ORAL TRADITION

Volume 11, Number 2 October, 1996

Slavica

Volume 11 October 1996 Number 2

Slavica Publishers, Inc.

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Slavica Publishers, Inc.
Indiana University
2611 E. 10th St.
Bloomington, IN 47408-2603

ISSN: 0883-5365

Oral Tradition seeks to provide a comparative and interdisciplinary focus for studies in oral literature and related fields by publishing research and scholarship on the creation, transmission, and interpretation of all forms of oral traditional expression. As well as essays treating certifiably oral traditions, *OT* presents investigations of the relationships between oral and written traditions, as well as brief accounts of important fieldwork, a Symposium section (in which scholars may reply at some length to prior essays), review articles, occasional transcriptions and translations of oral texts, a digest of work in progress, and a regular column for notices of conferences and other matters of interest. In addition, occasional issues will include an ongoing annotated bibliography of relevant research and the annual Albert Lord and Milman Parry Lectures on Oral Tradition. *OT* welcomes contributions on all oral literatures, on all literatures directly influenced by oral traditions, and on non-literary oral traditions. Submissions must follow the list-of reference format (style sheet available on request) and must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return or for mailing of proofs; all quotations of primary materials must be made in the original language(s) with following English translations. Authors should submit two copies of all manuscripts. Most contributions will be reviewed by at least one specialist reader and one member of the editorial board before a final decision is reached. Review essays, announcements, and contributions to the Symposium section will be evaluated by the editor in consultation with the board.

Oral Tradition appears twice per year, in March and October. To enter a subscription, please contact Slavica Publishers at the address given above.

All manuscripts, books for review, items for the bibliography updates, and editorial correspondence, as well as subscriptions and related inquiries should be addressed to the editor, John Miles Foley, Center for Studies in Oral Tradition, 316 Hillcrest Hall, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211.

Printed in the United States of America.

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Editor's Column

The first item of business for this Editor's Column is in fact business. With the present issue Slavica Publishers moves from its longstanding *temenos* in Columbus, Ohio to the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Indiana University, Bloomington. The most immediate consequence of this change in venue is the change in address for subscriptions, back issues, and other matters relating to publication. For these purposes, please write to: Slavica Publishers, 2611 East 10th Street, Bloomington, IN 47408-2603. The web site address remains the same (http://www.slavica.com), but the new telephone number is 812-856-4186 (fax 812-856-4187).

All editorial correspondence—including manuscripts submitted, books for review, inquiries, and so forth—should continue to be sent to the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Our contact numbers and addresses appear at the end of this column.

The second item of business is a consequence of the first. After more than ten years of rewarding collaboration, I take this opportunity to thank the former president of Slavica Publishers, Professor Charles E. Gribble of Ohio State University, for his creative and generous support of our journal. *Oral Tradition* became a reality in 1986, due largely to his timely agreement to help us get started, and Professor Gribble's staunch support through the years has enabled our publications program to develop in ways that could not be foreseen at the outset. It is modest enough recompense for more than a decade of such faithful stewardship, but I would like to dedicate this issue of *Oral Tradition* to him in gratitude for his enormous efforts on its behalf.

Indeed, the present issue may perhaps stand as a worthy tribute to Chuck Gribble in one particular way. Eleven years ago the journal was founded to provide a forum for comparative exchange, a kind of "pituitary gland" to help organize a cross-disciplinary discourse that often suffered from reinventing the wheel. In these first ten annual volumes of *OT*, an electronic index to which will soon be available at the web site maintained by the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition (www.missouri.edu/~csottime), we have tried to bring scholars from disparate areas into an unprecedented, productive dialogue. Issue 11, ii illustrates this editorial policy, treating a rich variety of oral traditions and performances, from ballads to Shakespeare to Japanese storytelling, medieval English poetry, Finnish narrative, and African American rap music. Our editorial premise is clear:

the best chance for understanding any single tradition lies in a realistic grasp of the plurality and heterogeneity of oral traditions. *OT* has been and will remain committed to this premise.

Future issues will address the complexities of oral traditions in various ways. Issue 12, i will focus on South Asian women's traditions, opening up an understudied area to closer inspection. Similarly, number 13, i will feature Native American traditions, concentrating on the challenge of cotranslation by a native speaker and an outside scholar. In between these two special issues, as well as afterward, we will be presenting typically miscellaneous collections that will include articles on Russian, Mongolian, Tibetan, Old Norse, ancient Greek, Chinese, and Latvian traditions, for example, as well as a major overview of Jewish folk literature from ancient times to the present, an update to the ongoing bibliography of oral-formulaic theory, a cluster of essays on oral Torah, and an analysis of electronic communication in the context of orality and literacy.

Let me close by emphasizing our wish to broaden the ongoing discussion by whatever means are available. Thus we actively solicit your manuscripts, in any and all fields. We also plan an enlargement of our web site to include not only the annotated bibliography of oral-formulaic theory (already in place) and the index of volumes 1-10 of *OT*, but also titles and abstracts for future contents. Let us know how we can better serve your academic needs.

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The Mechanism of the Ancient Ballad: William Motherwell's Explanation

Mary Ellen Brown

> This uniformity of phraseology in describing incidents of a similar nature which pervades all our ancient ballads, might appear to argue a poverty both of expression and invention in these Minstrel Poets; but if the compositions were narratives of real facts produced on the spur of the occasion, as in most cases we have ventured to suppose them to be, the use of such common places becomes abundantly obvious. They not only assisted the memory in an eminent degree, but served as a kind of ground-work, on which the poem could be raised. With such common-places indelibly fixed in his memory, the minstrel could with ease to himself, and with the rapidity of extemporaneous delivery, rapidly model any event which came under his cognizance into song. They were like inns or baiting places on a journey, from one to the other of which he could speedily transport himself. They were the general outlines of every class of human incident and suffering then appropriated to song, and could be fitted easily to receive individual interest as circumstances might require, and that without any painful stretch of fancy or invention. Indeed the original production of these common-places betokens no slender ingenuity on the part of these song inditers. They were like a commodious garment that could be wrapped expeditiously round every subject of whatever nature or dimensions.
>
> (Motherwell l827:xxiii)

The extended passage above, published in l827 in *Minstrelsy: Ancient and Modern*, presents William Motherwell's view of the ballad, most particularly its compositional make-up, and might be taken as an *avant la lettre* articulation of oral-formulaic composition. And that position was derived from a thorough study of the ancient ballads of Scotland—through books and manuscripts, by corresponding with the leading experts of the day, and by collecting from the singers. Thus Motherwell builds his description of the ballad and its compositional techniques from lived experience, rather than from library analysis alone.

William Motherwell came to an interest in balladry and song for nationalistic and antiquarian reasons: they represented to him inherited capital, symbolic capital that Scotland was in danger of losing as she was losing her language, her laws, her history. Change was rampant and it was not good. As poet he wrote of ancient times, appropriating characters and topics from the Eddas; as editor of one of Glasgow's leading Tory newspapers, the *Courier*, he spoke out against the Reform Bill of 1832 that would enfranchise members of the middle class and thus alter the class structure and the status quo; as citizen he joined the Orange Society to lobby against Irish and thus Catholic immigration to Scotland; as Sheriff Clerk Depute, essentially a clerical activity, he lavished attention on routine legal records by embellishing them with manuscript capitals and flourishes that gave them an "antique" flavor; and as ballad and song editor and collector, he was particularly interested in the earliest, oldest songs, songs that had certain characteristics indicating their antiquity, songs rich in formulae, structured in predictable ways, sung. And in 1827 a book that had begun as a collaborative project with several friends was published in book form, having been issued sequentially in fascicles beginning in 1824. In 1827 an introduction, musical examples, and an appendix were added to the texts and the whole was published as *Minstrelsy: Ancient and Modern*.

The *Minstrelsy* was one of Francis James Child's privileged sources for his first edition of ballads, which appeared in 1857; Child was particularly taken with Motherwell's texts and his lengthy headnotes. Later, when he was preparing his definitive edition, the publication of which began in 1882 (and continued through 1898), Child paid special attention to the introduction where Motherwell talked not only about the ballad's characteristics but also about editorial principles—questions of authenticity. Motherwell made it clear that ballads exist in a number of versions, each of equal authority. Child was taken with both questions and sought, in his own work, to go behind the published texts to discover the manuscripts on which the works had been based. One of the first manuscripts that he had copied was Motherwell's; and his final edition of *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* contains some 225 versions of 108 ballads, many from the manuscript that he had proclaimed "of hitherto unused materials, much the most important" (Child 1882:1, Advertisement). Child's stated model for his work, Svend Grundtvig's *Danmarks gamle Folkeviser*, had likewise been influenced by Motherwell, particularly on the questions of authenticity and variation: texts should be presented as collected and all texts should be given. And Motherwell's work has been cited frequently by many ballad scholars from Gordon Hall Gerould, M. J. C. Hodgart, Evelyn K. Wells, Sigurd Bernhard Hustvedt, and William Montgomerie to Emily Lyle, David

Buchan, Flemming Andersen, Dave Harker, and William McCarthy as well as myself, indicating its importance. And yet some of his most significant perspectives have been overlooked, not the least of which are his ideas about the ballads' composition and sung reality. Thus it seems appropriate to look again at Motherwell's work, most particularly the *Minstrelsy*, beginning with the publication history of that work.

An unsigned review of the work, dated March 3, l828, and found in a file of clippings at the Paisley Central Library, offers an apt beginning to this exploration (B/Moth-Pam PC 3216):

> . . . he resists every temptation to re-mould the broken grandeur of antiquity, and refuses to trick his Muse in the costume of other ages, to gain in masquerade the plaudits of his own. His observations are guided by sound masculine judgment—and if he occasionally inflicts severe chastisement for heresies, it is evident that the individual has no part in his resentments, and that he aims at nothing beyond the propagation of an uncorrupted text. To secure this, he has, in addition to ballads never before published, inserted many others in a more complete form than they have heretofore assumed, scrupulously adhering to the words of the reciter. A collection of thirty three melodies, the lawful spouses of as many Scottish ballads are given at the end of the volume. It is almost needless to observe, that their arrangement has been regulated by the same rigid antiquarian honesty for which the poetry is remarkable. The Historical Introduction and Notes are full of information, and might of themselves complete the education of a respectable collector of ancient song.

This assessment is not unlike the majority of subsequent assessments; the reviewer takes the published book at its word, neither examining the publishing history nor looking closely at the text at hand. There is, in fact, a disjunction among the introduction, music and appendix, and the texts proper that needs to be explained before detailing Motherwell's ballad theory, his ideas about "the Mechanism of the Ancient Ballad."

The *Minstrelsy* was published in fascicles and begun in concert with a group of fellow enthusiasts. Interestingly, Motherwell was involved throughout his short life (l797-l835) in a number of such collaborative publications and this was simply one of those. The title itself may well have been conceived by the original participants: anticipating a collection of old and new materials, that is, orally circulating texts as well as more contemporary material written by themselves and others, they called their projected book *Minstrelsy: Ancient and Modern.* At least one text early in the collection, *The Crusader's Farewell*, was actually the work of Motherwell and appeared in the l832 edition of his poems. William Montgomerie, who did so much to reveal the sources of ballad manuscripts

in Scotland, suggested his authorship of two other items: *The Twa Corbies* and *The Master of Wemyss*. The l828 reviewer took exception to the title itself (B/Moth-Pam PC 3216):

> There is one trifling exception to our praises of "Minstrelsy, Ancient and Modern." It lies in the name. A quarto, containing only four brief poems of contemporary composition, ought not to have announced them after so formal a fashion. Such a limited representation cannot fail to draw forth a cry for Radical Reform among our Modern Minstrels. It is but fair to state that the fault does not rest with Mr Motherwell. The work appeared in numbers, a few of which, containing the modern infusion, were published before his entrance on the editorial office. The four poems are good; two of them of first rate excellence, but they should be omitted in the next edition, and reserved for their proper place, where we hope to see them associated with others from the same fine fancy.

A letter written to his friend R. A. Smith in Edinburgh explicitly describes the editorial situation: "the whole labour save correcting the press has devolved on my shoulders. How I am to get through with it I don't very well know but since our hand is on the oar we must een lug away as best can" (Robertson 3/25).

Motherwell and his friends, then, had embarked on a publication, assembling texts—ideally never before published—with a distinct preference for "old" examples over new. When the project became his, he embarked on a learning process that made of him the preeminent ballad scholar of his day and time, barring none.

In the introduction to the *Minstrelsy*, written after the texts themselves had already been published, he refers to the process of making the book and learning about the subject matter as his errantry, a word that itself suggests the quest that enabled him to offer his ballad theory. His quest began with correspondence to other ballad and song enthusiasts—C. K. Sharpe (to whom the *Minstrelsy* was dedicated), Peter Buchan, Walter Scott among others—to ask their opinions and sometimes to share texts. His well-known exchange of letters with Walter Scott, and most particularly Scott's belated disclaimer of his own editorial tamperings, has been identified as the beginning of Motherwell's enlightened editorial policy—praised by the reviewer and most subsequent critics.[1] Motherwell

[1] Manuscript copies of the letters can be found in Robertson 9/1. McCarthy (1987) prints the exchange of letters between Motherwell and Scott. Interestingly, Svend Grundtvig had pointed out Scott's letter to Child in a letter dated 9 July 1874; he had chanced upon it himself quite by accident at a pension in Switzerland in the memoir attached to a book of Motherwell's poetical works (see Hustvedt 1916).

looked up to Scott, praised him lavishly; yet his correspondence with the much maligned Peter Buchan may have made a more enduring impact on Motherwell's approach to ballads.[2] In a letter dated July l826, Buchan writes Motherwell that "what will render it [the *Minstrelsy*] more dear to me, as well as every lover of Scottish song, is, your having given the ballads without the disagreeable and disgusting emendations and interpolations so frequently met with in works of this sort." The words "your having given" suggest that in the most recent fascicle Motherwell may well have printed his texts as collected. This had not always been the case.

The notes to the texts offer ample evidence of Motherwell's interventions. The note introducing *Johnie Scot* is quite explicit: "In preparing this ballad for the press, three recited copies, all obtained from people considerably advanced in years, have been used . . . . As is to be expected, in all poetry which depends on oral tradition for its transmission to our own times, the copies of this ballad which the Editor has recovered do not exactly correspond with each other. Numerous, though on the whole but trivial, verbal discrepancies exist among them; and in adjusting the text, he had therefore to rely on his own judgment in selecting, what he conceived, the best reading from each of his copies" (l827:204-5). Some seventy pages later, Motherwell provides an asterisked footnote, explaining the origin and status of the text of *Child Noryce:* "That the reader may have no room to doubt the genuineness of a ballad for which a very high antiquity is claimed, the editor thinks it right to mention, that it is given verbatim as it was taken down from the singing of widow M'Cormick, who, at this date (January, l825), resides in Westbrae Street of Paisley" (l827:282). Finally, a song that fits the principles expounded in the introduction! Whether Buchan influenced Motherwell in this matter, whether Motherwell came to his opinion about the presentation of texts on his own or with the help of Scott, or whether his firsthand collecting

[2] Motherwell, of course, valued Peter Buchan and his work; in fact he wrote to his friend R. A. Smith, saying that Buchan "has done more than anyone I know to collect the ancient traditionary ballads of Scotland" (Robertson 3/60). Child's views were almost the opposite: in the preface to the 1857 edition he says that "some resolution has been exercised, and much disgust suppressed, in relating certain pieces from Buchan's collections, so strong is the suspicion that, after having been procured from very inferior sources, they were tampered with by the editor" (v). Grundtvig in his very first letter to Child says that he can authenticate Buchan's texts "through a comparison with undoubtedly genuine Scandinavian ballads" (Hustvedt 1916:244). See also David Buchan's defense of Peter Buchan in *The Ballad and the Folk* (1972:ch. 16).

experience solidified his thinking, the introduction clearly stakes out a position on authenticity and editing.

Buchan stimulated Motherwell's collecting, and his letters to Motherwell are filled with personal collecting experiences, as well as the collecting of the blind singer James Rankin whom he paid. In an instructive letter, Buchan describes one such foray: "one old woman of eighty got so much into the spirit of the olden time, that, on approach, altho' lying on a bed by the fire, and whose decayed body and limbs could not carry her to the door, sat up and repeated many fragments which I had never heard before" (25263.19.6F). Such accounts clearly gave Motherwell the idea that this was truly a way to gather the kinds of materials he had decided to privilege in the parts of the *Minstrelsy* definitely under his editorship. And collecting clearly opened his eyes to the nature of the tradition and culture of the ballad-singing and -performing community; William McCarthy in deconstructing Motherwell's notebook and manuscript has suggested that Motherwell moved beyond the text-centered approach, from grouping various versions together to a consideration of repertoires. Buchan's example led him to hire Thomas MacQueen to collect for him, as Emily Lyle has so meticulously recorded in her work on the Crawfurd collection. And Motherwell had, in fact, stimulated Crawfurd to collect balladry as well. The influence of Peter Buchan on Motherwell's errantry deserves to be acknowledged today, as it clearly was by Child, who may well have overcome in part some of his scruples about Buchan, based largely on Motherwell's association with Buchan, in addition to Grundtvig's persuasive statements.

These details seem relevant to a reassessment of the *Minstrelsy*. Motherwell inherited a project and then began to learn in earnest about the subject matter: he acquired books, he corresponded with leading enthusiasts, and he began to collect. I would suggest that this process opened his eyes to many things, not the least of which was the issue of *authenticity*. His experience in the field, with variation and with individual performances underlines what Scott's letter had suggested: there were many versions and it was wrong indeed to collate, for in collating and rewriting the real state of the tradition is misrepresented. And this is generously explained in his introduction, written at the end of his errantry. In fact, the introduction ought rather to be called an afterword: it records what he learned in the process of thinking about and studying balladry, but does not describe the process of arriving at the texts printed in the *Minstrelsy* proper. That is why, of course, his manuscript has been thought to be so important; in many ways it records the texts he acquired—from collecting and from correspondence—in the process of completing the *Minstrelsy* and thus more

nearly lives up to the editorial principles expounded in the introduction. That explains Child's enthusiasm for Motherwell's manuscript and other holograph and published materials he was able to assemble;[3] they provided access to more authentic texts and versions. Child in fact privileges Motherwell's texts, using Motherwell's titles at times even when the Motherwell text is not designated "A." Yet he was vexed by the anomalies in those same texts, even the ones in the manuscript: "Motherwell professes to copy the ballad from Herd's MS. by way of supplying the stanzas wanting in Scott. There are, however, in Motherwell's transcript considerable deviations from Herd, a fact which I am unable to explain" (Child 1882-98:V, 2l8). In other words, he could present editorial principles that we today laud, as did the anonymous reviewer, but he did not exactly follow his own articulated example.

As noted above, the introduction represents the sum of what Motherwell learned preparing the *Minstrelsy*, and served in effect as an afterword to the texts that had already been published. In fact, many of those texts violated the very principles about which he wrote so vehemently. Yet, authenticity and the proper establishment of texts are clearly hallmarks of Motherwell's ballad theory. Authentic texts come from oral tradition, which he characterizes as "a safe and almost unerring guide" (l827:iii). And those texts should be collected "with scrupulous and unshrinking fidelity" (iv); they must be collected and printed "as they orally exist" (v): "What their texts or forms originally were, we have no means of knowing; what they are now, we do know; all then which remains by us to be done, is to transmit that knowledge unimpaired, and with rigid fidelity, to posterity. By publishing in this manner, we stamp upon them all the certainty and authenticity which their shadowy and mutable nature can receive" (cii). Collated texts give "inaccurate impressions of the state in which these compositions are actually extant among us" (vi); an overzealous editor does even worse in choosing "to impose on himself the thankless and uncalled for labour of piecing and patching up its imperfections, polishing its asperities, correcting its mistakes, embellishing its naked details, purging it of impurities, and of trimming it from top to toe with tailor-like fastidiousness and nicety, so as to be made fit for the press" (iv). Forgers come in for vivid condemnation: "those gentlemen who deem themselves fully better poets than ever earlier times produced; but who cannot persuade the publick to think so, or even prevail on it to read their compositions till

[3] Child obtained copies of Motherwell's manuscript and notebook and also had access to letters Motherwell wrote to C. K. Sharpe, copies of the *Paisley Magazine* (a periodical publication edited by Motherwell in 1828), and miscellaneous papers.

they have given them a slight sprinkling of olden phraseology and stoutly maintained that they are genuine specimens of ancient song" (viii-ix).

The latter half of the introduction, which surveys the history of the publication of Scottish ballads, offers further and specific critiques of the editorial principles espoused by a number of earlier editors. Of Allan Ramsay, Motherwell writes gently that "at the time Ramsay published, the business of editing Ancient poesy was not well understood; nor were the duties of an Editor, in that department of letters, accurately defined . . . . In the liberties which he took with the antient [*sic*] Song of his country, he has however unfortunately supplied a precedent for posterity to quote, and set an example which men of less talent, and even less critical integrity, have been eager to imitate" (1827:lxi). But near contemporaries come in for criticism and bald denouncement. Of R. H. Cromek's *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song*, he writes: "More pretention, downright impudence, and literary falsehood, seldom or ever come into conjunction" (lxxxviii); and of Allan Cunningham's *The Songs of Scotland*, Motherwell calls his editing, altering, and mutilating a "heartless, tasteless, and impious jest . . . violating ancient song . . . wholesale mode of hacking, and hewing, and breaking the joints of ancient and traditionary song" (xcvii). What an editor should do is to select from the copies available the "one . . . which appears the most complete and least vitiated" (vii).

Clearly, editing of all sorts was in part motivated by the fact that ballads exist in multiple copies, that ballads are in, as he suggests, "perpetual mutation" (x). One of his significant articulations has to do with this fact, that ballads exist in versions and that each has equal authority; each is equally authentic. Sometimes, of course, there are great differences between versions, the result of additions and confusions, misunderstandings, forgetting, inventing, and conflating events from several ballads. Sometimes there are so many changes—as the law of perpetual mutation progresses—that a virtually new ballad is sung. No doubt this recognition of variation and versions was the central most important contribution Motherwell made to ballad scholarship: Grundtvig decided to print all the versions he found; Child followed suit.

Motherwell's experience collecting balladry impressed upon him the fact that there are many ways to sing or recite a ballad, that oral tradition preserves the versions far better than have the published editions of balladry. That very oral transmission insures variability and change, the law of perpetual mutation; and thus "the whole duty of a collector of traditionary ballads is to print them exactly as they were said or sung to him; to mention the district of the country where he recovers the version, and to abstain from all conjectural emendation of the text" (1828:657).

Only then will the texts be authentic. Thus the lengthy discussion of editorial principles is really a discussion about authenticity and reflects Motherwell's growing awareness, derived from his field experience, that each version has equal authority; that ballads are alive and vital in oral transmission.

In large measure he became concerned about authenticity because he believed the ballads were national poetry, records of Scotland's ancient national minstrelsy: "They convey to posterity, that description of song which is peculiarly national and characteristic; that body of poetry which has inwoven itself with the feelings and passions of the people, and which shadows forth as it were an actual embodiment of their Universal mind, and of its intellectual and moral tendencies" (l827:v). Of course, he knew that Scotland shared her body of ancient poetry with England and Scandinavia; but he believed that the particular versions produced in Scotland were Scottish and reflected something of that indigenous history and culture. Along those lines, he believed that the ballads represented a common reservoir that served as shared cultural and symbolic inheritance. Thus they should be gathered and collected before the changes that were taking place introduced other common references, perhaps less national, less Scottish, more print-inspired. His activity then was both nationalistic and antiquarian.

Part of the introduction offers a characterization of balladry as he sought to delineate its qualities. First of all, the ballad has a particular structure: it begins at once to create the scene; characters are revealed more through action than through description; the action always moves forward with no backward glances to fill in incidents and details; the story rather than embellishments is essential in yielding a succinct "perfect harmony and wholeness" (xiv). A good deal is left to the imagination to fill in; the texts make no appeals to tradition to affirm their verity as in the legend and whatever takes place is assumed to be comprehensible and accepted. Yet the style is even more distinctive: commonplaces—"their ever agreeing in describing certain actions in one uniform way—their identity of language, epithet, and expression, in numerous scenes where the least resemblance of incident occurs" (xix)—tie very different versions together. And he goes further in suggesting that "in all cases where there is an identity of incident, of circumstance, of action, each Ballad varies not from the established mode of clothing these in language. This simplicity of narrative and undeviating recurrence of identical expressions in analogous cases, is one never failing mark of the antiquity of these songs, and their absence the best argument to the contrary" (xxi). And these recurring commonplaces provide more than action; they may well have connotative significance, as he suggests in

offering several examples: "And it may be remarked, that the expressions of *wiping on the sleeve*, *drying on the grass*, and *slaiting owre the strae*, always occur in such ballads as indicate a dubious and protracted and somewhat equal combat; and I take it these expressions were meant to convey that idea to the mind, as opposed to cases in which an individual has been overpowered by superior numbers, or assassinated unawares" (xii-xxiii). Likewise, the seemingly perfunctory refrains or "burthens" whose words appear "totally unmeaning and extravagant" may once have "had a significance, and were a key to a whole family of associations and feelings, of which we can form little or no conception" (xxiv).

This structure and style have maintained "the purity and integrity" of the ballad; but more than that they have helped people hold the material in memory; they have provided the very groundwork on which ballads might be raised; they represent the bases of composition. Motherwell returned briefly to this radical suggestion in a review published in the *Paisley Magazine* in l828, just a year after the appearance of the *Minstrelsy*. There he reiterates the "many features peculiar" to the ballad: "the identity of expression, where identity of action occurs in these ancient compositions—their perpetual use of the same imagery—betraying, as one might suppose, a poverty of invention, but which we believe was a device, ingenious as it was judicious, to fix them in the memory of the people, as well as to assist the professed minstrel on those occasions, wh[i]ch circumstances might call on him to produce extempore narratives of passing events" (l828:660). Versions themselves offer evidence of "so remarkable a class of compositions" (l827:x) and "their existence can be accounted for in no other way, than by supposing these different versions the productions of so many distinct minstrels, each of whom obtained the story, which he versified from a channel foreign to that accessible by his fellow poets" (vii).

I suggest that Motherwell came to these conclusions on the basis of the fieldwork he began to undertake in l825, inspired by his correspondent Peter Buchan, that here for the first time there is tantalizing field-derived evidence that the ballad was orally formulated. This experience also introduced Motherwell to the performance practices of his day. First of all, a song might be prefaced by background information relative to the personages described, information that helped smooth over "abrupt transitions" (xiv); at times the prose commentary was formalized and at others not. He adds that "reciters frequently, when any part of the narrative appears incomplete, supply the defect in prose. When the ballad naturally terminates, they can tell what became of some inferior or subordinate character . . . some pieces too are prose and rhyme intermixed . . ." (xiv). One of the reasons for the prose extension of the sung performance was the

general belief that the ballads recounted the truth—if not specifically, then at least generally. He uses the word "legend" in referring to the story line and expands in a footnote on the detrimental effects of showing one's own skepticism in collecting (xxvii). And he remarks on the performance mode as well, emphasizing that ballads are sung: "they have throughout the marks of a composition, not meant for being committed to writing, but whose musick formed as essential part of it, and from which it could not well be separated, without sensibly interfering with its unity and injuring its effect" (xvii).[4] Words then are wed to music and that combination has enormous effect on the total performance. The thirty-three musical examples added to the *Minstrelsy* texts, like the introduction that actually concluded the process of publishing the book, suggest his recognition of the centrality of music to a consideration of the ballad. And in his review of Buchan's *Ancient Ballads of the North of Scotland*, Motherwell returns to this point and thus underlines the essential role of the tunes, which he refers to as national music; he praises Buchan's collecting and publishing of texts in lavish terms, but he faults the collection for its lack of tunes: "They lack the music, they lack the salt which preserved these ballads—the very atmosphere in which they lived and breathed, and had their being" (1828:643). Thus he urges their collection, regretting "that no attempt on a large scale has been made to gather all our ballad tunes" (*idem*).

Motherwell himself had gone to considerable lengths to have the tunes recorded by his musical friends Andrew Blaikie and R. A. Smith; he had singers brought to Paisley for that purpose. And he was no stranger himself to the wedding of text and tune, which he had been doing since his teenage years as a writer of songs. He was frequently called on by R. A. Smith and by George Thomson to write words for an extant tune and he knew that there were particular issues involved. In an amusing letter to Smith dated 15 November l823—that is, presumably before the *Minstrelsy* project had even begun—he complains of his own failure to create verses for a given tune: "I am cramped every way when I have to write to a given tune and a given measure . . . . The better part of last Sunday I devoted to the task. With a laudable diligence I scratched my head and bit my pen, invoked all the benign shades of such defunct scribblers as my memory supplied me with and smoked sigars even to sickness in order to assist me in this minervan birth, but alas there was no true conception . . . " (Robertson 3/15). He was able then to consider the wedding of text and tune in ballads

[4] While he suggests that sometimes the ballads are recited, he focuses on the sung renditions: the meter is not always regular; in fact he calls it "licentious," meaning that syllables are accented that would not be stressed in ordinary discourse.

from an informed vantage point: he recognized melodic variation from verse to verse, prefacing his examples with these words: "The following tunes having been taken down from the singing of particular verses in the respective ballads to which they belong, and these verses having sometimes happened not to be the initial stanza of the ballad, it has been deemed advisable to print the precise verses from the singing of which the several tunes are so noted. This is rendered the more necessary as some tunes are given to which no correspondent ballad will be found in this collection, while others refer to sets of a ballad different from those which it contains" (Motherwell l827:xv). Thus Motherwell offers musical examples, comments on the characteristics of the tunes, and recognizes that the melodic line may well be altered from verse to verse; moreover, he urged the collection of national music, the tunes, in addition to the national poetry, the ballads.

In fact, collecting and urging others to collect became something of a *cause célèbre* with him: he returned to it in his 1828 review of Buchan; but there are other instances in the *Paisley Magazine,* which he founded and edited. In the editor's column of the 1828 issue, for example, he mentions having received for consideration some mediocre poetry; he muses, perhaps somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that the erstwhile poet might better spend his time in collecting, in gathering the remaining evidence of Scotland's heritage. He feared that the materials he favored were losing ground, were becoming less popular, were heard less. He realized, of course, that song continued; it was just that he did not like the newer examples. In his review he began by saying, "For your modern foisonless poetical inventions, called ballads, we care not a doit; but for the old traditionary, romantic, or heroic strain, which, like the shibboleth of free masonry, has lived upon the memory without the intervention of written character, and has been transmitted from sire to son, from generation unto generation, from the remotest times to the present graceless days, we profess a sincere and perfect love" (l828:639). Change may well have been Motherwell's greatest fear; he sought to valorize what he could of the past, to rescue evidences, to turn back the clock if he could because he recognized that the altered societal environment was not conducive to the kinds of ballads he preferred, that their production and transmission were dependent on a particular sort of milieu, unarticulated, but the "way things had been."

Because of his nationalism, his antiquarianism, and his dissatisfaction with the status quo, he sought to gather and preserve one evidence of Scotland's past. He saw the ballads and their tunes as a component of Scottish heritage; he delineated their qualities, characteristics, and performances as he observed them; he laid down strictures for their

preservation as they were found in oral tradition. Child and Grundtvig were compelled by his ideas on authenticity and variability; Child mined Motherwell's work for texts. But in every case everyone seems to have overlooked his comments on performance and on the music, and especially his intriguing ideas about memory and composition. Motherwell's introduction certainly influenced the work of David Buchan, provided the seeds for the work of Flemming Andersen; and William McCarthy could well have capitalized on Motherwell's own ideas of oral-formulaic composition in bolstering his case for Agnes Lyle as a creator or recreator of ballads, for Lyle was one of Motherwell's "old singing women." Have the synchronic biases of much contemporary folklore and ballad scholarship kept us from reading and receiving the lessons of the past? Perhaps scholarship has been too fixated on texts, ignoring the theoretical and methodological concerns and discoveries of our scholarly forefathers and foremothers?

Looking again at William Motherwell's life and work reveals not only an expert, an authority on traditional balladry, but a man whose interest in materials and contexts was very much a part of the world in which he lived. As a cultural nationalist, he was concerned with the changes that seemed to threaten older cultural patterns; he looked then to the past, not only in ballads but also in his own poetic endeavors. His conclusions reflect his own interests and the concerns of a coterie of other Scots, offering a counter-hegemonic perspective to the Enlightenment preference for progress, change, and improvement—the dominant social perspective and trajectory of his day and time. His study of the ballads and his discoveries suggest that certain cultural conditions favor their survival; progress, change, and improvement are foes. His ballad scholarship was thus part of an antiquarian and nationalistic movement, and in that sense his perspective was backward-looking. On the other hand, his viewpoint could also be characterized as forward-looking, as an interesting form of Scottish romanticism characterized by a yearning for bygone eras, distant cultures, and nature. Certainly his cultural activities reflect one complex Scottish perceptual framework in early nineteenth-century Glasgow. Most importantly, his ballad studies offer revealing suggestions that may, even today, alter the way we conceive of ballad-making.

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Oral Tradition, 11/2 (1996): 190-221

Who Heard the Rhymes, and How: Shakespeare's Dramaturgical Signals

Burton Raffel

The Audience

"The many-headed multitude" was how, in 1601, a contemporary referred to the Shakespearian audience (Salgado 1975:22). "Amazed I stood," wondered an anonymous versifier in 1609, "to see a crowd/ Of civil throats stretched out so lowd;/ (As at a new play) all the rooms/ Did swarm with gentles mix'd with grooms."[1]

This wide-ranging appeal considerably antedated Shakespeare's plays: though he very significantly shaped its later course, he profited from rather than created the solidly popular status of the Elizabethan and, above all, the London stage, for "London was where the players could perform in their own custom-built playhouses, week after week and year after year. . . . In London there were regular venues, regular audiences, regular incomes."[2] The first playhouses had been built in 1576; at least two professional "playhouses were flourishing in 1577."[3] (Shakespeare was then a country lad of thirteen.) The urgency of clerical denunciations, then as now, provides particularly revealing evidence of the theater's already well-established place in many Londoners' hearts.[4]

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[1] *Idem*:29. Festivity was of course a far more important aspect of Elizabethan life. "The popular culture of Elizabethan England . . . is characterized first and foremost by its general commitment to a world of merriment" (Laroque 1991:33).

[2] Gurr 1992:6. And, just as today, those who wielded political power took most seriously the ancillary economic benefits produced by London's professional theaters. See Harrison 1956:112-14, for the authorities' immensely positive reaction, when appealed to by the watermen who ferried playgoers back and forth across the Thames, and whose profitable employment was being interfered with.

[3] Harrison 1956:23. For the 1576 date, see Gurr 1992:7.

[4] Yet another body of evidence comes from letters and other documents indicating how regularly foreign visitors to London made it their business to attend theatrical productions. There is no entry under "Tourists" in Halliday 1964, but there ought to be.

To be sure, there was some reason for clerical denunciations. The Elizabethan theaters sometimes produced considerable disturbances, both inside and outside their walls. The Lord Mayor of London declared, in 1593, "that they give opportunity to the refuse sort of evil disposed and ungodly people that are within and about this City" (Harrison 1956:19-20). An important source of difficulty stemmed from the fact that the members of theatrical companies were not enrolled in any of the traditional craft guilds, which rendered them liable to be "listed as vagabonds and masterless men and hence . . . subject to arrest and imprisonment."[5] Even the protection offered by sympathetic noblemen, who enrolled the players as their nominal (and sometimes their actual) "servants," could not entirely repair the situation. There were often tensions, too, as between the theater professionals and the university men who sought to milk this new profession. "The Elizabethan theatre was anything but aristocratic";[6] university-trained men, whether born to the aristocracy or not, were apt to put on airs.

Contemporaries writing about the Elizabethan audience naturally focused on aristocratic, notable figures rather than on ordinary playgoers, just as, for exactly the same reasons, "they wrote more about exceptional audience behaviour than about ordinary audiences" (Gurr 1992:226). But Halliday's summary is both objective and, from my perspective, provocatively on point (Halliday 1964:43):

> It used to be thought that the Elizabethan audience was an ignorant and ill-smelling assembly, capable of nothing but bawdiness, inexplicable dumb-shows and noise. Ill-smelling they may have been, but in those days when few could read, and talk took the place of books [movie houses, television, records, and tapes] the ear must have been delicately trained and quick to appreciate fine language. No doubt some of the gallants who sat on the stage and smoked, and some of the ladies in the galleries, came to be seen rather than to listen, but recent research discovers an audience made up for the most part of eager and attentive listeners, generous with their applause, though equally ready to hiss and mew their disapproval.

Salgado 1975 contains many such reports, originally written in French, German, and Latin, as well as in English.

[5] Parrott and Ball 1943:46. See "The Laws of Plaing," in Gurr 1992:27-33.

[6] Parrot and Ball 1943:48. See "Social Divisions in the Playhouses," in Gurr 1992:215-22.

Indeed the commander of an East India Company ship, sailing in Asia in 1607 and 1608, regularly had staged on board his ship such plays as *Richard III* and *Hamlet*, "which I permit," he recorded in his journal, "to keep my people from idleness and unlawful games, or sleep" (Salgado 1975:28). When not only the audience, but also the actors, of Shakespeare's plays could be composed of the raggle-taggle sort who made up ships' crews, without much question there must be a clear and important bond between and among the highly literate author and his largely doubtfully literate audience.[7]

The Theater

Elizabethan playhouses were wonderfully impermanent structures, built quickly and of materials resistant to neither fire nor time. It is also true, as Andrew Gurr has well noted, that more scholarly attention has been devoted to tangible issues of playhouse design than to subtler but also more important issues: "it is easier to dispute fixities like the shape of a stage than such intangible matters as an Elizabethan audience's awareness of itself as a visible presence."[8] Consider the following description:[9]

> Halfway into the pit there projected a platform upon which most of the action of the play was presented. It is important to realize that the spectators were not only in front of the stage as in a modern theatre but actually on three sides of it. At the rear of the platform was an inner, or alcove, stage separated from the front by a . . . draw-curtain, and flanked by doors which allowed the actors to enter directly onto the platform . . . . Over the alcove-stage was an upper stage; it also had a curtain which could cut it off from the view of the audience when it was not in use . . . .

[7] Salgado says that this journal is "generally regarded as genuine," though the original manuscript has disappeared; it has been suggested that John Payne Collier, both a scholar and a celebrated forger, may have concocted these accounts (Salgado 1975:28 and n. 1).

[8] 1992:115. But see the close examination of actual stagecraft in, e.g., Slater 1982. A very different perspective can be found in Greene 1988.

[9] Parrot and Ball 1943:52-54. They also reproduce a detailed reconstruction of the floor plan of the Globe Playhouse, drawn by Professor John C. Adams (53).

Again, we do not know exactly what was on that platform, or stage; we do however know what was *not* on it, which is most of what, today, we think of as stage scenery:[10]

> Public theatres in Shakespeare's time had not much in the way of scenery. There were hangings of tapestry or painted cloth, much as there would be in most London houses of any consequence, and we know there was a certain amount of stage furniture in the way of stools, thrones, arbours, statues and the like, which could be set in position or taken away as required, but there seems to have been little or nothing to serve as a specific, localized background against which the actors would play . . . . This absence of localized scenery must have made the combats and battle-scenes in some of the Histories a good deal easier to stage and more effective to watch, because when such a scene is played on a bare or nearly-bare Elizabethan stage, the action is concentrated, and the dramatic illusion sustained, more easily than in a fully-representational set.

I will return to this matter of the concentration of action, which concentration inevitably applies to virtually everything taking place on the stage, whether active or merely verbal. Audience focus, and audience attention, were not much distracted from the players and their words, for the actors and the actors' words were, in essence, all (or certainly most) of what there was to a theatrical production. There were costumes, to be sure, and props of various sorts, sometimes fairly elaborate, even costly. Some props, on the other hand, were both extremely simple and, to our minds, distinctly gruesome. In *King Lear*, Cornwall has put out one of Gloucester's eyes, at which point one contemporary text provides the revealing stage direction, "Cornwall pulls out one of Glosters eyes, and stampes on it" (Wells and Taylor 1986:1050). Cornwall is temporarily interrupted by a loyal servant of the helpless duke, then freed of this humane and nobly futile interference by Regan, who picks up a sword and runs the servant through from behind. Cornwall then returns to his grisly work, exclaiming, "out vild Jelly."[11] It seems apparent that a gutta percha ball, or something of the sort, has been employed, with what other possible grisly accompaniments we do not know.

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[10] Holmes 1972:112, 118. For more detail, see "The Staging," in Gurr 1992:172-211.

[11] Wells and Taylor 1986:1050. For reader convenience, citations to this source will also be tracked by a footnoted act and scene reference, keyed for the sake of uniformity to the various volumes in the Signet Shakespeare, in the following form: III:vii, line 82.

In short, though it remains true that "this was not a realistic stage" (Parrot and Ball 1943:60), neither was it a Punch-and-Judy puppet show. A degree of sensationalism is also a theatrical constant (informing the very meaning of "theatrical" in our language). "The play's the thing," as Hamlet declares: Elizabethan actors freely used whatever devices they had, and just as freely did without those they did not have. "The variety and scope of the language, the emotional rhythms of poetic speech of the Elizabethan drama were partly the result of the Elizabethan theatre" and all its physical possibilities and constraints (Parrot and Ball 1943:60).

Rhyme

And what is more, if the early plays of Shakespeare are any indication, Elizabethan dramatists seem to have had a trick or two up their sleeves that we, in our time, have lost both sight and sound of. In a strictly formal sense, Shakespeare, like most Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights, employs three basic modes: rhymed verse, blank verse, and prose. It is not always easy to *hear* the difference between blank verse and prose, especially (a) when both are written to simulate speech and (b) both occur in the same work and are written by the same hand. Indeed, there are passages the nature of which has regularly produced disagreement among editors. Here, for example, is a passage printed as verse in the Oxford original-spelling edition (Wells and Taylor 1986:519):[12]

> Got with much ease. Now merrily to horse:
> The theeves are al scattred, and possest with feare
> So strongly, that they dare not meete each other,
> Each takes his fellowe for an officer,
> Away good Ned, Olde-castle sweates to death,
> And lards the leane earth as he walkes along,
> Wert not for laughing I should pittie him.

This is Prince Hal speaking, after he has despoiled the despoilers, stealing from Falstaff and his fellow thieves what, playing the role of highwaymen, they themselves have just stolen. But in his edition of *1 Henry IV,* Maynard Mack prints this same speech as prose, with a footnote acknowledging that it has been "printed as verse by Pope and many later editors" (1965:n. 71). There is in fact no way to resolve the disagreement: to quote myself, "except when it is used to present poetry, or to record actual speech, and the

[12] *1 Henry IV*, II:2.

like, prose may logically and conveniently be defined as the written form of a language" (Raffel 1994:7). Presented as blank verse, the passage scans quite acceptably. But this is not conclusive, since much prose can be scanned as verse, and that fact no more constitutes a full definition of poetry than does the non-scannability of, say, Walt Whitman's verse. The borderlines between prose and verse are neither sharp nor always readily perceivable. The situation may be summarized as follows (Raffel 1994:6):

> 1. Poetry, as compared to prose, generally places greater emphasis on *the sound of language*, on its music and rhythm, and also employs a greater intensity of verbal colors of all sorts.
> 2. Poetry, as compared to prose, lays diminished emphasis on literal, linear *significance* and relies far more on metaphor and other indirect ways of meaning. There are ranges of operation, to be sure, and some prose becomes "poetic," just as some poetry becomes "prosaic."

But the difference between rhymed and unrhymed verse is relatively easy to hear, which makes that difference available, should the poet care to use it, as a signaling device. All linguistic, like all dramatic, signaling devices, are of course procedures designed to heighten and clarify communication by concentrating the listener's attention—by focusing his mind more closely, and more in the particular direction desired: "outside poetry rhyme is commonly thought of as a 'poetical' device, but in fact it is a broadly attested linguistic structure, used for marking the ends of important words and phrases, to make them memorable . . . . Its effect on audiences and readers both inside and outside poetry is well known" (Preminger and Brogan 1993:1059-60). And it has long been noticed that, in addition to using more rhyme in his earlier than in his later plays, in these same early plays Shakespeare shows a clear tendency to employ it as just such a signal, rounding off a scene or an act with a rhyming couplet. It has also not escaped attention that, though in his later plays he "discarded [rhyme] as a staple medium, . . . he retained it for certain effects, to clinch an aphorism and to define a scene, and such minor uses of rhyme afford a limited index of chronology, for they gradually dwindle and ultimately disappear in the latest plays" (Halliday 1964:411).

I do not contest the designation of rhyme-signals as "minor uses": there are issues far more important than rhyming techniques in all of Shakespeare's plays, nor would Shakespeare have achieved worldwide fame and popularity if his use of rhyme-signals were the most significant thing to be found in his plays. All the same, if it can be shown that in the early plays he used rhyme-signals both more commonly and in a much greater variety of ways than has previously been suspected, it seems to me that

matters of some importance will necessarily be touched upon. A signal spoken from a stage, in other words, is a signal meant to be heard, and to be understood, by those in the audience. Any playwright at or near the beginning of his professional career, even Shakespeare, is likely to be maximally attuned to the capabilities and expectations of his audience. Later in his career he will be, as Shakespeare plainly was, a good deal more confident, less concerned about an audience approval that he has already earned, and also more interested in experimentation, in pushing at the boundaries of his craft.[13] And while he was earning his reputation and his self-confidence, he would naturally remain closer to his audience's established understanding and capacities.

If in his earlier work Shakespeare was employing rhyme to effect such signals, it is extremely unlikely that he was merely wasting his actors' breath, or playing intellectual games with himself. His audience, or some significant part of it, surely could and did hear, note, and understand what he was doing. Indeed, had they not, and had they not taken pleasure in his giving them such signals and in their own ability to correctly interpret them (neither side of which need be fully conscious procedures: things can be fully *deliberate* without being fully conscious), the odds would have to be heavily against his continued use of any such signals. Elizabethan audiences were notably devoid of public shyness. When the audience was happy, the actors and their playwright (to quote a 1610 observer) could count on "enormous applause to full houses" (Salgado 1975:30). But though they were "for the most part . . . eager and attentive listeners," Elizabethan playgoers were "equally ready to hiss and mew their disapproval" (Halliday 1964:43). As G.B. Harrison explains, "to the keen Elizabethan playgoers, the drama was part of his life. He never ceased to discuss, quote, and criticize" (1956:55).

Accordingly, establishing the clear existence of many more, and much more commonly employed, rhyme signals than have previously been perceived should lead us to reconsider 1) the nature of spoken verse, 2) the capacities of a significantly nonlettered audience, and 3) the interpenetration of spoken and lettered forms, both a) in a society partially lettered and partially nonlettered, like that of Elizabethan England, and b) also in our own, which we tend—mistakenly—to think of as not only basically but virtually exclusively lettered. To put it differently: if so subtle a literate craftsman as Shakespeare could and did employ preliterate devices in universally celebrated and unmistakably lettered works, the enduring

[13] The sheer technical expertise of a late play like *The Tempest*, dated from 1611-12, is literally unimaginable in the earlier work.

importance and power of oral literature has been considerably underapprehended.

It is obviously true that "The man who could write a line like 'How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night' can never be called insensitive to the value and importance of the sound of words as well as their sense" (Holmes 1972:25). But to discuss the significance of rhyme in strictly and rather vaguely literary terms, as those few who reach the topic have tended to do, seems to me largely to dodge the issue (Holmes 1972:40):

> We used to be told that rhymed couplets were the signs of an early play, but the matter is hardly so simple as that. Sometimes they perform the same function as the poetical conceits just mentioned, or by their combined ingenuity and artificiality suggest an easy, leisured rarefied society . . . . In *Love's Labour's Lost* they give much of the dialogue the elegance of a dance, in *Richard II* they reflect at need the artistic philosophizing of Richard, the formal challenges and responses of Mowbray and Bolingbroke, or the dignified yet passionate appeals of John of Gaunt . . . .

To sum up this sort of thing, as Martin Meisel does (in a different context), as "the deliberate shift to a more heightened, formal rhetoric to achieve heightened intensity" (quoted in Holmes 1972:40), is I think in this context to fail fully to see what is in fact going on.

The Comedy of Errors

Let me begin with the early, unexceptional farce, *The Comedy of Errors*, its fairly mechanical plot derived from Plautus, its characterization distinctly minimal, and its poetic texture relatively so limited that one commentator has declared, significantly though not entirely accurately, that "Language, which regularly afterwards [in Shakespeare] is squeezed for its comic potential, here serves chiefly to keep us advised of situation" (Levin 1989:164). After a first act in which rhyme is used several times aphoristically—first to begin the play, then to end a scene, and again to heighten a comedic dialogue (Wells and Taylor 1986:293, ll.12-26-27; 294, ll.154-58)[14]—the second act opens with the two sisters, Adriana and Luciana, attempting each in her own way to deal with the differing rights and responsibilities of men and women. The first nine lines, in blank verse, move to a smooth and flowing beat. Beginning with line 10, the sisters engage in a kind of closely rhymed choral dialogue, interlarded with

[14] I:2, lines 1-2, 51-52, 70-71.

moderately extended aphoristic speeches, a dialogue that extends for thirty-four lines and is only broken, first, after the appearance of their servant, and second, after one of the sisters, though still using the verse mode, changes back to the more swiftly flowing sort of blank verse with which the scene (and the act) opened. Here are the unmarried sister's final rhymed couplet and the married sister's blank verse line, spoken, now, not to her sister-in-rhyme, but to the servant (Wells and Taylor 1986:296):[15]

Luciana:	Well, I will marry one day, but to trie.
	Heere comes your man, now is your husband nie.
Adriana:	Say, is your tardie master now at hand?

It is not hard to hear how differently the final line moves. The caesura, or pause, in line 1, comes after the third of the line's five poetic feet: "well, I/ will MAR/ry ONE/day" (or perhaps "one DAY") "BUT/ to TRIE."[16] In line 2, the caesura comes after the second poetic foot: "heere COMES/ your MAN/ NOW is/ your HUS/band NIE." These are more or less standard positions for the caesura in an iambic pentameter line. But in line 3, the first blank verse line, the caesura comes at an unusual place, immediately after the first poetic foot: "SAY, is/ your TAR/die MAS/ter NOW/ at HAND?" In other words, there is a kind of conventional metrical symmetry in the rhyming lines, and no symmetry whatever, but a flowing, speechlike utterance, in the nonrhyming line. These are of course deliberate usages: as a jazz critic once noted, commenting on a supposedly wholly improvised performance in which, all on the same beat, eight musicians not only changed to a new key but changed to the same new key, these are not matters which occur by chance. I suggest that Shakespeare's audience could hear all of these differences at least as well and probably better (considering how much more practice they had had) than we can, and that, far from being mere prosodic details, of interest only to pedants and poets, these were to them matters of automatic (if not exactly earth-shaking) significance. That is, having been thus signalled (prepared), they could and would now expect that, following on Adriana's speech to the newly entering servant, for the time being there would be no more rhyme forthcoming. And, in fact, the servant begins his response to the blank verse line by speaking in the prose mode, in which mode both sisters then answer him; some ten lines further along, one of the sisters moves back into blank verse, in which mode the servant instantly joins. The blank verse

[15] II:1, lines 42-44.

[16] Here and hereafter I employ the scansion marking used in Raffel 1992.

mode endures for something over twenty lines, and this time it is the servant who breaks it—moving back into the rhymed verse his two mistresses had been using before he appeared. Here are the four lines in which this latter change in mode is accomplished (Wells and Taylor 1986:296):[17]

> am I/ so ROUND/ with YOU,/ as YOU/ with ME,/
> that LIKE/ a FOOT/-ball YOU/ do SPURNE/ me THUS:/
> you SPURNE/ me HENCE,/ and HE/ will SPURNE/ me HIther,/
> if i LAST/ in this SER/vice, YOU/ must CASE/ me in LEAther.

I suggest that, with the symmetrical placement of the caesura in the first line, the audience's ears pricked up, automatically wondering (not consciously wondering: these would have been matters of half-subliminal convention) if rhyme was to follow.[18] Line 2, which scarcely pauses at all, seems to indicate that rhyme was not to follow. But line 3 once again turns rhythmically symmetrical, and this time line 4 follows suit, and the rhyme expectation is promptly satisfied. And then, the two sisters being alone again, as they were at the start of the scene, rhyming persists for the whole remainder of the scene, approximately thirty-five lines—the end of the scene being clearly signaled, and separated from what has come just before, not by a standard rhymed couplet but, still more emphatically, by a rhyming triplet.

What does this prove? Not much, as yet, though it is I trust a beginning demonstration. The next scene shows, I think, how truly deep the rhyming conventions run, and how deftly Shakespeare deploys them, and his audience responded, to their deployment. Beginning in blank verse, scene 2 does not use any rhyme for almost fifty lines (Wells and Taylor 1986:297).[19] After a single aphoristic couplet, "was there EV/er AN/ie MAN/ thus BEAT/en OUT/ of SEAson,// WHEN in/ the WHY/ and the WHERE/fore, is NEI/ther RIME/ nor REAson" (note both the interesting use of the word "rhyme" as well as the metrically extended meter), the scene then leaves off both sorts of verse, going for yet another fifty lines into a pure and uninterrupted prose mode.

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[17] II:1, lines 82-85.

[18] Barkan's rather condescending observation that "perhaps the tedium which . . . word-play inspires in a modern audience would be completely alien to Shakespeare's own theater" (1986:268) is I think distinctly misplaced.

[19] II:2, lines 47-48.

I believe Shakespeare's audience could plainly hear the difference, and my belief is bolstered by the way in which Shakespeare handles, first, the next transition in expressive mode, which is back to blank verse, and then, after another forty-one lines, the further transition from blank into rhymed verse. Here are the two lines immediately following the last in the prose portion; they are spoken, I suspect significantly, not by the servant, who has been one half of the prose dialogue just preceding, but by his master (Wells and Taylor 1986:298):[20]

> i KNEW/ 'twould BE/ a BALD/ conCLU/siON:/
> but SOFT,/ who WAFTS/ us YON/der.

Not only could the audience sense the difference in mode immediately announced by the first of these two lines, I believe, but they could also register the heightened, more poetic diction of the second line. And their ears as well as their minds would thereafter have been disappointed had the entering character, one of the two sisters, not continued in the verse mode thus audibly prepared for. And indeed she does, delivering herself of a speech, almost forty lines long, in wonderfully flowing, elegant blank verse.

Further, when at the close of her long, passionate, high-toned complaint, the speaker of this extended blank verse passage is answered by the man who is not, as she thinks, her husband, but her husband's long-lost identical twin, she is logically enough answered in the same mode she herself has employed. But his response is considerably shorter and, though it begins in blank verse, it soon signals to the audience, by means I will explain in a moment, that he intends, as he must, to reject both her and her noble words, for he knows quite well that he is not her husband. Note that "Ephesus" is the name of the city inhabited by this speaker's twin, and by the wife of that twin; she is addressing, all unknowingly, not her husband but her brother-in-law (Wells and Taylor 1986:298):[21]

> PLEAD you/ to ME/ faire DAME?/ i KNOW/ you NOT./
> in EPH/eSUS/ i AM/ but TWO/ houres OLD,/
> as STRANGE/ unTO/ your TOWNE,/ as TO/ your TALKE,/
> who EVE/ery WORD/ by ALL/ my WIT/ being SCAN'D,/
> wants WIT/ in ALL,/ one WORD/to UN/derSTAND.

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[20] II:2, lines 109-10.

[21] II:2, lines 148-52.

Line 1 is straight dramatic blank verse. Line 2, containing a choice metaphor, carefully uses that metaphor to highlight the word "two." Line 3 then makes a good deal of alliterative play on the /t/ sound that begins this word. I do not think such elaborate and extended alliterative play could possibly be accidental. The sequence "but *t*wo houres old,/ As s*t*range un*t*o your *t*owne, as *t*o your *t*alke" is so replete with alliteration (I count four primarily alliterating consonants, and two more secondarily alliterating ones, for a total of six alliterating consonants in less than a line and a half!) that no amateur poet would ever stumble upon the effect, and no professional poet could possibly have thus stumbled. Moreover, having, as I believe, thus signaled a coming change to his audience, Shakespeare not only shifts into rhyming mode but carefully links the shift with what has announced it, as it were taking his alliteration with him: "Who every *w*ord by all my *w*it being scan'd,/ *W*ants *w*it in all, one *w*ord to understand." Again, five primary alliterating consonants in one couplet is not something that happens by accident.

What Shakespeare has been signaling, I believe, by these fairly wild alliterative bursts, is not the merely aphoristic or the merely scene-ending or the merely comedic signaling function of rhyme, but something quite different, namely—and, considering the couplet itself, not surprisingly—exactly the sort of wordplay that Professor Evans believes is hard to come by in this play.[22] I think Shakespeare's audience not only understood the signal, because this was neither the first nor the only time they had experienced it, but reacted to it, as say a race horse will to its rider's stretch-run signal, a flick of the riding crop, by automatically kicking their minds into a higher gear, putting on a burst of mental speed, the better and therefore the more satisfyingly to follow the mind-twisting couplet to which they would then be treated. And the likelihood of this interpretation is buttressed still further, I think, by the indisputable fact that, following this rhyming brain-bender of a couplet, it is the other sister who responds, and the mode *she* employs is straight blank verse, no rhyme occurring for roughly twenty lines. And then, after her sister's nonrhyming interlude, the frustrated wife breaks into aphoristic complaint, first protesting and then, with considerable force and courage, indicating that she will not be denied: "Come I will fasten on this sleeve of thine:/ Thou art an Elme my husband, I a Vine" (Wells and Taylor 1986:298).[23] The rhyme is distinctly emphatic, as it is meant to be. And with the exception of some

[22] Bertrand Evans, "From *Shakespeare's Comedies*," in Levin 1989:164.

[23] II:2, lines 174-75.

half a dozen lines, the entire rest of the scene is then in rhymed verse, the end of the scene being signaled, as before, with a rhyming triplet.

The Taming of the Shrew

Or consider *The Taming of the Shrew*, almost invariably dated, like *The Comedy of Errors*, to 1593-94. The "Induction," or prologue, which begins in prose, in its first scene uses rhyme only once, as the kind of scene-framing device that aurally signals to the audience the conclusion of the first scene (Wells and Taylor 1986:32):[24]

> Haply my presence
> May well abate the over-merrie spleene,
> Which otherwise would grow into extreames.

The first act proper makes intermittent but largely unremarkable use of rhyme, employing it mostly to frame or set off aphoristic-like observations. The shrew herself, Kate, says that a maiden's "care should be,/ To combe your noddle with a three-legg'd stoole,/ And paint your face, and use you like a foole" (Wells and Taylor 1986:34).[25] Two lines further along, Tranio, servant to one of her younger sister's suitors, remarks, in an aside: "Husht master, heres some good pastime toward;/ That wench is starke mad, or wonderfull forward." A good bit later in the same scene, Tranio combines rhyme, aphorisms, and Latin: "If love have touch'd you, naught remaines but so,/ Redime te captum quam queas minimo" (Wells and Taylor 1986:35).[26] Lucentio ends the scene proper with what is very probably a rhyme, in Elizabethan English: "One thing more rests . . . :/ To make one among these wooers: if thou ask me why,/ Sufficeth my reasons are both good and waighty" (Wells and Taylor 1986:36).[27]

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[24] I:1, lines 137-38.

[25] I:1, lines 64-67.

[26] "Ransom yourself, a captive, at the lowest possible price" (I:1, lines 161-62). Though the quotation is from Terence, it is quoted, preserving the inaccuracy found there, from Lilly's *Latin Grammar*.

[27] I:1, lines 245-47.

In the next scene our gallant hero, Petruchio, slings rhyme back and forth in a spat with his servant, Grumio (Wells and Taylor 1986:37),[28] indicating that Shakespeare's use of rhyme in this play is meant to extend to comedic byplay as well as to mark gnomic wisdom, then casts a greeting to his old friend, Hortensio, in an aphoristic rhymed couplet employing, this time, Italian as well as English (the play being supposed to take place in Padua): "Signior Hortensio, come you to part the fray?/ Con tutto il core ben trobatto, I say" (Wells and Taylor 1986:37).[29] Some hundred lines further, Grumio uses rhyme in a metrically gait-legged aphorism: "KATHer/ine the CURST,// a TI/tle FOR/ a MAIDE,/ of all TI/tles the WORST" (Wells and Taylor 1986:38).[30] Petruchio speaks of himself in an aphoristic couplet (Wells and Taylor 1986:38);[31] he and his servant, Tranio, speak some more or less barbed, comical rhymed lines, ending with the rather predictable signal to the audience, via a rhyming triplet, that rhyming was about to be suspended—as indeed at precisely that point it is (Wells and Taylor 1986:39).[32] Furthermore, Tranio reinforces this suspension of rhyme—it is not here a scene- or an act-ending device, let me emphasize—by the emphatically flowing quality of the blank verse he employs: "Softly my Masters: If you be Gentlemen/ Do me this right: heare me with patience" (Wells and Taylor 1986:39).[33] That is, Shakespeare first signals with the rhyming triplet, then reemphasizes that cessation with this strong blank verse cadence—and his audience hears, and understands.

Nor should we be surprised, for though neither Shakespeare nor his audience were particularly aware of the fact, multiple signals are a basic component of all communication. To effect reliable, accurate communication we employ changes in pitch, in stress, in volume; we gesture; we alter verbal positioning and verbal rhetoric; and so on. "I'm going to the store," we say, and as it is supposed to, in a good declarative statement, the subject precedes the verb *and* the voice drops at the end. But to transform this declarative statement into a query—"Am I going to the store?"—we not only alter the position of subject and verb but also, this

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[28] I:2, lines 11-17.

[29] "Welcome, with all my heart." I:2, lines 23-24.

[30] I:2, lines 128-29.

[31] I:2, lines 101-2.

[32] I:2, lines 223-36.

[33] I:2, lines 237-38.

time, we end on a rising inflection. In a pinch, either signal could be used alone, and would probably carry the intended meaning. But human communication being as uncertain as it is, we like to avoid risks, employing more signals than we strictly speaking need.

Finally, after roughly forty lines in blank verse, the scene and the first act come to an end in one more macaronic couplet, this time in Italian and English (Wells and Taylor 1986:39).[34]

Before going on to the second act, which is of considerable interest in rhyming matters, let me in the name of clarity and brevity sum up what Shakespeare's use of rhyme seems to have been communicating to his audience in *The Comedy of Errors* and in this first act of *The Taming of the Shrew:*

1) rhymes will frame (that is, end) scenes and acts

2) rhymes will frame aphorisms

3) rhymes will emphasize comedic dialogue

4) triple rhymes will frame *either* the end of a scene or an act, *or* the suspension of rhyming

5) rhymes will frame high-order wordplay, which will be signaled by verbal extravagance like bursts of alliteration

6) the beginning and end of rhyming passages will sometimes be signaled by sudden changes in prosody

7) the beginning and end of rhyming passages will sometimes be signaled by sudden changes in diction

8) the beginning of rhyming passages will sometimes be signaled by assigning a speech to a character of markedly different social level

9) above all, no single pattern of any of the three expressive modes—prose, blank verse, or rhyming verse—will be allowed to continue uninterrupted: there will be signals that changes are coming, to be sure, but there will always be changes. The audience is to know that, placing themselves in Shakespeare's hands, they will not be bored.

Let me add, though we know sufficiently little about it not to be able to pursue the matter very far, that just as they could count on him, so Shakespeare too could count on certain things from his audience. John Porter Houston, after analyzing poetic rhetoric in the Renaissance and seventeenth century, notes that "sociological and geographical facts . . . influence the diversity of a language, and in Shakespeare's case the range and origins of the audience certainly had some effect on variety of

[34] I:2, lines 280-81.

discourse. The pure courtier poet often tended to be limited in this respect in the sixteenth century, and some of the most original styles were created by writers . . . who did not reside at a court" (1983:124). That is, the wide range of social classes and levels of literacy in Shakespeare's audience was as important to him, in his practice as a professional playwright, as his own varied, non-aristocratic, non-university-trained background was important to them. We ought not to forget that such writers as Shakespeare and William Blake were able, as they progressed in their respective crafts, to break so many "rules," and to make so many poetic advances, precisely because of their relatively humble origins and "lack" of what was at the time considered a good education.

Blank verse and prose passages plainly constitute a much greater proportion of both the plays I have been considering than do rhyming passages. As mentioned above, in the first act of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Shakespeare employs rhyme only intermittently, though he uses it fairly steadily, and he employs it only for limited, unambiguous purposes. But Act II handles rhyme differently. For one thing, in Act II rhyme is not used at all for well over two hundred lines. Since this is a play that begins in prose and continues to use prose at intervals throughout the first two scenes of its prologue and throughout the first act, it is also worth noting that these two hundred-odd lines are entirely cast in blank verse.[35] What then is the audience to make of the intrusion of a sudden rhyming couplet, in which Petruchio speaks and Kate answers: "Nay heare you *Kate*. In sooth you scape not so./ I chafe you if I tarrie. Let me go" (Wells and Taylor 1986:42).[36] Let us recollect that, though still in blank verse, the forty lines or so before this couplet have been taken up by rapid bursts of repartee between the swaggering hero and the equally swaggering heroine. What the audience must therefore expect, hearing the rhymed couplet, is a swift change. The use of rhyme, here, plainly cannot signal the end of a scene, so the change must be either in rhetoric, form, or style—and when Petruchio promptly launches into a deft, smooth fifteen-line eulogy of his newly determined wife-to-be, the audience's expectations are surely satisfied. "I finde you passing gentle," Petruchio declares. "Twas told me you were rough, and coy, and sullen,/ And now I finde report a very liar:/

[35] See Houston 1988:viii: "I have confined my observations . . . to blank verse, since rime . . . influences sentence structure to such an extent that any study which does not distinguish between the two kinds of verse will give a confused picture of the syntax of both."

[36] II:1, lines 234-35.

For thou art pleasant, gamesome, passing courteous," and so on, as this unusual wooer lays on his wooing with a very thick brush.

What then does Shakespeare do with rhyme? He completely discontinues it for another eighty lines—which occupy a good deal more time in the saying than they do in the mere reading. Depending on the stage business employed, and the actors' delivery, it is thus some while before rhyme reappears. Does Shakespeare signal that reappearance? Petruchio first speaks two non-rhyming lines, the first of which, indicating his imminent departure, is broken into four heavily separated elements, the second of which, though it does not itself rhyme, suddenly drops into a rhyme-like symmetry: "Father, and wife, and gentlemen[,] adieu,/ I will to *Venice*, sonday comes apace" (Wells and Taylor 1986:43).[37] Either "adieu" or "apace," the two end-words of these lines, would be excellent rhyming material, but neither of them is so employed. But their use, plus even more importantly the rhythmic signal, allows the audience to anticipate the ringing rhymed couplet with which Petruchio then concludes and after which both he and Kate leave the stage: "We will have rings, and things, and fine array,/ And kisse me *Kate*, we will be married a sonday." Two things stand out, one plain even to our dulled ears, but both doubtless apparent to the Elizabethans' better-tuned ones. First, "*rings* and *things*" can hardly be an accidental use, at this point, of heavy internal rhyme. That this usage heralds still more bluntly the forthcoming use of rhyme seems to me extremely likely. Second, "we will be married a sonday" is in fact quoted from a popular Elizabethan ballad, composed by Nicholas Udall (1505-56), sung in the early play *Ralph Roister Doister* and very likely known to most of those in the audience.[38] For those who did know the ballad, the rhyme of "array" and "Sunday" would have been considerably reinforced.

Shakespeare then switches back to flowing blank verse, as Gremio asks: "Was ever match clapt up so sodainly?" But the response by Baptista, father of the two eligible ladies, at once suggests by its symmetrical rhythm, very unlike that of Gremio's brief speech, that still more rhyme is in the offing. "Faith Gentlemen now I play a marchants part," Baptista begins, following this line with a solid rhyme, "And venture madly on a desperate Mart." Once more Shakespeare leads his audience away from rhyme, as Tranio comments, "Twas a commodity lay fretting by you,/ Twill bring

[37] II:1, lines 314-15.

[38] *Roister Doister*, act III, scene 2, lines 161-81. The play features many songs. See also Ault 1986:25-26.

you gaine, or perish on the seas." The first of these lines is flowingly asymmetrical, but the second is suggestively—and accurately, predictively so—in distinctly symmetrical rhythm. And once more the suggestion of rhyme, like some magical rainmaker, brings on rhyme itself, as Baptista speaks and Gremio answers, "The gaine I seeke, is quiet in the match./ No doubt but he hath got a quiet catch."

Having sounded his rhyme-word, Gremio clearly moves in a different direction, both in substance and in rhythm: "But now *Baptista*, to your yonger daughter,/ Now is the day we long have looked for . . . ." There is no time to pause for rhyme, when verse thus flows. But yet again, in Tranio's two-line response to Gremio's three lines of blank verse, though Tranio does not himself employ rhyme the rhythm of his second line strongly suggests it: "And I am one that love *Bianca* more/ Then wordes can witnesse, or your thoughts can guesse." Interestingly, and perhaps significantly, modern editors tend to use no punctuation in this second line, but the Elizabethan printer did use a comma. Was it his theater-going ear that so informed him? Or had the comma been marked in the copy from which he was setting type? There is of course no way of knowing, though the fact is suggestive. In any event, the rhythmic suggestion is immediately verified in the two lines which follow it—which frame not two but three spoken utterances: "Yongling thou canst not love so deare as I./ Grey-beard thy love doth freeze./ But thine doth frie." The next two lines continue to rhyme—and then, for sixty lines, until just before the end of the scene and of the act, there is no rhyme whatever.

There is an oddity here, too—if, that is, we let ourselves think that Shakespeare is capable of being as boringly predictable as lesser authors surely are. In the final two speeches, the first five lines in length, the second and last eight, the five-line speech ends with a rhyming couplet, but the eight-line one does not, employing rhyme medially in its fourth and fifth lines and, for good measure, rhyming by means of characters' names: "I see no reason but suppos'd *Lucentio*/ Must get a father, call'd suppos'd *Vincentio*" (Wells and Taylor 1986:44).[39] The heavy symmetry, seems not in the least accidental, involving as it does both a repeated and parallel use of the adjective "suppos'd" and also the ultimate symmetry of an actual father and an actual son—or at least their names. Like tends to attract and to be associated with like, and for English poetry rhyme is itself perhaps the ultimate symmetry. Oscar Wilde has been quoted as saying that rhyme was "the one chord we have added to the Greek lyre" (Preminger and Brogan 1993:1052).

[39] II:1, lines 400-1.

I have been looking at a pair of early comic plays. Let me pursue, and conclude, my argument with an examination of two distinctly more somber-toned early plays, *Romeo and Juliet* and the play that follows immediately on its heels, *Richard II*.

Romeo and Juliet

Romeo begins with a prologue, spoken by a Chorus: it is a fully rhymed Shakespearian sonnet.[40] Did the audience know it was a sonnet? Perhaps some did, but probably most did not. But did they know it was fully rhymed? I would like to assume that, by this point, the question requires no answer. Nor should anyone be surprised when I note that, following on these fourteen closely rhymed lines, the play itself opens not with rhymed verse, nor with any verse at all, but in prose. The unexpected is what we must expect, in Shakespeare.

It is old Capulet who first changes the play's expressive mode from prose to blank verse: "What noyse is this? give me my long sword hoe" (Wells and Taylor 1986:380).[41] This is rhythmically distinctly symmetrical, but it is not quite a rainmaker; it does not yet bring down a flow of rhymed verse. But in the three lines that follow, spoken by Capulet's wife and again by Capulet, symmetry of rhythm is hammered away at—and when old Montague makes his appearance, so too, at last, does rhyme:

C's wife: A crowch, a crowch, why call you for a sword?
C: My sword, I say, old *Mountague* is come,
And florishes his blade in spight of me.
M: Thou villaine *Capulet*,
[his wife holds him backe]
hold me not, let me go.
M's wife: Thou shalt not stir one foote to seeke a foe.

But with the entry of the Prince of Verona, blank verse becomes both more appropriate and what, in fact, Shakespeare turns to, first in the prince's twenty-three line burst of statesmanly eloquence and then for the fifty lines that follow. When, after those seventy-odd lines of blank verse, Montague

[40] The prologue to Act II, again spoken by a Chorus character, is once again a fully rhymed sonnet.

[41] I:1, line 78.

at the end of a ten-line speech slips from blank into rhymed verse, there is no signal whatever, no audience preparation (Wells and Taylor 1986:380): again, Shakespeare's only true predictability is his unpredictability.[42] The six lines that follow after Montague's aphoristic couplet—"Could we but learne from whence his sorrowes grow/ We would as willingly give cure as know"—then remain in rhymed verse. The first of these three rhyming couplets belongs to Benvolio, Montague's nephew, who announces the imminent arrival of Romeo, Montague's son, about whose state of melancholy they have been deliberating. The second of these rhyming couplets belongs to Montague, and is spoken as he takes his leave. And then the third rhyming couplet, which is divided into a series of brief, introductory statements, belongs to the two younger men beginning their conversation:

B: Good morrow Cousin.
R: Is the day so young?
B: But new strooke nine.
R: Ay me, sad houres seeme long.

Romeo then speaks in a much more flowing rhythm, heralding the return to blank verse, which however does not reassume the kind of unbroken prominence it has by and large and to this point clearly had in the scene. Both Romeo and Benvolio, with each of them sometimes speaking half of a rhymed couplet, keep moving in and out of rhyme. Romeo's use of it is somewhat greater; of the almost eighty lines that follow on Romeo's rhyming comment, "Ay me, sad houres seem long," just over half are rhymed.[43] Thus Shakespeare not only flits back and forth between the two modes but, once more, he flits unpredictably. For example, the rhymed couplet, "Love is a smoke made with the fume of sighes, /Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers eies," is followed by the line, syntactically closely parallel to the second rhyming line, "Being vext, a sea nourisht with lovers teares," which however does not introduce yet another rhyme. Perhaps this is at least partly because the first, neatly balanced (parallel) syntactical structure is at once replaced by a different syntactical structure: "What is it

[42] I:1, lines 157-58. A reliable indicator of the utter banality of Joyce Kilmer's poem, "Trees," is the absolute, deadening regularity (i.e., completely rule-dominated) of its prosody. See Raffel 1992:xxi.

[43] Lines 179-80, in most modern texts, make ambiguous a rhyme that is clear in the original spelling. The end-words "hate/created," in modern editions, obscure the rhyme that the end-words "hate/create," in the original spelling, make certain.

else?" begins the following line—and this does introduce another rhymed couplet: "What is it else? a madnesse, most discreete,/ A choking gall, and a preserving sweete" (Wells and Taylor 1986:381).[44] Shakespeare also uses the imperfect rhyme (*rime faible*) "is/this," constructs a sort of rhyming triplet out of the end-words "hit/hit/wit," and uses what may—the exact Elizabethan pronunciation is uncertain—be yet another imperfect rhyme, "poor/store" (Wells and Taylor 1986:381).[45] But the scene ends, more or less predictably, with a perfectly rhymed couplet (Wells and Taylor 1986:381).[46]

Nor are the intensely romantic scenes in this more somber play handled much differently. Romeo's first sight of and first meeting with Juliet is typical. The scene begins with servants, and is cast in the prose mode; old Capulet enters, and with this appearance of a socially lofty character the mode immediately shifts to blank verse, in which it remains without break for almost thirty lines. At this point Romeo sees Juliet, asks a servant who she is, receives the answer "I know not sir," and without any audience preparation bursts into a ten-line rhymed peroration on Juliet's beauty. Plainly, it is a desire to raise the rhetorical pitch to the highest possible level that leads Shakespeare to thus employ rhyme: note that the first six lines of the speech do not use the basically symmetrical rhythms common to less emotionally intense passages:

> O she doth teach the torches to burn bright:
> It seemes she hangs upon the cheeke of night:
> As a rich Iewel in an Ethiops eare,
> Bewtie too rich for use, for earth too deare:
> So showes a snowie Dove trooping with Crowes,
> As yonder Lady ore her fellowes showes . . . .

But note, too, that once Romeo passes from celebration to cogitation the rhythm turns to what is, for rhyme, a more conventionally symmetrical pattern (Wells and Taylor 1986:386):[47]

> The measure done, Ile watch her place of stand,
> And touching hers, make blessèd my rude hand.

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[44] I:1, lines 193-97.

[45] I:1, lines 184-85, 210-12, 218-19.

[46] I:1, lines 240-41.

[47] I:5, lines 46-55.

Did my hart love till now, forsweare it sight,
For I nere saw true bewtie till this night.

Can we imagine that the Elizabethan audience did *not* link this rhythmic shift to the rhetorical shift which accompanies it? They surely would have automatically associated this sort of rhymed verse with aphoristic language, just as they would have linked the rhyming of the first six lines to vastly heightened (and far more flowing) and more passionate language.

At this point, rhymed and unrhymed verse (the rhyming lines in couplet form) more or less alternate for another forty lines, and then, as Romeo for the first time speaks directly to Juliet, and she to him, Shakespeare assigns them a more usual love-poem mode—rhymed verse, rhyming markedly but more lightly, according to the pattern ABAB (Wells and Taylor 1986:386):[48]

R: If I prophane with my unworthiest hand,
This holy shrine, the gentler sin is this,
My lips two blushing Pylgrims readie stand,
To smoothe that rough touch with a tender kis.
J: Good Pilgrim you do wrong your hand too much
Which mannerly devocion showes in this,
For saintes have hands, that Pilgrims hands do tuch,
And palme to palme is holy Palmers kis.

By no means all Shakespearian wordplay is associated with rhyme. Some however *is*, as we have seen. And rhyme is regularly, over and over, functionally—that is, dramaturgically—associated with dramatic changes, with divergence, mutation, and the like. These are, as I have suggested, readily audible associations that serve the audience, and thus the playwright, as handy, readily comprehensible dramatic signals. That there is no single such usage to which rhyme is limited is in no way an indication of its non-functionality. Indeed, that very multiplicity of usage is in fact a powerful indicator, in these early plays, of rhyme's shifting but ubiquitous functionality.

One last example from *Romeo and Juliet*. In the fifth and final act, just before Romeo kills himself, and Juliet awakens to find him dead and kills herself as well, Romeo is confronted at Juliet's supposed tomb by her sorrowing "official" suitor, Paris. Having first directed his page to "stand

[48] I:5, lines 95-102.

aloofe," Paris strews flowers and water on what he thinks is his intended wife's grave (Wells and Taylor 1986:409):[49]

> Sweet flower, with flowers thy Bridall bed I strew.
> O woe, thy Canapie is dust and stones,
> Which with sweete water nightly I will dewe,
> Or wanting that, with teares distild by mones,
> The obsequies that I for thee will keepe:
> Nightly shall be, to strew thy grave and weepe.

It cannot be said here that Paris' previous words have in some way prepared the audience or anticipated this rhyming speech, because between Paris' previous words and the ones just quoted there is a two-line speech by his page, employing a blank verse that provides no hint of impending rhyme: "I am almost afraid to stand alone,/ Here in the Church-yard, yet I will adventure." But Paris' *actions*, beginning with the solemn strewing of flowers, provide all the preparation his heightened, rhymed verse requires: stage situations, and stage business, are as valid as any other signals from playwright to audience.[50]

Not only are the first four of these lines not in couplet rhyme, being once again in the rhyming pattern ABAB, but the printer, apparently setting type "from Shakespeare's working papers" (Wells and Taylor 1986:377), has carefully indented lines 2 and 4—that is, lines that carry the B rhyme—much as if this had been a poem rather than a play. Shakespeare's "working papers" may well have indicated this spatial arrangement (all readers can of course see and understand it), but what of the audience? Is a visual indent on the printed page in any way relevant to the audience? Clearly not. But what *is* clearly significant, and distinctly audible, is the difference between a love- or funereal-poem rhyming pattern and an aphoristic couplet rhyming pattern. Not only could the audience hear, appreciate, and react appropriately to *this* difference, but they had audible confirmation from the playwright that they were indeed hearing what they thought they were hearing, for after four lines rhyming ABAB Shakespeare carefully (and without question deliberately) employs couplet rhyme in lines 5 and 6: "The obsequies that I for thee will keepe:/ Nightly shall be, to strew thy grave and weepe." Rhythm and rhyme are both changed, in these more symmetrical lines, from the four flowing lines that precede them. And with those changes come changes in rhetoric, in tone, and in purpose.

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[49] V:iii, lines 12-17.

[50] See Slater 1982:*passim*.

Rhyming lines cast in an ABAB pattern, that is, serve a different dramatic purpose—here, the validation of Paris' love for Juliet—from rhyming lines cast in a couplet pattern. The latter, as we have seen again and again, can serve many quite specific purposes; their purpose here is to aphoristically frame Paris' love validation.

Did *everyone* in the audience receive and understand these rhyme-carried messages? I do not know. But that everyone in the audience *could* hear and understand them I have no doubt whatever, and I strongly suspect that most in the audience did in fact do so—or Shakespeare's career would have been considerably less meteoric than we know it to have been.

Did Shakespeare *have* to use such rhyme-messages to convey aspects of his meaning? Of course not. The playwright's choice of expressive devices, to be sure, will be conditioned by other factors than merely his own predispositions, however those predispositions may have come into being. In Shakespeare's case, in these earlier plays, those predisposing factors include his comparatively slim theatrical experience, his comparatively modest reputation and standing at that time, as well as his desire to satisfy the audience's expectations, desires, and capacities. But Shakespeare *did* choose to use these rhyme-carried messages. Unless Francis Bacon or the Earl of Oxford wrote the lines we have been considering, or some unknown, jealous hand intervened to cob up and confuse the texts we have, these are the lines Shakespeare wrote, and wrote deliberately, and they are the lines with which he and his audience were apparently well satisfied. Our task is to try as best we can to understand their significance, not only for the plays in question, but for the nature of publicly performed dramatic literature in a transitionally literate age and also for literature in our own time, which—let me say just once more—is far more a mixture of literate and illiterate, of written and of oral, of lettered and of unlettered, than most of us like to think.

Richard II

Richard II, if not so subtle, mature, or stunningly powerful as, say, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, or *King Lear* (which come roughly five to ten years later: not a long span, as ordinary mortals are likely to accomplish such things), nevertheless marks a kind of dramatic turning-point. As Harold Godard puts it (1960:I, 149), "Before *Richard II*, Shakespeare . . . occasionally confused imagination with 'imagination.' After *Richard II*, he seldom or never did." It seems never to have been as popular as others of his early plays (Bradbrook 1978:104). But as a good American poet, Mark Van

Doren, has noted, "the author of 'Richard II' is perhaps more interested in poetry than he will ever be again . . . . It is the work of an awakening genius who has fallen in love with the language he writes; who realizes the full possibilities of his idiom and scale; and who lets himself go" (1939:68-69). He does indeed. And we have a very good text, more than likely "printed from Shakespeare's papers" (Wells and Taylor 1986:413), so that we can be reasonably sure that what we have is what Shakespeare would have wanted us to have.

In this poetically almost riotous play there is, once again, an ongoing mixture of rhymed and unrhymed verse, without any admixture of prose. Low and high alike, king and humble gardener, speak at poetry's bidding. And King Richard, inevitably, speaks most poetically of all (Wells and Taylor 1986:432-33):[51]

> What must the King do now? must he submit?
> The King shall do it: must he be deposde?
> The king shall be contented: must he loose
> The name of King? a Gods name let it go:
> Ile give my iewels for a set of Beades:
> My gorgeous palace for a hermitage:
> My gay apparel for an almesmans gowne . . . .

But though this magnificent set-piece flows on and on, in blank verse as bright, passionate, and shining as hot metal, after twenty-five lines it too seems to have required, and to have received, the framing assistance of rhyme. There is no preparation or advance signaling, but as Richard modulates toward both the end of his lyrical outburst and the speaking of the ominous message, carried to him by Northumberland, "My Lord, in the base court [Bolingbroke] doth attend,/ To speake with you, may it please you to come downe" (Wells and Taylor 1986:433),[52] the purpose of Richard's long speech narrows, becomes more practical—and, not surprisingly, it is at precisely this point that rhyme enters (Wells and Taylor 1986:433):[53]

> there lies
> Two kinsmen digd their graves with weeping eies:
> Would not this ill do well? well well I see,

[51] III:iii, lines 142-48.

[52] III:iii, lines 175-76.

[53] III:iii, lines 167-70.

> I talke but idlely, and you mock at me.

It is not only rhyme that enters, but punning, and wordplay, and alliteration, too: "*w*eeping/ *w*ould/ *w*ell/ *w*ell/ *w*ell." Do we find, both in Shakespeare's plays generally, and in this play particularly, punning, wordplay, and significant alliteration all used without rhyme? Yes—but that is, for better or worse, not what we find at this point in this play. It is the *presence* of rhyme-carried signals with which we have to deal, not the choice to use or not to use them. That choice was exclusively Shakespeare's. And he would not have employed rhymed-carried signals without some fairly clear purpose; he resorted to such signals, here as elsewhere, for good, sound dramaturgical reasons.

Moreover, once Northumberland has spoken the dreaded words, quoted above, politely but firmly directing the king to come down to "the base court" (both "court" and "base" constituting strongly evocative puns), Richard acknowledges both the words and their significance in a stunningly powerful six-line speech, the first two lines of which are in blank verse, the last four of which are all in couplet rhyme (Wells and Taylor 1986:433):[54]

> Downe, downe I come, like glistring Phaeton:
> Wanting the manage of unrulie jades.
> In the base court, base court where Kinges grow base,
> To come at traitors calls, and do them grace,
> In the base court come downe: downe court, downe King,
> For nightowls shreeke where mounting larkes should sing.

Richard flashes all sorts of word-play in this brief speech. Five iterations of "downe" over the course of the first five lines are anything but accidental, and "downe court, downe King" is plainly a reference to Richard's own fall. Nor is there anything accidental about the studied reference to the son of the sun god, Phaeton, hurled out of his father's runaway chariot and flung to the ground at the hand of almighty Zeus himself. Richard's equally studied insistence on the immense heights from which *he* has fallen, and the virtually obscene powers required to thus topple him, is still further emphasized by juxtaposing against those great heights the word "*b*ase," four times iterated, and by that reiteration providing, additionally, an alliterative echo to the iterations of "*d*owne" and to the four iterations of "court"—which word, again, is itself a pun on the physical location to which Richard is being summoned and the "court" where, as king, he has

[54] III:iii, lines 177-82.

ruled. This alliteration is both reinforced and echoed by three iterations of "*c*ome," as well as by "*c*alls," not to mention that, whatever the spelling may indicate, "*k*ing" too alliterates with "*c*ome" and "*c*alls." The word "king" occurs twice in these lines, and I much doubt it is accidental that the bitter reference to "traitors" is sandwiched between two of these particularly sharp-sounding /k/ alliterations: "*c*ome at traitors *c*alls." "Jades" is of course primarily a word describing vicious, worthless horses, but though it is by extension applied mostly to women rather than to men, one of the recorded instances of the latter usage is in an even earlier Shakespeare play than *Richard II*, namely, *The Taming of the Shrew* (Wells and Taylor 1986:39).[55] The possibility of yet another pun—and puns are never very far to seek anywhere in Elizabethan literature—is therefore a very real one here. "Manage," though a word often applied in Elizabethan English to controlling horses, had taken on the modern sense of "management" at least as early as 1581 (*Oxford* 1955:1197).

Rhyme-carried signals in fact abound in this play; I will briefly discuss only two more instances. In the last act, when the Duke of York has loyally turned in his own traitor son, the new ruler Bolingbroke praises the father's "aboundant goodnes," hailing York as the "loyall Father, of a treacherous Sonne" (Wells and Taylor 1986:441).[56] York's seven-line response begins in blank verse, but its first three lines insist on the symmetrical rhythms of rhymed verse, and the speech ends with two sorrowfully aphoristic rhymed couplets (Wells and Taylor 1986:441):[57]

> So shall my vertue, be his vices baude,
> An he shall spend mine honour, with his shame,
> As thriftles sonnes, their scraping Fathers gold:
> Mine honour lives when his dishonour dies,
> Or my shamd life in his dishonour lies,
> Thou kilst me in his life, giving him breath,
> The traitor lives, the true man's put to death.

But there is much, much more rhyme to come. The Duchess of York, mother of the traitorous son, calls outside the door, begging admission. Bolingbroke responds, "What shril voicd suppliant makes this eger crie" ("eager" then meaning "sharp, severe," rather than, as today, "appetant"

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[55] I:ii, line 248.

[56] V:iii, lines 64, 59.

[57] *Ibid.*:lines 66-72.

[*Oxford* 1955:577])? The duchess' answer rhymes with this question: "A woman, and thy aunt (great king) tis I." And then, for no less than sixty consecutive lines, all of them speak in rhyme—the king, the Duke and Duchess of York, and their finally forgiven son. When at last the royal pardon is spoken, and then repeated at the mother's insistence for good measure and for certainty, the father, mother, and son rise from their kneeling positions, and the duchess chimes the final rhyme in this long sequence—"A god on earth thou art," she exclaims to the king, the end-word, "art," rhyming with the end-word of his previous speech, which not accidentally just happens to be "heart."[58] Having just broadly relied on rhyme, Shakespeare drops it for the final speech of the scene, bringing it back only to signal the scene's end with a rhymed triplet, the first two lines of which are given to Bolingbroke, the last to the duchess (Wells and Taylor 1986:442):[59]

B: Uncle farewell, and cousin so adue,
Your mother well hath prayed, and proove you true.
D: Come my olde sonne, I pray God make thee new.

The juxtaposition of rhyme and wordplay, so strongly visible here, is of course something we have seen over and over again. It is not so simple to say precisely why Shakespeare presents this long sequence in uninterrupted rhymed couplets. Was this, indeed, a signal of any sort whatever, so far as the audience was concerned, other than the continuance of a mode the poet-playwright had for apparently better reasons introduced? I do not know, though it seems obvious that the *dis*continuance of rhyme, at precisely the point when the pardon has been first granted and then re-affirmed, serves as a framing device of structural significance. This scene-within-a-scene features a good many symmetrically balanced, couplet-style lines. But there are also rhythmically flowing lines, nor can I readily explain why we see either the one or the other. Is there no reason for sixty consecutive lines of rhyming verse other than Shakespeare's decision or desire so to employ the rhyming mode? That too is a possibility.

Richard's final scene is also the last to be examined here. For most of its length, it features wondrously flowing blank verse, with not a rhyming line of any sort until (a) Richard has well summed up his plight, first in solitary musing, then in conversation with one of his former

[58] Word order and rhyme are somewhat confused at this point; this confusion is reflected in Wells and Taylor 1986, but is repaired, plainly correctly, in modern editions.

[59] V:iii, lines 143-45.

grooms, and (b) Richard's jailer enters, bringing the former king's food. Richard has the last words, in the almost one hundred lines of blank verse (Wells and Taylor 1986:443):[60]

> I was not made a horse,
> And yet I beare a burthen like an asse,
> Spurre[d], galid, and tird by jauncing Bullingbroke.

Is it the /b/ alliterations, two indeed in the final word "Bullingbroke," that signal to the audience that rhyme is coming? Or is it the entrance of a socially inferior character like the jailer? Or both? Again, I do not know—but can only point out that the rhyme that occurs at this point is in fact a triplet, which far more usually frames an ending than a beginning or anything in between. The first line is the jailer's, the second is Richard's, speaking to the groom, and the third belongs to the groom (Wells and Taylor 1986:443):[61]

> J: Fellow, give place, heere is no longer stay.
> R: If thou love me, tis time thou wert away.
> G: What my tong dares not, that my heart shall say.

Does this in fact signal that something highly unusual, or highly dramatic, is about to occur? The audience of course is well aware that something highly dramatic is indeed in the offing, for at the end of the previous scene Sir Pierce Exton has vowed (in rhyme): "Come lets go,/ I am the kings friend, and will rid his foe" (Wells and Taylor 1986:442).[62] Rhyme endures, after this anomalous-seeming triplet, for one brief exchange between the jailer and Richard; then Richard explodes in anger, striking the jailer, who calls urgently for help. Says the printed stage direction (reproduced from Shakespeare's "working papers"?): "Exton and his men rush in." Richard, roaring in blank verse, "seizes a weapon from a man," the stage direction tells us, "and kils him," and kills yet another before Exton, once more according to the stage direction, "strikes him downe." Richard has five more lines to speak; the first is in blank verse; the remaining four are rhymed couplets (Wells and Taylor 1986:444):[63]

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[60] V:v, lines 92-94.

[61] V:v, lines 95-97.

[62] V:iv, lines 10-11.

[63] V:v, lines 108-12.

That hand shal burne in never quenching fire
That staggers thus my person: Exton, thy fierce hand
Hath with the kings bloud staind the kings owne land.
Mount mount my soule, thy seate is up on high,
Whilst my grosse flesh sinckes downeward here to die.

Exton's six lines end the scene; they are all in rhyming couplets. I wish I could explain that fact, and the almost more striking one that of the 52 lines in the next and final scene of the play, all but 12 are in rhymed couplets. Are all of these the kinds of closure signals associated with rhyme? Much of this sixth and last scene is aphoristic. The 12 lines not in rhymed verse are strictly functional, information-carrying stuff, and the whole scene is cast in an elevated, formal tone to which rhyme is of course apposite. Richard's death is well framed in rhyme, being in much the same tone. And perhaps that is explanation enough.

Finally, let me emphasize that I have not attempted to delineate the *etiology* of rhyme-signaled meanings in Shakespeare's plays. This is a complex issue, potentially of high importance; it should not be approached either in passing or in anything but the fullest possible detail. I have very deliberately confined my discussion to establishing, first, the existence of rhyme-signaled meanings in Shakespeare's plays and, second, their range and nature. Neither have I dealt with the equally important (and associated) question of the existence and nature of such rhyme-signaled meanings in the plays of Shakespeare's contemporaries. This too is a large question, though perhaps not one quite so difficult, that also must necessarily be discussed elsewhere than in these pages.

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Oral Tradition, 11/2 (1996): 222-248

Orality and Literacy in the *Commedia dell'Arte* and the Shakespearean Clown

Robert Henke

Although rarely considered in such terms, Renaissance theater provides particularly salient examples of interactions between oral and literate modalities. Renaissance playwrights, dramatic theorists, and antitheatricalists themselves viewed theater through the prism of orality and literacy, if using different terms. The relationship between orality and literacy was highly charged, variously characterized by conflict, competition, accommodation, or, very often, interaction. Improvisation in the Italian *commedia dell'arte* and in the Shakespearean clown offers an especially interesting and controversial locus of oral-literate interaction, and will be our chief object of scrutiny. I am less interested in compiling a detailed list of oral characteristics in these two areas—so long as the presence of residual orality can be demonstrated—than I am in exploring the cultural valences of orality and literacy. The relationship between orality and literacy offers the most generative point of comparison between the two professional theaters, about which surprisingly few comparative studies have been made.[1] If comparative study of Renaissance drama has largely abandoned traditional and positivistic source and influence mapping, the negotiation of orality and literacy in theaters of independent yet parallel development provides an important cultural homology: the most fruitful kind of topic for comparative inquiry.

A rich combination of oral and literate modalities may be seen in both the *medium* of theater and in the *period* of the Renaissance. There appears to be a historical if not inherent paradox in regard to orality in Western theater. Delivered and apprehended without texts, at least in the performance event, theater might seem to be the most oral of "literary" media. But the ancient Greeks, who awarded the prestigious prizes at the

[1] Most comparative studies have investigated the English use of the *commedia* character types. See the bibliographic entries in Heck (1987:148-59), and cf. Grewar 1993 for a recent comparative examination.

City Dionysia to playwrights and not to actors, highly esteemed the dramatic script. For Walter J. Ong, theater was the first medium to be principally governed by writing because of the prominence of the script and because of the influential Aristotelian codification of a logical, linear plot shaped by the spatial consciousness of writing (1982:148). Compared with the auditor of extended narratives delivered over many sittings, the theatergoer may more easily apprehend the trajectory of dramatic plot in the two or three hours' traffic of the stage.[2]

On the other hand, the commonplace that dramatic texts can only be fully understood in performance points to the insufficiency of the scripted word alone in theater, and to the dramatic script's dependence not only on visual manifestations but also on dynamics similar to those of oral performance. Now compared with oral utterances, written texts tend to be more explicit and self-contained about their meaning, even if one takes into account various poststructuralist complexities attending writing (Olson 1977:258). And compared with written texts, oral utterances depend more on prior knowledge, performative contexts, and the simultaneous transmission of paralinguistic, bodily, and gestural signals (Tannen 1982:9). Dramatic speech, it will readily be seen, is concrete, relatively explicit about its meaning, and context-free, as writing tends to be, but is uttered in an oral context that fully exploits paralinguistic and non-verbal meaning. Dramatic speakers are usually subject to the give-and-take of oral performance, both in relation to those sharing the stage and to those in the audience. Language in drama often constitutes an action, a dynamic speech performance.[3] And because of the compressed, rapid nature of dramatic dialogue, drama often privileges not narrative or epic forms, but short conversational speech genres such as proverbs, exemplary tales, riddles, taunts, curses, and prophecies—genres that may be easily integrated into writing, but that tend to be shaped by orality.[4]

As a period, the Renaissance was liminal in regard to orality and literacy. If the alphabetic revolution and the spread of literacy did not immediately eradicate orality in classical Greece, neither did the printing

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[2] Eric Havelock (1982) has stressed the persistence of orality in classical Athens and argued that Greek drama was produced in an age of continuous tension between oral and written modes.

[3] Among others, Keir Elam (1980:156-70) has applied the speech-act theories of Austin and Searle to the ways in which speech in drama functions as action.

[4] For a study of oral conditions in the performance of "conversational" genres, see Abrahams 1976.

revolution nor the humanist literary program altogether efface orality in the Renaissance. The classical and medieval practice of reading aloud persisted into the Renaissance, so that works like Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and Rabelais' *Gargantua* continually refer to a fictional but specific and collective audience similar to those of oral performances (Nelson 1976). Despite its textual center, Renaissance humanism actually displayed many oral features. It championed genres that are modeled on speech situations like the adage, the dialogue, and the oration. It advocated the conversational style or *sermo humilis* over the grand style. The cultivation of "copiousness"—variation and amplification in written composition—was meant to equip its practitioners with the kind of rich and abundant verbal flow required in oral performance; in a famous example, Erasmus turns myriad variations on the sentence *tuae litterae me magnopere delectarunt* ("Your letter pleased me very much").[5] Humanists such as Erasmus and Montaigne elevated the pedagogical role of Roman comedy to what now seems an inordinate degree because of the desire to render Latin a spoken language, at least within academic confines. Written composition did not appeal to anything like romantic inspiration, but employed techniques analogous to those of oral-formulaic composition: a kind of "rhapsody," or collecting and stitching together of literary commonplaces, culled mostly from Greek and Roman literature, which was conceived as an encyclopedic storehouse of wisdom (Ong 1965:149). Either drawing from written commonplace books or from the verbal storehouse of the mind furnished by humanist education, Renaissance writers often proceeded by piecing together ready-made themes, situations, and expressions—a process highly relevant, I shall argue, to improvisatory performance in popular Renaissance theater.

We should expect to find the theater of the Renaissance, then, characterized by a rich interplay between orality and literacy. Oral modalities are especially prevalent in the popular and professional theaters of Italy and England, which at about the same time achieved their most developed forms in the *commedia dell'arte* and in the theater of Shakespeare.[6] Both theaters drew on audiences of a wide socioeconomic range, including those who could read and those who could not. Even for

[5] Walter J. Ong (1965) has identified humanistic copiousness as an example of residual orality in English Tudor culture. For a text of Erasmus' *De Copia*, first published in 1512, see Thompson 1978; for the example mentioned above, pp. 348-54.

[6] Spanish golden age theater, especially in the plays of Lope de Vega, is heavily indebted to a medieval performance tradition and also contains significant oral residue.

literate theatergoers, the oral element figured importantly on the popular stage, a relatively bare space compared with the visually ornate stage of courtly theater. The predominance of orality in popular Renaissance theater is also suggested by the language people used to talk about theater: actors were often considered "orators," and one went to "hear" rather than to "see" a play. And as I hope to show here, the *commedia dell'arte* and the English clown provide especially important (although far from exhaustive) loci of orality in Renaissance drama.[7]

The *commedia dell'arte* should be intrinsically interesting to students of oral culture, because it was not performed from set scripts but instead used as a basis for improvisational performance a system of established character types and a rough plot outline (the scenario or *canovaccio*) that keyed the actors to set scenes and situations.[8] Furthermore, actors (at least the literate ones, who made up the majority[9]) typically prepared for performance by studying both canonized and popular works of literature as well as manuscript and printed *generici*, or collections of speeches appropriate for certain characters. Some *generici* organized a character's speeches according to rhetorical action, locutionary situation, and emotional

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[7] For other studies of orality and literacy in Renaissance drama, see Trousdale 1981 and Potter 1990. Documentary and literary references suggest that English contemporaries sometimes associated their clown figure and the *commedia dell'arte*. Will Kemp, the first known clown of Shakespeare's company, made two trips to Europe where he probably came into contact with *commedia* players, in 1586 with Leicester's Men and around 1600 in Germany and Italy (Wright 1926). A 1590 pamphlet links Kemp with the Italian professionals, as well as John Day's 1607 play, *The Travailes of Three English Brothers*. Ben Jonson's *Volpone* includes several references to the *commedia* as part of its Venetian detail. And the part of the grotesque dwarf Nano, who in the mountebank scene poses as a *zanni* and sings a song to warm up Scoto's audience, would have been played by Robert Armin, a short man who offset his artificial wit with a grotesque body that evoked the natural fool. In *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio explicitly connects the two figures with his reprimand of Feste's supporters as no better than the "fool's zanies" (I.v.88)—a remark which imagines the *zanni* as the clown's assistant.

[8] This study was completed before I was able to consult Fitzpatrick 1995. The interested reader is encouraged to review this excellent analysis of extant scenarios for written notations of oral performance processes. Whereas Fitzpatrick argues that *commedia dell'arte* performance entailed almost purely oral processes comparable to those underlying Homeric or South Slavic epic poetry, I argue for a roughly equal balance between orality and literacy in the Italian professional theater.

[9] Working from surviving scripted dialogue that probably reflects actual *commedia* practice, Richard Andrews (1993:175-85) has hypothesized a structure of dialogue—the "elastic gag"—that would have been congenial to illiterate actors.

comportment, categorizing various speech genres such as "council," "persuasion," "curse," "farewell," "hope," "prayer," "reproof," "tirade," "salutation," "desperation," and "jest." For each of these speech genres, it is not hard to imagine codified gestures, motions, and paralinguistic indications, such as were anatomized by the occasional playwright Giovanni Bonifacio in his 1616 *L'Arte dei cenni* (*The Art of Signs*). A character in one of Domenico Bruni's 1621 prologues who is the servant of her fellow actors shows how *commedia* actors used literary works, *generici*, and commonplace books, as she complains of being an overworked librarian:

> This morning the Prima Donna calls me "Riccolina, bring me Boccaccio's *Fiammetta*; I want to study it." Pantalone asks me for Calmo's letters, the Capitano for *Le bravure di Capitano Spavento*, the Zanni for *Bertoldo's Jests*, the *Book of Pastimes* and *The Hours of Recreation*, Graziano for the *Sayings of the Philosophers* and for the latest Anthology; Franceschina wants the Celestina to help her play the Bawd, and the Lover calls for Plato's Works.[10]

The heterogeneity of the *comici*'s library—the dialogue collection of the ridiculous Capitano stacked on top of Plato—bespeaks a certain indifference to cultural hierarchy (if one eventually belied by the actors' cultural ambitions), the *commedia*'s willingness to pilfer from "high" and "low" culture alike.

If romantics like Goethe and Maurice Sand projected the myth of improvisation *ex nihilo* onto the *commedia*, positivistic critics reacted against this misinterpretation, claiming that the professional comedy improvised practically nothing.[11] Whereas this may have been true for the mediocre actors, there are many contemporary testimonies to the *commedia*'s capacity for extemporization, and so we must consider the bookish preparation indicated in the Bruni quote in the light of humanist "rhapsodic" composition, as discussed above.[12] As for the humanist-trained writer, the *generici* and commonplace books equipped the actor with a

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[10] I quote from Marotti and Romei 1991:388-89. Translations from the Italian are my own unless otherwise noted.

[11] For an example of the latter, see Bartoli (1880:lxxii, n.1). See also Tessari's discussion of these two critical poles (1969:223-24).

[12] For example, in 1582 George Whetstone described from his continental travels a group of commedia actors from Ravenna "not tide to a written device, as our English Players are, but having a certayne groundes or principles of their owne, will, Extempore, make a pleasant show of other men's fantasies" (Lea 1934:II, 346).

repertory that would ensure ready and abundant verbal production. *Commedia* improvisation actually fell somewhere between the positivists' theory of rote memorization and the romantics' notion of creation *ex nihilo*, varying according to the skill of the actors. It was rather a kind of *composition*, a stitching together of moveable parts or formulae culled from classical literary works, commonplace books, and everyday speech (Tessari 1969:224). The actor composed by responding to the demands of the scenario, the speech genre, and the particular character, organized according to the decorum of a given diction and lexicon.

The most detailed commonplace book, which gives the most precise notion of how *commedia* composition might have actually worked, is the 1699 treatise *Dell'arte premeditata ed all'improvviso* (*On Scripted and Improvised Art*), written by Andrea Perrucci, an amateur actor and poet who published works both in Italian and in his native Neapolitan. Given the persistence of oral and improvisatory techniques handed down from actor to actor, the excerpts provided by Perrucci as typical *commedia* speeches, which stylistically and substantially resemble earlier, less detailed extant speeches, probably approach the actual practice of the Italian professional theater during its "golden age" of 1570-1620.[13] The second half of Perrucci's work, devoted to improvisatory performance, provides many examples of speech genres organized according to particular characters, and also offers formulaic principles shared by all of the *maschere*. For example, the continued metaphor builds by repetition and elaboration on certain key words or concepts, as in the "First Exit of a Disdained Lover": "E sopra qual base fondai l'edificio delle mie speranze? In qual erario depositai il tesoro della mia fede? Sopra qual nave caricai la merce de'miei affetti?" ("And on what base did I found the edifice of my hopes? In what bank did I deposit the treasure of my faith? On what boat did I load the mercy of my affections?" [Perrucci 1961:168]).

Almost all *commedia* speech is characterized by stock epithets commonly relied upon in oral composition: the Dottore (foolish pedant) speaks of *matrone putte . . . serve ruffiane . . . giovani scapestrati* ("whorish matrons . . . pandering servants . . . dissolute youth" [199]). Paronomasia is practiced by all of the characters, from the more elegant word play of the lovers ("Nume solo di nome, per cui più non spero, ma spiro"; "Oh power [of love] only in name, for which I no longer hope, but breathe" [194]) to

[13] Ludovico Zorzi (1990:210) similarly defends the use of an even later *commedia* collection, the 1734 *Selva overo Zibaldone di concetti comici* of Placido Adriani, arguing that such documents are relevant to preceding periods because of the oral, actor-to-actor nature of *commedia* transmission (*idem*).

the puns typical of popular discourse, to the sound-equivocation practiced especially by the Dottore, which Perrucci cautions must be used with discretion, lest it destroy the literary integrity of the play (209):

> Wanting to say that someone is good, he will say "bù, bù," so that one does not know whether he wants to finish by saying "ox," "Bucefalo," or "buffoon" ["bue," "Bucefalo," o "buffone"]. Or he will say, "co," "co," "co," and one will not know whether he wants to finish by saying "content," "consoled," "comfort," or "cuckolded" ["contento," "consolato," "conforto," or "cornuto"] or something else, so that those playing the ridiculous roles can get a laugh with equivocation. But one should not too often practice such malapropisms, because it generates tediousness and repulsion, especially when the plot is unfolding, because it slows down the resolution of the story, and dissipates one's curiosity.

The kind of copious variation and amplification advocated by Erasmus seems to have found a very practical outlet in the *commedia dell'arte*, so that a given speech genre could be expressed in a variety of ways; the Capitano *maschera* (braggart soldier), described by Perrucci as "abundant in word and gesture" (210), was skilled in such copious dilation as "Quegli occhi, che vibrano saette hanno pertugiato, succhiato, bucato, perforato il cuore" ("Those eyes, that brandish arrows, have bored through, sucked out, pierced, perforated my heart" [212]). Copia allowed the *commedia* actor to compose speeches of great verbal virtuosity while maintaining the illusion of immediate oral delivery.

Although Shakespeare's actors worked from scripts and may have felt pressured to have had "letter-perfect" memories because of their insecure social status, improvisational and oral modalities seep into the scripted English theater, especially through the clown.[14] The three most famous English actor-clowns were Richard Tarlton (?-1588), a founding member of the Queen's Men in 1583; Will Kemp (?-1608), a member of Leicester's Men in the 1580s and of Shakespeare's the Lord Chamberlain's Men from 1594-99; and Robert Armin (1570-1615), who took over for Kemp in Shakespeare's company and appears to have acted with them until at least 1610. The improvising of these clowns must have been widespread, judging by the frequent reprimands it provoked, the most famous of which is delivered by Hamlet in his speech to the players (*Hamlet* III.ii.1-45).

Ample evidence suggests that these reprimands were based on fact. Francis Meres' praise of Tarlton's "extemporall wit" in the 1598 *Palladis*

[14] Potter (1990) has discussed the connection between English Renaissance actors' memories and their changing social status.

Tamia, *Wit's Treasury* refers to the clown's practice, at the end of plays during which he had performed scripted roles, of extemporaneously composing rhymes in response to provocative themes issued to him by often hostile audience members. *Tarlton's Jests*, a collection of anecdotes published in 1600 and designed to preserve the memory of the famous clown after his death, records an instance when Tarlton improvised a rhyme in the middle of a play after being pelted with an apple by a boisterous audience member (Halliwell 1844:13-14). The jest-book also records an extemporaneous rhyming exchange between Tarlton and Robert Armin as a young boy (conveyed, interestingly, through writing), which suggests Armin's assuming the mantle of the older clown (22-23). In fact, Armin's *Quips Upon Questions*, published in 1600, depicts Armin improvising after the manner of Tarlton. A riddling question is read to the clown, or perhaps offered up from the audience, which provokes a series of "changes"—possibly exchanges between Armin and the audience but more probably between different voices of Armin himself. Finally, the clown delivers the concluding "quip," or "moralizing metamorphosis," often a hostile riposte directed back at the riddler or at the subject of the question.

The clowns' "extemporall wit" was not limited to rhyming, although rhyme was their chief practice, and we know less about how non-rhyming improvisation actually worked with the English clown than we know about *commedia* prose improvisation. Nonetheless, Thomas Nashe's *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (probably first performed in 1592) depicts a fictional Will Summers, Henry VIII's famous jester, improvising at the expense of the other script-bound actors. And John Day's 1607 *The Travailes of Three English Brothers* portrays Will Kemp, who probably traveled to Italy, discussing the improvisatory performance of a *commedia dell'arte* play with an Italian Harlequin. Kemp claims that he is not good at memorizing scripted plays but says that "if they will invent any extemporall merriment ile put out the small sacke of witte I ha' lefte in venture" with the *commedia* players (Bullen 1963:370).

Furthermore, the substantial body of writing published by Robert Armin is saturated with oral residue. David Wiles (1987:137) has opposed the literary Armin to the improvisatory Kemp, stressing the tortured, complicated syntax of the former, but Armin's texts are difficult because he directly applies oral discourse to a written medium without subjecting it to the kind of subordinating, logical structure common to literate communication. A major difficulty of *Quips Upon Questions* results from scarce and indifferent punctuation, which makes it very hard to discriminate among the various "voices." Many other features of orality as enumerated by Ong, Goody, and others may be discerned in Armin's writings:

antagonistic tonality, non-autonomous discourse, a tendency towards additive rather than subordinate construction, redundancy, copiousness, and the mnemonically convenient use of rhythm and balanced syntactical patterns.[15]

The improvisational practices of the *commedia dell'arte* and the English clown, then, preserved a strong trace of orality in Renaissance drama. But it is also true that the humanist movement's attempt to reconcile dramatic practice with the literary principles of neoclassical theory fundamentally shaped popular as well as courtly Renaissance drama. This was true not only in Italy and France, where the neoclassical influence was strongest, but also in England and Spain, where neoclassicism contended with a stronger inheritance of native medieval theater. Chief among these neo-Aristotelian, literate principles was that of the well constructed, logical, and complex plot. Leone De' Sommi, a Jewish theatrical impressario who straddled the professional and amateur arenas of mid-sixteenth-century Mantuan theater, cogently analyzes the linear plot: "The first act of a well-woven comedy should contain the argument and exposition, in the second one should see various disturbances and obstacles, in the third some adjustment should be made, in the fourth ruin and disaster must threaten, while in the fifth one must completely resolve things, bringing to all a joyous and happy ending" (Marotti 1968:32). Such an intricate structure requires the backward scanning made possible by writing. And in arguing that the Roman five-act structure is based on the divisions of the human body into five extremities and the world into five zones, De' Sommi conceives of plot in spatialized, or writerly terms (30-31).

For neoclassical commentators, writing a play was increasingly construed as a virtuosic exercise in wresting unity—a perceptible structure—out of complexity. It was largely attention to decorum—or the generically codified fittedness of diction, subject, character, and action—that produced structural coherence.[16] The neoclassical principle of verisimilitude gave a theoretical underpinning for the *explicit* nature of the dramatic text: the dramatic text was seen to mirror reality, with which there

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[15] My hypothesis that Armin's prose demonstrates features of orality draws on the distinctions between oral and literate discourse elaborated by Ong (1982:31-77) and Goody (1987:263-64). Almost any page of *Foole Upon Foole* will demonstrate these characteristics.

[16] Decorum is a complicated notion, which may be either seen in spatial, writerly terms (it provides a coherent structure of person, speech, action, and genre), or as an organizing principle of orality, constituting the appropriate repertory of a given character as discussed above.

existed a perfect correspondence. Lodovico Castelvetro, an influential sixteenth-century commentator on Aristotle, founds the principle of verisimilitude on an anti-Platonic view of realistic artistic representation: "Truth existed by nature before verisimilitude, and the thing represented (*la cosa rappresentata*) before the representation (*la cosa rappresentante*) (Bongiorno 1984:3). The responsibility of the actor, according to the doctrine of verisimilitude, would lie in delivering a faithful reproduction of the dramatic text and in giving due attention to the literary qualities of the script.

In Renaissance drama, literate and neoclassical ideals continually confronted the realities of oral performance, and lines of force moved both ways. The scripted English theater was significantly affected by improvisatory performers like the clown. At the same time, the non-scripted Italian theater was significantly shaped by the amateur *commedia erudita* of Ariosto, Bibbiena, and Machiavelli, a mainly literate phenomenon.[17] By the late sixteenth century, *commedia* actor-writers influenced by the claims of neoclassicism and the persecution of post-Tridentine antitheatricalists began to exercise control over the improvisational excesses of the more buffoonish characters. The scripted English theater, then, accommodated orality and improvisation, and the non-scripted Italian theater was significantly influenced by writing and its attendant forms of consciousness.

In the *commedia dell'arte* and in the English clown, the relationship between orality and literacy could range from conflict to competition to accommodation to, most importantly, a productive interaction. Two texts, one English and one Italian, both issuing from connoisseurs of the theater who are concerned about the excesses of the oral performer, may introduce a discussion of a *conflictual* relationship between orality and literacy, a relationship expressed in very similar terms in the two theaters.

For example, in a well known speech, Shakespeare's Hamlet huddles with the traveling players just before they are about to perform a scripted play ostensively designed to function as a verisimilar mirror of Claudius' fratricide. Whereas the speech, as critics have often argued, does not neatly represent Shakespeare's own views on theatrical practice, it is too compelling to be merely dismissed as the conventional or naive opinions of the scholar-prince. It should rather be seen as a dramatization of internationally disseminated theatrical concepts—concepts of which

[17] One could, however, also examine the relationship between oral and literate modalities in early sixteenth-century humanist theater, which Siro Ferrone has seen as a capacious genre capable of assimilating oral elements of medieval performance (1985:I, 7).

Shakespeare was more aware than is commonly assumed. The speech opposes the principles of scripted, neoclassical drama to the theatrics of the popular, largely oral performer, and is worth quoting at length. Hamlet enjoins the players to

> Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise. I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant. It out-Herods Herod. Pray you avoid it. . . . Be not too tame either, but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so o'erdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. . . . And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them—for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the meantime some necessary question of the play be then to be considered. That's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it.... (*Hamlet* III.ii.1-14, 16-24, 38-45)

The players are not to improvise but to "speak the speech"—and presumably the very lines of a play originally written in "very choice Italian"—exactly as Hamlet pronounced it to them. High standards of rhetoric and diction ("trippingly on the tongue") differentiate the accomplished player's speech from the "mouthing" of the town crier—an improvisatory, oral performer—and guarantee that due attention will be paid to the literary merits of the script. "A kind of temperance" maintains a right relation between speech and gesture, word and action violated by the grotesque gesticulations ("saw the air . . . tear a passion to tatters") often required in oral performance, as gestural and paralinguistic supplements to the verbal text (cf. Tannen 1982). Word, action, and passion must be guided by the neoclassical principle of decorum. If, as I will argue, the presentational theatrics of English clowns like Richard Tarlton and Robert Armin continually violated the mimetic and verisimilar representation of a self-contained illusion, the "mirror up to nature" tag must also be

considered an implicit rebuke to the clown. The unifying concern of the writer ("some necessary question"), guaranteed by the integrity of the script, must never be obscured by the "pitiful ambition" of improvisational clowns like Will Kemp, used to solitary performance as well as repertory acting.[18] The player must strive to please the skilled, "judicious" audience rather than the plebeian "groundlings," who prefer spectacle and sound.

Of course, several ironies suggest that orality and literacy were much more connected for Shakespeare than for Hamlet in this speech. The "antic disposition" donned by Hamlet in the course of the play renders him, in relation to the court, the d isruptive, chaotic clown who swerves from the necessary question of the revenge tragedy dictated him by his father.[19] He declares himself to Ophelia the "only jig-maker," frequently interrupts the play within the play as he has enjoined the clown not to do, and is reprimanded by sober characters like Rosencrantz to observe the spatial dictates of literate consciousness—to "put [his] discourse into some frame and start not so wildly from [my] affair" (III.ii.300-1). And in the so-called "bad quarto" Hamlet ends the speech to the players by citing a long series of clown jests, ironically perpetuating the very thing he critiques:

> And then you have some again that keeps one suit of jests, as a man is known by one suit of apparel, and gentlemen quotes his jests down in their tables before they come to the play, as thus: "Cannot you stay till I eat my porridge?" and "You owe me a quarter's wages," and "My coat wants a cullison" and "Your beer is sour," and blabbering with his lips, and thus keeping in his cinquepace of jests when, God knows, the warm clown cannot make a jest unless by chance, as the blind man catcheth a hare.[20]

Within the fiction of the play, Hamlet here out-clowns the clown by rapidly and rather impressively recalling stock expressions from a rich verbal repertory. His skill is matched only by the delight he takes in reeling off four clownish formulae, surely more than is necessary to make the point. By negatives, he suggests that the accomplished clown worked with copious and flexible storehouses, or "suits" of jests, duly memorialized in writing by

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[18] Many Shakespearean critics have in fact read the speech as a rebuke to Kemp, who left Shakespeare's company in 1599 and was in Germany or Italy when *Hamlet* was first performed in 1600 or 1601.

[19] Robert Weimann (1978) provides an excellent discussion of *Hamlet* in the tradition of popular clowning.

[20] For the speech, see Jenkins' edition of *Hamlet* (1982:499).

gentlemen admirers of the clown. One might conclude that the *conflictual* relationship between orality and literacy professed by Hamlet the neoclassicist is revealed by Hamlet the actor as a relationship of *contamination*.[21]

Despite his illumination of improvisational techniques, Perrucci often bifurcates orality and literacy in terms very similar to those of Hamlet. Early in the second half of his treatise, he fulminates against the debased oral techniques of the street performer (1961:20):

> The most vulgar ruffians and mountebanks get it into their heads that they can draw crowds and entertain them with words, and like so many bumptious Hercules in golden chains they try to perform improvised plays in public squares, mangling the *soggetti*, speaking off the point, gesturing like lunatics and, what's worse, indulging in a thousand scurrilities and obscenities, in order to extract a sordid income from the purses of the spectators.

Perrucci's objects of attack resemble those of Hamlet: the popular performer who appeals to the lowest instincts of his plebeian audience, improvisation that is "off the point," wild and undisciplined gesticulation, and the departure from the main narrative or thematic line of the play. Perrucci's solution is to create a hierarchical relationship between literary and oral modalities, a relationship reflected in the very structure of his treatise, the first half of which is devoted to script-based acting and the second to improvisation. For Perrucci, because improvisatory acting is much more difficult than acting from scripts, it must be "regulated" by literary, rhetorical principles. If the single, unifying writer of the literary text is replaced with a plurality of improvisatory actors, they cannot say "whatever pops into their mind," but must function like authors. They must further be instructed by the leader, or *corago*, who like Hamlet gathers with the actors before the play to review the scenario and insure that no individual performer gets carried away with virtuosic *lazzi* (verbal or physical gags). As the very binary structure of the treatise suggests, the improvisatory actor models his verbal compositions on scripted theater: he must know "the rule of language, rhetorical figures, tropes, and all of the rhetorical art, having to do *all'improvviso* that which the poet does by

[21] In an article that considers the possibility that Shakespeare's actors may have used *commedia*-like improvisatory techniques, Andrew Grewar (1993) links Richard Burbage (the actor who played Hamlet) with the *commedia dell'arte* via a production in the early 1590s of *The Dead Man's Fortun*e, which employed *commedia* characters and possible *commedia* techniques.

premediation" (159). Each actor, especially those playing the dignified parts of the *innamorati*, should study good authors and build up a literary storehouse for improvisation. Good diction, especially when practiced by the Tuscan-speaking lovers, ensures that the literary qualities of the play will be sufficiently appreciated.

Orality, then, was controversial, besieged both by apologists for a literary-based theater and by antitheatricalists. Most obviously, oral improvisation was considered dangerous in both Italy and England because of its imperviousness to censorship. A 1574 Act of the Common Council of London forbade the production of "anie playe, enterlude, Commodye, Tragidie, matter, or shewe, which shall not be firste perused and Allowed in suche order and fourme and by suche persons as by the Lorde Maior and Courte of Aldermen for the tyme beinge shalbe appoynted" (Chambers 1923:IV, 274). In the 1590s, the perusal of dramatic scripts prior to performance became the office of the Master of the Revels.[22] Italian authorities voiced the same concern about the license of improvisatory actors. G. D. Ottonelli, a seventeenth-century Jesuit who was a moderate critic of the professional theater, tolerated scripted over improvised theater because the latter could not be scrutinized in advance for scurrilousness and impropriety. Ottonelli laments the fact that when charged with an obscene remark, the improvisatory performer could always say, *Mi è scappata* ("It just escaped from me" [Taviani 1969:521]).

Neoclassical commentators opposed the ways that the buffoonish *zanni* and the clown violated the spatial and writerly principle of decorum. Sir Philip Sidney complains that the clown is "thrust in by head and shoulder, to play a part in majestical matters, with neither decency nor discretion" (Mann 1991:54). Inheriting the tradition of the "natural" fool (as opposed to the self-conscious "artificial" fool), Robert Armin brandished his grotesque physical presence, said to be sufficient cause for laughter. In twentieth-century theater terms, the "presentational" theatrical pleasures served up by the clown conflicted with the "representational" bias of neoclassical theorists. In his 1600 *Foole upon Foole*, an anecdotal account of six natural fools, Armin begins by emphasizing their ludicrous bodies, one indecorously described both from the head down and from the rump up. In the case of the *commedia dell'arte*, decorum supplied for Perrucci the principle for hierarchically structuring the acting company. He accords the buffoonish parts a certain amount of nonsensical sound-play and

[22] Of course, his control of improvisation in performance probably was not absolute unless he had a perfect memory, as Lois Potter has argued (1990:87).

presentational theatrics but continually expresses concern lest they breech decorum.

In particular, the English clown and the Italian buffoon's violation of mimesis came under attack.[23] Richard Tarlton and Robert Armin were famous for moving in and out of fictional roles. Tarlton donned the persona of the rustic clown and broke the dramatic illusion in order to answer audience hecklers; the short and ill-shapen Armin staged the persona of the natural fool and used his truncheon, or slap-stick, as a speaker in his multivoiced impersonations. For Robert Weimann, Tarlton's juggling of roles in *The Famous Victories of Henry V* amounts to a significant destablization of the mimesis principle (Weimann 1978:187-91). Nicolò Barbieri, an actor-writer who wrote a neoclassical defense of the stage in 1634, considered the same problem in negative terms. According to Barbieri, whereas the polished actor is capable of moving in and out of many self-enclosed fictional worlds, a buffoon is someone who is not capable of the refined art of mimetic representation: "the buffoon is always the same both in name and appearance and in action, and not just for two hours of the day, but for his entire life, and not only in the theater, but in his home and in the piazza" (Taviani 1971:24). Barbieri goes on to reprove the buffoon for equivocatory speech that obscures its own referential objects: "metaphorical propositions, stinging equivocations, and scolding jokes" (25). The buffoon's speech is not explicit, as writing ideally is, but depends for its meaning on the paralinguistic, gestural, and kinetic signs common to oral performance. The clown destroys the simple relationship postulated by neoclassical theorists like Castelvetro between signifier and signified, *la cosa rappresentante* and *la cosa rappresentata*, and thus threatens the doctrine of verisimilitude. The rich repertory of speech genres deployed by Robert Armin as the Fool in *King Lear*—including riddles, proverbs, exemplary tales, prophecies, taunts, and jokes—constitute an equivocatory and destabilizing discourse worthy of Barbieri's reproof, if paradoxically more trustworthy than the most obvious incarnation of literacy in the play: the overdetermined, misinterpreted, or deceitful letters frenetically passed from hand to hand.

The prologue to Thomas Nashe's *Summer's Last Will and Testament* suggests a *competitive* relationship between orality and literacy.[24] As the

[23] Indeed, in England the term "zanie" came to indicate a degraded form of mimesis, a mere "aping." In verses prefixed to Thomas Coryate's *Coryat's Crudities*, Michael Drayton speaks of "apes and zanies."

[24] See also Potter's discussion of this play (1990:87-88).

playscript records it, the clown playing the role of Will Summers is apparently checked in his initial improvisations by the prompter, who calls "Begin, begin." Although of course we have no way of knowing how faithfully Nashe's playscript records the actual performance event, the clown dramatizes the relationship between scripted and improvised performance, declaring that he will "set a good face on it, as though what I had talked idly all this while were my part." In other words, the clown's improvisation is so skillful that he can make it pass as scripted.[25] Then Summers issues a challenge to the script-bound actors (Fraser and Rabkin 1976:441):

> I'll sit as a Chorus, and flout the actors and him at the end of every scene. I know they will not interrupt me, for fear of marring of all; but look to your cues, my masters, for I intend to play the knave in cue, and put you besides all your parts, if you take not the better heed. Actors, you rogues, come away; clear your throats, blow your noses, and wipe your mouths ere you enter, that you may take no occasion to spit or cough when you are *non plus*. And this I bar, over and besides, that none of you stroke your beards to make action, play with your codpiece points, or stand fumbling on your buttons, when you know not how to bestow your fingers.

Summers interjects into the scripted performance the antagonistic tonality common to much oral discourse, a tonality that can be readily perceived in the rhyming exchanges that Tarlton and Armin carried on with their audiences. By signaling the haplessness of script-bound actors, whose linguistic-gestural repertoire is limited to grotesque noises and obscene fumblings, Summers implicitly indicates that the improvisational practice of the clown operated something like that of the *commedia* actors: deployment of a rich and varied verbal and gestural storehouse.

Such power as Summers boasts was unusual for the English clown; more typical is the reprimand of the clown by Shakespeare's Hamlet or by Marlowe in the prologue to *Tamburlaine*, in which he announces his intention to replace the clownish foolery popular on the English stage with drama of higher decorum (Fraser and Rabkin 1976:208): "From jigging veins of rhyming mother wits / And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay. / We'll lead you to the stately tent of war." As David Wiles has argued, there was a "tension between a neoclassical aesthetic which could not accommodate the clown and a performing tradition in which the clown was

[25] That these terms were often inverted suggests a complementary relationship between improvisational and premeditated theater; Leone De' Sommi argues that amateur actors working from scripts should appear to be improvising (Marotti 1968:42).

central" (Wiles 1987:43). This relationship was only imperfectly resolved in the plays of the "university wit" Marlowe himself, for in a prefatory note the printer of the 1590 octavo edition of *Tamburlaine* laments the contamination of the original text by clownish improvisations.[26] But according to Wiles, in the 1590s the tension between the script and the clown was finally resolved in the form of the jig performed at the end of the play. The jig provided a formal legitimization of the post-play rhyming exchanges practiced in the 1580s by Tarlton—exchanges that could easily break out in the middle of dramatic performance, as we have seen. As developed by Will Kemp, the jig featured the clown and combined improvisation, rhyming, and dancing, constituting an entire dramatic action of its own. By placing the jig after the end of the play and affording the clown a completely autonomous entertainment, the Elizabethan stage achieved a successful *accommodation* of the increasingly rationalized script and potentially wayward orality. The conflictual relationship between orality and literacy was resolved by institutionalizing a popular genre.

As I have already suggested, however, despite the controversial and ideological weight borne by orality and improvisation, the relationship between orality and literacy in Renaissance drama may most frequently be characterized as mutual *interaction*, or *negotiation*. And this is true even where one might expect a "pure" version of orality, as in the Venetian piazza performers frequently proposed by recent theater historians as the preliterary precursors of the *commedia dell'arte*. In particular, the charlatan or mountebank is seen to anticipate the *commedia* actor, because he and his assistants would often warm up his unstable and ambulatory audience to his snake oil harangues with theatrical routines employing *commedia*-like masks and tropes—an overtly commercial use of theater that anticipated the professional *commedia*.[27] Contemporary eyewitness accounts do suggest that the mountebank's long tirades were quintessential oral performances. In his 1611 work *Coryate's Crudities*, the English traveler Thomas Coryate describes the oral practice of Venetian mountebanks that he had observed during a 1608 trip (Coryate 1905:I, 411):

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[26] Harper's edition of the two parts of *Tamburlaine* contains the printer's note (1971:3).

[27] In a 1610 set of etchings commemorating various Venetian public rituals made by the artist Giacomo Franco, there is a depiction of a charlatan and his assistant performing in the Piazza San Marco with two *commedia dell'arte* characters and a man disguised as a courtesan playing a lute. See Tessari 1981:31-47 for a discussion of charlatans and the *commedia dell'arte*.

> Truely I often wondred at many of these naturall Orators. For they would tell their tales with such admirable volubility and plausible grace, even *extempore*, and seasoned with that singular variety of elegant jests and witty conceits, that they did often strike great admiration into strangers that never heard them before: and by how much the more eloquent these Naturalists are, by so much the greater audience they draw unto them, and the more ware they sell.

As an oral performer, the mercenary mountebank is enabled by the kind of verbal storehouse ("elegant jests and witty conceits") that we have seen as a mark of later *commedia* improvisers, one that empowers him to be a virtuoso of copiousness. A sixteenth-century charlatan song exhibits some salient characteristics of oral performance (Pandolfi 1957-61:I, 123-30). A rhymed *frottola* form often privileges sound over sense, as in "chi vuol di me l'esperienza fare / vedra senz' altri *impiastri pesti* o *pisti*" (emphases mine). Continual and insistent audience address ("pregovi ch'ascoltate, stare attenti" ["I beg you to listen, be attentive"]) and invitations to try his services ("ognun la sperimenti, ognun la provi" ["Every one of you, test it, try it"]) maintain close performer-audience contact, if also suggesting that the charlatan only tenuously held his auditors, and doubtlessly needed to enlist the *energeia* of oral performance to keep them involved.

But the mountebank actually negotiated oral and written cultures in interesting ways. In order to sell his product, he needed to establish his authority, and it was a humanist rhetoric that he enlisted for self-legitimization. And so he curiously melded mercenary and classical discourses. In the Venetian song, the charlatan appeals to the second book of Galen as the *locus classicus* for his miraculous recipe, one that will cure a fever and that he offers for a mere pittance. The writings of Avicenna and Macronius legitimate other nostrums. And the charlatan's products themselves materially derive from classical sources. Ben Jonson's mountebank Scoto of Mantua, probably based on an actual figure and on eyewitness accounts of Italian entertainers personally relayed to him by Fynes Moryson and John Florio, ascribes an elaborate east-to-west classical lineage to his powder, a kind of comic version of the *translatio imperii*. It was given by Apollo to Venus in order to render her a goddess, was passed to Helen, and was unfortunately lost at the sack of Troy. But according to Scoto, "now, in this our age, it was as happily recovered, by a studious antiquary, out of some ruins of Asia, who sent a moiety of it, to the court of France (but much sophisticated) wherewith the ladies there now color their hair" (*Volpone* II.iii.240-44; see Brockbank 1968). The rest has been fortunately kept by Scoto himself. Like the classical manuscripts unearthed

by Renaissance humanists, the powder has been rediscovered and now can be disseminated throughout Europe, in popular and courtly venues alike.

As a semi-legitimate humanist who indiscriminately stitches together pieces of learning, the mountebank is succeeded by the Bolognese Doctor figure of the mature *commedia*. Dressed in academic gown, the Doctor shores fragments of classical erudition against his ruin, loosely stitched together in an additive manner typical of oral discourse (Oreglia 1968:87-89):

> By stumbling I might have broken my head, by breaking my head the physician would have come and prescribed me some medicine; medicine is made out of drugs, drugs come from the Orient and from the Orient comes the philosophy of Aristotle; Aristotle was the tutor of Alexander the Great, who was the master of the world; the world is supported by Atlas and Atlas has great strength. . . .[28]

This is rhapsodic composition in its crudest form. The Doctor perhaps provides the most striking combination of literate and oral modalities, in that he adds to his virtuosic pseudo-learning a penchant for almost purely oral sound play, entertainment deemed "low" enough by Perrucci to merit censure. As Pietro Spezzani has shown in his detailed linguistic study of *commedia* language, the Doctor, the Captain, and the Lovers employ the detritus of courtly language. The fragmentary and debased learning of the Doctor, the mythological onomastics of the Captain, and the Petrarchan conceits of the lovers all provide the combinatory formulae of a secondary orality, one dependent for its material on literary discourse but largely following the compositional techniques of oral performance. Comparable to the secondary orality of the Doctor is that of Mark Twain's charlatan Duke Bilgewater, who "pieces together" an oral version of Hamlet's soliloquy from several different Shakespearean tragedies. If Bilgewater's rhapsody offends Shakespeareans, it certainly impresses Huck, who declares that it "knocked the spots off any acting ever I see before" (Twain 1996:179).

The popular entertainers of the Italian cities, as well as the English clown, were seen both by themselves and their nostalgic public as embodying oral traditions transmitted from generation to generation via both orality and writing. *Tarlton's Jests*, as we have seen, represents the young Robert Armin inheriting the "clown's suit" of the older, legendary

[28] The speech, it may be objected, is not without subordination, but its simple syntax does not relate the major clauses together. The translation is that of Lovett F. Edwards.

performer. And as Thomas Nashe saw it, Kemp was "jest-monger and Vice-gerent to the ghost of Dick Tarlton."[29] Whether or not Hamlet's Yorick explicitly represents Richard Tarlton, the "infinite jests," "gibes," "gambols," "songs," and "flashes of merriment" (*Hamlet* V.i.183-84; see Jenkins 1982) powerfully invoked in their ghostly absence suggest a repertorial performative tradition potentially available to new generations of clowns, if tragically unavailable in the dark world of *Hamlet*. In the early part of the sixteenth century, a group of famous professional buffoons that included Domenico Taiacalze and Zuan Polo were at the center of Venetian theater, especially in banquet entertainments and in the *intermezzi* performed in the middle of regular plays. By mid-century the friends, sons, and rivals of the earlier entertainers (such as Zan Cimador, Marcantonio Veneziano, and Giovanni Tabarin) had formed a new generation of buffoons, self-consciously and nostalgically perpetuating a tradition.[30] One of their favorite genres was the oral and associative form of the genealogy. And we should not be surprised to find, in pieces like the "Genologia Di Zan Capella," a thoroughly classical genealogy, with the eponymous buffoon ultimately descending from the "illustrious blood of Troy."[31]

As a final example of oral-literate negotiation, let us consider the memorialization of the oral performer in print, a cultural phenomenon strikingly homologous in Italy and England. If the Italian mountebank and buffoon longingly pointed back to the medieval *guillari* (and perpetuated some of their techniques), the English clown nostalgically evoked late medieval performers who were becoming almost completely extinct: the professional minstrel, the Lord of Misrule, and the Vice of medieval drama.[32] The nostalgic appeal of these ephemeral performers to Renaissance audiences gave rise to the same form in both Italy and England: the "facetie" or "jest-book"—a collection of the witty sayings and deeds of the buffoon or clown. In addition to the anonymous jest-book that memorializes Tarlton, Kemp provides his own memorial reconstruction of his virtuosic oral and athletic morris dance from London to Norwich. His *Nine Daies Wonder* records rhymes improvised by Kemp's associates in the course of the journey (usually to record colorful folk figures encountered

[29] The quotation, from Nashe's 1590 *Almond for a Parrat*, is cited by Wiles (1987:11).

[30] See Povoledo 1975 for a discussion of these Venetian performers.

[31] Also collected in Pandolfi 1957-61:I, 253-57.

[32] See Wiles 1987:17-23.

by Kemp in his dance) and witty retorts of Kemp himself. Kemp writes the pamphlet, he declares in the prologue, to correct false oral memorials of his feat produced by "lying Ballad-mongers." Robert Armin's literate rendering, in *Quips Upon Questions*, of the multivoiced rhyming improvisation that legend had him inheriting from Richard Tarlton delicately negotiates orality and writing in its frequent audience addresses, its indifferent punctuation, and its oral cadences. While touring England between 1595-97 with the Lord Chandos company, Armin studied village idiots and "natural" fools retained in noble households, and then summarized some of his findings in *Foole Upon Foole*. Of course, Armin's purpose in publishing literary accounts of natural, illiterate fools was not folkloric and archival but intended to help negotiate an upward social transition from goldsmith's apprentice to a gentleman of letters. As such, Armin's publishing is comparable in aim and function to that of famous *commedia* actors like Francesco Andreini, founding member of the prestigious Gelosi troupe, who memorialized his improvisations as Capitano Spavento in the 1607 commonplace book *Le bravure del Capitano Spavento*. And yet the oral-literate negotiation does not move simply and in one direction from the improvisational stage to the premeditated page, because the 1621 Bruni passage cited above shows that Andreini's commonplace book was frequently used by subsequent actors as a basis for improvisational composition, the kind of formulaic and residually oral rhapsody practiced by the *commedia* and the clown. Orality and literacy are negotiated in the never-ending oscillation of verbal formulae between page and stage.

The similarities I have begun to trace between the Italian and English professional theaters do not arise from direct influence, but from the presence of striking cultural and historical homologies in the two theaters. In both Italy and England, the revolution in consciousness wrought by the printing press did not suppress—and perhaps even fostered—a great nostalgia for the oral performer, a nostalgia that also resulted from the decline of agrarian festive traditions. The Italian *zanni* and the English clown are urban representations of rural figures, and descend from oral rather than literate traditions. Their principally oral natures fit uneasily into a drama largely governed, even in England, by literate modalities. The relationship between these oral figures and the literate drama could manifest itself, alternatively, in outright conflict (expressed by Hamlet in his speech to the players), competition (the *agôn* between Will Summers and the

script-based actors in *Summer's Last Will and Testament*), accommodation (the institution of the jig outside of the main plot), or, most often, a precarious but productive negotiation.

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Oral Tradition, 11/2 (1996): 249-269

A Furified Freestyle: Homer and Hip Hop

Erik Pihel

> That's hip-hop, you know what I'm saying, when you could just feel it...you can feel the beat flow through you, man, where you just know every lyric gonna come on time, and half the words gonna rhyme.
>
> —Large Professor on freestyling[1]

Since Albert Lord published *The Singer of Tales* in 1960, the Parry-Lord oral-formulaic theory has been applied to various kinds of poetry from all over the world. Ruth Finnegan has studied *griots* in West Africa (1977), John D. Niles has studied traditional Anglo-Saxon poetry (1983), and John Barnie has studied the formulas of country blues singers in the United States (1978). I want to explore this theory's possible applications to rap music.

Rap music is a young black urban art form where lyrics are rhymed over sounds sampled from previously recorded songs. It was first created in the mid-1970s on the streets of the South Bronx out of what can be called a post-literate culture.[2] This culture—known as "hip hop culture" (the

[1] Quoted in Fernando 1994:287. I would like to thank Jonathan Scott for all his insights on freestyling.

[2] I call hip hop culture "post-literate" rather than "secondary oral" (Ong 1982) or "oraliterate" (Finnegan 1977) to underline how profoundly different this culture is from that of primary oral cultures. Lord (1960) correctly perceived that any culture influenced by literacy can no longer be considered oral in any meaningful sense of the word. The term "post-literate," then, acknowledges the historical progression from orality to literacy to post-literacy rather than a circular development back to orality; it implies that post-literate poetry both incorporates and exceeds literate poetry, and therefore is not inherently inferior to literate poetry, and it distinguishes this third kind of text from both oral and literate

culture that produces rap music, graffiti art, and break-dancing)—exists within a typographic (print) culture and yet produces both oral and literate elements in its art forms.

The hip hop community initially consisted of the original South Bronx MCs, DJs, and dancing audience members, but now has grown worldwide to all urban areas that have established a network of MCs, DJs, producers, underground radio shows, independent record labels, and rap collectives (such as the Native Tongues and the Five Percenters).[3] Some hip hop communities, of course, are more developed than others, and the community in New York—partly because it is where hip hop was first created—is the most developed because it has established the most complex network of cultural production.

This definition of hip hop culture, however, may be misleading since fixed definitions cannot account for a culture constantly in flux. This is not to say that hip hop culture might one day be produced by white upper class executives; the hip hop community is defined in relation to the various groups that are hostile to its existence.[4] But any definition of the culture

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poetries.

Given that oral poetry is composed and performed simultaneously by pre-literate poets, and literate poetry is composed through writing and meant to be read, post-literate poetry, then, is composed through writing, but meant to be performed. Most rap music is pre-written and meant to be performed: a post-literate poetry. Freestyling, because it is composed and performed simultaneously with no pre-written materials, is the closest one can get to the oral poetry of primary oral cultures. But even in freestyling—since hip hop exists in, and is influenced by, the larger literate culture—there exist literate elements such as freestylists' emphasis on the self and the use of rhyme, both of which I will discuss below.

[3][3] Hip hop culture began in the mid 1970s when Disc Jockeys (DJs) such as Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash, Afrika Bambaataa, and other set up their massive sound systems in South Bronx parks, and started playing their record collections to make people dance. A few years later, DJs began inviting Masters of Ceremony (MCs) to say a few words through a microphone in order to help get people moving. At first these words consisted merely of short phrases such as, "Everybody say 'hey,' everybody say 'ho!'" and "Everybody throw your hands in the air / And wave 'em like you just don't care!" By the end of the '70s, however, MCs had become more sophisticated in their phrases and rhyming, and the genre developed a name that incorporated both the MC's role and the DJ's role: "rap music."

[4] These various groups cannot be consolidated into a vague notion of "white culture" since they include black church leaders (Calvin Butts, Al Sharpton), black politicians (Dolores Tucker, Jesse Jackson), and black intellectuals (Cornel West, bell hooks), in addition to the music industry and other industries plagued by racism.

must be understood to be a working definition—always subject to reworkings and readjustments—rather than a static, definable object.

The various groups antagonistic toward the culture need hip hop to be a static, definable object. They attempt to stereotype and label hip hop (as in the conception that black urban youths are all violent criminals whose activities must be carefully monitored) in order to maintain control over this shifting and seemingly incomprehensible culture. In order to undercut the fixity that these various groups attempt to impose, hip hop must be constantly in motion.[5] Wherever hierarchies, establishments, or categories form, it moves in and, like the wind that scatters Sibyl's leaves, shuffles the order. DJs sample[6] bits of various songs and scramble them into a new order, pulling together bedfellows as strange as James Brown, Beethoven, Miles Davis, and the Rolling Stones.

MC and DJ competitions, moreover, constantly challenge the reputations of the popular MCs and DJs to prevent canons from forming. In the rap music industry, what's old and what's new exchange places at whirlwind speeds. Songs recorded a few months ago are already outdated, although they might be sampled by another artist and suddenly become new again. Recorded texts are fixed only for a month or two while they circulate around the community through the trunks of jeeps and the sound systems of clubs. After this short period, they disappear, possibly forever, but more likely to be sampled by a future artist.

While the Homeric poets preserved the traditions of Greece, the only thing preserved in hip hop culture is an assurance that things will keep changing. The culture is constantly recreated and redefined from the

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[5] To freeze rap music into something fixed is to destroy it, because rap is made up of the DJ's creation of rhythms and beats, the MC's lyrical flow, and the dance movements of the audience. Recording, then, poses a problem since it threatens to impose fixity on a culture based on movement. The first hip hop DJs, such as Kool DJ Herc and Grandmaster Flash, proved that records did not have to be fixed recordings. They developed techniques known as "scratching" and "punch phasing." Scratching involves pulling the record backwards so that the same sound plays over and over again. The original recording is altered so that the DJ may use only those portions of a record that he or she needs for that particular mix. Punch phasing involves playing one record and then "phasing" a section of a second record (usually a vocal or a drum hit or a horn) over the first record. The hip hop DJ creates rather than plays music; he or she destabilizes the fixity of records by erasing the boundaries of where one recording ends and another begins.

[6] Sampling involves looping portions of previously recorded records onto a track and then mixing them together to produce a new collage of sound. This music then provides the beat over which the MC will rap.

bottom up rather than preserved through traditional formulas, diction, and meter by a group of bards trained since early childhood. A rap song captures a moment in hip hop culture; it does not encompass the culture. One cannot say what hip hop culture *is*; one can only explain the processes by which it changes. And the site of cultural production where it changes most rapidly is the freestyle competition.

Any discussion that asks whether rap is oral poetry must begin, and perhaps end, with freestyling. Freestyling—rapping spontaneously with no pre-written materials—is how MCs battle each other to see who is the best rapper. Also called "off the head" and "rapping off the top of the dome," freestyling is by definition a live performance. It is composed and performed simultaneously. The pressure of performing live in front of a potentially hostile audience with no prepared lyrics scares away the fronters[7] and the fakers, and demonstrates who the real MCs are.

Once the performance is finished, the freestyle ceases to exist. Even if a rapper attempts to recreate a similar freestyle at another performance, it will never be performed the same way twice. Memorized raps that have been pre-written (which would include any rap with a chorus, a single theme, or a second rapper emphasizing certain words or phrases) are not freestyles. Even a rap that is freestyled in a recording studio cannot be considered a freestyle because the rapper is able to do a limitless number of takes before he or she decides on the final version. A freestyle, then, is a live performance in front of a live audience—whether an audience at a club or listeners to a freestyle competition on live radio.

Freestyling is an outgrowth of various African and African-American oral traditions. These include the praise songs and genealogies of West African *griots*, African-American preachers and poets, and African call-and-response techniques, but the tradition most immediate to the original Bronx MCs is signifying.[8] Signifying is a ritual often involving

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[7] To "front" means to put up a front, to hide your true feelings, to pretend to be someone you're not. This accusation is often leveled against those who pretend to have rapping skills, but actually do not.

[8] The ritual of signifying in black communities of the United States derives from the Signifying Monkey poems, a group of poems that originated during slavery and began to be recorded in the twentieth century by black musicians. The main characters in these poems are a lion, an elephant, and a monkey. The monkey starts trouble by falsely telling the lion that he heard the elephant insulting the lion's family. The lion then goes to hunt down the elephant who, of course, denies these insults. In some versions of the story, the lion mauls the elephant to the immense enjoyment of the monkey. In other versions, the elephant convinces the lion of the truth, sending the lion back to the monkey, who is

two (though sometimes more) participants exchanging insults. These contests to see who can come up with the most clever and biting insults are fiercely competitive, since one's reputation in the community is at stake. Even though signifying often involves two people, there is always a group of spectators either laughing at a clever insult or criticizing a weak and predictable one.

Those who develop exceptional skills in signifying gradually accumulate a storehouse of quick replies for various contexts. These ready-made insults come in handy in tight situations when the insulted party has to think quickly of a reply. As Thomas Kochman has shown, the winner of these contests is often not the one who has the most original insults, but the one who has the largest quantity and can outlast his or her opponent (1969:33). The one who gets the last word in is usually the winner, although if one participant continually comes up with weak insults, the crowd will quickly let him or her know.

Many freestylists are also experts at signifying. Through the trials of signifying, they learn to come up with quick replies. This skill is also essential in freestyling because the performer must be able to produce lines quickly without pausing. Too long a pause in either signifying or freestyling might mean losing the battle. Freestyle competitions have elevated signifying contests to a more complex art form, with more complicated rhythms, more complicated rhymes, and the use of prerecorded music. While an insult in signifying only needs to be clever and insulting, in freestyling the rhymes must be "dope" and the beats must be "funky" in order for the song to be accepted by the hip hop community. The winner of a freestyle competition is determined by the audience. Audiences of competitions become wildly exuberant for def freestyles and mercilessly unforgiving toward wack performances.[9] These evaluations are based on three factors: the MC's flow (the rhythm of the rap), the clarity of his or her words (the audience must be able to understand what the rapper is saying, at least most of the time), and the cleverness of his or her punchlines.

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laughing so hard that he falls out of the tree. The lion jumps on top of the monkey, but, just before the lion mauls him, the monkey asks the lion to let him up so that they can have a fair fight. The lion agrees and the monkey quickly climbs back up the tree, only to cause more trouble through signifying. The main theme of all the poems is how the weakest party becomes the strongest through his expertise in language. For a detailed account of this tradition, see Gates 1988.

[9] In hip hop culture, "def" means innovative and "wack" means banal.

In tracing the possible connections between rap music and the Parry-Lord theory of oral-formulaic composition, we need to look at what techniques rappers use in freestyling. Do they rely on formulas when composing their raps? How is a freestyle rap related to hip hop culture? Does this culture play a large role—that is, to the degree usually associated with oral cultures and oral poetry—in supplying the themes and ideas that emerge in a freestyle?

Los Angeles freestylist T-Love says that "in a lyrical freestyle, the MC can rap about whatever he/she wants, in any style he/she chooses. The only confinements in the rap are: first, it should rhyme; second be comprehensible; and third, be on beat, if done to music" (Cross 1993:306). I will first look at each of these three elements, then examine whether freestylists use formulas in the Parry-Lord sense of the term, and finally consider the ways in which rappers use freestyling as a political tool to return rap to its oral foundations.

Rhyme

While not all freestyles conform to T-Love's categories of coherence and staying on beat, all freestyles (as well as all written raps) rhyme. This is one of the two most significant differences between freestylists and traditional oral poets (the other being that freestylists think of themselves as original creators rather than as vessels for a tradition). Most oral poetry is metered and unrhymed to aid the poet in composing. Homer's meter is functional: it helps him compose and also helps him remember important information through formulas that fit the phrase-units of the line. While the hexameter line certainly may give the poem an even, rhythmic flow, its two main functions are to make composing easier and to act as a mnemonic device.[10] A freestylist's use of rhyme, on the other hand, is aesthetic: it

[10] Homer's composing process, however, is not devoid of aesthetic considerations, and critics are now questioning Parry's overemphasis on the economy of Homeric verse. John Miles Foley writes that the point is not that "*ideas* are economical or uneconomical," but that "the *phraseology* used to express those ideas is thrifty." Moreover, for poetry composed in performance, it is not so much the phrases themselves that are important, but rather the "relationships among phraseologies" (1991:26). This emphasis on the movement from one phraseology to another is analogous to the freestyling technique of "flippin' the script," which I discuss below.

actually makes composing more difficult,[11] but in doing so, it makes the rap more rhythmically varied and complex. The aesthetics of freestyling are centered on overcoming difficulties. A freestylist's rhyme skills show how well he or she can overcome obstacles and transform a structural challenge into verbal art. The freestylist must come up with as unexpected a rhyme as possible because predictable rhymes create dull poetry and a freestyle audience craves the unexpected. The ability of a freestylist to turn an unexpected phrase or create a novel rhyme determines who wins the competition.

Unlike traditional literate poetry (where meter is self-consciously counted out) and traditional oral poetry (where meter is "felt out"), freestyles do not have a consistent meter. Without a consistent meter, a rap's rhymes are less predictable because the listener (as well as the freestylist) is never sure quite where the next one is going to fall. And because the rhymes are less predictable, the freestylist can construct more complicated rhythms.[12]

Coherence

In order to freestyle, the rapper must be "in command" of the culture. He or she must have a wide range of cultural references and be able to manipulate these materials with ease. The artist must be able to access the culture that has shaped him or her—then reorganize it, reshape it, and recreate it at the moment of the performance. Freestylists are relatively unconcerned with narrative unity since, unlike the Homeric poets, there is no single story they want to tell. Instead, one of the defining techniques of freestyling is "flippin' the script"—the ability to change subjects mid-rap. This is the focus because what is important is not narrative unity, but rather

[11] While rhyme does make freestyling more difficult, there is one way in which rhyme actually makes composing freestyles easier: it helps organize the poem by providing direction for freestylists, who know they must rhyme with a word they have already said. Freestyling an unrhymed rap might be more difficult in this respect because the possibilities for the next line are limitless. Given this exception, however, rhyme serves an aesthetic rather than a mainly functional purpose.

[12] This is characteristic of many African-American poets (Nikki Giovanni, Amiri Baraka, Quincy Troupe, June Jordan, Paul Beatty, and others) who reject the use of a consistent meter but still use rhyme. For these poets, rhyme is a catalyst for rhythm. As in freestyling, without a consistent meter, the placement of the rhyme is unexpected and can be manipulated to construct complicated rhythms.

the ability to express many different styles. The more flexible the freestylist is, the better he or she will be able to adjust to any situation that might come up during the performance. When T-Love says that a freestyle must "be comprehensible," he does not mean that the freestylist must somehow connect the different narrative strands into one unified work,[13] but that each "script" (section of a freestyle defined by a single theme) must make sense in and of itself before the MC "flips" to the next one. A weak MC is one who raps nonsensical lines because he or she has not yet mastered the art of maintaining the rhyme while composing a line that makes sense.

Rhythm

T-Love's final criterion for a freestyle is that it must "be on beat, if done to music." The rhythm of the MC's rap must fit over the beat of the DJ's music track. The DJ, while varying the samples, usually keeps a consistent beat (though not always, as we will see later) so that the MC can get into a flow. The DJ's track determines the rap's beat and shapes the rap's lyrical rhythms, but only partly: the freestylist has free reign with his or her rhythms as long as they stay on beat.

The unit of a rap is determined by the DJ's beat rather than by a set meter. In other words, freestyles can be broken down into rhythmic units rather than metrical units. Let us look briefly at a freestyle by Harlem rapper Big L.[14] In transcribing this freestyle, I have broken the lines at the rhythmic units determined by the DJ's beat. Each line, therefore, takes up an equal time span in the rap. I will use Tim Brennan's technique of marking stressed words in boldface and caesuras with the symbol (*).

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[13] This is not always true for written raps, which are often organized around a main theme that is emphasized by a chorus. DJ Romeo, discussing written raps (not freestyles), says that one "characteristic of a good rapper is to have some continuity to a rap. A lot of times people who will start rapping about one thing here and then later on in the song they're rapping about something else—they get off on a tangent. People with talent can stick to a theme and take it from A to B and bring it back and keep the continuity to it" (1993: 237-8). This kind of "continuity" is possible only with written raps, and is neither possible nor desirable in freestyling.

[14] Big L both freestyles and writes his rhymes. To hear his written raps, check out his studio record *Lifestylez Ov Da Poor & Dangerous* (Columbia, 1995). On at least three tracks of which I am aware—"All Black," "Da Graveyard," and "Let 'Em Have It 'L'"—Big L takes various lines composed during freestyles and inserts them into these written raps.

MCs be actin' like they top **gunnin'** (*)
Yo talkin' like villains
But won't **pop** nuttin', (*) so stop **frontin'** (*)
Before I **pop** you like a phat rope, I'm phat dope
I'm mad far from flat broke—Frontin'? I let my gat **smoke** (*)
Big L is a nigger you can't call **wack**, (*) front and get your jaw cracked
My format is war, **Black**, I'm all **that**
Phatter than horse flies, (*) known to extort guys (*)
This ain't Cali, (*) it's Harlem, nigger, we do walk-bys

In this freestyle, as in all freestyles, there is no set metrical pattern that predetermines the rhythm or line length. Each line makes up one rhythmic unit, but within that rhythmic unit, the placement of stresses and the number of syllables vary greatly. To assure that each line takes up equal time over the beat, Big L either (1) uses caesuras, hesitating or pausing before delivering the next phrase, or (2) overloads words into a short space (the words "Big L is a nigger" are said so fast that they take up the time of a single word delivered at his "normal" speed). These two techniques constantly alter the rhythm to keep the audience's attention. The passage from "Before I pop you" to "gat smoke," for example, was delivered so fast that the audience began howling in awe.

Supernatural and Live Radio

I don't shoot bullets, I throw books, I throw verbs
And one thing I love to do is puff herbs
That's my favorite all-American pastime
Puffin' herbs, hittin' skinz, and kickin' dope rhymes
—Supernatural

Most freestylists incorporate their immediate surroundings into their rap. At a live show, this usually involves rapping about specific audience members, commenting on the sound system, and, if this is a one-on-one competition, insulting your opponent. Besides the club, another popular arena for freestyle competitions is live radio. Stretch Armstrong and Bobbito Garcia's radio show on Columbia's WKCR (89.9 FM) in New York airs live freestyle competitions. The freestyle I will look at is a rap by Brooklyn freestylist Supernatural that was part of one of these KCR competitions. In 1993, Supernat (as he is often called) won the Battle for World Supremacy and also the freestyle competition at the New Music

Seminar. Although he lost his NMS title to Craig G in 1994, he is still considered one of the best freestylists around.

Freestyling follows the immediacy of oral poetry rather than the revisable and premeditated art of literate poetry. In the particular performance on which I will focus, Supernat, while discussing numerous subjects, incorporates the immediate surroundings of the KCR studio into his freestyle. Two subjects that recur in Supernat's rap are that Bobbito has placed a twenty-five minute time limit on each freestyle ("My man Bobbito said we only got 25 minutes / to win it") and that Supernat's friend George is eating a bagel in the studio:

> Supernatural gonna step in and I'm-a stand in
> For George 'cause you know he's able
> But he can't flow right now 'cause he got a stupid bagel
> Crumbs in his mouth so let me turn it out

This passage demonstrates not only that immediate surroundings can be instantly incorporated into a freestyle, but also that Supernat's intentions can shift from one line to the next. At the moment that he raps "he got a stupid bagel," Supernat is focusing only on rhyming with "able." This line then unpredictably leads into "crumbs in his mouth." If this were a written rap, the author could go back and erase the article "a" in front of "stupid bagel" now that he or she knew the subject to be plural ("crumbs") rather than singular ("bagel"). In freestyling, of course, this is not possible. The direction of the narrative can change so rapidly that the freestylist sometimes must be able to adjust mid-word.

This revision process—which does not and cannot go back over what Supernat has already said, but constantly moves forward, adjusting itself—is most evident in the following passage:

> I kick logic for the brothers in the projects
> The ones that's out there throwin' facts
> Flippin' styles, even the kids out there sellin' vials

After he says "facts," Supernat thinks of the word "crack" and begins constructing a line that will end with "crack." What happens, however, is that when he says "Flippin' styles" (his mind still on the subject of crack cocaine), he rhymes this phrase with "vials." This ability to discard one's initial intentions and to adjust immediately to new developments in the rap is essential in freestyling.

The studio itself becomes the setting of the rap. A friend eating a bagel, technicians laughing at a clever line, or a producer wearing a strange

hat can all be instantaneously transformed into art. While rappers who write out their raps also transform their surroundings into art, the results are much more immediate and apparent in a freestyle. Since almost no time elapses between the freestylist's perceptions and their incorporation into the song, it is as if the studio itself becomes the rap. While this nearly instantaneous interchange creates very exciting, immediate, and energetic poetry, there are always uncontrollable factors that threaten to disrupt the freestyle. Since all freestyles are created as they are composed, there are no second takes, rewritings, or overdubs. Freestylists, therefore, must be prepared with techniques to deal with unexpected developments during the performance.

Ruptures

Tricia Rose writes that hip hop DJing is centered around three concepts: flow, layering, and ruptures in line. The DJ layers his or her samples to create a flowing track, but then periodically interrupts this flow by scratching or introducing new musical passages onto the track. Rose (1994:39) writes that

> these effects at the level of style and aesthetics suggest affirmative ways in which profound social dislocation and rupture can be managed and perhaps contested in the cultural arena. Let us imagine these hip hop principles as a blueprint for social resistance and affirmation: create sustaining narratives, accumulate them, layer, embellish and transform them. But also be prepared for rupture, find pleasure in it, in fact, *plan on* social rupture.

Although Rose never discusses freestyling, this act of "plan[ning] on social rupture" is nowhere more strongly emphasized. At one point in Supernat's freestyle, his DJ, Grand Ghetto, suddenly changes the music and, like all skilled freestylists who can instantly respond to changes in their surroundings, Supernat begins to rap in a soft, whispering voice to fit with the music:

> [Normal freestyling voice:]
> When it comes to a freestyle battle
> I'll dismantle, displace 'em, dyslexics dismantle
> [Music changes] And that's the way that I am comin'
> [Raps more quietly:]
> I do not understand it, he changed the beat
> Let me complete, now I can get biz with the style

Flip the fly-stro, I think it's time for the maestro
Oh Grand Ghetto, love the way you're whisperin'
'Cause I'm dissin' that discipline

Supernat's adjustment time is one line: he finishes the line he began when the music shifted ("And that's the way that I am comin'"), but then the next line is already adjusted to fit with the music, satisfying T-Love's requirement that a freestyle must "be on beat, if done to music."

Supernat's aesthetics are based on his ability to transform unexpected difficulties into art. As we saw earlier, this mode of transformation is built into the art form itself—that is, all freestyles must rhyme—but it also involves responding to difficulties that occur during the performance. Grand Ghetto changes the music in order to challenge Supernat's abilities to flip the script—a challenge Supernat meets and uses to develop his style. Alongside such interchanges between MC and DJ, however, unexpected difficulties arise that are controlled by neither the DJ nor the MC.

During Supernat's rap, the record skips and this is enough to throw him off for a second. He stops short the line he is currently composing and, in a normal speaking voice, says, "Yo George, man, the record skipped." This technical difficulty threatens to bring the freestyle to a screeching halt. But Supernat immediately returns to his highly rhythmic freestyling voice and, of course, rhymes with what he has just unexpectedly said ("the record skipped"):

He's trippin' out, I'll still rip
Never booin', I'm pursuin', I'm not pollutin'
Stretch said, yo George, kid what you doin'?
But that's OK, yo kid, that's the breaks
On live radio, yo we all make mistakes
It don't make no dif', I can switch
Every time I hit, yo stretch around the pitch

Supernat is the batter who can "hit" any "pitch" thrown at him by his DJ, the producer, or any other unpredictable element in his environment. He can "hit" obstacles head-on, "switch" the freestyle in a new direction, or, like the name of his host, "stretch" around the obstacle. Supernat does not let a technical problem—the skipping record—interfere with his freestyle. This is not because he is so focused on his freestyle that he ignores this detail: the DJ's music track is an important element in freestyling. Instead, he acknowledges the "mistake" and uses it as a catalyst for a new narrative direction, a direction the rap never would have taken had the record not skipped.

This transformative agility is even more impressive when the mistake is the freestylist's own. At one point in the rap, Supernat stutters on the word "thousand:"

> Every time I rock an old well
> Fifty thou-an-ousand nine million cells
> Oh shit, I fucked up, I started to stutter
> But when I come back, I melt the mic just like butter
> I can make my mistakes sound dope[15] 'cause that's how dope I am
> And everybody out there love the way I slam

There is no attempt to front and cover up mistakes. Everything is laid out in the open, examined, and then transformed into art. There is not even a pause between the stuttered line and the "compensating" line. In fact, it proves difficult to define what a mistake is in Supernat's freestyles because mistakes—that is, unintended utterances—necessarily become part of the freestyle and are quickly incorporated. That is, the "mistake" words are rhymed, and employed as catalysts to take the rap in new and unexpected directions (both narratively and rhythmically).

Supernat's ability to flip the script (change styles, adjust to new situations) is most apparent when he becomes a fish underwater and continues freestyling—that is, rhyming, rapping (semi-)coherent lines, and staying on beat—all this while making bubbling noises to indicate that he's underwater. This incredible ability to flip the script obviously involves years of practice and this particular technique—rapping underwater—was certainly practiced before the night of this performance. The lines themselves, however, are freestyled. Through the process of freestyling, some techniques are perfected, but individual lines are not.

The *process* of freestyling is emphasized over any kind of final product to ensure that the work being done is broadly cultural rather than the random thoughts of isolated individuals. Freestylists prove themselves by showing how they can overcome any difficulty or unexpected circumstance. This ability is highly regarded in the hip hop community because it often has to respond to unexpected circumstances imposed on it by the hostile larger culture. Freestylists, then, recreate the instability of their communities in competitions so that freestyling becomes a cultural workshop where techniques are developed for working through the contradictions of living in a racist society.

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[15] In hip hop culture, "dope" refers to particularly good rhymes or beats, as in a "dope rhyme" or a "dope beat."

In the unstable environments of both the hip hop community and the freestyle competition, developing a set of fixed codes of behavior would be counterproductive. Rather than creating a written, fixed text that will outlive its author and the historical moment of its creation, hip hop develops techniques that will allow its members to adjust to sudden changes in their environments. Rather than emphasizing a final product, freestyle emphasizes the author's techniques (to compose complex rhythms and unexpected rhymes) and abilities to compose under the most difficult of conditions (performing in front of screaming audience members or knowing one's words are being simultaneously broadcast to all of New York City). I now want to explore whether freestylists use formulas to help them cope with these difficult tasks.

Freestyling and the Oral Formula

Specifically, I now want to examine Supernat's use of recurring phrases and see whether these can be considered oral formulas. Milman Parry's definition of a formula is "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea" (1971:272). Given that rap is not a metrical poetry, it seems that we should exclude rap from the category of "oral-formulaic poetry," but we can do this only if we think of oral poetry as necessarily metered.

Albert Lord cites three criteria for a phrase to be considered a formula: meter, usefulness, and repetition (1960:ch.3). The phrases employed in freestyling are useful (that is, they make composing easier) and repeated, but rather than using formulas for metrical purposes, freestylists must develop techniques for rhyming, since that is the single most difficult aspect of their task. Supernat says, "When I freestyle I'm thinking about the next three lines before the first is even finished" (Destiny 1994:55). A rhyme must always be thought out ahead of time rather than felt out as with rhythm. DJ Romeo, a freestylist from the hip hop community of Columbia, Missouri, says (1993:237) that

> a lot of times you'll use formulas that help you maintain that spontaneity. There are certain end-line words that are easier to rhyme with. Obviously, "lay," "he," the vowels "a," "i," "o," and "u." And then there's other tools like suffixes, "-tion"—"prediction," "resurrection," "persecution." You can throw all that kind of stuff in there, "reiterate," "exasperate," whatever. You use those kinds of words as often as you can.

What DJ Romeo refers to as "formulas" are not the metrical formulas to which Parry and Lord refer; rather, these are rhyming formulas that help the freestylist continue rhyming with previous lines. Through years of performing, the freestylist gradually accumulates a repertoire of rhymes. Words that often come up have standard accompanying rhyme words: "Brooklyn" is often rhymed with "took and" or "tooken;"[16] "MC" is often rhymed with "me;" "chillin'" is often rhymed with "illin';" "it's all real" is often rhymed with "this is how I feel;"and "freestyle" is often rhymed with "wild."

Along with these rhyming formulas, freestylists also use formulaic phrases. In the 254-line freestyle that I have been examining, Supernat employs the phrase "I'll tell you what" eleven times, "far as I can see" three times, and "it don't make a dif'" five times. "I'll tell you what" and "far as I can see" serve no narrative purpose and the freestyle would lose nothing narratively if they were left out. Instead, their function is threefold: they provide a rhyme,[17] they give Supernat time to think of what to say next, and they help develop the rhythm. Supernat's repeated phrases can be considered formulas because they function as formulas do in Homeric verse; that is, they aid in the poem's composition. They do not serve the same purposes, however, because freestyles are built on rhyme and rhythm, while Homeric verse is built on syllabic meter and narrative patterning.[18]

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[16] Like freestylists, rappers who write their lyrics also place rhythm and rhyme over grammatical rules: "I met her on the subway on my way to Brooklyn / Hello good lookin', is this seat tooken?" (Eric B. & Rakim, "What's On Your Mind"); "Rap brings back old R&B and if we would not / People coulda forgot" (Stetsasonic, "Talkin' All That Jazz"); "Hollywood or would they not / Make us all look bad like I know they had" (Public Enemy, "Burn Hollywood Burn"). Whether attempting to pick up a woman on a subway, defending rap against ignorant critics, or criticizing the racism of the Hollywood movie industry, all of these raps have one thing in common: rhythm, rhyme, and idiomatic expressions are more important than grammatical rules because the rules (grammatical and otherwise) of the larger literate culture are irrelevant.

[17] Sometimes "I'll tell you what" rhymes and sometimes it does not, while "far as I can see" has a rhyme partner in all three of its occurrences. In addition to the three functions (rhyme, time, and rhythm) of the first two formulas, "it don't make a dif'" also works as a thematic aid. It fits well with Supernat's aesthetics of "it doesn't matter what difficulty comes up; I will transform it."

[18]Supernat prioritizes rhythm and rhyme over everything else, even—surprisingly—boasts of his own rapping powers: "Yo they love it, it's me, the Nate, G / Some of them hate me, some of them wanna date me / You overrate me." We cannot imagine a written rap ever containing the phrase "You overrate me." We hear this not as Supernat making a mistake, but rather keeping his priorities straight: narrative is important,

Are these formulaic phrases in freestyling individual or traditional? The phrases are not individual in the sense of a literate poet who comes up with his or her own unique wordings. These phrases do not, as DJ Romeo asserts, "get their origins from songs, and then everybody starts using them" (1993:240). Instead, it works the other way around: "everybody starts using them" first. That is, these phrases originate in the everyday language of the hip hop community and only then do they find their way into rap songs. They become more widely known, of course, through the circulation of rap music, but almost all of these phrases originate in the everyday language of urban black youths.[19]

The phrases also are not traditional in the way that the Homeric tradition reserved specific phrases for composing oral poetry.[20] Of course, the phrases that freestylists use come from hip hop culture and their widespread deployment in rap songs demonstrates how oral and functional black language is; but, because Supernat can draw from *all* phrases currently in use in hip hop culture rather than a more specialized set, freestyling formulas cannot be considered traditional in the Homeric sense. Word choice is neither strictly individual (as in literate poetry) nor strictly traditional (as in oral poetry). Freestyling is a post-literate poetry that incorporates both oral and literate elements into its aesthetics.

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but never as important as rhyme and rhythm.

[19] Occasionally a rapper will invent a phrase that is not in use in the culture and subsequently begins to be used by people who have heard the song. DJ Romeo correctly points out (1993:240) that the phrase "O.P.P." ("Other People's Property/Penis/Pussy") was not used in hip hop culture until the South Orange, New Jersey rap group Naughty By Nature wrote a song by that title. The case of "O.P.P.," however, is an exception rather than the rule.

[20] It is worthwhile to note that, as in Homeric epic, there is a relatively stable pool of phrases in rap, but these occur among rappers who write their lyrics and therefore cannot be considered oral formulas. These phrases summarize an important idea that the rapper, as a member of hip hop culture, wants to express; they do not function as aids in composing. Examples of such phrases include "flip the script," "paid in full," "act like you know," "if it ain't rough, it ain't right," and "you know the time." Like the Homeric poets' pool of phrases, new ones are added and others gradually fade away, but the pool itself remains relatively stable. This type of phrase-pool is never found in literate poetry, but post-literate poetry contains characteristics of oral (as well as literate) poetry.

Goin' For Self

I have already mentioned two ways in which freestyling differs from traditional oral poetry: rhyme and the fact that freestylists think of themselves as original creators rather than as vessels for a tradition. While I have discussed the first point in detail, the second point needs to be more fully explained. G. S. Kirk writes that in traditional oral poetry, "it is misleading to think of genius all concentrated in one man, the monumental composer. Behind him there undoubtedly lay oral heroic material of very high quality; his special gifts were those of integration" (1962:288).[21] The Homeric poet does not invent original themes, hero-types, or diction; he integrates traditional materials into a coherent form during performance.

In freestyle competitions, however, it is of utmost importance to be the sole original creator of the rap. Supernat, for example, claims to be more original than his opponent:

> For the whole 25 minutes I could flip it
> It don't make no dif' 'cause I sit back and sip it
> Just like water, I am the author, yo I start to slaughter

Supernat emphasizes that he is the author of the freestyle, and it matters a great deal who wins the competition. It entitles one to boasting rights in the community. The claim of uniqueness, however, is not a claim for original visions or ideas. Supernat differs from others in his community not in kind but in degree: he is the one who is most representative of the hip hop community. Supernat is unlike others only in so far as he has absorbed and transmitted the community's values better than anyone else.

Freestyle competitions, or "style wars" as they are sometimes called, not only ritualize the conflicts of African-American communities, but also elevate the skills of all performers. As Q-Tip of A Tribe Called Quest raps in "Vibes and Stuff," "Competition's good, it brings out the vital parts / The abstract poetry, latest in recital arts." T-Love adds that such competitions are one of the reasons rap music has evolved so far since its origins. "Where there is competition," says T-Love (quoted in Cross 1993:306),

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[21] While Kirk argues that there is no "monumental composer" in the Homeric tradition, this does not preclude an oral poet's ability to be original. Kirk also argues that Homer was an exceptional, rather than a typical, poet among Homeric poets, and that "not every singer" of Homer's time would have been capable of "constructing such lines as his" and "extruding clumsy locutions as effectively" as Homer (1962:82).

> there is change. And in order for an MC to be considered a worthy competitor, he or she must practice and freestyling is just that: drills for skills. It opens the mind, and helps to keep fresh and new ideas flowing, which improves the competition amongst MCs, therefore upgrading the quality of true hiphop flavour in rap music.

While freestyle competitions often involve bitter exchanges (the purpose is, after all, to insult your opponent as cleverly as possible while praising one's own MCing powers), they benefit the community because they 1) improve everyone's skills while weeding out the fake MCs and 2) assure that hierarchies do not crystallize.

Keepin' It Real

Rap is now being recorded and distributed worldwide, and freestyle competitions are no longer the most common site of cultural production. Most rappers now write out their raps beforehand, even though the main emphasis remains on performance. Rap videos on MTV give the false impression that almost anyone can be a rapper as long as he or she wears the right hat and sneakers, and can memorize a rap. This mirage has prompted many rappers and fans to engage in genuine as well as sentimental recollections of "back in the day" when hip hop was "pure" and "real." DJ Kiilu of Freestyle Fellowship (quoted in Cross 1993:288) says that

> a lot of it started because there was a microphone attached to the turntable, kinda like crowd participation. Gettin' everybody to say "Ho!" and clap their hands and stuff like that. Rap is different now, all these images. Yeah, they just came up with an image. Rap is at a point where you gotta have an image and stick with the image, like gangsta, or a stick-up kid, or a fuckin' peace guy.

Video images and record contracts threaten to pull rap away from its roots in freestyling skills, and to extinguish a rapper's ability to come up with an "off the head" rhyme to defeat an opponent. As with traditional oral poetry, the visual/written/fixed text threatens to destroy the aural/oral/evolving performance. Anyone can memorize a rap and recite it, but in a freestyle, there is no time to fake or front. In order to keep the rap flowing, you must be practiced in freestyle skills and be able to capture spontaneously the spirit of the community at the moment of the

performance. Without a knowledge of hip hop culture, the freestyle will be empty and phony.

This tension in the community, however, is not between oral and literate elements, but rather between freestylists and fronters. Post-literate cultures incorporate both oral and literate elements in their art, without antagonism and without hierarchy.[22] Supernat, one of the most skilled freestylists, does not have a hostile relationship with those who write out their raps. He influences and is influenced by recorded rappers who write their rhymes, and often mentions their names in his freestyles. He does not think that rappers who freestyle are necessarily more skilled than those who do not; they are just different.

Instead, antagonism in hip hop arises between those who accurately represent the culture and those who do not. According to Supernat, the only unforgivable sin is pretending to freestyle (quoted in Destiny 1994:55):

> Some MCs are just more partial to paper than others. It doesn't make you any less of a lyricist. The only thing that pisses me off is when a rapper gets on TV or radio and someone asks them to kick a freestyle and they start rhymin' and their homeboy is kickin' the shit right with them. *That* to me is wack.

If a second rapper emphasizes certain words or phrases of the main MC, it is a clear indication that the rap was written beforehand. To an experienced freestylist like Supernat, and to anyone familiar with hip hop's art forms, this is obvious. The danger is that those who do not know the culture's art forms (including members of the culture as well as those outside the culture) will hear this performance as an authentic freestyle. This kind of reception contributes to a process whereby freestyling loses its value. Eventually the culture as a whole may lose its credibility and perhaps its ability to preserve itself in the face of the hostile larger culture.

Freestyling, therefore, has become a way not only of tracing rap's origins, but also a way of connecting today's rap back to its original spirit. Freestyling "keeps it real" because you need verbal skills to manage it; you cannot rely on video images or pre-written lyrics. Both videos and

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[22] In a post-literate culture such as hip hop, oral and literate elements are for the most part not at odds. There is generally no antagonism between freestylists and rappers who write out their raps because both groups belong to the same culture. While a few rappers may argue that freestyling is the only true form of rapping, this opinion is fairly rare. A more common attitude is that rappers may pre-write their raps, but they also must be able to freestyle.

pre-written lyrics allow a rapper to formulate an image that he or she wants to convey. The inherent danger is that they give the rapper an opportunity to front, that is, to pretend to be someone he or she is not. And this allows those who are not part of hip hop culture to exploit and profit from the culture. T-Love explains that rappers who attempt to freestyle, even if they have not perfected their skills, prove that they are "committed to all facets of the music form, not just the ones that earn the duckets" (quoted in Cross 1993:306). Freestyling does not "earn the duckets" because freestyling is not preserved in a fixed form and marketed.[23] What the winner of a competition receives, however, is "props" (respect) from the hip hop community for proving his or her skills on the mic.

Supernat maintains that all written raps are freestyles before they hit paper (see Destiny 1994:55) because the source for all rap is the oral improvisation of freestyling. While we need to maintain the distinction between freestyling and written raps, the two styles influence one another and are becoming increasingly intertwined. While written raps have a wider narrative range because of the writer's ability to revise, freestyling provides more varied rhythms and unexpected rhymes. To the uninitiated, written raps seem to involve more preparation, but, as we have seen, this is not the case. Even though freestyling is spontaneous and never pre-written, its techniques require years of practice before one can rap off the top of the dome.

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[23] While record companies have released CDs with titles such as "The Best of Freestyling" and "Freestyle Compilation," these CDs all contain a freestyle flavor rather than actual performances. They usually feature dancehall rap and what's called "house music," songs that attempt to capture the excitement and energy of the original park jams in the Bronx (known as Old School rap). Also, many of these rappers in their lyrics rap that they are freestyling, but, again, even if they are actually doing so (most are not), they are allowed a limitless number of takes. This single fact disqualifies their raps as freestyles since a freestyle must be performed in front of a live audience. A freestyle record is not inconceivable, however, if someone were to record performances in clubs and live radio, select the best ones, and release them as a CD or cassette. As far as I am aware, no one has attempted such a project.

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Oral Tradition, 11/2 (1996): 270-300

The *Kalevala* Received: From Printed Text to Oral Performance

Thomas A. DuBois

jätti kantelon jälille
soiton Suomelle sorean
kansalle ilon ikuisen
laulut suuret lapsillensa.

He left the kantele behind
the fine instrument for
Finland
unending joy for the people
great songs for his children.

Kalevala 50:507-12

In the closing years of the nineteenth century, in the midst of a revived national interest in the *Kalevala* and a neo-Romantic fascination with the fabled epic "song lands" east of the Finnish border, the lexicographer Kustaa Karjalainen recorded a set of epic songs from the illiterate peasant singer Vihtoora Lesonen. Vihtoora was a native of the Vuokkiniemi district of Viena Karelia—one of the most productive regions for the collection of Baltic-Finnic epic song in the nineteenth century. The combined length of Vihtoora's songs amounted to 1483 lines, a substantial repertoire by Karelian standards, although nowhere as long or varied as that collected from some singers in the past. Upon returning home to Finland, however, Karjalainen discovered a terrible truth: in examining the content and phrasing of the songs, it became evident that Vihtoora had somehow learned his repertoire from the *Kalevala*. Rather than providing a further example of the oral tradition upon which the *Kalevala* had been based, in other words, Vihtoora's songs furnished evidence of the profound effect of Lönnrot's published epic upon local repertoires and understandings, even in the very heart of the song lands.

This paper speaks to a number of salient issues raised in recent scholarship on oral tradition. First, as many scholars have shown,[1] the relation of Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala* to its oral sources remains a complex and intriguing area of research, indicative not simply of the manner in which one editor/author presented one set of transcribed performances, but also of the way in which editors, folklorists, and ethnographers in general have approached and interpreted others' words (Honko 1993). Second, as John Miles Foley has noted (1991), scholarly attention in oral tradition research has tended to focus on the composition side of the performance transaction, devoting relatively little attention to the reception side—that is, how an audience witnesses, interprets, and evaluates the performance in traditional contexts. Finally, as Stephen Mitchell has argued (1991), few scholars have attempted to examine in detail the "synergism between oral and written literature"—the ways in which printed texts become part of active oral tradition through the mediation of literate community members. For the bulk of the twentieth century, "booklore" and "literary contamination" have functioned essentially as pejorative terms in folklore research, relegating the text under scrutiny to a footnote or appendix and chagrining the scholar or collector too callow to recognize the tell-tale signs of a published source.

But songs such as Vihtoora's need not be viewed as embarrassing asides, nor do they represent the death knell of a once vigorous oral tradition. Instead, as Kaukonen has maintained (1980) and as I have suggested as well (1995), *Kalevala*-derived songs reflect Karelian peasants' active reception and interpretation of the Finnish national epic in particularly traditional terms. Examining Vihtoora's works can tell us much about his understandings of Lönnrot's stylistic and editorial choices and much about their relation to his own community's preexisting aesthetic traditions. They can also contribute to an ethnography of literacy in turn-of-the-century Karelia. Far from reflecting the demise of a song tradition, Vihtoora's print-derived songs demonstrate the responsive, innovative nature of the song tradition and singers immortalized in the *Kalevala*.

In this study, then, I propose to examine one of Vihtoora Lesonen's *Kalevala*-derived songs with an eye to the interplay of printed text and oral tradition in late nineteenth-century Karelia. In so doing, I hope to reveal both the artistry and the traditionality of Vihtoora's act of appropriation. By examining literacy in the region and the social contexts in which

[1] See Kaukonen 1939-45, Anttila 1985, Kuusi and Anttonen 1985, Alphonso-Karkela 1986, Pentikäinen 1989, and DuBois 1993, 1995.

peasants met with Finnish anthologies, I provide a framework for understanding the means by which a text from 1849 could become part of oral tradition in 1894. The paper's stance and content answer an earlier article in the pages of this journal (1993) in which I attempted to show how Elias Lönnrot transformed oral tradition in creating the *Kalevala* in the first place. The back and forth of oral and written art—this synergism—lies at the very heart of Finnish folk poetry at the end of the nineteenth century.

Literacy in Turn-of-the-Century Karelia

Recent research has focused on the culturally variable aspects of literacy in traditional and industrialized societies.[2] A number of studies have also examined the process of literacy development in nineteenth-century Finland, Russia, and Karelia.[3] These studies provide a conceptual framework and historical data for understanding the ways in which printed anthologies of folk poetry made their way into the homes and hearts of peasants east of the Finnish border. It is only once we accept the notion of literacy as a variable phenomenon—one without universal rules or monolithic effects—that we can appreciate the complexities of the folk poem examined here.

In that spirit, I sketch below the broad lines of literacy as a phenomenon and process in late-nineteenth century Karelia. The educational efforts undertaken there, I argue, were determined by two opposed interests: the cultural nationalism of Finland and the territorial concerns of tsarist Russia. The former process led Finns to equate Karelian culture with that of Finland itself, thereby justifying the claim to the *Kalevala* as the indisputably *Finnish* national epic. The latter concerns led Russians to seek continued control of a well forested and geographically important region, lost and regained repeatedly during centuries of armed conflict with Sweden. In language of instruction, alphabet, and administration, Finnish and Russian educational efforts were locked in conflict, a fact that greatly influenced the degree of literacy achieved in the region during the decades prior to the Russian Revolution.

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[2] See Goody 1968, Scribner and Cole 1981, Tannen 1982, Graff 1987, Arnove and Graff 1987, Darnton 1989, and Boyarin 1993.

[3] See Wilson 1976, Brooks 1985, Marker 1990, and Austin 1992.

Russian Influence

During the nineteenth century, the Baltic-Finnic peoples of Karelia and Ingria lived in the shadow of Slavic language and letters. Russian was the language of state and church authorities, Church Slavonic the language of liturgy, Bible, and Psalter. Efforts to increase rural literacy following the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 focused on Russian as the target language, even in regions where markedly different languages prevailed in daily life. As Eklof has shown (1986, 1987), an Education Statute of 1864 established the framework and curriculum for public schools, eventually administered by local *zemstvo* (municipality) commune governments. At the same time, myriad unofficial schools were also founded throughout the countryside, staffed by literate individuals, retired soldiers, and priests. Zemstvo and church-run schools emerged as dominant educational institutions by the 1890s, when they began to receive subsidies from the public treasury. Soldiers were also provided with literacy training in the army (Eklof 1987:124). Schools in Karelia promoted literacy in Russian language and the Cyrillic alphabet and used primers common throughout the Empire. The resultant linguistic hurdle meant that although the overall literacy rate of Russia in 1896 had reached a level of 21 percent (Brooks 1985:4), the rate in Karelia was much lower (10.4 percent overall, three percent among women—Austin 1992:19). It was not until 1887 that a dual-language primer was produced in Russian and Karelian, using the Cyrillic alphabet for both languages and including basic prayers and Gospel readings (Austin 1992:20). The effect of the primer was limited, however, by its infrequent use and the lack of a standardized literary Karelian at the time.

Despite the linguistic difficulties involved in gaining literacy in Karelia, cultural factors common throughout the Russian Empire made it a valued skill. Reading offered peasants greater accuracy in record-keeping and proved of service to persons interested in developing market or trade occupations. Peasant trade with urban centers on both sides of the Finnish border made literacy of immediate practical value. It also helped mobile peasants learn about opportunities elsewhere in the Empire (especially in the cities) and was viewed as a key to upward mobility (Brooks 1985:13). Compulsory male conscription, introduced in 1874, specified a reduced term of duty for literates, adding further incentive to peasant learning efforts (Eklof 1987:124). By 1896, in fact, urban literacy had reached a very high level, even among workers of rural origin. Day laborers in the cities enjoyed a literacy rate of 59 percent; people in more specialized occupations showed even higher rates (e.g., 85 percent for bakers, 90

percent for restaurant workers; Brooks 1985:13). These factors touched the thriving urban centers of Karelia and Ingria—for example, Viipuri, St. Petersburg—as much as they did the industrializing cities of central Russia.

Reading also played important roles in pan-Russian social and religious life. Public reading as a means of entertainment was noted among rural populations across Russia (Brooks 1985:27), and the reading of the Psalter and religious texts was extremely common as well (24). Brooks states that the Psalter was the most popular book owned in the countryside and that its very possession was said to bring a blessing to the household (24). Those who could not themselves read relied on literate children as performers of the text and were known to memorize large portions of the Psalter and canon to perform during church services or elsewhere (23).

The religious sect known as the Old Believers, common in Viena Karelia, also valued literacy highly. The ability to read allowed the faithful to consult old religious texts used prior to the Nikonian reforms of the seventeenth century and ensured that literate community members enjoyed high esteem in the village or household (Brooks 1985:2-26). The importance of Karelian Old Believers in preserving and maintaining the folk poetry tradition has been discussed by Juha Pentikäinen (1989:124-30). Their positive attitude toward print, along with their conservative embrace of things old and traditional, undoubtedly shaped their reception of Finnish collections as well.

The importance of folk poetry in Karelia, both before and after its appearance in print, may have stemmed in part from peasants' view of it as the Baltic-Finnic version of Russian sacred song. Songs associated with particular ritual moments (weddings, planting, cattle blessing, harvest) were viewed as holy and were associated with Christianity as practiced in the region (Salminen 1931:528). In 1829 Jacob Fellman noted the view of a peasant from Vuokkiniemi earlier in the century that explicitly equates pre-Christian mythological songs with Christian doctrine:

> kah, pyhä veli, meillä on sama usko kuin teillä. Kokko lenti pohjosesta, pani munan Väinämöisen polven päälle ja loi siitä maailman. Niinhän tekin uskotte.
>
> Well, holy brother [Fellman was a Lutheran priest], we have the same belief

> as you. An eagle flew out of the north, laid an egg on Väinämöinen's knee and in that way created the world. You believe that as well. (*SKVR* I_1:66)[4]

The events here referred to as Christian actually derive from the *Creation* song as commonly performed in Karelia during the nineteenth century and as reflected in part in Poem 1 of Lönnrot's *Kalevala*. Indeed, the common term for folk poetry in the tradition itself, *virret* ("verses"—used also for psalms), reflects this understanding. A view of the songs as sacred, however, was not universally accepted, as is demonstrated by some informants' strong condemnation of the tradition noted in collectors' diaries. Salminen (1931) observes that although local clergy did not dissuade parishioners from performing the songs in normal contexts, they implored singers not to share the songs with outside collectors (531), apparently wishing to curtail the spread of such pagan survivals. The reticence that some singers showed toward fieldworkers may stem either from such clerical injunctions or from considerations of the sacrality of the songs themselves.[5] In any case, published collections of songs such as the *Kalevala*, appearing in the prestige medium of the society (print) but containing elements variously viewed as sacred or sinful, undoubtedly captured peasant interest all the more for the debate. That such volumes became cherished familial possessions, avidly read aloud in peasant households, is evidenced both by collector notes and by the abundance of print-derived songs in the oral tradition of late nineteenth-century Karelia and Ingria (Kaukonen 1980).

In various ways, then, common cultural features of peasant Russia conditioned Karelian receptiveness to literacy and to printed versions of folk poems. Literacy was positively viewed, as were printed texts in

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[4] *SKVR* refers to the published anthology of Finnish folk poetry *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot* (*The Ancient Songs of the Finnish People*), the first volume of which (I_1) appeared in 1908. Although Fellman does not specify the identity of his informant in this notation, the singer may have been Vasilius Lesonen, a singer who performed a version of the Sampo song containing this account of the origin of the world for Fellman during that same visit (*SKVR* I_1:75). A kinsman of Vihtoora Lesonen (see below), Vasilius' testimony sheds important light on the ways many Karelian peasants understood their songs throughout the nineteenth century. All English translations of Finnish texts are my own.

[5] Länkelä noted a case of the former fear in his 1858 account of a singer who performed several songs while drunk but feared for her soul afterwards, recounting her priest's strong condemnation (Salminen 1931:531). Alava noted a case of the latter fear in his 1892 description of a singer who was afraid to perform a song associated with planting rituals outside of its proper ritual setting, lest she be unable to sleep for five nights in a row (Salminen 1931:630).

general. Reading aloud, both for entertainment and for sacred instruction, was an established part of peasant social life. The ability to decipher Finnish renderings and Gothic script, however, a further task added to the challenges of learning to read Russian and/or Church Slavonic, required a new educational impetus, this time from the west.

Finnish Influence

In late nineteenth-century Finland, school-based literacy programs were relatively new, despite centuries of exceptionally high literacy achieved through familial and parish-centered instruction. Long a Lutheran stronghold and an integrated region of Sweden, Finland and its inhabitants valued the ability to read as a key to pious life. Already in the sixteenth century, the Finnish Lutheran reformer Mikael Agricola had translated portions of the Bible and Luther's Catechism, and had authored a basic primer in the language itself. In keeping with Lutheran theology, fathers—and more broadly, parents and godparents—assumed responsibility for seeing that their children learned to read (Johansson 1987:73). Ministers, too, were charged with this fundamental duty to their flocks. Strong social pressure to learn to read arose in annual parish-wide examinations and through a church law that denied confirmation (and thereby the right to marry, testify in a court of law, or receive Holy Communion) to any person who could not pass an official reading test (69). Finnish peasants learned to read in their own language, in Gothic script. The Finnish census of 1880 counted less than two percent of the adult population incapable of reading (70). Far fewer individuals, however, knew how to write.

This highly successful church- and home-based literacy campaign achieved its results despite the lack of formal schools. In both Sweden and in the now-autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland, however, the nineteenth century saw a new campaign oriented toward practical literacy and general education for a changing world. Laws pertaining to public education were enacted in Finland in 1843 and 1866, stipulating subjects to be taught, teacher preparation, school establishment, and overall curriculum (Nurmi 1964; Melin 1980). Finnish was accepted as an elementary school subject already in 1843 (Kauppinen 1985), although the language was not taught at the university level until 1850 and did not attain equal status with Swedish as a language of state administration until 1863 (Wilson 1976). The first Finnish-language secondary school (lyceum) was opened in Jyväskylä in 1858, and by the 1870s, the fledgling Finnish school system comprised over

four hundred schools and a number of teacher training colleges. Although literacy efforts focused on children (as in Russia as well), adult education was pursued vigorously by organizations such as the bourgeois Kansanvalistus Seura (Society for Public Enlightenment; see Wilson 1976:45) and by a proliferating system of workers' associations (Sulkunen 1989). The expansion of popular reading beyond the religious canon is indicated by the strong growth of the newspaper industry, rising from only one Finnish-language paper in 1835 (when the *Kalevala* was first published) to some thirty newspapers by 1885 (Wilson 1976:47).

Throughout the development of education in Finland, the *Kalevala* remained both a source of inspiration and a favored subject of study. Lönnrot himself created a classroom *Kalevala* in 1862, abridging his text carefully and providing detailed explications of obscure terms (Lönnrot 1862; Kauppinen 1985). Even more influential, however, was Zachris Topelius' *Maamme-kirja* (1876)—a general textbook and reader that remained a staple of Finnish education from the 1880s onward. In his section on Finland's pagan past (Part III), Topelius includes a general essay on the Finnish national epic and its significance in the world, synopses of its poems, and extensive excerpts as reading selections. These include direct excerpts of the *Creation* (Poem 1), the *Origin of Iron* (Poems 8-9), and the *Battle for the Light* (Poems 47-49). Synopses include the *Origin of Agriculture* (Poem 2), the *Origin of Fire* (Poems 47-48), the *Song Contest* (Poem 3), *Väinämöinen's First Expedition to Pohjola* (Poems 6-8), the *Creation of the Sampo* (Poem 10), *Lemminkäinen's Adventures* (Poems 11-15), the *Journey to Tuonela* (Poem 16), *Ilmarinen's Courtship of the Maiden of Pohjola* (Poems 18-25), the *Kullervo Cycle* (Poems 31-36), the *Raid of the Sampo* (Poems 39-43), and *Väinämöinen's Singing* (Poems 41 and 44). Predictably, the final poem of the epic (50), in which Väinämöinen sails away, leaving his songs and kantele to Finland, enjoys a prominent position in Topelius' text. Students taught through such primers came to view the *Kalevala* as the ancient heritage of the Finnish people. Writes Topelius (214):

> [The *Kalevala*] has awakened great interest not only in Finland but in many other parts of Europe as well, and even in America. It has been translated into Swedish and into dozens of other foreign languages. . . . Everywhere the opinion prevails that the *Kalevala* is one of the most significant products of folklore ever created, and Finland is considered fortunate to be in its possession. For such a collection of folklore as the *Kalevala* is unequaled in all the world. It depicts the characteristics of the Finnish people and although it contains much that seems pagan and strange to us today, it

> expresses nonetheless a deep wisdom, a simple beauty, and a stirring love of native land.

The extension of formal education in the Finnish Grand Duchy thus worked both to inform students of the contents of the national epic and to instill in them an attitude of pride and respect for the national heritage. Literacy and the ancient oral tradition were viewed not as opposed forces but as a single cultural achievement.

An outgrowth of this enthusiasm was the strong desire to extend education to Karelians as well. Particularly in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, cultural nationalists called for the establishment of Finnish schools east of the border, recompensing the people who had preserved the ancient traditions of the Baltic-Finnic peoples with one of the most valued skills of the Lutheran ethos—the ability to read (Wilson 1976). Karelians could learn to read Finnish, the language most closely related to their own, rather than struggling with the very different Russian language of the Empire. Significant efforts in this area began with the founding of a teachers' college at Sortavala in 1880. Located near the border itself, the school trained teachers who would subsequently establish primary schools of their own in the Karelian countryside and villages. Like its counterparts to the west, the Sortavala college made strong use of Topelius' reader (Nurmi 1964, II:29) and prepared teachers to run Finnish-language schools. Soon after the establishment of the Sortavala college, Finland's Greek Orthodox bishop A. V. Antonin (1892-98) replaced Russian and Old Slavonic with Finnish in the state-funded parochial schools under his direction, recognizing the detrimental effect of the Slavic languages on Karelian literacy (Melin 1980, II:112). Although both trends were halted by the Russification policies of the turn of the century, this embrace of Finnish-language schooling in Karelia had profound effects on the reading interests and abilities of the local populace (Austin 1992). By 1896, when the Russian teacher I. V. Olenov visited Karelia, he found the inhabitants literate in Finnish rather than in Russian and often possessed of a Finnish rather than a Russian Bible (Heikkinen 1982-83:83).

The rapid influx of Finnish thought and publications to the east, combined with positive peasant attitudes toward literacy and customs of reading aloud, created an ideal context for the spread of Finnish works such as the *Kalevala*. Kaukonen (1980:224) cites an elderly singer in the village of Vuokkiniemi in the 1940s who recalled reading both the *Kalevala* and the *Kanteletar* (Lönnrot's lyric anthology of 1840) over and over again to his maternal grandmother at the turn of the century. The continued importance of the folk poetry tradition in many villages and farmsteads

made published collections both approachable and valued. Finnish esteem for the tradition—demonstrated in curriculum, continued fieldwork efforts, and published materials—meshed well with the native esteem for the tradition as ancient, sacred, and expressive. The performance of folk poetry thus became a privileged act of cultural maintenance on two complementary planes.

Literacy, Song Performance, and the Institutionalization of Tradition

Both literacy and the ready availability of printed collections complemented native modes of entertainment and edification. As noted in the above discussion, reading aloud played important roles both in passing the time and in conveying moral or sacred thought throughout peasant Russia. Illiterates depended on literate community members to perform texts that could then be committed to memory. In such cases, printed collections could reach a much larger audience than might at first be assumed on the basis of actual literacy rates alone. And when printed folk poetry was performed aloud, as we shall see, it necessarily (re)entered the interpretive and experiential frameworks of local tradition.

It is important to understand the performance traditions of epic songs in nineteenth-century Karelia. Songs tended to be performed and preserved in the familial context, with male singers figuring as the most revered performers. Collection throughout the nineteenth century reveals a remarkable degree of conservatism in the repertoires and song contents of Karelian "song families," such as the Perttunen, Malinen, and Lesonen clans. Songs were also performed in work contexts (such as during sowing or fishing) as well as on certain ritual occasions (for example, weddings and funerals). Although a strong notion of the primacy of the local version prevailed, new songs or song details did make their way into the communal tradition and were accepted, especially if introduced by prestigious male performers. Thus, male singers could learn new songs while traveling, bringing these back to the community on their return home. Print-derived songs, acquired either first- or secondhand, could thus easily seep into local tradition. Such appears to be the case with Vihtoora Lesonen's repertoire.

The development and institutionalization of the folkloristic enterprise also affected singers' attitudes toward printed collections in Karelia. From the very first appearance of Lönnrot's *Kalevala*, fieldworkers brought the collection with them into the field as a kind of item-inventory for prompting singer recall. By reading portions of the poems aloud to peasants, collectors hoped to jog singers' memories and elicit otherwise

forgotten songs. As later collections appeared, such as Lönnrot's primarily South Karelian collection of lyric songs *Kanteletar* (1840) and D. E. D. Europaeus' Ingrian collection *Pieni Runonseppä* (1847), these too were brought into the field. By the turn of the century, even scholarly dissertations were being used as checklists. Räikkönen describes his use of Väinö Salminen's dissertation on wedding songs as a prompt in 1917 (quoted from Salminen 1931:568):

> Because there were a lot of people in the house, middle-aged persons as well, I sat down to chat a bit about songs. I read little snatches from Dr. V. Salminen's collection of wedding songs, which appeared to entertain the residents greatly. The result was that Mari Kuparinen (Kähäri), a 44-year- old, remembered seven old songs.

Such practices, while intended merely as a means of eliciting songs, could convey the notion of printed collections as authoritative, weighty, and esteemed. Regardless of whether or not singers viewed printed collections as superior to their own (usually shorter) renditions, they did acquire such publications for themselves, reading them or having them read aloud by literate community members.

Not only did Finnish folklore enthusiasts bring the printed collection to the folk, however, they also brought the singing folk to the salon and stage. Anneli Asplund's discussion of the development of a market niche for traditional singers deserves quotation here (1994:345):

> Teaching at the seminary in the little town of Sortavala on the shores of Lake Ladoga in the 1880s was a man by the name of O. A. Forsström-Hainari—an ardent admirer of ancient Finnish folk culture. It was his custom to invite to his home *rune* singers and *kantele* players from among his acquaintances to entertain his guests. These were only too pleased to oblige, since they were thankful for the small sums of money which their performances earned them. It was also a pleasure to bask in the glow of the gentlefolk's admiration. Some of Hainari's friends began to follow his example by inviting singers to their homes or by arranging opportunities for them to perform. As a result, players and singers began to make their way to Sortavala from farther and farther afield.

Performance opportunities of this nature were further expanded by the development of formal folk festivals in places such as Sortavala from the 1890s onward. The prospect of monetary gain—through nominal fees paid

by collectors in the field, small wages for an evening's entertainment, or larger amounts paid for performance at elite song festivals—provided economic incentives for both using (and eventually also possibly concealing the use of) printed collections. The monetary aspects of such exchange were also strongly seconded by the prestige accruing from elite approval. Karjalainen notes the prestige which Miihkali Perttunen enjoyed in his home district thanks to the stipend he received from the Finnish Literature Society. Miihkali instructed the collector to convey his thanks to the board of the Society not so much for the economic assistance they afforded but for the honor they conferred (Laaksonen 1990:95).

By the late nineteenth century, then, the relation of singer and collector becomes frought with tension, bound up as it is in notions of self-worth, reputation, and economic success. Increasingly, both singer and collector needed each other, and their interactions—as reflected at least by fieldnotes—often became covertly adversarial, each carefully monitoring the claims and intentions of the other. Sometimes a peasant informant appears unaware of fieldworkers' dislike of literary sources and mentions them unequivocally. Räikkönen notes the enthusiasm with which villagers spoke of local copies of the *Kalevala*, *Kanteletar*, and *Pieni Runonseppä* in 1917 (quoted from Salminen 1931:572):

> The old woman [Anni Lappalainen, then 74 years old] explained that her verses had slipped her mind by now, but that her daughter even had a proper songbook: "There you'll get verses aplenty," explained the farmwife. I thought it best to leave that house with its song treasury intact and continue my journey onward.

The fieldworker's reticence even to listen to songs that may have been contaminated by print influence betrays the prevalent views of a "pure" oral tradition and the insidious effects of published collections among collectors of the day. Peasant informants did not fail to note such views with time, and occasionally downplayed the importance of print in the creation of their repertoires. Such claims are implicit in the notes of F. Kärki regarding the possible inauthenticity of a song collected in 1907 (*SKVR* IV_3:3776):

> Juhana Peipponen, 65 years old. He spoke of having heard the song in his youth from a man living at a neighboring farm, but I doubted him since at that same neighbor's [Kivikkola] there was a copy of Europaeus' *Pieni Runonseppä*, from which the following song may derive.

Literacy—originally extolled as Finland's gift and recompense to the treasured songlands—was now responsible for the development of an insidious literary "contamination" of the oral tradition itself.

We have seen, then, that reading as a customary act had long and well established roots in Karelia. Literacy was prized as a skill and shared through the act of reading aloud. The reading of sacred materials in particular was viewed as proper and propitious, both in Old Believer and standard Orthodox communities. Printed collections of folk poetry, further, fit native modes of edification, entertainment, and status manipulation. The advent of Finnish schools and materials in the area, replete with positive images and quoted examples of traditional song, prevented the growth of literacy from having immediate negative effects on local oral tradition. Adoption of printed materials into oral repertoires became possible as soon as even a minimal proportion of the populace had acquired the skills necessary for reading Finnish texts. Only collector disapproval, expressed through polite refusals to record certain songs or certain singers, stood in opposition to the active and creative incorporation of printed songs into performed tradition.

A Karelian Singer's Adaptations

It is clear from examining Vihtoora Lesonen's repertoire that it derives from Lönnrot's published epic. For one thing, the songs collected by Karjalainen all correspond to poems printed in near succession in the epic itself, implying that Vihtoora heard only sections of the work through another person's reading aloud. Further, many of the songs contain details or events uncharacteristic of Vihtoora's home region (the Vuokkiniemi and Latvajärvi districts of Viena Karelia). Vihtoora's song *SKVR* I_2:1023, for instance, relates the hero Väinämöinen's desperate search for someone to heal his bleeding knee, an event covered in Poems 8 and 9 of Lönnrot's 1849 *Kalevala*. Although this song finds plentiful counterparts in local oral tradition (e.g., *SKVR* I_1:295-307), its second half—relating the incantations used in the actual healing—derives entirely from Lönnrot's text (see below). Similarly, only the second half of Vihtoora's *SKVR* I_2:1026—in which Väinämöinen attempts to gain entrance into the land of the dead (Tuonela)—finds close echoes in the local song tradition (*SKVR* I_1:362-69); the first half of Vihtoora's song contains narrative events and lines that closely match Lönnrot's Poem 16 but differ substantially from the songs of Vihtoora's community. Lönnrot's Poems 10, 11, 12, and 26 find direct

adaptations in Vihtoora's *SKVR* I_2:1022, 1024, 1025, and 1027, each containing narrative events and characters (for example, Lemminkäinen's marriage to Kyllikki) otherwise unattested in the Latvajärvi and Vuokkiniemi districts. Indeed, because Lönnrot's 1849 *Kalevala* is based on texts collected across the entirety of Karelia and differs so significantly from the oral tradition of any single locale, literary influence of the kind evident in Vihtoora's repertoire is seldom difficult to recognize.

In an earlier study (1995), I tried to show that although Vihtoora's version of one song (*SKVR* I_2:1023) closely follows Lönnrot's text in many respects, it also betrays a strong and pervasive reliance on local oral tradition and immanent understandings of the narrated events. The ethnopoetic structure of Vihtoora's performance closely matches that of a song collected from Vihtoora's kinsman Varahvontta Lesonen (*SKVR* I_1:306) in terms of stanza length, use of repeated lines, and other stylistic features. These similarities give way only once the song broaches subjects normally outside of the local song tradition—for instance, the healing incantation of the song's second half, a detail in keeping with local understandings of the song's plot but normally not included in the song itself. Such closeness in form indicates that although Vihtoora clearly borrows from Lönnrot's text, he does so from within the framework of aesthetics and plot expectations characteristic of his community's song tradition. Lönnrot's epic does not displace local understandings and stylistic norms; rather it is fit into them by native audience members and performers.

These observations may be extended by examining Vihtoora's account of the creation of the sampo (*SKVR* I_2:1022). The source of Vihtoora's song, Lönnrot's Poem 10, differs greatly from the accounts of the sampo's creation current in Vihtoora's home tract, as we shall see. We may thus examine how the singer confronted, interpreted, and reperformed a song entirely outside of the local repertoire. Again, as with Vihtoora's 1025, this performed *Forging of the Sampo* proves a reinterpretation rather than a mere imitation of Lönnrot's material. Vihtoora seems to read Lönnrot's elision of two distinct songs—the *Sampo Epic* and the *Golden Bride*—as a clear metonymic allusion to the moral implications of each. His resultant song heightens this allusion and spotlights the moral judgment at the core of the song in a manner consistent with techniques of allusion and intertextuality described for Karelian epic (Tarkka 1994) and for many oral traditions in general (Foley 1991).

Lönnrot's *Forging of the Sampo* (Poem 10) represents for many modern readers one of the most vivid and memorable moments in the entire

fifty poems of the *Kalevala*. The Sampo Cycle as a whole forms the narrative backbone of Lönnrot's epic and it is thus natural that the author seeks to dramatize and extend the moment of the sampo's creation in Poem 10. In doing so, however, he must depart from folk versions of the sampo song—the same versions that were familiar to Vihtoora from local oral tradition. The typical sampo song of Viena Karelia covers the actual creation of the sampo virtually in passing. Versions focus most usually on Väinämöinen's floating in the sea, possible role in the creation of the world, miserable experiences at Pohjola, sending of Ilmarinen, Ilmarinen's marriage negotiations with the farmwife, and the heroes' eventual theft and destruction of the sampo itself—events redistributed by Lönnrot across the expanse of his literary text. Within these broad, multi-episodic songs, the creation of the sampo receives relatively little attention. Consider, in contrast to Lönnrot's long account of the forging process (10:281-416), Arhippa Perttunen's more typical rendering, collected by Lönnrot in 1834 (*SKVR* I_1:54:49-164):

Pohjolahan mentyöön
Pohjon akka harvahammas
pani sammon laaintaan
    kirjo kannen kirjantaan
yhen joukosen sulasta
    yhen otrasen jyvästä
        yhen villan kylkyöstä
            maiosta mahovan lehmän
                yhen värttinän murusta.

Sillon seppo Ilmorinen
päivät sampuo rakenti
    yöt neittä lepyttelööpi.

Sillon seppo Ilmorinen
saapi sammon valmihiksi
    kirjokannen kirjatuksi
        ei neittä lepytetyksi.

After he got to Pohjola
Pohjo's old woman, gap-toothed one
set him to making the sampo
    to carving the mottled lid
from one swan's molting
    from one grain of barley
        from one strand of wool
            from the milk of a dry cow
                from the shard of a distaff.

Then craftsman Ilmarinen
by day built the sampo
    by night soothed the maiden.

Then craftsman Ilmarinen
got the sampo finished
    the mottled lid carved
        the maiden was not soothed.

Here, in a song performed by one of Lönnrot's greatest informants who was also one of the principal contributors to the *Kalevala*, we find none of the suspense or drama that characterize Lönnrot's Poem 10. The sampo itself receives little attention here beyond the details of its original elements and final creation.

In order to create the memorable moment of the sampo's forging, then, a necessity born in part of the immensity of the sampo's symbolic role

in the long literary epic, Lönnrot must adapt a different song as the basis of his depiction. The song that Lönnrot chooses for this purpose—the *Forging of the Golden Bride* (*Kultaneidon taonta*)—figures as a later portion of the epic as well (Poem 37). In traditional versions of this song collected in Viena Karelia, Ilmarinen seeks out workers and a forge and sets to work creating a metal bride for himself. He creates a series of imperfect items, returning each to the forge in turn. At last, however, the hero succeeds, creating an ersatz wife who, however, proves dissatisfying both as a companion and as a bedfellow. Lönnrot borrows the *Golden Bride's* narrative framework, particularly its images of repeated attempts at forging, in order to lengthen and enliven an otherwise brief moment in the Karelian epic songs. Images of Ilmarinen ordering workers, fanning flames, and pulling out flawed items derive entirely from this latter source. The resulting fusion constitutes a poem unparallelled in the oral tradition. Given the uniqueness of Lönnrot's poem, then, any oral appropriation of it offers insights into traditional means of adapting and understanding new songs. As we shall see, Vihtoora contextualizes Lönnrot's poem within larger communal understandings of its individual source poems and characters.

Vihtoora's 64-line song (included in the Appendix at the end of this article) follows the core plot of Lönnrot's Poem 10. Vihtoora's adaptation opens with the farmwife's bidding Ilmarinen to make the sampo. The hero forges a bow, a horse, and finally the sampo, an act that causes the community no joy but pleases Ilmarinen himself. In line and in detail, Vihtoora's song shows clear dependence on Lönnrot's epic. At the same time, however, the song contains lines not included in Lönnrot's poem and reveals as well both Vihtoora's traditional oral aesthetic and his apparent interpretation of Lönnrot's editorial decisions.

Vihtoora does not reproduce in his song the entirety of Lönnrot's Poem 10. Lönnrot's long stage setting (1-250), involving Väinämöinen's trickery, Ilmarinen's arrival, and the farmwife of Pohjola's welcoming speech, finds no counterpart in Vihtoora's song. Instead, the singer begins, seemingly abruptly, with the farmwife's challenge to Ilmarinen and the latter's modestly confident answer (1-18). Gone with this performative decision are Lönnrot's carefully constructed details of character motivation and feelings—for example, the hero's unwillingness to journey to Pohjola, Väinämöinen's ulterior motives, and the existence of the Maiden of Pohjola as the possible reward. As in his other *Kalevala*-derived songs, Vihtoora chooses to rely on his audience's general understanding of the narrative and characters to situate his scene. Simply by mentioning the farmwife and Ilmorini (Ilmarinen) by name and quoting their exchange, the entirety of

the epic moment is metonymically evoked and assumed (Foley 1991).[6] A more explicit depiction of the narrative situation, its motivation, or outcome is unnecessary for an audience already familiar with the story. It is significant that Vihtoora can rely on a system of traditional referentiality here even when the song he sings depicts a scene unfamiliar in his community's usual repertoire.

Broad aspects of structure and detail change in Vihtoora's adaptation as well. Vihtoora's song reduces the hero's attempts at forging from Lönnrot's five to a terser series of three, characteristic of local vesions of the *Golden Bride* song. Whereas Lönnrot's hero creates a bow, boat, heifer (*hieho*), and plow before attaining the sampo, Vihtoora's Ilmorini creates only a bow and horse (*hehvo*) before achieving the magic object. This three-part structure is characteristic of local versions of the *Golden Bride*, where the hero generally creates a sword, horse (*orih*), and maiden (e.g., *SKVR* I_1:530, 533, 534, 535, 537, 538). This series of paralleled actions is subtly intensified by the figures manning the bellows in Vihtoora's song: first serfs, then the wind, and finally Ilmorini himself. Vihtoora thus builds mounting significance into his series in a way unparallelled in Lönnrot's text. In the *Kalevala*, the bellows are operated by serfs up to the final fanning, when the winds take over.

Vihtoora's independent control of his song's form and contents contrasts with the closeness of the lines actually borrowed from Lönnrot. As an illustration of the similarities between Vihtoora's song and its textual source, consider the words with which Ilmarinen answers the farmwife's challenge in each:

Silloin seppo Imarinen	Then craftsman Ilmarinen
itse tuon sanoiksi virkki:	himself put into words:
"Saattanen takoa Sammon	"I may be able to forge the Sampo
kirjokannen kalkutella	to hammer the mottled lid
joutsenen kynän nenästä	from the bottom tip of a swan's feather
maholehmän maitosesta	from a barren cow's milk
ohran pienestä jyvästä	from a little grain of barley
kesäuuhen untuvasta	from a summer ewe's wool
kun olen taivoa takonut	since I have made the heavens
ilman kantta kalkuttanut	pounded out the lid of air
ilman alkusen alutta	without any prior plan
riporihman tehtyisettä.	without even a guide string."

(*Kalevala* 10:269-80)

[6] For a general discussion of traditional metonymy of this kind, see Foley 1991.

Sanou seppo Ilmorini:	Craftsman Ilmorini says:
"Taijanhan mie takuo Sampon	"I know perhaps how to forge the Sampo
kirjoalla kirjokannen	carve the mottled lid
joutsenen kynän nenästä	from the bottom tip of a swan's feather
osran pienestä jyvästä	from a little grain of barley
kesäuuhen untuvasta	from a summer ewe's wool
mahon lehmän maitosesta;	from a barren cow's milk;
kun mie olen taivahan takonun	since I have made the heavens
aivan ainehien alutta,	quite without any basis,
ei tunnu vasaran jälki	it doesn't seem beyond the hammer
eikä pihtien pitämät."	nor held by the tongs."

(*SKVR* I $_2$:1022:8-18)

Here, Vihtoora's changes are limited to a few telling whole-line substitutions at the end of the passage (drawn from other songs common in the local oral tradition) and a partial translation of the Lönnrot's lines from his Finnicized literary Karelian into the normal Karelian of the song tradition. Lönnrot's *ohran* ("barley," 275) becomes Vihtoora's *osran* (12); his *taivoa* ("heavens," 277) becomes the more typical Karelian *taivahan* (15); his descriptive verb form *kalkutella* ("to hammer," 272) is replaced with the *kirjoalla* ("to carve," 10) used elsewhere in Lönnrot's poem (e.g., 10:261). Where Lönnrot makes use of the somewhat archaic potential mood in his line 271 ("Saattanen takoa Sammon"—"I may be able to forge the Sampo"), Vihtoora uses the more common particle *-han* to express this same uncertainty (9): "Taijanhan mie takuo Sampon"—"I know, perhaps, how to forge the Sampo." This last substituted line is by no means Vihtoora's own singular creation, however; in fact, it occurs a number of times in the local oral tradition as an alternative to the line used by Lönnrot (e.g., *SKVR* I$_1$:64:166). Vihtoora's rendition thus hints at his familiarity with oral versions of the sampo song.

At other junctures in Vihtoora's song, however, Lönnrot's text seems a distant model indeed, as lines and refrains appear in the oral performance that find no counterpart in the printed epic. Consider, for instance, Vihtoora's description of the first attempt at forging (19-28), a passage more or less equivalent to Lönnrot's 10:307-22:

Siitä seppo Ilmarinen	At that craftsman Ilmarinen
takoja iän-ikuinen	age-old smith
tunki ainehet tulehen	thrust the items in the fire
takehensa alle ahjon.	to the bottom of his forge.
Otti orjan lietsomahan	He set a serf to fan
väkipuolet vääntämähän.	servants to pump.

Orjat lietsoi löyhytteli	The serfs fanned the heat to steam
väkipuolet väännätteli	the servants kept pumping
kolme päiveä kesäistä	three summer days
ja kolme kesäistä yötä	and three summer nights
kivet kasvoi kantapäihin	stones ground into their heels
vahat varvasten sijoille.	boulders where their toes were.
Niin päivänä ensimmäisnä	Thus on the first day
itse seppo Ilmarinen	craftsman Ilmarinen himself
kallistihe katsomahan	stoops down to look
ahjonsa alaista puolta....	at the forge's lower end....

(*Kalevala* 10:307-22)

Se seppo Ilmorini	That craftsman Ilmorini
tunki ainehet tuleh	thrust the items in the fire
pani orjat lietsomah	set the serfs to fanning
palkkalaiset painamah.	the hirelings to pressing.
Orjat lietso löyhytteli	The serfs fan the heat to steaming
palkkalaiset painatteli.	the hirelings keep pressing.
Lietso päivän	They fan a day
lietso toisen	they fan a second
jo päivänä kolmantena	already on the third day
kyyristih heän katsomah	he bent down to look
ahjonsa alaista puolta:	at the forge's lower end:

(*SKVR* I $_2$:1022:19-28)

Here, the first three quoted lines find nearly exact counterparts in Lönnrot's text; line 22, in contrast ("palkkalaiset painamah;" "the hirelings to pressing"), "replaces" a line with similar meaning but different form in the printed text (line 312, "väkipuolet vääntämähän;" "the servants to pumping"). Such seemingly new lines derive, in fact, from neither the *Kalevala* nor local versions of the sampo song, but rather, from local renderings of the *Forging of the Golden Bride*. The Vuokkiniemi singer Okahvie Matvenna Remsujeff used lines nearly identical to Vihtoora's for describing the workers in her rendition of the *Forging of the Golden Bride* (1894). Compare their lines:

Pani orjat lietsomah	He set the serfs to fanning
palkkalaiset painamah.	the hirelings to pressing.

(V. Lesonen; *SKVR* I$_2$: 1022:21-22)

Pani orjat lietsomahe
palkkalaiset painamahe

He set the serfs to fanning
the servants to pressing.

(O. Matvenna; *SKVR* I_1: 530:7-8)

So, too, Ohvo Homanen performed lines that resemble the latter part of Vihtoora's stanza in his version of the *Forging of the Golden Bride* from 1872, helping account for these details of Vihtoora's reworking. Compare the lines in Vihtoora's song with those of Ohvo's *Golden Bride*:

Lietso päivän
lietso toisen
jo päivänä kolmantena
kyyristih heän katsomah
ahjonsa alaista puolta:

They fan a day
they fan a second
already on the third day
he bent down to look
at the forge's lower end:

(V. Lesonen; *SKVR* I_2: 1022:21-28)

Lietto päivän,
lietto toisen
jo päivänä kolmantena
katto hän ahjonsa aluksen
kohotteli kuumokses'ta.

He fans a day,
fans a second
already on the third day
he looks at the base of his forge
lifts out of the flames.

(O. Homanen; *SKVR* I_1:534:41-44)

Vihtoora's most striking borrowing from the local versions of the *Forging of the Golden Bride*, however, is not the inclusion of stray lines but the happy/unhappy refrain that closes each of the three attempts at forging. Where Lönnrot's poem concentrates on Ilmarinen's appraisal of the attempted tools alone, Vihtoora creates a repeated juxtaposition of the views of Ilmorini and his workers. Compare the five moments in Lönnrot's text with their three counterparts in Vihtoora's song:

Itse seppo Ilmarinen
ei tuota kovin ihastu

Himself craftsman Ilmarinen
doesn't rejoice much at that

Se on seppo Ilmarinen
ei ihastu tuotakana

That craftsman Ilmarinen
doesn't rejoice at that either

Se on seppo Ilmarinen
ei ihastu tuotakana

That craftsman Ilmarinen
doesn't rejoice at that either

Se on seppo Ilmarinen

That craftsman Ilmarinen

ei ihastu tuotakana — doesn't rejoice at that either

Niin ihastui Pohjan akka — Then the farmwife of Pohja rejoiced

(*Kalevala* 10:333-34, 352-53, 369-70, 387-88, 423)

Siitäpä orjat ihastu — At that the slaves rejoice
vain ei ihastun Ilmorini — only Ilmorini did not rejoice

Muut ihastu kaikki kansa — The entire people rejoices
vain ei ihastun Ilmorini — only Ilmorini did not rejoice

Ei ihastu muu kansa — The rest of the people do not rejoice
vain ihastu Ilmorini — only Ilmorini rejoices

(*SKVR* I_2:1022:31-32, 50-51, 63-64)

Vihtoora's marked departure from the epic's text finds close parallels, however, in local versions of the *Forging of the Golden Bride*, as, for example, in Ohvo Homanen's version (cited above):

Señ seppä pahoim pahastu — The craftsman was sad at that
muu miero hyvin hyvästy — the rest of the world was very glad

Señ seppä pahoin pahastu — The craftsman was sad at that
muu miero hyvin hyvästy — the rest of the world was very glad

Señ seppä hyvin hyvästy — The craftsman was glad at that
muu miero pahoim pahastu — the rest of the world was horribly sad

(*SKVR* I_1:534:47-48, 66-67, 83-84; 1872)

It is clear from such comparisons, then, that Vihtoora draws not only on Lönnrot's Poem 10, but on local equivalents of the same songs that Lönnrot had mined originally for his literary epic's structure and lines. In this sense, Vihtoora's version of the *Forging of the Sampo* reveals a remarkably sophisticated process of oral reception. Vihtoora accepted Lönnrot's song in its theme and details, even though it found no local counterpart. Recognizing the source poetry that had served as Lönnrot's model (the *Sampo Epic* and the *Forging of the Golden Bride*), however, Vihtoora then recreated the song on his own terms, combining lines adopted from the *Kalevala* with the overall framework and refrains drawn from local versions of the *Forging of the Golden Bride*. Further, the entire song was performed in accordance with local ethnopoetic norms—a stress on

groupings of three, parallelism between refrain-like closing scenes, and reliance on metonymic understandings of character and situation. One could scarcely imagine a more active or independent reception of a written work, or a more traditional approach to a new song.

Reperformance as Interpretation

Given the fact that Vihtoora recognized Lönnrot's textual alteration, then, the question becomes why Vihtoora chose to learn the song itself and extend Lönnrot's editorial strategy even farther. In examining this question of *why*, I believe we must focus on *how* Vihtoora understood Lönnrot's text and the emendations that he noted there. I suggest that Vihtoora, as a traditional audience member, viewed Lönnrot's textual reworking not as random or meaningless alteration for the sake of suspense alone, but as a powerful immanent allusion: an imagistic linking of the story of the sampo and the lesson of the golden bride. By superimposing these two moral tales through the hybrid union of lines and structures from each, both Lönnrot and (perhaps more consciously) Vihtoora create new resonances in the oral tradition. We can sense the meaning of this allusion, then, only by examining the sampo and golden bride as they exist in Vihtoora's local oral tradition.

Vihtoora's understanding of the sampo song undoubtedly contrasted with that of Lönnrot or that of historical-geographic researchers who followed. Setting aside questions of Ur-form and redaction analysis, however, we may note a fairly consistent form and interpretation of the sampo cycle in nineteenth-century Viena Karelia, particularly in the region in which Vihtoora resided (Latvajärvi and Vuokkiniemi).[7] The song, ritually performed during spring and fall plantings (cf. note, *SKVR* I_1:88b) propitiated a successful harvest. Its power in assuring a productive agricultural year and in forestalling the frost (associated with the farmwife of Pohjola) must be understood not as an intrusive scholarly myth-ritualist reading but as the native view among nineteenth-century Christian Karelian peasants. The song's recurrent cosmogonic elements are linked by the theme of useful creation arising out of seemingly destructive or injurious

[7] The question of the "original" or "core" meaning of the sampo has occupied myriad folklorists in Finland for a century and a half. It has been compared to motifs in Scandinavian saga, Finno-Ugric religion, north Eurasian cosmology, and other cultural complexes. My intent in this discussion is not to delve into the sampo's pre-Christian significance, but only to suggest its meaning to Christian peasants of the nineteenth century.

acts. Most local versions (e.g., *SKVR* I_1:54, 58, 60, 62, 63, 64, 73, 74, 75) begin with an enemy's wounding of Väinämöinen and the latter's protracted floating on the sea. During this time, the hero becomes a nesting place for a bird but unavoidably destroys its eggs, leading to the creation of the earth and sky.[8] In other versions, Väinämöinen's courtship of the Maiden of Pohjola and resultant conflict with Ilmarinen opens the song instead (e.g., *SKVR* I_1:53). In any case, the hero then arrives at Pohjola, negotiates with the farmwife there and eventually creates—or has Ilmarinen create—the sampo, an object capable of limitless, effortless production. Avarice leads to its theft, however, and in the end, the sampo (and sometimes also the Maiden of Pohjola; *SKVR* I_1:64) is lost into the sea.[9] Singers noted extratextually that this fate explains the saltiness of the ocean, its unsuitability as drinking water. As one informant clarified:

> Mereh jauhomah s'ai ijäks'eh, tuoho Valkieh mereh; s'uoloo jauho viimeseks', ta s'ielä on meress'ä s'uolan jauhonnass'a. Ei voia i vettä juua, n'iin on s'uolan'i meri.
>
> It ended up in the sea to grind forever, into the White Sea; it was grinding salt last, so there in the sea it's grinding salt. One cannot drink the water, because the sea is salty.
>
> (N'ekka-Jyrin leski; *SKVR* I_1:73; 1872; cf. also *SKVR* I_1:64, 1825)

Yet another informant viewed the sampo not simply as the source of the sea's salt, but also the entity responsible for its strange creatures, such as shellfish (Maksima Martiskainen, *SKVR* I_1:99; 1872). Moral judgments regarding greed, either for the sampo or for the Maiden of Pohjola or for both, and its destructive effect on human and cosmic order were consciously identified by singers. Through its performance during the planting process, further, the song comes to express the importance of cooperation and toil as the outcomes and remedies of primordial avarice and sloth.

Local versions of the *Forging of the Golden Bride*, for their part (e.g. *SKVR* I_1:526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531), combine occasionally with other songs related to the courtship attempts of Väinämöinen or Ilmarinen. In any case, they end nearly without exception in a strong moral pronouncement against turning silver and gold into substitutes for living

[8] Lönnrot divides this portion of the typical Viena Karelian sampo song into two parts, placing the account of creation from an egg at the outset of the 1849 *Kalevala* (Poem 1), while the enemy's attempted assasination occurs in the figure of Joukahainen (Poem 6).

[9] The latter part of this song is used as the base for the 1849 *Kalevala*'s Poem 42.

affection, as in the following summation performed for Karjalainen by Maura Marttinen in 1894:

Itse noin sanoikse virkki:	Thus he put into words:
"Elköh nainehet urohot	"Do not, married men
Elköh miehet naimattomat	do not, men unmarried
valakko vasesta naista	craft a woman of copper
naista kullasta kuvakko	adorn a woman of gold
vilun huohti vaipan alta	cold will chill beneath the blanket
kylmän kylkehe panouve."	when touching the icy rib."
	(*SKVR* I_1:526b:74-80)

This moral occurs even in songs that do not explicitly recount Ilmarinen's tribulations in bed with his metal companion (as, for example the above song *SKVR* I_1:526b). Clearly the song's plot was familiar enough that it could be invoked metonymically in performance. The song's moral, on the other hand, appears to have been stressed through its unfailing inclusion at the culminating moment of the performance.

When we consider these narrative frameworks, then, it becomes easy to see why Vihtoora would have welcomed Lönnrot's elision of the sampo song and the account of the golden bride. Both songs hinge on strong moral pronouncements regarding both greed and unnatural acquisitions. Both stress the destructive potential of such acts for the entire community and call for proper conduct. Thus, whereas Lönnrot can create a moment of misguided euphoria at the creation of the sampo—an image of illusory joy dashed immediately by the farmwife's unsuspected avarice and treachery *(Kalevala* 10:423-62)—Vihtoora expects no such gullibility from his audience. The very mention of the sampo, now further bolstered by the imagistic invocation of the golden bride as well, would signal the seriousness and error of the creation at once. It is for this reason, perhaps, that Vihtoora allows the audience inside his song—like the traditional audience outside it—to recoil in immediate disapproval at the creation of the sampo. By adopting the refrain common to the *Forging of the Golden Bride* as locally performed, Vihtoora accentuates the metonymic significance of the sampo itself:

Ei ihastu muu kansa	The rest of the people do not rejoice
vain ihastuIlmorini.	only Ilmorini rejoices.
	(*SKVR* I_2:1022:63-64)

In a competent and nuanced manner, then, Vihtoora Lesonen assimilates a printed poem into his community's meaningful ambient framework of performance, interpretation, and variation. His knowledge of the traditional oral epics of the region allowed him to recognize Lönnrot's nontraditional fusion of two formerly distinct narrative themes. His understanding of the moral bases of these source poems may have allowed him to interpret Lönnrot's reworking as a metonymic invocation. Vihtoora's own new song reflects the immanent significance of both the sampo and the golden bride and interrelates the two in a powerful depiction not of suspense but of foreboding. The singer brings his competence in the oral tradition to bear upon the printed text, receiving it first as a traditional audience member and then as an active performer.

In terms of Vihtoora's performance, then, the ability to read—or to listen to others read—played an important yet not destructive role. Literacy made songs published in the 1840s readily available to a singer half a century later. The resilience and power of the oral tradition, for its part, ensured that the experience of those songs occurred along lines inherent in and supportive of the tradition itself. The resulting song provides evidence not of the destruction of a genre (as late nineteenth-century collectors feared) but of the continued shaping influence of tradition in the artistic lives of its performers.[10]

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Appendix

Sammon taonta [*Forging of the Sampo*]
-Vihtoora Lesonen's version (*SKVR* I_2:1022)
(collected by K. Karjalainen, 1894)

Sano Pohjolan emäntä:
"Taijatko takuo Sampon
kirjokannen kirjoalla
joutsenen kynän nenästä
osran pienestä jyvästä
mahon lehmän maitosesta
kesä uuhen untuvasta?

The farmwife of Pohjola says:
"Do you know how to forge the Sampo
shape the mottled lid
from the bottom tip of a swan's feather
from a little grain of barley
from a barren cow's milk
from a summer ewe's wool?"

[10] A draft of this paper was written for the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar on "The Oral Tradition and Literature," held at the University of Missouri in 1994. Many thanks go to the seminar's director John Miles Foley for his useful suggestions and to the NEH for its generous assistance.

Sanou seppo Ilmorini:
“Taijanhan mie takuo Sampon
kirjoalla kirjokannen
joutsenen kynän nenästä
osran pienestä jyvästä
kesäuuhen untuvasta
mahon lehmän maitosesta;

kun mie olen taivahan takonun
aivan ainehien alutta,
ei tunnu vasaran jälki
eikä pihtien pitämät.”

Se seppo Ilmorini
tunki ainehet tuleh
pani orjat lietsomah
palkkalaiset painamah.

Orjat lietso löyhytteli
palkkalaiset painatteli.
Lietso päivän
lietso toisen
jo päivänä kolmantena
kyyristih heän katsomah
ahjonsa alaista puolta:

jousi tungekse tulesta
kirjokoari kuumoksesta.

Siitäpä orjat ihastu
vain ei ihastun Ilmorini.

Jousi on hyvän näköni
vain on pahan tapani:
joka päivä peän kysyy
toisin päivin kaksi peätä.

Siitä seppo Ilmorini
tunki ainehet tuleh
pani tuulen lietsomah.

Lietso päivän,
lietso toisen
jo päivänä kolmantena
kyyristih heän katsomah
ahjonsa alaista puolta:

Craftsman Ilmorini says:
“I know perhaps how to forge the Sampo
shape the mottled lid
from the bottom tip of a swan’s feather
from a little grain of barley
from a summer ewe’s wool
from a barren cow’s milk;

since I have made the heavens
quite without any basis,
it doesn’t seem beyond the hammer
nor held by the tongs.”

That craftsman Ilmorini
thrust the items in the fire
set the serfs to fanning
the hirelings to pressing.

The serfs fan the heat to steaming
the hirelings keep pressing.
They fan a day
they fan a second
already on the third day
he bent down to look
at the forge’s lower end:

a bow thrust up from the fire
a mottled bow from the flames.

At that the slaves rejoice
only Ilmorini did not rejoice.

The bow is nice-looking
but it is bad-mannered:
every day it asks for a head
on other days for two heads.

At that craftsman Ilmorini
thrust the items in the fire
set the wind to fanning.

It fans a day,
fans a second
already on the third day
he bent down to look
at the forge’s lower end:

hehvo tungekse tulesta	a horse thrusts up from the fire
kultasarvi kuumoksesta.	a gold-horn from the flames.
Hehvo ois hyvän näköni	The horse is good-looking
vain ompi pahan tapani:	but it, indeed, is bad-mannered:
Metsässä on makoalija	in the forest it loafs around
moaha maijon koatelija.	it spills its milk onto the ground.
Muut ihastu kaikki kansa	The entire people rejoices
vain ei ihastun Ilmorini.	only Ilmorini did not rejoice.
Siitä seppo Ilmorini	At that, craftsman Ilmorini
hehvon katkasi kaheksi	broke the horse in two
murteli murenehiksi.	splintered it into pieces.
Toas tunki ainehet tuleh	Again he thrust the items in the fire
itse löihe lietsomah.	takes up the fanning himself.
Lietso päivän,	He fans a day.
lietso toisen	fans a second
jo päivänä kolmantena	already on the third day
kyyristih heän katsomah	he bent down to look
ahjonsa alaista puolta:	at the forge's lower end:
Sampo tunkekse tulesta	The Sampo thrusts up from the fire
kirjokansi kuumoksesta.	the mottled lid from the flames.
Ei ihastu muu kansa	The rest of the people do not rejoice
vain ihastu Ilmorini.	only Ilmorini rejoices.

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Oral Tradition, 11/2 (1996): 301-319

Early Voice Recordings of Japanese Storytelling

J. Scott Miller

Japan's opening to the West in the late 1850s ushered in the Meiji period (1868-1912), an era of widespread industrial growth and erratic social change. Meiji Japan made great progress in its efforts to increase mass literacy, but during the same period saw the expansion of a thriving form of professional storytelling called *ninjôbanashi* ("tales of human sentiment").[1] This oral epic genre enjoyed a period of intense popularity beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, but in a surprising turn of events came to an abrupt end by the mid-1910s. The short-lived glory days of *ninjôbanashi* gave rise to a number of derivative arts, including comic monologues (*rakugo*) and silent film narration, and even contributed to the colloquial style of modern Japanese literature.[2] One of the more interesting artifacts to survive the extinction of *ninjôbanashi* is a collection of voice recordings made in 1903, some of which contain short excerpts from the *ninjôbanashi* genre performed by contemporary master storytellers.

This paper will use one of the 1903 recordings to articulate some of the unique characteristics of Japan's professional storytelling tradition as it existed during the Meiji period. First, I will sketch the background leading up to the *ninjôbanashi* boom of the 1880s and 1890s. Then, after describing the quirks of fate whereby the rare recordings were made, I will present a transcription and analysis of one *ninjôbanashi* from the series, illustrating some of the oral components typical of the genre. In the process I hope to give readers unfamiliar with the Japanese oral tradition a taste of the art form as it existed during its Golden Age approximately a century ago.

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[1] In romanizing Japanese the diacritic ˆ is used to represent double vowel sounds; hence, ô = oo.

[2] On *rakugo*, see Morioka and Sasaki 1989; on silent movie narration, see Ritchie 1990:3-5; and for a brief overview of the connections between storytelling and the birth of Japanese colloquial narrative, see Nobuhiro 1978.

Storytelling in Japan

Japan had no written language before it adopted the Chinese writing system in the fifth and sixth centuries CE. At first, dependence on the Chinese script meant using the Chinese language as well, but soon Chinese writing was altered to fit the unique needs of the very different Japanese language, and in this process literary compositions from preliterate Japan found their way into the permanent written record. The richness and the sheer volume of early Japanese writings with preliterate origins (including works such as the *Kojiki* ["Record of Ancient Matters," a cosmology, 712] and the *Man'yôshû* ["Collection of Myriad Leaves," a poetic anthology, 759]) suggest the existence of a rich oral tradition prior to the introduction of Chinese script.

Subsequent Japanese literary works maintained strong ties with the oral tradition throughout the Heian (749-1192) and medieval (1192-1600) periods; many classical Japanese literary masterpieces, including *The Tale of Genji* (c. 1006), contain a great deal of orality (Miyoshi 1989). While these written works of literature possess something akin to Walter Ong's "residual orality" (Ong 1986), a vibrant oral tradition appears to have coexisted among all levels of society. Between the tenth and fourteenth centuries itinerant Buddhist preachers often used oral fables (*setsuwa*) in their efforts to enlighten both the illiterate masses and the literate elite (Matisoff 1992). Some of these parables found their way into written collections, and are preserved today in works such as the *Konjaku monogatari* ("Tales of Times Now Past," 1108; translated in Ury 1979). More secular, *märchen*-like narratives called *otogi-zôshi* also found their way into written collections during the medieval period (Skord 1991).

Widespread civil war led to chaotic conditions in Japan during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, a situation that gave rise to another type of oral narrative. Some eyewitnesses to the more famous battles, along with now-masterless samurai, wandered the countryside telling battle stories in exchange for food and lodging. For most this was a temporary means of survival, but for a small number it turned into a profession. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, when political control in Japan was consolidated by the Tokugawa family, some of these itinerant storytellers began to settle down, affiliating themselves with popular temples or plying their trade at the intersections of major thoroughfares in the growing cities.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the art of professional storytelling divided into pre-existing oral and written camps, one relying upon colloquial dexterity and the other upon exposition in written texts (Orsi 1976). The former, whose performers were given the name *hanashika* ("raconteur"), consisted of oral narratives performed from

memory by storytellers who faced their audiences directly and employed minimal props (such as a hand towel and a fan) to serve as visual additions to the story (Morioka and Sasaki 1989:III). The latter, whose performers were labeled *kôdanshi* ("expositor"), consisted of written texts (usually drawn from the Japanese classics or military annals) that were placed upon a lectern, quoted or paraphrased, and then explicated by the storyteller. These *kôdan* offered a mixture of chanted rhythmical reading, punctuating beats on the lectern, and personal commentary (Sano 1943:I). Both types of storytelling involved mimetic dramatization of dialogue and a certain amount of acting on the part of the storyteller.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the urban centers of Osaka and Edo (now Tokyo) witnessed the establishment of professional storytelling theaters called *yose*, where both types of oral epic narratives would unfold nightly to a diverse audience of samurai, merchants, tradesmen, and their families. As Japan opened its doors to the West in the mid-1860s, the previously immobile masses began to converge upon the urban centers, and professional storytelling witnessed unprecedented growth. *Yose* multiplied, springing up in nearly every neighborhood, and a continuous flow of storytellers, musicians, impersonators, and magicians entertained an ever more diverse audience.

The world of late nineteenth-century professional storytelling was divided into schools or clans that included both apprentice and veteran performers, primarily men but including some women among their ranks. A typical evening at the *yose* began with several apprentice storytellers performing brief tales interspersed with vaudeville-type variety acts. As the evening progressed, the more experienced storytellers would appear in succession, and the final story would usually be an installment of an ongoing epic recited by a *shin'uchi*, or master storyteller.

Repertoires varied, and a well-trained storyteller was capable of reciting anything from a ten-minute comic monologue to an episodic work of thirty or more forty-minute installments.[3] Thematically the tales included both traditional fare (war stories, didactic moral tales, ghost stories, and romances) as well as the avant garde (biographies, current intrigues, and, as Japan continued to import ideas and technology from abroad, "adaptations" of Western novels).

In the 1870s a young Englishman named Henry Black (1858-1923), living in Japan with his journalist father, took to the *yose* stage offering his own Japanese-language renditions of Victorian novels and Western legends (Morioka and Saskaki 1983; 1989:256-58). These early adaptations were

[3] Storyteller lore includes accounts of famed raconteurs whose repertoires numbered over a hundred epic-length stories, some of which took several months (or even, in the case of renderings of classical *kôdan* tales, a year or more) to complete (Orsi 1990, Sano 1943, Barth 1928, Meissner 1913).

called *hon'anmono* ("adaptations" or "transmutations") and became widely popular among audiences in Tokyo. As Black rose in prominence as a storyteller, he supplied both materials and inspiration for other premier performers, who created new adaptations based upon Western literature. Both *kôdanshi* and *hanashika* created tales patterned after Western novels. Victorian Charles Reade's *Hard Cash* was re-set in Japan, complete with Japanese protagonists, as *hanashika* San'yûtei Enchô's (1839-1900) *Eikoku kôshi Jôji Sumisu no den* ("Tale of George Smith, A Filial English Son," transcribed 1885), while *kôdanshi* Shôrin Hakuen (1832-1905) used a German tale as the basis for his *kôdan* entitled *Ochiriya zôshi: Doitsu kenjô* ("A Wise German Daughter," transcribed 1891). These adaptations were very popular in the *yose*, and corresponded to the exotic written translations of Western novels popular during the first decades of Meiji.

Another Western import that influenced the storytelling profession during the early Meiji period was stenography. In the early 1880s Takusari Kôki invented a Japanese version of shorthand (Fukuoka 1978). Up to that time no stenographic system had existed in Japan; its centuries-long absence had allowed a broad diglossia to emerge between written and spoken Japanese.

While the Japanese vernacular underwent a number of changes in the millennium separating Heian and Meiji Japan, the written language did not evolve in line with speech but along more conservative, tradition-bound lines. Hence, the situation in Meiji Japan would be comparable to a modern England where everyone spoke contemporary English but for all written tasks would employ the language of Chaucer. This discrepancy, and the labor required to master the classical written dialect, meant that literacy was reserved for a small, highly educated percentage of the populace.

The arrival of shorthand in Japan in 1883 not only added a new sense of objectivity to printed discourse but, through the promotional efforts of Tokyo publishers, became the means whereby oral stories also began to appear in print.[4] These widely popular stories, called *sokkibon* ("shorthand-books"), represented verbatim transcriptions of traditional oral epics, written down as they were recited by professional storytellers in the *yose* (Miller 1994).

The new *sokkibon* caught on quickly among all levels of society, both as books and (in imitation of the *yose* performances) as serialized stories in the daily press. Oral stories made for successful printed texts for several reasons. First, the style of *sokkibon* language was much more immediate for the average Japanese reader of the Meiji period, since it

[4] Shorthand, first employed to transcribe court hearings and political debates, was soon used to transcribe a twenty-two episode ghost story, *Kaidan Botandôrô* ("The Peony Lantern," 1884), by master *hanashika* San'yûtei Enchô. Shortly after the work appeared in print it became a bestseller.

came from the oral rather than the literate milieu. Second, a majority of *sokkibon* readers also attended the *yose*, and therefore possessed a solid familiarity with the stories, narrative strategies, and idioms of the storytelling world that appeared in *sokkibon*. Finally, in the 1880s Japanese written narrative itself was undergoing a kind of gangly adolescence as it sought a new, colloquial idiom to suit a growing readership among the newly educated masses.

The success of *sokkibon* produced a twofold reaction: writers experimenting with vernacular narrative borrowed from the storytellers' style, and storytellers became famous throughout Japan as their tales were distributed in book form well beyond the traditional *yose* networks. Riding the crest of a new national awareness, premier storytellers—and storytelling as an art form—blossomed during the late 1880s and 1890s. A survey of the Japanese Diet Library collection of *sokkibon* (estimated to contain only a third of the *sokkibon* titles that appeared during the Meiji period) lists over seven hundred new titles published between 1884 and 1912. The rapid proliferation of hundreds, even thousands, of volumes of epic stories attests to the depth and breadth of the Japanese oral tradition during the late nineteenth century.

The phonograph goes East

At this same time, halfway around the world in Washington, D.C., Emil Berliner was perfecting the disk phonograph to compete with Edison's wax cylinder technology. During the late 1890s one of Berliner's friends, an enthusiastic, entrepreneurial American named Fred Gaisberg, set up the Gramophone and Typewriter Company in London and entered the world of commercial record publishing with a vengeance. At this early stage there were many competing startup companies, and Gaisberg, eager to seek out new recording possibilities, included ethnic music recordings among some of the company's first offerings.[5] These had enough success to warrant a subsequent, major collecting effort.

In 1902 Gaisberg set sail from London in a specially designed ship filled with wax disks and recording equipment. He traveled to India, and thence onwards to Japan, where he planned to collect ethnic music recordings as he worked his way back through Southeast Asia to Europe.[6] When Gaisberg landed in Yokohama he made the acquaintance of Henry

[5] A Gramophone catalog from 1902 includes not only English, German, French, and Italian titles, but also recordings made in Persian, Arabic, and Japanese (Gramophone 1902).

[6] For an account of the voyage, see Gaisberg 1948:ch. 3.

Black, who by that time was well-placed in the entertainment world. Using Black as an interpreter and agent, Gaisberg moved to Tokyo, set up his equipment in a Ginza hotel room, and proceeded to record over 260 disks of Japanese music. During this process Black suggested that Gaisberg record some of the more popular professional storytellers, and Gaisberg, recognizing a new potential market, agreed. Seventeen storytellers and entertainers (including several *shin'uchi*) made over sixty master disks that joined Gaisberg's growing collection.

Gaisberg arrived back in London at the end of the summer, and his exotic collection of recordings soon became commercially available in Europe.[7] Plans were made to market the ethnic recordings in their respective countries, but by the time the Japanese disks had been pressed in Germany, sent to England, and then shipped all the way to Japan, the Japanese market for records was no longer unspoiled territory. By early 1904 Columbia Records, taking its cue from the Gramophone expedition, was already marketing very aggressively in Japan and making domestic recordings. Columbia, and later that year the German record company Beka, followed Gaisberg's lead in recording storytellers as well, although they apparently did not employ Black.

Despite the fact that Gaisberg, on behalf of Gramophone, took another trip to Japan in 1906, he lost interest in the Japanese market and sold the territorial rights to Gramophone's American counterpart, Victor, the following year. Shortly thereafter domestic production facilities were set up in Japan, and Japan's recording industry was soon isolated from European production.

Therefore, as early as 1904 commercial recordings of storytellers joined *sokkibon* as alternatives to the *yose* oral narrative experience. The combination of printed editions of popular tales and the new records proved to be stiff competition for *yose*-style storytelling. In addition, a new style of written narrative increasingly patterned upon colloquial Japanese (and on the storyteller's *patois*) came into widespread use among many of Japan's new writers. As mass literacy increased, more and more people forsook the *yose* for the bookstore, the record player, and soon the cinema. By the beginning of World War I storytelling as an art form had dwindled in popularity, and the remaining performers found audiences who were most interested in comic monologues.[8]

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[7] The earliest catalog listing these recordings (Gramophone n.d.) appears to have been printed around 1905.

[8] Although there were attempts during World War II to revive storytelling as a "native" art form, these attempts failed and today the vestige of Japan's vibrant oral storytelling tradition is limited to the narrow range of comic monologues (*rakugo*). For a monograph on the Japanese *rakugo* tradition, see Morioka and Sasaki 1989.

Meanwhile, in London, Gramophone continued to grow and soon became one of the dominant leaders in the European recording industry. When Gramophone became EMI prior to World War II, the original Gramophone archives, containing a complete set of copies from the first Gaisberg recordings, were incorporated into a larger EMI library. Unfortunately, since the labels of the Gaisberg records were printed in Japanese, and the catalog consisted of a photo reproduction of the labels, the records garnered little or no attention over the intervening decades.

In Japan, Gramophone (and later Victor) attempted to market the Gaisberg records before 1911, but the paucity of records surviving today in Japan suggests that they were not widely distributed. The records that did find their way into Japanese collections suffered greatly in the intervening years of war and natural disaster.[9] Most, having been played over and over, retain only a shadow of their former quality.

Several years ago, after a bit of detective work in the National Sound Archive of the British Museum, I confirmed the existence of the EMI set of Gaisberg recordings. To my great joy I discovered that the Japanese collection is nearly complete, with only a few damaged records and most of the records still in mint condition, allowing us the rare chance to hear the voices of Meiji storytellers with great clarity.

Shiobara Tasuke no den

The Gaisberg recordings contain an assortment of voices that includes some of the star raconteurs of the Meiji period. The stories represent the major storyteller clans and a wide range of story types: epics, comic monologues, accompanied ballads, classical tales, romances, and even performances by impressionists.

Among the Gaisberg recordings are works by Black himself, which are particularly interesting since Black was a non-native speaker performing a traditional narrative art.[10] All of the storytellers recorded by Gaisberg had been trained during the nineteenth century, and had learned their art by memory, studying under the guidance of a senior storyteller until they finally developed their own style and repertoire. One of the prominent storytellers in 1903 was Asanebô Muraku VI

[9] Two Japanese record collectors in particular, Miyakoya Utaroku and Okada Nobuo, have taken great pains to locate existing Gaisberg records in Japan. Utaroku has been particularly ambitious, and has published a discography and biography of the Gaisberg storytellers (Miyakoya 1987).

[10] While the Black recordings have some value as novelties, their idiosyncratic style disqualifies them as examples of traditional Japanese oral narrative.

(c.1858-1907).[11] Muraku was in his forties when he performed five tales for Gaisberg's recording equipment.[12] Among these works Muraku included a brief episode from a tale called *Shiobara Tasuke ichidaiki* ("The Life of Shiobara Tasuke"), a popular, lengthy biographical narrative created by the most famous of Meiji *hanashika*, San'yûtei Enchô, who had passed away three years prior to Gaisberg's arrival in Japan.

Enchô created his tale during the 1870s from the rags-to-riches story of a successful charcoal merchant who moved to Edo during the eighteenth century. As with most original tales (as opposed to tales handed down from mentors), the storyteller would develop the story over a period of years, taking cues from audience reactions (Yamamoto 1962). In order to add realistic detail to his narrative, Enchô went so far as to travel to the Shiobara homeland, northwest of Tokyo. These details and Enchô's sense of timing paid off. The original Shiobara Tasuke had moved to Edo from the provinces to seek his fortune. During the 1870s and 1880s people were moving to Tokyo in droves from all across Japan for the same reason, and Enchô, keenly aware of his audiences, tailored the narrative to suit their circumstances and their interests. The tale, immediately successful, was so popular that, when it was transcribed using shorthand and published as a *sokkibon* in 1885, it quickly sold over 200,000 copies and became popular throughout Japan. By the 1890s it was such a well known tale that variations of *Shiobara* were even incorporated into the first textbooks for moral education in Japan (Aoki 1966).

The story begins by describing the desperate circumstances of the Shiobara family in their provincial home. Reduced from the relative luxury of samurai status to scratching out a living by farming in the bleak mountains, one of the Shiobara heirs, Tasuke, moves to Edo, where through perseverance, affability, and a penchant for thrift he eventually becomes a prominent and wealthy charcoal merchant. Enchô's biographical tale highlights Tasuke's rise to glory in a way that naturally intrigued and captivated provincial fortune seekers, themselves newly arrived in Tokyo.

After the 1885 *sokkibon* publication of *Shiobara Tasuke ichidaiki*, other storytellers besides Enchô, even those outside of his clan, began to perform episodes from this Enchô signature tale that had been an important part of the contemporary oral canon. It comes as little surprise, then, that in 1903 Muraku chose to perform one episode from *Shiobara* in Gaisberg's

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[11] It was a common practice for storytellers to adopt the stage names of their mentors; thus, Muraku was the sixth in his school (clan) line Asanebô to take the name Muraku.

[12] The recordings suggest that Muraku recorded only brief segments from what would normally have been twenty-minute episodes.

recording studio. Muraku's episode, entitled *Shiobara Tasuke no den* ("Tale of Shiobara Tasuke"), takes place after Tasuke arrives in Edo and enters an apprenticeship with a charcoal merchant. Tasuke's good looks and honest character have endeared him to the daughter of a wealthy family, and his future is about to take a turn for the better. A transcription of Muraku's tale, with a rough translation, follows:[13]

Shiobara Tasuke no den

Toki ni isseki ohanashi o môshiagemasuru no wa, Enchô tokui no Shiobara to môsu ohanashi o itashimasu ga, mazu Shiobara no ohanashi to môshimasu to kazu ga gozaimasu ga, Fujinoya no musume Hana to môsu no ga, ê Tasuke to môsu sumiya ni kokoro o minukimashite horemashita no o chichi ni akashimashita kara, ano sumiya wa mikomi ga aru to itte, hajimete niwaguchi kara sumiya o yobiireru koto ni ê narimashita ga, saisho kara sôdan o itashimasuru to, taike ga endan no koto de kotowarareru to ikan to iu node, akidarukai no Kyûhachi to iu Tasuke no tomodachi o yobimashita.

"Saa saa saa, kotchi zûtto taruya-san ohairi."

"Hê hê, dômo arigatô gozaimasu. Makoto ni kekkô na oniwa de gozaimasu. Ehhe dômo hajimete oniwa ni agarimashita mon de gozaimasu kara, menkuraimashite."

Iya iya, toki ni nô, omae-san ni sukoshi okiki môshitai koto ga aru."

"Hê hê , ê dô iu koto de gozaimasu?"

The Tale of Shiobara Tasuke

The story I will relate is from Enchô's masterpiece, *Shiobara*. There are any number of *Shiobara* variations; this one takes place after Hana, daughter of the Fujino family, has fallen head-over-heels in love with Tasuke, the charcoal vendor. When she divulges her feelings to her father, he sees promise in the youth and hires him to deliver charcoal through the family garden. For the marriage arrangements to proceed smoothly the wealthy Fujino family cannot be turned down outright, so Hana's father solicits the aid of Tasuke's friend, a trader of used barrels named Kyûhachi.

"Hey, hey! Keep coming, right along there—that's it, barrelman. Come on in."

"Why, thank ye, sir. What an outstandin' garden. Er, never been asked into a garden before, sir, so's I'm a bit flustered, ye might say."

"Never mind that. There is something I would like to ask you."

"Yessir, what exactly would that be, sir?"

[13] Romanization (and the Japanese text below) is based upon a transcript made by storyteller Miyakoya Utaroku (Miyakoya 1987:II, 19-21), which I have emended to conform with the clearer archive recording. The bracketed phrase is inaudible on the London recording; most likely it is a skip, since it is found on the Japanese record transcribed by the storyteller.

"Iya, hoka no koto de mo nai ga, shijû omae-san ga hiru jibun ni naru to monomi no shita no kakejaya de, issho ni gozen o tabete oide no ano sumiya-san nô."

"Well, let me see . . . how can I put this? You know that charcoal vendor, the one you take lunch with everyday at noon by the tea stall beneath the tower . . . ?"

"Hê hê."

"Yessir!"

"Ano sumiya-san wa, arya nani kai, doko no okata dai?"

"He—that is to say, that charcoal vendor—lives . . . ?"

"He, he, atashi no uchi no aryâ tonari de gozansu."

"I see, sir! 'E lives right next to me, sir!"

"Ohoho, omae-san no uchi o atashyâ shiranai yo."

"But I haven't a clue where *you* live."

"Naruhodo sô de gozansu. Hê, Honjô Aioi-chô de gozansu."

"Ahh, I get your point, sir! 'Live in Honjô, Aioi-chô, sir!"

"Oo, sô ka nô, ano okata ni gokanai wa aru ka nô?"

"Right. I see. Does your friend have someone . . . ?"

"Hê? Nan de gozansui?"

"What?! What's that you say?"

"Iie sa, gokanai wa aru ka nô?"

"I said, is there someone he is . . . with?"

"He he, makoto ni kekkô degasu."

"Oh, that's just fine with me."

"Iya, omae wa owakari wa nai no ka?"

"What, you don't understand what I'm saying?"

"He he, owakari ga nai n degasu."

"Reckon I don't, sir."

"Iie sa, nyôbô-san wa aru ka ten da."

"I'm asking you if he has a wife!"

"Ahahaha, naruhodo, yama no kami degasu."

"Ahh, I see, sir, you mean *'er indoors*!"

"Yama no kami to wa okashii nô."

"Well, *her indoors*, then."

"Hitorimono de gozansu. He he, asshi mo hitorimono degasu."

"Single as can be, sir. Matter of fact, I'm single too, sir!"

"Omae-san no koto o kikiyasen, toki ni ano okata nô, ê okonai wa dô iu okonai da nô?"

"I'm not asking about you! So, is your friend . . . esteemed?"

"[Sô de gozansu] nê Danna, ma o-sonae wa tsuitachi to jûgonichi degasu."

"[Well, sir, to tell you the truth,] sir, 'e offers steamed rice cakes at the shrine on the first and fifteenth of each month, sir . . . ."

"Iie sa, o-sonae de wa nai, okonai da?"

"No, not 'steamed'! Is he highly *esteemed*?"

"He he, sonna mon wa kuimasen."

"Esteem don't make for much of an offering, sir!"

"Ie, asshi, tebemono de wa nai. Ano okata wa nô, asa okiru to dô iu koto o nasaru nô?"

"No, no, no! I don't mean food. . . when your friend gets up in the morning, how does he conduct himself?"

"He he, sayô de gozansu nâ, meshi o kutte, ehhe kao o araun de."

"Well, sir, as I remember now, he eats his breakfast, then washes his face."

"Soryâ abekobe da, ê shikashi ano okata wa dôraku wa nasaran ka nô?"

"Don't you have that backwards? Oh, never mind, does your friend go out for 'base amusements'?"

"He he, dôraku nanzo wa itashimasen. Makoto ni aryâ nan de gozansu yo Danna, shôjiki na mon de gozansu."

"Oh, 'e don't ever go for 'amusements,' sir! 'E's what you call a right honest fellow, sir!"

"Aa sô ka nô, omae-san ni nô, ê sukoshi watakushi ga oriitte onegai ga aru nô."

"Oh, you don't say! Well, then, I have quite a delicate question for you."

"Hê, hê."

"Yessir!"

"Ê ano okata ni nyôbô-san wa nai no danô?"

"Well . . . your friend isn't married, correct?"

"Ehhe, sakki itta tôri hitorimono tte iu kara."

"As I said, he's single, so yes, he's not, sir!"

"Ôô, ê anô sumiya-san ni, ê nyôbô-san o sewa shiyô to omou ga moratte okure de nai ka nô?"

"Well . . . you see, I'd like to provide a wife for that charcoal vendor, but do you think he'd accept one?"

"EhheDanna, okanemochi nante mono wa nan de gozansu nê, eh, zeitaku na mon de gozansu nê. Ehhe, ouchi no osandon ga ehhe iro ga kuroi kara, ehhe fûfu ni shitara, tadon no yô na ko ga dekiru darô."

"Oh-ho, sir! So rich you are, sir! And so gen'rous, too! But your maid, she's so dark, sir, I think as a pair they'd have children that looked like lumps o' charcoal, sir!"

"Iiya sô de wa nai, musume no Hana ga, ê makato ni hazukashii ga, sumiya-san ni horeta to iu hanashi da ga."

"No, no, no! My daughter Hana . . . Hana has . . . well . . . fallen in love with the charcoal vendor."

Ato môshiagemasu, ê jikan ga gozaimasen kara, atoren to sashikawarimasu.

There is more to the story, but since my time has run out I'll turn it over to the next act.

Elements of Meiji storytelling

Several elements of Muraku's narrative *Shiobara Tasuke no den* reveal the state of Japanese storytelling by the turn of the century. First, owing to a general decline in audiences, larger epic tales of many nights' duration were rarely recited from beginning to end but were presented as abridged "fortnighters" or chopped into pieces that, with a bit of contextualization by the storyteller, could be performed for nearly any occasion.[14] This type of abridgment worked particularly well with the more popular tales, such as *Shiobara Tasuke ichidaiki*, that had been in circulation as *sokkibon* for nearly two decades.

Another element that stands out in this scene is the comic overtones. Although *Shiobara Tasuke ichidaiki* is a serious *ninjôbanashi*, at times very dramatic and suspenseful, the overtly comic tone of this particular episode suggests that by 1903 storytellers favored humorous over more dramatic episodes. Muraku's selection mirrors the general contemporary tendency for storytelling professionals to eschew the serious and favor the comic in their efforts to attract audiences distracted by *sokkibon* and new written literature.

Despite the fact that *Shiobara Tasuke no den* is only one in a long series of episodes, and a fragment from the episode at that, Muraku nevertheless follows standard storytelling convention by providing context at the beginning and promising more at the end. This structure, typical of the serialized narrative used by professional storytellers in the *yose*, developed as a narrative exigency for epic genres, particularly the complex, interwoven plots of *ninjôbanashi*.

The introductory paragraph (actually one long sentence in Japanese) is characterized by a lengthy chain of honorific verbs (such as *môshimasu*, *môshiagemasu*, and *itashimasu*). Both the run-on sentence and the honorific verbs are common initiatory techniques of Japanese professional storytellers. These devices serve at least two functions. The length added by the use of honorific phrases gives the audience (who usually hear several storytellers perform one after another) a chance to "zero in" on the new raconteur's vocal idiosyncrasies. The run-on sentence structure marks fluent delivery and assures the audience that the storyteller is eager to present the new installment. There is sometimes even a sense of mock impatience as the storyteller rushes through his summary of what has happened before. In this particular case, Muraku uses the introduction to

[14] The more revered storytellers were often hired to perform at private gatherings (Meissner 1913, Sano 1943).

clarify exactly why Fujino, a rich man of high social status, is willing to enter into conversation with a common barrel trader.

Fluency, in the sense of fluid narration, was *de rigueur* for the storyteller. Whereas modern Japanese written narrative tends toward shorter sentences with full stops, oral narrative has no such convention, and contains in its agglutinative structure the grammatical means to combine any number of sentences into one. Even the best storytellers must breathe, however, and listening carefully to the recorded version one notes that Muraku's opening line allows for (at least) five breathing pauses.[15] Thus what appears to be one long run-on sentence in the written text is actually part of the natural fluidity of an oral performance.[16]

After completing the initial summarizing narrative, spoken directly to the audience, the storyteller usually launches into a conversation between two or three individual speakers. One of the storyteller's skills is imitation, and in the above example Muraku shows off his skill by acting out both sides of a dialogue between two very different speakers. The dialogue is rich in dialect and linguistic indications of status, and even without visual clues—such as facial expressions or switching the head back and forth—the disparities between the two characters are quite apparent.

Muraku's dialogue between Kyûhachi and Fujino demonstrates a number of traditional devices still in common use among professional storytellers during the Meiji period. These include repetition, mimicry, punning, fluid narrative, and abrupt changes in tempo. Colloquial Japanese contains a large number of repetitive or rhythmical phrases that add richness and color to speech. Muraku's dialogue reflects this feature in several instances where repetition is used to emphasize or describe action. In the dialogue between Kyûhachi and Fujino, sound repetition alternately suggests hesitation (*ê*, "Hmmm") or confusion (*Hê*, "What?!"), or even overeagerness (*He he*, "Right, right!").

The storyteller's expert manipulation of register and his imitation of dialect play very important roles in characterization. Japanese contains varying levels of register that reflect degrees of deference towards the listener. These levels, often divided into honorific-humble and polite

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[15] There are lengthy pauses before the words *mazu*, *Fujinoya*, *chichi*, *saisho*, and *akidarukai*. As is the case in spoken Japanese, speakers tend to breathe following particles; in the example above, most of the breathing takes place after the particle *ga*.

[16] An analysis of the clearer archive recording reveals several cases where run-on response utterances (particularly *ehhe* and *ê*) were not included in the Miyakoya (1987) transcription, suggesting both the heavy wear of the Japan records as well as a native tendency to omit overt oral components during transcription.

language markers, can be used to reinforce the speaker's social status vis-à-vis the listener, but can also reveal subtle nuances about the relationship. Kyûhachi's frequent use of the deferential copula *gozansu* (an Edo dialect polite marker) is used in a manner that is stereotypical for Edo tradesmen addressing their social superiors. Fujino, on the other hand, who is a rich landowner, uses the neutral copula *da* (or substitutes the dialect equivalent *nô*) at the end of his sentences. He does, however, use polite markers (*ohairi*, *-san*, etc.) and occasional mid-sentence deferential language *(okikimôshitai*) to indicate his awareness of proper protocol when addressing a stranger for the first time. By including these register differences in his characterization of Kyûhachi and Fujino, Muraku emphasizes the gap between them; in giving Fujino a non-Edo dialect he further widens that gap, setting the stage for the inevitable misunderstanding upon which much of the humor of this episode depends.

Although at the beginning of the exchange Kyûhachi signals the formality of a first-time meeting by employing fully drawn out, deferential ending phrases (*de gozaimasu*), as the conversation proceeds he quickly begins to abbreviate (*gozansu* or *degasu*) or lower the deference level (*darô*). This shift suggests that he is less intimidated by Fujino's status than seems to be the case at the beginning. Likewise, Fujino at first uses some polite forms, but as the interchange begins to breakdown and misunderstanding grows, he also begins to abbreviate, suggesting that he is losing patience and his ability to maintain appearances.[17] Although the ambiguity of the transcription allows for at least two interpretations of Kyûhachi's "ignorance" (he is a fool and we should laugh at his ignorance, or he is playing the fool and we should laugh at Fujino), the recording itself reveals—through Muraku's changes in pitch, speed, and intensity—that Kyûhachi is, indeed, an entertainingly slow-witted tradesman.

As the differences in register between Kyûhachi and Fujino grow less distinct and as confusion grows, Muraku subtly brings the language of the two disparate characters closer together. This mirrors and foreshadows the mediation between Fujino's daughter and Kyûhachi's friend that is the *raison d'être* of the conversation.

Japanese contains many homophones, a situation that has elevated the pun as a primary marking device and established it as a central form in poetry. The Japanese oral tradition draws deeply upon this aspect of the language, and although there is no overt punning in the above story, there is one humorous exchange that turns on a near-pun, one that could be

[17] Interestingly enough, Fujino continues to use highly deferential language when referring to Tasuke.

accounted for by the nervousness, dialect difference, low status, or even hearing impairment of Kyûhachi. In the original, this revolves around the similarity between the words *okonai* ("behavior" or "character") and *o-sonae* ("food offering"). My translation offers an (admittedly stretched) equivalent near-pun using the words *esteemed* and *steamed*.

Fluid narration has always been an important characteristic of Japanese professional storytelling, and even today many storytellers build reputations on their rapid-fire delivery or ability to imitate accelerated spoken conversation with remarkable verisimilitude. Performing such a conversation is particularly difficult, since the characters often cut one another off, anticipate reactions, or even finish each other's sentences.[18] To create as realistic an effect as possible storytellers sometimes need to make instantaneous character changes in mid-sentence. In the above story, as Fujino is leading up to his question about Tasuke, Kyûhachi interjects:

"Iya, hoka no koto de mo nai ga, shijû omae-san ga hiru jibun ni naru to monomi no shita no kakejaya de, issho ni gozen o tabete oide no ano sumiya-san nô?"	"Well, let me see . . . how can I put this? You know that charcoal vendor, the one you take lunch with everyday at noon by the tea stall beneath the tower . . . ?"
"Hê hê."	"Yessir!"
"Ano sumiya-san wa, arya nani kai, doko no okata dai?"	"He—that is to say, that charcoal vendor—lives . . . ?"

Another characteristic of spoken Japanese conversation is the use of *aizuchi*, or confirmation sounds, a kind of back-channel response offered at regular intervals by listeners during a speaker's remarks. Above, Kyûhachi confirms that he is following Fujino's description by interjecting the phrase *hê hê* in response to Fujino's use of the signaling particle *nô*. In Muraku's performance, there is little or no pause between the two, yet the pronunciation difference is quite clear. This rapid transition back and forth between speakers illustrates the remarkable mimetic skill and fluency of Meiji storytellers.

Short of using some code to denote time passage, speed of delivery is difficult to depict on the printed page. Miyakoya's Japanese transcription

[18] Storyteller Yanagiya Kosanji, a contemporary of Muraku, remarked that perhaps the most difficult storytelling achievement was to perform a conversation involving the voices of five or six people (Meissner 1913).

of the recording, however, contains a few representations of speech compression that give evidence of variations in tempo. Compression in Japanese is sometimes indicated in writing by the use of the *katakana* syllabary. *Katakana* is an alternative script employed to write onomatopoeia, meaningless sounds, or words of non-Japanese origin. It thus lends itself to representing both condensed phrases (where speed of delivery slurs portions of words into new sounds) and attenuation (where, for example, slow delivery results in lengthened vowels). In Muraku's story, when Fujino reiterates his question, "I said, does he have a wife?" (*Iie sa, nyôbô-san wa aru ka ten da*), his speedy delivery condenses what would normally be pronounced *wa aru ka tte iu no da* into *wa aru ka te n da*, with *n* representing the rapid slurring of *iu* and *no*. In his transcription Miyakoya chooses to highlight the conflation—and thereby offer a written clue to the tempo—by using *katakana* instead of the more traditional *hiragana* alphabet to write the sound *n*. While not a complete temporal marking system, the deployment of *katakana* nevertheless provides readers who lack the voice recording a sense of haste or slurring in dialogue.

Other temporal variations in the performance are not immediately apparent in the transcription alone. For example, Kyûhachi fits the Tokugawa period (1600-1868) archetype of the garrulous, fast-talking Edo-born tradesman. Fujino, on the other hand, reflects the archetype for moneyed, non-Edo landowner: he is much more reserved and deliberate in his speech. Dialect and usage suggest this difference, but the differences in tempo emphasize it even more. Toward the end of the dialogue, as Kyûhachi finally warms up to Fujino, he begins to take liberties of familiarity that include quickened speech.

There is no means, however, aside from listening to the original recording, to discern immediately the tempo used in Kyûhachi's rapid-fire delivery of his last lines. Their length in print (five lines) stands in strong contrast to the relatively terse prior remarks Kyûhachi has offered, and this difference might suggest to a reader that he takes a bit of time making his point in his longest narrative. In Muraku's performance, however, Kyûhachi's last lines (containing eighty-eight syllables) are recited in about eight seconds. This is roughly the same amount of time Muraku uses to recite Fujino's subsequent forty-five syllable line. Thus the voice recording reveals that Kyûhachi speaks twice as rapidly as Fujino. Once again Muraku uses his verbal skill to underscore the differences between the two speaking characters.

Muraku thus uses a number of typical storytelling techniques in his 1903 recording of this brief tale. These techniques are combined with great dramatic and comic effect to contrast Kyûhachi's bumbling eagerness to

please with Fujino's reluctance to admit that his daughter is in love with a mere charcoal vendor.

Conclusion

While this paper only begins to tap their potential for illuminating Meiji storytelling, the 1903 Gaisberg recordings are a priceless resource for expanding our understanding of the aural dimension of *ninjôbanashi* and other Japanese oral narrative arts. Although the visual aspects of epic storytellers' performances from the Meiji period remain veiled by the passage of time, we can listen to an echo of their voices and in so doing gain greater insights into the stories themselves, along with a renewed admiration for the talents and skill of these professional raconteurs. The recordings allow us to reconstruct to a greater degree than heretofore possible the oral, non-textual dynamics at play in Meiji storytelling. For this chance we must thank the entrepreneurial spirit of Gaisberg and the intervention of Black, whose efforts nearly a century ago have preserved these rare aural glimpses of a lost oral tradition and allowed voices long silent to speak to us again.

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Oral Tradition, 11/2 (1996): 320-345

"In Forme of Speche" is Anxiety: Orality in Chaucer's *House of Fame*

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'He that speaks, sows; he that hears, reaps.'
English proverb

I

One of the central problems in the Middle Ages, according to Brian Stock, "is the relation of orality to a world making ever-increasing use of texts" in both its social interactions and its ontological explorations (1990:35). Because a contemporary self-consciousness can be reconstructed, Stock observes, "[t]he coming of literacy heralds a new style of reflection. Individuals are aware of what is taking place, and this awareness influences the way they think about communication. . ." (7). The subject of this essay is precisely some of the subjective reactions that the oral-literate interchange provokes in the mind of Geoffrey Chaucer. Working within both literate and oral poetic traditions, the English aureate-laureate also works between them, negotiating their interchange through his acute awareness of their strained fusion[1] In arguing that an anxious ambivalence about writing operates as dynamic subtext in *Beowulf*, Michael Near (1993) suggests that tensions between orality and literacy lie at the heart of the Anglo-Saxon poem. Reading Middle English literature, produced in a time of steadily increasing literacy and in an age wherein written poetry supplants oral poetry, we discover tensions in the oral-literate continuum that are the inverse of those faced by the author and audience of *Beowulf*. In the fourteenth century, these latter-day tensions play themselves out in Chaucer's dream vision, the *House of Fame*.

[1] I borrow the notion of the aureate/laureate dual role from Lerer 1993.

As the relationship between orality and literacy changes over time, so do the tensions resulting from the clash between their various mentalities and practices. What is more, early and late medieval poets react to these respective tensions differently. Whereas the tensions the *scop* confronts in *Beowulf* threaten his poetic voice, those Chaucer confronts in the *House of Fame* sustain his. To Chaucer, the stylistic and ideological friction produced by the interaction of orality and literacy is nurturing and constructive, not impoverishing or destructive, and his awareness of the cultural encounter leads not to silence but to articulation. To say that the opposing attraction of the oral and the literate is artistically enabling for Chaucer is not to minimize its destabilizing force: many uncertainties arise for the poet and for the literary tradition in which he works. Chaucer's struggle to achieve artistic vision in face of the cultural conflict is nevertheless productive. At times, though, a kind of anxious self-awareness marks the poet's comprehension of the challenges implicit in the oral-literate synergism.

The systematic disparagement of oral tradition in the *House of Fame* reveals Chaucer's poetic reflexivity as he explores the tensions between orality and literacy. Most notably, as I will show, Chaucer satirizes folklore by manipulating the proverbs and proverbial phrases he sets throughout his text. Because proverbial utterances have seemed to offer little beyond their unexceptionable observations, they have been relatively neglected by scholars other than folklorists. But a reappraisal of them reveals that much of the subtle richness in the poem resides in these deceptively common expressions. And more importantly to the matter at hand, not only do proverbial utterances speak to the folk and thereby disclose the latent orality of this medieval text, but in Chaucer's hands they also function as *literary* devices. Through their delicate subversion, Chaucer parodies oral poetic material and technique (cf. Hazelton 1960:376) and offers a metalinguistic critique that resounds within the newly literate culture he embraces. Its key lies in the embedding of orality in the written text, a phenomenon we must approach cautiously.

"Complete genius" such as Chaucer's must have thrived in (and in part been the product of) the "dynamic tension" between the orality and literacy of his world, just as Homer's flourished in the transitional world of ancient Greece (Havelock 1982:9). Unfortunately, modern readers trying to

appreciate Chaucer's talent may get caught in an observer's paradox.[2] Our literacy can blind us to many of the artistic subtleties and concerns Chaucer expressed. Trapped in a literate world in which even our spoken standard is writing-based, we have become desensitized to the oral world. As the equilibrium between orality and literacy has shifted, their interface has receded from our ears and eyes. Regardless of our approbation of it, the fluid linkage of orality and literacy seen in Chaucer's day may be difficult for the primarily literate to conceive.[3]

Before attempting to explicate Chaucer's metalinguistic concerns in the *House of Fame*, we need to consider how modern critical methodology affords us access to his text. As John Miles Foley insists, any abstraction of the oral must be informed by a flexible and synthetic methodology (1985:3). Only when literary criticism is combined with the multidisciplinary insights of folklore and culture studies can we begin to disentangle the enormous complexity of the medieval oral-literate interchange. Recognizing the ambiguous situation in the European Middle Ages is a necessary first step in that attempt: "interactions between orality and literacy reached perhaps an all-time high" then and yet leave the two in high relief (Ong 1984:1, 11). It follows that an investigation of the literature of the medieval period should be pursued along the twin axes of orality and literacy (Amodio 1994:4). The critical approach required to gain access to the cultural nexus thus envisioned has an epistemological basis. To appreciate the otherness of medieval texts a modern reader must engage in a creative act of imagination (Zumthor 1984:67-68). The best stratagem may be to use awareness of our own literate paradigm as a point

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[2] Compare Edwards and Sienkewicz 1990:3. Parks (1991) takes this recognition one step further: he concludes that not only scholars' literacy but also their resulting interpretive theories prejudice their understanding of orality. See further Parks 1991 for a discussion of the bias promoting the textualization of orality.

[3] A different intellectual paradigm may also isolate the modern world from the medieval. Accompanying the print and Newtonian revolutions is a cognitive shift that elevates vision as the basis of modern knowledge and belief. Our perception is altered as we are deafened by epistemology and time. This "deaf spot" must be kept in mind when we consider oral poetics. As Hoffman 1986 makes clear, a profound insensitivity underlies the more obvious difficulty of approaching an oral tradition from a literate one. See Kuhn 1970 and Merchant 1989 for historical analyses of the modern scientific revolution; see Ong 1982:36-49 for a treatment of the psychodynamics of orality.

of departure producing in ourselves an openness to the silence in the text; in this way we might respond to orality on its own terms (Parks 1991:59). If we hear the bias in our own voices, the postmodern recognition that "the Other can never speak for itself as Other" may be a place to resume, rather than suspend, reading (Jolly forthcoming).

A spatial metaphor oriented in a literate model aids our recovery of the complex interaction taking place in the Middle Ages. Orality, literacy, and their relationship to each other can be envisioned in terms of a continuum, with a primarily oral culture and a primarily literate one at opposite poles.[4] Literacy itself is not an absolute determinant, but is a term or concept that must always be qualified quantitatively to achieve meaning (Havelock 1982:58). Purely oral and purely literate cultures remain at best theoretical constructs, whereas real experience at any one point in time probably entails a mixing of degrees of orality and literacy (Amodio 1994:7; cf. Zumthor 1990:21). This relativity proves all the more striking at the end of the fourteenth century when the print revolution dawns. As Mark Amodio points out, orality and literacy are "integral and interrelated parts of a subtle and complex cultural change rather than (largely) unrelated moments of cultural evolution" (1994:5). Over time, the perceptual orientations they bear become interdependent through their interaction (9).

As a cultural artifact, medieval literature reflects the amalgamation of practices. Literature of the Middle Ages exhibits a confrontation among if not a synthesis of sometimes competing and sometimes complementary oral and literate traditions. The insights emanating from a recognition of this grappling are aesthetic and cultural (Amodio 1994:21; cf. Ong 1984:4):

> [a]cknowledging the tension which informs the medieval oral-literate continuum will enable us to understand more clearly both the mix of oral and literate poetics we discover . . . as well as the 'cultural diglossia' central to medieval English society.

Through approximation, that recognition also hints at the kind of cultural awareness medieval people must have had.

Even though the implications of the literacy revolution were not fully understood at the time, and even though much of the conflict between the oral past and the literate future remained unacknowledged on the battleground of the present, Chaucer and his contemporaries did reflect on changes they perceived in progress. Conceding that people of the Middle

[4] Amodio 1994:5; compare Ong 1984:1, Bäuml 1980:243, and O'Keeffe 1990:13-14.

Ages are not Janus-faced does not deny their perspicacity. In fact, their consciousness evidences a turning point in the history of English literacy "when the literate mind was able to cast back upon its own oral past" (Parks 1994:173). As more fully (and primarily) literate people of the modern age we must approach the medieval sensibility gingerly. Wisely, Parks warns us not to equate Chaucer's awareness of oral tradition and his treatment of the interaction between orality and literacy with the retrospective vision characterizing modern scholarship on the subject. For one thing, the reality of Chaucer's world proves far more nuanced and subtle than the commonly postulated dichotomy "oral-literate" would allow. Moreover, because modern perspectives frequently verge on the reductive, they propagate anachronism in their retrojection.

Although medieval awareness of the oral-literate interchange may not equal ours (distorted even as it is advantaged by hindsight), medieval people prove cognizant of their changed and changing world. This very awareness constitutes one of the clearest implications of literacy (Stock 1983). Because oral and literate modes constitute complementary world views, the hybrid world of the Middle Ages inspires a hybrid reflectivity. At the junction of the cultural divide a bivalent consciousness originates. More interestingly, in terms of human perception, the cognitive duality raises the possibility "that reality could be understood as a series of relationships, such as outer versus inner, independent object as opposed to reflecting subject" (Stock 1983:531). Experience, as a result, becomes "separable. . . from ratiocination about it" (1990:36). Medieval recognition of paradigmatic differences thus grows out of a culturally determined presumption that there is a basic difference between the oral and the written.

Numerous cultural changes, theological controversies, and phenomenological considerations mirror society's apprehension of the transformation initiated by widespread literacy. Stock has shown, for example, that during the eleventh and twelfth centuries a reflective theology emerges in which "higher religious culture" militates purposefully against the "unwritten." Different levels of spiritual understanding are credited to those literate or illiterate in Latin, just as different levels of comprehensibility are associated with the central truths of religious texts, devotional practices, or sacramental rituals. An additional self-consciousness about this hermeneutic activity is one of the byproducts of literacy. A general linguistic awareness is another. Articulating the new reflection (or what was once more accurately called "perpension"), Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Abelard, and Bernard of Clairvaux each explore the relationships among written language, the reader's intellect, and reality (Stock 1983:523-25). Or again, explicit treatment of the ontological

implications of vocalization can be seen in the meditations of Thomas Aquinas and other scholastic endeavors. Indeed, consideration of the implications of orality and literacy occurs so commonly, Paul Zumthor maintains, as to be implicit in medieval poetic art (1984:75).

II

Chaucer's poetry discloses precisely such an awareness of the oral-literate interchange and the social and literary change it both signals and promotes. Yet consistently critics have misapprehended this awareness as they focus on a Chaucerian preoccupation with the unreliability of language in general. While previous scholarship has revealed a Chaucerian "distrust" of "language," it emphasizes a disjunction between words and meaning. For instance, Robert Jordan (only partially in jest) refers to Chaucer as a *proto*-postmodern writer: the poet exploits the metafictional consequences of admitting a multiplicity of meaning to the written word.[5] More basically, the disingenuousness of Pandarus or Criseyde explicated by Myra Stokes (1983) exemplifies a similar fascination with verbal "trouthe" and the spoken word's potential for ambiguity. On a pragmatic as well as semantic level, claims Britton Harwood (1992), the *House of Fame* and the tales told by the Friar and the Summoner represent the potential deficiencies inherent in any illocution.

Such readings buttress a prevailing belief that in Chaucer's eyes language is unreliable. Despite this recognition, critics have neglected an important reason for the poet's skeptical appreciation of language. It is a related linguistic phenomenon that disquiets Chaucer. Apprehensiveness about orality and its ephemeral, mutable substance lies at the center of Chaucer's *House of Fame*. Chaucer's concern with orality is not unique to this poem, but rather proves an abiding one for the poet, one that he pursues directly in later works. As Parks has shown, oral tradition is an explicit subject of the *Canterbury Tales* (1994:150). In a more tentative exposition, by means of allusion and implication, Chaucer explores the limits of orality in his earlier dream vision and exposes the troubled engagement with orality that figures in his later work.

Let us first consider evidence of Chaucer's productive disfavoring of orality before turning to his treatment's cultural moorings. As consideration of oral matter and its presentation reveals, orality is

[5] Jordan, unpub. ms.; see also Jordan 1983 and 1991 for a discussion of Chaucerian metafiction.

foregrounded only to be subverted in the *House of Fame*. If, following Harwood (1992), we interpret "speche" in the restricted sense of spoken (as opposed to written) genres, we can shed light on Chaucer's linguistic circumspection in the *House of Fame*. There is little doubt that Chaucer is deeply concerned with the world of orality. Frequent references to the process of telling (such as the repetition of first person "speke" and "seye" and second person "herkeneth" and "listeth" in Geffrey's account) mark the activity of human speech.[6] His dream is narrated as an act of aural report (509-11). The eagle's discursus on phonation, articulation, and the physical properties of sound also highlight spoken language (762-822). We are explicitly told, finally, that speech in particular warrants skepticism (765-68):

> Soun ys noght but eyr ybroken;
> And every speche that ys spoken. . .
> In his substaunce ys but air.

Although critics usually generalize and assume that "speche" represents language, we should not too readily dismiss the literal denotations of the word as proffered subject.

Whereas speech is Chaucer's general topic, the poet directs his speculum at oral tradition more particularly and does so in a manner that draws it to our attention. Called forth along with the deity in Book I's invocation is the performance of oral poetry. When the narrator announces that he will relate the dream as it appeared to him, if only the god of sleep will help him tell it "aryght" (79), he launches an elaborate assertion of verbal incompetence (cf. Bauman 1977:22). He apologizes for being a poet who needs help "to endite and rhyme" (520). Developing the motif of the "lewed" poet in remaining invocations and proems, Geffrey demurs (1094-1100):

> Nat that I wilne, for maistrye,
> Here art poetical be shewed,
> But for the rym ys lyght and lewed,
> Yit make hyt sumwhat agreable,
> Though som vers fayle in a sillable;
> And that I do no diligence
> To shewe craft, but o sentence.

His composition remains unsophisticated, but its matter is true, the narrator

[6] This and all subsequent references to *House of Fame* are from Benson 1987.

insists: "Thought . . . wrot al that I mette" (523).

On one level the disclaimer is meant to authenticate the dreamer's dream, to aid a cooperative audience in the suspension of its disbelief. Within the oral world this rhetorical signal also has a clear institutionalized meaning (Foley 1995:81; Parks 1987:47). The pretense is a performance "key" that constitutes a powerful referent of oral tradition. An audience well-versed in oral tradition—Chaucer's audience—would recognize the disclaimer as "*the* conventional means" to announce an oral poetic performance (Bauman 1977:21-22; emphasis mine). Not only does the disclaimer mark an oral performance, but it also initiates one. By denying artistic competence, the poet traditionally enters the arena of oral performance (Foley 1995:79 *et passim*). Even in a written poem, Chaucer's disclaimer engages the performative matrix and summons the oral world for his reader.[7]

With the conventional disclaimer of the oral poet, the narrator embraces the role of transmitter and situates himself within the context of traditional performance rather than creative composition (cf. Edwards and Sienkewicz 1990:33). The self-effacement ploy belongs to a larger folkloric rhetoric. Performance disclaimers of competence and description constitute the stock in trade of oral performers, as do analogies and proverbs (Lindahl 1987:169). Geffrey relies on all of these oral figures to structure his narrative. Because facility with them is characteristic of Chaucer's fictional surrogate, inevitably he becomes identified with the oral poet, a singer whose craft depends on those devices. To this extent (and there may be other applications whose pursuit lies beyond the scope of this essay), he assumes the persona of oral poet. Certainly it is this figure whose traditional invitation opens the second book (509-12):

> Now herkeneth every maner man
> That Englissh understonde kan
> And listeth of my drem to lere,
> For now at erste shul ye here."[8]

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[7] Mark C. Amodio, personal correspondence. Amodio has coined the term "performative matrix" to account for the engagement of performative structures within non-performative poetics.

[8] Compare Quinn 1994:15. Pointing out that members of Chaucer's late fourteenth-century audience all understood English, Quinn reads line 510 as "deadwood" if not "ludicrous." He has no doubt that the entire invitation is designed to mock "mistrelsy" (15-16).

Later on, Chaucer makes the association between dreamer and *scop* explicit. Having tailored his explanation of phonetics accordingly, the Eagle deems Geffrey a "lewed man" (865-867), accusing the love poet of having an unlearned or ignorant ability. Representing the narrator's aureate skill through example and attribution, Chaucer foregrounds oral poetics as the matter of the *House of Fame*.

The lore of the folk also provides the shape of the dream's creation. Just as people of the Middle Ages were culturally disposed to perceive "what folklore tradition and religious ideology imposed" whether they were awake or asleep (Gurevich 1984:52), so Chaucer gives his dream vision verisimilitude by peopling it with the figures and voices of lore. Epic heroes reenact their stories before his eyes. Even more significantly, the subject matter of the overheard speech is the property of oral tradition. The eagle assures Geffrey that he will learn much about love in Fame's edifice, and the passage starting at line 675 attests to the talk promised. We logically assume, since we are never informed otherwise, that the "sawes" and "lesinges" enumerated are those heard in Fame's house (675-99):

> And of Loves folk moo tydynges,
> Both sothe sawes and lesinges,
> And moo loves newe begonne,
> And longe yserved loves wonne,
> And moo loves casuelly
> That ben betyd, no man wot why,
> But as a blynd man stert an hare;
> And more jolytee and fare
> While that they fynde love of stel,
> As thinketh hem, and over-al wel;
> Mo discordes, moo jelousies,
> Moo murmures and moo novelries,
> And moo dissymulacions,
> And feyned reparacions,
> And moo berdys in two houres
> Withoute rasour or sisoures
> Ymad then greynes be of sondes;
> And eke moo holdynge in hondes,
> And also moo renovelaunces
> Of olde forleten aqueyntaunces;
> Mo love-dayes and acordes
> Then on instrumentes be cordes;
> And eke of loves moo eschaunges
> Then ever cornes were in graunges.

Both subjects and their manner of presentation belong to the realm of

orality. In accordance with a standard figurative operation in oral poetry, the stereotypical summary of love's themes functions metonymically, as objects, individuals, gestures, and illocutions stand for the more complex state or story underlying them. Here, for example, "berdys" (689) represents all the deceptions of love, "murmures" (386) all its intimacy. These signifiers also possess a traditional referentiality (not unlike intertextual literary discourse) shared by oral works as well as oral-derived texts (Foley 1991:7). In other words, given their "echoic" contexts, Chaucer's subjects resonate metonymically within the poetic tradition known to the audience. The aches and joys and games of love live in the popular stories of lore. The motive for agglutinating these associations here is oral tradition. Adopting a technique meaningful to an oral audience or a literate one familiar with oral tradition, Chaucer announces that the multiform voice of orality will be heard in the house of Fame.

Conventional idiom may reside in Fame's house, but it is not celebrated in the poem. Nor does the substance of oral tradition escape Chaucer's critique. In a sense, the medium is the message that proves worrisome to Chaucer. Offering a sophisticated analysis of the *House of Fame* in light of the grammatical theory that informs it, Martin Irvine shows that the voices of the poets are rendered in *vox confusa* by Fame (1985:868; cf. *House of Fame* 1477-80, 1514-19); all Geffrey hears is "a ful confus matere" (1517). Further confusion originates in a grammatical joke that literalizes an illogical linguistic structure. Orality's subjects appear to be dislocated from its propositions. Subjects fly around Fame's house as their entailments ricochet through Rumor's. The comic relegation of oral predication to the palace of Rumor subverts the efficacy of the tidings murmured there (Harwood 1992:345). Jangles speak (1961-76),

> Of werres, of pes, of mariages,
> Of reste, of labour, of viages,
> Of abood, of deeth, of lyf,
> Of love, of hate, acord, or stryf,
> Of loos, of lore, and of wynnynges,
> Of hele, of seknesse, of bildynges,
> Of faire wyndes, and of tempestes,
> Of qwalm of folk, and eke of bestes,
> Of dyvers transmutacions
> Of estats, and eke of regions;
> Of trust, of drede, of jelousye,
> Of wit, of wynnynge, of folye;
> Of plente, and of gret famyne,
> Of chepe, of derthe, and of ruyne;
> Of good or mys governement,

> Of fyr, and of dyvers accident.

Reduced to predicates lacking subjects, as Harwood describes them, these "words of mouth" are divorced from reference and meaning (1992:345).

That these predications lose their affirmations along with their subjects poses one problem. That these universal human experiences are also complementary introduces another. Ultimately they cancel each other out: peace quiets war, love subdues hate, and life balances out the whole. Out of profusion, often a source of delight in a medieval work,[9] comes only nullification. Heaped up in this contradicting manner, capacious metonyms become bland itemizations instead of bright evocations. Such is the "raw stuff of reputation and of history," the tidings of which fame and oral tradition are made (Howard 1987:249).

Chaucer's diminution of orality in Book III leads Harwood to suspect outright attack on "the oral poetry that must have appeared to him to monopolize the English vernacular" (1992:345). The attack continues as Chaucer questions both the nature and the source of that primacy. On the one hand oral tradition conveys fame and rumor; on the other it carries the stories of the oral poets. Fame, rumor, and story share a fundamental quality and one ultimate limitation as oral genres: they are essentially ephemeral. The physics of the spoken word means that it is transitory, as the eagle memorably informs us in Book II. What is said out loud soon dissipates as vibrating airwaves naturally diminish over time and space. A second disadvantage is the difficulty of recall. Subsequent verbal reconstruction of the vocal sign (in memory or report) relies on the exigencies of another oral performance. The original utterance eludes repetition in the end:

> O, soth ys, every thing ys wyst,
> Though hit be kevered with the myst,

the sentence announces (351-52). It is not the voice but its recollection that becomes doubtful.

In Jupiter's eagle, a bird of prey who hunts memory, we then find Chaucer joking with his audience. The irony arises from twists on literary tropes recognizable to Chaucer's audience (cf. Carruthers 1993:896). Conventionally, caged birds represent memory contained in the perfection of the human mind while metaphors of hunting prove traditional for the

[9] Cf. the catalogs of mysterious facts in the bestiaries.

process of recollection (Carruthers 1990:246-47). The perfect memory hunted here (by a bird which has flown the coop if it were ever caged at all) cannot be found in either the houses of Fame or Rumor.

Literary tradition as a whole, as well as oral tradition, suffers the vicissitudes of fame and rumor, of course. Irvine argues that in the *House of Fame* Chaucer makes exactly that larger complaint about the arbitrariness of literary discourse (1985:871). In Geffrey's dream, letters appear engraved in ice that melts or freezes as Fame casts her shadow (1136-64). However, although the written seems under scrutiny at this point in the poem, it is the names or reputations of the famous and infamous that suffer impermanence, not their texts. For the books that preserve the words of Dante and Virgil, Geffrey expresses admiration as he evokes their stories and cites their authority (448-50).

Orality's inherently mutable substance comes under sustained attack in the poem. The most successful line of offense is still to come, and it is covert rather than overt. An important folk device recurs throughout the poem, representing orality only to inform against it. The dreamer's repetition of proverbs and proverbial phrases, the originally oral sayings of the folk, skillfully undermines the integrity of the oral tradition from which they descend. Insidiously and ironically Chaucer will contextualize proverbial expressions in a manner that deconstructs them (cf. Hutcheon 1989:102).

III

In turning our attention to Chaucer's use of proverbial material we must recognize the problems of identification that arise because proverbs participate in the general commerce between the oral and the literate (Mann 1984:94), a traffic Chaucer exploits. Jill Mann reports that in the *Franklin's Tale*, his presentation of a proverb carefully links it to both popular and learned tradition (1984:94). Only after we have evaluated any one dictum can we surmise Chaucer's purpose in incorporating the saw into his poetry. To some extent, it is possible to trace the oral tradition underlying a written version of a proverb. Analysis in light of literary and folk tradition may clarify genre and source, isolating provenance from conveyance. Proverbs can be distinguished from sentences—aphorisms transmitted by writing—and their divergent traditions separated. Written proverbs and proverbial phrases finally remain artifacts of the oral world. Even their appropriation by literate convention may not preclude oral attribution. While medieval rhetoricians such as Matthew of Vendôme and

Geoffrey of Vinsauf recommend that literary works begin or end with the citation of a proverb (Whiting 1934:17-19), learned practice probably followed popular custom. B. J. Whiting has demonstrated that the rhetoricians codify a widespread fondness for proverbial citation (19-20). They sanction a vernacular custom, not an elite eccentricity. Chaucer's tendency to poke fun at rhetorical forms and aims can mislead critics about his point in quoting the proverbial. It is tempting to suspect ridicule of the rhetorical when a proverb is in Chaucer's sights, but the more fundamental orality may be the real target disguised by rhetorical placement or ornamentation.

As the poet's disparagement of proverbial utterances capitalizes on their peculiar properties, we must consider their oral essence. Then we can examine Chaucer's application of the proverbial in the *House of Fame*. Although "sayings" are often associated with folk tradition, their connection with orality runs deeper than mere affinity. Walter Ong stresses oral culture's dependence on proverbs: it actually "*thinks* its thoughts in mnemonic patterns" (1981:123). Because only what can be recalled can be known, oral noetic processes are by definition formulaic; formulaic design allows the storage and retrieval of the thoughts and beliefs that constitute culture. Collective commonplaces necessarily characterize oral poetic style (*idem*). Inasmuch as folk culture bases itself in community experience (Lindahl 1987:10), its lore will be experiential. Thus can proverbs partly be defined, in Whiting's words, as "the rich pawky wisdom of the folk" (1934:4).

Whiting identifies six proverbs or records of popular sayings in the *House of Fame* (1934:35-37).[10] In addition thirty-one grammatically flexible proverbial phrases appear (155-94). While they do not generalize and offer the concrete morals typical of proverbs, they employ similar idioms. In a particularizing mode, many of these conventional phrases state analogues in order to compare the unfamiliar with the familiar (cf. Whiting 1968:x-xvii). The presence of both kinds of proverbial material typifies writings that characterize the folk (Taylor 1962:172). Traditional set phrases, according to Derek Brewer, help formulate a familiar, collectivist style that actually constructs as well as reflects ideal community (1988:87-88). There is more here than meets the ear. On a superficial level the distinctive sayings of the folk provide a communal and comfortable, folkloric texture in the poem. Chaucer's use of them, however, inverts

[10] I would like to thank Stephen Partridge for his assistance with textual criticism and proverbial sources. I am also grateful to Iain Higgins for his consultation about Gower's and Lydgate's use of proverbs.

their standard function of stating popular lore. In an important but neglected study of "Catoniana," Richard Hazelton remarks that their mouthing by Chaucer's characters frequently deprives *proverbia* and *sententiae* of significance or applicability (1960:379-80). Based on the *Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, Hazelton's judgment applies equally well to the proverbs and proverbial phrases found in the *House of Fame*.

Chaucer uses proverbial material plentifully and strategically in his text. Often he marks its presence with a pronouncement: "Therfore I wol seye a proverbe" (289); "But men seyn" (1147); "Folk kan synge hit bet than I" (2138). Other times he trusts the careful reader to notice its artful management, as when the relativity of its numerical concentration alerts us to its manipulation. Both the presence and the absence of proverbs fit a pattern. Of proverbial material in the poem, the lowest frequency occurs in Book I, the highest in Book III. The least material, two proverbs and two proverbial phrases, depicts the Temple of Venus, while three literary sentences are enlisted for that purpose in the first book's 508 lines. When the dreamer arrives in the House of Fame, oral material begins to dominate *sententiae*. Of Book II's 581 lines, one proverb and six proverbial phrases complement one sententious remark. A disproportionate number of the former prevail in the 1067 lines of Book III, however. Twenty-three proverbial phrases and three proverbs contrast with three sentences in that book and with the lower proverbial density of the earlier divisions. In absolute terms, almost four times as many orally transmitted utterances construct Fame and Rumor's abodes. In relative terms, with book length taken into account, twice as many can be counted.[11] The correlation of subject matter and verse source strikes us at once. Comparatively few proverbs are found in the temple walled in writing. But in the dwelling places of the spoken, oral sayings abound.

Appropriately, the stories engraved in Venus's shrine are told with little proverbial matter. Following the story of Dido, for instance, when Chaucer recounts tales of love's betrayals and other events recorded in Virgil, Ovid, Claudian, or Dante (388-467), no oral material is employed at all. Proverbs are applied to the story of Dido and Aeneas only (272-73; 290-91; 362-63), where, as I will suggest, their use contradicts any wisdom they might seriously contribute. Instead the passage relies on literary *sententiae* for its commentary (265-66; 351-52; 361). This exemption of lore contrasts dramatically with the concentrated presence of oral matter

[11] To be precise, Book I has a frequency rate of .0079 proverbs per line; Book II has a frequency rate of .012 per line; Book III contains .024 per line.

used in creation of Fame and Rumor's domains.

Fame's sanctuary, where oral art and performance dwell, is literally constructed from orality, through idiomatic verbal collocations whose structure and contents have currency in oral tradition.[12] Obvious as well as familiar proverbial comparatives constitute most of the folkloric building material. Their job is to draw an analogy with some thing or quality already known to the reader and thereby to ease depiction. Traditional, iterative phrases index common folk experience. Their hyperbolic language also lends the flavor of "animated, informal conversation" to the narration, just as Brewer contends it should (1988:97-99). Chaucer's ethnographic artistry proves subversive, however (cf. Lindahl 1987:159). Form reinforces content in this passage, but also vitiates it. When examined carefully, the composite description looks vapid rather than vivid. There are as many windows in the castle as "flakes falle in grete snowes" (1191-92), more seats "than sterres ben in hevene" (1254). The walls of beryl shine "ful lyghter than a glas" (1289). Sides, floors, and ceiling of the great hall are of gold set with as many exquisite gems "as grasses growen in a mede" (1350-53).

Fame herself is painted with the same predictable comparisons. Her hair shines like burnished gold (1386-87). She has as many eyes as there are "fetheres upon foules" (1382) and as many ears and tongues as there are hairs on beasts (1389-90). The lady's messenger, Aeolus, whom we meet next, elicits another concatenation of proverbial expressions. Awaiting her instructions, the god stands still as stone (1605), while the winds he commands roar like bears (1589). His black trumpet of slander is fouler than the devil (1637-38), its noise sounding as swift as gunshot (1643-44). Smoke rising from its blast stinks like the pit of hell (1654). When the Wind changes and Laud, his gold trumpet of praise, is blown, it conventionally rings as loud as thunder (1681). Later Black Clarion calls as the wind blows in hell (1803), its tone as full of mocking as apes are full of grimaces (1805-6). Suffering the "sory grace" (1790) of Fame's punishment thus, the undeserving are heard to laugh as if they were crazy (1809).

In this way, folkloric collocation is heaped upon folkloric collocation. Fittingly the oral realm of Fame is constructed with the easy, exaggerating, and empty whispers of orality. And in the manner of the

[12] Due to the heterogeneity of its application and the elusiveness of the language it delimits, I avoid the term "oral formula" in my characterization of the proverbial phrases Chaucer uses here. Foley 1991:14 *et passim* explores shortcomings in the use of the concept within Oral Theory.

commonplace, ill repute and great renown are meted out by Chaucer. So he mitigates Fame's power, rendering it as ephemeral and immaterial as it is capricious. The substance of the goddess and her minions reduces itself to nothing more than cliché in the end; her house proves as insubstantial as the broken air of Fame's essence.

Proverbial utterances do more than reinforce meaning structurally. Their presence often has comedic effect that uproots the folkloric. Overuse of formulae in the "Manciple's Tale," Hazelton observes, contributes to its comedy: proverbial phrases are used so frequently as to seem overdone.[13] Here too, in Hazelton's words, is proverbial citation carried to "parodic excess" (1960:378). One result is an inflation of use and meaning. In Geffrey's mouth lore is transmuted from popular truth to meaningless cliché; his conscious literary usage bleaches the traditional wisdom from the proverbial and leaves it bereft of meaning.[14]

The literalization of the oral represents only one way of decontextualizing it. Like proverbial phrases, independent proverbs are deconstructed by their quotation in the poem. Chaucer undercuts the wisdom of one proverb through its incongruous placement within the narration. Interrupting his description of Fame's house, the dreamer employs a device of oral performance and complains that he saw more splendor there than he can report, "For ese of yow and los of tyme" (1256; cf. 1299-1300). So goes the oral storyteller's standard disclaimer of descriptiveness. Chaucer carries the performance disclaimer to ridiculous extreme when he chases it with the saying, "For tyme ylost, this knowen ye, / Be no way may recovered be" (1257-58). Subsequently, of course, he delays his listeners for some additional nine hundred lines. The absurdity of the citation becomes clearer when we consider the axiom's conventionally earnest application. Contemporary poets invest this proverb with moral weight and use it in serious contexts. Gower intones (*Confessio Amantis* IV 1485-87; cited by Whiting 1960:595-96),

> Men mai recovere lost of good,

[13] The contradictory aesthetic of overabundant formulaic language in a text is well known. The overaccumulation of appostitive phrases in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* episode *The Death of Edgar* excoriates their contents, for instance (Greenfield and Calder 1986:247-49).

[14] See Foley 1995:7 on the mechanics of this literalization. When the performance arena or field of reference "shrinks from tradition to text," metonymic context is divorced from oral form. Cliché, a bleaching impossible within an oral referring poetics, thus derives from the assimilation of oral models by written models.

> Bot so wys man yit nevere stod,
> Which mai recovere time lore.

Similarly, Lydgate admonishes ("Evil Marriage" 456; cited by Whiting 1960:595-96),

> Take hede and lerne, thou lytell chylde, and se
> That tyme passed wyl nat agayne retourne.

Chaucer, in contrast, trivializes the wisdom by using it in the context of a poet hesitating to hold an audience assembled for that very purpose. Rewritten by its usage the proverb has become ironic: "Of myspent tyme a fole may *weel* compleyne" (Lydgate *Testament* 248-50; cited by Whiting 1960:596; emphasis mine). With a chuckle Chaucer implicates the traditional oral poet immediately embodied in the persona of Geffrey, satirizing his poetics.

Elsewhere the humor is more explicit, as when Chaucer robs another proverb of its sententiousness by presenting it as a *double entendre*. On one level line 290 merely remarks that Dido's ignorance of Aeneas leads to her downfall: "'he that fully knoweth th'erbe / May saufly leye hyt to his yë'." The analogy of admitting only the trusted medicine seems apt. Yet the citation also introduces a sexual pun on "yë," a word finding echoes in the related form, "nether ye" (cf. the "Miller's Tale," 3852). Dido certainly would have spared herself much grief if she had known the Trojan's true nature before laying him to her "lower eye." The likelihood of this reading suggests itself in the motivation ascribed in line 287: nothing less than "nyce lest" causes her fall.

In light of the medieval proverb's closest analogues, Chaucer's bawdiness seems purposeful. A citation of the generic proverb can be found in Usk (26.114-15; cited by Whiting 1960:280), who employs "smertande sores" instead of "eye," a variant wording that prevents the pun even if it does not preclude a sexual interpretation. "Eye," however, is the recorded term in what may be the literary antecedent for lines 290-91. Partly on the basis of the same proverb's presence in Nicole de Margival's *Panthère d'Amours*, Albert C. Baugh argues that the earlier French romance serves as one source for the *House of Fame*. Baugh assumes that Usk borrows the lore from Chaucer who takes it from Margival (1960:59-61). We must concede the possibility that the diction results from literal translation rather than original choice. Nonetheless, Chaucer's offering of

the proverb as commentary on the story of Dido and Aeneas remains, and that fact is suspicious in itself. For when the same lovers appear in another of Chaucer's poems, erotic word-play frequents their tale. In the *Legend of Good Women* a cluster of copulatory homophones imbues Dido's tragedy with sexuality (Delany 1985:194). The subversive function of *double entendre* in Chaucer's second version of the epic (Quinn 1994:95-112) suggests its motivation in the *House of Fame*. Through an ambiguous term's placement in a passage on romantic love, the poet twists folk matter to comic effect.

An ironic feature of their own oral essence may make proverbs vulnerable to such perversion. "It is in the nature of proverbial wisdom to exist in separation from a context, and to find one only transiently," Mann observes (1984:105). As they do in the *Ysengrimus*, proverbs in the *House of Fame* celebrate their own "habitual separation from the realities they claim to represent." The "impersonal force" of their orality grants them a resiliency to survive even such "subversive contexts" as Chaucer provides them only to be repeated in another conversation or literary text (106-7). They cannot be abused, in other words, but neither will they ever truly fit immediate experience. What is resurrected in the new and different versions of an individual proverb is as much its oral impetus as any immutable content.

A third example of Chaucerian citation leaves no doubt about the subversion of the oral in the *House of Fame*. Near the end of the poem, Chaucer quotes a proverb one final time to summarize the argument he has made. In Rumor's house truth and lies become indiscernibly confused with each other. Lines 2121-25 characterize the voices inhabiting the cage of twigs:

> And, Lord, this hous in alle tymes
> Was ful of shipmen and pilgrimes,
> With scrippes bret-ful of lesinges,
> Entremedled with tydynges,
> And eek allone be hemselve.

This proverbial stereotype combines two related proverbs: "Shipmen are liars" (Whiting 1960:516) and "Pilgrims are liars" (446; cf. 492). It is medieval commonplace, in other words, that each one typically lies.[15] Furthermore, "there is no difference between a liar and a great teller of

[15] Recalling this truism, Hill (1991) considers the tidings brought to Canterbury by Chaucer's pilgrims in light of the truths they carry.

tidings" (134), an overlapping maxim observes. Another contemporary truism extends the syllogism. Lies and folktales are themselves so commonly linked that the word "tale," meaning both "artful fiction" and "malicious falsehood," bespeaks their equation (Lindahl 1987:38). Prevarication arrives with the tidings and tales both kinds of travelers bring from afar. The implication is clear: oral tradition lies just as fame and rumor lie. Using proverbial lore to establish this truth, Chaucer completes his derogation of orality. Cleverly, the poet calls upon orality to impugn itself.

IV

Prevailing attitudes and assumptions about the written and the oral provide a cultural context for Chaucer's disparagement of orality in the *House of Fame*. His interest in the obfuscation of truth and the possibilities of oral and literate conveyance reflects larger social concern; his ambivalence about speech and the traditions associated with it finds support in the popular writing of the time. John Ganim's (1994) reading of *Handlying Synne* points to a common medieval anxiety about the disproportionate efficacy of the spoken word. Speech contains pitfalls in addition to its unreliable reconstruction. Because it possesses a power beyond its substance it is inherently dangerous. The fourteenth-century tract's proscriptions of uncontrolled and malicious speech divulge the considerable, almost magical power accorded verbal utterance. In the same text we see that the writing down of the spoken word, here associated with "anarchic everyday urges" like slander and backbiting, seems to neutralize its power. When a recording of a potent witch's charm is read aloud by a bishop in an incident Mannyng relates, it fails to work, for example. Even though writing cannot counteract magic in reality, it is the urge to use it that way that proves significant, Ganim shows. The attempt to coopt voice and control speech arises out of faith in the technology. While spoken and verbal illocution might have an equally powerful potential, Ganim concludes, the actual use of spoken media arouses distrust in medieval man (111-12, 121).

According to contemporary belief, the advantages of the written counteract the deficiencies of the oral. While the written, like everything else in life, is subject to Fortune's changes, it may not be quite as mutable as the oral. Writing fixes a text, whether or not the page or book produced survives intact. That textual fixity delimits written discourse at the same time it establishes it. Both textual discourse and the authority of the text

proceed from the "death" of the author (cf. Barthes 1977). "The trouble with a written composition is that it becomes detached from its author, and goes off on its own, so to speak," concedes Carruthers (1990:30). Its reception and transmission remain uncertain in this respect. Yet both may also be protected to some extent by learned practices intended to stabilize communication. As Carruthers demonstrates, the ideal of medieval reading entailed "a highly active . . . hermeneutical dialog" between and among texts and readers.[16] Textual memory, trained and nurtured during this period, is thought to mediate the phenomenological relationship between language and truth. A collective social process safeguards the integrity of writing and the written.

Ultimately, medieval faith in the text extends beyond this trust. Arguing that with widespread literacy the written text becomes the "operative factor in all social discourse," Stock documents a cultural realignment wherein everything not written seems subjective (1990:46; cf. Stock 1983). Medieval authorities, he observes, "were convinced that written communication . . . was directly reflective of reality, but that purely oral exchange, when it was not backed up by a text, was not" (1990:43).

This reification, asserts Havelock, results directly from the adoption of the alphabet, an invention which converts speech into language and, in turn, renders language into artifact. The technology's "causative function," as Havelock calls it, transforms language into an object of reflection and analysis (1982:8-9). In written form language achieves physical materiality as well. A document's tangibility, its status as object, grants it another kind of integrity. Even if a text allows various interpretations or inspires divergent reputations, it possesses a presence contrasting with the evanescence of the spoken word. From a literal "objectness" comes a figurative objectivity we now take for granted. The opposition between the oral and the written mushrooms. Once the written achieves permanence and canonicity, the oral world is reanalyzed: custom and transience become orality's limitations (Stock 1983:530).

An artistic ramification of the perceptual shift sheds additional light on the writerly anxiety seen in the *House of Fame*. The advantages of the literacy revolution for the writer were also assessed at the time. In short, medieval poetic theory elevates written poetry over oral poetry because it facilitates attributability and individualizes authorship. "Poeseye" is to Chaucer and his fellow writers, as Lerer reminds us, "writing freed from the controlling ideologies or codes of conduct that made all forms of

[16] 186. For an exploration of the reception of texts by medieval listeners as well as readers, see Green 1994.

commissioned literature acts of performance" (1993:31). Writing has the possibility of approaching this ideal in a way that oral "making," performance-based poetry, does not. The latter, rooted in the expectations of its audience, is thereby limited. Whereas "poeseye" approaches autonomy in its creation, "making" remains "socially constructed ritual" (Lerer 1993:31). The former is unique, the latter anonymous; the author of a written poem can confer on it new contextual meaning instead of having to refer automatically to an inherent and inherited meaning (cf. Foley 1991:6-8). While written literature can itself become traditional, communal property (cf. Zumthor 1984:77-78), oral poetry epitomizes the enactment of cultural constraints. The goal of "poeseye" is to escape those bounds and achieve a transhistorical prospect (Lerer 1993:31). Through "poeseye," poets hope to transcend the time, place, and perspective of composition as a creative act.

As we have seen, the shock waves of literacy's new assumptions are felt throughout the duration of the Middle Ages. If the ideal establishes polarities, tensions between the oral and the written abide. The tenaciousness of common proverbs, folk stories, and oral poetics serves to undermine the neat dichotomies. While the habitual and unoriginal may be devalued by converts to literacy, the oral somehow refuses to go away. Although speech is a transitory medium of expression, its matter obtains an enduring opacity, for the folk continue to grant authority to the voice of experience heard in these verbal artifacts. The written may transfer *knowledge*, but the oral conveys *wisdom*. In common usage, Jesse Gellrich (1988) reiterates, the oral habits of the earlier period prove "persistent," even exerting "dominion over writing" in a literate age. Grounded in a "potent medieval mythology," preference for oral modes is sustained well into the morning of print culture (470-72).

The rivalry between the two modes fascinates Chaucer, a poet writing verse meant to be read as well as heard. To this poet's ears the oral can be ephemeral, mutable, unreliable, and insubstantial. Sometimes oral tradition proves immaterial in both senses of the word and therefore fungible. It may deserve neither the credence nor the respect nor the fame it itself conveys. Eventually the unwarranted power of oral tradition prompts Chaucer to parody its poetics. For Geoffrey Chaucer, the pen proves mightier than the voice.

More laureate than aureate in the last analysis, Chaucer's role is not without anxiety. Nor might his poetic backlash be unexpected. Hazelton (1960) points out that parody comes about during periods of artistic transition such as that found at the waning of the Middle Ages. Parody can be a response to a changing social reality that is no longer adequately

reflected by the existing mimetic representations. When "art can no longer be pious to either the journey or the pity in the old forms, and has not yet found the means to settle on new forms," then parody tempts the artist (R. P. Blackmur, quoted by Hazelton 1960:380). At such historical junctures, parody offers a tool for both deconstruction and construction, criticism and creativity.[17] Medieval parody—double-edged in the *House of Fame*—functions much as one critic claims postmodern parody functions: challenging through irony the authority of cultural continuity while acknowledging that continuity through an awareness of its need to adapt to changing formal demands (Hutcheon 1989:107). In his fight to establish new forms in English poetry, Chaucer voices his culture's inchoate ambivalence about the basis of its literary tradition. By doing so, he secures the autonomy of English poetry.

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[17] Hutcheon 1989:98; cf. Hutcheon 1985:8. While Hutcheon examines parody primarily as a defining feature of postmodernism and explores its political and aesthetic implications within postmodern art forms, her account sheds light on Chaucerian parody. Jordan 1983 already identifies parodic technique among shared medieval and postmodern literary practices.

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Oral Tradition, 11/2 (1996): 346-362

A Narrative Technique in *Beowulf* and Homeric Epic

Bruce Louden

Over the last forty-seven years commentators have explicated much of the structure of *Beowulf* by investigating what is known of the techniques of oral poetry.[1] Consequently a rough consensus has been reached that the poem is "oral-derived."[2] While the study of oral techniques has firmly established the formula, theme and/or type-scene, and narrative pattern as among the tools available to the oral composer, less attention has been given to another technique of the orally composing poet: specific functions of syntax capable of delivering typical or generic effects.[3] In this essay I demonstrate the presence in *Beowulf* of a narrative technique that involves the manipulation of a specific form of syntax, a technique common in Homeric epic and which has recently received close study. I proceed to note that though both epic traditions, Homeric and Old English, apply the technique in a number of parallel contexts and type-scenes, the syntactic pattern is particularly used in one crucial context, the hero's encounter with a deadly opponent and life-threatening circumstances.

The locution under examination is an expression taking the general form of "and now *x* would have happened, had not *y* intervened," a past contrary-to-fact condition with a negated apodosis preceding the protasis. There are three such passages in *Beowulf*, 1054-58, 1550-54, and 1655-58, discussed below, all figuring in narratives describing Beowulf's encounters

[1] For a history of the entire discipline of research on oral literature, see Foley 1988. For summaries of the work relevant to Old English, see Olsen 1986 and 1988, as well as Foley 1990:331-33, 1991:190-242, among others. The forty-seven years are from Lord's 1949 dissertation, precursor to *The Singer of Tales* (Lord 1960).

[2] On this issue, see Foley 1990:5-8 and 1991: *passim*.

[3] While there have been a few studies of syntax in *Beowulf* from an oral perspective, most have been concerned with relatively small units, smaller than that focused on in this article. See, e.g., Cassidy 1965 and Green 1971, as well as two earlier unpublished dissertations, O'Neil 1960 and Gattiker 1962 (which I have not consulted).

with Grendel or his mother. By virtue of their contextual deployment in the poem, they may be regarded as a key component in the narrative logic of those encounters. Let us first establish a context for analyzing the structure by noting its use in another oral epic tradition, Homeric epic.

In the fifth book of the *Odyssey*, as Odysseus makes his way by raft from Ogygia to Skheria, Poseidon wrecks his vessel with a violent storm, forcing Odysseus to swim the rest of the way. As the hero makes for shore, however, Skheria's rocky coast offers no easy access. His dilemma compounded, Odysseus is now struck by a great wave resurging from Poseidon's storm (5.436-37):

> ἔνθα κε δὴ δύστηνος ὑπὲρ μόρον ὤλετ' Ὀδυσσεύς,
> εἰ μὴ ἐπιφροσύνην δῶκε γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη.
>
> There Odysseus would have perished, wretched, beyond fate,
> had not gray-eyed Athene given him forethought.[4]

In its syntax the passage is a past contrary-to-fact condition, with the more logical order of clauses reversed, that is, "if Athene had not given him forethought, Odysseus would have perished." In its rhetorical thrust and narrative function, however, the passage warrants further examination. Odysseus, the titular hero of the epic, can hardly be allowed to die here at this stage of the poem. Nonetheless, the narrator thrusts the possibility before the audience, if only momentarily, that Odysseus's luck may have finally run out. Such a death would be rather ironic were Odysseus, consistently depicted by Homeric epic as a survivor, having survived ten years of mortal combat at Troy, encounters with such deadly opponents as Polyphemos, the Laistrygones, and Skylla and Kharybdis, to die a nameless death, drowned at sea. Such a death would also bring the *Odyssey* to an abrupt end, with the audience cheated of the opportunity to hear about Odysseus' most famous exploits, and with the poem's own opening claim that he would return (1.16-18) violated. However, the poet, having directed the narrative to such a forbidden juncture, neatly changes its direction through a technique occurring regularly in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.[5]

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[4] All Homeric translations are my own. All quotations from Homer are taken from the Oxford standard edition of D. B. Monro and T. W. Allen.

[5] There are 60 such passages. For a complete list, as well as reference to earlier literature on the subject, see Louden 1993:n. 5. See also Nesselrath 1992 for a synoptic view of the device in Homer and later literature through the Renaissance (though he does not consider *Beowulf*), de Jong 1987:68-81, Lang 1989, Morrison 1992a and 1992b.

If Homer does not intend to let the outcome occur, then why does he steer the story toward such a possibility in the first place?[6] For various dramatic and rhetorical effects, Homeric epic threatens a dire event, such as the premature death of a character. In each instance the poet contravenes the threatened disaster by having another character, most often a divinity,[7] intervene and change the direction of the narrative. The poet thereby affords himself a number of means of emphasis, heightening the narrative in various ways. First, such near-disasters and their resolution form seemingly natural climaxes, allowing the narrator to confer an added dramatic emphasis upon events. The reversed sequence of clauses, serving to underscore the likelihood of the looming disaster ("and Odysseus would have perished . . ."), contributes greatly to the drama the construction so naturally confers. Second, the construction is an emphatic method for changing the direction of the plot, forming a pivot. Third, it often conveys an editorial comment, positive or negative, on a particular character.

We can observe all of these effects in the Odyssean passage that began our discussion. The audience knows that, traditionally, Odysseus cannot and will not die here, though the narrative threatens. But, caught up in the onrushing events, our emotions are nonetheless engaged and we experience a brief, suspenseful climax. Affective criticism might suggest that the technique is a way of increasing an audience's fear, and thereby its engagement with the narrative.[8]

The trajectory of the plot pivots here, the passage serving to mark the juncture between different sections of the narrative. The preceding unit (5.269-434) delineates Odysseus' dangerous approach to Skheria, capped by Poseidon's tempest aimed directly at Odysseus. The subsequent section (5.438ff.), however, depicts safety for the hero and a secure approach to the river mouth, found immediately after the passage. The passage under discussion highlights, therefore, the emphatic change in fortune.

The sequence also constitutes an implicit positive editorial comment on Odysseus. In the midst of such trials he performs heroic feats of swimming and endurance, the passage illuminating qualities unique to Odysseus—that he is much-enduring, the man of many ways, and so on.

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[6] Though committed to the oral theory for the genesis of Homeric epic, I tend to think that one individual gave the plots of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* their final form. For recent argument to this effect, see Janko 1982.

[7] Deities intervene in 34 out of the 60 Homeric instances. For a complete list, see Louden 1993:n. 8.

[8] On affective criticism and *Beowulf*, see Amodio 1994.

Athena's intervention in no way reduces his stature, since he still must perform the labor required to extricate himself from this predicament.

In a recent study I adopted *pivotal contrafactual*[9] as a shorthand term for this technique, the potential of which post-Homeric classical epic, especially Greek, continues to exploit.[10] The *Aeneid*, by contrast, contains only four such passages.[11] Hence my claim that the device is especially Homeric, whether in the Homeric corpus itself or in closely derivative subsequent Greek epic. "Pivotal" refers to the structural function such passages serve in forming a pivot or hinge within contrary actions of an episode or between two episodes, while "contrafactual" refers to their syntactic shape or force. As the following analysis will argue, this is an apt name for the same structure in *Beowulf*.

Beowulf contains three passages that closely conform to Homeric pivotal contrafactuals. It is worth noting that all three passages describe the encounters between the hero and either Grendel or his mother, arguably among the poem's most memorable sequences. Let us consider them in their order of occurrence, beginning with the description of Hrothgar's reception of Beowulf after he has slain Grendel in the raid on Heorot. Though Hrothgar especially makes recompense for Handscoh, slain by Grendel, the narrator ominously stresses that more warriors would have perished, if not for Beowulf's bravery,[12]

> þone ðe Grendel ær
> mane acwealde,— swa he hyra ma wolde,
> nefne him witig God wyrd forstode

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[9] Louden 1993.

[10] E.g., Hesiod, *Theogony* 836; Apollonius, *Argonautica* 1.492, 1.863, 1.1298, 2.285, 2.864, 2.985, 3.74, 3.584, 4.20, 4.338, 4.639, 4.903, 4.1305, 4.1651; Quintus Smyrnaeus, *Posthomerica* 1.215, 1.447, 1.689, 2.507, 3.26, 3.366, (3.571) 3.752, 4.329, 4.563, 6.570, 6.644, 7.28, 7.626, 8.152, 8.237, 8.427, 9.255, 9.403, 10.104, 11.255, 11.457, 12.93, 12.395, 14.419, 14.580.

[11] 5.232ff., 6.358ff., 10.324ff., 11.912ff. Considering that in Homer it is not unusual to encounter four pivotal contrafactuals in one book (e.g., *Iliad* 5.22, 311, 388, 679; 17.70, 319, 530, 613)—the total number found in the *Aeneid*—we appreciate how comparatively scarce are the Vergilian occurrences. Furthermore, none of the Vergilian passages are particularly crucial or pivotal in the *Aeneid*'s plot, unlike many of the Homeric instances.

[12] Lines 1054b-58. Quotations from *Beowulf* are taken from Klaeber 1950, with diacritics deleted. Translations are quoted from Raffel 1963.

ond ðæs mannes mod. Metod eallum weold
gumena cynnes, swa he nu git deð.

Raffel's translation accurately reflects the pivot in the sequence (1963:56):

. . . and for the one
Murdered by Grendel gold was carefully
Paid. The monster would have murdered again
And again had not God, and the hero's courage,
Turned fate aside.

As in Homer, the passage is a past contrary-to-fact condition, with the most typical order of clauses reversed.[13] As in Homer, a conjunction, *nefne* (or its allomorphs, *nymðe* and *nemne*),[14] introduces the second clause containing the intervention and reversing the dire circumstances.

We can also observe a similar rhetorical strategy at work. Handscoh was slain by Grendel, but the sequence continues by suggesting Grendel would accomplish *further* depradations, emphasizing, as in Homeric practice, the dire event that would have transpired. As in the *Odyssey*, however, the sequence concludes with the dire circumstances averted, with Beowulf triumphing and containing the threat. Both passsages offer similar accounts of divine intervention, "nefne him witig God" as compared with "had not the gray-eyed goddess, Athena." In *Beowulf*, divine intervention is not the concrete and visual fact that it is in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Nonetheless, the intervention is clearly given credit for reversing the dire circumstances. And, as in Homer, the passage offers a climax and a pivot in the plot.

As to the specific provocation necessitating intervention, the threat of *repeated* destruction, Homeric epic offers some equivalent contexts. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* several times employ pivotal contrafactuals to break up various iterative actions. The following passage from the *Iliad* serves to illustrate the tendency (5.679-82):[15]

καί νύ κ' ἔτι πλέονας Λυκίων κτάνε δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,
εἰ μὴ ἄρ' ὀξὺ νόησε μέγας κορυθαίολος Ἕκτωρ·

[13] For fuller description of the syntax, and some parallel passages, see Mitchell 1985:835-38.

[14] Equivalent to Homeric εἰ μή "unless, if not, had not" or adversative ἀλλά "but," either of which may introduce the contravening action or clause.

[15] For a list of additional such passages see Louden 1993:n. 22.

βῆ δὲ διὰ προμάχων κεκορυθμένος αἴθοπι χαλκῷ,
δεῖμα φέρων Δαναοῖσι·

And now shining Odysseus would have killed yet more of the Lykians,
had not shiny-helmed Hektor sharply perceived,
and gone through the front ranks armed in bright bronze,
bringing terror to the Danaans.

In this instance a man, not a monster, threatens the continual carnage. Nonetheless, the general shape of the threat and its resolution are roughly parallel with *Beowulf* 1054b-58. Further violent acts would have occurred unless a heroic opponent intervened to contain the threat. We might compare a further instance from the *Iliad* (21.211-12):

καί νύ κ' ἔτι πλέονας κτάνε Παίονας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς,
εἰ μὴ χωσάμενος προσέφη ποταμὸς βαθυδίνης.

And now swift Achilleus would have killed yet more Paionians
had not the deep-eddying river addressed him in anger.

In these passages, as in *Beowulf* 1054b-58, deaths have already occurred, but intervention through a pivotal contrafactual prevents further fatalities. Both poetic traditions thus employ pivotal contrafactuals in similar contexts. We might further observe that the *Iliad* 21.211-12 passage occurs in a river, while most of Beowulf's exploits, particularly the victory over Grendel's mother, are similarly set in various bodies of water.[16]

The second such sequence in *Beowulf* figures prominently in the hero's fight against Grendel's mother. As many have noted, this encounter is in many respects an inversion of Beowulf's earlier encounter with Grendel in that Beowulf stalks the monster to her lair, as opposed to encountering her son in the hall.[17] Though he takes the initiative, nonetheless, in the early stages of the actual encounter Beowulf is clearly at a disadvantage. Like Beowulf himself, Grendel's mother is a powerful swimmer and has a forceful grip. Worse, because the sword given by Unferth cannot inflict any harm upon her, Beowulf's chances for victory or even survival appear slim as his opponent draws a knife on him (1550-54a):

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[16] A further Iliadic pivotal contrafactual, 21.176-79, is set on the river bank as something of a prelude to the passage discussed above (21.211-12). Both passages are elements in Achilleus' ongoing fight with the river. Recall also that the *Odyssey* passage with which we began our discussion featured that hero swimming in the sea.

[17] See, among others, Rosier 1963 and Desmond 1992:274-75.

> Hæfde ða forsiðod sunu Ecgþeowes
> under gynne grund, Geata cempa,
> nemne him heaðobyrne helpe gefremede,
> herenet hearde,— ond halig God
> geweold wigsigor.
>
> He'd have traveled to the bottom of the earth,
> Edgetho's son, and died there, if that shining
> woven metal had not helped—and Holy
> God, who sent him victory, gave judgment.

The essential dynamic is the same as in the earlier passage. Destruction is threatened, and would occur if not (*nemne*) for intervention linked to God. The passage is climactic and literally pivotal, for immediately afterward (1557ff.) Beowulf sees the giants' sword (that he now notices it is a consequence of the divine intervention, as 1661-64, Beowulf's own later narration of the same event, makes clear) with which he will be able to defeat Grendel's mother. The outcome is roughly similar to that of Odysseus, in the earlier discussed passage (*Odyssey* 5.436ff.), discovering safety in the river mouth immediately after Athena's intervention in the same construction. We should observe that in this instance one of the climaxes of the poem, and of Beowulf's heroic career, is signalled or prepared for by the pivotal contrafactual. Beowulf's triumph over Grendel's mother in effect ends the action of the first half of the poem, as well as lays the most immediate foundation for the subsequent events in Beowulf's life.

The sequence begins, however, by calling all of this into question in a way that is again quite parallel with our first passage from the *Odyssey* (5.436-37). The pivotal contrafactual initially threatens Beowulf's imminent death: "He'd have traveled to the bottom of the earth, / Edgetho's son, and died there" (1550-51). To threaten the protagonist's death at this juncture is to threaten the continuation of the narrative itself. Beowulf will die, to be sure, but only after having reigned as king for fifty years, and only after helping to slay the dragon that will slay him. His death against Grendel's mother, then, would be an event outside of or contrary to the tradition from which the poem itself derives. It is from such a perspective that the crucial nature of the plot pivot contained in 1550-54a might be appreciated.[18] We earlier observed, in respect to *Odyssey* 5.436-37, that Homeric epic displays a parallel tendency to have pivotal contrafactuals

[18] The earlier sequence arguably carries a kernel of this same force in "swa he hyra ma wolde" (1055b), which implicitly suggests harm to Beowulf as well.

threaten dire events that cannot occur because they would violate the tradition.[19] Both traditions then can employ contrafactuals to step outside, if only briefly, their implied or expected boundaries—a passing metanarrative moment.

The final pivotal contrafactual in the poem is one that Beowulf himself narrates.[20] Returning to Hrothgar after his victory over Grendel's mother, he renders his own retrospective account of that exploit. As he offers Grendel's head to the king, Beowulf begins his narrative by noting that at one point he appeared to be doomed to defeat (1655-58):

> Ic þæt unsofte ealdre gedigde,
> wigge under wætere, weorc geneþde
> earfoðlice; ætrihte wæs
> guð getwæfed, nymðe mec God scylde.
>
> My life was almost lost, fighting for it,
> Struggling under water: I'd have been dead at once,
> and the fight finished, the she-devil victorious,
> If our Father in Heaven had not helped me.

While it is hardly surprising that Beowulf closes in on the climax of the exploit so quickly, it is somewhat surprising that he, just like the principal narrator, depicts the event using the same narrative technique. His subsequent remarks (1659-76) again underscore how crucial the moment is: only the divine intervention, highlighted both times in the pivotal contrafactuals, makes possible his victory.

The hero is threatened with death, a death that could not occur because it lies outside the traditional outline of his career. Beowulf not only survives his encounter with Grendel's mother; this triumph establishes his fame through a subsequent long life. As in Homeric epic, this particular intervention reflects positively on Beowulf, and elsewhere his success is also linked to divine aid.[21] God intervenes, implicitly, because the hero,

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[19] For discussion of this well-defined tendency, a list of relevant passages, and mention of earlier literature, see Louden 1993:25-26.

[20] Homeric epic several times features the hero using pivotal contrafactuals in his own narrations. Odysseus does so at 7.278 (discussed below), 9.79, 11.565, 630. Menelaus, in his own very Odyssean narratives, does so as well at 4.363, 441, and 502.

[21] E.g., "þurh Drihtnes miht" (940a). A propos of this I suggest that the concept of *over-determination*, the effects of which are frequently seen in Greek mythology, applies well to *Beowulf*. Events in Greek mythology are frequently determined twice, once on the human plane and once on the divine plane. For instance, Hektor slays Patroklos in Book

whether Greek or Germanic, has earned such attention and favor. Concluding his brief narrative, he proceeds to turn over the remnant hilt to Hrothgar.

Again, Homeric epic offers relevant parallels in this particular deployment of the pivotal contrafactual. The importance of *Odyssey* 5.436-37 (with which we began our investigation of pivotal contrafactuals) in that poem's overall structure is underscored by the fact that Odysseus himself, in his initial account to the Phaiakians, offers a second description of the same event, earlier related by the principal narrator. When asked by Arete, the Phaiakian queen, to account for his arrival on the island, Odysseus narrates his arrival made hazardous by the storm, the wreck of his raft, and the necessity for prodigious swimming (7.275-80):

> τὴν μὲν ἔπειτα θύελλα διεσκέδασ'· αὐτὰρ ἐγώ γε
> νηχόμενος τόδε λαῖτμα διέτμαγον, ὄφρα με γαίῃ
> ὑμετέρῃ ἐπέλασσε φέρων ἄνεμός τε καὶ ὕδωρ.
> ἔνθα κέ μ' ἐκβαίνοντα βιήσατο κῦμ' ἐπὶ χέρσου,
> πέτρῃς πρὸς μεγάλῃσι βαλὸν καὶ ἀτερπέϊ χώρῳ·
> ἀλλ' ἀναχασσάμενος νῆχον πάλιν.
>
> The stormwind utterly scattered it [the raft], but I
> cut across the great gulf by swimming until
> the wind and the water carrying me drove me to your shore;
> and there, had I emerged onto land, the rough wave
> would have dashed me against the great rocks in a gruesome place
> had I not backed away and swam again.

The circumstances are identical to those earlier described in 5.436-37,[22] except that Odysseus in his narration is unaware of the divine intervention described by the principal narrator. In *Beowulf* the principal narrator uses a pivotal contrafactual to describe Beowulf's encounter with Grendel's mother (1550-54a) and, shortly thereafter, the hero himself employs the same narrative technique as he recounts the same exploit to Hrothgar (1655-58). In the *Odyssey* the principal narrator first highlights Odysseus's difficult approach to Skheria in a pivotal contrafactual and then shortly

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16 of the *Iliad*, but Apollo slays him as well, or simultaneously. Apollo's action does not detract from Hektor's; both are responsible for the slaying. In *Beowulf*, the hero always performs the act, but God is always given credit as well. On over-determination see Dodds 1951:7, 16, 30ff., 51. For a brief comparison of the functions of deities in *Beowulf* and Homeric epic, see Parks 1990:37-38.

[22] "and now the great wave covered him . . . and Odysseus would have perished had not . . . ."

afterward the hero follows suit, again employing a pivotal contrafactual in his own partial narration of his exploits.

In 1963 Robert P. Creed identified a theme common to *Beowulf* and Homeric epic, "the singer looks at his sources," in which, for both Odysseus and Beowulf, a court singer sings a song about the hero's deeds in the presence of the hero himself.[23] Following Creed's example we might thus suggest the existence of an additional common theme or technique: "the hero emphasizes (with a pivotal contrafactual) his own exploits and proximity to death, earlier so emphasized by the principal narrator."

Having observed the three instances of the structure in *Beowulf*, we might now briefly consider it from some other perspectives. I have called the pivotal contrafactual a *narrative technique*, a classification that emphasizes its role in shaping and structuring the narrative. The device exists at the level of the sentence, as does the simile, for instance. Pivotal contrafactuals are, however, far more integral to the course of the narrative than the simile.[24]

Though a sentence-level device, they may be interpreted as very brief type-scenes, for in *Beowulf*, in particular, they always contain several repeated elements, including some verbal responsion and other specific correspondences. Each passage in *Beowulf* has these same smaller units: 1) a threatening action: *swa he hyra ma wolde* (1055b), *Hæfde ða forsiðod . . . under gynne grund* (1550a, 1551a), *Ic þæt unsofte ealdre gedigde . . . ætrihte wæs / guð getwæfed* (1655-58a); 2) a conjunction introducing the intervention: *nefne* (1056a), *nemne* (1552a), *nymðe* (1658b); 3) divine agency: *witig God* (1056a), *halig God* (1553b), *God* (1658b); 4) a personal pronoun referring to Beowulf: *ðæs mannes* (1057a), *him* (1552a), *mec* (1658b); 5) the threat averted: *him . . . wyrd forstode* (1056), *geweold wigsigor* (1554a), *scylde* (1658b). That "God" is the most stable element in the constructions emphasizes the importance of divine agency in the dynamics of the device.

Since one of the chief contextual demands for deployment of the pivotal contrafactuals appears to be Beowulf in combat against a monster, we should wonder, perhaps, why the poem does not employ such a sequence

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[23] The relevant passages are *Beowulf* 867ff., *Odyssey* 8.72ff., 499ff. See also Renoir 1988:100; and below for other citations on some elements common to *Beowulf* and Homeric epic.

[24] See Peabody 1975:220: "often a simile is only thematic gloss on a momentarily salient secondary element within a thematic development. A simile is seldom a significant feature of any major song pattern."

in the final combat, that with the dragon.[25] A brief consideration of why this does not occur may shed further light on the workings of this narrative technique. Partly building on some earlier work by Albert Lord, J. M. Foley has recently analyzed the three principal engagements, which he draws together under the rubric, "Battle with the Monster."[26] He persuasively argues for a five part *schema* underlying the three principal engagements, "Arming, a *Beot* (or verbal contract), the monster's Approach, the Death of a Substitute, and the Engagement itself" (233). The sequences with which we are concerned would thus be a smaller component within Foley's fifth element, the Engagement.

In making his case for how Beowulf's death against the dragon is an individual elaboration on the pattern established by the earlier engagements, Foley pays particular attention to his fourth element, "the Death of a Substitute." As in the first encounter Grendel slays Handscoh, and in the second his mother slays Aeschere, so the third battle also requires this preliminary to the actual engagement. There is something of a shift in the poem's modality, however, as the final sequence starts up, for, as Foley notes, the leisurely pace between the final Arming and *Beot* strikes a fatalistic tone.[27] When Beowulf's sword fails in the encounter, the narrative begins to signal that, to a degree, Beowulf himself will now fulfill the function of Death of a Substitute, while Wiglaf will fulfill the role Beowulf played in the first two encounters. That is to say, Wiglaf will not displace Beowulf as the hero, given the pomp and circumstance that commemorates Beowulf's death and draws out its significance to the end of the poem. Furthermore, Beowulf and Wiglaf kill the dragon together, and Wiglaf remains subsidiary in the battle's aftermath. Nonetheless, much of Foley's pattern holds.

The deployment of the pivotal contrafactuals in the first two multiforms of the Battle with the Monster, but absence of the narrative device in the final sequence, may offer a corollary to Foley's *schema*. Divine intervention is perhaps the most crucial element in the pivotal sequences. The course of the poem suggests a steadily upward evolution in

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[25] The other context in *Beowulf* most suitable for a pivotal contrafactual is Beowulf's account of his youthful victory over the sea-monster (549-72). Renoir (1988:129) notes the specific theme of a light flashing at the moment of victory (569-70, 1570), linking the defeat of the sea-monster with the victory over Grendel's mother.

[26] Foley 1991:231-42; Lord 1960:201-2. For another recent study of the first two Monster scenes, see Desmond 1992.

[27] Foley 1991:236.

the necessity for divine aid in the three Battle with the Monster multiforms. That is, Beowulf is increasingly more dependent on such aid with each subsequent engagement. In the encounter with Grendel divine aid is present, but the narrative does not suggest that Beowulf is in dire need of such aid. The aid itself is not made a central issue in the account. If anything the passage implies a joint responsibility, "nefne him witig God wyrd forstode / ond ðæs mannes mod" (1056-57a).[28] Against Grendel's mother, however, divine aid is crucial, as highlighted in the two pivotal sequences (1550-54a, 1655-58). Both accounts suggest that Beowulf could not survive the encounter without help from God. Against the dragon such aid is not forthcoming, and Beowulf does not survive. In that final engagement there could be no divine intervention, and as a narrative consequence no pivotal contrafactual, unless on behalf of Wiglaf, who is hardly yet the proper recipient of such narrative focus. As Beowulf's role modulates from the successful hero to the doomed substitute, so the narrative motivation behind pivotal contafactuals, which in *Beowulf* are only used of successful encounters by Beowulf himself, vanishes.

As we have noted several parallels between the deployment of pivotal contrafactuals in *Beowulf* and Homeric epic, some further comment on that relationship is in order. Lord and others have noted several specific narrative techniques common to both traditions, from motif to type-scene to story-pattern.[29] Some have argued for parallels between *Beowulf* and Indo-European or other ancient poetic traditions.[30] Without testimony

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[28] ("Had not God, and the hero's courage, / Turned fate aside"). Cf. again Dodds' formulation of "over-determination" (note 21 above).

[29] On common themes, see Creed 1963 on "the singer looks at his sources;" Lord 1965 for comparison of Odysseus' meeting with Nausikaa, preliminary to meeting the Phaiakians, and Beowulf's meeting with the coast guard; Renoir 1988 and 1990 for analysis of the "hero on the beach;" Renoir 1988:100, 111, and Parks 1990:72-77 on similarities between Unferth's taunting of Beowulf and Euryalos' rude remarks to Odysseus, as well as the subsequent reconciliations between these sets of characters; Nagler 1980 on similarities between Odysseus' combat with Polyphemos and that of Beowulf with Grendel's mother; Parks 1988 and 1990 on some narrative techniques common to both traditions. Lord 1965 and Renoir 1988 have compared various story-patterns and themes in the *Odyssey* and *Beowulf*; cf. Renoir 1990:*passim*.

[30] On Indo-European (IE) influence in Homeric epic, see Schmitt 1967 and Durante 1976. Posited IE phrases surviving in Homer include ἱερὸν μένος, κλέος ἄφθιτον, κλέα ἀνδρῶν, δῶτορ ἐάων, Διὸς θυγάτηρ, and so on. Suggested influence of *Gilgamesh* is seen in Homeric divine councils, Aphrodite's relationship with Zeus in the *Iliad*, and the like; on this and IE influence, see West 1988. Klaeber notes an

from a third ancient Indo-European tradition, however, it would be reckless to assume Indo-European provenience for the technique.[31] It would be equally reckless, and unsupportable, to argue for direct influence of Homeric epic on the Old English poetic tradition.[32] Nonetheless, since deployment of the structure agrees in so many particulars in the two traditions, we cannot rule out indirect influence of Homeric epic patterns on *Beowulf*, or of an earlier tradition on both the Greek and Old English traditions, as a qualified and tentative conclusion.

Of those tools assumed to be at the disposal of the traditional oral poet, we have observed the properties of one type of narrative technique that has largely escaped notice, manipulation of a specific form of syntax. This particular device, the pivotal contrafactual, employed by both Old English and Homeric epic, is particularly used in one crucial context, the hero's encounter with a deadly opponent and life-threatening circumstances. So deployed, the syntactic pattern is capable of great force and can articulate issues reaching to the core of heroic poetry itself. As the hero can be effectively threatened by this device, so can the existence of the narrative itself be momentarily threatened. As we have noted, the *Beowulf* poet, at some moments of particular narrative tension, underscores the singular drama of key encounters through this ancient device. This narrative technique is, then, one more piece of evidence of the level of sophistication operative in the literature of oral cultures.[33]

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apparent IE narrative technique present in *Beowulf* 61: "Heorogar ond Hroðgar ond Halga til." The same pattern is also present at 2434; see also West 1988:155-56. On the general likelihood of IE themes surviving in *Beowulf*, see Renoir 1988:86ff.; cf. Lord 1980 and Nagler 1980. See Fontenrose 1959:524ff. for suggested parallels between Grendel's mother and Tiamat, the chaos demoness of Mesopotamian creation myths.

[31] Though Vergil employs the structure occasionally in the *Aeneid*, he clearly imitates Homeric practice in so doing, and his usage thus cannot be taken as a Latin reflex of an inherited IE phenomenon.

[32] Cf. Lord's similarly cautious conclusion (1965:139): "The *Odyssey* had no direct influence on *Beowulf* . . . . But they both belonged . . . to the same oral epic narrative tradition. The story patterns in such a tradition are very old, amazingly stable, surprisingly alive." On knowledge of Greek in Anglo-Saxon times, see Lapidge 1988 and Berschin 1988.

[33] I should like to thank John Miles Foley and the anonymous reader for *OT* whose helpful comments strengthened this essay considerably.

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Ei Pote: A Note on Homeric Phraseology

R. Scott Garner

The phrase εἴ ποτε ("if ever") has long been recognized by Homeric scholars as a characteristically important element of many Homeric prayers and supplications and especially as a component of entreaties that are intended to remind an individual of services performed in the past.[1] However, it remains to be thoroughly explored how this seemingly simple phrase functions as a dynamic unit in its own right within the framework of the Homeric poems, specifically to examine the extralexical meaning metonymically encoded into the phrase by the ambient oral tradition from which our present-day texts ultimately derive. By understanding this additional significance of εἴ ποτε within Homeric poetry, we can gain not only a better appreciation of the events narrated in the poems themselves but also an improved awareness of how traditional rules may affect the phraseological content of such oral-derived works of art.

The phrase εἴ ποτε appears eleven times in the Homeric epics (*Iliad* 1.39, 1.340, 1.394, 1.503, 5.116, 15.372, 22.83, 24.705; *Odyssey* 3.98, 4.328, 4.763), and each of these occurrences is found within a passage concerning either the unfolding of future events or the marked elevation of the emotional or dramatic content of the current scene. Both of these functions of individual passages are especially characteristic of Homeric prayers and supplications, for the result of a request will nearly always affect subsequent events, and the mere fact that an individual is forced to ask for assistance is often enough to bring emotions to the forefront (cf. Morrison 1991:149ff., Thornton 1984:113ff.). Therefore, it is no coincidence that nine of the eleven appearances of εἴ ποτε occur within prayers or supplications.[2] However, it is telling that all but one of these

[1] See, e.g., Janko 1992:268, Lang 1975, and Richardson 1993:15.

[2] In fact, the two instances that are not definite examples of prayers or supplications can actually be seen as such. The occurrence at *Iliad* 1.340 is found within Achilleus' speech in which he orders/requests the two heralds to be witness to Agamemnon's wrongful action that will in the future cause destruction for the Achaeans. This occurrence

requests are successful. It is the intent of this note to demonstrate that the success of an important request is part of the expanded meaning of εἴ ποτε and that the poet may therefore use this meaning in a variety of ways.

In order to show that εἴ ποτε has such an additional meaning, we must first prove that this phrase may actually exist as a single compositional unit within the poetic tradition. As Eugene O'Neill, Jr. has shown in his analysis of metrical word-types in the Greek hexameter, while there is substantial evidence that in Homer "an accented word and its enclitic did not constitute a single and indivisible metric unit" (1942:106), "the independence of proclitics, enclitics, and the like was very limited, and that with the words that preceded or followed them they constituted *quasi-units*, phrases that cohered just closely enough to *suggest* single words, and hence to be avoided in those verse positions in which single words of the same metrical type were to be avoided" (110). The fact that εἴ ποτε, collectively a dactyl (– ◡ ◡), does indeed avoid the only position in the Homeric line at which a single dactylic word is uncommon—that is, the third foot, which extends over the mid-line caesura—thus lends credence to the argument that this phrase is an actual element of Homeric composition. In this respect, the two-word phrase acts as a single word in Homeric phraseology.

However, we need not think that the single simplex phrase, εἴ ποτε, is the only shape that this formulaic component may take in Homer. As John Miles Foley has shown, such an element may actually consist of several multiforms that are associated with each other in meaning but with no single one of these units being the original kernel from which the other forms are generated.[3] For instance, the phrase εἴ ποτέ μοι/τοι occurs six times in the epics (*Iliad* 1.39, 5.116, 22.83; *Odyssey* 3.98, 4.328, 4.763). O'Neill's analysis establishes that single Homeric words of a metrical type identical to this phrase occur in one of the first two possible positions (those beginning in either the first or second foot of the line) about eighty percent of the time (144). In fact, since εἴ ποτέ μοι/τοι always occurs in these two positions, this phrase also appears to work in accordance with

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can be seen as a precursor to the prayer Achilleus makes less than sixty lines later, which also uses the phrase εἴ ποτέ. The case is much simpler at *Iliad* 24.705, where Kassandra orders the Trojan men and women to look upon the body of Hektor—an order that, when seen in the context of the surrounding narrative, is easily understood as an emotional request or supplication.

[3] See Foley 1990:129-37 for a discussion of this oral traditional characteristic as it relates to the phrase ἔπεα πτερόεντα, "winged words."

traditional rules and may itself be considered a formula. This fact is especially important because it accounts for the extraordinarily high occurrence of εἴ ποτε in the second foot of the line. According to O'Neill's figures, such a formula should only occur in this position less than ten percent of the time (142). However, six of the eleven occurrences of εἴ ποτε (54.5%) actually appear there. But since four of these instances are part of another formula (εἴ ποτέ μοι/τοι) that is working in combination with traditional rules as a larger compositional unit in its own right, this statistical discrepancy is resolved. The interplay of larger and smaller composite "words" is one of the ways in which traditional rules may affect Homeric phraseology—namely, that traditional requirements of the idiomatic register may skew the purely metrical localization of a given formula.

Now that we have established that the phrase εἴ ποτε and its multiforms can indeed be viewed as a formulaic component of Homeric poetry, we can move on to explore how this phrase is actually employed in different narrative contexts throughout the epics. Let us begin by looking at the simpler and more usual occurrences of εἴ ποτε in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and then proceed to investigate how the indexed meaning of this phrase can come into play in other significant passages.

The first occurrence of εἴ ποτε in the *Iliad* furnishes a clear example of how this phrase is used within a successful Homeric prayer. While Chryses prays to Apollo at 1.37-42, he says:[4]

> "κλῦθί μευ, ἀργυρότοξ', ὃς Χρύσην ἀμφιβέβηκας
> Κίλλαν τε ζαθέην Τενέδοιό τε ἶφι ἀνάσσεις,
> Σμινθεῦ, εἴ ποτέ τοι χαρίεντ' ἐπὶ νηὸν ἔρεψα,
> ἢ εἰ δή ποτέ τοι κατὰ πίονα μηρί' ἔκηα
> ταύρων ἠδ' αἰγῶν, τόδε μοι κρήηνον ἐέλδωρ·
> τείσειαν Δαναοὶ ἐμὰ δάκρυα σοῖσι βέλεσσιν."
>
> "Hear me,
> lord of the silver bow who set your power about Chryse
> and Killa the sacrosanct, who are lord in strength over Tenedos,
> Smintheus, if ever it pleased your heart that I built your temple,
> if ever it pleased you that I burned all the rich thigh pieces
> of bulls, of goats, then bring to pass this wish I pray for:
> let your arrows make the Danaans pay for my tears shed."

[4] Quotations of passages from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are from the standard Oxford editions by Monro and Allen. All English translations are from Lattimore 1951 and 1965, with slight changes made for emphasis.

This passage consists of a prayer mentioning Chryses' past services to Apollo. Within the Homeric epics, there are thirteen such prayers that detail services performed in the past either by or for the petitioned god, and in each case the prayer is successful.[5] Therefore, the mentioning of these past services seems to be a strong traditional indicator of the success of the request to follow, and the phrase εἴ ποτε dovetails with this indicator. We need not ask whether εἴ ποτε is the primary signal that the following appeal will be successful; instead, we must simply realize that the phrase is an important part of the reference to past services and therefore inextricably associated with the success of the prayer, whether or not it is the root cause.[6]

Another example of the inclusion of εἴ ποτε in an important epic prayer is in the plea that Diomedes makes to Athena after he has been wounded by Pandaros (*Iliad* 5.115-20):

> "κλῦθί μευ, αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς τέκος,'Ατρυτώνη,
> εἴ ποτέ μοι καὶ πατρὶ φίλα φρονέουσα παρέστης
> δηΐῳ ἐν πολέμῳ, νῦν αὖτ' ἐμὲ φῖλαι,'Αθήνη·
> δὸς δέ τέ μ' ἄνδρα ἑλεῖν καὶ ἐς ὁρμὴν ἔγχεος ἐλθεῖν,
> ὅς μ' ἔβαλε φθάμενος καὶ ἐπεύχεται, οὐδέ μέ φησι
> δηρὸν ἔτ' ὄψεσθαι λαμπρὸν φάος ἠελίοιο."

> "Hear me now, Atrytone, daughter of Zeus of the aegis:
> if ever before in kindliness you stood by my father
> through the terror of fighting, be my friend now also, Athena;
> grant me that I may kill this man and come within spearcast,
> who shot me before I could see him, and now boasts over me, saying
> I cannot live to look much longer on the shining sunlight."

Because this prayer involves a reference to the past employing εἴ ποτε, the audience is once again able to recognize that this prayer will be successful and that Pandaros will indeed die. In addition, the poet also uses the imperative κλῦθι ("hear"), another apparent traditional signal of successful prayers since all eleven occurrences of κλῦθι within Homeric prayers are

[5] *Iliad* 1.37-42, 1.451-56, 5.115-20, 8.236-44, 10.278-82, 10.284-94, 10.462-64, 15.372-76, 16.233-48; *Odyssey* 4.762-66, 6.324-27, 17.240-46, 20.98-101.

[6] Note that in the line after εἴ ποτε we have the only occurrence in the epics of the phrase εἰ δή ποτε. While this phrase may or may not be an actual compositional formula in its own right, at the very least it amplifies the previous εἴ ποτε and thus imparts even more significance to Chryses' past services—an added sign that the fulfillment of this prayer will have such dire consequences for the Greeks throughout the epic.

followed by successful requests. However, even with such important indicators having been provided to the audience, Athena, when she hears Diomedes' prayer (5.121), does not help him to kill Pandaros until nearly 170 more lines have elapsed (5.290ff.). Instead, the poet uses this significant prayer to launch the lengthy and important sequence of the raging of Diomedes.

As a final example of the way in which εἴ ποτε may function in a successful prayer, consider *Odyssey* 4.762-67. In this passage, Penelope asks Athena to keep Telemachos safe during the voyage he is undertaking to gain information about his father:

> "Κλῦθί μευ, αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς τέκος, Ἀτρυτώνη,
> εἴ ποτέ τοι πολύμητις ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν Ὀδυσσεὺς
> ἢ βοὸς ἢ ὄϊος κατὰ πίονα μηρία κῆε,
> τῶν νῦν μοι μνῆσαι, καί μοι φίλον υἷα σάωσον,
> μνηστῆρας δ' ἀπάλαλκε κακῶς ὑπερηνορέοντας."
> Ὣς εἰποῦσ' ὀλόλυξε, θεὰ δέ οἱ ἔκλυεν ἀρῆς.
>
> "Hear me, Atrytone, child of Zeus of the aegis,
> if ever here in his own palace resourceful Odysseus
> burned the rich thigh pieces of an ox or sheep in your honor,
> remember it now for my sake and save for me my beloved
> son, and fend off the suitors who are evilly overbearing."
> She spoke, and raised the outcry, and the goddess listened to her praying.

Once again, we see εἴ ποτε being used in combination with both **klu'qi** and the goddess's hearing of the prayer, and this harmony of traditional signals therefore provides us with every indication that Penelope's prayer will be successful in its intent. Nevertheless, the granting of her request does not occur until much later (Book 15), when Telemachos finally arrives safely in Ithaka. In fact, Book 4 actually ends with the suitors lying in wait to ambush Penelope's son. However, since the poet has provided the necessary signals to his audience that nothing will happen to Telemachos, he is able to transfer his narrative to the exploits of Odysseus without the audience worrying about the safety of the hero's son. This ability of the poet to rely upon his audience's understanding of the indexed meaning of his words reveals the self-referential nature of the components of oral traditional poetry and the ability of these components to close gaps of indeterminacy that would otherwise exist in the narrative.[7]

[7] See also Foley 1995, esp. chapters 1-3, for a discussion of the ways in which traditional elements may help to bridge these gaps of indeterminacy.

Another way in which the poet may use the indexed meaning of εἴ ποτε to his benefit is demonstrated at *Iliad* 1.498-510 as Thetis seeks to supplicate Zeus for the sake of her son:

> εὗρεν δ' εὐρύοπα Κρονίδην ἄτερ ἥμενον ἄλλων
> ἀκροτάτῃ κορυφῇ πολυδειράδος Οὐλύμποιο·
> καί ῥα πάροιθ' αὐτοῖο καθέζετο, καὶ λάβε γούνων
> σκαιῇ, δεξιτερῇ δ' ἄρ' ὑπ' ἀνθερεῶνος ἑλοῦσα
> λισσομένη προσέειπε Δία Κρονίωνα ἄνακτα·
> "Ζεῦ πάτερ, εἴ ποτε δή σε μετ' ἀθανάτοισιν ὄνησα
> ἢ ἔπει ἢ ἔργῳ, τόδε μοι κρήηνον ἐελδωρ·
> τίμησόν μοι υἱόν, ὅς ὠκυμορώτατος ἄλλων
> ἔπλετ'· ἀτάρ μιν νῦν γε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων
> ἠτίμησεν· ἑλὼν γὰρ ἔχει γέρας, αὐτὸς ἀπούρας.
> ἀλλὰ σύ πέρ μιν τεῖσον, Ὀλύμπιε μητίετα Ζεῦ·
> τόφρα δ' ἐπὶ Τρώεσσι τίθει κράτος, ὄφρ' ἂν Αχαιοὶ
> υἱὸν ἐμὸν τείσωσιν οφέλλωσίν τέ ἑ τιμῇ."

> She found Kronos' broad-browed son apart from the others
> sitting upon the highest peak of rugged Olympos.
> She came and sat beside him with her left hand embracing
> his knees, but took him underneath the chin with her right hand
> and spoke in supplication to lord Zeus son of Kronos:
> "Father Zeus, <u>if ever</u> before in word or action
> I did you favour among the immortals, now grant what I ask for.
> Now give honour to my son short-lived beyond all other
> mortals. Since even now the lord of men Agamemnon
> dishonours him, who has taken away his prize and keeps it.
> Zeus of the counsels, lord of Olympos, now do him honour.
> So long put strength into the Trojans, until the Achaians
> give my son his rights, and his honour is increased among them."

Here we see εἴ ποτε and its reference to past services (described previously by Achilleus in another passage involving εἴ ποτε at *Iliad* 1.393-412) employed in tandem with a very full description of supplication gestures in order to constitute a plea that a tradition-aware audience will recognize as a plea that should be answered favorably. However, Zeus remains silent after Thetis' entreaties and Achilleus' mother is once again forced to request the favor before the king of the gods finally agrees to grant her appeal for help. Therefore, a heightened feeling of suspense intrudes for a moment upon this scene—although by means of a method quite different from any found in a purely literary tradition—as the audience wonders if Zeus will indeed act in a way contrary to tradition. Of course, no such degree of suspense would even be possible without the metonymically indexed meaning of εἴ ποτε and of the rest of the supplication's important constituents.

Perhaps the most fascinating usage of εἴ ποτε in the epics occurs in the following scene, in which Hekabe begs Hektor not to continue fighting against Achilleus outside the walls of Troy (*Iliad* 22.79-89):

> μήτηρ δ' αὖθ' ἑτέρωθεν ὀδύρετο δάκρυ χέουσα,
> κόλπον ἀνιεμένη, ἑτέρηφι δὲ μαζὸν ἀνέσχε·
> καί μιν δάκρυ χέουσ' ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·
> " Ἕκτορ, τέκνον ἐμόν, τάδε τ' αἴδεο καί μ' ἐλέησον
> αὐτήν, εἴ ποτέ τοι λαθικηδέα μαζὸν ἐπέσχον·
> τῶν μνῆσαι, φίλε τέκνον, ἄμυνε δὲ δήϊον ἄνδρα
> τείχεος ἐντὸς ἐών, μηδὲ πρόμος ἵστασο τούτῳ,
> σχέτλιος· εἴ περ γάρ σε κατακτάνῃ, οὔ σ' ἔτ' ἔγωγε
> κλαύσομαι ἐν λεχέεσσι, φίλον θάλος, ὃν τέκον αὐτή,
> οὐδ' ἄλοχος πολύδωρος· ἄνευθε δέ σε μέγα νῶϊν
> Ἀργείων παρὰ νηυσὶ κύνες ταχέες κατέδονται."

> And side by side with him his mother in tears was mourning
> and laid the fold of her bosom bare and with one hand held out
> a breast, and wept her tears for him and called to him in winged words:
> "Hektor, my child, look upon these and obey, and take pity
> on me, if ever I gave you the breast to quiet your sorrow.
> Remember all these things, dear child, and from inside the wall
> beat off this grim man. Do not go out as champion against him,
> o hard one; for if he kills you I can no longer
> mourn you on the death-bed, sweet branch, o child of my bearing,
> nor can your generous wife mourn you, but a big way from us
> beside the ships of the Argives the running dogs will feed on you."

The emotional content of this scene is tremendous, especially since it is coupled with a preceding passage in which Priam also tearfully attempts to persuade his son not to do battle alone. However, in addition to the more obvious emotional elements depicted here in detail, we once again find εἴ ποτε as a crucial dimension of Hekabe's words. This phrase, undeniably linked to successful supplications in the Homeric epics, demonstrates by its appearance that Hekabe has now done everything within her power to persuade Hektor to cease from his fighting outside the walls of Troy, and that according to traditional usage she has every reason to expect her plea to carry the day. Nevertheless, this model supplication's predictable success is at odds with the fact that fate has already ordained Hektor's imminent death at the hands of Achilleus.[8] These two conflicting forces add both suspense

[8] Although Hektor's death is alluded to throughout the *Iliad*, it becomes a main focus of the epic in Book 18 and is even foretold miraculously at 19.408-17, where Xanthos (a horse) tells Achilleus of his own approaching death, which may occur only after he has killed Hektor.

and importance to Hekabe's plea, and the scene ends dramatically with Hektor necessarily rejecting his mother's supplication and continuing his march toward death.[9] The poet has once again used the enriched traditional meaning of εἴ ποτε to add even more significance to an already emotion-filled scene.

Now that we have explored the metonymically indexed nature of εἴ ποτε within the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, two final points should be made to demonstrate even more fully the significance of this simple formulaic component in Homeric poetry. First, since the indexed meaning of εἴ ποτε is intertwined with its ambient oral tradition (for this phrase is at the same time both an enabling cue and a generated product of this tradition), a bit of doubt concerning our theory of this formula's metonymic meaning might arise if a dissimilar usage of εἴ ποτε occurred elsewhere in the ancient Greek *epos*, particularly in the Homeric Hymns. As Foley has stated, "because both Hymn and epic phraseologies stand in a symbiotic relationship to the same hexameter prosody, and therefore follow the same traditional rules, they are unlikely to have developed into wholly separate linguistic idioms" (1995:155). Thus, it is necessary that we investigate εἴ ποτε in reference to the Hymns and compare any additional developments of the phrase to that found in the Homeric epics.

There is, in fact, only a single instance of εἴ ποτε in the Homeric Hymns, and it occurs in the *Hymn to Demeter* as Demeter herself implores Helios to reveal to her what has happened to her daughter Persephone (64-73):[10]

> Ἥλι' αἴδεσσαί με θεὰν σύ περ, <u>εἴ ποτε</u> δή σευ
> ἢ ἔπει ἢ ἔργῳ κραδίην καὶ θυμὸν ἴηνα.
> κούρην τὴν ἔτεκον γλυκερὸν θάλος εἴδεϊ κυδρὴν
> τῆς ἀδινὴν ὄπ' ἄκουσα δι' αἰθέρος ἀτρυγέτοιο
> ὥς τε βιαζομένης, ἀτὰρ οὐκ ἴδον ὀφθαλμοῖσιν.
> ἀλλὰ σὺ γὰρ δὴ πᾶσαν ἐπὶ χθόνα καὶ κατὰ πόντον
> αἰθέρος ἐκ δίης καταδέρκεαι ἀκτίνεσσι,
> νημερτέως μοι ἔνισπε φίλον τέκος εἴ που ὄπωπας
> ὅς τις νόσφιν ἐμεῖο λαβὼν ἀέκουσαν ἀνάγκῃ
> οἴχεται ἠὲ θεῶν ἢ καὶ θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων.

[9] Although it may be observed that one of Hekabe's wishes within this supplication speech (being able to mourn her son on the deathbed) does come to fruition, it should be stressed that the actual request that she makes of Hektor (that he refrain from fighting outside the Trojan walls) is indeed unsuccessful in its intent.

[10] Quoted from Allen 1936. The English translation is from Athanassakis 1976, with slight changes made for emphasis.

> "Helios, do have respect for me as a goddess, if ever I
> cheered your heart and soul by word or deed.
> Through the barren ether I heard the shrieking voice
> of my daughter famous for her beauty, a sweet flower at birth,
> as if she were being overcome by force, but I saw nothing.
> And since you do gaze down upon the whole earth
> and sea and cast your rays through the bright ether,
> tell me truly if you have seen anywhere
> what god or even mortal man in my absence
> seized by force my dear child and went away."

Since the request bears fruit and Helios tells Demeter all that he knows, this occurrence provides more support for the association of εἴ ποτε with successful scenes of prayer and supplication.

Finally, one additional item further illustrates the significance of εἴ ποτε in Homer—the clearly unrelated usage of the elided version of what is lexically the very same phrase: εἴ ποτ'. Although there are nine occurrences of εἴ ποτ' in the epics,[11] only one of them is even involved in a prayer or supplication (*Odyssey* 17.240). Furthermore, even though εἴ ποτ' of course has precisely the same denotative, lexical meaning as its unelided equivalent εἴ ποτε, it is impossible to find any evidence of its involving the same indexed meaning. This discrepancy demonstrates the arbitrary nature of the relationship between signs and their meanings in oral-derived poetry, and provides just one more piece of evidence that εἴ ποτε is indeed a significant element in Homeric poetry that, just like any other Homeric formula, relies upon its metonymically indexed nature to function as an enhanced compositional unit with a greatly extended connotative meaning. By understanding this tradition-enhanced signification, we can therefore gain a much greater appreciation not only of traditional phraseology but also of the Homeric poems themselves as narrative wholes.[12]

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[11] *Iliad* 2.97, 3.180, 11.762, 24.426; *Odyssey* 2.342, 15.268, 17.240, 19.315, 24.289.

[12] This note is adapted from an unpublished honors thesis completed at the University of Missouri-Columbia in May 1995. The thesis itself was the direct result of research which I began in the summer of 1994 under the mentorship of John Miles Foley and the sponsorship of the University of Missouri's Undergraduate Research Mentorship Program.

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Oral Tradition, 11/2 (1996): 374-417

In Defense of Milman Parry: Renewing the Oral Theory

Merritt Sale

John Foley's *Theory of Oral Composition* begins by referring to the "development of the Oral-Formulaic theory from its origins in the writings of Milman Parry and Albert Lord through its contemporary influence on more than one hundred language traditions" (1988:1). But within its discipline of origin, Classics, Parry's work has come under heavy fire recently, and a number of scholars regard it as an outmoded phase in the history of Homeric scholarship. There is also a body of belief that Parry was disappointed by the South Slavic material he uncovered: it is supposed not to embody the ideas he had derived for Homer. If we listen to these voices, we must conclude that a theory now known to be unworkable even for Homer was rejected for other literatures by its own creator; the entire discipline founded on the Oral-Formulaic theory is declared to be undermined at its very base. Homer and oral poetry are to go their separate ways, and Parry has little to tell us about either one.

These voices are frequently supercilious and mocking; their language can readily anger those who have learned from Parry, and can encourage a simple dismissal. For two reasons, dismissal is unwise: Parry's critics have been influential, at least among classicists, and their criticism sometimes springs from genuine and important flaws in Parry's presentation. Let me say, I hope without impudence, that while Parry was a consummate linguist, an excellent scientist, and a man of wide literary culture, he was an imperfect theorist who made a number of broad claims that conceal some deep and important confusions. He was young, and justly excited by the power of his position and the force of his individual genius; he therefore took extreme positions. All or almost all formulae are traditional, he thought; all or almost all of the Homeric text is formulaic; all fixed epithets are ornamental, and to them the audience is always indifferent. In addition, like every other great scholar, he made mistakes. But the true power of his

position lies in the fact that if we correct the mistakes, and state the theory in a less extreme form, we can reach exactly the same result with regard to Homer and oral composition that Parry reached. Despite the vigor with which he has recently been shot down, or at least shot at, Parry's conclusion that Homer was an oral poet can be proved to have been absolutely right. Moreover, the Yugoslavian material is not a disappointment, but a brilliant confirmation. Parry's arguments, reformulated in part and supported by mathematical analysis, can sweep aside the arrogant claims that the hour of orality has "already passed" (Lynn-George 1988:55), that oral theory is a "myth" (Bellamy 1989:307), that we can "put a pen in" Homer's hand (Shive 1987:139).[1]

First, we must see clearly what his conclusions, his results, really were. Though he certainly thought that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were composed orally, he did not even attempt to prove it: "If one wishes to think that Homer composed his poems orally, and then sat down and wrote them out, there is little that can be said in disproof, and little that needs to be said" (322).[2] Indeed, there is little that can be said in disproof; we may think it improbable, but an oral poet could have learned to write. He might

[1] Much less arrogant and much more valuable is the discussion by Stanley (1993:268-96), who feels that certain features require literate composition (perhaps by a person with training in oral composition). These features are, I believe, within the scope of the illiterate oral poet; but since Parry cannot prove that Homer did not learn to write, the distance between Parry and Stanley is not vast. For a critique of Stanley, see Sale 1996. On Lynn-George and Shive, who appear to be the most cited among recent determined Scripsists, see below. Norman Austin (1975) and Paolo Vivante (1982) criticize Parry vigorously (mostly where I myself think him weak; see below), and Jasper Griffin (1980) rejects the need for an oral poetics, but none of them insists that Homer cannot have been an oral poet. Others, such as A. Parry (1966) and Lloyd-Jones (1992) have been offended by the South Slavic analogy because of their low opinion of the poetry; see further below on their lack of acquaintance with the South Slavic tradition except in English translation. Still others, such as Visser (1988) and Bakker (1988:152-64), seek to alter the conceptual foundations in very interesting ways while retaining the picture of an oral poet, perhaps literate. I do not everywhere agree with Visser's readings of Parry, but I have not offered much criticism in what follows, since as far as I can see most of Parry's arguments could be rephrased or recast to suit Visser's reconceptualization. We can probably say the same of Bakker, even though he elects to *begin* with the hypothesis of orality (1988:153).

[2] All references to Parry's writings are to Parry 1971, the collection of his published and previously unpublished works.

have made important changes thereby; he might have made the poems longer, for instance. In theory he could have obscured his oral training. But he did not; this is what Parry proved.[3] If Homer learned to write, and wrote the poems, he preserved the signature of the oral poet far too clearly for us to speak of a literate poet merely influenced by, or even steeped in, oral poetry, or of a literate poet who was also a rhapsode, a singer of other people's songs. Literate or illiterate, Homer knew how to compose in performance; he had mastered a subtle and difficult art.

This is the conclusion that I have described as "absolutely right," and the one I wish to defend here. More than this Parry's arguments cannot claim, and there are no new arguments that I know of to settle the question of whether the poems were composed orally; there are only new arguments that seek to support or to undermine Parry's position. So our task is twofold. We must extract the arguments for Homer as oral poet from Parry's text, where most of them are very compressed (266-324). And we must restate and add to them so as to secure the conclusion that Homer knew how to sing.

Repeated reading and study of Parry's texts have convinced me that there are no conceptual differences between Parry's thought in 1928 and 1932, that is, between the Paris theses (abbreviated TE and FM in Parry 1971) and the *Harvard Studies* articles (HS and HL). After 1932, after the visits to the former Yugoslavia in 1933 and 1934-35, he may have conceived of a more creative poet, as his coworker Albert Lord does (1960:43), and his faith in audience indifference to the force of the epithets may have weakened somewhat. But the pre-fieldwork material seems all of a piece, and indeed the thought at the very center did not alter from 1928 to the day of his death. This central thought is simple: the diction of Homer is largely, or entirely, *formulaic*, as "my teacher" Meillet (439) had argued in 1923 (see TE, 9), and as Parry himself had implied in his 1923 MA thesis (423); these formulae are largely or entirely *traditional* (FM, 196; HS, 324 *et passim*), again as Meillet and his thesis had argued; traditional formulae can be organized, largely but not entirely, into extensive and economical *systems* (TE, 16-21; HS, 275-79—this is Parry's most original contribution), and these systems existed for the sake of *oral* composition

[3] This is how Parry's son Adam interpreted his father, and how Adam could be a Scripsist and still feel himself his father's disciple (A. Parry 1966:212-16; Parry 1971:lx-lxii).

(317-19). Parry implies (439) that he needed Meillet to make this last point for him, but the idea is present, if understated, in TE (56, e.g.).

Still, it makes sense to say that in 1928 Parry argued for a traditional Homer, in 1930-32 for an oral Homer. The central thought is the same, but the arguments are independent of each other, and I think it logically important to emphasize the difference. Thus I shall barely touch upon Parry's arguments for Homer as a traditional poet, and must therefore take an arbitrary stance towards the question, much-vexed among those who regard themselves as disciples of Parry, of how much the poems owe to an individual composer and how much to the collective bards of the tradition. Those such as Gregory Nagy who emphasize the tradition and restrict the individual poet to "considerable refinements in the act of recomposition" (1990:79) seem closest in spirit to Parry himself, who maintained that the tradition created the formulae, while Homer merely grouped them (324). True, Parry elsewhere asserts that "the poet" selected from among the traditional store an epithet particular to the context, so that "we can see . . . the conscious choice of a word" (158); but in this passage Parry's "the poet" making such choices is a generic figure, not Homer. Time after time we find Parry attributing the employment of formulae to metrical convenience alone, leaving no scope for an individual to make a semantic or aesthetic choice. In contrast, those who emphasize the individual poet, and thus conceive of Homer as an inventive, original, and profound user of a wholly traditional style with largely traditional formulae, epithets, verbs, and phrases, tend to associate themselves with the views of Albert Lord; I am among their number. I am persuaded that most, perhaps all, of the epithets (and indeed the rest of the vocabulary) were traditional, but I think "the poet" in question is often Homer himself, and I think him capable of constructing original formulae, mostly (perhaps wholly) out of traditional material, often in the act of composing (Lord 1960:43). In fact, I think it was traditional to compose this way.

At times I shall be in more clearcut disagreement with Parry. I do not believe, for instance, that the audience was ever indifferent to the force of the epithets, though it may not always have thought very hard about each use of each one; I also think that the meanings of the generic epithets play a more important role than Parry allows. More orthodox Parryans will therefore demur at some of my restatements, though they will presumably welcome the fact that arguments different from their own lead to conclusions that they cherish. Nothing I say will undermine the view that

the elements of Homeric diction—all or almost all the words and a great many of the formulae—were traditional; and everything I say will be aimed at supporting, to the degree that I think it can, the other pillar of Parry's position, namely that Homeric poetry, though not necessarily orally composed, was composed by one or more oral poets.

With the exception of the seventh one, the arguments enumerated and elaborated below come directly from Parry. There are ten in all, falling into four general patterns of thought: *quantity* of formulae and formulaic occurrences (Argument 1), culminating with the quantity of frequently occurring "regular" formulae (Argument 2); the *qualitative* nature of regular and infrequent formulae (Arguments 3-5), and the further relevance of two of these qualities, economy and localization, to oral composition (Arguments 6-7); verses with metrical *irregularities* (Argument 8); and *comparisons* with other epics (Arguments 9-10). As we sift through them, we discover that while some of these arguments prove Parry's stance, others support a more modest claim, and make a point that Parry did not reckon with. They show that while the formulaic style originally came into being for the sake of composition in performance, a person who has learned to use this style may be no more than a good literate imitator of an oral composer. We shall be distinguishing these arguments from the first kind, those showing that while some aspects of the style can be accurately mastered by a wholly literate poet who has read or listened widely and deeply, certain other features are too subtle, and point ineluctably to extensive training (autodidactic or heterodidactic or both) and experience in oral composition. This group of arguments, while they cannot prove that the poems were orally composed, do prove that their composer was an oral poet.[4]

Making this distinction between groups of arguments mandates making comparisons. We lack a model for the oral composer who learned to write, which is why we cannot know whether Homer wrote or not. We do have a model for an excellent literate imitator of the oral style in Quintus of Smyrna, who, in the words of his most eminent modern student,

[4] It is a fascinating fact that Parry never really argues that "Homer is traditional and *therefore* oral," though he does say that "the traditional style that Homer used was oral" (321). Later scholars have felt that some formulae are traditional, others not (e.g., Sale 1987:34-35; 1993:135-42; and see below), or that epithets, nouns, and verbs are traditional, but formulae not (Visser 1988:26, 34). In what follows I have avoided reference to the tradition whenever possible, and permitted none of the arguments (even #4, from the extension of systems) to depend on it.

"est parvenu à s'assimiler la langue et la style d'Homère" (Vian 1959:250).[5] Quintus will loom large in the following pages: if we did not have the means to detect stylistic differences between him and Homer, all the evidence for orality in Homer would prove only that Homer was a much more talented and intelligent Quintus. We also have a good model for an oral poet in the Bosnian Avdo Medjedović: his *Ženidba Smailagina sina* is a first-rate epic poem, and was certainly composed orally.[6]

Many of the comparisons we shall be making among Avdo, Quintus, and Homer will be quantitative: "in this poem we have this many formulae, formulaic occurrences, regular formulae; in that poem, that many." Quintus has about 8,800 lines, the *Ženidba* 12,300, the *Odyssey* about the same, the *Iliad* nearly 16,000. Ideally we would compare all four poems, assigning the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to different Homers for safety's sake. We would find the argument extremely unwieldy, however, as we "adjusted" the size of Quintus to each of the Homers and each Homer to the other, and as we perennially confronted differences between one Homer and the other that, however minor, could not be blindly disregarded. The *Odyssey* is the length of the *Ženidba*, and not that much longer than Quintus' *Posthomerica*; so let us simply decide to demonstrate that the Homer of the *Odyssey* was an oral poet. We can shape the argument so as to make it independent of such similarities between the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* as we choose not to ignore altogether; the differences become irrelevant. On another occasion we can study the *Iliad*—and after all, if we can prove that the Homer of the *Odyssey* was an oral poet, few will insist that the Homer of the *Iliad* was not.

The **first two arguments** are quantitative: there are large numbers of formulae, and some of them are used over and over again. Or, as Parry puts it (317), "it must have been for some good reason that the poet . . . kept to the formulas even when he . . . had to use some of them very frequently. What was this constraint? . . . The answer is not only the desire

[5] Quintus lived in the third or fourth century of the common era. No one supposes him an oral poet; we do not require the differences we shall uncover between his style and Homer's in order to show that he could read and write. He was too learned for that.

[6] See Medjedović 1974. Parallels between Avdo and Homer may also be found in Lord 1974:22 and 1995:211, 246, with references to earlier work by Lord; in Foley 1990, 1991, and 1995 *passim*; and in Danek 1991, where there is an especially illuminating discussion of formulaic similarities and differences.

for an easy way to make verses, but the complete need of it . . . . There is only one need of this sort which can even be suggested—the necessity of making verses by the spoken word . . . The necessity shows its force most clearly . . . in the simple numbers of formulas."

Argument 1. We begin with the last phrase, "simple numbers." The *Odyssey* displays a vast array of different formulae, and their total occurrences are many. Subjectively we feel the anomaly: written texts either lack such abundance, or seem manifestly to be imitating Homer. These huge numbers cannot exist for the sake of refrain or echo; rather we are hearing the constant repetition of syntactically similar phrases falling in identical parts of the verse. Surely such numbers must enable rapid composition; surely we are right to link formulae with orality.

Few scholars reject this intuition entirely. A formulaic style no doubt arose at a time when writing was unavailable to, or at least not used by, the epic poets. But could there not have been a writing poet, or indeed several generations of writing poets, who inherited an oral-formulaic style and continued to use it both because it was effective and because it preserved the sound of antiquity? Are the formulae used in such abundance that an oral poet is required? We cannot *evaluate* the force of simple numbers without additional labor, without hard counting and close comparison.

But first, we must know what to count. What is a formula? And—an equally tricky question—when do we count one formula as different from another? The term "formula" has no fewer than seven meanings in Parry. I give these below in the order of increasing narrowness, as if I were trying to catch an essence by a definition, though in fact I am not: the first definition defines the largest, the all-encompassing set **a**; **b** is a subset of **a**, **c** is a subset of **b**, and so on. In the process, I shall occasionally supplement Parry's words with some ideas from more recent scholarship.

Set **a**. The most general definition: a repetition of some sort—whether of one word or more than one, and whether verbal, syntactical, or metrical—that is a feature of the compositional technique, not a deliberate echo, a refrain, or a simple record of repetition (as when an order is given and carried out). This sense of the term is implied when Parry speaks of the text as all, or almost all, formulaic (196, e.g.).

Set **b**. Structural formulae: word-groups possessing a common meter and similar syntax, but not necessarily any words in common (317).

Set **c**. Formulaic expressions: word-groups with common meter and similar syntax and one shared word, but not necessarily any more than one (317). [7]

Set **d**. Phrasal formulae: noun-phrases (noun-epithets[8] and noun-verbs) or verb-phrases that are repeated either exactly, or inexactly within precise parameters, and some of which are regularly employed. Inexact repetitions include generic formulae, Hainsworth-alterations, and proper nouns with patronymics, defined as follows. If an adjective or verb is repeated in the same position with two or more nouns, we classify it as generic and call the whole phrase a generic formula: e.g., in "great-souled Odysseus" and "great-souled Achilles," each used just once in the genitive, the phrases themselves repeat the adjective, and each noun is found in exactly the same form in other lines. If a phrase is exactly repeated except for changing its position in the verse, or except for being inverted, or separated by an intervening word, or inflected, it is a Hainsworth-alteration (cf. Hainsworth 1968:*passim*): e.g., the phrase "gleaming wine" is used in two different lines in different parts of the verse. Even if a patronymic does not recur in a given poem, we assume that it was repeated in the tradition.[9]

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[7] To these, other scholars have added exact repetitions of certain single words, what I call "minimal formulae."

[8] Noun-epithets are any combination of noun and noun-modifier (adjective, or noun, or adjective plus adverb, or—with vocatives—the interjection ὦ). Thus we shall call such phrases as ὄρχαμος ἀνδρων ("leader of men") noun-epithets, with ἄνδρων ("of men") counting as the epithet (see Parry 1971:20n.).

[9] See Parry 1971:*passim*, especially all discussions of formulae created by analogy. I do not count repetitions found only in the *Hymns*, Hesiod, or other early epic verse, since I think the statistics should be kept free of the decisions as to which of these may be deliberate citations or echoes of Homer, and which are instances of the technique of composition by formula. If, however, a phrase is repeated only in the other Homeric poem, and offers no indication of being a deliberate echo, I usually count it as formulaic for each poem. This is methodologically unsound for making comparisons between the *Odyssey* and poems that have no companion poem, but it is psychologically very difficult to declare that a phrase is not a formula when you are convinced that in fact it is one. There are so many formulae in Homer that this procedure raises his formularity by no more than 1%, and has no effect on the logic of our comparisons. The assertion that a formula occurs only once means "only once in a given poem," just as the assertion that it occurs 6 times means "6 times in a given poem."

Set **e.** Exact phrasal formulae**:** phrases exactly repeated as a whole. (Parry 1971:*passim*, often when he is using the definition of set **g** loosely).

Set **f**. Regular exact phrasal formulae, "regular formulae" for short: exact phrasal formulae that are regularly employed (Parry 1971: cf. set **e**).

Set **g.** Multi-purpose, regular, exact phrasal formulae: regular formulae that express an "essential idea"—that contain identical "stylistic superfluities" and mention an identical referent. This is how Parry himself defines the term "formula" (13, 272), but is by no means the only way he uses it.

If we are to determine statistically whether in fact Homer "kept to the formulas," we cannot use sets **a**, **b**, or **c**, because the definitions are too imprecise to enable even an approximate count. So we shall in this first argument use set **d** (and within it sets **e**, **f**, and **g**), which actually includes what most people have in mind by the term "formula" most of the time. I do not include word-groups lacking either a noun or a verb, since they are not comparable to the others statistically, and in some cases may well reflect the structure of the language itself and not merely the epic style.

Even set **d** contains some formulae that—for the mathematical portions of the following arguments—we shall eschew. Parry was primarily interested in noun-epithets, and it is probably wisest to follow mostly in his footsteps, since it is, after all, his reasoning that we are engaged in reinforcing. We must include noun-verb formulae, though, since our fundamental yardstick will prove to be the percentage of a noun's *total* occurrences that are formulaic occurrences, and we can hardly classify noun-verb formulae as non-formulaic! But in the statistics we shall set the purely verbal formulae aside, recognizing that Parry included them (11-16, 20, 276) but pleading that he did not allot them much space. Indeed, no one has studied verb-phrases very thoroughly, especially those occurring infrequently. It is therefore often hard to decide whether one that is not exactly repeated should be declared formulaic—even though Margalit Finkelberg's efforts along these lines have produced results quite consistent with those that I have arrived at for nouns.[10] We shall refer to verb-phrases

[10] Finkelberg 1989. A typical problem: verb-phrase formulae frequently vary the verb itself, so that the only fixed element in a phrase may be a conjunction. If the conjunction is repeated in the same position a number of times, we can probably regard it as equivalent to a generic epithet with a noun; but if it only happens once or twice, we are at a loss to know whether we have a genuine formula or a simple feature of the language in general, as opposed to the specific epic style.

as we proceed, but omit them from numerical comparisons.

The relationship between formula and meter is absolutely vital, and it often happens that nouns in different grammatical cases have different meters. The role of syntax is important as well, and of course a different case has a different syntax. Hence with the exception of certain vocatives and certain instances in South Slavic where the formula is invariably exactly the same in two different cases, we always count a noun in one case separately from the same noun in a different case. Readers should keep this in mind if they feel that the stated number of nouns is impossibly large. Similarly with formulae: a formula in a different case is a different formula. Indeed, for statistical clarity, we must count all inexact repetitions—even inflections, even the same words in a different position—as different formulae. Thus phrasal formulae that are not exactly repeated (set **d** not including **e**, **f**, and **g**) occur only once, and there are a great many of these.

If a noun occurs only once, it cannot have a formula from sets **e**, **f**, or **g**, and its chances of having even an inexact repetition are curtailed; yet it may very well exhibit a phrase that we would have called formulaic had the noun occurred a few more times. Sometimes we can find the phrase in the *Iliad*, but usually we find ourselves either guessing or declaring a phrase non-formulaic that we are convinced is a formula. Even nouns that occur three or four times have reduced opportunities for repetition, and their failure to repeat may be quite accidental. Now if all we want is a general statement of how many formulae a given poem contains, such niceties may not matter; but if we want to say that one noun, or one poem, is more formulaic than another, and especially if we want to calculate percentages, it is evident that an error of one or two formulae in a noun occurring just a few times can be serious. For these purposes we must set aside all infrequently occurring nouns and not count them or their formulae.

How many times does an "infrequently occurring noun" occur? If a noun is found 8 or 9 times, one or two formulaic occurrences more or less can mean percentage differences of 25%, and this is too much. If a noun occurs 20 times, an error of two becomes both less likely (most repetitions destined to occur will have occurred) and less serious; but we have eliminated too many nouns. The number 13 has proved workable here, so

we shall be distinguishing "thirteen-plus nouns" from "twelve-minus" nouns.[11]

Counting first all the nouns, we find in the *Odyssey* 5,368 different noun-phrase formulae from set **d** (including **e**, **f**, and **g**); counting just the thirteen-plus nouns, we find 2,185 formulae. Apparently Homer did "keep to the formulas"; apparently the "simple numbers" are overwhelming. But the inference that such numbers require an oral poet is invalid. Quintus' thirteen-plus nouns exhibit 1,979 different formulae. Fewer than Homer's, granted, but Quintus has only 8,770 lines; if he had the 12,111 lines of the *Odyssey*, his thirteen-plus nouns would presumably have exhibited 2,730 different formulae, considerably more than Homer's. Granted, Quintus uses relatively more thirteen-plus nouns than Homer: but even on a per-noun basis, Quintus has 7.9 formulae per noun, Homer only 7.5. Quintus, you will say, is an imitator of Homer; but here is our first encounter with the "point that Parry did not reckon with" (mentioned above): how do we know *prima facie* that Homer was not himself a literate imitator, without training in oral composition, of someone earlier than he? The mere number of formulae in the *Odyssey* is, in itself, compatible with that possibility.

Before we declare Argument 1 a failure, however, let us ask whether what Parry means by "simple numbers" may be total formulaic *occurrences* rather than different formulae. All the nouns in the *Odyssey*, twelve-minus and thirteen-plus together, display 11,441 formulaic occurrences—almost as many as the 12,111 lines in the *Odyssey* (many lines have two or more formulae, and quite a few have none). The poem is thoroughly formulaic—and we are, of course, not counting formulaic expressions (set **c**) or structural formulae (set **b**)! Even the thirteen-plus nouns exhibit 6,105 formulaic occurrences, and now Quintus suffers by comparison: his thirteen-plus nouns have only 3,490 formulaic occurrences—14.0 per noun, compared to Homer's 20.8. This difference is important, because it reflects

[11] The number in Sale 1993 was 15, making the sample, the number of comparable nouns, smaller than I now feel it had to be. Make no mistake: the sample is in one sense still small. There are 4,394 different nouns or noun-forms in the *Odyssey*, and only 295 that occur 13 times or more; on the other hand, these 295 account for almost half the total noun *occurrences*, and more than half the formulaic occurrences, so their behavior ought to be highly significant. Granted, the sample exhibits a much higher formularity (69.4%) than the formularity of the twelve-minus nouns (50.6%) or of the whole (59.2%); but the same disparities may be assumed for our comparands, which is mostly what matters.

Homer's far greater number of regular formulae (see Argument 2); but what does it mean in itself? Is there some cutoff point for oral poets below Homer's 20.8 (or rather Avdo's 17.6) but more than Quintus' 14? Faced simply with the raw numbers, I feel unable to say that Homer has incomparably more formulaic occurrences and must therefore be an oral poet. And of course we must avoid conflating the formularity argument (Argument 1) with the regular-formulae argument (Argument 2).

Perhaps when Parry uses the phrase "kept to the formulas," he has in mind not the raw numbers, but rather a *consistently high formularity*. We can imagine a literate poet, one who loved formulae and wanted to reproduce what he took to be the old epic style, being highly formulaic now and again, or perhaps being consistently formulaic but not keeping up a high rate. But we might think it improbable that almost every passage in such an author would be highly formulaic from beginning to end, or that almost all of his frequently-occurring nouns would display about the same high percentage. Such consistency seems to point to what Parry calls a "complete need," a fundamental *style*, in which a poet must always be asking, consciously or unconsciously, "Does this referent on this occasion, in this verse, require a formula?" This question, if persistently asked, is surely being asked by an oral poet.

When we divide the total formulaic occurrences of the 295 thirteen-plus nouns in the *Odyssey* by their total occurrences, the result is 70% (69% if we adjust for formulae mentioned in note 9). This is the same as what we get if we calculate the formularities of each of these nouns and take the average; their group formularity is the same as their average formularity. And the individual formularities cluster reasonably closely around this figure.[12] Since the thirteen-plus nouns are distributed more or less randomly throughout the poem, one can take any passage of the poem of statistically meaningful length, and about 69% of the thirteen-plus-noun-occurrences will be formulae.[13] These figures are higher than those offered by the thirteen-plus nouns of Avdo's *Ženidba*, our modern oral comparand, which run about 65% formulaic. The *Odyssey* "keeps to the formulas" even more than the certainly oral poem does.

[12] More precisely, 212 nouns have formularities between 50% and 88%; 38 lie below these figures, 43 above; 18 lie below 40%, 13 over 98%.

[13] The speeches are less formulaic than the narrative, but the difference is slight.

Quintus' formularity is 51%; we knew it would be lower than the *Odyssey*'s, because we have seen that Quintus has many fewer formulaic occurrences.

Quintus is definitely less formulaic than Homer. But the formularity of Avdo, falling somewhere between Homer's and Quintus', must give us pause. What does Homer's higher percentage signify, if it is higher than an oral poet's needs to be? It may well be a function of the difference between the hexameter and the *deseterac*; it may be personal idiosyncrasy; we do not yet know. Moreover, I do not find Homer more *consistently* formulaic than Quintus. If anything, the reverse is true: the formularities of Quintus' nouns fall in an astonishingly normal distribution around 51%, whereas Homer's distribution is somewhat skewed, and has as many between 60-65% as between 70-75% and 75-80%. So while Homer's formularity definitely proves him either a good literate imitator of oral poets or an oral poet himself, I do not think it allows us to choose which.[14]

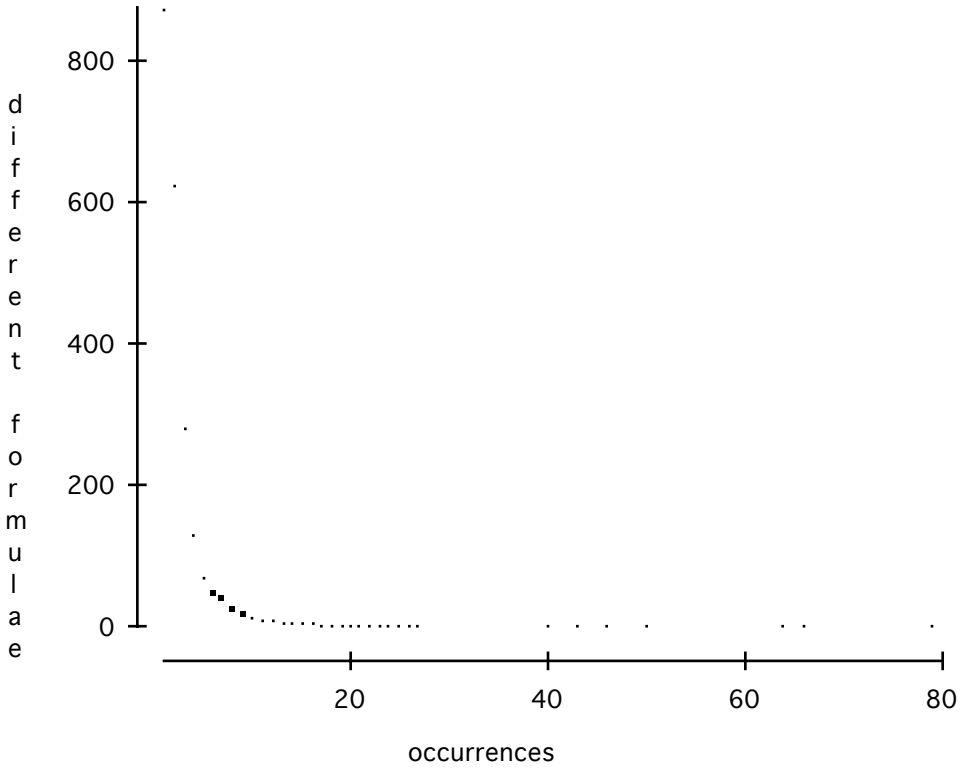
2. I call the **second argument** the "regular-formula argument," and start with Parry's assertion cited above that some formulae are used "very frequently" (317). Here we isolate set **f** and concentrate on formulae that are regularly employed, and our first question must be how often a formula must be exactly repeated to be called "regularly employed." It is useful to begin with the Formula-Occurrences Graph, a hyperbola with a bend running from $x = 6$ to $x = 9$ (I have highlighted these points below). On this graph are tabulated all the 2,185 different noun-phrase formulae for our thirteen-plus nouns. The x-axis gives the number of occurrences, the y-axis the number of different formulae that occur x number of times: 875

[14] Bakker (1988:152) argues that in 1930 Parry extended the concept of the formula (cf. Parry 1971:313) beyond his original definition, inspired by the wish to demonstrate Homer's orality and convinced that the higher the formularity, the greater the likelihood of orality. I believe that even in 1928 Parry found formulae everywhere ("bardic diction is in great part, or even entirely, made up of traditional formulae," 196); but Bakker is right to say that Parry saw the pervasiveness of formulae as part of his argument for oral composition. Has the statistical method therefore weakened Parry's argument by omitting his first three definitions (above) and reducing the number of formulae thereby? Not, I think, if we accept the need for comparisons with Avdo and Quintus. Subjectively, and using all seven definitions, I experience both of these poets as less formulaic than Homer, but I cannot see what to infer from this judgment nor why anyone else should pay much attention to it.

formulae occur just once, 625 occur twice, 281 occur three times, and so on.

An elaborate analysis of a comparable hyperbola may be found in Sale 1993, to which I refer readers who may find the following summary insufficient. Obviously something is happening at x = 6-9; the curve has been steadily and sharply descending, and now it makes an abrupt turn, so as to form a hyperbola. Formulae occurring 9 times or more are clearly

Formula-Occurrences Graph



different, and the difference appears to set in at x = 6. Before that, there are forces at work dictating that formulae are far less likely to be exactly repeated than to occur just once, far less likely to occur three times than twice, and so on. One of these forces is entropy, the fact that systems tend to randomness, to disorderliness; exact repetition is more orderly than the lack of it, and therefore less probable unless some force intervenes to nullify the force of entropy. Another is infrequency of need. There are certain kinds of need that arise often enough to encourage formulaic composition, but where a *particular* formula may be rarely needed: arming

is frequent, while Ajax arms himself only once. At x = 6-9 these forces appear to be nullified: at this point formulae are meeting needs that in fact commonly arise; and the effect of entropy has been canceled out, so that they are able to occur freely whenever they are needed. The structure of the hexameter line has intervened to enable the canceling: most formulae occurring 6 times or more—the regularly employed, the "regular" formulae—have been fashioned to fall in the cola between the familiar caesurae and the end of the line, the more highly structured half of the line (see Foley 1990:56-59, 82-84, *et passim*). Most of them are highly and widely useful *multi-purpose formulae*, which we shall discuss at length in due course. There are many fewer regular than infrequent formulae, 206 (270, counting the twelve-minus nouns) compared to 1982 (5100, again counting the twelve-minus nouns), but each is used much more often: on average, 11 occurrences per formula, while the vast hoard of infrequent formulae average fewer than two occurrences per formula. Regular noun-phrase formulae really are regularly employed: they occur 25% of the time that a thirteen-plus noun occurs in Homer, even though half these nouns lack regular formulae.[15] This over-and-over-again quality has always struck Western readers as an arresting and unique feature of Homer, whose repetitions are somehow never dull, yet who seems sublimely uninterested in variation for variation's sake. The *Odyssey* says δῖος ᾽Οδυσσεύς ("divine Odysseus") 79 times, γλαυκῶπις ᾽Αθήνη ("grey-eyed Athena") 50 times, ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα ("spoke winged words") 64 times, and so on, 2249 regular-formula occurrences in all—and these are exact repetitions: the same words, the same grammatical case, the same order, the same position in the line; the facts and the numbers are astonishing.[16]

[15] There are also 60 verb-phrase formulae in the *Odyssey* exactly repeated 6 times or more. They average 22 occurrences per formula; they too are regular formulae.

[16] The distinction between regular and infrequent formulae can assist us in a problem of Parryan interpretation. Visser (1988:25) calls attention to a passage in Parry's first thesis, TE, where he says that the "poet creates the noun-epithet formula of the desired measure by adding x syllables of the epithet to the predetermined value of the substantive" (84). From this Visser argues that at first Parry did not think of the formulae as pre-existing fixed units; instead there were "lexical solidarities," meaning that "for a certain noun there was a strictly limited number of epithets automatically present in the poet's mind" (1988:26). Parry uses the term "poet" with various senses (see above), and in this

Quintus has only 352 regular-formula occurrences, 1.4 per thirteen-plus noun. This is many more than Apollonius and Virgil, to be sure; but Homer, at 7.6 per noun, has over 5 *times* what Quintus has. Just 14% of Quintus' thirteen-plus nouns display regular formulae at all, compared to 51% for Homer, nearly four times as many. Here, surely, is a dramatic difference—between, we now want to say, the oral poet and his imitator.

Avdo's formularity, let us recall, falls between Homer's and that of the assuredly literate poet, and this made us cautious about using formularity as a criterion for orality. And in fact Avdo does exhibit fewer regular-formula occurrences per word than Homer (5.2 vs. 7.6), and a smaller percentage of regular-formula nouns, 41% vs. 51%. Now, however, there is a huge gap between Avdo and Quintus: Avdo's 5.2 is almost four *times* Quintus', his 41% nearly three times. This difference says much more than the 14% difference in their formularities; it tells us in no uncertain terms that it is not formulae as such, but *regular* formulae that mark the difference between Avdo and Homer's literate imitator. And why should they not? Formulae that can be, and are, used over and over are exactly what the poet needs to enable him to compose quickly; otherwise put, an epic poet who must compose before an audience will naturally find himself often saying the same thing in exactly the same way (Arguments 4 and 7 will make clearer just when this happens). Granted, we cannot claim that the circumstances of composition as such compelled Homer to repeat quite as frequently as he *does,* since Avdo repeats somewhat less.[17] But we can say that a style that enabled and encouraged a poet to use the same words over and over is ideally suited to the circumstances of oral composition, and that poets whose training is divorced from those circumstances do not repeat themselves anything like so often.

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passage I think he means the idealized traditional singer, not Homer himself; Parry's traditional noun-epithet systems in TE are certainly systems of traditional *formulae.* But the passage gives an excellent description of one way in which *infrequent* formulae are created (by Homer himself, in my opinion); and since Visser's lexical solidarities are virtually the same as Parry's systems, they are a way of stating how *regular* formulae are employed (or come into being, in Visser's view). See also note 25 below.

[17] Homer's greater repetitiousness may be due to the apparently greater complexity of the hexameter verse line; but see Foley 1990:85-106 on complexity in the *deseterac*.

This does not mean that the *Odyssey* must have been orally composed. Naturally we feel that, with the leisure to write, a poet would surely have sought variation, as Virgil, Apollonius, and Quintus seek it. But we cannot be certain. If the poet's ear were wholly attuned to a style in which such frequencies were common, he might simply have felt no desire to vary. Parry speaks of Homer's as the "best of all styles" (324); if that is so, why would the oral poet change it just because he could write?

But this very argument forces us to acknowledge that the poet of the *Odyssey*, whether writing or singing, must have been thoroughly imbued with this style. He must have felt that this way, and no other, was the way to compose verse, that vital to his craft was the capacity to use regular formulae again and again without being boring. And the only way in which he could have learned to do it was through oral training, just as his chief reason for wanting to know how to do it was to be able to compose in performance. He must have been orally trained: he was an oral poet, however the *Odyssey* itself was composed.

Arguments 3-5. The statistics of Homer's regular formulae, and numerical comparisons of them with Quintus' and Avdo's, have hastened us to a conclusion that seems inevitable. But we cannot grasp Parry's arguments for orality by merely gazing at and taking in the quantity and percentages of formulae and formulaic occurrences, impressive though that may be. We need to look at the quality of the formulae; we must clarify now why Parry speaks of the "complete need" for "an easy way to make verses" (317). The "easy way" turns out to be the employment of multi-purpose formulae (Argument 3), arranged in systems (Argument 4), and of generics and Hainsworth-alterations in the creation of infrequent formulae (Argument 5).

3. Argument 3 isolates the formulae in set **g**, and might therefore be called the "multi-purpose-formula argument." We begin with the qualitative difference between the formulae on the very gradually descending right-hand tail of the above graph and those in the steep left-hand tail—that is, between the regular and the infrequent formulae. The infrequent formulae meet infrequently arising needs, and although some of them share all the characteristics of regular formulae except for frequency of occurrence (the "accidental infrequent formulae"), most do not.

a. Many point to the less familiar **referents**, to people, things, ideas, and so forth that are destined to be mentioned only a few times.

b. Many, especially Hainsworth-alterations, occupy unusual **metrical** positions.

c. Most do not put the noun at the **localization-point**, the position in the verse where the noun most frequently falls.

d. Many cover the less frequent **syntactical** situations: common nouns in the nominative case, for instance.

e. A large number may have been coined, or re-coined, *ad hoc*, to meet demands that arose in the course of composition, and are therefore very often not **traditional** formulae (though their parts may be, and probably are, traditional).

f. Many, such as "Ajax armed himself," "the third day" (not the next or the seventh), or "Odysseus' halls" (not halls in general), are particularized. They are useful in certain **contexts** where the noun is employed, but not in others. Similarly with infrequent noun-verb formulae, where the verb narrows the possible use of the phrase dramatically: "Athena led," "Antinous answered," or "Menelaus gave" obviously cannot be used anywhere in the poem, but only where Athena is in fact engaged in leading, Antinous in answering, or Menelaus in giving.

I have set these features out schematically so that they may be compared readily with the six features that characterize most regular formulae in the right-hand tail. These are the characteristics that enable the regular formulae to perform many tasks at once, to be multi-purposed:

A. Most regular formulae point to the familiar **referents**, the characters, objects, actions, and concepts most likely to be mentioned.

B. They suit the basic **metrical** structure of the hexameter as set out in Foley 1990 (chs. 3-4), meeting especially well the demands to fall before and after the common caesurae (to fall in what I call the major cola) and to enable right-justification (Foley 1990:ch. 4), greater rigidity at the end of the line. There are a number of frequently occurring verb-phrases that are designed to match regular noun-epithet formulae (see Parry 1971:8-16); some of these vary considerably in inflection, and are highly suitable to begin the line.[18] The noun-epithets, normally not variable, tend towards the end. So elegant and effective is the matching process that for a poet who knows his formulae and wants to say, for example, "So-and-so said," an excellent line of poetry virtually composes itself.

[18] It is reasonable to speak of multi-purposed verb-phrase formulae; their ability to vary their endings makes them context-free.

C. They tend to put the noun at the **localization-point,** where it usually occurs, so that the poet will necessarily be experienced in building the remainder of the line around them—with matching formulae or otherwise.

D. They cover the familiar **syntactical** situations: proper nouns in the nominative and genitive (pertinentive) cases, common nouns in dative (locative and instrumental) and accusative, verbs in first and third singular and third plural past tenses.

E. Their epithets are colorful and evoke the **tradition**; indeed most of them are probably traditional.[19]

F. They are suitable for employment in a variety of **contexts** and are not particularized. They achieve their generality through the quality of their epithets or verbs, which are ornamental or, as I prefer to say, context-free. Parry thought that the "fixed epithet . . . has been used with its noun until it has become fused with it into what is no more . . . than another form of the name" (305); the audience was indifferent to the force of the epithets (118-72). I disagree, but rather than counter his arguments, let us observe that all the so-called ornamental epithets are carefully chosen: they are not only colorful, but their meanings are also consistent with virtually any passage in epic poetry. Odysseus is "richly endowed with cleverness" whether he is displaying it or not; he is "much-enduring" even in the *Iliad*, though he has not yet had a great deal to endure; Penelope is "circumspect" awake or asleep, flirtatious or frightened; and so on throughout almost all the 206 regular formulae. Usually Homer does not appear to have chosen an epithet to suit the context, though sometimes he surely has. We can agree with Parry that metrical convenience very frequently determined the choice of formula and therefore of epithet; still, the epithets very rarely jar against the context. But why did the early poets make such careful choices if they thought the audience would not hear their significance? Must they not have fashioned them to be this way because they knew that the audience *would* hear them? They are context-free (cf. Parry 1971:150), but not through audience indifference.

It would appear to be most destructive to a thesis to undermine the thrust of more than a quarter of its pages, but this is not the only place where Parry's intuition outpaces his argumentation. After all, why do we need context-free epithets? Why do we want formulae that may be

[19] Parry 1971:1-190; Hoekstra 1965:*passim*.

employed anywhere in the poem? Is it not so that we, as poets, *can* consult metrical convenience, can freely use a phrase that works metrically that we know will work semantically? Is it not so that composition may be rapid? And who needs to compose rapidly, if not the oral poet? Scholars who have argued for a literate Homer because they disagree with Parry's assertion of audience indifference can feel their tools turning in their hands.[20]

With multi-purposed noun-verbs, one word mentions the referent and the other adds no additional referent. A person "speaks a *word*," or is "anxious" or "distressed at *heart*," or is "dressed in *clothing*"; the phrase "who occupy heaven" means the same as "heavenly"; "the setting sun" is the sunset. Participle-plus-noun usually amounts to an adjective, verb-plus-object to a verb. So "speaks a word" can be used wherever speaking occurs; the noun becomes the equivalent of a context-free epithet. Granted, their fixed internal syntax at first seems to make them harder to combine with other words. But that syntax, after all, yields a complete sentence; the difficult combinational task is faced by the noun-epithet and verb-phrase formulae, which must be combined *into* a sentence. Hence they really are just as handy as the noun-epithets.

Multi-purposed regular formulae, therefore, have the right connotation, as well as the right traditional flavor, the right syntax, the right localization, the right meter, and the right denotation. They are obviously immensely useful: there are 193 such formulae in the *Odyssey* (counting the twelve-minus nouns, since we are not now making comparisons), which is about 70% of all the regular formulae; they are used over 2,600 times in all in the *Odyssey*, over 12 times each on average. It is obvious that formulae so useful must provide the poet with an "easy way to make verses." And no one has thought of another reason for the existence of all these formulae than to enable rapid, that is oral, composition. They are among the very basic tools of the oral poet.

But did one need to have been trained as an oral poet to have had the experience of composing in performance, in order to learn how to use them? Apparently not, for Quintus displays a number of multi-purpose formulae. Not nearly so many as Homer; but we must not unwittingly use

[20] This does not include Austin (1975) or Vivante (1982), mentioned in note 1 above, who object to Parry's treatment of the epithets but accept the theory of oral composition.

Argument 2, the quantitative regular-formula argument, all over again. We are in search of qualitative differences between the two poets, and we do not find them simply by looking at Quintus' multi-purpose formulae and comparing them to Homer's. Let us therefore leave Argument 3 with a verdict of "indecisive," and seek our differences elsewhere.

4. Argument 4 is the "argument from extension," and begins with Parry's conviction that the "schematization of the style" (323) marked the oral poet; the phrase refers to what Parry calls "systems" (16-19). The table below reveals best what he meant by "systems" when he first used this term.[21] We have a large set consisting of different formulae that have different metrical and syntactic tasks; each individual task is performed by a subset of different formulae, often quite numerous, that behave in very much the same way.[22] Thus, "B2-12 nom" includes συβῶτης ὄρχαμος ἀνδρων ("swineherd, leader of men"), etc.;[23] "B2-12 gen" Ὀδυσσῆος

[21] The later definition offered at 275-76 extends the basic concept to include many more types of formulae than those that he talks about at length in 1928; it is different enough *prima facie* that Foley considers the 1930 construct "not part of the theory in the 1928 essays" (1988:28-29). Unfortunately, this means that for many systems under the new definition their extension "is rarely so great and their thrift never so striking" (278). This, he felt, would not matter, because he was sure that all later (all written) poetry was far less systematic; but as usual, he failed to discuss Quintus, and his account of Apollonius and Virgil on 299-300 is skimpy and not wholly accurate. Comparisons based on the 1930 definition would be formidably difficult to carry out completely with statistical accuracy; if we stick to noun-phrase systems we extend the material treated in 1928 somewhat while remaining able to make very telling comparisons.

[22] For the designations of the cola in the list that follows, see Foley 1990:78, 82. If we assign an integer to each half-foot in the hexameter ("six-foot") line, and the fraction 1/2 to each short syllable that begins with a half-foot, then the A1 caesura comes after 2 (after the first foot), the A2 after 3, the B1 (also called "penthemimeral," meaning "fifth half-foot") after 5, the B2 (also called "trochaic" or "feminine") after 5 1/2, the C1 ("hephthemimeral," meaning "seventh half-foot") after 7, and the C2 ("bucolic diaeresis") after 8. Members of the same subset in Table 1 can have somewhat different metrical properties: some begin with consonants or double-consonants, others with vowels.

[23] The extension πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς ("much-enduring divine Odysseus") obviously belongs here, but is not counted among the numbers given, because for statistical reasons we cannot count extensions as different formulae. To do so would not affect this formula, but would create problems for phrases such as Θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἥρη ("the goddess white-armed Hera"): this extended form occurs 22 times, but λευκώλενος Ἥρη

Θείοιο ("of divine Odysseus"), etc.; "B2-12 dat" Θεοῖσιν ἀθανάτοισιν ("to the immortal gods"), etc.; "C1-12 nom" φάος ἠελίοιο ("light of the sun"), πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς ("Odysseus richly endowed with cleverness"), etc.; "C2-12 nom" δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς ("divine Odysseus"), etc. Most of these subsets were no doubt traditional: Parry argued of his similar systems (and almost all scholars who have examined this point in print have agreed) that no one person could have created all or even most of the formulae in them, that they took centuries to create. There is not space here to labor the point, so I must invite skeptical readers to ponder the reasoning of Parry, Hoekstra, and others, and if unconvinced, to conceive of the system as merely pre-existing the composition of the *Odyssey*—as developed or taken in by Homer over the course of much of a lifetime of compositional experience. It may not be the product of centuries, but it is quite impossible that such an intricate system could have arisen for the first time *during* the creation of a single poem.

Table 1. Multi-purpose regular formulae in the *Odyssey* (13+ nouns)[24]

Cola	Noun-epithets					Noun-verb	Total
	nom	gen	dat	acc	voc		
Common Major Cola:							
B2-12:	8	5	6	2		10	31
C1-12:	13	2	2	4	1	7	29
C2-12:	15		7	18		21	61
Rarer Major Cola:							
1-A1 (b)(A2):					7		7
1-B1 (2):	2	1	2	1		3	9
B1-12:	3	3		1		1	8
Total	41	11	17	26	8	42	145

("white-armed Hera") itself occurs only 3 times. If we count the latter separately (19 times for the extension, 3 times for it), then it must be called an infrequent formula, which is absurd, since it occurs many times in and out of the extension.

[24] Were we to add accidental infrequent formulae, some of which are multi-purposed, as well as multi-purposed formulae, regular and infrequent, for the 12-minus nouns, the numbers would be genuinely, though not arrestingly, increased.

What is the purpose of such a system? Why does it exist? We can best answer this question by noting that the word "extension" really has two meanings. On the one hand, systems maximize the number of different formulae that fall in the *same* colon, with the same syntax and in the same case, and therefore can be handled in the same *way*, either by matching them with syntactically and metrically complementary formulae, or—more commonly—by using them as a basis for constructing a line that will be finished either by other formulae or by non-formulaic phrases, or both. Once I have learned how to handle one or two of the 15 nominative noun-epithets that occupy C2-12, I can easily handle the other 13-14; experience with one or two of the 21 noun-verbs in C2-12 trains me for the other 19-20. On the other hand, systems maximize the number of different formulae that fall in *different* cola and still have the same *referent*; if I want to say "Odysseus," for instance, I have not one, but (counting the extension) three different regular formulae, occupying three different positions in the verse, with which to do it: I am prepared for most of the metrical possibilities I am likely to encounter when I want to mention Odysseus.[25]

We are back again at ease of composition, at an "easy way to make verses." Not only are the individual multi-purpose formulae in themselves useful, but they fall into groups that offer useful similarities on the one hand, useful differences on the other. They are the tools of the trade of oral composition, arranged into positions in a portable toolkit that makes them even handier than each one is in itself.[26] This toolkit must have predated our *Odyssey*, whether it predated Homer or not. The fact that it is so extensively employed in the *Odyssey* means that Homer had learned very thoroughly how to use it. Does this therefore mean that he was trained as an oral poet?

This is the same as asking whether an untrained literate poet could master the systems, and I know of no other way to answer this than to look at known literate poets. Virgil, with 15 regular formulae in the *Aeneid*, and Apollonius, with 5 in the *Argonautica*, do not have enough regular

[25] These three formulae illustrate the relationship between what Visser calls a "lexical solidarity" (1988:26; see above, note 16) and the elements of a Parryan system that have the same referent (here Odysseus).

[26] Parry does not imply of his systems, nor do I wish to imply of my toolkit, that the poet was conscious of possessing such orderly arrangements; I see no way of knowing how they existed in his mind, though that they existed there is certain.

formulae to constitute genuine systems. Quintus, on the other hand, has 44 noun-phrase regular formulae, of which 24 are multi-purposed, and when we tabulate them, we find that he has a fair number of nominative noun-epithets (10). But he does not have enough of any of the others, and is woefully deficient in genitives and noun-verbs. The reason for this distribution is that he has proportionately far too many formulae that fall in minor cola, almost 40%, and not nearly enough in any major colon except the 1-B1(2). He is thus very weak in the first kind of extension, the number of formulae that can be handled the same way.

When we look to the second kind, the number of different cola in which we can say the same thing in a regular formula, matters are even worse. Just five nouns have more than one regular formula and so offer more than one colon—the words for "son" (nominative), "sons" (nominative), "day" (dative), "time" (accusative), "word" (accusative); compare Homer's 32. In fact there are only three ordinary proper-noun regular formulae, one for Agamemnon in the nominative, and one each for Priam and the Argives in the genitive. Even Virgil does better than this, with *pius Aeneas, pater Aeneas, pater Anchises, puer Ascanius, Saturnia Iuno,* and (*rex*) *ipse Latinus*. For Quintus, the other nominative proper-noun formulae are all "son(s) of so-and-so," based on υἱός in various grammatical cases. It is true that Neoptolemus gets a full complement of three nominative formulae thereby; the Trojans get two; and Diomedes, Achilles, Odysseus, and the Achaeans one each. But by resorting to these "son(s) of" formulae, Quintus actually calls attention to his *lack* of an extended set of ordinary nominative proper-name formulae. And many major characters have no nominative proper-name formulae of any kind in any grammatical case: the greater Ajax, Aeneas, Eurypylos, Zeus, the Keres, Memnon, Menelaus, Paris, and Thetis are all mentioned at least 13 times in the nominative, under these names alone, without the use of regular formulae. In several cases, Homer could have supplied his wants—only as a literate poet, Quintus did not have the same wants.

Now just because Quintus *did not* display an extended system of formulae, though he might have taken over much of Homer's, it does not follow that an earlier literate poet untrained in oral composition *could not* have taken over or developed one. But with the example of Quintus before our eyes, we might well wonder why this hypothetical literate poet *would* have done so. He would never have faced the need for such a system before; he would not be facing that need when he sat down to write the

Odyssey; it is altogether reasonable to guess that he would have made selections from among the vast number of regular formulae that fell upon his ears (or, for all we know, met his eye). Just as Quintus actually did. Therefore the presence in the *Odyssey* of such an extended system makes it very probable that its poet had been trained to carry the oral poet's toolkit—that he was an oral poet, however he may have created the *Odyssey* itself.

Argument 5 is the "argument from infrequent formulae," and begins with Parry's statement that the "singers, ever seeking to reduce the terms of their expression to the simplest pattern, used for this end the means of analogy. That is to say, wherever they could obtain a new formula by altering one which was already in use, they did so . . ." (323). For Parry the "singers" here are the pre-Homeric makers of formulae, not Homer, who is merely "grouping" them (324). My formulation of Argument 5 makes a stronger case than this for Homer as oral poet. By itself, though, it is not quite decisive; and I part company with Parry on the issue of Homer's creativity.[27]

There are four chief methods of forming infrequent formulae: exact repetition (the least promising for the case for orality, since it is something that literate poets do and that offers no challenge to an imitator); patronymics (perhaps the first thing an imitator does); generics; and Hainsworth-alteration. The latter two are as fundamental to the technique of oral poetry as the use of regular formulae, and bear closer scrutiny.

Parry thought that modifiers became generic when one formula was created on the analogy of another ("horseman Tydeus" might be modeled on "horseman Nestor," for example).[28] Just how the generics existed in Homer's mind, whether coupled with nouns or by themselves, we cannot say, nor does it matter; but it is easier to picture them separately, as they

[27] I part company with Parry on another issue as well. He thought that in "these cases, and in all others, we see the sound of the words guiding the singers in their formation of the diction" (323; see also Nagler 1974:1-26). No doubt sound played a vital role; but so it does with most of the great literate poets, and in both cases I believe the sense too was vital.

[28] Epithets that were never transferred by analogy, and so were used of just one person or thing, he called *distinctive*.

appear on Parry's Table III (80-82), a table of epithets.[29] Such epithets are multi-purposed: they fall frequently in certain fixed parts of the line, they can be applied to a variety of names, they are context-free.[30] In fact, we find generics used to make regular as well as infrequent formulae. Parry calls Table III, with its variety of metrical patterns and grammatical cases, a system; it is almost certain, at any rate, that most of these words formed part of Homer's precompositional toolkit.

Parry does not quite say so, but it is evident that generics are a splendid tool for the immediate coining of formulae during the course of a performance; they enable rapid composition. A noun may lack a regular formula for a given colon, and the addition of a generic to the noun may give just the right meter. It will not happen all that often for any one noun (that is why these are *infrequent* formulae), but if it happened only once per noun in the *Odyssey*, that would be 4,400 instances. Or the poet may want a formula for a less common colon, or an unusual grammatical case, or where the regular formula may not say the right thing. The epithets in most regular formulae are context-free, but, even so, there are circumstances awkward for them, as where the poet needed to avoid such locutions as "He covered the corpse, did Achilles, swift in his feet, from head to feet," and elected instead to say, "He covered the corpse, did *great-souled* Achilles, from (its) head to (its) feet" (*Iliad* 23.168-69).

Parry said little about the phenomenon I call Hainsworth-alteration, the creation of new formulae by moving phrases around in the line, extending them, or inflecting, separating, and inverting their parts. Nonetheless, it plays a vital role in the making of infrequent formulae. It is obviously a wonderful tool for composing quickly: the poet has on hand formulae that can be readily altered so as to fit a variety of cola or syntactical needs at a moment's notice. As with the generics, we cannot imagine why they exist if not to enable rapid composition. And as with the

[29] Table III does not contain generic verbs, and we ought properly to construct a table of both epithets and verbs, selected from the *Odyssey* alone; but I am hoping that the argument itself can be perfectly clear without it.

[30] Even the generic verbs, omitted by Parry, though semantically more precise and not context-free, are otherwise multi-purposed. They too fall repeatedly in certain fixed places, and they usually display variable syntax and can therefore be used with large numbers of nouns in various persons and numbers.

generics, we naturally suppose that the art of making formulae with them requires years of training and experience as an oral composer.

Since for Parry as he offers this argument Homer is only "grouping" formulae, not making them, Parry cannot use it to identify Homer as an oral poet, or even a good imitator. But even if we differ, and recognize a Homer who is highly skilled at using generics and Hainsworth-alteration, need he then have been an oral composer? Could not a literate poet have read enough, or heard enough, oral poetry to catch on to the art and not reveal his literacy? Quintus uses both generics and Hainsworth-alteration in abundance. Granted, he often appears to use them to achieve variation for its own sake, which an oral poet does not do; but now we are wandering over to the argument from economy (Argument 6). Does he give himself away by being clumsy, or by making formulae where Homer would not? After all, Quintus maintained his formularity not primarily by repeating regular formulae but by creating an enormous pile of different formulae. Did he merely supply them mechanically?

Apparently not: Quintus' students agree that his use of the Homeric formulary technique is, generally speaking, successful. We have found him faulty in the matter of regular formulae; but if we overlook his lack of economy, which belongs in a separate argument, Quintus is a genuine craftsman of infrequent formulae. An orally untrained literate imitator can therefore learn this craft; Homer's mastery of it does not prove him an oral poet—except for his sensitivity to economy.

Argument 6. And so let us turn to the argument from economy. None of the noun-epithet formulae on Table 1 above can replace any other: no two that have the same referent possess the same meter and syntax. If you want to mention wine in the accusative and fill the colon C2-12, the adonean clausula, there are, to be sure, two formulae available; but one begins with a vowel and the other with the consonant digamma, and the metrical consequences are different. This is what Parry meant by economy (or thrift or simplicity). We might call it "metrical economy," since we are here ignoring the meaning of the epithets: however different their meanings, if the formulae containing them are metrically and syntactically identical and have the same referent, the formulae violate metrical economy. The systems Parry constructed (17-21) do contain a few

overlaps, a few "equivalent formulae." But the *Odyssey* multi-purpose formula system as given on Table 1 has no overlaps at all.[31]

Let us emphasize that metrical economy is a feature of systems, not of formulae in general, let alone of all phrases. Parry made this clear (7, 16-19, 276-79), and then began the process of muddling matters by extending the term "systems" to cover groups of formulae so general that economy is inevitably often violated (313). Perhaps the easiest way to regain clarity is to ask why we have economy at all. We spoke above of a pre-compositional toolkit containing multi-purpose formulae that was probably traditional but might have been created by Homer before he made the *Odyssey*. Metrical economy belongs to the toolkit, not to the text. The poet is economical because he does not want to carry about with him any tool that he does not need; theoretically he is indifferent to how many metrically overlapping formulae he may create in the course of composition. Parry indeed speaks of a "great many" equivalent noun-epithet formulae (176); most of those he cites can be seen as having been created during composition, through the operation of analogy.

There is more to the toolkit than systems of multi-purpose formulae, among other things the system of generic epithets already discussed. Parry notes that 73 of the generics are metrically congruent with another generic; he still wants to speak of the system's economy (or "simplicity," 94).[32] This is statistically most unsatisfying, and when we pursue Parry on the meaning of the generics, we encounter confusion. On the whole he wants to speak of them as ornamental (127): he says that "the generic meaning is not possible in an epithet which is not ornamental" (166). It is therefore subject to audience indifference. But he also says that "where the epithet was not constantly used with a given noun, it could never have become indifferent to the audience" (164), where "constantly" and "given" (translating the French *certain*) alert us to obvious problems. And some of the particularized epithets he discusses are generic (155-65), at least by the definition he gives earlier (64).

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[31] The closest it comes is τόδε δῶμα vs. μέγα δῶμα but the μ in μέγα can make position, even though we have no instance of its doing so in this formula in our *Odyssey*. As a member of the toolkit, it is metrically not the same as τόδε δῶμα.

[32] Parry makes the number less than 73, on the grounds that of two equivalents only one, after all, can actually violate economy (94), but it is still far too large.

Rather than sift through the difficulties here, since I do not agree that the audience was absolutely indifferent, and since I find 73 exceptions or even half that number unacceptable, I suggest we modify the concept of economy in the case of the generics that appear in infrequent formulae. There are very few generics that are metrically, syntactically, *and* semantically equivalent. Many generics exist, in fact, in order to say something different from what the ordinary regular formula, or another generic, would have said. Generics not only do not avoid overlapping another epithet metrically and syntactically; they seek it. They wish to be chosen when another epithet would say the wrong thing, as when the use of the regular formula would at one point have forced Homer to say, "Of the Cretans, Idomeneus, leader of the Cretans, was the leader," and so he says, "Idomeneus spear-famed" instead (*Iliad* 2.645). They offer semantic alternatives. The epithets "godlike," "horse-taming," "man-slaughtering," and "mighty," all metrically equivalent in Greek, led Parry into an elaborate discussion that could, I think, have been short-circuited if instead of assuming that "the poet hardly gave thought to its signification" he had appreciated the differences in meaning. Therein lies their economy: very few formulae made with generics have the same referent, the same syntax, the same meter, and the same epithetic meaning.

Since one of the purposes of generics is to offer semantic alternatives in the text, it is now reasonable to speak of violations in the text as well as in the toolkit. If a poet uses a generic, a word intended to provide an alternative, in a place where we cannot detect any real difference in meaning, he has violated semantic economy. Granted, there may be places where we do not know why one of the alternatives was chosen; there may be places where we are convinced that the epithet chosen is a filler; and there are places where no alternative is available. But if an alternative exists and as long as the meaning it offers really is different, semantic economy has not been violated.

The poet has other semantic alternatives besides generics. Many a distinctive epithet, applied to only one noun or only one character, can offer a needed semantic choice. These too belong in the toolkit. A look at some of the examples of equivalent epithets discussed by Parry (177-84) can illustrate how this works. None of the passages cited from the *Odyssey* violates semantic economy. In two passages the poet chooses "Zeus who delights in the thunderbolt" over "Zeus cloud-gatherer," the regular formula for this colon. In both places the god is casting down panic; in both places

the poet has just mentioned the στεροπή, the "lightning-like flash" of bronze. The meaning "cloud-gatherer" is obviously much less welcome than the semantic alternative. In 8.323 Homer prefers to call Apollo the "lord who works from afar" rather than the "son of Zeus"; he is deliberately *defining* him as a member of a group that includes the Earth-shaker Poseidon and Hermes the Helper, and 11 lines later, where definition is no longer needed, he uses the other epithet.[33] There are three other cases of distinctive epithets offering semantic choices: the γλαυκώπιδι ("bright-eyed") daughter of Zeus vs. the "daughter of great Zeus," the "long-oared ship" vs. the "blue-prowed ship," and the "loud-sounding sea" vs. the "sea with its wide ways." I shall not discuss the poet's choices here, not because they cannot be defended, but because it is beside the point, which is that the epithets clearly have different meanings that could without difficulty lead to contrasting interpretations.[34]

There are other generics besides epithets. Generic verbs have offered no violations of semantic economy in my experience. There are also generic phrases. David Shive makes much of Homer's use of δαίμονι ἶσος of Achilles, where he might have used the regular formula δῖος ᾽Αχιλλεύς (1987:25-27). Since the former can be and is used of others besides Achilles, we have an obvious case of apparent metrical violation of economy in the text, but no violation in the toolkit. And even if δαίμονι ἶσος were confined to Achilles, we would still have semantic economy; the

[33] The two phrases ἑκάεργος ᾽Απόλλων and Διὸς υἱὸς ᾽Απόλλων by themselves are not quite equivalent, since ἑκάεργος, unlike Διὸς υἱὸς, can create a preceding elision (22.15), though it need not. In the passages Parry cites the phrases are preceded by ἄναξ, and are equivalent; but we should see ἄναξ as a generic epithet useful in extending these and other formulae, an independent member of the toolkit. Thus ἄναξ ἑκάεργος᾽Απόλλων does not as such exist in the toolkit; the toolkit has the widely used generic ἄναξ and the regular formula ἑκάεργος᾽Απόλλων. The reader will see how this reasoning applies to other familiar extended formulae that appear equivalent to other formulae at first sight but are not so in the toolkit, such as Θεὰ λευκώλενος ῞Ηρη. None of this detracts from the interest we feel in *why* the poet elects to use them as equivalents in the text; see Janko 1981:251-54.

[34] Two more of Parry's citations entail equivalence because of Hainsworth-alteration of formulae not equivalent in other grammatical cases in which they occur; and the epithets have different meanings in any case. The rest involve the use of generics that either possess or permit (in the case of the epithets κάρη and ᾽Ολύμπιος used to extend a formula) alternative meanings.

phrase would be like another distinctive epithet. Here, as elsewhere, we may not always be able to say *why* one of two possible formulae was chosen; but as long as two metrically equivalent phrases offer genuinely alternative meanings, as long as genuinely different interpretations are possible, the principle of economy remains intact.

There may have been still other tools: some formulae that lend themselves especially to Hainsworth-alteration, some accidental infrequent formulae. The presence of all these tools made for a very large kit—but it was as small as it possibly could be. It embodied the principle of minimizing the number of tools by using the same tool for any given job, as long as it does the job well. This principle of economy is the precise counterpart of another: namely, in choosing a formula never seek variety for the sake of variety. The text often varies, not for its own sake, but rather to avoid unpleasant, or to seek desired, semantic or aural effects. If a given formula works well in a particular place, one is happy to use it no matter how often one has used it before. Such a toolkit, with its stress on efficiency, not making the poet carry about with him any needless tool yet providing him splendidly for so many emergencies, is manifestly the property of an oral poet. It is very hard to see how Homer could have been so skilled in its use if he had not been trained in oral composition. But again we need to look to Quintus for confirmation.

Quintus' so-called system has, as we saw, only five nouns that exhibit more than one regular formula, and thus only five opportunities for a regular formula to violate economy; and all five nouns behave themselves. On the other hand, even a casual reader of Quintus is aware that he violates economy all the time, and David Packard has confirmed this impression in a study of Book 1 (1976:85-91). Where we catch him out with his regular formulae is in the large number of infrequent formulae that have the same metrical properties as a regular formula and offer no significant semantic variation. After the bucolic diaeresis, for instance, the regular formula is δῆριος ὀρώρει, which Quintus twice in Book 5 varies with δῆριος ἐτύχθη. He varies the regular formula epithet for the Argives in the genitive, εὐσθενέων, with εὐπτολέμων and ἀρηιθόων. He varies θρασὺ σθένος with μέγα σθένος no fewer than five times after a short vowel before the trochaic caesura.[35] And so on; I count 11 such violations altogether among the 36 nouns with regular formulae. In none of these cases can I detect any

[35] For him neither θρ nor μ in μέγα makes position.

other motive than the desire for variety for its own sake. And often not even that: Quintus often feels sheerly indifferent to thrift. Why, after all, should a writing poet economize? There is nothing comparable in the *Odyssey*; Homer is stingy, Quintus is a spendthrift. Not that we can always speak of violations of economy in Quintus' toolkit: the generic epithets Θρασύ and μέγα are not everywhere interchangeable. But we must remember that with generics, we ask whether there are violations in the text; Homer's text almost always gives us a different meaning, even if we cannot always explain it. Quintus' text so often offers the same meaning. Again, the difference between Homer and his imitator is manifest; again it declares that Homer was an oral poet.

Argument 7 concerns localization, the percentage of times that a word falls in that position in the line where it falls most frequently.[36] The argument is not Parry's, but it offers a way to use the multi-purpose- formula argument (Argument 3), which is his. Some nouns have low localization: they tend to wander about the hexameter line, and appear less often at the "localization point." We can picture Homer electing to use one, positioning it relatively freely and embodying it in a formula about 60% of the time (lower than the overall average). It will usually be an infrequent formula. It may be a phrase he has already used, in which case he is simply repeating himself; but there is a good chance that it will be different, and formed with a generic modifier or by Hainsworth-alteration. It will almost always display semantic economy. Now so far as we can see, Quintus appears to behave in exactly the same way, except that he will use a formula only about 50% of the time, and, if he does, it may well be uneconomical. We do not know what, if anything, to infer from this 10% difference, just as earlier we did not know what to infer from the 14% difference in formularity between Avdo and Quintus. Homer's greater thriftiness is significant, to be sure, but we have exploited that fact already in Argument 6.

Now consider nouns that usually fall in the same position in the verse, nouns that have high localization. Many of these would be hard to fit into any other place in the hexameter line for metrical reasons; and as for the rest, various metrical pressures and conventions apparently required

[36] I calculate the localization of each noun separately, but normally the percentages will be close to what O'Neill (1942) calculates for word-types, for all the words of a given metrical shape, and indeed close to the revised figures given by Hagel (1994:84).

most of them to fall in a certain spot.[37] With such nouns, Quintus will do pretty much what he did before, except that he is somewhat more likely to use a regular formula than he was before, and somewhat less likely to use a different formula. But the difference really is slight, and he will still be choosing to use a formula about 50% of the time. Homer, however, will be acting differently. He is much more likely to use a formula: he will now be formulaic about 80% of the time, rather than 60%. If the noun has a regular formula, he will very probably use it. The likelihood of his employing very many different formulae is now much lower. Indeed, the principle of economy reduces the likelihood; there is only a certain number of formulae that can put the noun in the same place and say what needs to be said without overlapping either metrically or semantically.

We perceive a real difference in the response of the two poets to localization. Homer takes advantage of the opportunity to step up the use of formulae, to be more formulaic, mostly by using his multi-purpose regular formulae. Now we saw earlier that the use of multi-purpose regular formulae is indeed an easy way to make verses, that it contributes to rapidity of composition. But we did not dare infer from the mere presence of such formulae in Homer that he must be an oral poet, because we found them also in Quintus, and though Homer has many more, we had already exploited the quantitative difference between the two poets in Argument 2. But now we have an opportunity to exploit the qualitative difference. The multi-purpose formulae are regular—frequently occurring—formulae that occupy a major (frequently employed) colon, and usually put the noun at the localization-point, the one most frequently occupied. Owing to all this frequency, the art of using them necessarily becomes very familiar, especially to Homer, who has so many of them. He knows where to place them, and how to build up a verse around them, whether by a matching verb-formula or otherwise. The anchor for this practice is the noun's localization: if the localization is low, the rest of the process cannot occur so frequently.[38] The poet who responds to (and thereby creates) high

[37] Ionics *a minore* (⏑⏑– –) and bacchiacs (⏑– –), for instance, almost always come at the end: the former are hard to fit in elsewhere, the latter happen to be placed there.

[38] Localization is both cause and effect: high localization leads to high regularity and formularity; the persistent use of regular formulae leads to high localization. A circle, perhaps (though some nouns *must* have high localization), but not vicious. We are indifferent to cause; we care only about the necessary simultaneous presence of the two.

localization is manifestly using a very familiar process in order to make it easy for himself—that is, in order to compose rapidly.

The very skillful imitator knows how to create a multi-purpose formula; but he does not know what to do with it. He does not see it as a time-saving device—because he has plenty of time. He has not been trained as an oral poet.[39] The reader will not be surprised to learn that Avdo Medjedović's response to high localization is very nearly the same as Homer's, certainly close enough to support the inference we would have made anyway: the connection between high localization and the "easy way to make verses" is present in Homer and absent in Quintus because Homer was an oral poet.[40]

8. The **eighth argument,** the "argument from metrical irregularity," states that under the pressure of rapid—oral—composition, poets kept to the formulae even when their use created metrical irregularities. "In such cases," says Parry, "it is not the poet who is to blame, but his technique, which is not proof against all fault, and which, in the unhesitating speed of his composition, he cannot stop to change" (319). This argument is clear, and needs no amplification from us.[41]

9. The **ninth argument** stems from the remark that "when one hears the Southern Slavs . . . he is hearing Homer" (1971:378). South Slavic poets employ countless noun-epithet formulae, such as "the foundling Simeon," and "Theodore the high-counselor," and even more verb-phrase formulae such as *Veli njemu [njojzi, njima]*, "said to him [her, them]" (379). Since these poets composed in performance with the same kind of tool that Homer used, they seemed a palpable proof of Homeric orality. I

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[39] Foley calls attention to the role of word-type placements in three oral traditions, ancient Greek, South Slavic, and Anglo-Saxon (1990:156, 197, 237). The precise relationship between this phenomenon and the localization of individual words has yet to be worked out, but there obviously is one and the possibilities are exciting.

[40] Readers have a right to the equations on which the above argument is based, together with their correlation coefficients and residuals, but that means 45 different equations, which is too many for present purposes. We can, however, encapsulate the basic argument in four equations; this gets fairly technical, so I have put it in the Appendix.

[41] It is mentioned (as set out in FM, 191-239) with emphatic approval by A. Hoekstra (1965:9-10), who does not, however, let it stand as convincing proof of oral composition. It is hard to see, though, why a literate poet who was unused to oral composition would have made just this sort of error.

call this the "argument from external analogy," to distinguish it from the process of creating formulae that Parry called analogy.

This argument has received a good deal of criticism, some of it just. Parry had claimed that almost all Homeric formulae were traditional. The South Slavic poets do employ traditional formulae, but they modify them freely and also invent formulae of their own (see Lord 1960:43-45). I have already suggested that we should depart from Parry and picture Homer doing the same. Some other complaints are neither just nor scholarly, and ought to be refuted. Michael Lynn-George thinks that Parry's "Yugoslav material did not seem to him to yield itself to the same kind of detailed formulaic analysis" (1988:65); David Shive adds, "although repetition of phrases in the Slavic epic was not rare, it was certainly not the general rule, nor the principal compositional technique" (1987:12). Both Shive and Lynn-George defend these extraordinary claims by quoting Parry's statement that "there existed for the Greek heroic songs a fixity of phrasing which is utterly unknown in the Southslavic . . ." (444). This may sound devastating to the analogy, but in fact it is quite irrelevant. Parry is thinking about the authorship of the Homeric poems; he is weighing the implications of the fixity of phrasing *between* the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, compared with the lack of fixity *between* one South Slavic poem and another. Shive and Lynn-George have apparently construed this as, "There is less fixity of phrasing *within* one South Slavic poem than within one Greek one." When Shive calls this "a crisis for formulae" (1987:12-13) and says that it was his South Slavic experience that drove Parry to serious alteration of his concept of what a formula is, Shive's desire to nail Parry has led to some very irresponsible scholarship.[42] We have seen that Avdo is only slightly less formulaic than Homer, so that most of us require statistics to perceive the difference. And Parry had extended (not seriously altered) his concept of the formula *before* he went to Yugoslavia in 1933 (see 301, 308-9, written no later than 1930; and cf. xxxiii and xxxv).

Others have assaulted the analogy on the grounds that South Slavic poetry is so greatly inferior to Homer that Homer must have been literate. Adam Parry made this inference in 1966, and it has resurfaced at various times since, recently in a piece by Hugh Lloyd-Jones (1992). Lloyd-Jones

[42] Further (and very telling) criticism of Shive may be found in Danek 1991:25, 38; Danek concentrates on Shive's failure to take account of developments of Parry's position by later oralists.

cannot read South Slavic, or at least could not at that time, and failed to avail himself of Albert Lord's translation of Avdo's *Ženidba*. Adam Parry did have some South Slavic, but he too had not read the *Ženidba*. This may be all that needs to be said; Avdo's poem, read in the original, is, to be sure, not as great as Homer's, but it is first-rate. It is a profound study of the limitations of heroism, rich in moral and political insight; its characters are complex; it contains stylistic intricacies such as patterns of alliteration, rhyme, and ring-composition to indicate closure; its bipartite structure contrasts romance with satire and irony, the ideal hero with a tough, dirty, sometimes inspired, sometimes comic warrior, and asks why the Ottoman Empire requires the latter hero even more than the former.[43] Avdo is not so profound or complex as Homer, to be sure, but the analogy between them is never so faulty to tempt us to conclude that Homer must have been literate.

Mathematics can make a contribution to the analogy. We can construct the same equation for Avdo that we make for Homer and Quintus in the Appendix and find a correlation as good, and a residual almost as good, as Homer's; its slope and y-intercept are nearly identical to Homer's. These two facts—the precision of each equation and their identical parameters—mean that we can feed Homer's total occurrences into *Avdo's* equation and predict correctly the number of different formulae that *Homer's* nouns will display! This is a truly extraordinary fact, and cannot be left without an explanation. The mind turns to thoughts of imitation: Quintus' corresponding equation, though less precise than Homer's, as we saw, has almost the same parameters, and so when we feed Quintus' data into Avdo's equation, we get predictions for Quintus' formulae that are at least respectable, though definitely not as close as those for Homer. Quintus' insensitivity to localization accounts for the difference; the fact that he comes as close as he does testifies to his overall mastery of Homer's style.

But there is no possibility of imitation in the case of Avdo, no way he could have acquired a familiarity with Homer in Greek comparable to Quintus'. Nor is there anything about the human brain, or the epic genre as such, or even the epic that employs formulae, that forces this precision upon

[43] For further stylistic complexities, all analogous to Homer's, see Foley 1990:158-200; on Tale, Danek 1991 and Foley 1995:ch. 2. For a fuller discussion of the poem's form and vision, see Sale 1996.

a poet: predictions for the formulae of Apollonius and Virgil are much further off. There seems no alternative to the conclusion that the style of both poems must have been evolved to meet identical *circumstances* of composition; and since we know Avdo's circumstances, oral composition, we naturally infer that the *Odyssey*'s were the same. Either it was composed orally, or its literate poet was thoroughly familiar with those circumstances and reproduced in writing the oral poet's response to them.

We have already seen how regular formulae mark the difference between Avdo and the literate imitator of Homer, and how similar Avdo's numbers are to Homer's. We could add more numbers; we could discuss the role of extension, economy, and metrically irregular verses in the analogy. For now, let us confine ourselves to two further similarities. Avdo's regular formulae are multi-purposed: they point to the familiar referents, suit the meter well, are sensitive to localization, cover the common syntactical situations, are traditional, and contain context-free epithets. And Avdo's four-valued equation shows that he uses these multi-purposed regular formulae in response to localization. More than anything else, the sound of multitudes of similar regular formulae used in the same way makes us feel that hearing "the Southern Slavs . . . is hearing Homer."

10. The **tenth argument** expands Parry's statement that "we know surely that Homer's poetry is governed by factors unknown to later Greek poetry" (290). Unfortunately, Parry never really confronted the imitator who really wanted to sound like Homer. In his master's thesis, Parry talked about Quintus with distaste, then set him aside as a comparand, presumably because he did not want to read him any more; this was an unfortunate decision, because Quintus' efforts to appropriate the Homeric style met with considerable success, as we have seen. That is why the stylistic differences between Homer and Quintus are so important; they add up to what I want to entitle the "literate-difference argument." What does an oral poet do that an excellent imitator does not, perhaps cannot, do?

Most of these have been discussed already: Quintus does not have enough regular formulae; he is insufficiently extensive and economical; and he is not sensitive to localization and its effect on the oral poet's use of multi-purpose formulae. Many details might be added here, but must await future publication. As with the argument from external analogy, so with literate difference: it is enough to concentrate on the quantity of multi-purposed regular formulae that the oral poet uses in response to

localization. These especially unite Homer and Avdo, and divide both from Quintus. These most of all pose unanswerable questions if Homer was not an oral poet. For example, *why* does Homer have the right number of multi-purposed regular formulae for an oral poet, over 4 times what Quintus would have had, if he had had the same number of lines? How could the untrained imitator know that this was the number needed for a poem the length of the *Odyssey*? Did some oral poet tell him? Can we imagine that an oral poet literally knew the number?

And why on earth should a literate poet *want* to give so minutely accurate an imitation? Scholars who require a literate Homer believe that the poet wished to achieve certain goals that (according to them) an oral poet simply cannot attain. Such a poet would therefore be profoundly conscious of the fact that what he was producing must necessarily differ from an oral poem. A Quintus, to be sure, might well say, I shall make my poem stylistically indistinguishable from Homer's. Of course the actual Quintus failed, but he had a right to think that he could succeed. The hypothetical literate Homer did not *want* to succeed. Why then labor to have the right number of regular-formulae? Or to correlate their use with localization? And so on; the questions multiply, and we always come back to the same answer: if Homer did indeed write the *Odyssey*, he had been an oral poet too long to avoid revealing his past.

Coda. It is natural to raise the question here, "What does such a defense of Milman Parry tell us about Homeric art?" We have, after all, abandoned Parry at several points: we have said that the fixed epithets are heard by the audience; we have stressed the difference between regular and infrequent formulae; we have allowed the possibility that Homer coined (or re-coined) a good many of the latter, at least; we have ignored, if not disallowed, the view that almost all the text is formulaic; we have said nothing to endorse the opinion that at "no time is he seeking words for an idea that has never before found expression" (324). In short, we have said that oral composition is consistent with considerably more individual freedom in the use of formulae than Parry appears to permit. I have indicated in earlier publications some of what I take to be the fruits of that freedom; it is Homer's use of formulae (1) to deepen the concept of Olympian religion (1984), (2) to extend the political and ethical vision of the epos (1989, 1994), and (3), more technically, to meet the demands of oral composition by creating and recreating infrequent formulae (1993). He achieves all that strictly literate poets achieve, but with different tools.

(Skeptics might ponder the incredibly moving ἀνδρὸς παιδοφόνοιο in *Iliad* 24.506: this is an infrequent formula, because –φόνοιο in position 4-5.5 is generic. It also displays the formula-creative feature of Hainsworth-alteration, both by separation—of ἀνδροφόνοιο, itself part of a formula—and inversion, too subtle for our statistics, of Ἕκτορος ἀνδροφόνοιο). And also he achieves what, if John Foley is right, strictly literate poets do not, word-power through the free use of formulae to invoke the entire oral tradition (Foley 1991, 1995).

Although our modifications of Parry's arguments may allot Homer such freedom, they cannot show that he exercised it. Gregory Nagy, if I understand his views correctly, does not want any one poet in the oral tradition to have altered the poem significantly. Except as a mythic figure, his "Homer" names only the last poet in the tradition to claim the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* or both as his own, and though this Homer may have "executed considerable refinements," he did not innovate (1990:79-80). Nothing in our reformulation of Parry's arguments would falsify Nagy's view. Nor do we confront head-on those scholars such as Keith Stanley (1993) who feel that Homer's art requires literacy, since we cannot rule out the possibility that Homer learned to write. I would prefer to meet such dedicated Scripsists by developing the literary criticism (in the broadest sense) of the best work of the best poets known to be oral—such as Avdo Medjedović (cf. Sale 1996). This would still be Argument 9, perhaps, but elaborated far beyond our use of it here to defend Milman Parry.

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Appendix

In each author, Homer and Quintus, we first construct equations relating the number of different formulae (**df**) any noun will display (this is the y-variable) to the noun's total occurrences (**to**). Homer's equation shows genuine, but not remarkable, correlation: the correlation coefficient, measuring the consistency with which y varies with x, is .78 (1.0 is perfect correlation). The points on the graph are fairly near the line (the root-mean-square residual, a measure of this distance, is 3.6). Clearly there is a significant tendency in Homer for nouns to display more different formulae the more often they occur. This is genuine information, since it

was theoretically possible for him to start with a fixed number of formulae for each noun, and simply use them over and over, so that once those had appeared, **df** would *not* rise as **to** rose. Homer, of course, is not consciously concerned with this relationship: he adds formulae when he needs them, and *we* observe his consistency. When we create the same equation for Quintus, we actually get a higher correlation coefficient, .85, and a lower mean residual, 3.2; the imitator apparently *is* conscious of the **df/to** relationship.

Now let us include two more variables in Homer's equation, localization (**loc**), and occurrences per formula (**odf**), which together with **to** will make up a complex x-variable. Total occurrences will be in the numerator, the other two in the denominator; we are predicting that as **df** rises with **to**, it will rise less quickly if the localization is high—if the noun does not wander about the verse—and if the occurrences per formula rise with it. We expect **odf** to rise with **loc**, because we observed earlier that high localization accompanied the employment of regular formulae, which of course show more occurrences per formula than the others. We might simply have put regular formula occurrences in the denominator, but we are guessing that high localization may accompany more occurrences per formula of infrequent formulae as well. We do not put **loc** alone in the denominator, because **odf** may well move inversely with **df** independently of **loc**. None of these variables is to be seen as causal**.** Homer is the cause; the variables are merely the factors that affected him. Homer, though he cannot have been conscious of the equation we are constructing, was probably conscious of the variables; in any case, the equation tells us how he responded. The equation turns out to be **df = .4 (to/loc + to/odf) + .6.** Now the correlation coefficient is much higher, at .94, and the residual much lower, at 1.9; this is really an excellent fit. It means that Homer's behavior is consistent throughout the *Odyssey*; wherever localization and occurrences per formula are high, this will slow down the rate at which the number of different formulae will vary with total occurrences. Our analysis of how Homer's behavior modulates in localization is nicely confirmed.

Naturally we must test this observation by examining Quintus' corresponding four-variable equation. We are not wholly surprised to see that the addition of the two variables to his two-valued equation leads to an insignificant improvement: the correlation coefficient goes from .85 to .86, the mean residual from 3.2 to 3.1. This difference probably means nothing whatever: we had already concluded that Quintus was virtually indifferent

to changes in localization, and we have merely confirmed this. It is obvious that Quintus is chiefly interested in maintaining his roughly 50% formularity. As total occurrences go up, he will make more different formulae, whatever the localization of his nouns.[44]

Our confirmation is complete. The skillful imitator does not respond to changes in localization because they mean nothing to him. The oral poet does respond, because high localization gives him the opportunity to use his multi-purpose formulae, the formulae designed to enable rapid composition, the "easy way to make verses."

[44] This is not to say that he is merely mechanically making formulae. It is rather to say that each time he must face the problem of using a noun, the choice for him lies between formula or non-formulaic simply; he has time to ignore the constraints that varying localization places upon an oral poet. We can legitimately argue that he is creating formulae as he needs them, but his needs do not include rapidity of composition.

Indeed it is hard to see why localization would have much of a role if there were no time pressure. A noun has high localization, and wants to fall in a particular spot; fine, put it there, then decide whether to use an old formula, make up a new one, or eschew a formula altogether. You have time. A noun has low localization; put it where you like, and go through exactly the same set of choices. You have time. But the creator of the *Odyssey* either did not have time or, if he did, elected to use with dedicated precision the techniques that oral poets used.

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