



# ORAL TRADITION

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# ORAL TRADITION

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*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.

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## Editor's Column

With this issue *Oral Tradition* comes to the end of its first year of existence, and it thus seems an appropriate time to thank all those concerned with producing the first volume: the authors, reviewers, editorial board, editorial assistants, and not least the readership. The staff at Slavica Publishers, especially Erica Townsend and Tonya Spears, deserve special gratitude for their heroic efforts.

Our next year will see the publication of two special issues as part of a policy that calls for at least one such special collection annually. The January number will be a Festschrift for Walter J. Ong, and will consist of papers in a number of the areas he has influenced; authors include Albert Lord, Eric Havelock, Robert Kellogg, Werner Kelber, and others, with a closing essay by Father Ong himself. The May issue, under the editorship of Ruth H. Webber, will be devoted to Hispanic balladry and will feature articles by Diego Catalán, Antonio Sánchez Romeralo, and Samuel G. Armistead and Joseph H. Silverman, to name only a few. The third number for 1987 will return to the usual format of a potpourri, containing essays on Persian and South Indian oral traditions, as well as the second parts of the Old English and Homeric Greek surveys and the annotated bibliography.

Once again we encourage all readers to send us their publications for inclusion in the bibliography. Many people have been extremely helpful in this regard, and we hope that all who work in the consortium of fields that bear on "oral tradition" will form the habit of contributing one copy of their books or monographs and two copies of their articles to this worthy cause. The annual bibliography, the first edition of which may be found later on in this issue of *Oral Tradition*, is only as thorough and as useful as contributors make it.

In connection with the recently established Center for Studies in Oral Tradition at Missouri, we are happy to announce an



upcoming international symposium commemorating the two-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, the great Serbian ethnographer, linguist, and collector of oral traditional narrative. To celebrate this occasion, six Yugoslav colleagues will be coming to Columbia to join six Americans for a five-day symposium on the topic “Vuk Karadžić: Oral and Literary Art.” Please send any inquiries to John Foley at the usual editorial address.

The present issue of *Oral Tradition* begins with Albert Lord’s comparative survey of recent developments in oral literature studies; a sequel to his 1974 “Perspectives” essay, it also treats the important questions of formulaic density and the “transitional text.” Other surveys include the first section of a two-part history of oral-formulaic studies of Old English poetry by Alexandra Hennessey Olsen, and Elizabeth and Michael Jeffreys’ thorough examination of similar kinds of scholarship on the Byzantine Greek tradition. Bruce Rosenberg extends his analysis of the American folk-preaching tradition to some historic events, and Eliza Ghil offers us a closely drawn portrait of Vasile Tetin, a Romanian singer of tales, and a sample performance of “The Song of Iancu Jianu” by Tetin. Ward Parks’ survey of oral literature research in Middle English and Joseph Duggan’s 1986 Parry Lectures, on “Social Functions of the Medieval Epic in the Romance Literatures,” round out the issue.

Let me close this brief column with an invitation for all readers to take an active part in formulating the early history of *OT*. We welcome your comments and suggestions for the journal, as well as your bibliographical assistance and responses to previously published articles for the “Symposium” section. Notes of conferences or other events of interest to the readership will also be a regular feature. In short, we welcome whatever contribution you wish to make to the shaping of our collective enterprise.

*John Miles Foley, Editor*

## **Perspectives on Recent Work on the Oral Traditional Formula**

**Albert B. Lord**

The history of the study of Oral Literature has been covered well by John Miles Foley in his Introduction to *Oral Traditional Literature* (1981b), and also in his Introduction to *Oral-Formulaic Theory and Research* (1985), which includes a monumental annotated bibliography to the subject. I do not intend to recapitulate what he has already done so admirably; all the material is there, and his comments are even-handed and exemplary. There are, however, several general observations which it would perhaps be fitting to make at this juncture in the study of Oral Traditional Literature, which is marked by the inauguration of a new journal devoted to Oral Tradition.

Perusing Foley's works just mentioned, one is immediately struck by the number of language traditions and cultural areas in which the "oral theory" is now discussed, and by the diversity of forms and problems included in the study of "oral traditional literature." This is an exciting development; it is also sobering, because it carries with it a mandate to be clear in our notion of what we mean by oral traditional literature. There are some who would stress the literal sense of "oral" and include in "oral traditional literature" any literature which is "performed" orally no matter what its original manner of composition was.<sup>1</sup> Such an interpretation, it seems to me, overemphasizes performance to such an extent that the peculiar character of what is performed is obscured. We are told that in some cultures it is the performance that is important and that the words of what is performed are unimportant, even meaningless. If that is true, then there is no literary content in such performances, and those of us who are concerned with literature are left with an empty shell, which we should leave to other disciplines. While there may be special cases

where this is true, namely, that the words do not count, they are special cases, and it would be a mistake to generalize from the exceptional.

I hasten to affirm, however, that performance is indeed significant, that context is important, and that without a sympathetic knowledge of context the text may well be misunderstood and misinterpreted. There is no doubt in my own mind that text and context are inseparable. To consider the one without showing an awareness of the other is to miss much. On the other hand, it is true that certain types of research may concentrate either on describing context or on analyzing text, but this should be done with the clear understanding that the other facet exists, and that it must be called upon wherever the description or the analysis should be taken into consideration, because the study would otherwise be inaccurate or incomplete.<sup>2</sup>

Just as there are those who would overemphasize “oral performance,” there are those who would underemphasize, to the point of eliminating, the concept of “traditional.” It seems to me shortsighted to ignore that aspect of oral traditional literature which gives it the depth of meaning set into it at its origin by previous generations. Forcing oral traditional literature, which, I submit, is traditional by its origin and nature, into the straight-jacket of synchronic observation is to distort it beyond recognition.

Turning to the last element in our subject, oral traditional literature, need it be said that we must be very clear about what we mean by literature? Must we spend time squabbling about whether “oral literature” is a contradiction in terms? Such controversy is a red herring, taking our attention away from the real issues. If we can but accept the well-recognized meaning of “literature” as “carefully structured verbal expression,” then carefully structured oral verbal expression can surely qualify as literature.

This is not to say, however, that oral and written literature are indistinguishable! Let there be no doubt on this question either; for oral traditional literature without tradition is meaningless; and oral traditional literature without a clear distinction between it and “written literature” ceases to exist.

\*\*

I would like to take this opportunity to bring up to date an article on "Perspectives," which I wrote a few years ago, published in 1974 by Professor Joseph Duggan, entitled "Perspectives on Recent Work on Oral Literature." In it I expressed the opinion that we need more study of bona fide oral traditional literature. I am happy to report that there seems to be more attention being given to both collecting and studying oral traditional literature, even to the point of suggesting new models for comparative studies. If I speak mainly about epic, it is because my deepest commitment is there, but I do not mean to imply that other genres either do not exist or are unimportant.

It was my privilege last September to attend a conference at the University of Bonn on Central Asiatic epic. The specialists who participated, including Professor A. T. Hatto of London, who has edited and translated the Kirghiz epic *The Memorial Feast for Kōkötöy-khan* (1977), as well as six scholars from Mongolia and China, were very impressive. It was a particular pleasure to become acquainted with the work of Professor Karl Reichl of the English Department at Bonn, a specialist on Old and Middle English, who has just published a translation of an Uzbek oral traditional epic about *Rawšan*, the grandson of Kurroglou (1985). In the introduction to it and in a recent article (1984), he has called attention to parallels in European medieval literature, especially Old French and Anglo-Saxon, and has suggested that medievalists might find in Central Asiatic epic another helpful model for comparative research in addition to the South Slavic songs. Parallels have also been drawn between Mongolian and medieval German epic by Professor Walther Heissig (1983a). Professor Heissig is the founder and prime mover of the Seminar für Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft Zentralasiens der Universität Bonn. His recent monumental *Geser-Studien* (1983b) is especially valuable for comparative study of European and Asiatic epic. A new body of Mongolian Geser material was collected in 1972 and published with text and German translation by S. Ju. Nekljudov and Z. Tömörçeren (1985). The abundance of Geser material from Central Asia which is now available in original and translation makes this one of the richest fields for research. The *Asiatische Forschungen* of the Seminar für Sprach- und Kultur Wissenschaften der Universität Bonn is the worthy successor to the tradition started by Radloff in the nineteenth century.

Earlier that same month, at the International Conference on

Folk Epic in Dublin, I made the acquaintance of Dr. John D. Smith of Cambridge, who has collected Pabuji epic, long oral traditional songs, from western India. He has made a comparative study of passages from four different versions, with a view to investigating whether the texts are memorized or not (1977, 1981). Smith's paper at the Dublin conference was entitled "Use of Formulaic Language in Indian Oral Epic." Professor Stuart Blackburn of Dartmouth College has collected in South India, and he had a presentation on "A Folk Ramayana in South India: Textual Transmission and Local Ideology." I have recently heard also of a study of a South Indian poem, the 5082-line Dravidian epic, the *Cilappatikaram* (The Epic of the Anklet), in Tamil, by Mr. R. Parthasarathy at the University of Texas in Austin, which treats the formulaic poetics of the poem. These texts and studies from the Indian sub-continent provide further opportunities to expand our knowledge of oral traditional poetry, and to test our hypotheses on *remembering* structured phrases and lines rather than *memorizing* a fixed text.

Needless to say, at Dublin one heard of work being done on Celtic oral traditional literatures. Among recent works which stand out are Joseph Falaky Nagy's splendid study, *The Wisdom of the Outlaw* (1985), and Kevin O'Nolan's translation of the long Irish tale *Eochair, Mac Ri in Eirinn* (1982), which was central to his conference presentation on story-telling in Ireland.

The last decade has also seen the publication of Jeff Opland's study of Xhosa oral poetry.<sup>3</sup> Praise poetry is not epic, of course, nor is it essentially narrative, but it offers valuable examples for the study of true improvisation, as distinct from composition by formula and theme. It is, indeed, *sui generis*, and of considerable interest in its own right.

But there is epic in Africa too. During the last decade Daniel Biebuyck of the University of Delaware has published two more versions of the *Mwindo Epic* (1969) in *Hero and Chief* (1978), and John William Johnson of Indiana University has just published *The Epic of Son-Jara* (1985). In 1979 Johnson had published two volumes of the *Epic of Sun-Jata* from Mali, and the new book enriches the material available from the Manding tradition. Five years earlier Gordon Innes had published three versions of *Sunjata* (1974), and it is gratifying to have the available material for analysis increasing so strongly within a period of ten years. In 1973 Innes wrote an article on the manner in which the *griots*

learn, compose, and perform the *Epic of Sunjata*. Foley notes in his annotated bibliography that this is “a study based on fieldwork by the author and others.”

One should not leave the African scene without noting John W. Johnson’s work on Somali poetry, which offers a very different body of material from the epic songs of Mali. In 1974 Johnson published a study of a kind of poetry called *Heello*. In 1980 he described the way in which Somali poetry is composed and transmitted and agreed with others that it is a completely oral and at the same time completely “memorial” tradition. This is valuable reporting from a scholar who has done extensive fieldwork in both Mali and Somalia. It is important to note, however, that the Somalis do not appear to have a tradition of long narrative poems. In the same year Johnson published a now well-known article, “Yes, Virginia, There is an Epic in Africa,” defending Africa against the allegations that it has no epic poetry. I should like to add one more little book to the African “report” because it was done by one of Harvard’s first PhD’s in Folklore, Clement A. Okafor of Nigeria. He has published in English some Tonga tales which he himself collected and studied for his dissertation under the title *The Banished Child* (1983).

There have been some fine studies of Arabic oral poetry. The work of James T. Monroe (1972) and Michael J. Zwettler (1978) comes immediately to mind. A study has just appeared of a body of poetry which has hitherto been neglected. It is by Saad Abdullah Sowayan and focuses on Nabati poetry, which he says is “the popular vernacular poetry of Arabia. Due to the great mobility of the Arab tribes, it is not easy to confine this poetic tradition to one particular locality; it is widespread throughout the Arabian peninsula” (1985:1). Sowayan is critical of both Monroe and Zwettler, who dealt with Pre-Islamic and Classical Arabic poetry, in part because they go to alien, Yugoslav, poetry for a model for understanding composition and not to the native “continuator” of the earlier poetry, namely, the Nabati poetry. This is an interesting and valuable book, in spite of its native Arabic bias and its feeling of discomfort with the critical approaches of Westerners. It does provide a balance, and deserves careful reading.

There is considerable activity going on at present in entering Latvian *dainas* onto computers, and several helpful analyses of formulas in the Latvian quatrains have appeared. The data from

the entire nineteenth-century classical collection of Krišjānis Barons are stored at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a very large selection, including all the sun-songs, is located at the University of Montreal. Among studies worth mentioning are the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, doctoral dissertation in 1981 by Lalita Lāce Muižniece, "Linguistic Analysis of Latvian Death and Burial Folk Songs," and two articles by the Freibergs, namely, "Formulaic Analysis of the Computer-Accessible Corpus of Latvian Sun-Song," by Vaira Viķis-Freibergs and Imants Freibergs (1978), and "Creativity and Tradition in Oral Folklore, or the Balance of Innovation and Repetition in the Oral Poet's Art," by Vaira Viķis-Freibergs (1984).

Thus there is a growing body of authentic source materials, and we can read new collections and up-to-date studies of oral traditional poetry and prose in Central Asia, India, Africa, Arabia, and Ireland. And there is the suggestion by scholars like Jeff Opland in South Africa, Karl Reichl in Bonn, and John D. Smith at Cambridge that the poetic traditions with which they work could serve as another model, in addition to or instead of Serbo-Croatian for comparative study in Old English and elsewhere. I welcome these suggestions, and have only one caveat, namely, that like should be compared with like. The non-narrative African praise poetry of the Xhosa or Zulus, for example, or the occasional or lyric poetry in Somaliland, may be helpful in studying the shorter Anglo-Saxon genres, or other true improvisations, but its usefulness for the study of epic would be very limited. For the epic, the Central Asiatic and Indian traditions, or the songs in Mali and the epics from Zaire, are much more apt and deserve further study in depth. I should like to add that I believe that comparatists would find the Russian and Ukrainian models also helpful, especially for Old English with which they share similar metrical bases. I am puzzled that more use has not been made of them than is the case.

\*

Homeric and other ancient Greek, and Old and Middle English scholarship dealing with questions of oral traditional literature continues strong. Attempts to modify Parry's definitions of the terms formula, system, and theme have been given considerable attention, especially in Old English, and contextual

studies of differing kinds are of great significance in both these areas. The following comments are intended to highlight some of what is being done in these two important fields.

In the scholarship devoted to ancient Greek and Homeric poetry there has been considerable activity in the publishing of works in which the force of oral tradition has been considered of great importance in its creation, without which it cannot be properly interpreted. One of the most outstanding books in that category is Gregory Nagy's *The Best of the Achaeans* (1979). By perceptively analyzing formulas in context in ancient Greek and other ancient Indo-Iranian traditional literature, Nagy reconstructs concepts of the hero which once characterized an entire epoch, and still have relevance today. Nagy's work is multi-faceted, profound, and far-reaching. Two recent articles by him, one "On the Death of Sarpedon" (1983) and the other on "Ancient Greek Epic and Praise Poetry: Some Typological Considerations" (1986) add further theoretical perspectives to his book. The first provides an extraordinarily apt additional illustration of principles previously set forth, and the second brings the praise poems of Pindar into the larger theoretical framework that also includes the Homeric poems. Nagy's methodology has inspired a number of others, of which I should like especially to mention Leonard Charles Muellner's *The Meaning of Homeric "eyxomai" through its Formulas* (1976) as a worthy representative. The book on Theognis of Megara, edited by Thomas Figueira and Gregory Nagy (1985), should be added here.

Another important recent book is Richard Janko's *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns: Diachronic Development in Epic Diction* (1982). One might also mention a very useful article of his, "Equivalent Formulas in the Greek Epos" (1981). His work uses an entirely different technique from Nagy's, but one that is also based on the oral traditional nature of the material, to establish a comparative dating for the early texts.

It is especially interesting to me that one of the most significant undertakings going on at the moment in Homeric studies is being carried on by scholars well acquainted with Parry's Homeric studies and not unsympathetic to the oral-formulaic theory. The project to which I refer, of course, is the multi-volumed commentary to the *Iliad*, under the editorship of Geoffrey Kirk, the first volume of which, done by Kirk himself, has already appeared (1985). While Kirk is not comfortable with the South Slavic model, nevertheless, if I read his work correctly, he



accepts Homer as an oral traditional bard, the composer of the “monumental epic,” a term which originated with him, I believe. Associated with him in the commentary are J. Bryan Hainsworth, the well-known author of *The Flexibility of the Homeric Formula* (1968), which is a landmark in Homeric studies after Parry; Mark Edwards of Stanford, who has written much on thematic structures in Homer (e.g., 1970, 1975, 1980); and Richard Janko of Columbia, whose recent book I mentioned above.

Several other books of note have been published dealing in one form or another with ancient Greek and oral tradition, including a consideration of traditional formulas and themes. Two collections of essays by a number of scholars have appeared that are pertinent here: *Homer: Tradition and Invention*, edited by Bernard C. Fenik (1978), and *Homer: Tradition und Neuerung*, edited by Joachim Latacz (1979). Fenik has just published another book on Homer and the *Nibelungenlied* (1986). Finally, special mention should be made of the work of Mario Cantilena of the Università di Venezia, *Ricerche sulla dizione epica, I. Per uno studio della formularità degli Inni Omerici* (1982).

Old English and Middle English studies reflecting the relationship of oral traditional literature to the extant Anglo-Saxon and Middle English poetic texts continue to flourish. Beginning in 1967 with an important article by Donald K. Fry and continuing in 1969 with Ann Chalmers Watts' significant book *The Lyre and the Harp*, followed by more articles by Fry, the questions about the formula in Old English were actively being raised and discussed. Jeff Opland's *Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry: A Study of the Traditions* appeared in 1980, and it made extensive use of the Xhosa parallel, which was to be fully described in 1983 in his *Xhosa Oral Poetry*. Robert P. Creed, in addition to his concern for Anglo-Saxon metrics (1982), recently turned his attention as well to sound-patterning in *Beowulf* and the songs of Avdo Medjedović (1981a, b). John Miles Foley has also written on Anglo-Saxon metrics in “The Scansion of *Beowulf* in its Indo-European Context” (1982), and more generally on oral traditional literature, as in “Oral Texts, Traditional Texts: Poetics and Critical Methods” (1981c). Alain Renoir also contributed to the volume on *Approaches to Beowulfian Scansion* cited above, and has expanded his interests to include the *Hildebrandslied* (e.g., 1977). He has been especially attracted by the larger subject of context, as in “Oral-Formulaic Context: Implications for the Comparative

Criticism of Mediaeval Texts" (1981). John Niles' book on *Beowulf* (1983) is the latest full-scale work on the subject, and Anita Riedinger's "The Old English Formula in Context" (1985), which appeared in *Speculum*, is the most recent article to come to my attention.

The Middle English *Alliterative Morte Arthur*, too, has been studied from the point of view of oral traditional literature. Among more recent works of importance are Jean Ritzke-Rutherford's two articles from 1981, "Formulaic Microstructure: The Cluster" and "Formulaic Macrostructure: The Theme of Battle," and Karl H. Göller's article in the same publication, "A Summary of Research," is useful. Valerie Krishna's work on the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (1982) has also kept the study of formula density very much alive.

In the Scandinavian field, among the studies that concern themselves with problems of oral tradition one should mention Lars Lönnroth's *Njal's Saga: A Critical Introduction* (1976), as well as several articles by him, most recently "Iorð fannz aeva né upphiminn. A Formula Analysis" (1981). Here too belong Peter Buchholz's *Vorzeitkunde: Mündliches Erzählen und Überliefern im mittelalterlichen Skandinavien nach dem Zeugnis von Fornaldarsaga und eddischer Dichtung* (1980), and Jesse L. Byock's *Feud in the Icelandic Saga* (1982), which analyzes the significance of traditional patterns of feuding in the sagas. The relationship of the Old Icelandic sagas and Eddic poetry to oral tradition is discussed in several of the chapters in the recently published *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature*, edited by Carol J. Clover and John Lindow (1985), especially that on Eddic poetry by Joseph Harris.

Old French studies in this area have been led by Joseph J. Duggan, two of his recent articles being of paramount importance, namely, "La Théorie de la composition des chansons de geste: les faits et les interprétations" (1981a) and "Le Mode de composition des chansons de geste: Analyse statistique, jugement esthétique, modèles de transmission" (1981b). Duggan is also at home in medieval Spanish, as is attested by at least two articles, "Formulaic Diction in the *Cantar de Mio Cid* and the Old French Epic" (1974b) and "Legitimation and the Hero's Exemplary Function in the *Cantar de Mio Cid* and the *Chanson de Roland*" (1981c). He is presently working on a much-needed new edition of the *Chanson de Roland*.

In medieval Spanish literature, Ruth Webber pioneered

formulaic and thematic analysis beginning in 1951.<sup>4</sup> Recently she has returned to formulaic studies in connection with the *Mocedades de Rodrigo* (1980). In addition to stylistic studies of Spanish ballads, she has also written innovatively of their narrative structure (1978). One of her most remarkable articles (1981) has dealt with history and epic, particularly in regard to the *Cid*. In her latest paper, a discussion of the relationship between medieval Spanish and medieval French epic, she boldly suggests that together they formed the medieval Romance epic, the true "homeland" of each.

A recent long article on "The Crown-Bestower in the Iranian Book of Kings" by Olga M. Davidson (1985) brings to our attention one of the great epic traditions from the past, which still has importance today, namely, that of Persia, especially as represented by Ferdowsi's *Shahnama*, "The Book of the Kings."<sup>5</sup> In the first part of her study Dr. Davidson traces the elements of the Rostam narrative to Indo-European roots, and in the second she analyzes the traditional formulaic structure of parts of the epic.

The Far East is well represented by Ching-Hsien Wang's *The Bell and the Drum: Shih Ching as Formulaic Poetry in an Oral Tradition* (1974). Wang analyzed formulas and themes in a famous group of lyric poems from China's past. Among other articles, Alsace Yen also wrote in 1975 on "The Parry-Lord Theory Applied to Vernacular Chinese Stories" (1975).

Two or three additional areas deserve comment before we conclude this brief survey. What I have termed "the philosophical school" of orality has produced a notable book by one of its most distinguished practitioners, the Reverend Walter J. Ong, S. J., who not long ago published *Orality and Literacy* (1982). A Festschrift in his honor will soon appear.<sup>6</sup> A recent article by Franz Bäuml, a member of the same philosophical school, on "Medieval Text and the Two Theories of Oral-Formulaic Composition: A Proposal for a Third Theory" (1984), has some suggestions concerning the changing relationships between orality and literacy in the thirteenth century in Germany. In New Testament studies mention should be made of Werner Kelber's challenging book, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (1983). The work of Professor Susan Niditch at Amherst College brings to Old Testament studies the methodology of oral traditional literature. This can be seen in her recent book *Chaos and Cosmos* (1985).

Finally, there is one book which defies classification under any regional rubric, but which is comparative in a larger sense of the term, namely, David E. Bynum's *The Daemon in the Wood* (1978). It is a study of the motif of wood, both alive and dead, and its significance in story patterns through man's history and throughout the world. A learned and provocative book, it is in a class by itself. In 1974 Bynum's "Oral Literature at Harvard Since 1856" appeared, and in the same year he also published for the Parry Collection *The Wedding of Smailagić Meho*, by Avdo Medjedović (Lord 1974b, translation) and the original-language text, *Ženidba Smailagina sina* (Bynum 1974b). In 1979 he edited volume XIV of the same *Serbo-Croatian Heroic Songs* series, this one containing songs from the Bihaćka Krajina; the accompanying translation volume is now ready for publication. In 1980 volume VI appeared under his editorship, containing three more texts by Avdo Medjedović, including the 13,326-line "Osmanbeg Delibegović i Pavičević Luka," the longest in the Parry Collection. The Prolegomena to this volume include studies of metrics and melodic changes in the performance of some of the singers, as well as comparative analysis of some of the versions.

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In an article in 1974 I paid particular attention to the "theme" in oral traditional narrative song, specifically epic. It would be useful here to review some of the work on formulas over the years, because they have been the focus of the study of oral literature since Milman Parry's Sorbonne thesis, "L'Épithète traditionnelle dans Homère: Essai sur un problème de style homérique" (1928a) and his *thèse supplémentaire*, "Les Formules et la métrique d'Homère" (1928b). I should say at the beginning that I shall be talking about the formula as defined by Parry as "a word or group of words regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea" (1930:80), which does not include repeated passages, for which I use the term "theme." It is perhaps fair to begin with perspectives on my own previous work on formulas, and to comment especially on formula density, making clear my own views on the subject at the present time.

## Formula Density

To the best of my memory, Parry did not mention “formula density,” nor use it under that title as a test for orality, but he did make statements that implied that he was acquainted with the concept. For example, he wrote (1930:304):

We have found that formulas are to all purposes altogether lacking in verse which we know was written, and we are now undertaking the first step in showing the particular character of Homeric style, which is to prove that Homer’s verse, on the contrary, has many. We are establishing the difference between many formulas and none.

Parry was interested in noting statistical data about frequency of occurrences of formulas in a text. On occasion he counted the number of formulas in a passage, as in the following statement, after presenting his chart of formulas in the opening of the *Iliad* and of the *Odyssey* (*idem*):

The expressions in the first twenty-five lines of the *Iliad* which are solidly underlined as being found unchanged elsewhere in Homer count up to 29, those in the passage from the *Odyssey* to 34. More than one out of every four of these is found again in eight or more places, whereas in all Euripides there was only one phrase which went so far as to appear seven times.

A little later in the article he wrote (312):

What we have done then is to prove that the style of Homer, so far as the repeated expressions go, is altogether unlike that of any verse which we know was written.

These statements, it should be emphasized, apply to Homer and ancient Greek literature rather than to medieval epic, and as medievalists we may disagree if they are imposed on medieval vernacular literatures, but the principle of formula density as a test of orality is clearly set forth in these quotations.

Parry did not write much on formulas after his Yugoslav experience, except for his article on whole-verse formulas in Homer and South Slavic (1933). When I ventured into medieval epic after Parry’s death, I brought with me what I had learned. In my doctoral dissertation in 1949, entitled *The Singer of Tales*, I

analyzed passages from the Homeric poems, *Beowulf*, the *Chanson de Roland*, *Digenis Akritas*, and the *Nibelungenlied*. This was published under the same title (which was originally Parry's), with revisions (1960), including the omission of the *Nibelungenlied*. Although I pointed out that there were many formulas and formulaic expressions in the passages analyzed, I did not speak of "density of formulas," nor, with the one exception noted above, did I reckon percentages. Such exact statistics had, however, been figured for *Beowulf* by Magoun in his famous *Speculum* article (1953), and by Robert Creed in his unpublished doctoral dissertation at Harvard (1955).

During the fifties and sixties, in a seminar on Medieval Epic and Romance which I gave regularly in the Comparative Literature Department at Harvard, I began, with the help of the students, to count formulas in narrative poems in the several medieval language traditions with which they were acquainted in the original, and to figure percentages. I believe that it was in this context that the term "formula density" came into being as a test of orality. We were experimenting, and the results turned out to be surprising because of the number of poems containing a high percentage of formulas or formulaic expressions. We worked not only with texts which, we were advised, might possibly belong to oral tradition, such as *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn* in Middle English, and *Beowulf* in Anglo-Saxon, but also with those which we knew could not, such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *König Rother*. The last two were clearly low in true formulas, as we had expected, and the first two were pretty high on the scale, but *Beowulf* was marginal.

The implication in our study of formula density at that time was that a poem which had many formulas was an oral poem and that one with few was not an oral poem. By an oral poem it was implied that it was a poem belonging to a tradition of oral verse-making—to use Parry's term—that is, to a tradition of singing and performing, and that the text before us was the product of a traditional singer dictating his song to a scribe. In retrospect, however, our thinking was too simplistic to cover the variety of situations in the medieval milieu. In *The Singer of Tales* I had argued against the existence of "transitional texts," a concept that constantly haunted us. That ghost has, for the moment at least, been laid to rest. There seem to be texts that can be called either transitional or belonging to the first stage of

written literature. Does that mean, then, that our discovery that many medieval texts of written origin contained a surprising number of formulas was of no value, that that discovery is meaningless? Certainly not.

What we did show very clearly about the texts which we analyzed was *the degree to which they made use of the formulaic style*. Some were very close to it, some more remote, and others moderately formulaic in their manner of making lines. The formulaic style originated, as Larry Benson agreed in his well-known article (1966), in oral traditional singing of narrative verse. When people began to write Anglo-Saxon verse, as Magoun himself had indicated, they continued to use the same traditional style, because there was as yet no other available. A new style was to evolve in time. Our analyses of formula density demonstrated the degree of involvement of any given poem in the oral traditional style, and conversely *its degree of involvement in a non-traditional style*, if we could find a way of measuring that. Benson has himself admirably discussed the debt of the poet of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to the traditional formulaic style (1965). Formula studies, *including intelligent statistical analyses*, are an important component in the investigation of medieval vernacular poetry.

We also learned in that seminar to adapt the concept of the formula to the particular tradition with which each student was working, to translate the general terms of Parry's definition to the specific metrical and rhythmic conventions of the several cultures involved. We learned too, that there were modifications needed in the idea of "exact repetition"; for example, metathesis was frequently found in the occurrences of the formulas, and we agreed to accept a metathesized form as an "exact repetition," as Wayne O'Neil had noted in 1960. He also remarked that "formulas, since they are made up of individual words, can be declined and conjugated and compared."<sup>7</sup> In the seminar we also struggled with the question of whether the repetition of a phrase within a few lines of another occurrence of it should count as evidence for formulaicity. Our techniques were sharpened, as was our sense of what a formula was.

Although we did not succeed in the seminar in coming to grips fully with the problems of the "transitional" text, we were acutely aware that there was a problem. In the summer of 1981 I decided to return to the study of Anglo-Saxon poetry, which I had

neglected for some time, and I prepared a paper for the Medieval Institute at Kalamazoo the following spring. I was engaged in comparing speech introductions in *Beowulf*, *Elene*, and *Andreas*. The paper was only a progress report, but it was well received. Since then I have written much more on the subject in manuscript. I for my part learned that the study of formula density is only part of a larger picture, and that its evidence alone may not be sufficient to determine orality. One might put it that formula density is a necessary criterion, a fundamental characteristic of orality, without which no testing would be complete or ultimately valid, but the concept of formula density needs to be expanded.

I mean by expanding the concept of formula density that it should be calculated not only on the basis of the number of the individual formulas, but it should also be reckoned in terms of larger syntactic and semantic units, such as the whole sentence, and within boundaries, therefore, that go beyond the single line, as needed to accommodate the syntactic requirements. Parry had to some extent foreseen this as an inevitable necessity when he spoke of the complexity of the formulaic style and noted that formulas would have to be adjusted to fit the constraints of the sentence: "The ways in which these formulas fit into the parts of the verse and join on to one another to make the sentence and the hexameter are very many, and vary for each type of formula" (1930:126). His idea of the formula included, in the long run, its place not only in the metrical milieu, the line, but also in the syntactic milieu, the sentence, which often went beyond the boundaries of a line. Both Hainsworth (1968) and A. Hoekstra (1964) elaborated on this for the ancient Greek tradition in their studies on the flexibility of the Homeric formula, and on the antiquity of some formulas in that tradition.

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The studies of formulas with which we have been concerned so far have dealt with the definition of the formula, with formulaic technique, and with the expansion of the concept of the formula. The study of formula density was aimed originally at demonstrating the difference between an oral and a written poem. John S. Miletich of the University of Utah has devised what he believes to be another way of making that differentiation, using repetitions,



but not formulas as such. He has attempted to add a new dimension to the problem of understanding the differences between oral traditional and written literature.

In order to evaluate properly Miletich's analyses we must look more closely at the basic tenets of his theory, at his categories of repetition and the way in which he differentiates between what he calls "elaborate" and "essential" styles (1974, 1978). He begins with "six different types of repetitive sequences . . . : (1) the 'repetitive group,' (2) 'exact repetition,' (3) 'semantic repetition,' (4) 'similar initial-internal-end repetition,' (5) 'distinct initial-internal-end repetition,' and (6) 'syntactic repetition'" (1974:112). Let us look at each of these categories.

The "repetitive group" contains a group of consecutive lines that is repeated almost exactly. For example, someone tells the hero to proceed to a certain place. The singer then recounts in about the same words that the hero went to that place. Here are some lines from a Croatian *bugarštica* which Miletich cites:

Podji, sinu, nebore, - u te crkve svete Petke (7:33)  
 (Go, son, - to the church of Saint Petka)  
 ter mi vjenča' njega kralja - s kraljicom slavnom gospodom, (:34)  
 (and marry the king - to the glorious lady queen)  
 i krsti mu, njemu Janku, - od srdašca mlado čedo, (:36)  
 (and christen for Janko, - the young child of his heart)  
 Pak mi podji, moj sinu, - u cara u čestitoga." (:37)  
 (and then go, my son, - to the illustrious sultan.)

Tamo podje Kraljević - u te crkve svete Petke, (:40)  
 (Kraljević went there - to the church of Saint Petka.)  
 tere kralja vjenča - s kraljicom slavnom gospodom, (:42)  
 (and he married the king - to the glorious lady queen.)  
 i krstio, njemu Janku, - od srdašca mlado čedo, (:43)  
 (and he christened for Janko, - the young child of his heart.)  
 Pak ti podje, on Kraljević - u cara u čestitoga. (:45)  
 (and then he went, Kraljević, - to the illustrious sultan.)

This type of repetition is common in oral traditional narrative poetry, and the three examples given by Miletich from Spanish, Croatian, and Russian belong to such poetry. It is easy to imitate by anyone writing "in the style of" oral traditional poetry. For that reason, its presence or absence could not be decisive in

determining oral or written style.

The second category, “exact repetition,” is just what it says it is, but in describing it Miletich says it is “the recurrence of consecutive units in which the diction and syntax are the same or almost the same and the idea remains essentially unchanged” (1974:113). Examples given from Spanish and Croatian are:

Rico Franco aragones (3 times)

dvije ptice lastovice (3 times)  
(two swallow birds)

Such repetitions are found in both oral traditional and written poetry. They could be either formulas, and hence characteristic of oral traditional poetry or its imitation, or the kind of repetition that is characteristic of written literature.<sup>8</sup> Unless one can make the distinction between the two kinds, this second category does not differentiate between the two styles, because it ignores the reasons for the repetitions, a criticism which can be made of all six of the categories.

The third category, “semantic repetition,” occurs “in those consecutive units in which the diction and the syntax are generally different but the basic idea is the same (1974:114), e.g., “Do not be afraid,” and “Have no fear.” Miletich’s examples are:

-Mentide, el rey, mentides, (13a:35)  
que no dices la verdad; (:36)

“A ne boj me si, d’jete mlado - a nemoj se pripadati, (19:73)  
(Do not be afraid, young boy - and fear not)

These are excellent examples of parallelisms of a type characteristic of some oral traditional poetry, especially that in which couplets are cultivated; and couplets are very common in the oral traditional poetries with which I am familiar. But such parallelisms are carried over into written poetry in those traditions, and hence, as with the first and second categories, “repetitive groups” and “exact repetitions,” this feature does not provide decisive information to distinguish between oral traditional and written style. I do not understand why Miletich avoids calling anaphora anaphora, a parallelism a parallelism, or a whole-line

repetition a whole-line repetition, and prefers periphrases.

The fourth and fifth categories are much alike. They are both concerned with “consecutive recurrence of identical or similar words at the beginning, middle, or final position of different units” (1974:114). “Distinct repetition” differs from “similar repetition” in that the repetition of the word does not have the same meaning as its first occurrence, and may be a different word. Here are examples of “similar repetition”:

Jurado habia *el rey*, (52:35)  
pero alli hablara *el rey* (:37)

-*sinu* Marku govoriti, (5:1)  
“Kako, *sinu*, izide - (:4)

-to say to her *son* Marko,  
“How, *son*, did you get out of -

Molodoj *Dobrynjuška* - (78:18)  
Kak *beret* svoj tugo<sup>2</sup> luk - (:19)  
*Beret* streločki *Dobrynjuška* - (:20)

young *Dobrynjuška* -  
As he *chooses* his taut bow -  
*Dobrynjuška chooses* his bow -

Before commenting on those examples, let me give examples of “distinct repetition”:

los *castellanos* quedaron (78:49)  
se volvio para *Castilla*. (:52)

Da bi *sanak* ti spala - a *sanka* se ne nagledala (28:2)

May you dream a *dream* - and not have surfeit  
of your *dream*.

Sidit *belen'ka* na nej. - [*belodubovoj*] (82:16)  
(:17)



Did you ransom yourself with that bit of money,  
Or did you wrestle your way out with your sharp  
sword,

Handsome hero?"

Marko Kraljević answered his mother:

"Whence would I have a bit of money in prison, mother,  
my dear mother?"

Whence would I have a sharp Damascus sword in  
prison?"

It is not clear why Miletich chose only *sinu* from this abundance of repetitions, nor why he omitted the line (or two lines) intervening between its two occurrences. By so doing he destroyed the chiasmic formation that in part explains the repetition, and is very characteristic of oral traditional composition:

*sinu/domačine:domačine/sinu* (son/master:master/son).

Repetitions are the very heart of the structure of these lines, a traditional structure conceived long ago for the making of oral narrative verse. Not only has Miletich ignored the repetition of *domačine* by omitting lines 3 and 4, but he has also suppressed the repetition of *veseli se* (*veseli ti*) in initial position in the two halves of the line. Surely these are the significant elements for measurement of the quality of a passage or of a poem rather than the arbitrary repetition of a word taken out of context! Here is an English translation of the opening lines of the passage with the repetitions marked:

His old mother began to speak to her *son* Marko:

"Honorable *master*,

*Be merry, master*, may your friends *be merry*. -

How, *son*, did you get out of the Arabian prison,

My Kraljević?"

I am aware, of course, that Miletich has excluded the "refrains" in the *bugarštice* on the grounds that they are "seldom part of the narrative" —a dubious exclusion for a study of style—and that he has limited the space between occurrences of the repetitions to four immediately successive units for the Romance poems and five for the Slavic. A unit consists of eight

syllables for the Romance poems, seven or eight for the *bugarštice*, and four and six for the Slavic decasyllables. The length of a unit in the Russian *byliny* is determined by the moveable break in the line, and only two half-lines or less can separate repetitions in that tradition. It turns out, of course, that these are the natural cola in their respective traditions, and it is not incidental that they are also the basic metrical lengths of *formulas* in those traditions, although “formula” is a word Miletich avoids, even when he is describing one. Moreover, the limiting of the number of units between occurrences of a repetition is entirely arbitrary and leads to problematic exclusions and inclusions, as we have seen above. The limitations that he imposes divorce the units from the composing poet, be he oral traditional or written literary. The length of the units is compatible with the compositional formula, but the “statute of limitations,” if I may use the term, among other things, takes Miletich’s method of analysis out of the realm of the reality of either performance or writing into that of the contrived and artificial.

It is useful to look at the Russian example in this same category, i.e. “similar repetition,” and to compare it in part with the Croatian example. I must give it with full lines, without Miletich’s deletions.

Molodoj *Dobrynjuška* Mikitinič,  
 Kak *beret* svoj tugo<sup>j</sup> luk rozryvčatyj,  
*Beret* streločki *Dobrynjuška* kalenyj,  
 I on pošol hodit’ po gorodu po Kievu.

Young *Dobrynjuška* Mikitinič  
*chooses* his taut carved (?) bow,  
*Dobrynjuška chooses* his well-tried bow,  
 and he begins to walk through the city of Kiev.

The structure of this passage is notable, not because “beret” and “Dobrynjuška” are repeated, but because they are repeated in chiasmic order; as in the previous Croatian example, this structure is apparent only when the refrains are not arbitrarily excluded:

Dobrynjuška/beret:beret/Dobrynjuška,

More especially, the structure of the passage is notable for the

way in which the tradition expresses the essential idea “Dobrynjuška chooses his bow,” using three lines. The first line is devoted entirely to the subject in the nominative, namely, Dobrynjuška, with a formulaic epithet “molodoj” (young) and the hero’s patronymic, Mikitinič. The second line is the predicate, and consists of “beret” (chooses) and “svoj tugo luk” (his taut bow), plus another epithet to complete the line. The essential idea has thus encompassed two lines, with the help of formulaic epithets. The third line repeats the essential idea of the first two: “He chooses” (*beret*) “his bow” (*streločki*) Dobrynjuška, plus another epithet, “tempered” (*kalenyj*), to complete the line. What is important is not the repetition of “beret” and “Dobrynjuška” per se, as Miletich’s method implies, but rather the fact that the repetitions and their position in the line result from the way in which the traditional poet composes his lines. This is oral traditional composition of Slavic verse at its most typical. I do not understand why Miletich has suppressed an epithet in each of the three lines, further distorting the poetics of the passage.

Without knowing the character of each case included in the fourth or fifth categories of Miletich’s scheme, one cannot judge what kind of repetition is involved. One can tell this only when the repetition is seen in the context in which the composing poet put it.

The sixth category, “syntactic repetition,” is recognizable enough as one of the basic patterns in a formula (see Lord 1960:41ff.), but only one, and in itself not indicative of either oral traditional or written style. By itself the “syntactic repetition,” or the “syntactic formula,” as it is often called, or the “structural formula,” as it is also sometimes known,<sup>9</sup> has no significance, therefore, in determining whether any given text is composed in the oral traditional or in the written style.

As we look back at Miletich’s six categories, we note that they are not very useful as they stand, without further analysis, in our search for criteria to be employed in differentiating between oral traditional and written styles. It would appear, therefore, that any typing of styles as “essential” or “elaborate” on the basis of such arbitrary and contrived categories cannot help but be flawed. Nevertheless, we should comment on his types as set forth in the same article that I have been quoting.

First, however, before discussing the “elaborate” and the “essential” styles, Miletich divides his six categories, as outlined

above, into two classes. The first four categories contain repetitions in which an idea is repeated; in the last two the idea is not repeated. He calls the first group the “elaborate” mode, and the second the “essential” mode. In the elaborate mode action, or forward movement, is delayed by repetition, but in the essential mode the forward movement is not interrupted by repetition.

Miletich’s next step, of course, was to analyze the five groups of texts studied in the article in order to determine to which type each belonged. He found that all four genres, that is, Romances, Croatian *bugarštice*, South Slavic decasyllabic narrative poetry, and Russian *byliny*, were “basically essential, or rapid . . . in the manner of communicating information,” but that within them there was a varying tendency to retardation. There was a “fairly high frequency of elaborate style repetitions, over one quarter in the case of both groups of *romances*, and the South Slavic heroic decasyllables, and more than one third for the *bugarštica* and the *bylina*.” He noted further that “the South Slavic decasyllabic poems are highest in essential style units (74.1 per cent), so that their style may be classified as properly essential, with a somewhat lesser tendency toward the elaborate style than the other four groups examined” (1974:116).

In the second article cited above, “Oral-Traditional Style and Learned Literature: A New Perspective,” Miletich applied his method of analysis to six songs from the Karadžić collection as representative of the “oral style texts,” “The Song of Radovan and Milovan” in Kačić-Miošić’s *Razgovor ugodni naroda slovinskoga* as representative of a poem “in the style or the oral song, and the entire second canto of Mažuranić’s *Smrt Smailage Čengića* as representative of “the style of a literary epic.” His choice of poems from Kačić as well as of Mažuranić’s “epic” is somewhat puzzling. “The Song of Radovan” is not typical of Kačić, because its epistolary form stems from the influence of Renaissance Dalmatian literature and its subject matter is very different from the more truly epic poems. It would have been useful to contrast one of Kačić’s narrative poems, which are very abundant in the *Razgovor*, and were written “in the style of the traditional epic songs, and hence are more comparable with Vuk’s songs. Moreover, Mažuranić’s poem, with its variety of meters and poetic styles, is not really “in the style of a literary epic,” because it was heavily influenced by the oral traditional poetry, even if, perhaps, not exactly written “in the style of the oral traditional songs, as



was Kačić's, and it is scarcely to be termed an epic. One would have thought that a better choice as a representative of South Slavic written literary style would have been one of the narrative poems of Petar II Petrović Njegoš (not the *Gorski Vijenac*, which presents the same problems as Mažuranić's *Smrt Smailage Čengića*). If a Croatian work is desired, one might suggest Franjo Marković's romantic epic *Kohan i Vlasta*, or even Petar Preradović's "Prvi ljudi." One of them would be truly typical of Croatian written literary style.

From the analysis of those texts Miletich concluded that "the style of the shorter oral-traditional song in the *junački deseterac* can be distinguished from learned creations by its pronounced retarding tendency resulting from the considerably higher number of elaborate style repetitions" (1978:350-51). These findings, he pointed out, were tentative, and I note that they contradict those in his earlier article in respect to the South Slavic heroic decasyllables. In his first article he used thirteen of Vuk's songs; in the second article he chose six of those thirteen.

It is not easy to see why he chose those particular thirteen songs from Vuk in the first place. Not all of the songs in Vuk's second volume are of the same kind or genre, although they are all in heroic decasyllables. Five of the first six are of a religious nature, only one, the rightly famous "Ženidba Dušanova," is truly heroic. It and one of the religious songs, "Nahod Simeun," are by Tešan Podrugović of Gacko, one of Vuk's best singers. Four of those, including the two Podrugović songs, are among the six in the second article. Of the two other songs in both articles, there is another from Podrugović, "Marko Kraljević i kći kralja arapskoga," and a 53-line Kosovo ballad—and I use the term advisedly, because it consists only of a conversation between the queen and the duke—"Kraljica Milica i Vladeta Vojvoda," from blind Stepanija from Srem, who specialized in short religious songs, which may be of doubtful traditionality. Only a few of the songs Miletich chose belong in a recognizable epic category. His findings, contradictory or not, should not be interpreted as representative of oral traditional epic songs in the Christian tradition in Serbo-Croatian. A fair number of those chosen were probably written by some cleric in the style of the oral traditional songs. Two are religious songs from blind Stepanija, "Sveci blago dijele," and "Časni krsti." Without going into further detail, I find Miletich's choice puzzling and unsatisfactory.<sup>10</sup>

John Miletich was seeking in South Slavic an alternative to the formula which could be used for comparative research in the field of medieval Spanish epic, and which would be applicable even more widely. His ingenuity is to be commended, but I do not think that he has found such an alternative. I am afraid that problems inherent in his method cast doubt on the validity of results obtained by applying it to ancient or medieval texts. Nevertheless, as I have discovered in reviewing the rationale for analyses of formula density in medieval epic, statistical studies may have meaning, even if it is not what one expected them to have. After all, one has been counting *something*. I think, therefore, that it might possibly be useful to identify properly and re-sort some of the components of Miletich's categories, which are themselves the components of his two groups that determine whether the style of a poem be "elaborate" or "essential."

#### Differentiation between Formula and Repetition

One of the subjects that in retrospect I do not believe we have explored enough, that we seem to have taken for granted, or perhaps even to have forgotten entirely, is the difference between a formula and a repetition. Parry paid great attention to this (1930:304):

It is important at this point to remember that the formula in Homer is not necessarily a repetition, just as the repetitions of tragedy are not necessarily formulas. It is the nature of an expression which makes of it a formula, whereas its use a second time in Homer depends largely upon the hazard which led a poet, or a group of poets, to use it more than once in two given poems of a limited length. We are taking up the problem of the Homeric formulas from the side of the repetitions, but only because it is easier to recognize a formula if we find it used a second or a third time, since we can then show more easily that it is used regularly, and that it helps the poet in his verse-making.

What did Parry mean by "the nature of an expression?" The key to that is in the last clause in the above quotation. The formula "helps the poet in his verse-making." It is primarily for

that reason that it is repeated. The “repetition,” on the other hand, is a phrase repeated to call attention to a previous occurrence, for an aesthetic or other purpose. *Formulas do not point to other uses of themselves; they do not recall other occurrences.* It might be said that they embody *all* previous occurrences, and, therefore, not any one other single occurrence.

One of the changes that comes about in the “transitional” stage is that gradually *formulas*, no longer being necessary for composition, give place to true *repetitions*, which are repeated for aesthetic or referential reasons rather than for ease in verse-making. The true formula, extremely complex in practice, yet simple enough in concept, can be illustrated—if illustration be necessary—by the epithets in Homer, which provide a means of expressing an essential idea, such as “Achilleus,” in all the places in the dactylic hexameter in which the ancient Greek traditional poet might have wanted to use it. I can illustrate “repetition” by turning to almost any modern poet in English. Here are lines 9-11 of Robert Frost’s “An Old Man’s Winter Night” :

And having *scared* the cellar under him  
*In clomping* here, he *scared* it once again  
*In clomping* off - and *scared* the outer night

Or from one of Carl Sandburg’s poems:

*Pile* the bodies *high* at Austerlitz and Waterloo!  
*Shovel them under and let me work!*  
*I am the grass; I cover all.*

*And pile them high* at Gettysburg,  
*And pile them high* at Ypres and Verdun!

*Shovel them under and let me work!*  
 Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor  
     What place is this?  
     Where are we now?  
*I am the grass;*  
*Let me work!*

Or the last stanza of Robert Frost’s “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”:

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.  
 But I have promises to keep  
*And miles to go before I sleep,*  
*And miles to go before I sleep.*

A note to the above lines reads: “Frost always insisted that the repetition of the line in the last stanza was not supposed to imply death but only to imply a somnolent dreaminess in the speaker.”<sup>11</sup>

It is clear, then, that the difference between formula and repetition is crucial to oral poetics, and one of the results of not having explored sufficiently the difference between formula and repetition has been that the lines between oral and written poetics have been blurred. There is a different attitude toward repetition in an oral poetics, where repetition is tied to verse-making, not to semantic or contextual reference, or to “aesthetics.” In respect to repetition, oral poetics is different from written poetics *precisely* because in it one is dealing with *formulas*, not “repetitions.”

In translating Homer, for example, exact repetition of the epithets, however desirous it may be, does not reproduce Homeric style except on a very superficial level, which does not take into account the *necessity* of the formulas in Homer and the *absence* of that necessity in the translation.

#### From Oral to Written: What are the Signposts?

In addition to the *density* of formulas in a *transitional* text, one has to consider also *their oral-traditionality* and the *oral-traditionality of the structures or systems* in which they belong.<sup>12</sup> Transition has meaning only if one passes from oral-traditional *diction* and oral-traditional *systems* of formulas to non-traditional diction and non-traditional structures. In order to assess this, however, one must know the traditional elements. The task, then, is to determine what the oral-traditional diction and systems are (or were).

We have enough information in the South Slavic material to make that determination. There is an abundance of pure oral-traditional verse extending over several centuries. With Anglo-Saxon, and some other medieval traditions, we are less fortunate. Nevertheless, there are some guidelines. We have

indicated that what we were measuring in our analyses of formula density was not orality in the absolute, not whether any given text was a fully oral-traditional poem or not, although this was sometimes the case, but the degree of “orality” of that text, judging by its use of traditional formulas, which all seem to agree are characteristic of oral-traditional composition. We can, therefore, talk about formulas that are characteristic of oral-traditional composition in Anglo-Saxon, or any other tradition, only after we have determined a) which repetitions are formulas, and b) which formulas are oral-traditional, insofar as we can do so from the sometimes scanty evidence.

### Conclusion

The study of Oral Literature has increased not only in quantity but also in quality. New collections in areas little cultivated by scholars except those in the particular discipline provide new models, some of which themselves represent a learned tradition of long standing. One can think of the Central Asiatic tradition, for example, from the time of Radloff to the present with Nekljudov, Heissig, and the members of the Bonn Seminar.

Formula studies, always an important ingredient for basic understanding of oral traditional poetry, have matured and become more sophisticated. And the way has been opened up to investigate the details of the creation and life of transitional texts. I have come to realize that, in fact, in such fields as Anglo-Saxon and other medieval poetries, we have been doing just that all along.

The time has come to deepen our comprehension of the role of *tradition* in oral traditional literature, lest its significance be forgotten in the present zeal for synchronic description of performance and contextuality, important though those elements may be. For it is tradition that imbues both the text and the context with a meaning profound and strong enough to demand persistence through time. The new journal *Oral Tradition* will provide a smithy on the anvils of which may be hammered out true perspectives on our present, as well as on our past.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>I am referring particularly to Ruth Finnegan in her book *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context* (1977). She, however, does not by any means ignore text, as do many others in the essentially anthropological school.

<sup>2</sup>I am grateful to Professor Stephen A. Mitchell for providing me with the references to the recent text/context controversy in *Western Folklore*: Jones 1979a, Ben-Amos 1979, Jones 1979b, Georges 1980.

<sup>3</sup>1983. I am most grateful to Professor Opland for taking me last summer to hear praise poets in the Transkei and Ciskei.

<sup>4</sup>See also Webber 1973.

<sup>5</sup>See further Davidson's forthcoming study of formulaic structure in the *Shahnama*, to be published in *Oral Tradition*.

<sup>6</sup>The Ong Festschrift will be the January 1987 issue of *Oral Tradition*.

<sup>7</sup>In "Oral-Formulaic Structure in Old English Elegiac Poetry" (1960:30, 38). His examples are "fela feorhcynna," *Bwf* 2266a and "feorhcynna fela" *Maxims* I, 4 14a. I owe this reference and quotation to Fry 1967:195.

<sup>8</sup>See below for a discussion of this distinction.

<sup>9</sup>See inter alia Russo 1966 and Nagler 1974:7, 11.

<sup>10</sup>The following chart gives the number of the song in Vuk II, its title, and its "author"

1. Sveci blago dijele	slepica Stepanija
13. Nahod Simeun	Tešan Podrugović
17. Časni krsti	Unknown
22. Sveti Savo	Stepanija
23. (opet)	Filip Višnjić
28. Ženidba Dušanova	Tešan Podrugović
48. Carica Milica i Vladeta Vojvoda	slepica Stepanija
54. Marko Kraljević i soko (opet)	Unknown
60. Marko Kraljević i Alil-aga	slepica Živana
63. Marko Kraljević i kći kralja arapskoga	Tešan Podrugović
73. Smrt Marka Kraljevića	Filip Višnjić
80. Smrt vojvode Kajice	Unknown

<sup>11</sup>The verses of Frost and Saadburg are quoted from Ellmann and O'Clair 1973. The note on the last stanza of Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" is note 6 on page 205.

<sup>12</sup>We might add the element of artistic excellence, or aesthetics, because some scholars believe that this is a mark of the non-oral-traditional text. This is a separate subject, however, and should be treated separately as an argument to be discarded after discussion.

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## **The Oral Background of Byzantine Popular Poetry**

**Elizabeth and Michael Jeffreys**

The popular poetry of Byzantium first appears in the form of consistent surviving texts of some size in the middle of the twelfth century, at the courts of the emperors John Komnenos (1118-1143) and Manuel Komnenos (1143-1180).<sup>1</sup> Little or no such poetry seems to survive from the thirteenth century, when Byzantine energies were occupied in the reconquest of Constantinople and other parts of the empire from the forces of the Fourth Crusade. The next preserved examples seem to date from early in the fourteenth century, and the popular poetic tradition then continues through to the end of Byzantium in 1453 and beyond. Insofar as evidence permits us to speak about the places in which this material was composed and written down, it seems that the western-ruled states surviving from the Crusades on Greek lands were at least as fertile ground for its production as the area ruled by Byzantium, under the last dynasty of the Palaiologoi. The total volume is not large, but it covers a number of genres. We shall discuss in the conclusion of this paper the difficult question of the continuity of this tradition in Greece under Turkish rule.

These texts may be regarded for most purposes as the first preserved material of any length in Modern Greek, a language which bears much the same relationship to ancient and medieval Greek as does Italian to ancient and medieval Latin. The linguistic pressures of Byzantium are not dissimilar from the early history of many Western European language groups: the steady development of spoken Greek is hidden from us by the conservatism of writing, which made efforts to keep up the illusion that Greek had not “declined” from its great past—the classical Greek of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. and the “Koine” Greek of the New Testament and the Septuagint version of the Old

Testament. Nevertheless, linguistic pressure of change in popular speech was building up behind a dam of the linguistic censorship of Byzantine education.<sup>2</sup> That dam was first seriously breached in the twelfth century by the popular poetry which is the subject of this article.

Byzantine popular poetry has not been much studied and more rarely still within a useful conceptual framework. Byzantinists may be tempted to regard it with the same contemptuous eye that can be observed among contemporary Byzantine intellectuals on the few occasions when they deign to notice poetry in popular linguistic and metrical forms. The information which may be derived from these poems about Byzantine history and society is quite considerable, but needs analysis of a rather different kind from that appropriate to legal documents or learned historians, and so tends to be discounted as unreliable. This poetic genre is also studied in the first chapters of histories of Modern Greek literature (e.g., Dimaras 1965, Vitti 1971, Politis 1973), and in introductory lectures to university courses in the same subject. In this case the dangers are obvious: it is very difficult to view these poems within a meaningful context, whether that of all Greek literature being produced at the time or the wider context of contemporary European literature.

There is even a problem now of national identification of Greeks with these first products of Modern Greek literature. There has always been some reluctance in Greece, dating from before the Revolution of 1821 which created the Modern Greek state, to accept as an integral part of the Greek heritage the culture of the Byzantine period. For the extreme nationalists, there was a tendency to speak and write in a way which minimized the gap between 1821 and ancient Greece, as if the death of Alexander the Great were one of the last significant events in Greek history before the Revolution. More progressive forces saw in Byzantium the epitome of all that was wrong in the modern Greek state, and preferred to view it as a kind of extension of Roman occupation rather than something essentially Greek (see Fletcher 1977). After all, the Byzantines called themselves Romans and reserved the word "Greek" for ancient pagans. The nature of the popular poems themselves, as we shall discover, does not help in national identification. The epic *Digenis Akritas*, hailed at its discovery as a Greek *Roland* or *Cid*, is ambivalent about its allegiances, since the hero has an Arab father and fights more Christians than



Arabs. Other poems are translations or adaptations of French, or in one case Italian, originals. Worst of all, the *Chronicle of the Morea* is the foundation epic of a Western state on Greek soil, speaking at length of the faithlessness of the Byzantine Greeks who were the main power against which the Moreot principality had to defend itself.

Byzantine popular poetry thus has fallen outside the normal frameworks of literary understanding, being regularly ignored in discussions of European vernacular literature without finding a secure place within a Greek national context. The writers of this article, together with several other students of the genre, have recently attempted a re-evaluation, trying to find ways of developing a framework for studying it and of understanding the purposes of those who chose to compose in it.

The most important element in this re-evaluation is the proposal that we should see in the popular poetry of Byzantium the written remains of a tradition of oral poetry.<sup>3</sup> This statement must be very carefully qualified. We think it most unlikely that any of the surviving texts are the verbatim record of creative oral performances, taken down by the methodology of the “oral dictated text” (see Lord 1953) -though in one or two cases this possibility cannot be excluded, as will be discussed later. We believe, on the other hand, that it is almost impossible to explain many features of the language, meter, and style of this genre of poems without assuming that they derive in a fairly direct way from a language, meter, and style developed by oral poets for use in oral poetry. We would suggest, therefore, that Byzantine popular poetry was produced by means which approximate to those of conventional literature, but in a genre most of whose products were orally composed and disseminated. This genre was the only one available to poets who wished to write in a way which would be immediately intelligible to the uneducated majority of their audiences.

However, before seeking to support this proposal, it is only fair to point out how little direct evidence there is for it and how dependent it is on theoretical arguments by analogy with other oral traditions. Students of medieval Greek can only envy the vast mass of material available to scholars working in medieval French, not the least because of the opportunities it provides for defining the profession of *jongleur*, particularly from the direct statements made within the texts of the *chansons de geste* and by

extrapolation from the practices observable there (see Duggan 1984). Greek evidence of this kind is extremely limited; perhaps the best example is the following from the *Chronicle of the Morea*:

If you desire to hear of the deeds of good soldiers, to learn and be instructed, perhaps you will make progress. If you know letters, start reading; if, on the other hand, you are illiterate, sit down by me and listen. And I hope, if you are sensible, that you will profit, since many of those who have come after them have made great progress because of the stories of those great men of old (lines 1349-55).<sup>4</sup>

Other minstrels' comments in this genre are little more than formalities, like the first words of *Belthandros and Chrysantza*:

Come, listen for a moment, all you young people. I want to tell you some very beautiful stories, a strange, most extraordinary tale (lines 1-3; Kriaras 1955, our trans.).

The pattern of narration set is that of one storyteller to an audience whose interest needs to be aroused. We have no way of checking that this pattern represents the physical reality of performance rather than a convenient narrative fiction.

Nevertheless, the singing of songs seems to be a significant feature of the life described in the songs. Digenis Akritas, for example, sings several songs to his beloved, and takes a musical instrument rather than a weapon when he sets out for adventure (Trapp 1971: Ms E 711-12). Five songs are included in the long text (Ms N) of the *Achilleis*, and we are told that many more are sung in celebration of Achilles' first victory.<sup>5</sup> *Libistros and Rhodamne* too is full of short love songs.<sup>6</sup> In the *Romance of Apollonios of Tyre* the ability to improvise saves the virtue of Apollonios' daughter—though many of the details of the episode derive from the original text of which this is a translation (Wagner 1870: pp. 63-90; 11. 594-97, 601-4). Unfortunately, no Demodokos appears in any of the poems of this genre.

References within the works themselves are not much supported by external references to singers or minstrels within Byzantine society. We may begin with the fact that several

troubadours formed part of the Fourth Crusade and remained in Frankish Greece afterwards. One may mention Raimbaud de Vaqueiras and Conon de Béthune, and a mysterious “Prince de l’Amorée” (see Longnon 1939). We have also noted two references to oral poetry professionals in the Frankish states of Greece—richly clad “juglars” at a ceremony in the court of Thebes for Guy II de la Roche in 1294 and a pair of “menestreaux” sent by Thibout de Cepoys, agent of Charles de Valois, to a wedding among the Catalan mercenaries whom he was trying to use in his master’s interest.<sup>7</sup>

The following list of references concerns singers in a more purely Greek cultural context. It makes no pretensions to completeness, but it is unlikely that it could be more than doubled, say, in length (cp. Beck 1971:50 and Beaton 1980:75-77). Monks during the iconoclast controversy were mocked by the associates of the loathed emperor Constantine V Kopronymos (741-45) to the sound of the kithara, presumably in verse (*Vita*: col. 1116). In the time of Michael III (842-67), an improvised song was used as part of a trick to capture a town (Bekker 1838:72). Next in chronological order comes the most hackneyed of these references, the complaint of Arethas of Caesarea about the “Paphlagonians” (meaning “windbags,” not a geographical reference), who put together songs about the achievements of famous men and go round houses singing them for money (Kougeas 1913-14:239-40; Beaton 1980:77). John Tzetzes in the mid-twelfth century tells the same story of his own day (Leone 1968:III, 11. 218-67). Neophytos, a contemporary Cypriot hermit, heard a singer singing what sounds very like a modern folk song of exile.<sup>8</sup> Niketas Choniates tells us of a song improvised by Andronikos Komnenos in 1185, as he tried to win over the servants of his successor who had captured him. He sang in alternation with his wife and mistress (van Dieten 1975:348). Maximos Planudes in his “Dialogue on Grammar” says that laments in fifteen-syllable verse were sung by “Ionian” women at funerals (Bachmann 1828:98). During the civil war between Andronikos II and III, Nikephoros Gregoras tells us of a journey he made through an area of terrifying ravines. Some of his company were singing of the “deeds of men” and the ravines re-echoed antiphonally, in a way he found appropriate (Schopen 1829:vol. 1, 377). Gregoras later writes of the sequel of a famous dream of John VI Kantakouzenos (1347-54): a creator of songs who was present sang a prophecy (*ibid.*, vol. 2,

705-6; cp. Magoun 1955). A horoscope from Trebizond (1336) promises prosperity to singers in their composition to win their audience's attention, prophesying that December will bring them eloquence, and probably suggesting that they were improvisers (Lambros 1916). Further information from an unpublished treatise of Gregoras had recently been reported by A. F. van Gemert, together with a published comment by the Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos (van Gemert and Bakker 1981-82). The conclusion to be drawn from the two passages is that at the time of writing (1353) songs of lament, accompanied by both wind and stringed instruments, could be heard every day in Constantinople. Michael Apostolis, in a letter written on the Dalmatian coast in 1466-67, is reminded of Cretan funeral and festival customs when he hears antiphonal singing (Noiret 1889:80).

However, even though these lists may be lengthened somewhat, it is most unlikely that they will ever be fully convincing about the existence of an oral tradition in Greek lands. The time-span covered is long, and the geographical area wide. Although the censorship of Byzantine education can be used to explain the removal of all non-learned material from Greek writing, it is an insufficient excuse to prevent a firm negative conclusion. In our search for direct signs of singers and their songs, we have found little evidence, scattered over different times, places, and kinds of song and singer. This serious deficiency demands in compensation really convincing evidence of other kinds to make the case for the existence of an oral tradition.

The first part of that case derives from a consideration of the meter which is employed in nearly all popular Byzantine poetry, and its connection with the first appearance of poems consistently written in Modern Greek. It is usually called the fifteen-syllable or *dekapentasyllabos*, less often the political verse (a name derived from a puzzling label given by some metrical scholars of the Byzantine period).<sup>9</sup> The meter is sometimes called the national meter of Modern Greece, because it has dominated Greek folk-song since at least the last century of Byzantium and probably long before, and has been used by most Modern Greek poets, often for their solemn poetry on national themes. We have spoken above of a general lack of national identification among contemporary Greeks with Byzantine popular poetry. That indifference does not extend to its meter or, of course, to its language.

It is no accident that language and meter are extremely

closely connected in the manuscript evidence available to us. The overwhelming majority of Modern Greek surviving in complete texts from the Byzantine period is in fifteen-syllable metrical form. Prose and other metrical patterns are both equally rare. It is no exaggeration to say that Modern Greek first broke the dam of linguistic censorship in this metrical form: it is logical, therefore, to examine the social and educational connotations of the form to see why it was so successful (see further M. Jeffreys 1974).

The first observation to be made is that the metrical form was used for writing at more learned levels of language well before the mid-twelfth century, the date of the first Modern Greek vernacular poetry. The first dated specimens of the verse in which identification is secure were written in the year 913, a lament for the death of the emperor Leo VI in respectable Byzantine Greek.<sup>10</sup> It is interesting that the text is not purely fifteen-syllable: there are some half-lines too, which suggest that the form is not yet fully stable. Numerous attempts have been made to trace the earlier history of the verse, but none is fully convincing (summary in M. Jeffreys 1974:146ff.; see also Politis 1981, Lavagnini 1983, and Luzzatto 1983). This metrical shape, for example, is certainly common among the multifarious rhythmical patterns of the hymn called the *kontakion* (Koder 1983), but it is difficult to say whether any conclusion—even the most tentative—can be based on that fact, granted the possibility of coincidence. Origins for the fifteen-syllable pattern have been suggested in a variety of different periods and in Latin as well as Greek tradition. It is certainly striking that the most common rhythmical form of Latin medieval verse is also a fifteen-syllable form with a reversed accent pattern (trochaic rather than iambic), and the second and third most common stress meters of medieval Latin and Greek are similarly mirror-images, with the same syllable numbers—a twelve-syllable and an eight-syllable pattern (M. Jeffreys 1974:191-94).

However, for those who place emphasis on surviving texts, there exists a *prima facie* case that the fifteen-syllable was invented at a linguistic and educational level above that of the vernacular poems, and that it spread downwards and outwards from the social and educational center of Byzantium: from the imperial court in the tenth century to folk song in the fourteenth, when it first becomes possible to make secure predictions about the form of Greek folk song (see, e.g., Politis 1970:560-63, Koder 1972, and Baud-Bovy 1973). But to anybody with a knowledge of

medieval society in general and of Byzantine society in particular, such a judgment is self-evidently dangerous. Byzantine culture was centralized to a most disturbing degree around the city of Constantinople and the imperial court, and the popular culture of the countryside was systematically excluded from its written records at all stages, with very few exceptions. We know of no rival metrical pattern likely to attract the ear of the illiterate or half-literate Byzantine between, say, the sixth century A.D., when linguistic changes must have completed the destruction of popular appreciation of ancient meters based on long and short syllables, and the period of demonstrable popular dominance of the fifteen-syllable in the fourteenth century (M. Jeffreys 1981). How are we to react to this gap? Should we assume that folk song ceased to exist? It is obviously preferable to test the alternative theory that the *prima facie* case which we mentioned above is merely one of many demonstrations of the nature of Byzantine culture and society, that evidence is preserved in the center long before the periphery, perhaps even that the culture of the countryside had to be accepted and written down at the highest social and educational levels before there was any chance of it being preserved in a peripheral, rural form. The distribution of the evidence may thus tell us nothing about the nature of the meter and its origins.

If one reads carefully the surviving examples of the verse from the tenth to the twelfth century in the different varieties of learned Byzantine Greek, one may find some support for this point of view. When, for example, the verse is used by some of the capital's most pedantic *literati*, there is often a disclaimer or an apology. Let John Tzetzes, the most pedantic of all, speak on their behalf, in his *Theogony*, a simple mythological handbook in fifteen-syllable verse addressed to the sister-in-law of Manuel Komnenos:

You want to know of the Greek and Trojan generals: anything more is redundant, full of labour and effort—both for the listeners, and still more so for the writers, particularly when they have written in playful verses. For a mind which is carrying out a great task will often grow numb, when in matters where it should win praise it seems rather to be providing faults for its detractors, who have no regard for the fact of

*oikonomia*. Indeed, forbearing to write the superfluous facts of heroic genealogy in the writing of apes (?), I am putting down here clearly the most important points. The rest needs time and hexameters and, more important still, a language that will bring pleasure (496-508).<sup>11</sup>

Tzetzēs here connects the verse form of his handbook with slapdash, simplistic work, and feels he needs to defend himself against those who will attack his choice of medium. The word *oikonomia*, it becomes plain in other passages, involves a compromise between the ambition of the author and the demands for simplicity imposed by his patron (M. Jeffreys 1974:151-53).

Learned works in the fifteen-syllable form cluster largely into three groups, those connected with imperial ceremonial, education, and religion (*ibid*:173-76). But the more one reads them the more importance one gives to a fourth element, the vernacular and popular, represented at the same period by the first Modern Greek vernacular poems of the twelfth century. The poems connected with imperial ceremonial were designed to appeal to a large popular audience, and also to communicate, in some cases at least, with members of the imperial family who were not educated to the highest standards.<sup>12</sup> It was easier to write intelligibly in this verse than in prose, for prose always had to conform to the rules of ancient prose stylistics. The fifteen-syllable had no ancient models, and the writer could improvise with his own choice of style and language. The poems connected with education seem to involve a good deal of rote learning: grammatical rules and even dictionaries were put into the fifteen-syllable. What metrical form could be more likely to stimulate the memory than the meter of a popular oral tradition? The religious poems are often mystical or penitential in character: in the first case the inspired words fall from the poet's lips regardless, almost, of metrical form and in the second the emphasis is on simplicity and honesty of utterance.<sup>13</sup> It would be difficult, for example, to express penitence in polished antique hexameters. In all these cases we would suggest that the reason for the choice of the fifteen-syllable is likely to have been its status as the meter of a contemporary oral tradition of narrative songs.

Although this metrical discussion has been somewhat compressed, we hope that its general pattern has been clear. To

sum up: the fifteen-syllable meter which has dominated Modern Greek folk song since the fourteenth century at least made its debut in the Modern Greek vernacular in the mid-twelfth century, and is the metrical form of almost all early examples of the vernacular. The origins of the verse seem to go far back into the history of Byzantium, perhaps well beyond its first appearance in the early tenth century. During its written history between the tenth and twelfth centuries, it was used by some of Byzantium's driest intellectuals. However, this choice of meter is usually imposed on them by a patron who wants the commissioned work to be comprehensible. The writers regularly complain and expect to be attacked for choosing a meter with such low educational prestige. In the majority of cases, of course, the meter is used without explicit comment about the writers' attitudes. Here the genres in which the poets write are compatible with the possibility that the meter was simultaneously used in a popular oral tradition.

The discussion is not a comfortable one for a sober historian, even the historian of literature. On the one hand, there is the complete absence of direct evidence for vernacular fifteen-syllable verse before the twelfth century and for any consistent use of the verse before the tenth century. On the other hand, we may set the determined censorship of Byzantine literature against all material regarded as below an acceptable linguistic level. But above all, there is the impossibility of a void of many centuries in verse expression with meters intelligible to the uneducated. Many Byzantine specialists would accept that the most economical solution is the assumption that oral fifteen-syllable verse existed earlier, that it inspired imitation in learned language from the tenth century onwards and more direct imitation in the vernacular from the twelfth century. Perhaps the strongest single piece of evidence is a ceremonial song of four verses from the official Byzantine ceremonial, which cannot be dated earlier than the mid-tenth century *Book of Ceremonies* in which it is contained, but is described there as a customary part of the ceremony. In spite of its fairly formal language, this song has struck many commentators as a rural folk song only slightly adapted for its ceremonial role. What is more, the song belongs to the genre of calendar songs for spring — the *chelidonismata* — which is acknowledged as constituting the strongest traditional similarity between ancient and modern Greek folklore.



See, the sweet spring is again returning, bringing joy, health, life and well-being, valor from God to the emperors of the Romans, and God-given victory over their enemies.<sup>14</sup>

Fortunately, the hypothesis of a tradition of oral poetry in Byzantium depends much less on the general considerations about the history of its meter than on analysis of the poems themselves, to which we must now turn. Our first task is to remove from the argument two very promising groups of poems, the oldest in the tradition.

The epic, or epic-romance, of *Digenis Akritas* was the Byzantine poem which first caught Albert Lord's eye, and he devoted to it some rather inconclusive pages in *The Singer of Tales* (1960:207-20; cp. Lord 1954). The material is promising: six manuscripts, all showing unmistakable elements of the same story but with very large variations between them; anonymity up to the two last-written of the manuscripts, which give the names of their seventeenth-century redactors; clear references in the story to wars of the ninth and tenth centuries, and a world-view which must predate the Turkish overrunning of central Anatolia in the eleventh century; a society which is at times convincingly heroic; one or two non-Christian supernatural interventions; and the survival of the names Digenis and Akritas (more usually Akritis) in Modern Greek folk song.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, the poem is nearly as disappointing to students of oral poetry as it has been to Greek nationalists, as we have seen.

Under close examination it becomes plain that four of the six manuscripts cannot be oral variants, but are the product of a purely literary attempt to combine all available material and to tell the whole story of Digenis (Trapp 1971:28-29, M. Jeffreys 1975:163-201). The remaining two, G(rottaferrata) and E(scorial), represent the two sources of that compilation text. G has an appearance of accuracy and organization, which is unfortunately combined with a flat, anti-poetic quality of language and style that make it difficult to read. It has learned elements which it is hard to imagine being successful in an oral performance. E, though it is not without learned features, has a freshness and directness which would appear much easier to translate into oral terms. Its textual transmission, however, is extremely untidy. Until recently, it was accepted that this untidiness was the result of dictation from oral

performance, since some of the distortion consisted of syllables extra to the basic fifteen of the verse, a phenomenon which seemed to represent some of the performance features of contemporary Greek folk song. This idea has been attacked and probably disproved, in several recent studies, and the textual problems have been approached in more conventional and systematic ways (Karayanni 1976, Chatziyakoumis 1977, Alexiou 1979 and 1983, Beaton 1980 and 1981a).

We are left, then, with the learned and tidy G, dated around 1300, and the less learned and more untidy E, probably written in the second half of the fifteenth century. Much of the history of scholarship on *Digenis Akritas* may be seen as a contest between partisans of these two manuscripts, each claiming one version as more authentic, more original, and older than the other. Recent studies have shown that both preserve authentic early information.<sup>16</sup> Although the texts are very different, there is enough common material to indicate that the two versions have at some stage been in close contact (e.g., M. Jeffreys 1975 and Alexiou 1982). There is still much work to do in defining the nature of that contact,<sup>17</sup> the degree of learned influence (borrowings from written texts) in both versions, and the vexed question of a hypothetical original for both surviving versions, whether it may have been in oral or written form, whether (if written) its language level was closer to the simple but learned level of G or the popular level of E with its scatter of learned elements. Discussion is at present impeded by the fact that for some of the participants the ideal kind of original text and subsequent transmission, with connotations of authenticity and reliability, should be oral, while for others it should be written.

Another interesting question is the relationship of the two halves of the poem. The first half is centered on the story of Digenis' father, an Arab emir who converts to Christianity. This part of the poem has a comparatively structured plot and contains most of the references to the frontier wars of the ninth and tenth century; its tone is that of comparatively realistic historical epic. The second half of the poem, which recounts the adventures of Digenis himself, is a sequence of ill-connected heroic episodes with a romantic, otherworldly atmosphere, including unexpected supernatural happenings. Digenis himself, whose heroic prowess is used to keep the peace by defeating bandits who are Christian, seems to have no relevance to the history of the Euphrates border

of Byzantium, which was one of uninterrupted hostility and almost uninterrupted war between Christian and Moslem. He does, however, read to us like the hero of a much-told poem long held in oral tradition. A consensus appears to be forming around the idea that the creator of the whole poem took a pre-extant oral poem about the emir and appended to it an unrealistic pacifist mission, taking as its hero one who was Digenis, that is, born of the two races: "At some moment between the tenth and probably the early twelfth centuries a single gifted individual must have conceived the idea of a twice-born hero as a symbol for the rapprochement of two warring empires, and grafted it on to the traditional frontier stories of Akrites" (Beaton 1981a:21; cp. Beck 1966:137-46). This sequence of events seems to the writers of this report unlikely. The pacifist vision is noble, but apparently unparalleled during the period. We would prefer to see the story of Digenis as the original. We make the hypothesis that a hero called Digenis is more likely to have demanded an emir for a father than vice versa, and that the connection between the two halves is likely to have been based on the pre-existence of an oral poem with Digenis as its hero. We have therefore suggested a much earlier situation in which the story could have arisen (M. Jeffreys 1978).

Whatever the genesis of *Digenis Akritas*, it seems that its present texts, G and E, are not susceptible to the most basic method of oral poetry research, that is, to formulaic analysis. After Lord's efforts in *The Singer of Tales*, we may report other investigations by Beaton (1981a:12-16, 1981b), confirmed by some preliminary unpublished sampling of our own. The results are certainly not negative, but far less positive than those from later texts which we discuss below. We are convinced that *Digenis Akritas*, in some form, spent centuries in oral tradition, and it seems likely from evidence which we will present that that oral tradition included a high level of formulas, as well as some idiosyncratic linguistic features. It is disappointing that neither G nor E has preserved these oral features intact.

The most favored milieu in recent publications for the writing (or writing down) of both versions of *Digenis Akritas* is the Comnenian court of the mid-twelfth century (Oikonimides 1979, E. Jeffreys 1980)-which is also the date of the first independent reference to the text. This occurs in the Ptochoprodromic poems (Hesseling and Pernot 1910), a group of satirical writings attached

to the name of one of the greatest *literati* of the time, Theodoros Prodromos, in which he calls himself Ptochoprodromos, “Penniless Prodromos.” In fact, this attribution is probably a contemporary fiction, since the poems use the fifteen-syllable at a vernacular language level in a strikingly different metrical way from the genuine learned fifteen-syllables of Theodoros himself (H. and N. Eideneier 1978:1-7, Hörandner 1982). The tone of the poems themselves has been compared to that of the Goliardic Archpoet. The subjects are varied and lively: the poet complains about his overbearing wife, about poverty, about the poor rewards available for learning and, in the persona of a young novice, about monastic exploitation of the monks by their abbots.

We would be surprised if there is anything from popular tradition in these subjects or their treatment. It is noticeable that the poet seems in control of the linguistic medium he is using, at one moment producing lines which are purer reflections of contemporary Greek than many of the poems which were to follow, at the next, and particularly when addressing a powerful, usually imperial, patron, he raises the language level to a respectful formality. Phrases are repeated in a way which may be formulaic, but the repetitions are much too few to constitute a system as we shall find it later. These poems seem to us the work of a court poet, who is writing to exploit the vernacular tastes of the Comnenian aristocracy (who were, after all, connected with Western noble families prominent in patronage of other vernaculars; see M. Jeffreys 1981:110-11; E. Jeffreys 1980:468-72). The poet may well have been expert in the writing of learned fifteen-syllables for ceremonial purposes; here he added personal themes and vernacular Greek, imitating contemporary oral tradition from the outside without being seriously touched by any of its formal constraints. The same judgment may be made of other twelfth-century experiments in popular language—the *Poem from Prison* of Michael Glykas, the *Spanas* poem of conventional advice (though there may be more formulas here) and the *Eisiterioi for Agnes of France*.<sup>18</sup>

The thirteenth century seems to be barren of such material, but the fourteenth is quite rich. Much had changed in the Byzantine world since the powerful, confident days of the Comnenians. The last quarter of the twelfth century combined defeat at the hands of the Anatolian Turks with a series of civil wars. The thirteenth century opened with the capture of

Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade, the most devastating psychological blow to Byzantium before the end of its history in 1453. The imperial throne was held by the Count of Flanders, the Marquis of Montferrat became king of Salonika, many islands and towns became the possessions of the Republic of Venice, a Burgundian noble became Duke of Athens and Thebes, and the Morea, or Peloponnese, fell under the control of knights from Champagne. The three Greek fragments of the Empire which remained-Epirus, Nicea, and Trebizond-naturally became obsessed with the past, with the inheritance of the name of Rome and of the language of Homer and of the classical period. Gone was the confidence of the mid-twelfth century, when Byzantium, like France and England, could experiment with breaking the linguistic and literary forms which linked them with the legitimacy of the past. The linguistic and cultural censorship was reimposed.

After a century of Frankish control, lands like the Morea or Crete had become societies with two parallel cultures, the native Greek and the superimposed Western forms (see Jacoby 1975 and 1979, Topping 1977). Though our sources tend to stress the legal and even cultural distinction of the two races, we may assume (and even find some evidence for) considerable interpenetration. This is, in our opinion, the best framework in which to view the first fourteenth-century poem which we wish to discuss, the *Chronicle of the Morea*. We remarked earlier on its strong anti-Byzantine prejudices, remarkable in a work written in Greek, but we have no doubt that Greek was the language in which the poem was first composed, and have supported our opinion at considerable length elsewhere.<sup>19</sup> In a multi-cultural society like the Morea, it is sterile to debate the question whether the poet was Greek, French, or of mixed race, but he must have been working under the patronage of the French nobles. For them, the whole hierarchy of Greek learning would be unknown, or meaningless. A poet whom they patronized would have to be intelligible-to them, with the knowledge of spoken Greek which many of them must have acquired, and to the Moreot population, who were to be enthused with patriotism for their young state by listening to the story of its history. The taboos of learned literature would only build barriers. We may expect, therefore, an anti-Byzantine document in a style and language of genuine Byzantine oral poetry, a text which reflects the Greek reality in a French state far more accurately than would be possible in a Byzantine state, with its

inevitable censorship. This is, in fact, what we find.

The *Chronicle of the Morea* is a highly formulaic poem. Its earliest and best manuscript, H (in Copenhagen) has been fully analyzed for formulas by the use of computer techniques, and was found to have 31.7% of formulaic half-lines which were identical or varied only in a carefully defined list of insignificant ways (M. Jeffreys 1973:163-95). Allowing a rather looser definition of the formula (but no looser than is often used in formulaic studies), the percentage rises to 38.4%. These figures are almost meaningless on their own; however, they acquire meaning when compared to the analysis of another poem in the same fifteen-syllable meter, though in a rather more formal language, the *Alexander Poem* (ed. Reichmann 1963). This work is dated certainly within the same century as the *Chronicle of the Morea*, perhaps closer than that. By the same definitions of the formula, the *Alexander* gives statistics of 9.4% and 12.8%, respectively. It should be stressed that these statistics refer to what is often called "straight formula," not to "passages of the same type" (the dotted underlinings of Milman Parry's tables of repetitions) which we regard as useful in the analysis of an established oral tradition but of little use in the confirmation of the existence of that tradition. In case there is any value in cross-linguistic comparisons, it is worth reporting the results of similar studies of Old French conducted by Joseph Duggan (1966), whose methodology played an important role in fixing the parameters for our own investigations. The percentage of formulas found in the *Chronicle* puts it in the middle of the *chansons de geste*, while the *Alexander* is less repetitious than the romances which Duggan has used as control poems.

The kinds of repetitions found, as in most non-Homeric traditions, are rather disappointing for those who have read Parry's exciting list of Homeric formulas. The most common formulas in a published list of 63 which are repeated eight or more times are simple names of Moreot barons, given in a simple form which fills the relevant half-line. Next come some toponyms and some simple phrases and clauses like "great and small," "with the army he had with him," or "that was his name." Among the less common items on the list a more prominent place is taken by verbal phrases: "and he said to him," "he informed them," and "they rejoiced greatly" (M. Jeffreys 1973:178-81). Most of the phrases have little more to recommend them as formulas than the mere fact of repetition: they are simple ideas expressed in straightforward

language. Chief among the small number of exceptions to this rule are a few frequent formulas, most of them found also in other fourteenth-century texts, which are expressed in grammatical and syntactical forms notably more archaic than the main body of the text. Some of them, curiously, have survived as fossilized archaic phrases into modern spoken Greek. A certain amount of dissension has grown up around these. Mohay (1974-75) and H. Eideneier (1982) regard them as proof of archaic influence on this genre of texts. We prefer to see in them some sign of the length of the oral tradition with which the poems are connected, and its importance in the history of the development of the modern language.

This strongly positive evidence must be supplemented by discussion of other tests regularly made of oral and oral-influenced poetry (M. Jeffreys 1973:195). The *Chronicle* is anonymous. A large proportion of its lines are end-stopped, and enjambement within the phrase or clause is rare. There are some signs of marked pauses for a performer to take a rest at fairly regular intervals. We have already seen that the poet's avowed purpose is to tell the stories of the heroes of the Fourth Crusade, especially those prominent in the conquest and organization of the Moreot principality. Since the date usually set for the composition of the *Chronicle* is in the 1320's, none of the events described in detail is more than 130 years old. However, the *Chronicle* is full of errors of fact which may be detected by comparing it with other, conventional historical sources, while it retains an easy familiarity with several aspects of Moreot life which other sources ignore-particularly those connected with the feudal organization of the principality. It seems very likely that it was based largely on oral sources (Jacoby 1968:182-83, M. Jeffreys 1975b:325-26).

On the other hand, an almost negative report must be given about elements of oral organization longer than the formula, that is, the motifs and themes which loom so large in discussions of Homeric oral poetry and several medieval traditions. The parallelism of wording used at the deaths of the *Chronicle's* main characters approaches the status of a theme (lines 2441-67, 2752-57, 7213-39, 7753-810). Equally, there is considerable parallelism in structure between two major scenes between noble captives and their captors, that of the Moreot prince William II (lines 4092-191), and that of the Byzantine Megas Domestikos (lines 5466-575). There are subtle contrasts here redounding to

the credit of the Moreot leader; they could be regarded as straightforward literary parallelism or as the sophisticated use of an oral thematic pattern. But it is clear that these features are exceptions and not the rule. The poem is not regularly organized by thematic structures, and as such seems to diverge from the products of several other medieval oral traditions. This fact must be given due weight in discussion of the nature of oral influence on the text.

Equally, the text which survives (we use ms H, which is the oldest and clearly the best) describes itself regularly as a book and the poet refers to his own activity as writing. There are in fact pairs of formulas which can be used with either the specific "write" or with the ambiguous "tell," which could as well refer to reading aloud or pure oral narration: "the one I tell you"/"the one I write for you," for example, or "I am telling you the truth"/"I am writing you the truth." Even cross-references take on formulaic form: the pair "Earlier in my book"/"Later in my book" are used a total of six times.<sup>20</sup> This confusion is not unique to the *Chronicle*: in the *Achilleis*, which we shall speak of later, it reaches the extreme form of repeating three times the phrase, "And what tongue would be able to write in detail. . . ?" ,<sup>21</sup> a line which could survive only at a time of transition and could not have stood for a moment against the ordinary critical judgment appropriate to purely oral or purely written poetry.

Before pronouncing a conclusion on the status of the *Chronicle*, we must deal with another factor, but one where it is impossible to summarize the results of a published study because that study has not yet been written. Our preoccupation derives from the lesser-known half of the work of Milman Parry on Homer, that which has to do with Homer's language. In work which culminated in his "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making. II The Homeric Language as the Language of an Oral Poetry" (1932), Parry showed that his oral theories could solve with great precision and elegance the problem of the Homeric mixture of forms, including some usually identified with the Arcado-Cyprian and Aeolic dialects, together with the Ionic which was the spoken language of the milieu in which the poems reached their preserved forms. Scholars before Parry had looked for an area in which these three dialects may all have been present at the same time, but were beginning to realize that the hexameter must have a role in the way in which the dialects were combined.



Parry's solution, simplified to its essential mechanisms, was as follows. A poet working in an oral-formulaic tradition like the Homeric and with an inflected language like Homeric Greek needs not only formulaic patterns of expression for one grammatical case or one verbal tense, but a flexible system which reflects the changing demands of the case and tense inflections of the language. Homeric ships, for example, tend to be "equal" in the genitive singular and "black" in the dative singular, for purely linguistic reasons: a black ship in the genitive would break the meter. This system is complex and subtle, and must have needed long practice in a young singer. But what would happen when the language changed, for one of a number of possible demographic reasons, or perhaps simply because of the passage of time? Where the new linguistic form is metrically identical, the new would gradually replace the old. But where the new form is such as to break the formula, the poets would have a difficult choice: either remake the formula from the beginning or preserve the archaism. The evidence of the Homeric language suggests that the latter course was often followed in that tradition. It was a long tradition, and in some cases the language seems to have changed twice; as a result one may find in Homer three different forms of the same case of the same noun—one the natural spoken form of the poet at the moment when the poem reached its final form, and two archaisms, preserved for metrical reasons to perform two different roles within the formulaic system and the hexameter line. This part of Parry's work has never, to our knowledge, been seriously challenged in principle.

The relevance of this parallel to Byzantine popular poetry may be established by a quotation from the most authoritative summary history of the medieval Greek language (which recommends, it must be said, a different solution to the problem from that proposed here):

The existence in early vernacular literature of so many alternative verbal forms poses problems to which at present we can give no answer. The purist forms may be eliminated as due to scholarly and literary influence. But did *-oun* and *-ousi*, *-eton* and *-otan* really coexist in living speech? They were certainly living forms in different parts of the Greek-speaking world. This brings before us the problem of the origin of the

common spoken language of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Does it go back to a common spoken language of at any rate the urban population in late Byzantine times, which is reflected, however imperfectly, in the language of the early vernacular poetry? Or do these poets write in an artificial amalgam of forms belonging to different dialects, which they have heard on the lips of uneducated speakers? In other words, is their poetry a kind of incompetent attempt to imitate living speech by men whose only familiar mode of expression was the literary language? To answer a blunt 'yes' or 'no' to any of these questions would be to over-simplify the matter (Browning 1983:82).

The author uses the *Chronicle of the Morea* more than any other Byzantine text to show the complexity and range of the linguistic macaronism of the period. To explain the observed practice, he reminds us that the poet may well be a Hellenized Frank: "Perhaps they [the variety of forms] were genuine alternatives in the language spoken by the writer. But it is more likely that he is using a mixed language, the result rather of a lack of feeling for the language than of conscious effort to raise his style above that of everyday speech" (*ibid*:74). We do not find it easy to believe in this Hellenized Frenchman with a defective feeling for Greek who has left a poem which is a kind of museum of all the various Greek linguistic forms used in the Middle Ages.

The language of these poems has been of interest in the question of the history of the Greek language, the battle between supporters of the vernacular *dimotiki* level of the language and those of the purist *katharevousa*, which has only very recently been settled in favor of the former. In the years around the end of the last century Yannis Psycharis, the linguist, novelist, and passionate supporter of the *dimotiki*, spent many years charting the development of the language of these poems, which he thought was the oral vernacular of Byzantium at the time, the unwritten history of the *dimotiki*. He found that there was a real development from earlier to later, with the percentage of early forms being high in poems dated early in this genre, and later forms dominating at the end of the period in a remarkably regular way.<sup>22</sup> His opponent Georgios Chatzidakis, from among the

supporters of *katharevousa*, showed, however, that whatever Psycharis was measuring it was not the development of the spoken language. By assembling all of the other available evidence for the vernacular of the time, he was able to make a convincing case that the changes from one form to another in Psycharis' tables gave an apparent date for linguistic change far too late to reflect accurately the real development of the spoken language. Several of the forms which, according to Psycharis, increase in numbers during the fourteenth century and become dominant only towards its end, were probably already the primary, even the only, forms used in vernacular speech in some areas in the twelfth century (Chatzidakis 1892). In this statement of the linguistic problem, one last point should be made: there is no Byzantine popular poem with the specific characteristics of any Modern Greek dialect, though it is likely that some features, at least, of those dialects had developed by the fourteenth century (Browning 1983:126).

A full proof that the mixed language of these texts is an oral poetic *Kunstsprache*, like that of Homer, will be very arduous, and can certainly not be attempted here. It will be necessary to examine, with detailed statistics, at least a score of the linguistic variations found in these texts, updating Psycharis' tables and fitting them into a complex framework of proof. A good deal of work is also needed to establish the history of each variation from all other available evidence, following the work of Chatzidakis. The following sample is offered as a sketch of the general lines that the argument will take.

We must begin from a description of the fifteen-syllable verse, which, in contrast to the Homeric hexameter, is a rather simple meter. It is based on syllable numbers and stress accents like English metrics, unlike ancient Greek prosody. Each line is divided by an invariable break after eight syllables. Each of the resultant half-lines is regulated in accent position towards its end: in the first, a word-accent must fall on the sixth or eighth syllable (of the eight), or on both, while in the second half-line, it must fall on the sixth of the seven syllables, the fourteenth of the whole line. The remaining word accents of the line nearly all fall on even-numbered syllables, confirming the underlying iambic rhythm. Most of the exceptions, the word accents on odd-numbered syllables, fall on the first and ninth syllables of the line, making the opening two syllables of each half-line metrically unregulated (Koder 1969, vol. 1:87-94; Hörandner 1974:128-33):

	x	x	(o)	(/)	(o)	/	o	(/)							
or	x	x	(o)	(/)	(o)	(/)	o	/	x	x	(o)	(/)	(o)	/	o
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15

A moment's examination of this table will show that one syllable, accented or not, added to the seven syllables of the second half-line will produce an acceptable first half-line, and vice versa with one syllable removed. Thus the simplest pattern of usefulness to an oral poet which one could imagine would be two noun- or verb-forms equivalent in every way except that one would have an extra syllable at the end. If the accents are in the right place, the longer form could then be used at the end of the first half-line and the shorter form at the end of the second. We should like to propose that much of the diversity of language in poems like the *Chronicle of the Morea* may be explained in this way, in fact that this diversity is a practical working system for composition in the fifteen-syllable.

Let us take the first of the examples of macaronism quoted from Browning's description above. Third person plural verb forms ending in unaccented *-oun* and *-ousi* are found in the *Chronicle of the Morea* as alternative terminations for the present indicative active and both forms of the active subjunctive. In general terms, the *-ousi* ending is that of ancient Greek, the *-oun* ending that of Modern Greek. Examples of *-oun* can be found in the Egyptian papyri before they peter out in the seventh century, and Byzantine grammatical treatises warn that it should be avoided. On the other hand, the *-ousi* ending is found in several peripheral modern dialects, particularly those of Crete and Cyprus (Browning 1983:6; cp. 1976). It is occasionally found, apparently *metri causa*, in folk songs from other areas.

In ms H of the *Chronicle of the Morea* both these forms are used systematically. In fact, if one disregards the nature of the verb-forms concerned (whether, for example, they are indicative or subjunctive) and merely collects examples of the terminations, it is possible to find as many as 59 stems from 53 different verbs which show examples of both alternative endings, as well as many more which give examples of only one of the forms. In the case of the 59 stems, one may find 280 examples in all using *-ousi* and 491

using *-oun*. Now the *-ousi* ending would fit well at the end of the first half of the line and *-oun* at the end of the second, and we do, in fact, find a number of phrases adapted for both halves of the line by the use of this convenient variation.

The next stage of the argument involves an attempt to show that one alternative form or the other is used in the poem partly or completely because of its metrical characteristics, like an Aeolic form in Homer. In the case that we have chosen as an example, it is obviously desirable to isolate as many as possible of the forms ending in *-ousi* at the end of the first half of the line, though there are other possible kinds of metrical usefulness too complex to explain and justify here. It so happens that the *-ousi* form, though much more restricted in its use than the *-oun* form, cannot be shown to be an archaism to the poet of the *Chronicle*. The reasons are probably two: first, that the comparatively simple and relaxed form of the fifteen-syllable leaves the poet greater scope for initiative than does the hexameter, and so allows the use of archaic forms away from the limited situations which have forced their preservation within the poet's linguistic repertoire; second, that the *-ousi* form may not have been seen purely as an archaism, since it may still in the fourteenth century have been in use in wider areas of the Greek world than now.<sup>23</sup>

The example chosen is of average value in the proof of the oral genesis of the linguistic mixture of these texts. Of the various sets of linguistic alternatives to be studied, it has a higher than average range of application through the linguistic usage of the *Chronicle*—the 59 verb stems we have mentioned. On the other hand, it is less clear than is usually the case that the alternatives studied include one which is an artificial form to the poet—presumably an archaism, preserved because of its specific metrical usefulness. There are several other verb-forms and a number of noun-patterns which would give a less ambiguous result, but would need longer discussion here. Experts in contemporary Greek folk song may respond to our example and to the whole linguistic proposal that we are making by saying that it is no new suggestion that unusual linguistic forms may be used in the fifteen-syllable for metrical reasons. We would agree, but would claim that, in the *Chronicle of the Morea* at least, we are not dealing with exceptions, with a minority of linguistic distortions, but rather with a complete linguistic system regularly based on the needs of the meter. For us, this is one of the firmest pieces of

evidence that the *Chronicle's* language and style are those of a contemporary system of oral poetry.

It is time to state formal conclusions about the role of oral tradition in the genesis of the *Chronicle of the Morea*. We do not believe that the poem as it stands is a text dictated in performance by an oral singer. Its own insistence on its status as a book and on writing, and the confirmation of this fact in formulaic phrases, are decisive. The absence of thematic organization also seems important, indicating perhaps that the poet is dealing with material which did not come to him in poetic form. Much of Moreot history is here told from the point of view of the lawyer and the diplomat. We have an impression that the oral style is being extended in length and subject-matter beyond its usual range, which was probably more restricted to heroic narrative. The spectacular charge of Geoffrey of Karytaina at the battle of Pelagonia (lines 4018-72), containing two of the very few images found in the whole poem, seems likely to reflect a short oral song of a type more conventional for the tradition.

Yet we regard this poem as a more genuine reflection of Greek oral style than any other we have examined. The evidence of the formulaic level (whether the formulas are oral formulas or specially created for the writing of this text in formulaic style) combined with the linguistic evidence is enough to convince us that oral narrative poems with similar characteristics could be heard in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Morea. We are also confident that, after removing some Franco-Greek language and a good deal of anti-Byzantine sentiment, it is possible to see this poem as a good reflection, perhaps the best we have, of the oral material which lies behind the whole genre of Byzantine popular poetry. There exists a later, less authentic text of the same kind as in the *Chronicle*, giving the history of the Italian Tocco family and their conquests in the Ionian Islands and Western Greece (ed. Schirò 1975; see also Koder 1982 and Zachariadou 1983). We have already mentioned the paradoxical judgment that Byzantine popular forms can be seen in undistorted form only in circumstances which sweep aside the rest of Byzantine culture, for otherwise the recording of genuine popular material is usually blocked.

Similar judgments can be made about much of the remainder of the fourteenth-century material in this genre, especially the romances. There are about a dozen poems which fall within the category of romance, some of them very long and preserved in

numbers of manuscripts. Together they make up a considerable proportion of the manuscript remains of popular poetry of the period. They are divided approximately equally between poems which are translations from sources in Western European literature and those which seem to be Greek, or at least for which no western originals have been found. The question of national identification again causes problems of critical approach. The romance is to some extent a Greek genre, in spite of its name: the earliest surviving examples are the novels of Chariton, Achilles Tatios, Longus, and Heliodoros from the second to the fourth centuries A.D. (survey in Hägg 1983). Then, after a long break, there appear four more romances in the twelfth century, in the learned language, those of Theodoros Prodromos, Konstantinos Manasses (in fifteen-syllable verse), Niketas Eugenianos and Eustanthios Makrembolites (see H. Hunger 1978, vol. 2:119-42). This resurgence of the romance must be in some way connected with the simultaneous flowering of romance in the west (the direction of influence is not clear; see E. Jeffreys 1980), but the works themselves are almost pure products of the Greek tradition. However, the greatest problems of critical approach are caused by the fact that several of the fourteenth-century translations are of originally Greek material—the French *Roman de Troie*, the Latin *Apollonios of Tyre*, and Boccaccio's *Theseid*.

The disconcerting feature is that it is the translations,<sup>24</sup> particularly the distorted Homeric material in the *War of Troy*, the French *Imberios and Margarona (Pierre de Provence et la belle Maguelonne)* and the Italian *Florios and Platzia-Flora (Fiorio e Biancifiore)*, which produce, in our opinion, the best reflection of the Greek oral style. The poems which are not translations include the *Alexander* poem, which we have already seen used as a half-learned and non-formulaic contrast to the *Chronicle of the Morea*, and *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*, possibly ascribed to a relative of the emperor Andronikos II and written without many formulas in a language rather more correct than that of the oral tradition. *Belthandros and Chrysantza* and *Libistros and Rhodamne* give a similar impression, but are somewhat closer to the oral pattern, in both formulas and language level. Only with the *Achilleis* and the Trojan poem edited as a *Byzantine Iliad* (ed. Norgaard and Smith 1975) do the original Greek works reach the same impression of oral authenticity as the translated romances mentioned above.

These romances and the relationships between them have caused a good deal of scholarly disagreement in recent publications (survey in E. and M. Jeffreys 1983). There are numerous similarities in wording between them. At one end of the scale, these include formulaic phrases like “great and small,” which is found repeated, sometimes many times, in nearly every poem of this genre. At the other end of the scale there are similarities which resemble the sudden appearance of a repeated oral theme between two poems, which is most surprising in a genre where repeated themes are rare. In one particular case, a striking phrase from *Florios and Platzia-Flora*, which appears to be a direct translation of the equivalent phrase in that poem’s original, *Fiorio e Biancifiore*, is taken over into *Imberios and Margarona*.<sup>25</sup>

Basing himself on a solid core of evidence like this last example, and combining it with long lists of less surprising repetitions (1976, 1977-78, 1977, 1979; in addition to 1975), Guiseppe Spadaro has built up an extensive and patient case in favor of systematic plagiarism among all the poets of this genre: “E’ evidente, infatti, che i poeti della letteratura greca medievale in lingua volgare si sentivano legati da uno stesso indirizzo poetico, appartenevano ad una stessa scuola poetica, per così dire, e quindi subivano, ovviamente, il fascino delle opere precedenti, alle quali spesso si ispiravano e dalle quali attingevano . . . oltre che motivi, emistichi, versi interi, insomma tutto quel formulario che all’occorrenza utilizzavano con molta comodità e grande vantaggio, sebbene a scapito dell’originalità” (1978:9). This is a school of poets who read and copy each other’s work in a purely literary way. From Spadaro’s tables of similarities it is possible to construct a complex network of influences among most of the poems we have mentioned in this article.

We have explained at length elsewhere why we are unable to accept this account of the way these poets worked (E. and M. Jeffreys 1983). In the first place, it does not allow enough for the influence of the copyists of our surviving manuscripts, as we shall see below. Further, Spadaro’s arguments seem designed to show that similarities between the poems are not the result of chance, a position which no scholar in this field would wish to challenge. But his position is exposed to criticism on the opposite flank: he does little to prove that the phrases he collects are literary influences rather than oral formulas from a tradition known to all the poets. Spadaro concentrates attention on phrases repeated from



one text to another, often ignoring internal repetition within the individual text, and so understating the repetitious nature of the poetry as a whole. He also does not compare each of the poems of the tradition systematically with all of the others. If he were to do so, he could find many sure examples of influence at least as convincing as some of those which he has published. The complex network of interrelationships which he implies would then become even denser and more bewildering. We find the parallel phrases he cites, in most cases, unlikely to stimulate the memory in a literary way, and prefer to ascribe their repetition to the mechanical processes associated with oral-formulaic style. Finally, the plagiarism which he suggests assumes the existence of considerable numbers of manuscript copies, so that each poet could read, and be influenced by, the work of nearly all his predecessors. However, a recent study by Manolis Chatziyakoumis (1977:247-48) has suggested that manuscripts were comparatively rare until around the year 1500, when all the poems dealt with here had long been composed.

Spadaro's work is a useful counterbalance to those who might feel that the hypothesis of the influence of an oral tradition prevents any further investigation of links between the texts under discussion. It is plain that connections can be established in several cases among those texts he examines, whether they result from common authorship, similar circumstances of composition, or even the conventional literary influence which Spadaro assumes (espec. 1975:307-9). One of these cases of similarity has recently been investigated with great care by A. van Gemert (1981), who ascribes many of the connections to the intervention of two scribes rather than to links between the original versions of the poems. As we shall see later when dealing with the textual traditions, it is vital to examine common lines for the possibility of scribal intervention. Van Gemert's article is a good example of the large volume of work which needs to be done.

Chronicles and romances do not exhaust the genres of popular poetry in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, though they are far the most impressive in bulk and seem to us more relevant than any others to the discussion of oral influence. There seems no point in listing the other, less relevant genres, since Beck's handbook does this most efficiently. However, before passing from the texts themselves to their manuscript traditions, there are two other comments to make about texts which have not yet been

mentioned.

The first is the *Belisarios* poem. This work has a historical basis in the story of Justinian's famous general, and is certainly not without romantic elements. Beck, however, categorizes it as a didactic poem with a moral purpose, and that seems the best way to describe the apparent motives of the surviving versions. In contrast to most of the popular romances, *Belisarios* is pre-eminently a poem of the populace of Constantinople. It knows a good deal of the topography of the city and is less and less convincing the further away it goes from the capital. It knows very little of Belisarios' real story, but seems to project onto this great name episodes from the lives of many popular heroes of the city, from the fifth century (a hundred years before the historical Belisarios) to the fourteenth century (when the first surviving version of the story seems to have been written). It is also one of a handful of surviving Byzantine texts which show a clear bias for the common people and against the nobility, whose role it is to poison the emperor's mind against the great popular hero. The message is a tract about the power of envy, the envy of the aristocrats for Belisarios. The whole gives the impression of being an urban folk song, expressing in one composite story the feelings of a thousand years of the capital's inhabitants for their heroes. From the point of view of formulas and language the text seems to have considerable oral characteristics, and it is tightly involved in Spadaro's tables of influences (see also van Gemert 1975).

A rather peripheral position in this discussion must be taken by a number of beast fables in fifteen-syllable verse, of which two have been analyzed in some detail by Hans Eideneier (1982:301-6) for oral influence, particularly for formulaic patterning. These poems are structured, as Eideneier says, not only by the pattern of speech and counterspeech, but also by schematic patterns of abuse and self-encomium. Perhaps as a result, there are few repetitions which fill the complete half-line, and so fulfill the formal requirements of a formula as defined in our work on the *Chronicle of the Morea*. Eideneier's various techniques of analysis do not depend on full half-line correspondence, and he succeeds in describing several patterns of linguistic usage which provide some support for a theory of oral influence, at least that the poems were conceived for oral presentation.

The twelfth-century examples of fifteen-syllable verse in the vernacular were court poems written by learned men outside the

range of influence of the oral tradition which we think provoked them. Most of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century poems were quite different. The poets, in general, seem to be away from the influence of Byzantine learning, particularly when we consider the Frankish propaganda of the *Chronicle of the Morea* and some of the translations from western European texts. In the latter case, for example in the *War of Troy*, it is very instructive to compare the Greek text with its French original.<sup>26</sup> The Greek text has a high formulaic content (our samples give 29.3% and 35% compared with 31.7% and 38.4% for the different levels of repetition defined above for the *Chronicle of the Morea*). The French too is formulaic, but at a lower level of frequency. Sometimes Greek formulas seem to be made up in translation to reflect the French formulas; sometimes they are introduced by the Greek translator and one may assume, especially if they are phrases found in other poems, that they are Greek oral formulas. There is a large intermediate group of related phrases about which one cannot pronounce (E. and M. Jeffreys 1979:131-36).

All these poets, to our mind, were writing in the only style available to them which would make for easy communication in circumstances where the learned languages of Byzantium had lost their hold on published literature. The meter, the formulaic phrases, and the language mixture were all parts of the style which would be unquestioned by any writer who was accustomed to listening to Byzantine oral poetry. Whether any of those whose writings have been preserved for us also had singing skills, we can only speculate. If it turns out, as we suspect, that the language of the oral tradition is particularly closely reflected in the *Chronicle of the Morea*, then it could be suggested that the poet who wrote that book also performed parts of it as creative oral poems to the French and Greek inhabitants of the Moreot castle where he lived, even before he wrote them down as a text.

It is a cliché for all those who write about oral poetry that such poems do not have fixed texts, that they exist in some kind of inchoate form realized from time to time in performances which usually differ from each other, sometimes significantly. This argument may, of course, work in reverse: if a poem is preserved in several manuscripts which differ from each other in significant respects, then it is tempting to conclude that each manuscript is a separate realization of an oral Gestalt, that each somehow reflects a separate performance of the oral material. Those Byzantine poems

which are preserved in more than one manuscript regularly show changes, great and small, from one manuscript version to another. Therefore the question has been raised whether each manuscript is a separate recording of a different realization of the same oral material. In fact, a history of this period of Greek literature (Trypanis 1981) has been written from that point of view.

On this issue we should like to sound a note of caution, with the firmness of those who have been converted to a conservative viewpoint by long and hard experience. We have been involved (with Manolis Papathomopoulos) in the edition of the *War of Troy*, the longest of the popular Byzantine texts, which also survives in five manuscripts and two substantial fragments, all of which show considerable variations from each other. Our initial approach to this substantial task assumed that we were unlikely to be able to print a single critical text based on all the manuscripts, and that our methodology was likely to have far more to do with Lord than with Lachmann. After 14,000 lines of editing and interminable discussions, this assumption has been totally abandoned. It seems to us that in this text the classical methodology of textual criticism is the correct way to reconstruct the original translation: both this judgement, and the reconstruction itself, are much more secure because of the survival of the French original, which often puts the critic in the position of being certain as to which of two alternative readings was found in the original text of the translation.<sup>27</sup>

Questions of oral poetry, however, are certainly not irrelevant to the reconstruction of the text within this overall logical framework. Some of the "errors" which are met represent the replacement of one formulaic line or half-line by another, and so seem rather gross to those who are used to textual transmission in which oral tradition has played no part. Furthermore, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the existence of an oral tradition is also responsible for the number of "errors" found in the manuscripts. We are here in a totally different world from that of Lord's Yugoslavia, where the fixed, printed text tends to impose on oral poets, when they learn to read, the corrupting idea of the fixed text: "If one looks at the surviving manuscripts of the *War of Troy* . . . it is most unlikely that they could ever have imposed upon their readers the concept of a stable text. The appearance of the page naturally varies greatly. There is no standardization of orthography so that the spelling fluctuates alarmingly in almost

every word. Worse still . . . there is no accuracy in the presentation of the words and grammatical forms of the text. In our opinion, this is not a case of literacy imposing its rigid standards upon a fluctuating oral tradition, but the reverse. The fluidity of the tradition has been carried over into its written expression, probably because the writers of the manuscripts recognized an oral style which did not demand word-for-word reproduction" (E. and M. Jeffreys 1979:124). In our opinion there is a decisive difference between the world of Avdo Medjedović in the Montenegro of the 1930's and that of the *War of Troy*, a difference that renders invalid the cultural parallelism on which the extension of the oral-formulaic theories into the medieval period was first based. That difference is largely centered on the invention of printing. Printing changed fundamentally the relationship between one copy of a text and all other copies: only after that, it seems to us, would a text be likely to change in a singer's mind the relationship between one version of his song and all other versions.

Let us return to the *War of Troy* and describe its textual tradition, explaining why we regard it as basically a conventional literary tradition with only subsidiary influence from oral poetry. In the first place, the variants in the texts, although very numerous, seldom extend beyond the individual line. Our line concordance of the manuscripts very rarely shows that all extant manuscripts agree over the precise form of any one line (let alone the right way of spelling it). Variations of detail are so constant that one is forced to conclude that word-for-word accuracy was not one of the copyists' goals. On the other hand, it is equally rare for the concordance to show inserted lines, expansion or contraction of episodes, or the replacement of one episode by another. Our impression is that the copyist would read a passage of perhaps one to six lines, and would then write it out in a very similar form, with the same number of lines and similar vocabulary. In all other respects, however, he can have had no conscious policy of checking the precise form of his model: inessential words would vary, articles would be inserted or omitted, the word order would change, and a different choice would be made among the linguistic variations permitted by the mixed language.

The constant change would not be purposeful. Recognizing the language and form of a fluid oral tradition, the copyist would

merely relax his standards of accuracy. In fact, in the whole of Byzantine popular poetry there are only one or two cases of accurate copies by the conventional definition. The relaxation would be assisted by the flexibility of the fifteen-syllable line, which must have offered the poet-in oral or written expression-greater scope for small-scale initiatives than, say, the Homeric hexameter. The whole orally-based system-meter, formulas, and language-was extremely flexible, and this flexibility was dominant enough to overcome the demands for precision usually associated with the act of copying. It is interesting that several of the manuscript variants are written in hands which betray the practiced scribe. Several identifications are being investigated, and it seems to be only a matter of time before we are able to compare the practice of the same scribe writing both learned and popular material.

There have been a number of detailed studies attempting to show the influence of scribes in causing apparent verbal echoes from one text to another. Several of these have concentrated on a 60-line interpolation at the end of ms N of the *Achilleis* (Michaelidis 1971-72; Spadaro 1977-78:252, 267-78), the connection of which to more than one other text has been hotly debated. The researches of H. Schreiner (e.g., 1966) into the relationships between the various texts always allowed for the influence of the copyist, while those of G. Spadaro (1975:313, note 5) do not do so systematically, leaving some of his results open to objection. This last point has been recently made in van Gemert's article (1981-82:95) on the relationship between the *Achilleis* and *Belisarios*. He makes great progress in the analysis of the textual transmission of both poems and in defining the nature of the phrases that they have in common, suggesting several cases which are probably due to the intervention of copyists. His results in the comparison of these two texts demand caution from all those who look for similarities between poems in this tradition-whether we are able to prove that the poems concerned have been copied by the same scribe, or whether we must merely remember to leave that hypothesis open as a possibility.

Ultimately the choice of editorial methodology in the publication of an individual text must depend on the relationships observed between or among its surviving manuscripts. Van Gemert's analysis of the *Achilleis* and *Belisarios* is, in conventional critical terms, attempting to construct a stemma codicum by

finding common errors. We too, after some initial reluctance, have constructed a detailed stemma for the *War of Troy* and tested it rigorously in establishing a text of over 14,000 lines. Our testing will have been more searching than that possible in most textual traditions, because the results of our stemmatic reconstruction of the archetypal translation, more often than not, can be confirmed or denied by reference to the French original. Our stemma works in the overwhelming majority of cases of serious variants, and the few apparent contradictions can be explained by a coincidence in choice of alternative formulas, a phenomenon which is not surprising in a transmission dominated by an oral tradition. Unfortunately, the stemma does not permit the easy reconstruction of the details of the text: in nearly every line there are tiny linguistic variants too insignificant, in a fluid tradition like this, to be solved by stemmatic means, especially in the not infrequent cases where every preserved manuscript has a slightly different variant. But the general conclusion seems to us certain. In spite of the formulaic density of this text, to which we referred above, its surviving witnesses lead us back by a written tradition to a single, written translation from its French original. The oral tradition intervenes only to relax the definition of accurate copying aimed at by the scribes.

Before leaving the subject of textual tradition, it is necessary to mention two obvious cases where differences between versions of a poem are considerably greater than those described above for the *War of Troy*, and there is some greater chance at least of the redaction being due to a more direct form of oral intervention. The first example, of course, is *Digenis Akritas* in its two earlier versions of G and E, described above. One may add the different versions of the *Achilleis*, with their very different lengths.<sup>28</sup> Each of these examples is based on manuscripts containing other popular material, which also shows some signs of the same textual distortion. The Escorial manuscript, Ψ, IV 22, which contains *Digenis*, also includes *Libistros and Rhodamne* and the bird-fable, the *Poulologos*. The Oxford manuscript, Misc.Gr.282-7, which contains the *Achilleis*, also has a version of *Imberios and Margarona*; there is also the London manuscript, BL Add. 8241, which gives the *Achilleis* and *Florios and Platzia-Flora*. We fear, however, that a detailed examination of these cases will show not oral variants but a systematic popularizing of the poems and purification from their learned linguistic elements, as we shall see

later in the proposals of Chatziyakoumis (1977:247).

\* \* \*

Thus in some Byzantine century before the tenth, possibly as early as the sixth, a tradition of oral poetry arose, based on the stress accent which had replaced long and short syllables as the basis of Greek metrics. The dominant rhythm came to be the fifteen-syllable. Tradition and meter gave only the most indirect signs of their existence before the tenth century, when the meter appears in the learned language. From then until the twelfth century, it was used by learned men, but for specific purposes and often with disclaimers which indicate its status as a meter below literary contempt. In the twelfth century it appears for the first time in the vernacular, but the writers are still mainly learned men and there is little direct reflection of oral style.

In the fourteenth century we are able to follow for the first time long texts which must have a real resemblance in language and style to the oral material which had been circulating for at least four centuries. The style is formulaic, and the language shows the historical depth of the tradition which had forged it. It is disappointing, though far from unexpected in Byzantine conditions, that the chronicles and romances which best reflect the oral style are non-Byzantine or even anti-Byzantine in ideology. This is not the only moment in Greek literary history when the true direction of Hellenism has been best appreciated, even exploited, by non-Hellenes, or at least by those outside the range of a Greek classical education.

It remains to say something about the continuation of the tradition up to and beyond the end of Byzantium. A key contribution here is that of Manolis Chatziyakoumis, who has examined the date, provenance, and present place of preservation of the manuscripts of Byzantine popular poetry (1977, espec. on *Libistros*, *Kallimachos*, and *Belthandros*). He is struck by the fact that most surviving manuscripts may be dated around the year 1500, that most are now in western European libraries, and that some at least seem to have been written in the West. He suggests that we should test the hypothesis that many may have been written by educated Greek refugees in the West after the fall of Constantinople, often in a language more uniformly popular than the mixed form in which the original texts were written, as we may see from the comparatively few older surviving manuscripts. It remains to be seen whether there is any statistical significance in



the number of manuscripts preserved in the West, in view of the large proportion of Greek manuscripts of all periods which have found their way to the same libraries. However, if this fact is enough to make at least a *prima facie* case for the writing of many of these manuscripts in the West, then it is interesting to seek a way to include this new hypothesis in an overall picture of the preservation of oral material. One could surmise, for example, that the oral-based material in the West, say in Italy-and even the texts of very limited oral pedigree to which we are referring-was written down because the writers felt that they had lost contact with the tradition. As Lord has documented in Yugoslavia (1960:155-56), those living in the range of a lively oral tradition feel no need to write, since the tradition itself seems immortal. However, one could surmise that a Greek refugee in Italy after 1453 might feel the need to preserve some sign of the oral tradition he had left behind, and could have been stimulated to make a copy of a written text in the style and language of that tradition.

The final point to be made has to do with the apparent disjuncture between the poems we have been studying and most of the poems of Modern Greek folk song. So far as we are able to observe the latter, through scattered texts from the Turkish period up to the eighteenth century, through earnest nineteenth-century collecting, and through systematic study of the twentieth-century remains, we must conclude that Modern Greek folk songs tend to be short and lyrical, rather than long and narrative like the poems spawned by the medieval tradition. At first sight, we can only assume that the one tradition must have died so that its successor could take over. On a more careful examination, however, there appears a more conservative branch of the modern tradition, with narrative songs in Crete and particularly in Cyprus, which can be compared directly with the medieval poems. On this point we may await the enlightenment of Roderick Beaton, who has made a special study of the Cypriot tradition.<sup>29</sup>

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The handbook of H.-G. Beck (1971) gives a comprehensive survey and

full bibliography through 1971 of the texts discussed here, and should be consulted for the older literature on the subject. For work between 1971 and 1978, see E. Jeffreys 1979 and 1981, Beaton 1980 (espec. 7-86), Eideneier 1982-83. See also the general discussion in M. Jeffreys 1975a.

<sup>2</sup>The most accessible history of the Greek language is Browning 1983; see also Browning 1978.

<sup>3</sup>This proposal stems from Trypanis (1963), who has put the idea into practice, with wider claims than we would dare to support, in Trypanis 1981.

<sup>4</sup>Schmitt 1904; there exists a translation by Lurier (1964).

<sup>5</sup>Ms. N 272-77, 970-84, 1223-29, 1290-94, 1540-46 (Hesseling 1919).

<sup>6</sup>E.g., E 1541, 1735, 1906 (Lambert 1935).

<sup>7</sup>Lanz 1844:par. ccxlv. On Thibaut de Cepoys, see du Cange 1657:vol. 2, 355.

<sup>8</sup>Partially ed. in Tsiknopoulos 1952; see M. Jeffreys 1974.

<sup>9</sup>E.g., Eustathios of Thessalonika, in van der Valk 1971:vol. 1:19; trans. in M. Jeffreys 1974:147.

<sup>10</sup>Ševčenko 1969-70:185-228.

<sup>11</sup>Trans from John Tzetzes, *Theogonia* (Bekker 1840:147-69).

<sup>12</sup>E.g., the empress Eirene, formerly Bertha von Sulzbach, first wife of the emperor Manuel Komnenos; and the sebastokratorissa Eirene, widow of Manuel's older brother. The one was certainly and the other probably of Western origins, and both were dedicatees of simple introductions to aspects of Greek classical culture.

<sup>13</sup>Mystical: e.g., Symeon the New Theologian (Koder 1969 and Kambylis 1976); Penitential: e.g., Nikephoros Ouranos (Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1899).

<sup>14</sup>Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *Le Livre des cérémonies* (Vogt 1967:vol. 2, chap. 82, pp. 165, 167). For discussions, see Baud-Bovy 1946.

<sup>15</sup>The voluminous older literature is conveniently available in Beck 1971:63-97.

<sup>16</sup>For Ms. E, Alexiou 1979:33-35; for Ms. G, Oikonomides 1979.

<sup>17</sup>An interesting argument is advanced in Macallister 1984.

<sup>18</sup>For editions of Glykas and the *Spaneas* poem, see Beck 1971:101-9; the "Eisitirioi" for Agnes of France are edited in Stryzowski 1901.

<sup>19</sup>M. Jeffreys 1975b. Different views can be found in Jacoby 1968:187-88, 1976; Spadaro 1959, 1960, 1961.

<sup>20</sup>*Chronicle of the Morea* 3179, 3469, 4683, 4885, 6249, 7556.

<sup>21</sup>*Achilleis*, Ms. N 69, 96, 778.

<sup>22</sup>The material is most completely available in Psicharis 1886-89.

<sup>23</sup>Tables and lists of examples to support these statements are given in M. Jeffreys 1972.

<sup>24</sup>For details of editions, see Beck 1971.

<sup>25</sup>See the discussion and bibliographical details given in Spadaro 1975

(espec. 309).

<sup>26</sup>Given the continued delays in the appearance of the edition, see the examples given in E. and M. Jeffreys 1979.

<sup>27</sup>On the manuscripts and their relationships, see the preliminary (but still accurate) statement in E. Jeffreys 1976.

<sup>28</sup>Ms. M: 1820 lines; Ms. L: 1363 lines; Ms. O: 761 lines.

<sup>29</sup>A first example is provided in Beaton 1980:162-68, 174-78. See also his essay in an earlier issue of *Oral Tradition* (1986).

The two writers of this article have invested more of their research labors than anyone else they can name in attempts to solve the problems of Byzantine popular poetry, trying to develop comprehensive methods of analysis from among the range of interests covered by *Oral Tradition*. Thus it has proved impossible to carry through an impersonal and objective survey: it has seemed more honest to present our views clearly, while explaining others' objections and alternative proposals, and scrupulously noting all bibliography of which we are aware. We hope to have avoided narcissism in referring to our own writings, but such references remain uncomfortably frequent. Only the reader may judge if the result is of any use.

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## **Oral-Formulaic Research in Old English Studies: I**

**Alexandra Hennessey Olsen**

The extant corpus of Old English poetry is small, yet during the late twentieth century scholarly studies thereof have been numerous. In particular, the corpus has been the focus of scholarly controversy centering on the means whereby the poems were composed and made known to their audience. Were the poems composed orally or in writing? Were they improvised during performance or composed beforehand and memorized? Were they heard by their audience or read in manuscript form? Was the most important influence on their style and content a native tradition deriving from the Common Germanic past or a learned Latin rhetorical tradition? What is the relationship between their possible orality and their obvious aesthetic excellence?

As the questions themselves show, the controversy concerning the composition and presentation of Old English poetry is part of a larger critical question, that of the oral and formulaic composition of classical, medieval, and contemporary works. As Adrien Bonjour pointed out in 1957, "if the well-known dictum that history repeats itself is sometimes open to controversy, its veracity can hardly be doubted when we turn to the history of *Beowulf* criticism. For it almost seems a law that in its broad outlines *Beowulf* criticism should follow the fortunes of Homeric criticism" (563). Even in its most recent manifestations, oral-formulaic research in Old English has followed classical research, and it is inextricably intertwined with research on other literatures as well. Because, as John Miles Foley has recently pointed out, "oral literature research and scholarship is by its nature a comparative and interdisciplinary area" (1985a:5), scholars have frequently built on and responded to ideas published in fields of research other than Old English. As a result, the history of oral-formulaic

research in Old English is in many ways the history of oral-formulaic research at large as well as the history of resistance to the ideas of the oral-formulaists.

The present study consists of nine sections, of which the first four appear in this issue. Section I, "Oral and Written," considers the questions of whether Old English poetry was composed orally or in writing and whether it was presented to a listening audience or to an audience of readers. It also examines questions of lay literacy during the Old English period and of the nature of the reaction of a listening audience to traditional poetry. Section II, "The Oral-Formulaic Theory," reviews the origin and development of the study of oral composition in Old English, including nineteenth-century Higher Criticism, the study of formulaic structure in Homeric and Serbo-Croatian epic, and the application of the oral-formulaic theory to Old English literature beginning with the work of Albert B. Lord and Francis P. Magoun, Jr. Section III, "The Formula," reviews definitions that have been proposed for the basic units of oral composition, the formula and the formulaic system, and treats metrics and the study of particular formulas and formulaic systems. Section IV, "Themes and Type-Scenes," studies the level of oral composition above the formula, discussing the definitions that have been proposed for the terms "theme" and "type-scene" and reviewing the literature that has identified and described various Old English themes and type-scenes.

The last five sections of the essay will appear in a subsequent issue of *Oral Tradition*. Section V, "Levels Above the Theme," discusses the higher structures of oral poetry, including Ring Structure, the Envelope Pattern, and mythic structures. Section VI, "The Case Against the Oral-Formulaic Theory," weighs scholarly objections either to the idea of formulaicity or to the idea that Old English poetry might have been composed orally. It considers the controversies as to whether formulaic poetry can be artistic and whether literate formulaic composition can exist. Section VII, "The Comparative Method," discusses the studies of other literatures which have been used to illuminate Old English poetry, emphasizing that scholars must be aware of differences as well as similarities. It also examines the way that the comparative method illuminates two questions: whether all oral-formulaic poetry must be improvisational or whether it can be memorial, and how the Germanic and the Graeco-Roman Christian traditions

came together in Old English poetry. Section VIII, "Present Trends in Oral-Formulaic Research," reviews current trends which re-open questions about such points as the nature of the formula and the influence of linguistic theory on the oral-formulaic theory. Section IX, "Future Directions," discusses work on linguistics, myth, and the diachronic as well as synchronic nature of oral-formulaic verse which should introduce a new and productive era in oral studies in Old English.

### *I. Oral and Written*

One basic question about which scholars disagree is whether Old English poetry was composed—or at least presented—orally or was composed in writing for reading in a manuscript. As Theodore M. Andersson (1962) has pointed out, by 1830 scholars argued that there were differences between oral and literate poetry, basing their ideas on the study of Homer and of existing oral literatures. In a study of unwritten traditions published in 1939, S. Gandz discusses oral literature and its transmission and the interaction between oral and written literatures, and Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg have argued that "oral and written narrative are formally distinct, and profoundly so" and that modern written narrative in the western world derives from "the orally composed narrative of ancient Greece and Northern Europe" (1966:18). Not all scholars, however, agree that oral and written literatures differ substantially. In a study of the Old Testament and the oral tradition that presumably lies behind it, William Whallon points out that Scandinavian Biblical scholars find the two forms "complementary, rather than incompatible and mutually exclusive" (1963:1). Ruth M. Finnegan concurs, suggesting that although oral literature differs from written literature in various ways, there is no definite break between them; she points out that in Africa, "oral and written literature often in practice comprise relative and overlapping rather than mutually exclusive categories" (1976:137).

Finnegan argues that oral literature differs from written primarily because it is performed before an audience rather than being read, an important matter when one considers medieval literature. Cecil M. Bowra (1952) has contended that heroic poetry was composed for a listening audience in an illiterate society, and Ruth M. Crosby has pointed out that "in the Middle Ages the

masses of the people read by means of the ear rather than the eye, by hearing others read or recite rather than by reading to themselves” (1936:88) with the result that “oral delivery of popular literature was the rule rather than the exception in the Middle Ages” (110). Furthermore, an oral tradition can be shown to lie behind the work of literate Anglo-Latin authors like Bede (see Cosmos 1977), and oral tradition even affected the instruction offered in monastic communities, because oral reading was “employed [not only] as a means of instruction during the services, but also as a source of edification at other times during the monks’ day” (Hampton 1972:230).

Foley has argued that “the traditional oral society educates its members. . . through the repeated and collective experience of performed epic poetry” (1977a:134), and the Anglo-Saxons seem to have used oral literature as an educational tool both within the monastery and outside it. Thomas A. Shippey has demonstrated that the gnomic utterances used in poems were educational in nature and has suggested that the *Maxims* in particular had an educative function and demonstrate that the society “knows literacy and indeed venerates it, but still does most of its business orally and retains oral patterns of thought and rhetoric” (1977:36).

By examining all available evidence for oral poetry in Anglo-Saxon England, Jeff Opland (1977) has concluded that the Anglo-Saxons who conquered England brought with them a tradition of oral poetic composition and performance and has validated the work of earlier scholars, such as Frederick Norman’s 1938 study of the Common Germanic poetic tradition. Opland suggests that the oral tradition “informed the vernacular poetry that came to be written after the introduction of writing for literary purposes by the Christian missionaries” (52) and theorizes that there must have been a range of poets in Anglo-Saxon England, including traditional illiterate singers, singers who memorized works composed by others, and literate poets who used oral-traditional forms. A major question in Old English studies is whether our extant poetry, all of which is found in monastic manuscripts, derives from the early oral tradition or was composed under the influence of Latin learning.

In 1951 J. R. Hulbert pointed out that scholars like the Chadwicks believed that *Beowulf* was composed orally, whereas others, who viewed the poem as composed during the eighth century under the influence of Virgil, believed that it was

composed in writing, reflecting a debate still lively today. Karl Brunner has discussed the contents of all four major poetic manuscripts and pointed out that the various poems must have been of importance for monastic communities or they would not have been preserved, suggesting that they must therefore have been composed by monastic poets. He argues that *Beowulf* “has a decided Christian bent” (1954:3), even though it deals with the monster-fights of a pagan hero, and that this “bent” was the probable reason for its preservation. N. F. Blake has suggested that *Cædmon’s Hymn* is based on the Psalms rather than on Germanic heroic poetry and that the diction of the *Hymn* resembles that of the other extant poetry not because Cædmon borrowed from heroic poetry but because “later poets borrowed from Cædmon’s Hymn” (1962:245). J. E. Cross (1972) argues that phrases like “books tell us” used in both poetry and prose indicate that the poetry was composed by literate poets for literate audiences. In a similar vein, David R. Howlett contends that the *Beowulf* poet arranged his materials to imitate Latin poems and that “the literary nature of *Beowulf*, particularly in its imitation of Vergilian symmetry, is certain. The poet must have addressed his work to those who read it slowly, turning folios back and forth” (1974:325).

The idea that all Old English poetry that has survived is of monastic origin and that the form and style in which it is written were influenced by classical models has been put forth in a persuasive manner by many distinguished Anglo-Saxonists. Alistair Campbell has argued that both ancient Greek and Old English poetry depict the recitation of short lays in a heroic setting but give no indication that long epics were known during the heroic age, suggesting that “the short lay was replaced by the full-style epic” when “new conditions were created by the growth of Anglo-Saxon monasticism” (1962:13). Opland has endorsed this opinion by analogy to the Nyanga tradition, suggesting that after the introduction of literate culture an Anglo-Saxon poet would have been able to write down a poem the length of *Beowulf* and comparing *Beowulf* to “Biebuyck’s compilation of the *Mwindo Epic*” (1980:85).

The influence of such studies has been to suggest that Old English poetic diction and form are of Latin origin, an idea raised in 1910 by James Walter Rankin. Rankin asserts that between 597 (the arrival of St. Augustine) and 1066 (the Norman Conquest),

Latin exerted great influence on vernacular literature, attempting to indicate the nature and extent of this influence by finding Christian Latin sources for Old English kennings. Rankin's conclusion is that "the great majority of Anglo-Saxon kennings are of Latin origin" (51), even those expressing "non-religious conceptions" (83). E. G. Stanley (1956), studying the poetic diction, argues that Old English poets understood the meaning and function of similes in Latin poetry and adopted them and merged them with kennings, but he discusses primarily the Latin-based devices rather than the kennings. Jackson J. Campbell has contended that the Christian Latin tradition provided the Anglo-Saxons with "a poetic, complete with advice on stylistic features [and] factors of style the Old English poet could adapt and assimilate to his traditional Germanic verse form" (1967:2). Campbell believes that numerous Old English poets knew the Christian Latin tradition, and he further suggests (1978) that knowledge of classical rhetoric was undoubtedly extensive among poets. The extreme of this approach may be suggested by Ann S. Johnson's 1968 study, in which she argues that *The Battle of Brunanburh* uses classical rhetoric in a way not characteristic of secular poetry of its age and ignores devices typical of Old English poetry, and by Ann Harleman Stewart's "Kenning and Riddle in Old English" (1979), which deals with kennings without reference to oral tradition.

One of the main sources for evidence of an oral tradition in Anglo-Saxon England in addition to the literate monastic tradition is Bede's story of Cædmon, summarized by Opland as follows (1980:113): "Bede seems to indicate that Cædmon remained illiterate all his life. He never reads for himself, but always gathers his knowledge of biblical narrative by listening to others read to him. . . ; he always sings or makes songs or dictates his songs. . . . Cædmon is a purely oral poet or singer." Even the fact that Cædmon seems to have been an oral poet, however, is ambiguous, and Donald W. Fritz has argued that the story of Cædmon is based on "the most commonplace and traditional concepts of mediaeval poetry" for which "Bede could have easily found authority in Isidore's *Etymologiae*" (1969:334). He compares Cædmon to Paulinus of Nola rather than to an oral scop, although he argues elsewhere (1974) that Cædmon was a contemplative poet who composed spontaneously and that such composition is not incompatible with the idea that Cædmon was an oral singer.



Richard J. Schrader has attempted to harmonize the ideas of oral and written origins of Old English poetry by suggesting that the monasteries both provided literate culture and also “perpetuated an ancient system of oral learning and composition that had always been in harmony with the written word” (1980:56). He points out that “a monk composed—often aloud, even as he would read aloud—by impressing the first draft on wax tablets, then by correcting it; finally he copied the work himself or gave it over to a scribe, who copied from the finished draft or from dictation. . . . Transcribing was slow and painful; it had the effect of impressing a text (and gloss) upon memories which seem to us prodigious” (57). He argues that “whatever training the literate *scop* who wrote *Beowulf* received in native poeticizing, it was not really incongruent with what was going on in English schools around 750, and nothing in it would have prevented the influence of Roman literature” (56).

The central problem with even so fine an argument as that of Schrader is that those who insist that extant Old English poetry is literate and monastic tend to overstate the case for Anglo-Saxon literacy. In *From Memory to Written Record* (1979), M. T. Clanchy contends that literate ways of thinking and conducting business did not develop until the period between 1066 and 1307 and that literacy was not widespread even in the monasteries of Anglo-Saxon England. He speaks of the importance of oral techniques throughout the entire Middle Ages, noting that “a narrator, whether of common law pleadings or of epic and romance, had originally reconstructed his tale in due form on the basis of a few remembered formulas” (222). Patrick Wormald states that although the existence of a written tradition of Old English poetry and prose is documented before the time of Alfred, “the status of the pre-Alfredian vernacular should not be exaggerated” (1977:103) and concludes “that the traditional view of restricted literacy is substantially valid for the whole early English period” (113).

The existence of literacy during the Old English period is important because *Beowulf* may not be a monastic poem. Wormald argues that there was little literacy except among clerics, with the result that if *Beowulf* were a literate work, it would have had to have been composed by a cleric. M. B. Parkes states that “in order to assess the extent and development of literacy among the laity, and its significance for the student of literature, it is necessary to include the ability to read and write in the

vernacular,” and he distinguishes between three kinds of literacy: “that of the professional reader. . .; that of the cultivated reader, which is the literacy of recreation; and that of the pragmatic reader” (1973:555). He demonstrates persuasively that lay literacy became important only in the twelfth century, pointing out that from that time, the number of extant manuscripts of vernacular works increases. Godfrid Storms (1974) has suggested that *Beowulf* was composed by a lay poet for a lay audience, maintaining that none of the resemblances noted between *Beowulf* and the *Aeneid* proves that the *Beowulf* poet knew the *Aeneid* any more than resemblances between *Beowulf* and the *Odyssey* prove that he knew the *Odyssey*. Furthermore, John D. Niles has pointed out that even though some scholars have read Old English literature as if it were the product of a literate monastic culture with no other background, “there existed a set of native Germanic poetic strategies that deserve the name *rhetoric* just as much as do the strategies of Latin authors, even though the Germanic tropes were never codified in written treatises” (1983:79). In a study of understatement in Old English poetry, Frederick Bracher has noted that the device occurs more frequently in early poems than in late ones and has suggested that understatement may have been a characteristic of the heroic poetry from which the extant corpus descended. He reasons that understatement could not have been borrowed from Latin poetry because it “is found in the early poetry of all the Germanic peoples” and it would be “a remarkable coincidence if four related peoples developed such a usage independently” (1937:934).

Ritchie Girvan (1951) has suggested a pragmatic solution to the controversy over oral and written origins by arguing that some Old English poetry was composed orally and some was composed in writing, a point also made by Barbara C. Raw (1978). Girvan points out that the audience of orally performed poetry was “the immediate circle of hearers” (89), an opinion endorsed by John A. Nist (1959), who contends that the audience responds to the text from familiarity with the poetic tradition. Michael D. Cherniss (1970) states that a poet composing with a listening audience in mind must always be concerned with the immediate effect that the poem has upon the audience. He suggests that we must be aware of this effect in order to understand such poetry, and Foley (1977b) argues that the proem of *Beowulf* shows that poet and audience shared a collective traditional poetic experience.

Alain Renoir

believes that an awareness of the reaction of the original Old English audience listening to an oral presentation helps us to appreciate *Genesis B*, because the author must have “had to treat his subject matter according to the expectations of his audience” (1967:51). Because the audience would have expected the defeated Satan to seek revenge, we must interpret Satan in part in terms of the heroic tradition.

In his 1973 introduction to the various kinds of poetry written during the medieval period, J. A. Burrow divides them into three chronological categories, distinguishing “the poetry of ‘bards,’ the poetry of ‘minstrels,’ and the poetry of ‘men of letters’” (348) and using the term “bard” to describe the most ancient kind of narrative poet, the oral poet, including those of Anglo-Saxon England. Although the question of the oral nature of extant Old English poetry may never be answered to the satisfaction of all scholars, the fact that Old English poetry is at least oral-derived raises another question: if these poems were originally recited orally by illiterate scop, how did our extant manuscript copies come into being? Storms suggests that the story of Cædmon shows that “writing down oral verse was not an insuperable problem for an experienced scribe, nor was the dictating of oral verse impossible for a *scop*” (1974:13). Albert B. Lord views Homer as an oral poet who lived in an age when others were literate and his poems as “oral dictated texts” (1953:131-32), a view which has influenced Old English scholars like Storms. Some Anglo-Saxonists believe that our extant manuscripts testify to the existence of an oral tradition in Anglo-Saxon England. Kenneth Sisam (1946), for example, observes that variants in manuscripts of Old English poetry compared with those in classical texts seem to be more in keeping with the oral transmission of verse than with literate transmission. Alison G. Jones compares *Daniel* and *Azarias* (1966) and the two versions of *Soul and Body* (1969) and in each case finds that the differences between the two versions provide evidence of the oral transmission of the poems. Jess B. Bessinger, Jr., has even suggested that some of the passages that seem obscure, foreshortened, or inorganic in *Beowulf* “can be attributed to an uneasy collaboration of singer and scribe” (1957b:13) that produced our extant text.

Lord has pointed out that “once texts have been written down and are available to those who sing or tell stories, they can in fixed form have an influence on the tradition” (1967:1199), and

some scholars have been concerned with the way oral structures and written tradition come together in texts. Robert D. Stevick argues that part of the history of the *Beowulf* materials antedates the text we know and must have consisted of short oral works about various aspects of the story composed during the period before the Christianization of England. He suggests that the “Christian elements in *Beowulf* derive. . . from the normal mutations and accretions. . . in the oral literature of a cultural tradition whose religion had changed more radically than its. . . poetic techniques” (1963:88), but that our extant text derives from a written exemplar. One scholar who has been most deeply involved in discussing the intersection of oral and written has been Renouir. He argues, for example, that similarities between two poetic texts can be considered “illustrative of the fact that both poets may have drawn their materials from a common fund of formulas and themes” (1974:148) and that comparison of *Beowulf* and the *Aeneid* “helps us understand an important aspect of the Anglo-Saxon poet’s superb mastery of his craft” (160). In “Oral-Formulaic Rhetoric and the Interpretation of Written Texts,” he suggests that the “influence of written rhetoric. . . is probably what differentiates the oral-formulaic poem composed in writing for an audience attuned to oral-formulaic tradition from a similar poem composed orally before a live audience” and that those interested in approaching works which can be classified as oral-formulaic but written “might do well to take as a temporary starting point the assumption that, for pragmatic purposes, these works ought to be treated like oral compositions, and yet not quite so” (1986:125).

## *II. The Oral-Formulaic Theory*

Work like that of Renouir shows that the interface between oral and written composition is extremely complex. As he has recently said, “Even though I personally believe that methodical research will eventually tell all of us which ancient texts were actually composed orally and which were composed in writing, the truth remains that we have yet no such means of reaching a consensus; and, until we reach such a consensus, I suspect that interpretations based on the assumption of oral composition will continue to be rejected by the opposition as energetically as

interpretations based on the assumption of written composition will continue to be rejected by the proponents of oral composition” (TBP). In order to understand the origin and development of the study of oral composition in Old English, as well as to understand many of the reasons why scholars have refused to accept the theories of the oral-formulaists, one must be aware of the two stages that preceded it—nineteenth-century German Higher Criticism and the study of formulaic structure in Homeric and Serbo-Croatian epic carried on by Milman Parry, Albert B. Lord, and students and followers of Lord.

The German Higher Critics noted the presence of what we now call formulas in Old English poetry, treating them variously in a “synonymischer Teil” (Sievers 1878:391) or “Formelverzeichnis” (*ibid.*:391) and terming them “epischen Formeln” (Banning 1886:1), “Formel[n]” (Meyer 1889:232), “Parallelverse” (*ibid.*:327), “Parallelstellen” (Kail 1889:37), and “wortlichen Wiederholungen” (Kistenmacher 1898:1). Eduard Sievers’ work, for example, indicates that there was a Common Germanic poetic language that presumably preceded the colonization of England; Robert L. Kellogg (1965) notes that Sievers shows that phrases in the *Heliand* that occur only once in Old English help us understand the formulaic language of Old English poetry. In 1879, Franz Charitius argued that scholars needed to pay attention to formulaic phrases, and in 1901, Ernst Otto discussed recurring elements at the level of narrative, finding four typical characters (God, the king, the retainer, and the monster) in Old English poetry.

In 1898 Ellen C. Buttenwieser studied the aesthetic significance of the formulas used in *Andreas*, warning that scholars should not accept them as evidence of authorship because they represent a common lexical store used by all poets. Buttenwieser’s study was timely and important, because, following the lead of Moritz Trautmann (1876), many scholars had used the existence of formulas to argue for the common authorship of particular poems. Heinrich Ziegler (1883) discussed the works which he attributed to Cædmon, and scholars like R. Simons (1889 and 1898) and Alois Brandl (1901-9) discussed works which they attributed to Cynewulf. Gregor Sarrazin published a series of studies on the correspondences between *Beowulf* and the Cynewulf canon, arguing in 1886 that either (1) the *Beowulf* poet must have imitated Cynewulf or Cynewulf the *Beowulf* poet or (2) Cynewulf was the author of *Beowulf*. He favored the second alternative and insisted

that the “Parallelstellen” (1892:192) must be the products of a single author, an argument he reprised in *Beowulf-Studien. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte altgermanischer Sage und Dichtung* (1888); in 1897, he attributed *Andreas* as well as *Beowulf* to Cynewulf. After the appearance of “*Beowulf* and *Kynewulf*” (1886), Johannes Kail published a study disagreeing with Sarrazin’s assertions and arguing that the “Parallelstellen” do not indicate the common authorship of poems because they must have come into being over a long period of time, with the religious formulas later than the heroic ones. In 1889, Kail showed that the formulas were traditional, a concept adopted by Buttenwieser which has become a major part of the oral-formulaic theory.<sup>1</sup>

A number of early twentieth-century scholars studied the formulaic nature of heroic poetry and attributed it to oral composition. In a 1903 study of the evidence from Old English poetry and other sources, Lewis F. Anderson concluded that the formulas must have been useful in a preliterate society when “extemporization would naturally constitute a considerable element in much of the recitation” (24). In 1912, H. Munro Chadwick studied the common characteristics of Greek and Germanic heroic poetry, and he noted that the two kinds “contain many common features in regard to style. In both we find the constant repetition of the same formulae. . . . The explanation of such formulae is probably to be found in the fact that both sets of poems were designed for preservation by oral tradition” (320). In two studies of the Middle English poet Layamon, John S. P. Tatlock described formula usage in Old English poems, arguing that the Old English poets avoided the use of epic formulas in favor of “variety and ingenuity of phrasing” (1923a:515-16). He suggests that the fact that the poets avoided “a natural epic usage is a sign of the artificial sophistication of Anglo-Saxon poetry” (1923b:3). Tatlock acknowledges that the use of formulas was related to oral delivery, but he contends that “Anglo-Saxon poetry in general is sophisticated and not popular, produced in large part by professionals and scholars, and the complexity of the verse . . . and its uniformity through several centuries, and other uniformities of style, point to a conscious *Ars Poetica*” (1923a:515). His sense of the artistry of Old English poetry and concern that the formulaic poet may be a prisoner of his tradition are echoed by many of those who either reject the oral-formulaic theory as a whole or who, while acknowledging the formularity of the poetry, reject its

orality.

Some scholars at the beginning of the twentieth century, however, were willing to discuss Anglo-Saxon poetic diction without Tatlock's concerns about literary sophistication. H. C. Wyld points out that "although a word or phrase may occur in several passages, and must therefore be considered as conventional or traditional, this fact does not necessarily destroy its poetical value, nor detract from our estimate of the poet who uses it. Such *clichés*, although traditional, may be, and often are, expressive of a genuine emotion." (1925:54). Likewise, Francis P. Magoun, Jr., who later introduced the oral-formulaic theory into Old English studies, made a comparative study of the formulaic structure of Old English and Old Norse verse in 1929 with a view to describing the techniques used by the poets. In 1945 he argued that the West Germanic corpus of heroic poetry is a unified body and that "beyond a large common stock-in-trade of traditional story, the accumulations of parallel phrases and locutions that are sprinkled through the commentaries of this poetry . . . afford striking testimony to a basic, persistent community of diction" (1945:78). Other work suggests methods of investigation useful for scholars interested in the oral-formulaic theory; for example, John O. Beaty studies the use of the "echo-word" in *Beowulf*, the repetition of words or phrases intended to present an idea from several points of view, a poetic principle which Beaty says "binds by the identity of entire words or . . . of entire root-syllables" (1934:366) and which is analogous to composition by formulas. Another important study is Leonard J. Peters' "The Relationship of the Old English *Andreas* to *Beowulf*," which argues against those scholars who believe that *Andreas* is modelled on *Beowulf* merely because the vocabularies of the poems are similar. Peters writes that "three limitations enormously complicate the problem of determining literary influences in Old English literature by means of parallels. First, only a small number of the Anglo-Saxon MSS have survived. . . . Second, the chronology of most Old English works probably will never be settled to the satisfaction of everyone. . . . Third, the investigator who is evaluating parallels consisting of words and phrases must take into account the highly conventional nature of Anglo-Saxon poetry . . . [and the] conventional formulas and poetic tags belonging to the common stock of poetic tradition" (1951:850-51).

Oral-formulaic research *per se* may be dated from 1923, the

year in which Parry wrote his Master of Arts thesis on Homer, providing “the formulation of a new answer to the ages-old quandary commonly known as the Homeric Question” (Foley 1985a:11). A full study of Parry’s work is properly the province of the study of oral-formulaic research in ancient Greek, but those interested in Old English studies need to know his work. Parry’s great contributions were to describe a continuing traditional process in which an oral epic poet worked and to conceive of the oral poet as a literary artist working within a tradition. In 1928, he defined the formula as “an expression regularly used, under the same metrical conditions, to express an essential idea” (13),<sup>2</sup> a definition he modified in 1930 to “a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea” (272; italics deleted). The exact definition of a formula and the metrical conditions under which formulas operate in Old English poetry have been matters of great interest to Anglo-Saxonists.

In 1932 Parry argued that “the nature of Homeric poetry can be grasped only when one has seen that it is composed in a diction which is oral, and so formulaic, and so traditional” (328), and he laid the groundwork for testing his hypothesis in the illiterate society of rural twentieth-century Yugoslavia. Various scholars made further applications of Parry’s work; Rhys Carpenter (1946) argued that Parry’s work shows that the Homeric poems were composed orally and that similarities between them and Old English works prove that an oral tradition also informed Old English, and Martin P. Nilsson (1933) compared the Homeric epics to works from other oral poetic traditions. Parry’s theories about the Homeric poems have become the “new orthodoxy” (Miller 1982:1) of Homeric studies, largely because of the major contributions of Lord, whose work initiated the field of oral-formulaic scholarship. Lord’s work is important at every step of the way for understanding oral-formulaic research in Old English because his studies of Greek and Serbo-Croatian matters influenced Anglo-Saxonists, but his most important contribution is *The Singer of Tales*; although not published until 1960, it influenced scholars from the time that he presented its original version as his doctoral dissertation in 1949. From his personal acquaintance with the living oral tradition in Yugoslavia, Lord has been able to draw conclusions about the nature of the traditions at the times that classical and medieval literary works were composed. Because



Anglo-Saxonists build on or differ from Lord's ideas, I will discuss various aspects of his work at the appropriate places in this study.

Although Lord presented a brief formulaic analysis of *Beowulf* 1473-87 in his dissertation (see 1960:198-200), with the result that the history of oral-formulaic research in Old English poetry begins in 1949, Magoun's seminal article of 1953, "Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry," is the formal "extension into the realm of Anglo-Saxon narrative poetry of the work of Parry and Lord" (1953b:447). Magoun's most important assertion is that "the recurrence in a given poem of an appreciable number of formulas or formulaic phrases brands the latter as oral, just as the lack of such repetitions marks a poem as composed in a lettered tradition. Oral poetry, it may be safely said, is composed entirely of formulas, large and small, while lettered poetry is never formulaic" (446-47). Using Parry's definition of the formula and the formulaic system, Magoun argues that over 70% of a sample from *Beowulf* occurs elsewhere in the extant corpus, a fact that he feels demonstrates that Old English poetry—even the Christian poetry which shows "the adaptation of the traditional language of the ancient poetry to this new and different thematic material" (458)—was orally composed. In another article (1955a), Magoun suggests that Bede's account of Cædmon's poetic practice demonstrates the stages of the career of an oral singer. Magoun argues that Cædmon's "command of formulas and general technique *after* the dream can only mean a command of the same *before* the dream" and that Cædmon "had been learning them over a long time" (59). Magoun uses the oral-formulaic theory to suggest that Cædmon's use of formulaic Christian poetry was neither miraculous nor simply based by Bede on episodes in Latin works.

Numerous scholars have influenced the development of the application of the oral-formulaic theory to Old English poetry. Davis D. McElroy reinterprets the description of oral performance in lines 867ff. of *Beowulf* in the light of the oral-formulaic theory, interpreting it as a discussion of the use of the oral-formulaic techniques by the singer and translating the passage as follows: "One of the king's thanes was inspired by Beowulf's exploit to compose a short poem before the court. This man knew many verse-formulas and many stories rich in oral themes. He described Beowulf's adventure in skilful style, freely and eloquently adapting his formulas to a well-constructed plot. His audience was pleased

and he began another tale, this time telling the exploits of Sigemund” (1959:306). McElroy argues that the *Beowulf* poet “was making the first known judgment in English poetic criticism” (306).

In 1962, Stevick commented that “the amount and ingenuity of the scholarly activity” dealing with the oral-formulaic theory “are impressive” because “the new methodology applied to several segments of the extant Old English verse is rapidly producing results whose security and significance are noteworthy” (384). Nonetheless, he found the overall investigation disappointing and called for greater rigor in the application of the theory to Old English studies. The 1960’s did indeed show more detailed analyses of oral-formulaic elements. Randolph Quirk, for example, while calling the oral-formulaic approach “valuable for sharpening our perspective as we try to evaluate our early poetry” (1963:150), reminded scholars that metrical demands may have determined the words used in particular cases. Neil D. Isaacs (1963), arguing that Old English personification differs from the common rhetorical device, used the oral-formulaic theory to interpret six cruces in *Beowulf*. A. C. Spearing used oral-formulaic research to help interpret medieval English literature for a modern audience, pointing out that “if an audience of listeners is to be able to respond to a poem on a single reading of it, not only must its expressive devices be largely simple, they must also contain a high proportion of the familiar. . . . A poet cannot afford to be too novel, too original, too individual in style: he must keep largely within a stylistic convention which his audience will understand and accept without consideration.” (1964:20).

In addition, during the 1960’s, oral-formulaic research had become so major a part of Old English studies that scholars began to survey the history of the theory. In *A Study of Old English Literature*, Charles L. Wrenn discussed the form and style of the poetry, noting that meter, rhythm, and diction did not change during the Old English period but that “some of the verbal machinery of heroic oral formulaic tradition, designed for the description of noble warfare, was replaced by conventional formulae appropriate to religious or hagiographical matters” (1967:36). He believes that “the revolution by which the ancient technique of verse was adapted to Christian subject matter . . . carried with it echoes of Old Germanic spirit, which are to be met with even in specifically Biblical and hagiographical verse such as *Judith* and Cynewulf’s *Elene*” (91).

In 1969 Ann Chalmers Watts studied objections to the application of the oral-formulaic theory to Old English poetry, maintaining that “the original theory has not been rigorously or consistently applied to Old English poetry although one is given to understand that it has” and that “the practice of analogy has not been adequately tested or measured by those who believe Old English poetry to be oral in its composition” (64). Like Stevick, she called for a rigorous definition of the terminology of oral-formulaic criticism, and she surveyed work on both Homer and the Old English corpus. In 1973 Francis L. Utley surveyed the history of oral-formulaic studies in Old English and concluded that medievalists needed to carry on field research in order to understand oral literature more fully. Six years later Raymond Eichmann observed that the application of the oral-formulaic theory to medieval literature seemed to be “sporadic” and “its impact too widespread” (1979:97), and he surveyed the history of the theory without providing new directions except the observation that “our aim must therefore be directed toward the elucidation of oral presence beyond the mere affirmation of its existence” (109). In contrast to such scholars, Andreas Haarder in 1975 sought to discuss the implications of the theory, and instead of merely surveying its history, he discussed only the most significant contributions.

In the 1980's, as Foley observes, “oral literature research has become a field of its own” (1981:27), and two major studies of the field were published in 1980: Douglas D. Short's “*Beowulf* and Modern Critical Tradition,” which concludes that since the 1950's oral-formulaic studies have been the most productive area of Old English studies, and Foley's “Oral Literature: Premises and Problems,” whose purpose is to survey the field and the most significant contributions thereto. In a lengthier review (1981), Foley places “the oral theory in context and, in adumbrating its central importance to humanistic studies in general, . . . reveal[s] its manifold possibilities for future investigations of all kinds” (28). Carol L. Edwards, surveying the writings of both proponents of the theory and those who are unconvinced of its validity, argues that the oral-formulaic theory should be reinterpreted “under the tenets of operational structuralism . . . , [which] allows us to consider formulas through their operations” (1983:161). Her conclusion is that the oral-formulaic theory is “a poetics of process based in an implicit generative system” (161). In the most recent survey, the

“Introduction” to his *Oral-Formulaic Theory and Research: An Introduction and Annotated Bibliography* (1985b), Foley points out that in its rapid spread to more than 100 language areas “oral literature research and scholarship is . . . still very much in the process of discovering itself” (1985a:5).<sup>3</sup>

The series of state-of-the-art essays in *Oral Tradition* owe a great debt to the work of scholars like Watts and Foley, who have provided key studies of the entire field at important times, as well as to Foley’s *Oral-Formulaic Theory and Research*. They focus, however, more specifically upon various aspects of the question of oral-formulaic research than has been possible in work that provides a larger overview. As a result, they are able to highlight particular problems in the application of the oral-formulaic theory to the literatures of different countries. In his discussion of translations of Old English poetry, for example, Renoir points out that the accuracy of even good translations of *Beowulf* may be affected by the inability of a translator to evoke all the oral-formulaic elements, viewing as a major difference between *Beowulf* and its modern English translations the lack of provision of a “context for the proper reaction to oral-formulaic themes” (1978:168), a problem of particular concern in Old English studies.

### *III. The Formula*

In 1932 Parry noted that “the language of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is a poetic language made to suit the needs of the verse” (325), and Anglo-Saxonists accept that there was an artificial Old English poetic dialect that included archaic linguistic features (see Lehmann-Tabusa 1958). Robert P. Creed, for example, points to the use of three nouns in line 4 of *Beowulf* that have etymological meanings associated with cutting or injuring or with bunches, and he argues that the poet performs in a “verse-dialect that held fast to important information even as the shape of that information subtly shifted over millennia” (1980:124). Whallon suggests that the poetic diction of *Beowulf* “must have been a conservative . . . influence on popular thought” (1965b:19) because “the old poetic formulas gave the oral tradition a . . . continuity not easily broken” (23). Following Parry, Lord describes a dynamic oral language which is “the offspring of the marriage of thought and sung verse” (1960:31), noting that as the poet composed his lines,

the formulaic language did not restrict his artistry because “the formulaic technique was developed to serve him as a craftsman, not to enslave him” (54). In his study of Homer’s originality, Lord argues that an oral poet “has at his command ready-made phrases which have been built up by generations of poets to express all the ideas needed in the poetry. . . . Singers made changes from time to time, but these changes would have been slight as new formulas would have been modelled on the old ones” (1953:126).

The exact definition of the formula as it occurs in Old English poetry has been much discussed in Old English studies. Magoun adopted Parry’s definition, but in 1959 Creed redefined the formula in Old English as “a word or group of words regularly employed under certain strictly determined metrical conditions to express a given essential idea” (447). Creed also stipulates that “the essential quality of a formula is not its memorable sound . . . but its *usefulness* to the singer” (446). In a later essay dealing with formulas, Creed discusses the three Old English versions of the story of Abraham, one in prose and two in poetry, which provide “an opportunity to observe and compare the ways of two traditional poets or singers at work on the same story” (1967:70), and studies the use of formulas and formulaic systems in the poetic versions. In 1959 Robert E. Diamond, beginning with Magoun’s definition, made two important observations. In the first place, he pointed out that a formula does not necessarily involve the exact repetition of words because “variations of gender, number, case, tense, mood, etc. do not break the pattern unless they alter the metrical type” (230). Even more importantly, he observed that the formula is “entirely different in every tradition because of the varying demands of meter and syntax” (229). Diamond was the first Anglo-Saxonist to acknowledge the importance of the dimension which has recently been called “tradition-dependence” by Foley (1985a:68), who observes that “critics have too often simply ‘translated’ definitions and axioms derived for another poetry directly to Old English without allowance for its distinctive poetics” and ignored “the tradition-dependent characteristics of Anglo-Saxon traditional verse” (1978b:237).<sup>4</sup>

With reference to ancient Greek epic, J. B. Hainsworth observes that “the formula is a repetition of content, of words that have between them a bond of mutual expectancy,” emphasizing that “the essence of a formula is its repetition” (1964:155). Hainsworth also points out that Homeric diction “is organized in a

special way characteristic of Homer and only of Homer and certain other pieces of early Greek literature” (157), and Whallon argues that formula usage is different in Homer and in Old English poetry: “While the formulaic epithets for heroes of the *Iliad* are true to individual character but indifferently appropriate to context, the formulaic kennings for the heroes of *Beowulf* are true to generic character but significantly appropriate to context” (1965a:96; emphasis deleted).

Whallon felt that all the terms that Parry had identified in respect to the Homeric formula should also pertain to the Old English formula, especially the concept of thrift (see, for example, 1969). In 1967, however, Donald K. Fry contended that because the concepts and definitions formulated by Parry and Lord were “based on entirely different poetics from those of Germanic, and especially Old English, poetry” (1967c:353), Anglo-Saxonists needed to adjust the theory to make it fit Old English poetry. In particular, Fry argued that thrift was not applicable to Old English poetry because “as long as poets used the device of variation, thrift was impossible” (356). In the same year, Fry turned his attention to another aspect of formularity, emphasizing the importance of the *formulaic system*, “that process of association by which the formulaic diction is organized in such a manner that the poet can select formulas from it in order to express concepts in verse” (1967b:199). He thus redefines the formula as “a group of words, one half-line in length, which shows evidence of being the direct product of a formulaic system” (204; italics deleted). Fry’s emphasis on the tradition-dependent nature of the Old English formulas and formulaic systems has made these two articles necessary reading for all who wish to understand the nature of the formula in Old English.

In addition to Fry, Michael N. Nagler published a study of the formula in 1967 which, although it was written in the field of Homeric studies, has influenced Old English studies. Nagler argues that a formula is actually “a mental template in the mind of the oral poet” and is not to be found in “statistical aspects of ‘repetition’ found among phrases in the text” (269). He suggests that scholars must broaden their understanding of the formula rather than restrict themselves to the definition given by Parry, and he points out that we need “a theory of the formula which accounts for the irrefutable statistical facts that distinguish the texts of Homer from those of poems known to have been composed

by writing, yet does not close the door on the free play of creativity and genius that is so obvious throughout the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*" (274). His solution to the problem is that "a preverbal Gestalt generating a family of allomorphs must be the best conceptual framework for the Homeric formula" (284). In 1969 Nagler suggested that "if we define the formula concretely we are almost compelled to say that the oral poet memorized this or that concrete phrase or phrase-structure, but once we say that the formula he learned is a pre-verbal Gestalt, we can see how that process of learning is like language acquisition, not like memorization" (459). He has also argued that scholars must broaden their conception that a formulaic system is "an inert skeleton made into a poetic performance by the mere filling in of appropriate details" (1974:132).

One of the major movements in the study of the formula in the 1960's was an attempt to classify formulas by their syntax rather than by their semantic content. In Old English studies, two dissertations—that of Wayne A. O'Neil (1960) and that of Godfrey L. Gattiker (1962)—suggested that the syntactic frame was the basis of Old English poetic composition and that a poet could substitute words freely in the prescribed syntactic and metrical frames; Gattiker argued that his approach is compatible with the study of semantic formulas. Joseph A. Russo has suggested an analogous methodology in Homeric studies, arguing that "if the concept of the formula and the system really is to be refined beyond the original discovery of Milman Parry, it must be through the combination of Parry's insights with these more recent contributions which focus on the highly formal structural and metrical organization of the hexameter" (1963:235) because "formulaic verse not only repeats identical phrases; it also demands certain established rhythmical patterns" (247).

In another study, Russo (1966) points out that it is difficult to devise an appropriate method to study the syntactical formulas, but for Old English studies, Frederic G. Cassidy proposed such a methodology. Building on the analyses of O'Neil and Gattiker, Cassidy argued that "the verbal formula rests upon one or another of a limited number of archetypal syntactic patterns, each furnishing a 'frame' by means of which a very large and theoretically unlimited number of differently worded verbal formulas may be produced. . . . Old English verse is built upon only twenty-five syntactic patterns" (1965:78). Cassidy suggests that his

new concept shows that the formulaic system in Old English is not a rigid one because “the verbal details could change, not only unstressed elements but even stressed ones as in formulaic systems, within the steadying patterns of syntax” (83). Donald C. Green (1971) used a computer to study the syntax of the poems and to attempt to show how they were actually composed, finding confirmation for Cassidy’s theory that archetypal syntactic patterns existed and suggesting that future studies of the same nature should be conducted.

In a further development of the ideas about the syntactical formula, Patrick W. Conner defined the formula as “the product—one half-line in length—of a grammar of poetic diction superimposed upon a grammar of the spoken language” (1972:206), basing his idea on the system of transformational-generative grammar that holds that “the grammar of a natural language is dependent for operation [on] the semantic component, the syntactic component, and the phonological component” (207). Because Conner’s structural model describes natural language as well as poetic diction, its usefulness is limited in its application to Old English poetry, a limitation that William W. Minton noted in response to Russo’s first article on the structural formula in Homer. Minton points out that “the phenomena included in the new definition are not confined to oral poetry and should be used in discussions of it only with the greatest caution” (1965:242). He argues that Russo’s proposal makes the formula a unit without meaning, “a purely structural, metrical-grammatical unit” (243), and warns that we should not call the structural patterns formulas because scholars may be led to assume “that such patterns can be used as a test for oral composition” (244), a false assumption. As a result, he suggests that although the syntactical approach provides some insights, it cannot establish whether a poem is oral and does not help us to understand the nature of the formula.

The studies of syntax were, however, one of the influences that helped free the “formulaic theory of Old English poetic composition . . . of its earlier rigidity” (Fry 1968c:516), although most later scholars have not adopted the suggestions. In a study which does not allude to the oral-formulaic theory but nevertheless parallels its findings, F. H. Whitman (1973) argues that an Old English poetic translator followed the procedure of adding words to his literal translation in order to convert his text to poetry, remaining as literal as possible and even utilizing the same syntax



as his source with great frequency. Like Whitman, Fry (1968c) has studied the aesthetics of formulaic composition, emphasizing that poets chose their formulaic systems to express their meaning with aesthetic felicity. In another study dealing with formulas (1974), Fry re-examines the story of Cædmon, suggesting that Cædmon must have absorbed formulaic diction unconsciously as he listened to orally composed poetry. In this study, he defines the formula in terms of an “idea of systems as a pool of organized diction” (236) and argues that “the systems would remain only patterns in the poet’s mind, probably never reaching the level of self-consciousness required for our critical purposes”; he speculates that “Germanic formulas preceded and ultimately produced Germanic meter” (246) rather than the other way around. Diamond has also studied the aesthetics of formulaic language, pointing out that the formula has both a semantic and a metrical component and “seems to be the equivalent in Old English poetry of the phoneme in linguistics, the basic unit associated with meaning” (1975:304). He contends that “mere tabulation of the frequency of verse types or of lexical units does not give us an adequate basis for analyzing poetic style, for each poet had his own stock of formulaic diction . . . [and] may well have developed his own slightly personalized diction” (1975:304-5). He uses his study of formulas to re-examine the vexed question of the authorship of the three *Christ* poems of the *Exeter Book*, concluding that *Christ I* and *III* are not by Cynewulf.

In 1977 Michael Curschmann warned that the subject of oral-formulaic narrative might be “becoming academic, frozen in its own original premises” (63), and scholars began to say that the formula needed to be defined more rigorously than it had been before. Paul Kiparsky suggested that scholars should systematically compare “the phrase patterns of oral poetry with those of ordinary language” (1976:73), and he defined the formula grammatically, pointing out that oral formulas are special kinds of bound phrases and categorizing formulas as either fixed or flexible, the former being ready-made phrases in the surface structures of the poetic language and the latter being “co-occurrence restrictions (obligatory or variable) between lexical items” (82). John Miletich argued that in orally performed works, “the metalinguistic role is a dominant factor in producing variation” (1976a:67).

In another study, Miletich stipulates that “whether the meter is syllabic, tonic-alliterative, or quantitative, the syntactic pattern

must be the same if the statistical results are to be comparable” (1976b:116), and he suggests that if we applied the oral-formulaic theory consistently to all literatures, we would be forced to conclude that *Beowulf* was not composed orally. Miletich emphasizes that we must distinguish clearly between the formula and the “formulaic expression” (117), and Edward R. Haymes points out that there is a difference between an oral formula and a “repeated phrase” — although scholars have “consistently confused the two concepts without sufficient regard for the consequences” (1980:392). Attempting to apply the oral-formulaic theory rigorously to Old English poetry, Geoffrey R. Russom points out that, in contrast to Homer, the poets of Old English works repeat concepts without repeating formulas. He states that the oral-formulaic theory tells us that “oral poets are supposed to repeat useful phrases whenever the need arises, providing fresh language only when they encounter unfamiliar material, or when memory proves faulty” (1978:373). Because Old English poetry does not demonstrate Homeric thrift, Russom makes the generalization that “formulaic theory is refuted, not only as it applies to Old English works, but in general” (387).

In response to such concerns about the definition of the formula and scholarly refusal to acknowledge the need to take into account tradition-dependent features, Fry published a pair of articles that have laid the groundwork for future study of Old English formulaic poetry. In a paper delivered in 1977 but not published until 1981, he pointed out that “early theorists, influenced by Magoun and Parry, regarded repetition as the sign and essence of formulaic composition. They postulated that poets memorized huge blocks of formulas and moved them around in different combinations to produce a poem. . . . Besides being unprovable, this theory reduced poetry to mere moveable blocks, clichés filling slots. The poet becomes the prisoner of his tradition. . . . A second group of theorists related formulas to grammatical patterns, which they called ‘syntactic frames’. . . . This critically reductive theory failed.” (171-72). Fry goes on to say that the most commonly accepted theory in the late 1970’s “works on a generative model from memorized patterns rather than memorized phrases. . . . Multiply these patterns a couple of thousand times and you have not only a poetic tradition, but also a poetic which allows the poet enormous artistic freedom” (172). In a 1979 article which replies to Miletich’s argument that more rigorous definitions

of terms are needed, Fry points out that “one person’s rigor may become another person’s rigidity. Literatures do differ and require exactly tailored analyses within the formulaic framework” (3). He also points out that Old English poetry is too complex to be analyzed in terms of the current statistical techniques, suggesting that “so long as comparative studies remain based on Parry’s definition, which does not fit the Old English evidence, we must excuse Anglo-Saxon poetry from such comparisons” (5).

One response to the need for a definition of the formula that pertains precisely to Old English was made by Foley, who in 1978 used a computer to analyze the metrical text of *Beowulf* (see also 1976). The study addressed two important questions: “Could there exist suprasegmental structures which operated on principles similar to those by which formulas and systems were generated? Might there be a level of traditional poetic composition deeper and more fundamental than visually identified verbal patterns?” (1978a:72). In the course of the study, Foley demonstrated the existence of the “metrical formula,” one of the most promising new ideas about formulaic structure in Old English and one which needs exploration in respect to other poems in the corpus.

In the 1980’s, various scholars have re-examined aspects of formulaic analysis in Old English studies. Muriel Cornell (1981) studies formulas in the context of a wider investigation of the rhetorical device of repetition, which she views as a typical Old English poetic device as important as rhythm and meter. Niles re-evaluates Fry’s concept of the formulaic system, suggesting that the system “must provide a poet with the means of expressing his meaning with a minimum of reflection” (1981b:399) and redefining the formula as follows: “A formula in Anglo-Saxon poetry may be considered a rhythmic/syntactic/semantic complex one half-line in length. It is one of a set of verses (or formulaic system) of a similar metrical type in which one main verbal element is constant” (399; italics deleted). In another study, Niles discusses the varied compound diction of *Beowulf* and suggests that “the high incidence of compounding in the poem—even more, the consistent organization of these compound words into highly useful formulaic systems—might indicate not only that the author of the work was familiar with the old oral tradition, but that he was a living part of this tradition” (1981a:499). Most recently, Renoir has emphasized that “by definition, oral-formulaic elements are repetitions. Like Homeric epithets, they may be exact repetitions,

... or, like Old English metrical formulas, they may consist of paradigms which can be fleshed out in an infinite number of ways” (TBP). He also reminds us that “whereas oral-formulaic composition is unquestionably a form of repetition, mere repetition must not be confused with oral-formulaic composition, and it matters little in this respect whether the repetitions be of written or oral origin or be the product of a non-oral formulaic system” (TBP). Such work clears the ground for a new and productive era of oral-formulaic research in Old English studies.

In 1974 Lord pointed out that “in Anglo-Saxon research needs to be done not merely in numbers of formulas . . . but also, and more particularly in specific formulas. . . . It would be useful to know . . . what formulas are common to *Beowulf* and to the religious poems. . . . It would be helpful to know what formulas occur only in the religious poems—and so forth. The purpose is to determine not only whether a tradition exists but what its content is.” (204). What little work has been done on specific formulas in Old English poetry has tended to involve questions of manuscript readings or metrical patterns. In the former case, oral-formulaic research overlaps with the research conducted by scholars who are interested in the meaning of particular lexical items (see, for example, Kuhn 1979).

In addition, the study of particular formulas runs parallel to the study of aural effects in Old English poetry. In “The Role of Sound-Patterns in Serbo-Croatian Epic,” published in 1956, Lord pointed out that a singer is guided in his choice of formulas by the concept of the “key word,” which is “the bridge between idea and sound pattern” (302) and that “the sounds themselves aid in the choice of words even as the syntactic patterns assist in determining their structure. The singer weaves an intricate web of idea, sound and form. . . . The syntactic, metric, word-boundary, and sound patterns of lines and parts of lines are elements of the formulas” (304). In “The Poetics of Oral Creation” (1959), Lord again called attention to the importance of the aural effects and sound patterns of oral poetry, although most Anglo-Saxonists have been concerned only with aural effects rather than oral composition. Constance B. Hieatt has identified the role played by repeated words in *The Dream of the Rood* (1971) and in *Genesis A* (1980a) and by significant verbal repetitions in *Judith* (1980b). Correspondingly, Eugene R. Kintgen argues that Old English poetry uses verbal echo to link together “the phonetic and semantic levels” (1974:223), and

he identifies the uses of word echo and punning in *The Wanderer* which help reveal the implications of the theme of exile (1975) and the wordplay of *lif*, *lof*, *leof*, *lufu*, and *geleafa* which contributes to the effect of numerous Old English poems (1977). In a similar vein, Roberta Frank studies “the importance and meaning of etymological or pseudo-etymological wordplay (paronomasia) in Old English scriptural verse” (1972:208), and Roberta B. Bosse (1973) discusses the auditory aesthetics of *The Seafarer*. In the most interesting of such studies, James C. Addison, Jr., points out that even though *The Battle of Brunanburh* was undoubtedly not composed orally, critics need to consider its oral-formulaic elements, particularly the “extended aural interlace—interlace that deals with patterns of structure spanning many lines of text” (1982:268), and Cassidy, examining Christian changes to the Germanic oral-formulaic style, shows that there are recurrent formulaic words and phrases in Old English which form “a network with others” (1970:34), pointing to the image complex formed by the words *sunne*, *leoht*, *beacen*, and *tacen*, any of which “may suggest or trigger any of the others” so that “when two or more appear together it is a clear hint to look beyond the literal meaning” (34).

The study of formulas is also related to the study of metrics, the seminal studies of metrics being those of Winfred P. Lehmann. Lehmann argues that all poems written in the Germanic languages until the twelfth century belong to a single tradition—although there are differences within that tradition—and that we need to understand the facts that the poetry was presented orally and that “an appreciation of Germanic rhythms requires only that the rhythms of the single line be understood” (1956:35). Lehmann also uses the metrical conventions in Indo-European verse older than extant Germanic poetry to argue that “the structure of half-lines . . . shows great variety” (1982:23) in Indo-European verse and that scholars should not try to use “an accompanying musical instrument or appropriate pauses . . . to bring about equal, isochronous segments” (23). One scholar who has been concerned with the music that must originally have accompanied Old English poetry is Bessinger, who argues that “metrical formulas—recurring and interchangeable phrases strung together in similar metrical situations—make an oral singer’s improvisation possible” (1957a:162) and that Old English poetry must have been recited to the accompaniment of the harp. Nist (1967) has argued that a

theory about the rhythm of *Beowulf* must account for the scop's use of a harp, and Thomas Cable has studied the metrical and melodic formulas underlying *Beowulf* and argued that there is an important relationship "between the lexical formula studied in Old English scholarship and the melodic formula studied in musicology" (1974:106) and that "a melodic formula, or a small set of melodic formulas, . . . preceded and shaped the composition of the text" (1975:11). Creed has performed a computer-assisted study of *Beowulf* and has proposed a new lineation of the poem, arguing that from the point of view of the oral-formulaic theory and of metrics, "every measure in *Beowulf* is equal to every other measure" (1982:27; italics deleted), a theory that contrasts with that of Lehmann. Foley re-examines the differences between Old English metrics and those of the Homeric poems and Serbo-Croatian poetry, focusing "on the role of meter in formulaic structure—not as a gauge of orality or literacy but simply as a prosodic determinant" and reminding us that "*nothing* in ancient Greek translates *at all* to Old English without careful and thoughtful attention to differences in prosody" (1982:7). He emphasizes that we need to study the metrics and formulaic structure of *Beowulf* "from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives and to carry out our analyses with all of the old-fashioned philological rigor we can muster" (14; italics deleted).

The study of metrics and that of formulas overlap, and Lewis E. Nicholson (1963) has suggested that hypermetric verses can be examined not from the point of view of their metrics, but from that of their formulaic structure. The study of particular formulas has often been carried on in the interest of emending lines or preserving manuscript readings. Magoun has pointed out that the normal emendation of *Beowulf* 2226b "brings the verse into line with a formula and/or formulaic system" (1953a:541) well-known in Old English poetry, and Creed (1956) has shown that l. 2231a can be emended to match a verse found elsewhere in the poem. Creed (1958) uses the oral-formulaic theory to discuss manuscript readings from another angle when he contends that the *Genesis* poet must have been an oral singer on the basis that he fails to provide alliteration to link the half-lines in l. 1316. A few articles have dealt with formulas of the Germanic and Indo-European traditions. Magoun, for example, argues that the "common occurrence of *wine Burgenda* and *vin Borgunda* merely tells us that the Anglo-Saxon and Old-Icelandic singers . . . knew the fact that Gúphere-

Gunthere-Gunnar had ruled the Burgundians and had at their command this obvious means of saying so in a just measure of verse” (1958:218). Von Egon Werlich (1967) studies the Indo-European and Germanic contexts of two of the Old English terms for the singer, *wōðbora* and *scop*, and Tauno F. Mustanoja (1967), examining Indo-European funeral practices, argues that there must have been an oral tradition of ritual mourning among the Anglo-Saxons and that “Geatisc meowle” is the correct formula for *Beowulf* 3150b. Anne L. Klinck (1983), analyzing the Old English epithet *folces hyrde* in comparison to its Homeric counterpart, maintains that Old English poets used their flexible systems to merge the literal and the metaphorical levels of their formulaic language.

In 1957 Creed examined two formulaic systems, the “*andswarode*-system,” which he argued serves as “a kind of easily discernible oral ‘quotation mark’ ” (525), and “the *maðelode*-system,” which he views as “essentially a verse-pair system designed to make a whole line of the song” (527). Thomas C. Rumble, contending that we can perform the best literary analysis of Old English poetry when we understand its formularity, discusses “the remarkably systematic and imaginative use that the *Beowulf* poet made of just one of his many ‘set phrases’ —the well-known *ic hyrde, mine gefræge* formula” (1964:15). Rumble argues that we must examine specific formulas closely in order to determine “whether one poet makes a more purposeful and artistic use of them than another” (20). Scholars who have done so within the last ten years are Paula Mertens-Fonck (1978), who studies formulas that introduce direct discourse; Harvey De Roo, who argues that *ealuscerwen* and *meoduscerwen* are “grimly ironic” (1979:259) in *Beowulf* and *Andreas* respectively; and Barbara Nolan and Morton W. Bloomfield (1980), who have studied the formal boasts in *Beowulf*.

In 1961 Whallon argued against those scholars who felt that the usefulness of formulas meant that they were virtually meaningless by stating that “a formulaic element need not be held meaningless merely because it was selected with little conscious reflection. Time-savers though the periphrastic expressions are, they may nevertheless be handsome or ironic or humorous” (310). Along a similar line, Fry has suggested that the potential in formulaic composition “for manipulated expectation, for parody, for repetition as a juxtaposing device, and even for irony is enormous”

(1981:172), and Richard A. Lewis has argued that formulaic conventions “have a generally fixed semantic orientation which could be exploited and was exploited for a more sophisticated literary effect” (1975:663). Likewise, Lars Malmberg (1970), citing ironic conflict between fact and expression in *The Wanderer*, discusses the use of the phrase *wapema gebind*. Both Creed and Bessinger have put the study of specific formulas to good use by suggesting how Old English poems were made by the addition of formula to formula. Creed remade a passage from *Beowulf* (1959), and, when criticized for having done so, responded that “some simplification of the complexity of the interaction of tradition and the traditional singer-poet may well be necessary if we are to try to understand something of the nature of the singer as artist, that is as *shaper* of the tradition, and not simply as performer, that is as *transmitter* of the tradition” (1968:152). Bessinger, attempting to provide a traditional context for consideration of *Beowulf*, remade *Cædmon’s Hymn* as a “new oral-traditional praise song for the heroic builder of Heorot. This is of course very easy if the Hymn is used as a frame, for it is already basically that kind of poem, . . . indeed in one sense the best example surviving from the OE period of an heroic praise song” (1974:91).

#### *IV. Themes and Type-Scenes*

In “Ćor Huso: A Study of Southslavic Song,” an unfinished work composed between 1933 and 1935, Parry noted the existence of traditional formulaic elements above the level of the formula, and he commented that “the oral song is made up on the one hand of the essential theme, which may in itself be a bare enough thing, and on the other hand of the traditional oral material which furnishes its elaboration. . . . The good or bad song is due to no mere accident of length, but to the singer’s narrative ability, which is in turn limited by the quality of the tradition, . . . by the quality of the themes which make the texture of his song” (461). Lord defines the theme as “a subject unit, a group of ideas, regularly employed by a singer, not merely in any given poem, but in the poetry as a whole” (1938:440); he suggests that the “kinds of themes according to function or nature, essential, major, minor, narrative, descriptive, and so on, can be defined better at a later time when we understand more clearly the workings of the theme”



(440), and that thematic study can be classified by the study of “the workings of the theme” and by the study of specific themes.

In 1951 Lord pointed out that the theme “is not restricted, as is the formula, by metrical considerations; hence, it should not be limited to exact word-for-word repetition,” and he emphasized that “the theme and the formula are distinct units, even if at times they coincide” (73). In 1953 he defined themes as “repeated narrative or descriptive elements” which “function in building songs in much the same way in which the formulas function in building lines. . . . Some themes . . . are purely ornamental. . . . Moreover, the themes vary in stability, both as to formula content and as to place in any given song, in accordance with the frequency of their use” (127). Lord’s study of themes in South Slavic oral poetry permits him to answer those who suggested that the oral-formulaic theory called into question Homer’s genius, because he argues that an oral poet “will show his originality both in new phrases and in new combinations of themes, perhaps even in new themes” (128).

Lord’s 1949 dissertation, which became *The Singer of Tales*, introduced the study of oral themes into Old English studies, and he argues there that the theme “is not any fixed set of words, but a grouping of ideas” (1960:69) and that “the themes lead naturally from one to another to form a song which exists as a whole in the singer’s mind. . . . The theme in oral poetry exists at one and the same time in and for itself and for the whole song” (94). Critics who followed Lord were concerned with the aesthetics of the thematic patterns in Old English poetry. Creed, for example, poses the frequently asked question, “How can a tissue of formulas, of repeated verses and significant parts of verses, be a great poem?” (1961:98), and answers it by arguing that “it is on the level of the theme that we can legitimately expect to find differences in the work of mature singers which has survived to us” (99). He calls attention to the “sameness (the recurrence of the theme) with difference (the use of formulas not employed in other occurrences, the different arrangements of the formulas” (99) to show that there is both a formulaic tradition and an artistic use of it.

The desire to discuss the aesthetic applications of the oral-formulaic theory and to clear up “vague and contradictory critical terminology” led Fry to provide new definitions of the terms theme, type-scene, and motif (1968b:49). He suggests that a *type-scene* is “a recurring stereotyped presentation of conventional details used to describe a certain narrative event, requiring neither

verbatim repetition nor a specific formula content” and defines a *theme* as “a recurring concatenation of details and ideas, not restricted to a specific event, verbatim repetition, or certain formulas, which forms an underlying structure for an action or description” (53; italics deleted). Fry’s distinction between the type-scene, which is narrative-based, and the theme, which is a cluster of details, has influenced later discussions of the terms. Mark W. Edwards has discussed this distinction in respect to Homeric studies, holding that Fry’s definition of the theme is not satisfactory for Homeric studies and suggesting that Homeric type-scenes “have a rigidity of structure (especially of sequence, though omissions of elements occur and the scenes are sometimes interwoven)” (1975:71). In 1974, Lord commented that “it is noticeable in Anglo-Saxon and evident from Fry’s treatment of type-scenes that there seems to be no, or at best very little, verbal correspondence between instances of type-scenes, and, therefore, it appears appropriate to differentiate them from the compositional themes with a reasonably high degree of verbal correspondence” (207).

Although many scholars have adopted Fry’s definitions, not all agree with them, and some confusion has resulted in Old English studies from the lack of generally accepted definitions of the terms theme and type-scene. One of the greatest difficulties is caused by disagreements between those who use the term “theme” in its technical oral-formulaic sense and those who use it more generally. Stanley J. Kahrl, aware of the two meanings of the term, states that he does not use “the term in the restricted technical sense of Magoun or Lord . . . [but in] the more usual sense of a concept or general idea embodied in a narrative action in which recurrent elements . . . serve to remind the reader of earlier occurrences of that concept” (1972:190). Since he specifies that he defines the feud as a theme in the general sense of the term, his discussion is easy to follow. Other scholars who use the term theme in the general sense are not as precise as Kahrl, and one wonders whether their work would profit from a discussion of the oral-formulaic context of the themes they identify.<sup>5</sup>

Some scholars who use the more general definition acknowledge that the use of a particular theme might have had relevance to an oral tradition. David M. Gaunt, for example, comments that when poets depict singers relating the story of the Creation, the theme “is associated in their minds with certain

effects to be described in the narrative” (1977:220). Although he acknowledges that the theme appealed to oral singers as well as to literate authors, he does not discuss the debt of the theme to the oral-formulaic tradition. Kathryn Hume discusses the theme of the hall, in which “what is looked to for safety and what is feared as a threat to that security make apt points of departure for a study of a culture’s major assumptions” (1974:63). She refers to the theme of Exile identified by Stanley B. Greenfield (1955) but does not discuss the hall as an oral-formulaic theme. Kenneth Florey acknowledges that the source of the theme of stability and chaos may be either pagan or Christian and notes that the conflict between the two “is depicted in terms of heroic imagery” (1976:83) but does not discuss the oral-formulaic context of that imagery. The greatest problem, however, lies with those critics who discuss common oral-formulaic thematic elements and either deny that they are from the Common Germanic tradition or ignore discussions of formularity. Cross, for example, argues that the theme of war comes not “from a reality among our Germanic pagan ancestors” but from “a rhetorical question of St. Ambrose” (1971:269) and represents “part of the Christian conscience” (277) that lies behind *Beowulf*; he also contends that the poet of *The Wanderer* mentions the wolf and the bird to recall Christian themes rather than to evoke “the beasts and birds which appear in O. E. poetic battle-scenes” (1958-59:93). Likewise, both Stanley and John Gardner discuss the theme of the Beasts of Battle without referring to Magoun’s identification thereof (1955b). Stanley simply says that the presence of the wolf, the eagle, and the raven in a battle-scene “is obviously a part of traditional descriptions of battle” (1956:442) and an example of the Old English use of “figurative diction” (443). In his discussion of *Elene*, Gardner also alludes to “the preparation for battle, which opens the poem” (1975:88) without speaking of the identification of the Approach to Battle type-scene (Fry 1969). Such omissions make the arguments cited above less compelling than they might otherwise have been.

In *The Singer of Tales*, Lord notes several Old English themes, “repeated assemblies with speeches, repetition of journeying from one place to another, and . . . scenes of the slaying of monsters” (1960:198-99). Many themes and type-scenes have been discussed in a single article each, whereas others have been discussed in various works. Magoun notes the existence of two

themes, “the grateful recipient,” which “lets the singer highlight the value and splendor of a gift” (1961:274), and “the gesture of the raised shield and/or brandished spear,” which gives “solemnity to words that follow” (276). George Clark discusses the themes of “the impact of a weapon upon some part of a warrior’s armor or upon the man himself” (1965a:411), the advancing army (1965a), and the traveller who recognizes his destination (1965b). Paul B. Taylor treats the theme used by poets to suggest death, including the subthemes of “the sorrowful journey” and the “song of death” (1967:251). Earl R. Anderson identifies the theme of the “*sæmearh*,” which is used to allude to the dangers of sea travel or “to suggest the speed of the journey” (1972:8). Opland (1976) identifies the theme of joy in the hall, and Renoir the narrative pattern in which “an elongated, man-made wooden object of any size . . . with a pragmatic effect upon the speaker of the poem or a protagonist thereof . . . speaks up to tell how it once had a previous existence under the form of one or more live trees” (1976:340-41; italics deleted)<sup>6</sup> and the theme of separation in *Maldon* and the *Hildebrandslied* (1979). In a paper read at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association in 1980, Fry identified the theme of the Cliff of Death, which has “four essential elements: a cliff or wall, serpent shapes, darkness, and deprivation . . . [and] signals death.” Dwight Conquergood (1981) has identified the pattern of the formal boast, and Nabaneeta D. Sen (1979) has compared themes in works like *Beowulf* to those in the Indic *Ramayana*, arguing that narrative themes may be divided into those about the hero’s life and those belonging to the narrative itself. In an article of great promise because it shows an awareness of the complexity of Old English poetry, Howell D. Chickering argues that the *Death-Song* is one of six examples of “the theme of man’s ignorance when facing God’s judgment on his soul” (1976:96) and must be interpreted in its vernacular context; even though he defines a theme as “a particular concept and attitude” (96) rather than using the term in its technical oral-formulaic sense, his acknowledgment that formulaic expressions occur in all six texts helps us to identify the pattern as an example of an oral-formulaic theme.

Although the concept of the theme was introduced into Old English studies by Lord, the most important early discussions of themes—and two of the most productive for Old English scholarship—were made by Magoun and Greenfield. In 1955

Magoun published a study of one of the most common Old English themes, “the mention of the wolf, eagle, and/or raven as beasts attendant on a scene of carnage” (1955b:83) and called thereafter the Beasts of Battle. Magoun suggests that it is an “ornamental” rather than an “essential” theme (82), a judgment which later scholars, concerned with the aesthetics of the theme, have questioned. Bonjour points out that “Magoun’s main object was the identification of the theme, and he therefore abstained from drawing any inferences as to the use of that theme by the different singers” (1957:564-65), maintaining that the affective use of themes makes the audience anticipate events that will take place while acknowledging that a theme “may have been used . . . rather mechanically and, if not exactly out of context, at least without the full force of . . . its virtual valences or associational powers” (566). He feels that the use of the theme in *Beowulf* demonstrates conclusively that the *Beowulf* poet uses his inherited formulaic materials artistically. Taylor compares the use of the Beasts of Battle in *The Battle of Brunanburh* to the picture of the wolf presented in the *Maxims*, arguing that the *Brunanburh* poet “intentionally or by formulaic convention or both, has placed in contrast the position a wolf *should* occupy according to the rituals of nature, and the place he *does* occupy because of the carnage” (1969:403). Allan A. Metcalf surveys the *Beowulf* poet’s use of ten natural animals, especially the three Beasts of Battle, who “can sense when a forthcoming battle will provide them with carrion” and are connected with “‘doomed’ men” (1963:379-80), and Hrafnhildur Bodvarsdottir argues that the Beasts are “associated with sinister landscapes and death . . ., with the territory of the uncivilized, monsters and the forces of evil (wolf), with the boundaries of such territories (wolf and raven), and with ignominious death . . ., or with the boundaries of such territories where a dramatic transition scene would be enacted” (1976:145-46).

Also in 1955 Greenfield published a study as influential in Old English studies as Magoun’s study of the Beasts of Battle, “The Formulaic Expression of the Theme of ‘Exile’ in Anglo-Saxon Poetry,” which deepened insights he had expressed on exile in three earlier articles (1951, 1953a, and 1953b). Greenfield points out that “despite the fact that the exile figures are so different in kind and character . . ., the expressions of their plights are clearly cast in similar molds” (1955:201). In order to “establish the dimensions of the poetic convention for the theme of ‘exile,’ as a

further contribution to the study of convention and originality in Anglo-Saxon poetry” (200), Greenfield shows that there are “four aspects or concomitants of the exile state: 1. status . . . , 2. deprivation . . . , 3. state of mind . . . , [and] 4. movement in or into exile” (201). Leonard H. Frey extends Greenfield’s insights to consider the way that exile was understood during the Old English period and “its development in Christian narrative poetry” (1963:293), arguing that the theme provided an excellent background for Christian elegy. Joseph L. Baird (1966) contends that Grendel is a traditional exile as defined by Greenfield, stating that his exiled state would have had an impact on the original audience, and Matti Rissanen (1969) points out that the poet of *The Wife’s Lament* uses the theme effectively to depict the plight of an exiled woman rather than that of an exiled man.

Five years after Greenfield’s landmark article on Exile, David K. Crowne published a thematic study which proved to be of seminal importance for later Old English studies, “The Hero on the Beach: An Example of Composition by Theme in Anglo-Saxon Poetry” (1960). Using Lord’s definition of the theme, he compared *Andreas* to its sources, concluding that it is not merely “a versified translation of some one of the prose versions” but a “vigorous re-creation of the foreign story within the traditional native idiom” (366), an observation as valuable as his identification of the theme. Crowne defines the theme as “a stereotyped way of describing (1) a hero on the beach (2) with his retainers (3) in the presence of a flashing light (4) as a journey is completed (or begun)” (368) and calls for Anglo-Saxonists to investigate the way that Old English poets used their traditional themes. Although many scholars have analyzed the theme as it appears in various works, Joseph A. Dane has denied its existence, arguing that “the two stories in the Phoenix digression of *Iliad* IX contain all the principal motifs associated with the ‘Hero on the Beach’” (1982:444). Because scholars have attributed “Germanic provenance” (443) to the theme and he has found it in a classical text, Dane concludes that the theme does not really exist. But should we not seek—and find—“the continuity of tradition” Dane demands (443) in the common Indo-European heritage of both Greek and Germanic narrative, after the model that Renoir (1976) suggests when he identifies an oral-formulaic theme in the written poems of Catullus? Although Dane’s argument is clearly untenable, it does suggest a direction for future research on a common Indo-European

tradition behind the Hero on the Beach.

Other work on this theme has been more productive. In a study of its survival in the *Nibelungenlied*, Renoir states that it appears in a different form with the threshold of a door substituted for that of the beach. He argues that “the disparity . . . may well be more apparent than real. A beach is by definition the separation between two worlds—that of the land and that of the waters—and the ‘hero on the beach’ necessarily stands at the juncture between the two. The same remark applies to a man standing by the door of a building: in a less obvious but equally real way he stands at the juncture between two worlds—that of the finite inside and that of the infinite outside” (1964:73). Fry published several articles on the same narrative pattern, arguing in the first (1966) that 11. 2-12 of the *Finnsburh Fragment* provide an example of a stage of the theme intermediate between instances in *Beowulf* and the *Nibelungenlied*, and in the second that we should not view the theme as identified by Crowne as a “pure form” (1967a:178) from which other versions diverge because we have no evidence to tell us which details represent the norm from which the others depart. As a result, he continues, “we must regard all the passages as equally legitimate and conventional variant treatments of the same narrative materials” (1967a:179). Janet Thormann identifies the presence of the theme in *The Phoenix* in a form different from any in heroic poetry because the four elements “are separated over the course of the narration in the first part of the poem, and three of the four elements are substantially modified” (1970:188). Carol Jean Wolf argues that the author of *The Dream of the Rood* uses the theme to describe Christ’s burial, using it and the Approach to Battle sequence to reinforce “his presentation of Christ as a hero and the crucifixion as a heroic encounter” (1970:206). In an application to Old High German verse, Renoir (1977) uses the Old English research to argue that the theme lies behind the *Hildebrandslied* and to provide evidence supporting the manuscript reading of a disputed passage. Alexandra Hennessey Olsen (1980) studies the double use of the Hero on the Beach in *Guthlac B* and its literary affect, and James D. Johnson supports Renoir’s argument that a door, like a beach, can represent a “separation between two worlds” by reference to “Ibn Fadlan’s early-tenth-century description of a door-frame used as a symbolic boundary between the lands of the living and the dead” (1983:597).

In 1962 Creed discussed the theme of the Singer in the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and *Beowulf*, noting that both “Homer and the Anglo-Saxon poet have presented us with pictures of *oral* poets, or singers” (46). He observes that “these singers within the song are presented to us as oral and traditional singers. . . . We are thus left as we listen to these passages with an impression of Homer and the Anglo-Saxon singer glancing back at these moments to what they apparently would have us believe are the primary sources of their great sings—Demodocus and the Danish singer.” (52). In 1978 Foley used previously unedited Serbo-Croatian texts to cast light on the theme of the Singer in both Greek and Old English, showing that the *guslari* also depict ideal singers. He maintains that “the understanding of . . . idealized *guslari* as personifications of the oral epic tradition helps us to interpret their Anglo-Saxon counterparts Widsith and Deor” (1978b:246). In the same article, he notes that both Serbo-Croatian and Old English poems include the theme of the heroic oath that is taken before battle, and he suggests that the study of “both comparative resemblances and tradition-dependent dimensions” provides “a double focus which . . . is essential to the felicitous appraisal of oral epic art” (246).

In his doctoral dissertation of 1965, Lee C. Ramsey identified what he called the theme of Battle and argued that the two important features of the theme are “the use of similar details and the use of similar order” (9). He lists the important features of the theme as follows:

The central action is the *advance* to the field, and the supplementary actions are the *command* to advance, the *preparations* for advancing, and the *assembly*, which is either a preparation for or the same as the advance. The established order is command, preparation, advance (the assembly being treated in different ways and coming in different places) when all the details are used. Other details include the statement of *intention*, which follows a reference to the advance . . . ; the *beasts of battle*, which also follows a reference to the advance; *hastening*, which usually follows the beasts of battle; the *bearing of equipment*, which is synonymous with advancing; and various details about the *attitude* of the warriors, which can come almost anywhere. (72).

Ramsey’s work was brought to the attention of Old English



scholars by Fry (1969), who notes that Ramsey labels the elements a theme whereas he considers them a type-scene that he names the Approach to Battle, the designation by which it is now known. Fry points out the artistic possibilities of using type-scenes, observing that “the traditional formulaic poet using type-scene construction gains certain advantages from his medium. By manipulating recognized patterns already rich in association, he affords himself possibilities for unity, symmetry, suspense, foreshadowing, and larger connotations from imagery” (41). Artistic uses of the type-scene have also been noted by Wolf (1970); by Fredrik J. Heinemann, who argues that the *Judith* poet portrays unheroic warriors comically and that the ironic effects he achieves constitute “a mock heroic version” (1970:83) of the type-scene; and again by Fry, who feels that *Judith* 199-216a provides an artistic use of the type-scene and that the poet’s “mastery of convention makes the formulaic tradition not a limit to his creativity, but an opportunity for his genius” (1972:119).

In addition to the Approach to Battle, Ramsey identified the type-scene of the Sea Voyage, stating that the two passages in *Beowulf* share “similarities in events and in the sequence of events” (1971:54), even though they do not repeat specific words and details. He argues that “as rhetorical set pieces, the sea voyages of *Beowulf* have both a symbolic and a broader structural significance: symbolically, they help link together the major themes of voyaging, battle, challenge, and death; structurally, they, along with related descriptive patterns such as funerals, mark off the beginning and ending of the narrative as well as the transitions between its major segments” (59). In an essay that preceded Ramsey’s, Diamond (1961) had discussed several themes (war, sea voyages, the *comitatus*, and cold weather), concluding that the poets of *Andreas* and *The Seafarer* did not use the type-scene of the Sea Voyage because their individual poetic purposes were more important than the use of the traditional type-scene.

Diamond observes that “the paradox is that the more we understand about the way these poems were put together, the less certainty we can pronounce on the relationships of the poems to each other” (468), and he is one of a number of scholars interested in the literary artistry of the Old English poetic use of themes and type-scenes. Fry has argued that the *Beowulf* poet, like the *Judith* poet, uses themes and type-scenes artistically, and he adduces as evidence the poet’s use of “one very common pattern in Old

English poetry,” the theme “ ‘Banquet followed by Bed,’ which often symbolizes the bed of death after the banquet of life” (1968a:6). Robert B. Burlin discusses the same theme, noting that the *Beowulf* poet often uses such traditional formulaic material ironically: “The hero’s conquests can be followed only by a general rejoicing, sumptuous rewards, and the mandatory banquets. Such occasions are the prevailing symbol in Old English poetry for human happiness. . . . [But] it is never far from the *Beowulf* poet’s mind at least that the great celebrations of human communality share in the precariousness of the ‘feast of life.’ . . . The gnomic inconsequence reintroduces the alternation of human security and fear, comfort and agony, the inexorable rhythm on which the poet has chosen to organize his narrative.” (1975:46-47). Harry E. Kavros also suggests that the *Beowulf* poet uses “the motifs of feast and sleep . . . ironically or in apparently inappropriate contexts, and the tension created by motif and context also heightens the tone of impending doom” (1981:121) and contributes to the poetic texture. In a similar vein, Joanne De Lavan, studying “feasts and anti-feasts in *Beowulf*” (1981:235) compares the theme of sleeping and feasting in *Beowulf* and in the *Odyssey*.

In “*Beowulf* and *Odysseus*,” Lord points out that the passages preceding the story of Euryalus and the Unferth episode include the theme of the “calumny of a stranger at a feast” (1965:86) as part of a complex of story patterns. In Germanic tradition, the theme of calumny is known as the *senna*, “a stylized battle of words” consisting of “threats, insults, challenges, and the appropriate replies” (Harris 1979:66), or the *flyting*, “a stylized exchange between hostile speakers of traditional provocations (insults, boasts, threats, and curses), typically organized in the basic pattern Claim, Denial, and Counterclaim” (Clover 1979:125). Although Carol J. Clover argues that the *flyting* “is not, strictly speaking, a type-scene of Oral Theory, but a set piece drawing on a common stock of clichés which are genre-specific” (1979:125), and although this pattern occurs in prose as well as poetry, it seems reasonable to discuss it along with demonstrable themes and type-scenes. In her analysis of the Unferth episode in terms of the *flyting* and its traditional setting, contenders, structure, content, and outcome, Clover (1980) emphasizes that understanding that the episode is a *flyting* makes it easier to interpret. Earl Anderson (1970) discusses the *flyting* in *Maldon* in order to illustrate the poet’s skill, and in a later article he identifies a specific Old

English poetic variant of the *flyting*, the “ ‘tragic court flyting’, which involves the following sequence of events: (1) a tense situation is created by the presence or arrival of strangers in the hall . . . , (2) hostility comes to the surface with an exchange of threats or insults, (3) accompanied by the appearance of a particularly provocative weapon, . . . [and] (4) the provocation results in a battle which takes place in the hall, and ends with the destruction of court and hall” (1980:293-94).

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>For a detailed discussion of the relationship of German Higher Criticism to formulaic studies in Old English, see Foley 1981:52-56.

<sup>2</sup>All quotations from the works of Milman Parry are taken from Adam Parry 1971; all references appear in the text.

<sup>3</sup>The nearly 2000 entries (through 1982) analyzed in Foley 1985b will be supplemented and updated on a continuing basis in the Year’s Work annotated bibliography to be published in the third issue of *Oral Tradition* each year.

<sup>4</sup>Diamond’s statistical analysis has also been influential in recent years, as witnessed by the work of Sandra J. Hamartiuk (1980), who argues that formulaic analysis shows that *Juliana* differs stylistically from the other Cynewulfian poems.

<sup>5</sup>Some examples of works which use the term “theme” in its general sense are the following. Graham D. Caie (1976) studies the Judgment Day theme, discussed by L. Whitbread under the name “the doomsday theme” (1967:452); Whitbread argues that Old English poetry presents the theme in a non-heroic manner. Hildegard L. C. Tristram, studying the way that Old English poetry and prose describe Heaven and Hell, contends that “the origin and use of these syntagms . . . may be sought in Latin tradition” (1978:102).

<sup>6</sup>Although scholars have not extended Renoir’s observations to other classical and medieval texts, Niles (1977) has argued that Hans Christian Andersen uses the theme of the Wooden Object Which Speaks in *Grantraet* and that his use shows his knowledge of Germanic oral tradition.

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**A Romanian Singer of Tales:  
Vasile Tetin**

**Eliza Miruna Ghil**

Vasile Tetin is a peasant singer native of Teleorman county, in southern Romania. A versatile and highly gifted performer while in his prime, this singer regularly included in his show the local brand of traditional epic poetry, the so-called *cîntec bătrînesc* (“song of old deeds”), a type of epic similar in certain respects, such as themes and verbal compositional techniques, to the Balkan epic studied by Albert B. Lord in his classic book *The Singer of Tales* (1960). This epic differs, however, from the Yugoslav material described by the American scholar mainly in two ways: 1) in length: the songs have a more episodic character and rarely attain the length of one thousand lines; 2) in performing style: they often intermingle a sung and a declaimed *recitative* skillfully interwoven against an instrumental background (i.e., a string accompaniment) by the vocal performer, who may also participate in the playing. Though not unknown in other epic traditions in the Balkans, this type of register switching is quasi-mandatory in the long pieces performed in the Romanian territory.<sup>1</sup>

Now seventy-eight years old and officially retired from public singing in spite of an enduring local popularity, Vasile Tetin is an alert interlocutor endowed with an engaging sense of humor and with obvious natural intelligence. Thanks to these qualities, he turns out to be an excellent subject of study for the researcher interested in the performance of epic poetry, both old and new. The following portrait is based on two lengthy encounters that I had with the singer in September and December 1983, encounters supplemented with several shorter interviews conducted according to my instructions in 1983 and 1984.<sup>2</sup>

*I. Education and artistic training*

Vasile Tetin was born on September 21, 1907 in the village (*comună*) of Ciupereni, situated in the vicinity of Turnu-Măgurele, a little town (and harbor) at the confluence of the rivers Danube and Olt. As one of the ten children born to Marin and Anica, peasants of modest means (*țărani săraci* in modern parlance), Vasile had a childhood full of hardship. He attended school for one year in his native village. But when Romania entered the First World War in 1916, schools closed down and civilian life was disrupted. After the war that ended in 1918, his parents could no longer afford to send him to school, and had to use him for work around the house, particularly to guard sheep. Later on, while in the military service, young Vasile briefly attended a course for illiterate adults (*de alfabetizare*) where he was taught more reading and writing.

He can be considered literate now, though in a very minimal way. Judging by his own statements, the printed word appears to have played no role in the making of his artistic personality: he never saw a printed *cîntec bătrînesc* and never learned one from a book. He regrets at times nowadays, rightly or wrongly, not having been more “schooled” in his lifetime. It is interesting to note that the difficulty of reading as a terribly strenuous type of activity which brings tears to one’s eyes is a recurrent descriptive detail in the variants of some epic songs as sung by Vasile Tetin, for instance in the case of “Dobrișan.”

In 1918, while in his early teens, he joined an elder cousin, Marin Mitran (nicknamed Tăzluș), a violin player and singer, and underwent a sort of apprenticeship under his guidance. This type of learning from elder relatives constitutes the most typical form of apprenticeship in the Romanian epic tradition (Ciobanu 1969:10; Fochi 1980:27; Bîrlea 1942). Our singer learned to play the violin and to sing “songs of old deeds” (*cîntece bătrînești*) and “songs of a good time” (*cîntece de petrecere*). He subsequently enriched this epic and lyric repertory—both genres are part of his programs as we shall see below—while listening to “the village elders,” as he puts it.

He was married at the age of twenty and had three sons. Unfortunately, none of the three inherited his artistic gifts, a fact that saddens him deeply, aware as he is of the imminent disappearance of the epic art form so dear to his heart, a process

now close to completion in the Romanian territory. He attempted at one time to teach epic songs to a niece endowed with a good voice, but the attempt failed. "The young ones are lazy and conceited nowadays," he used to say; they prefer to learn short lyric pieces, since epic singing is a demanding and laborious art form and not a matter of simple memorization as we shall see below. The readiness to train a female performer in this art form may indicate our singer's desire to rejuvenate the genre and its possible audience: traditional epic singing is, by and large, a male trade in Romania as elsewhere in the Balkans (Lord 1960:14).

Vasile Tetin earned his meager living primarily as a farmer. He inherited a few acres of land and would tend his land part of the year, working also for well-to-do peasants (*chiaburi*) part of the year as a sort of contractor (*în parte*). But he would spend a significant amount of time during the weekends (up to three days at a time) performing, a kind of second job that often proved considerably more profitable than the first.

His association during his formative years with two important figures of the Romanian traditional entertainment scene deserves mentioning in this context. He was, first, a member of Maria Lătărețu's band at the beginning of her career (1932-33), and performed with her as a violin player and back-up singer during her early appearances, for instance in the restaurant of Sănduș, in Odaia, a suburb of Turnu-Măgurele. She then left for the capital Bucharest, situated at a distance of about one hundred miles from the area, and subsequently became one of the most prominent members of the lyric repertory called "folkloric" in Romania, a singer whose records reached a wide audience and are often being played on the radio in Romania to this day. Vasile Tetin can still croon "in Maria Lătărețu's manner," and often did so very successfully (particularly with respect to the feminine public) while performing at weddings and parties in the past.

His association with a second traditional singer turned out to be even more important from the viewpoint of epic performance, namely, with Marin Dorcea (Modeleanu), a *lăutar*<sup>3</sup> from Ciuperceni, well known to the public in his native Southern Teleorman, and to specialists. Tetin performed with Marin Dorcea extensively as back-up singer (*secundaș*, as he calls it) in his youth, and learned from him part of his own epic repertory. Born in 1895 and now deceased, Marin Dorcea is one of the fourteen epic singers featured in individual portraits in Alexandru Amzulescu's well-known



anthology of *Cîntece bătrinești* (1974:522-24). A house builder (*dulgher*) and part-time singer (particularly during the holidays of the cold season), Vasile Tetin's mentor possessed, according to A. Amzulescu, the richest repertory of a contemporary epic singer, some forty-five pieces in all. Items which Marin Dorcea once sung, such as "Gruia lui Novac," "Badiu Cîrciumaru," "Miu Haiducu," "Corbea," "Radu Anghel de la Greci," "Antofiță a lui Vioară," "Dobrișan," "Chira Chiralina," "Ghiță Cătănuță," "Ciobanul care și-a pierdut oile," are now also in Tetin's repertory. He may not have learned all of them from Dorcea directly,<sup>4</sup> but he credits him, for instance, with the teaching of "Dobrișan," one of his most elaborate and beautiful pieces.

The master of them both had been, for part of this material, Ancu Zgîrță the Elder (Moș Ancu Zgîrță) from Ciuperceni. Tetin claims to have learned from this singer "Miu Haiducu," one of the longest songs in his repertory (more than seven hundred lines in the variant that he sang for me), among others. Ciuperceni appears thus to have been a major center of epic singing in the "peasant style," as opposed to the other style extant in the Romanian performing tradition, namely the "gypsy" style, brilliantly represented, for instance, by the "school" of Clejani (Ilfov county, near Bucharest). Space does not permit a full description of these performing styles in the present context. Suffice it to say here that the "peasant style" is described as "purer" in melodic line and intonation, while the "gypsy style" is referred to as being more heavily ornamented and also characterized by a nasal delivery. The specificity of the latter style appears to be due to its representatives' proximity to urban folklore rather than to racial propensities (Ciobanu 1969:147). As for our singer, he is obviously a representative of the "peasant style," a true *lăutar țăran* ("peasant bard"), as Amzulescu would call him.

## *II. Career and Performing Style*

Vasile Tetin is an equally skillful performer of epic and lyric songs. He used to intermingle the two genres in his public appearances in order to present a well-balanced and entertaining program. Endowed with a keen sense of showmanship, he seems

to have reached a high degree of professionalism in his “act,”<sup>5</sup> judging by the wide variety of songs he knows and the astute awareness of the public’s response, a response to which he is able to react instantaneously.

When he was still performing publicly (he retired in 1982 after a bicycle fall<sup>6</sup>) he would get almost weekly invitations to perform at weddings, anniversaries, family occasions (such as the baptizing of a child) and work gatherings (*clacă*) throughout the area. He had compiled four programs of about one hundred songs each and had them ready for use. He would alternate them in such a way that none would be repeated after too small an interval, so that guests who participated in the wedding where he sang the previous weekend, for instance, and who might happen to be invited also to the anniversary where he was to perform the subsequent weekend would not recognize the same pieces in the program. Epic, lyric, and dance materials were given almost equal importance as far as I can tell.

He performed in Teleorman as far north as Siliștea-Gumești, on both banks of the river Olt, crossing thus at times into Oltenia,<sup>7</sup> and as far east as Zimnicea. During his years with Maria Lătărețu’s band he reached the outskirts of the capital Bucharest. His appearances in taverns, on the occasions of fairs (*bîlci*), organized in Turnu-Măgurele in connection with the yearly cattle market (*oborul de vite*) that took place around Saint Mary’s day in August, were much sought after in the 30’s, 40’s, and 50’s. He would be paid handsome fees by innkeepers and restaurant owners who were eager to attract well-disposed patrons ready for relaxation after the business transactions concluded in the marketplace nearby. He could make at times twice as much as the predetermined fee in unsolicited tips that enthusiastic listeners would throw his way in the heat of the performance. Nea Vasile<sup>8</sup> likes to tell the following story: he once agreed to perform for 1,250 *lei* during the fair that accompanied the cattle market in Turnu-Măgurele in the 30’s and ended up earning 3,000 additional *lei* in such tips for the two weeks of the fair.<sup>9</sup>

Vasile Tetin used to have an extremely powerful voice. He would thus sing in the village of Șegarcea-din-Vale, for instance, and his singing would reach as far as the village of Lunca, situated at a distance of more than one mile. Much of this beautiful instrument still survives. He uses it both forcefully and skillfully, and can switch effortlessly from a powerful baritone to a delicate

and soft countertenor of infinite sweetness within the same song. He often uses a melisma and high pitched notes in the opening melodic lines of the flexible stanzas (*strofe libere*) that constitute the compositional units in this type of epic. In lyric pieces his voice turns warm and insinuating, for instance in the half-sensual, half-melancholic crooning in “Maria Lătărețu’s manner.”

His violin-playing must have been also first-rate. It still is quite good, in spite of the broken hand in which that bicycle accident of 1982 resulted. In the variant of “Ciobanul care și-a pierdut oile” (“The Shepherd who lost his sheep”) that he sang for me in September 1983, the narrative episodes are interspersed with “ethnic” singing and playing, while the hero attempts to extract information about the lost flock from a Romanian, a Gypsy, a Russian, and a Serbian. The instrumental interludes that accompany these characters’ answers are of virtuoso quality.

Vasile Tetin displays a very engaging artistic personality. Though not pushy or overbearing as some performers tend to become because of an overwhelming desire to please, he is understandably proud of his art. His discreet and modest nature brightens tremendously when stimulated by the presence of an attentive and sympathetic audience. When I first visited him in September 1983 in his little “summer house” in Măgurele, I found him somewhat ailing and dispirited. He apologized and thought that he would disappoint us that day because he was in poor physical shape. But after just a few minutes of singing he came back to life, since he noticed that my party and myself<sup>10</sup> respected his art and took a genuine interest in it. He then sang for us for about five hours almost uninterruptedly (except for a twenty-minute break for a little snack), warming up gradually, and we could hardly stop him at the end of the day. Answering one question, Nea Vasile told me that singing uninterruptedly did not tire his voice and that the more he sang the better and the more invigorated he felt.

Nothing escaped the singer’s attention while performing for our group. Thus, during the lengthy “Cîntecul lui Miu Haiducu” (“The Song of Miu the Outlaw”), which occupied 716 lines and 30 minutes on tape, he turned to his fictitious *cobzar* (“back-up fiddler”) three times and poked fun at him because “he was falling asleep.” This type of staging device was meant to illustrate his answer to one of the questions concerning his reactions to the public’s possible boredom. What did he do when he noticed that

some listeners were dozing off? He said, during the interview that preceded this performance of “Miu Haiducu,” that he would turn at times to his back-up fiddler and start pretending to mock him for falling asleep, thus alluding tactfully to the audience’s lack of attention at that specific moment.

This bantering in *pseudo parlato* (a style close to the normal intonation of prose) was obviously prompted by the audience’s reactions whenever it occurred. While I myself listened to him spell-bound all of the time, some member of our group may have appeared to the singer absent-minded, and this detail reminded him of what he told me that he would do under similar conditions at a wedding or a party where the real back-up fiddler would be present and could be used to startle the dozing audience. These brief comic interludes were both amusing and ingenious; they strengthened the singer’s grip on the public and fueled the listeners’ curiosity about what was to follow.

In addition to his powerful voice and skillful violin-playing, Vasile Tetin also takes pride in what he calls *memorul bun* (“the good memory”). He could listen just once to an epic song of average length (200-300 lines for the Romanian corpus of “songs of old deeds”) and would be able to perform it unhesitatingly the following weekend. For longer pieces he may have needed to listen to the piece twice, he said. This practice seems widespread among the good epic singers in the Balkans (Fochi 1980:28; Lord 1960:19; Ciobanu 1969:72).

Vasile Tetin’s epic singing is known to specialists in his own country. Two of his renditions of epic songs—of “Vidros” and “Dobrișan”—appeared in print in Amzulescu’s *Cîntece bătrînești* mentioned above, while a third, “Ghiță Cătănuță,” appears in this scholar’s most recent publication, the monumental *Cîntecul epic eroic. Tipologie și corpus de texte poetice* (Amzulescu 1981). Some of his performances were taped by Ovidiu Bîrlea in July 1962. Tetin subsequently traveled in person to the Institute of Folklore in Bucharest (now “Institutul de Cercetări Etnologice și Dialectologice”), and sang for the same researcher “Antofiță a lui Vioară,” “Gruia lui Novac,” and “Badiu Cîrciumaru” (“Badiu the Tavernkeeper”).<sup>11</sup>

Our singer had some national exposure during his long performing career as well, such as a television appearance in January 1966 with a rendition of “Toma Alimoș.” He also visited Bîrlad (in Moldavia) and Baia Mare (in northern Transylvania) in

the 60's, a period during which the "song of old deeds" was given a good deal of attention by the Romanian authorities, who were interested in collecting and preserving it for posterity.

### *III. A Singer of Tales at Work: Vasile Tetin's Artistry*

Vasile Tetin is a genuine "singer of tales" who does not perform a memorized and fixed text, although he may respond when asked that he does so. He creates the song while singing it, that is, *in performance*, while weaving the traditional thematic commonplaces (called *formule cǎlǎtoare* by the Romanian scholars) and the rhythmic formulae that fit the general design of the respective song in a forceful and apparently natural flow. There are here and there split-second hesitations, practically unnoticeable during the live performance but audible on tape; they unveil for the researcher, though *not* for the normal listener, the tremendous effort of concentration and elaboration at work during the instance of live performance that we witness.

The musical/rhythmic structure seems to be the most stable element in the combination of artistic factors that make up the complex syncretic product called *cîntec bătrînesc*. But the verbal component displays a high degree of flexibility, so that two renditions of the same song, even sung by the same artist, are in no way identical, though the singer usually claims that he "always sings the song that way." I tested this claim tacitly on several performances of "Dobrișan," and I shall comment on the results of this experiment below. This phenomenon is well known to scholars familiar with live epic performances (e.g., Murko 1929:15).

However, even at the musical/rhythmic level, controlled improvisation (that is, controlled by the traditional elements which the singer internalized during his apprenticeship years and actualizes during the live performance) may still play a significant role. I mean in particular the alternation between sung recitative and declaimed recitative, alternation used regularly in long works in order to vary the tone, rest the voice, and break the monotony of the stately, solemn melody often typical of epic singing.<sup>12</sup> This switch from the sung to the declaimed register is not a fixed given for the song in question; it is rather a device at the performer's disposal to use as he sees fit during the live performance (Vicol 1976:23; 1979:49). I believe, for my part, that the situational

context and the performer's capacity to adapt to it often determine when the switch occurs. This seems to be the case in Vasile Tetin's performing practice, as far as I can judge on the basis of observations made during repeated performances of "Miu Haiducu," "Corbea," "Dobrișan," and "Badiu Cîrciumaru."

Our singer handles such alternations very skillfully. He also intersperses his delivery with parenthetical comments meant to bring the work to the audience's level as he perceives it, such as explanations of archaic terms (e.g., *malacu* in "Badiu Cîrciumaru," glossed by Nea Vasile as "that's how they called the Turk then"); implicit apologies for some rough terms unsuitable for the ears of city folk, particularly female (for instance: *futu-mi-l* ["fuck him"] used by the hero's enemies in "Min Haiducu" and swiftly replaced with *arză-mi-l* ["may he burn in hell"]); brief anticipations in *pseudo parlato* of coming events (e.g., "Look here how they're going to tie him up!" in "Badiu Cîrciumaru"); and so forth.

I shall attempt now to provide a glimpse into Vasile Tetin's epic know-how by comparing the beginnings of two renditions of "Dobrișan," sung on September 21, 1983 (for me) and on July 17, 1962 (for Ovidiu Bîrlea) (Amzulescu 1974:430 ff.).<sup>13</sup> I shall then refer briefly to a third variant produced by another singer. This song belongs to the category of the "feudal court" (Amzulescu 1964).

Here are, side by side, the first two free stanzas of the variants in question. The initial 44 lines in my variant (A) and the initial 36 lines in Ovidiu Bîrlea's variant (B) are sung uninterruptedly, an occurrence that is typical for the performance of long epic pieces in which the sung and the declaimed recitatives alternate, but in which the first one or two free stanzas are entirely sung, in order to set the framework and the pace for the whole performance.

## A

Floare verde, flori domnești,  
 Floare verde, flori domnești,  
 Din oraș, din Bucureștii,  
 Din oraș, din București,  
 5 La 'nalte case domnești  
 La 'nalte case domnești  
 Ce să văd în Bucureștii,  
 Ce să văd în București

## B

Floare verde flori domnești  
 Floare verde flori domnești  
 Din oraș, din București  
 La nalte case domnești  
 Ce să văd în București  
 Ce sîn' nalte-n scărișoare  
 Și rotunde-n foișoare,  
 La mijlocu casilorî

(Instrumental interruption: a few bars)	mare masă mi-este-ntinsă	
Ce sîm' nalte-n scărișoare	Dă mulz' boieri mi-e coprinsă..	10
10 Și rotunde-n foișoare	Iar in masă cine-m' șade?	
Și rotunde-n foișoare.	Boierii divanului,	
(In <i>pseudo parlato</i> : "Oamenl buni, numai cobzaru' meu avea case d-alea; da' i le-a dărîmat cutre-muru'!")	Stîlpîi Țaligradului,	
(Instrumental interlude)	Nădejdea-mpăratului,	
	Caimacani' orașului	15
	Bursumanii satului...	
	Iei in masă că-m' șădea	
	Și cu toții beau, mînca,	
	Și cu toții să cînstea,	
	Chefu' dăplîn și-l făcea	20
	Tot ca și noi acuma...	
II	II	
	Iar pă masă ce mănîncă?	
La mijlocu' casilorî	Iar pă masă ce mănîncă?	
Mare masă mi-este-ntinsă	Să vez', mîncăruri domnești,	
Dă mulz' boieri mi-e coprinsă.	Dă miroasă te zlăvești	25
15 Iei la masă că-m' șădea	Cu cap n-ai să mai trăiești!	
Și cu toții beau, mîna.	Cu cap n-ai să mai trăiești!	
Lîngă domnu' Minea-vodă	Pînișoară de Îrlău	
Cine, doamne, că-m' șădea?	Car' ne-a dat-o Dumnezău,	
Șădea trei boieri de susî	Șăde pă masă mereu,	30
20 Cu căciulile de urs.	Șăde pă masă mereu;	
Nu dă 'araj la-mpărăție	Rachiaj de afionî	
Dor dă Dumnezeu nu știe.	De omoară trup de om;	
Unu' ie cu barbs neagră	Vinișor dă Năstutești	
Toți boierii mi-l întrebă.	Care bei, te-nveselești,	35
25 Altu' ie cu barba căruntă	Nu știu, neică, cîn' te mai trezvești!	
Toți boierii mi-l ascultă, mă!		
(Instrumental interruption: a few bars)	+ Capu' mean dă la deal,	
Lîngă trei boieri dă sus	+ Doamne frate, cine-n' șăde?	
Cine, doamne, că mai șăde?	+ Șăde domnu Minea-vodă,	
Șăde Trezdeu Așmașlîu	+ Șăde cu boieri de vorbă.	40
30 Fir-ar bătut dă Dumnezău!	+ Lîngă domnu Minea-vodă,	
Lîngă Resteu Așmaștale	+ Doamne frate, cine șăde?	
Cine, doamne, că mai șăde?	+ Șăde trei boieri dă sus	
Șăde Resteu Așmaștale	+ Cu căciulile dă urs,	
Care-ș face slujba d-a-n călare.	+ La domnie nesupuși;	45
(Instrumental interruption)	+ Nu dă-' araj' la-mpărăție	
35 Lîngă Resteu Așmaștale	+ Do'r dă Dumnezeu îm' știe.	
Cine, doamne, că mai șăde?	+ Lîng-ăi trei boieri dă sus	
Șăde-un tînăr dă Moldovean,	+ Cu căciulile dă urs,	
Măi, ce cîne, ce dușman	+ Doamne frate, cine-m' șăde?	50
Și la inimă 'iclean	+ Șădea Resteu Azmajlău,	
40 Și la inimă 'iclean.	+ Fir-ar bātu dă Dumnezău,	
(Instrumental interruption: a few bars)	+ Și cu Resteu Azmaștale,	
Mă ce cîne, ce dușman,	+ Care-ș' face zlujba d-a călare;	
Și la inimă 'iclean.	+ Lîngă Resteu Azmaștale,	55
	+ Care face zlujba d-a-n călare,	
	+ Cine, Doamne, că-m' șădea?	

+ Dă sara, dă cînd pîrăște pã Dobrișan!	+ Șade-un tînăr dă Moldovean, Măi, ce cîne, ce dujman	
+ Nu-l pîrăște pã dreptate	+ Și la inimă 'iclean,	60
45+ Il pîrăște pã strîmbătate	+ De sara, dă cînd pîrăște pã Dobrișan!	
+ Nu-l pîrăște ca să-l crească	+ Iel nu-m' pîra pã dreptate	
+ Mi-l pîrăște ca să-l piardă!	+ Și-l pîra pã strîmbătate,	
(Instrumental interlude)	+ Nu-l pîra ca să mi-l crească	
	+ Și-l pîra ca să mi-l piardă..	65

## Translation of variant (A)

I. Green flower, princely flowers,  
Green flower, princely flowers,  
From the city, from Bucharest,  
From the city, from Bucharest,  
In princely houses,  
To be seen in Bucharest  
To be seen in Bucharest

—Instrumental interruption—

Which are high in their staircases  
And all round in their towers

*Pseudo parlato*: Good folks, only my fiddler had houses like these; but the earthquake brought them down!

—Instrumental interlude—

II. In the middle of those houses  
A big table is set there  
Surrounded by many lords.  
They were seated at the table  
And all were drinking and eating.  
Close to the prince Minea-vodă  
Who was seated, dear God?  
Three lords from the Northern country  
With hats made of a bear's fur.  
They pay no taxes to the empire  
They know no fear of God.  
One of them has a black beard  
All the lords ask his opinion.  
Another has a white beard  
All the lords listen to him, folks!

—Instrumental interruption—

Near the three Northern lords



Who was seated, dear God?  
 It was Trezdeu Asmașlîu  
 May God strike him with his might!  
 Near Resteu Așmaștale  
 Who was seated, dear God?  
 It was Resteu Așmaștale [*sic*]  
 Who performs his job on horseback.  
 —Instrumental interruption—  
 Near Resteu Așmaștale  
 Who was seated, dear God?  
 It was a young Moldavian lord  
 What an enemy, what a dog!  
 And treacherous in his heart.  
 —Instrumental interruption—  
 What an enemy, what a dog!  
 And treacherous in his heart.  
 Since last evening he slanders Dobrișan!  
 He does not slander him with reason  
 He slanders him without reason.  
 He does not slander to praise him,  
 He slanders him to destroy him!  
 —Instrumental interlude—

The variant of September 1983 (A) seems to start more hesitatingly than the variant of July 1962 (B): the singer repeats five of the six initial lines and uses after stanza I an aside comment, in *pseudo parlato*, about his fiddler's houses (with a fleeting reference to the devastating earthquake of March 5, 1977, to bring the communication "up to date"). Variant (B) is narratively more direct, and more ornate in its descriptions, such as those of the participants in the princely feast (lines 12-16) and of the meal served. The motive ("travelling formula" in the Romanian scholars' terminology) of the "big table"<sup>14</sup> occurs identically in both variants: "Mare masă mi-este-ntinsă/ Dă mulz' boieri mi-e coprinsă"—11. 13-14 in (A) and 9-10 in (B)—but in (B) an elaborate version of the "banquet" motive also occurs (11. 22-36), prompted by a direct reference to the festive meal in which the audience itself is participating while the performance goes on (II. 20-21: "Chefu' dăplin și-l făcea/ Tot ca și noi acuma..." ["They were eating their fill/ As we are doing right

now’]). Variant (A) omits this “travelling formula,” perhaps since we were in actuality a small group, not the boisterous public seated at a wedding or at a party.

But if the beginning of (B) seems superior in descriptive elaboration, a greater portion of the work is sung in (A)—44 lines versus 36, a feature which imposes the solemnity of the epic diction more forcefully. Moreover, the first occurrence of the declaimed recitative dramatically breaks this musical continuum precisely when the narration hits upon the beginning of the conflict (l. 43): i.e., the treacherous speech by one of the prince’s advisers, the young Moldavian, who slanders the hero Dobrișan, a rich shepherd from Stoienești whose authority and glamor rival, he says, those of the prince himself.

The recurrence of some four brief instrumental interruptions, one in stanza I and three in stanza II, combined with the two full-fledged instrumental interludes that mark the boundary between free stanzas, enhance the solemn tone of the performance.<sup>15</sup> I am unable to compare (A) with (B) on this point, since the published text of (B) does not indicate at all the instrumental dimension of the performance. But one has the feeling that in (A) the singer takes longer to set the tone and seems to “test the water” in order to adjust his delivery to his audience’s expectations, an audience with whom he is somewhat unfamiliar. He also seems eager to put on a more complete show and to sustain his epic delivery, and at the highest level of elaboration (melodic/poetic/instrumental), once it has been established.

If we turn now briefly to the same song as performed by another singer, namely Petria Bucătariu from Sihlea, Râmnicu-Sărat county in northeastern Valachia, close to the frontier with Moldavia (Diaconu 1980:144 fol.),<sup>16</sup> we will be struck by its conciseness. All the essential elements of the narrative (*and* of the epic diction) are there, but what Tetin sings in forty-seven lines in (A) and in sixty-five in (B) takes only fourteen in Petria Bucătariu’s rendition. Here is how this singer goes about it:

În curți la Ștefañ-Vodî  
 Frumșasî masî mi-ntiñsî  
 Di mulș boșeriġ mġ-e cupriñsî.  
 Dar la masî čini-m’ șadi?  
 Șed boșeri țării

Pribeḡi Moldóvii,  
 Caimacani tîrguluḡ,  
 Veşnişḡ dḡ-aḡ divanuluḡ.  
 Can la capu mesii  
 10 Şadi catanáş mai mari:  
 Niş nu bḡa, niş nu mîniñcî,  
 Numai şadi şî-m pîraşti—  
 Pîraşti pă Dobrişan,  
 Dobrişan dîñ Stojeneşti.

At Prince Ştefan-Vodî's court  
 A beautiful table is set  
 Surrounded by many lords.  
 At the table who is seated?  
 The country's lords are seated,  
 The exiles from Moldavia,  
 The vice-princes of the city,  
 The counselors of the *divan*.  
 Close to the head of the table  
 A high officer is seated:  
 He neither drinks, nor eats,  
 Only sits there and slanders.  
 He slanders Dobrişan,  
 Dobrişan from Stojeneşti.

In the variant quoted above—let us call it (C) —the slanderer is an officer of high rank (*catanaş mai mari*) who is not clearly described as a Moldavian. Such a character would have struck a singer from a Danubian county, a singer like Vasile Tetin, as foreign and therefore potentially dangerous, but would have interested a singer from an area adjacent to Moldavia, like Petria Bucătariu, much less in this respect. There are some “exiles from Moldavia” mentioned (l. 6), but it is not clear whether this officer is one of them.

We recognize the motive of the “big table” in lines 3-4 and some of the participants in the banquet. The *caimacani* (“vice-princes”) occur in l. 7 here as before in l. 15 of (B), but none of the other lords on which (A) and (B) dwell at length—the rebels from the Northern country (ll. 19-26 in A and 43-47 in B), or the dignitaries with exotic names (ll. 29-34 in A and 51-54 in

B)—appears in Petria Bucătariu's variant. I cannot judge the handling of the musical component by this performer since the editor does not mark it in any way.

Tetin's variant (A) is 553 lines long (counting as individual lines all the repeated lines); among these, 170 are in *recitativ melodic*, 384 are in *recitativ parlato*, and 4 are in a transitional delivery, half sung and half declaimed. Tetin's variant (B) is 600 lines long; among these 123 are sung and 477 are declaimed. Petria Bucătariu's variant (C) is 137 lines long.

The abundance of lines delivered in *parlato* appears to be a stable characteristic of Vasile Tetin's performing style and has little to do, so it seems, with the advanced age of the singer. This hypothesis has been suggested by some scholars, according to whom the recourse to the *parlato* register may be a device used by older singers in order to save their strength (Amzulescu 1974:xli). The sung parts are more extensive in (A) of 1983 than in (B) of 1962. His performance of other epic pieces, such as "The Song of Iancu Jianu," a classic piece for the Romanian repertory belonging to the category of "songs about outlaws" (see Appendix), is entirely sung and embellished with elaborate instrumental interludes and with some brief instrumental interruptions that together create a considerably fuller overall artistic effect than can be inferred from the simple reading of a published text. The frequent changes in intonation, gestures, and mimicry add to the vivacity of a performance which never turns dull, in spite of the repetitiveness in the presentation of the episodes narrated.

Space does not permit an analysis of the entire "Song of Dobrișan" here. I shall only mention, in the present context, the ending provided by Vasile Tetin's variants, an ending which is subtler and more thought-provoking than that of Petria Bucătariu's variant. The two rivals, the prince and the shepherd, discover—thanks to disclosures by their mother, now a nun—that they are in fact brothers who had been separated in childhood by the Turks.<sup>17</sup> The two brothers celebrate their reunion and bury their rivalry with a large feast. Variant (C) stops after this scene of reconciliation.

But variants (A) and (B) go on to show the prince offering Dobrișan the opportunity to exchange positions with him. The latter declines the honor and proceeds to extol the virtues of the pastoral lifestyle, free of the worries that burden a sovereign in power and capable of constant renewal. In variant (A), which is

more explicit on this point than variant (B), Dobrișan remarks to his brother the prince:

- + Domnia ieste adevărat sărăcia.
- + Azi te bagă, mîine te scoate,
- + Stăpîn nu iești pã domnie niciodată.
- + Da' ciobănia ie bogăția,
- + Moare o oaie, să naște zece,
- + Ciobănașu' nu să pierde.<sup>18</sup>

Princely power is true misery.  
 Today you're in, tomorrow you're out,  
 You never master princely power.  
 But being a shepherd is true richness,  
 A sheep dies, ten sheep are born,  
 The shepherd always prevails.

After this speech they conclude an alliance; Dobrișan is granted “tax privileges” and will reign undisturbed from now on in Stoieniști.

\* \* \*

Vasile Tetin's production in the epic genre is constantly first-rate and his artistry enlightens and delights in a steady outpouring of musical, poetic, and dramatic richness. In his practice the epic art form lives, and the epic universe is brought to life anew each time he sets out to “tell”<sup>19</sup> the heroes' deeds. He obviously loves to sing about Miu Haiducu, Iancu Jianu, or Dobrișan, and his face brightens up with joy in the heat of the performance. While singing, he becomes the voice of this legendary past, a voice which revivifies the heroic world with its sophisticated and transient sound, thus fulfilling *hic et nunc* the glorious and fragile predicament of the singer of tales: to live through song, for us and with us, an epic experience for the duration of the live performance.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>In Romanian scholars' terminology these registers are *recitativ melodic* and *recitativ parlat* (called *băsmi* by the traditional singers, from *basm*, "fairy tale"). One or two lines may be delivered in an intermediary type of recitative when a transition from the sung to the declaimed register occurs.

<sup>2</sup>I would like to thank Mr. Stelian Cristescu (Bucharest) and Mr. Gheorghe Stan (Turnu-Măgurele) for their generous and expert assistance in this respect.

<sup>3</sup>The term *lăutar* comes from *lăută* ("luth") and is the typical "show business" appellative for singers/performers of the type described in the present article, a term used in villages in Romania.

<sup>4</sup>The last item in this enumeration, performed by Tetin for me in September 1983, was learned from "Tache Ruses from the village of Traian, old *lăutar*," according to our singer's admission made on tape at the end of his performance of this song.

<sup>5</sup>I use this term in the sense we give it in modern "show business" parlance. Vasile Tetin is as sophisticated an entertainer as those we are accustomed to watching in contemporary Western societies, and his ability to put together a "good show" is remarkable, as Part II of this paper will describe.

<sup>6</sup>Vasile Tetin is still vigorous at seventy-eight, his memory is intact, his reactions vivacious and his diction clear. But he is not in perfect health any longer and considers himself artistically somewhat rusty. The right hand injured in the fall is not as agile with the violin as before, he says, and he is no longer able to reach vocally certain very high notes which presented no problem for him in the past. He continues to work his land as usual.

<sup>7</sup>The river Olt represents the natural boundary between the traditional provinces Valachia (capital Bucharest), and Oltenia (capital Craiova). Some of Tetin's performing characteristics bring him close to what A. Amzulescu described as the style of elder singers from Oltenia: the heavy reliance on *recitativ parlat*, for instance (Amzulescu 1974:xl).

<sup>8</sup>*Nea* is an appellative coming from *nenea* ("elder brother, uncle") and is used as a form of more intimate address to elders in villages. The *nea* in question may then respond with *nepoate*, *nepoțică* ("nephew, little niece"). Nea Vasile was confused for some time about how to address me. Thus, I passed through an intermediary stage of *nepoțică*, *doamnă profesoară* ("little niece, lady professor"), but finally reached the *nepoțică* stage, an achievement of which I was very proud.

<sup>9</sup>The importance of the market day as an occasion for this type of performance has been recorded also for Yugoslavia (Lord 1960:15).

<sup>10</sup>We were about eight altogether. I wanted to have with me some people from the region born in the nearby villages, since the primary interest of my research was the song *in performance* and the rapport between singer and public (i.e., the pragmatic dimension, in the semiotic sense, of the epic text, not just the verbal aspect of the phenomenon). Thus, I never interrupted or contradicted the singer, not even when I taped him later on; I told him to do for us what he would do for a normal public at a party, at

his own pace. I was born in Turnu-Măgurele myself and the dialectal features of the Romanian spoken (and sung) in the area posed no problem for me. But I left Romania almost twenty years ago and my foreignness might well have been evident.

<sup>11</sup>These tapes are probably now in this Institute's archives; they are, understandably, a jealously guarded property of this institution and, though they may be consulted, they may not be copied. Therefore I have relied on my collected material for the present remarks. I also rely, of course, on this Institute's publications on the epic tradition.

<sup>12</sup>Tiberiu Alexandru (1975:56) mentions three such types of recitative: "recto-tono," or the same sound repeated several times (the term comes from Gregorian chant); "melodic," or repeated formulae consisting of several sounds clustered around one main sound; "parlato," an almost spoken delivery. A. Fochi (1980:109) considers the last two types as truly essential for the performance of the Romanian epic.

<sup>13</sup>The place of the instrumental interludes is not marked in this edition; the sign (+) placed on the left side of a line indicates the declaimed register, while no sign indicates the sung register. I also adopt A. Amzulescu's notation for the transcription of my variant.

<sup>14</sup>These "formulae" have been listed, discussed, and illustrated by A. Fochi (1980:283-354). I shall refer to this list in my commentary on "Dobrișan." I use the term "motive" to refer to these units, in accordance with the practice of some scholars who would call these "loci communes" *motives* in order to distinguish them from the strictly rhythmic *formulae*, as in the analysis of the Old French *chanson de geste* (Rychner 1955:126-39).

<sup>15</sup>I distinguish between the full-fledged *instrumental interlude* (which exhibits a clear melodic structure and marks the passage from one free stanza to another) and the brief *instrumental interruption* (an accompaniment of a few bars that might have usually been played by the back-up fiddler while the singer would have concentrated on the vocal part). In Vasile Tetin's renditions of epic songs, both types of instrumental interventions occur. I have not encountered this distinction in the scholarship on the topic; since this distinction is manifest in Tetin's actual epic practice, however, I make it here.

<sup>16</sup>I follow the phonetic transcription used by this editor. The dialect he transcribes is a transitional one between Valachian and Moldavian (presenting more features of the latter, in fact). Tetin's dialect is purely Valachian.

<sup>17</sup>The cause of this separation—abduction by the Turks—is not mentioned in (C). The Turks' ominous presence frequently surfaces in the epic variants produced in Teleorman, a geographic area adjacent to the Danube and the Ottoman Empire in the Middle Ages, and therefore vulnerable to the Turks' attacks during the times in which many of the Romanian epic songs originated.

<sup>18</sup>In a previous episode the prince panicked when he saw the richly clothed hero and mistook him for an envoy from the Sultan's court, sent to remove him from his reign. Dobrișan's remark does not fall on deaf ears. The prince's panic appears in both (A) and (B).

<sup>19</sup>“a zice” is the technical term for epic diction in the parlance of the *lăutari*.

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## Appendix

## The Song of Iancu Jianu

“The Song of Iancu Jianu” is a classic work in the Romanian traditional epic repertory. It belongs to the category of “songs about outlaws” (*haiduci*, that is, popular figures who supposedly stole from the rich in order to help the poor in medieval times). Another such song from the same category mentioned in this paper is the one on “Miu Haiducu.” These heroes were not exclusively male, as the pieces dedicated to the *haiduca* Voica Bălaca testify (Amzulescu 1974:xxiii).

Iancu Jianu is a historical figure. An aristocrat by birth, he became an outlaw presumably in order to fight the abuses inflicted on peasants by the local feudal lords obedient to the Turks. His surname comes from the river Jiu, in Oltenia. He lived at the beginning of the nineteenth century and was a comrade-in-arms of Tudor Vladimirescu, the head of the peasant uprising of 1821. He was presumably killed by a posse’s bullet at a fairly early age.

The song is entirely sung and its rhythm is very lively. The appellative *lele* that marks the beginning of some of the free stanzas (I, V, VIII, IX) is sung on a highly pitched melisma (like a long musical shout) and is followed by a few bars played on the violin. The instrumental interludes are at times fairly elaborate and at times fairly brief, and use variations on the basic melodic line of the musical stanza. The melody is practically the same for each stanza. A few instrumental bars prolong certain lines here and there; the singer accompanies himself on the violin from the beginning to the end.

There is an instrumental introduction before stanza I starts; it is not, however, a fully structured *taxîm* (Alexandru 1975:55), but only an introductory series of musical phrases that will reappear in the melody of the stanza itself. Because of the rhythmic vivacity of the song, the smooth passage to the declaimed register (so

widespread in “Dobrișan,” “Miu Haiducu,” and others) does not occur in this piece. The melody moves on so forcefully that there is no time for this register-switching.

A. Amzulescu (1974:346-48) published an incomplete variant of this song as performed by Mihai Constantin (nicknamed “Lache Găzaru”) from Desa, in Dolj county, in 1951. The tape which contained Constantin’s rendition seems to have been partially damaged, and I have not encountered a complete variant of this famous piece in modern anthologies. Vasile Tetin’s variant seems well crystallized artistically. The song is 144 lines long in his rendition and lasts 14 minutes on tape.

The song was taped on September 21, 1983 in Măgurele, in Teleorman county, Romania.

- |      |                             |                           |
|------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| I.   | Lele!                       | (a few instrumental bars) |
|      | Dedeșăl și dedeșăl măi,     | (a few bars)              |
|      | Colea-n vale-n codricelî,   | (a few bars)              |
|      | Colea-n vale-n codricelî,   | (a few bars)              |
|      | La umbra de stejărelî,      | (a few bars)              |
|      | Frumos doarme-un voinicel,  | 5                         |
|      | Frumos doarme-un voinicelî, |                           |
|      | Tot cu arma lîngă iel.      |                           |
|      | — Instrumental interlude —  |                           |
| II.  | Tot cu arma lînga iel, mă,  | (a few bars)              |
|      | -Mă, duc, mamă, după ielî,  |                           |
|      | Mă duc, mamă, după ielî,    | 10                        |
|      | Că mi-e tînr voincelî       |                           |
|      | Și mi-e tare drag dă ielî.  |                           |
|      | -Ca nalba ș-o viorea, mă,   |                           |
|      | Nu te duce, fata mea,       |                           |
|      | Nu te duce, fata mea, mă!   | 15                        |
|      | Ăla nevastă nu vrea, mă,    |                           |
|      | Nevasta lui ie flinta,      |                           |
|      | Flinta și haiducia.         |                           |
|      | S-a amoretat dă iea, mă,    |                           |
|      | S-a amoretat dă iea.        | 20                        |
|      | — Instrumental interlude —  |                           |
| III. | Ca mărariu, ca mărariu,     |                           |
|      | Ca mărariu, ca mărariu,     |                           |
|      | Ăla mi-e Iancu Jianu,       |                           |

- Cel mai mare căpitanu'.  
 Maică, mi-a speriiat Teleormanu' 25  
 Și mi-a jăfuit divanu'! (a few bars)  
 Ȑla mi-e Iancu Jianu,  
 Cel mai mare căpitanu'  
 D-a speriiat Teleormanu'  
 Și mi-a jăfuit divanu'. 30  
 Mamă, nu te duce, fata mea,  
 Ca să trăiești prin pădure,  
 Să speli... 'aine sîngerate (slight hesitation to find  
 După 'aiduci lăpădate. the rest of the line)  
 Să stai, maică-nchisî-n casî 35  
 Și să te uiț' pă fereastră;  
 Să speli 'aine sîngerate  
 După 'aiduci lăpădate.  
 — Instrumental interlude (elaborate)—  
 IV. Mărzăcel și mărzăcel! (a few bars)  
 - Iancule, dă unde vii? 40  
 Iancule, dă unde vii?  
 - De la tîrg du peste Jii.  
 - Iancule, ce-ai tîrguit?  
 - Cîn' ți-oi spune, mai nimic!  
 Am dat aur și argintî, 45  
 An loat gluanțe dă plumbî.  
 Am dat aur și argintî,  
 Mi-an loat gluanțe dă plumbî.  
 Căci copiii șade-n crîngî,  
 Sînt copiii fără minte, 50  
 Rîsipesc la gluanțe multe,  
 Bagă iarba cu palma,  
 Gluanțele cu chivăra.  
 Și mi-e frică dă belea,  
 Că i-o sosî potera, 55  
 N-are, frate, cu ce da  
 Și le-o scurta viața.  
 — Instrumental interlude (very lively rhythm)—  
 V. Lele! (a few bars)  
 Siminoc și siminuocî, (a few bars)  
 Cîntă cucu-n vîrf dă pluopî, (a few bars)  
 Iancu să trage la Oltî, 60  
 Iancu să trage la Olt. (a few bars)

- Să trage, măi, cu foc,  
 Și să trage, măi, cu foc.  
 Că la munt' ie-Olt' vărsatî,  
 Văzui că sînt vinovatî, 65  
 Văzui că sînt vinovat.
- Instrumental interlude (very lively; long and elaborate)—
- VI. Strigă Iancu-n gura mare: (a few bars)  
 - Măi podiță, măi podare,  
 Trage podu' mai la vale  
 E, că-ț' răcesc un glonț în șale! 70  
 Trage podu' mai d-a dreptî  
 Că-ț' răcesc un glonț în peipt!  
 Trage podu' la limanî  
 Să treacă d-un căpitan!  
 Căci ieu sînt Iancu Jianu, 75  
 Cel mai mare capitani,  
 Dă mi-am jăfuit divanu'  
 Și s-a speriat Teleormanu'!
- Instrumental interlude (rather brief)—
- VII. Dară Iancu ce-mi făcea, mă?  
 'N Teleorman că să ducea, 80  
 Loa bani dă la bogați  
 Și da pă la ai săraci,  
 Ca să-ș' ia boi, măi, și vacii,  
 Ca să-ș' ia boi, măi, și vaci. (a few bars)  
 - Vin' cu podu', mă treci Oltu', 85  
 C-aicea mă arde focu'!  
 Dar podarii s-a-mbătat, (the singer laughs)  
 Pă sumanii s-a culcat.  
 Alții la sat mi-a plecat,  
 Pe Iancu mi l-a lăsatî, 90  
 Pe Iancu mi l-a lăsat.
- Instrumental interlude (rather brief)—
- VIII. Lele! (a few bars)  
 Dară Iancu ce-mi făce',  
 Din guriță că-mi zicea, mă,  
 Dacă vedea și vedea  
 Că potera mi-l sosa, 95  
 Din guriță iel zicea:  
 - Cată, futu-i mîna-sa, mă,  
 Dăcîț să mă rog d-un prostî,

- Pîn-o da podu' pe rostî,  
 Mai bine cu murgu' 'not. 100  
 Decît o para la podî,  
 Mai bine cu murgu' 'not.  
 Că mi-e murgu' cam nebunî,  
 Trece prin Olt ca pe drumî,  
 Şi mi-e murgu' cam nerodî, 105  
 Trece prin Olt ca pe pod.  
 — Instrumental interlude (average length)—
- IX. Lele! (a few bars)  
 Dară Iancu ce-mi făcea, mă,  
 După cal dăscălica, mă,  
 Şaua pă iel mi-aşăza,  
 Şi la chingă mi-l zlăbea, 110  
 Dă putea, măi, d-a 'nota.  
 Şi pă cal că-ncălica, mă,  
 Cînd odată-i sumuţa, mă,  
 Cu pintenii-l atîngea, mă.  
 Iacă potera-l sosa, 115  
 După iel gluante trăgea  
 Ca frunza şi ca iarba.  
 Cînd fu, măi, să treacă la Oltî,  
 Iancu trăgea cîte-un focî.  
 — Instrumental interlude (brief)—
- X. Cînd odată-i sumuţa, mă, 120  
 Cu pintenii-l atîngea, mă,  
 La juma' dă Olt sărea.  
 Joacă murgu' tot lupeşte  
 Şi-m' coteşte iepureşte,  
 Pă Iancu dă glonţ fereşte, 125  
 Pă Iancu dă glonţ fereşte.  
 Aşa bine ce 'nota, mă,  
 Nici chinga nu şi-o uda, mă,  
 Nici chinga, nici ibrunca,  
 Nici un colţ la ipîngea. 130  
 — Instrumental interlude (brief)—
- XI. Iar la mal cîn' mi-ajungea, mă,  
 Vadu' nu îl nemerea, mă,  
 Gloanţe ca ploaia fugea,  
 Potera pă iel trăgea.  
 Dară murgu' ce-mi făcea? 135

Iel p-o coastă să punea,  
 Înota, frate, 'nota,  
 Mare talaș ca făcea,  
 Cu talaș l-amesteca,  
 Pă Iancu dă glonț ferea, 140  
 Pă Iancu dă glonț ferea!  
 Pînă vadu' mi-l găsa, mă,  
 Și-n pădure că intra,  
 Și-n pădure că intra.  
 ["Cîntarea lui Iancu Jianu," învățată dă la Gheorghe Dinu, zis Bunică, din  
 Islaz.]

- I. Dear woman! ...  
 Pasque flower, pasque flower, folks,  
 Here in the valley, in a little thicket,  
 Here in the valley, in a little thicket,  
 In the shadow of an oak tree,  
 Nicely sleeps now a young hero,  
 Nicely sleeps now a young hero,  
 With his weapon by his side.
- II. With his weapon by his side, folks.  
 - Mother, I'll go after him,  
 Mother, I'll go after him,  
 'Cause he is a young hero,  
 And I am in love with him.  
 - As mallow and violet (grow), folks,  
 Don't go after him, my daughter,  
 Don't go after him my daughter,  
 That one doesn't want a wife, folks,  
 'Cause for a wife he has his gun,  
 His gun and his outlawry.  
 He fell in love with it (her), folks,  
 He fell in love with it.  
 — Instrumental interlude —
- III. As the dill now, as the dill (grows),  
 As the dill now, as the dill,  
 That one is Iancu Jianu,  
 The greatest captain of all.  
 Daughter, he scared all Teleorman  
 And also robbed the Divan.  
 That one is Iancu Jianu,

The greatest captain of all,  
 Who scared all Teleorman,  
 And also robbed the Divan.  
 Daughter, don't go after him,  
 In the forest then you'll live,  
 And you'll wash clothes full of blood  
 By the outlaws left behind.  
 Better stay, daughter, at home  
 And look out through the window;  
 Or you'll wash clothes full of blood  
 By the outlaws left behind.

— Instrumental interlude—

- IV. Dear flower, dear flower!  
 - Iancu, where are you coming from now?  
 Iancu, where are you coming from now?  
 - From the fair, on the Jiu.  
 - Iancu, what did you buy there?  
 - Not much really, I'll tell you!  
 I gave plenty o' gold and silver,  
 I bought bullets made of lead.  
 I gave plenty o' gold and silver,  
 I bought some bullets of lead.  
 'Cause my kids sit in the grove,  
 Mindless children as they are,  
 They waste bullets all around,  
 Use gunpowder by the handful,  
 And the bullets by the shako.  
 And I fear a misfortune,  
 That the posse might then reach them,  
 And they won't have what to use  
 And it'll shorten their life.

— Instrumental interlude—

- V. Dear woman! ...  
 Everlasting flower grows,  
 The cuckoo sings in the poplar,  
 Iancu withdraws toward Olt,  
 Iancu withdraws toward Olt.  
 He withdraws with fiery will,  
 He withdraws, folks! with fiery will.  
 In the mountains Olt o'erflowed,  
 I see that I am now guilty,

- I see that I am now guilty.  
— Instrumental interlude—
- VI. Iancu shouts in a loud voice:  
- Listen here, ferryman,  
Draw the ferry down the river  
Or I'll shoot you in the loins!  
Draw the ferry straight ahead,  
Or I'll shoot you in the chest!  
Draw the ferry to the bank  
So a captain may cross over!  
'Cause I am Iancu Jianu,  
The greatest captain of all,  
And I robbed all the Divan  
And scared all Teleorman!  
— Instrumental interlude—
- VII. And now Iancu, what's he doing?  
In Teleorman he is going,  
He'd take money from the rich,  
He'd give it to poor people,  
So they'd buy oxen and cows,  
So they'd buy oxen and cows, folks!  
- Bring the ferry, take me o'er Olt,  
'Cause here I am on fire!  
But the ferrymen got drunk,  
They were sleeping on their coats.  
Others to the village went,  
And left Iancu standing there,  
And left Iancu standing there.  
— Instrumental interlude—
- VIII. Dear woman! ...  
And now Iancu, what's he doing?  
He was saying to himself, folks,  
If he looked and saw now there  
That the posse was to reach him,  
He was saying to himself:  
- Look at them, o! fuck them now,  
Rather than begging a nut,  
Until he'll ready the ferry  
Better swim with Dark-bay horse.  
Rather than a penny for the ferry,  
Better swim with Dark-bay horse.



'Cause my Dark-bay horse is crazy,  
 Crosses Olt as on the road.  
 And my Dark-bay horse is silly,  
 Crosses Olt as on a ferry.

— Instrumental interlude—

IX. Dear woman! ...  
 Now Iancu, folks, what's he doing?  
 He's dismounting, folks, the horse,  
 He put the saddle on his back,  
 He loosened his saddle girth,  
 So that he could swim at ease.  
 He was now mounting the horse, folks.  
 Now he was on top of him, folks,  
 And he touched him with his spurs, folks!  
 Here is the posse coming,  
 Bullet after him they're shooting  
 Like the leaves and like the grass.  
 When he was about to cross,  
 He would fire then a shot.

— Instrumental interlude—

X. Suddenly he is on top, folks,  
 He touches him with his spurs, folks!  
 In the middle of Olt he jumped.  
 Dark-bay horse moves like a wolf,  
 And is turning like a hare,  
 And protects Iancu from bullets,  
 And protects Iancu from bullets.  
 He was swimming so well, folks,  
 The saddle girth was not wet,  
 Neither the girth, nor the blanket,  
 Not even a bit of cloak!

— Instrumental interlude—

XI. And when he reached the bank, folks,  
 He couldn't find the ford, folks,  
 Bullets were falling like rain,  
 The posse was shooting hard.  
 And Dark-bay horse, what's he doing?  
 He was leaning on a side,  
 Was swimming, brother, was swimming  
 A big wave he was now making,  
 He was mingling him (Iancu) with the wave,

Protecting Iancu from bullets,  
Protecting Iancu from bullets!  
Until the ford he could find, folks,  
And he went into the forest,  
Went away into the forest.

(“The Song of Iancu Jianu,” learned from Gheorge Dinu, nicknamed Bunică,  
from the village of Islaz.)



Vasile Tetin

## **The Oral-Formulaic Theory in Middle English Studies**

**Ward Parks**

Since it was first brought into modern critical consciousness by Milman Parry over half a century ago, the recognition of a distinctly oral mode of verbal artistry has sponsored a broadening interdisciplinary movement that now encompasses oral “literary” traditions from many parts of the world.<sup>1</sup> In the course of such a development it was no doubt inevitable that the categorical distinction between “oral” and “literate,” axiomatic in the early stages of the evolution of oral theory, should increasingly fall into jeopardy. For on the most obvious level, the existence of some kind of text—whether a medieval codex or a cassette tape—is a precondition for literary study on any but the most limited of scales; one might well argue that poems and narratives so recorded have been made literate at least to the degree that literate consciousness has participated in the process of their preservation and dissemination. Yet when one turns to Middle English literature, one is confronted with a greater complexity of orality-literacy interactions, figured in literary works themselves composed in writing yet indebted to oral traditions that underlie and inform them on many levels. Defining the parameters of the relationship between this burgeoning, vernacular chirographic tradition and its oral progenitor will comprise a central task for many scholars working in this branch of Middle English studies.

My present enterprise, to review Middle English scholarship vitally relevant to the oral-formulaic approach, meets with difficulties that should be elucidated from the outset. The root problem is that the theory in its “classical” form (Lord 1960) has yet to be applied to English literature of the later medieval period, in the sense that no one has claimed for any extant work an unambiguously oral provenience. At the same time many scholars,

borrowing from the theory selectively, have brought certain key concepts to bear on longstanding, canonical issues in Middle English criticism, such as the role of tags, or the significance of the oral performance medium, or the source of manuscript variations. Since all these subjects have their own scholarly history, the limits of my coverage become hard to designate. Further, since it depends on a mainstream of oral-formulaic scholarship that flows outside the boundaries of its period, the relevant Middle English research, taken by itself, conveys an impression of incompleteness: major topics are neglected, while particular problems become the subject of heated debate. Therefore, to avoid the kind of superficial and decontextualized approach that admits only those books and articles directly referring to Milman Parry, Albert Lord, or Francis P. Magoun in the footnotes, I will need to identify a nexus of themes that can serve as spotlights illuminating relevant fields of Middle English scholarship.

My principles in this respect are threefold and stem from the logic of the Parry-Lord theory itself. Reduced to its essentials, this theory argues from structure to genesis: that is, it derives observed stylistic tendencies from an oral-improvisatory mode of composition. Once one admits writing into the compositional process, of course, the “necessary,” causal link is broken, and one is left with two problematically related lines of inquiry. The first centers on structures internal to the texts themselves: how would one compare the use of formulas, themes or type-scenes, story-patterns, and other such devices in their Middle English manifestations with their counterparts in primary oral traditions? The second moves from text to human interactional context: how should a hypothetical oral performance medium shape our perceptions of what these poems are? A vital concern with either of these two problems constitutes the prime qualification for coverage in this essay. Yet I will also draw selectively on scholarship treating historical and cultural topics of high potential relevance, such as the extent and phenomenology of literacy in the later medieval period, or the sources of the Alliterative Revival. For modes of discourse do not stand in isolation from their historical settings; and inquiries into oral traditions or orality-literary interactions will increasingly need to bridge the gap between particular texts and relevant conditions in the cultures that produced them.

Since the material under review is itself erratic in its coverage

of Middle English literature (with, for example, a marked orientation towards romance narrative), this essay cannot profitably be organized by Middle English author, work, genre, or historical period. Nor is the distinction “structure versus genesis” productive, since many studies concern themselves precisely with the relationship between the two. Present needs would be best served, in my opinion, by a historical treatment of the scholarship itself. In the following pages, then, I will review scholarly contributions roughly in chronological fashion, with a few reorderings in the interests of coherence. Section I will survey the research prior to 1957 that significantly anticipated or catalyzed the introduction of the oral theory into Middle English studies. The second part (II) covers the seminal phase 1957-1967, which witnessed the first introduction of and response to Parry-Lord formulations; the time boundaries are marked, on one end, by the publication of Ronald A. Waldron’s “Oral-Formulaic Technique and Middle English Alliterative Poetry” (1957), and on the other, by the last of Albert C. Baugh’s articles concerned extensively with oral composition (1967). This endpoint is admittedly somewhat arbitrary; yet the scholarship of the 1970s and 80s seems to be less a primary response to Parry-Lord tenets and more a complex engagement mediated by a recognition of the past history of the oral-formulaic controversy in Old English studies, by new concepts borrowed from other areas of critical theory, and by a growing familiarity with Middle English oral-formulaic scholarship itself. In Part III, then, I trace this story of increasing sophistication and eclecticism through the present (1984), insofar as possible.<sup>2</sup> The concluding section (IV) attempts a general assessment and indicates directions that medieval and oral-formulaic scholarship might profitably pursue in coming years.

### I. The Beginnings through 1957

Despite its apparent revolutionary character, the oral-formulaic theory, in the form by which it first became known to medievalists, represented as much a culmination of previous scholarship as a departure from it. In fact, the problem of formulaic structure had been the subject of debate from the last quarter of the nineteenth century among apostles of the Higher Criticism, although their conclusions seem to the modern eye vitiated by the limited character of their aims. John Miles Foley

(1980b:52) describes the situation thus:

These early studies make very little or nothing of the possible orality of the poems they examine, occasionally suggesting sung or recited performance but always assuming a prior written record which serves as the basis for the performance. Editors and commentators have much to say about the "formula," very loosely conceived and defined, but for a few distinct and limited purposes only: (1) to solve the complex puzzle of authorship and interpolator(s) and thus (2) to assess the interrelationships among poems in the same literature or language family. To put it another way, the chronological strata which occupied the Analyst and Unitarian classicists have their counterparts in the *Lieder* and *Fortsetzungen* of the leading Germanists of this era. Questions of style, methods of composition, and the like are not addressed, simply because they are not the concerns of the "Higher Criticism."

Since Foley has documented in some detail (1980b:52-59) the evolution of the idea of the oral formula from its first adumbrations in these pioneering efforts of Germanic scholarship, I will confine myself here to a fairly cursory mention of several works of the Higher Criticism that concern Middle English directly. Among the first to try to demonstrate the traditional, popular underpinnings of a Middle English poem was Karl Regel (1872) in his examination of alliterating pairs in Layamon's *Brut*. These traditional phrases Regel divided into categories on basis of such characteristics as concreteness or abstraction of reference. Several years later Julius Zupitza, motivated by the need to justify editorial decisions, set a precedent by incorporating into the textual notes following his edition of *Guy of Warwick* (1875-76) many parallel phrases from elsewhere in the Middle English romance canon. Though Zupitza offered little theoretical insight into the nature of this stock phraseology, in subsequent decades the subject of stylistics, usually for the evidence that it provided (or failed to provide) concerning authorship, became a regular concern of editors. The connection between formulaic tendencies and oral culture was not, of course, appreciated. Yet an interesting anticipation in this respect appears in Wissman's proposal (1876:6) that variations between the texts of *King Horn* may reflect, in addition to scribal

error, the license of performing minstrels in an oral transmission process.<sup>3</sup>

In the following years the collection of parallel phrases proceeded apace. In 1876 Moritz Trautmann published an influential treatise listing repeated or similar expressions; two years later, in an inquiry into the celebrated “Huchoun” question, Trautmann buttressed various authorial claims with several stylistic “proofs” based on diction, phraseological parallels, and metrical usage. Oscar Zielke’s *Sir Orfeo* (1880) and Eugen Kölbing’s *Amis and Amiloun* (1884) both give attention to stereotypic expression; in an appendix to Kölbing’s 1886 edition of *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, Carl Schmirgel cites a wide range of Middle English parallels under such categories as “feelings of joy,” “descriptions of grief,” “fixed expressions of an amatory character,” “phrases containing benedictions,” and so forth. Schmirgel’s examples exhibit similarities of various types, from verbatim or near-verbatim repetition to repeating and collocating alliterative pairs to mere similarity of idea. This line of scholarship culminated in Johannes Fuhrmann’s *Die alliterierenden Sprachformeln in Morris’ Early English Alliterative Poems und im Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight* (1886), which organizes its matter by etymology and relations between words and phrases; and in Curt Reicke (1906), another inquiry into the Huchoun authorship problem offering perhaps the most extended treatment of repeating and parallel phraseology until that time.<sup>4</sup>

Several other studies from this period have particular bearing on matters oral and formulaic. In the introduction to her edition of *The Romance of Emaré* (1906:xxii-xxvii), Edith Rickert tallies the poem’s repeating lines, exact and approximate, which comprise by her count 16.5% of the total (cf. Wittig 1977). Further, she details nine examples of what we might now loosely call themes or type-scenes, that is, passages with marked phraseological and structural similarities treating common subjects such as love at first sight, boat travel, a messenger’s reception, a king’s resolve and subsequent penance, and so forth. Shortly before the publication of Rickert’s edition, and anticipating another important line of oral-related Middle English scholarship, Charles M. Hathaway took a step in the movement from empirical observation to explanation and interpretation in his “Chaucer’s Verse-Tags as a Part of his Narrative Machinery” (1903-5). Noting the corresponding formulaic habits of Homer, Chaucer, and other medieval storytellers, he raises

the question of “artistic propriety”: “why did Chaucer use these phrases, if he is the consummate artist in narrative that he is generally held to be?” (477). Reviewing the medieval poet’s growing mastery of the pleonastic style, Hathaway argues that the frequency of tags results from Chaucer’s participation in the popular idiom and “attitude of mind” common to cultured men of that era, and that it was to engage *listeners* rather than readers that he perfected this medium of “living oral speech” (484). Employing approaches less narrowly literary and more historical and sociological, Robert K. Root (1913) and Samuel Moore (1913) touch upon the related problems of literary publication and dissemination in a world that lacked print and a developed book trade.

The next two decades were marked by a general reaction against the methods and assumptions of the Higher Criticism as new, more fully documented treatments increasingly demonstrated that the parallels formerly used to “prove” common authorship often merely attested to a shared, conventional poetic style. In 1910 Henry N. MacCracken vigorously attacked Trautmann for the frail foundations of evidence on which his lofty arguments relied and concluded that most of the previous attributions of poems to the ever-elusive Huchoun had emerged from a “maze of guesswork” (534). The next generation of editors, including Robert J. Menner (1920), Henry L. Savage (1926), and Magoun (1929), steered carefully through the hazardous waters of facile attribution; in an interesting aside Magoun, after citing numerous examples to disprove the uniqueness of parallels between *Alexander A* and *B* located by Trautmann, suggests that “*Al. A*, by virtue of its extensive use of trite phraseology and transitional formulae, was composed with a view to a listening rather than a reading audience” (111). This same essential insight, divested of its pejorative connotations, received considerable amplification at the hands of the same author 24 years later.

Yet by far the most important of these early contributions to the understanding of Middle English formulaic language were John S. P. Tatlock’s two articles on Layamon, both published in 1923. Cataloguing this poet’s stylistic proclivities regarding the use of the alliterative verse form, simile, litotes, kennings, variation, and so forth, “Layamon’s Poetic Style and its Relations” (1923b) is intended largely as a supplement to the far more compendious “Epic Formulas, Especially in Layamon” (1923a). Not least among



his contributions was Tatlock's recognition in this earlier, massively documented article of a "looseness in the use of the term epic formula" (1923a:494, n.1) by his scholarly predecessors; while he proposes no precise definition of his own, he does exclude phrases that occur less than three times, "mere stock-rimes," and "phrases so inevitable that they would not have been felt as formulas by Layamon or his auditors . . ." (495). What follows is an impressive listing of "128 separate formulas, which occur upwards of 1500 times, once in about 10 lines, an average of 12 times to a formula" (511); Tatlock further notes the division of formulas into half-line and full-line types, the gravitation for formulas towards the b-verses, formulaic clustering, "petrification" as well as variation of wording, the avoidance of enjambement, and other characteristics of style to which Parry and others have attached particular importance.

In the second half of the article Tatlock interprets the evidence that he has amassed in a broad historical and comparative context. He contrasts the *Brut* with the English-language poetry that preceded and followed it: for the Anglo-Saxons eschewed formulas altogether, cultivating rather a "variety and ingenuity of phrasing" (515-16), while the later Middle English romances, although they frequently revert to the popular, unsophisticated formulaic style, rely on it less than Layamon does. Comparable formulaic usage is not to be found in English but in the *Chanson de Roland*, or the *Poema del Cid*, or the Homeric *epos*. Since most such works "stand near the head of the written documents of the peoples involved," Tatlock briefly speculates on a connection between formulaicity and oral delivery: "[the formulaic style] goes with singing more than with reciting, and with that more than with reading . . . . It is due partly to economy of effort. The poet feels no need of searching for variety of expression, and when he strikes out a fine or serviceable phrase, he is conscious of no carping criticism or nagging self-criticism to prevent him from repeating it" (528). Here and elsewhere, Tatlock's remarks remind one of Parry. And while many of his observations break down in the light of subsequent research, Tatlock clearly deserves credit for bringing the formulaic character of Middle English poetry into a new intensity of scholarly focus.

The next important study in this line, and in some respects culminating a half-century's research, was J. P. Oakden's massive, two-volume *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English* (1930-35), which

remains a standard reference to the present day. Surveying problems of dialect, metrics, the range of literature in its genres and historical phases, vocabulary, alliterative phraseology, and style, this work defies summarizing here by its sheer dimensions (almost 700 pages) and the diversity of its topics; in any event, from our present perspective it is more important for the evidence that it assembles than for its theoretical insights. Yet the quantity and variety of this evidence is indeed remarkable. In the third part of volume 2 (195-363), for example, Oakden compiles a series of purportedly complete listings of alliterative phrases in Old English poetry and prose, in early Middle English poetry (alliterative and non-alliterative), in poems of the Alliterative Revival, and in several non-alliterative works of the fourteenth century; within these categories the phrases are listed under various further subdivisions. Entries are cross-referenced, so that “the reader may see at a glance whether the phrases are traditional or not” (2, 195). Though far less comprehensive, his collections of tags (381-91) are also of interest. While a few of these tag groups are unified by common syntactic or semantic properties, most seem to embody an implicit defining principle similar to that commonly used at present to define Old English formulaic systems: that is, a constant lexical core (e.g., “men of armes,” “of dedes,” etc.) combines with a further lexical element varied to satisfy alliterative requirements.<sup>5</sup> Like others of his day, Oakden found little redeeming aesthetic value in stock phraseology. Yet whatever his merits as a theorist, his extraordinarily thorough compilations of evidence have had decisive impact on the study of Middle English stylistics and will no doubt continue to prove serviceable until they are at last superseded by computer technology.

Most of the scholarship that we have been reviewing bears primarily on problems of formulaic language; references to orality and oral performance occur usually as passing asides. Yet during the 1920s and 30s, a time span coinciding with the first publication of Parry’s work and the Chadwicks’ *The Growth of Literature* (1932-40), the matter of oral performance (as distinguished from oral composition) began to receive serious attention. Lynn Thorndike’s brief note on “Public Readings of New Works in Mediaeval Universities” (1926) and G. R. Owst’s *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (1933)<sup>6</sup> focused on traditions of discourse in the medieval world that bore considerable freight of oral residue. Yet the ground-breaking treatment of orality in

Middle English literature was George P. Wilson's "Chaucer and Oral Reading" (1926), whose explicit purpose was to "establish the probability that Chaucer wrote some of his works with the intention of reading them aloud" (283). Wilson proposed three historical or cultural-evolutionary stages "through which verbal composition passes in going from its author to the public" (283-84): transmission through singing or recitation, through reading aloud, and through silent reading. After reviewing the evidence for and circumstances surrounding recitation and especially oral reading in the Greek, Old French, and Middle English literary traditions, Wilson turns to the case of Chaucer specifically, adducing both external and internal arguments for that poet's participation in the second stage of literary transmission. The historical reasons are manifold: oral reading was the custom of the age; in a multilingual nation the spoken vernacular communicated more readily than its written counterpart; books were scarce, and poor handwriting and inconsistent punctuation practices made their decoding unpleasant and cumbersome; and live presentation suited the needs of court entertainment. Turning more briefly to textual evidence, Wilson cites several passages in which Chaucer addresses a present, listening audience or otherwise depicts the practice of oral reading. Though his evidence is far less complete than Ruth Crosby's (1936 and 1938), Wilson sets a precedent in bringing these three major perspectives—the comparative, the historical-biographical, and the internal—to bear specifically on the problem of orality.

The early 1930s ushered in the publication of several other articles touching on the topic of oral tradition directly or providing seminal treatments of topics vitally connected with it. Into the latter category falls James R. Hulbert's "A Hypothesis Concerning the Alliterative Revival" (1931), whose proposal that this literary movement was fostered by a baronial opposition to the crown has evoked a continuing response. In fact, the search for the origins of the Alliterative Revival repeatedly runs up against the possibility of oral traditional continuities from the Anglo-Saxon period. R. W. Chambers (1932:lxvii) articulates the position thus:

There can be few stranger things in the history of literature than this sudden disappearance and reappearance of a school of poetry. It was kept alive by oral tradition through nine generations, appearing in writing very rarely, and then usually in a corrupt form,

till it suddenly came forth, correct, vigorous, and bearing with it a whole tide of national feeling.

A different aspect of the orality-literacy problem was addressed by V. H. Galbraith in "The Literacy of the Medieval English Kings" (1935), who finds that medieval royalty remained largely illiterate through the twelfth century. More directly literary in his orientation is A. McI. Trounce (1932), who, in defining the principal characteristics of the popular, conventional style of the tail-rhyme romances, several times notes the connection with oral delivery or oral tradition, evidenced (for example) in narratorial tendencies to direct expressions to an audience presumed to be present, or in a repetitiveness suited to the needs of oral communication, or in phrases that assume a prior oral source.

Yet of all these early discussions concerning the role of oral performance in the Middle English literary tradition, undoubtedly the most authoritative and influential were Crosby's two articles, the first (1936) concerned with the Middle Ages generally, the second (1938) limited to Chaucer. Opening with a survey of historical antecedents, the more wide-ranging "Oral Delivery in the Middle Ages" cites Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon authors who attest to this practice in their societies. Alluding to scholarship on minstrels and *jongleurs*, Crosby goes on to cite passages from later medieval literature—particularly the romances—that depict one person reading to another or in which the narrator seems to presuppose a present, listening audience. The second half of her argument catalogs the principal characteristics of literature designed for oral delivery. Asserting that the surest textual indicator of such intent is the "use of direct address not to the reader, but to those listeners who are present at the recitation" (100), Crosby quotes numerous examples from several genres of French and English poetry. The other chief characteristic is repetition, which Crosby subdivides into two types. Under the heading "phrases occurring frequently in works intended to be heard but showing no specific intention of uniting the poet or minstrel with his hearers" (102), she surveys introductory and descriptive phrases, expletives, and formulas; the more significant category of "phrases which actually further the purpose of oral delivery by showing the relation of the poet or minstrel to his audience" (106) includes transitions, asseverations, and oaths. Noting further the tendency to employ religious introductions and endings, Crosby concludes that the "oral delivery of popular literature was the rule rather

than the exception in the Middle Ages" (110).

This article's successor and companion piece, "Chaucer and the Custom of Oral Delivery" (1938), follows a similar plan of organization. Documenting at the outset Chaucer's familiarity with contemporary oral performance practices, Crosby surveys the Chaucerian narrator's deployment of verbs of hearing and telling, passages that explicitly indicate an audience that is physically present, and other evidence suggesting that Chaucer envisioned an audience of listeners as well as readers. The second half of this article, like its 1936 counterpart, studies stock phrases (introductory and descriptive, expletives, formulas, and so on) and religious openings and terminations. In short, "his genius notwithstanding, Chaucer was conventional," and many characteristics of his style "can be accounted for only by understanding his relations to the popular traditions engendered by the custom of oral delivery" (431).

Less rigorous and economical in his assemblage of evidence while more speculative in his probings into aesthetic ramifications, Bertrand H. Bronson attacked this same problem of literature intended for oral performance in his lengthy article, "Chaucer's Art in Relation to His Audience" (1940). Noting like Crosby that Chaucer's original addressees were listeners as well as readers, Bronson cautions against the unconscious mental reduction of auditory signals to visual ones that habitual literacy facilitates. The oral medium would indeed have imposed on medieval authors numerous limitations, such as the imperatives to avoid audience boredom and to maintain a high degree of clarity through emphatic transition devices, frequent definitions and clarifications, and so forth. Yet, on the positive side, Chaucer was able to exploit the immediacy of his encounter with his audience to considerable artistic advantage; and here Bronson devotes almost half the essay to detailing how Chaucer's various self-representations and other features of his poetry relating to narrator and narratorial voice would have functioned aesthetically in a live interactional context.<sup>7</sup> Venturing on quite a different tack, Bronson next postulates a series of four stages by which the "habit of composition for oral reading" would have led to a realization of full dramatic structure in the *Canterbury Tales*. Moving from text to context, the essay closes with a few comments on the "nature and quality" of Chaucer's actual audience.

Although it does not particularly feature Middle English

literature, H. J. Chaytor's *From Script to Print* (1945) calls for attention here for its insightful discussion of communications in the pre-print era. Since relatively few in the Middle Ages could read, and since for those who could this activity often proceeded ponderously and with the accompaniment of muttering, auditory images usually predominated over visual ones in the medieval literary experience (5-21). Chaytor recognizes that many aspects of style—such as the frequent employment of formulas (64)—resulted from the imperative for immediate rhetorical impact that goes hand in hand with the oral performance medium. Chapter 6, “Publication and Circulation” (115-37), reviews various topics relating to the oral dissemination of medieval literature; particularly noteworthy are Chaytor's remarks on the role of memory, oral variation, and oral improvisation, as practiced by the Yugoslav singers. Much in this book falls outside our purview; yet in what concerns us, Chaytor seems in several connections to have anticipated much of the recent interest in the contrasting phenomenologies of reading versus listening.

Before we turn to the explicit history of oral-formulaic theory in Middle English scholarship, two more works deserve mention. Though it is oriented essentially towards the lettered and learned aspects of medieval culture, Ernst R. Curtius' *European Literature in the Latin Middle Ages* (originally published in German in 1948) brought into modern prominence the ancient rhetorical concept of *topoi*,<sup>8</sup> whose possible relation to oral “themes” was suggested by Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg (1966:26). More directly relevant is Dorothy Everett's posthumously published collection, *Essays on Middle English Literature* (1955). Several times in the articles “Layamon and the Earliest Alliterative Verse” (23-45) and “The Alliterative Revival” (46-96), Everett evokes “oral transmission,” perhaps from the Old English period, as a possible source for aspects of the conventionalized diction, phraseology, and narrative patterning in this Middle English verse. Everett's recognition of a conventional style and a possible oral provenience reflects what had by this time become fairly common perceptions whose implications were seldom looked into.<sup>9</sup> Under the stimulus of the oral theory, however, this same insight was soon to present itself again in a more fully articulated form and with a heightened awareness of its own literary and historical importance.

## II. 1957-1967

The first applications of oral-formulaic theory to Middle English literature followed in the wake of scholarly developments relating to the Old English period, notably the publication of Magoun's "The Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry" (1953).<sup>10</sup> And indeed, the Old English period has consistently been the main battleground for the oral-formulaic controversy; extensions into later English literature have followed secondarily and intermittently, discouraged no doubt by the higher state of literacy in later medieval civilization. Nonetheless, the conventional style of much of the verse narrative, particularly the romances, seemed from the outset to lend itself to certain aspects of oral-formulaic analysis.

The first scholar to take up the gauntlet was Ronald A. Waldron in an article consciously styled after Magoun, "Oral-Formulaic Technique and Middle English Alliterative Poetry" (1957). While postulating a "continuity in the use of alliterative meter between the eleventh and fourteenth century" through the medium of an oral tradition that "only incidentally found its way into writing" (793), Waldron makes it clear that he is searching for only "the *remains* of an oral technique embedded in written literature" (794). Such narratives, Waldron feels, would have been composed by poets "familiar with a body of formulas" ultimately deriving from an oral tradition, and for a readership that "still retained a taste for the conventions of an oral style" (800). This oral residue takes the shape of a "common diction" extending "to the use of formulaic phrases fulfilling metrical, rather than stylistic or aesthetic requirements" (794). Thus Waldron invokes the dichotomy of art versus usefulness that has remained the bugbear of the oral theory for the past three decades. To illustrate his claims, Waldron devotes much of the article to listings of phrases belonging to common formulaic systems. Further, in the fashion of Parry, Lord, and Magoun, he performs a formulaic analysis of lines 1-25 of the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, indicating with solid lines phrases "repeated elsewhere in exactly the same form, or with insignificant variations" (795) in his sampling of Middle English poetry, and with broken lines member phrases of formulaic systems. Though he does not tabulate his results, it appears that better than three-quarters of the half-lines in the sample passage contain phrases falling into one of these two categories.

Much ink has been spilled over Waldron's use of "formula" and especially "formulaic system," key terms that unfortunately remain undefined in his article. In fact, as later scholarship repeatedly discovers, Middle English alliterative poetry itself seems to be distinguished less by verbatim repetition than by constellations of similarities difficult to categorize. Perhaps in an attempt to meet this complexity adequately and without reduction, Waldron conceives of formulaic systems as underlying patterns with rhythmical, syntactical, and lexical components. Examples of these include: "as soon as the (NOUN) (VERB)," "the first (NOUN) that he (VERB)," and "there is no (NOUN + PREP PHR)"; member phrases of this last system are "For þar is na wa in þe werd," "Per is na wyge in his werk," and "There es no man appon molde" (799). Waldron has several times been taken to task for the excessive generality of these constructs<sup>11</sup>; yet their evident generative power has won the commendation of later scholars such as R. F. Lawrence (1966) and Stephen Morrison (1983).

Waldron's article has served as one of the two principal points of departure within Middle English scholarship itself. The other was established by Albert Baugh in a series of articles which, because of their interrelatedness and collective importance, I will here treat together, even though their publication dates span a full two decades. Antedating our period by seven years, "The Authorship of the Middle English Romances" (1950) tries to determine whether those who created in this genre were scholars or entertainers. While internal evidence does indeed seem to implicate minstrels in the performance process in some way, we cannot assume that these later medieval descendants of the Anglo-Saxon scop actually composed in their own right. On the other hand, references to written sources or the activities of reading and writing smack of "the odor of the lamp." It is true that this evidence, taken together with the invocations to God in the prologue or epilogue and the narratorial intrusions of an otherwise unworldly character, do not in general prove the authors to have been members of religious orders; yet taking certain of the English Charlemagne romances as examples, Baugh demonstrates that sometimes a stronger case can be made on basis of manuscript evidence and comparisons with the French sources. Drawing all these observations together, Baugh briefly hypothesizes that many of the romance narratives were in fact composed by non-minstrel authors for publication and dissemination by performing minstrels



who thus served “as intermediaries between [the authors] and their public” (28).

This insight emerges again in a brilliant new form in “Improvisation in the Middle English Romance” (1959), Baugh’s explicit response to the Parry-Lord theory and by far the most important in this series of studies. Raising the question of possible oral-improvisatory origins, Baugh suggests the applicability of two of the oral theory’s key terms, “formula” and “theme,” to this Middle English narrative material. There follows (420-25) an impressive listing of groups of lines with common formulas, which Baugh defines conservatively as repeating phrases consistent in their metrical shape and selecting the same position within the line. Even more formidable, however, is the following section on themes (425-27 and 440-54), in which, working through many examples, he subdivides the typical episodes of a knight’s arming, the inquiry into a stranger’s identity, and battle into recurring sequences of constituent narrative elements. Next (427-31), Baugh adds a notion of his own, the “predictable complement,” which refers to the second line of a couplet in which an initial statement seems “to call up automatically in the mind of the poet or reciter a conventional way of completing the thought” (428); an example would be the striking of a blow that leads, predictably, to the victim’s falling from his horse.

These demonstrations bear out the contention that stock patterns of various sorts play a role in Middle English romance usage. Yet the poems themselves can hardly be oral, since many are translations of French originals. “Are we then to dismiss the whole question of improvisation from our minds and to regard the presence of large numbers of formulas and themes in English romances as proof only of the ineptness of the poets who composed them?” (434). At this juncture Baugh introduces his most important and original contribution to oral-formulaic theory. As he illustrates through several examples, variation between manuscript versions of certain poems occurs on such a scale as to render the “scribal corruption” thesis implausible. On the other hand, these discrepancies might very well reflect the practice of minstrels who supplement memory with improvisation. In other words, while books provide the basis for the minstrel’s performance, his renderings from memory might introduce changes in accordance with oral-formulaic principles that would register in subsequent manuscript versions. Thus oral improvisation has changed its locus

from the compositional to the transmission process.

The precise character of oral "publication" and the role of minstrels, problems treated in brief in the previous articles, provide the main subject for "The Middle English Romance: Some Questions of Creation, Presentation, and Preservation" (1967). Reviewing and elaborating on his thesis that minstrels were primarily performers and not creators, Baugh reiterates his proposal that authors "wrote with oral presentation in mind" (9); he goes on to cite passages attesting to the types of occasions evidently suitable for such entertainment and the variety of appeals on which authors and performers would have capitalized. In the next section he inquires more closely into the nature of oral performance by professionals, concluding that singing and reciting from memory as well as reading aloud from books were all common practices. After examining possible correlations between romance structure and the time constraints under which oral performers would have operated, Baugh closes with a fuller exposition on a concern of his previous article, that minstrels may have covered memory lapses with oral improvisation and may thus be responsible for divergences between manuscripts.

Although this 1967 study concludes Baugh's work on orality and marks one of my boundaries for this phase of Middle English oral-formulaic scholarship, in order to round out the presentation of his views I will mention in brief his final essay in the romance genre. Entitled "Convention and Individuality in the Middle English Romance" (1970), this excellent study, through a comparison of several English-language romances with their French originals, argues that the translation process indeed gave scope for the Middle English poet's creative originality. In fact, the problem of "conventionality versus originality" has much occupied oral-formulaists and their critics. In overview, Baugh's studies collectively offer a rich and insightful perspective on the meaning and nature of "transitional literature." His mastery of his subject and his imaginative tailoring of oral-formulaic concepts to the specificities of the later medieval situation make him the contributor *nonpareil* to the study of orality-literacy interactions as shaping forces in Middle English literature.

The attempts of scholars like Tatlock, Crosby, Waldron, and Baugh to incorporate the recognition of oral and formulaic dimensions into their perception of Middle English literature did not, for the most part, prevail with the critical mainstream, though

sustained criticisms were few. Ralph W. V. Elliott (1961) opposes the oral-formulaic approach to his own visual-imagistic-rhetorical orientation; Karl Brunner dismisses Baugh with the unsupported assertion that manuscript variants “are not to be accounted for by oral transmission, but by the carelessness of scribes who simply exchanged one stock-in-trade phrase for another, or invented new lines when they had difficulties in reading their originals . . .” (1961:224). Somewhat more cautiously, Dieter Mehl (1969:7-10) stresses the lack of solid historical evidence concerning minstrels and the ambivalence of in-text descriptions of minstrel performances or appeals to the audience, which he feels could be literary devices; though Baugh’s oral improvisation might have figured in, “the extant romances appear to be for the most part ‘literary’ creations . . .” (10). Others are similarly reluctant to attach any real importance to oral performance in the interpretation of Chaucer. Paull F. Baum, for instance, disregarding (as it would seem) the problem of historical meaning, argues that “Geoffrey Chaucer reading aloud to certain groups in the late fourteenth century is for us a fiction; what remains is Geoffrey Chaucer addressing us from the printed page” (1958:128). Robert O. Payne more thoughtfully cautions against the too easy equation of “audience” with “listeners,” stressing that Chaucer was concerned with the preservation of his work and its long-term readership (1963:228). In his contribution to *Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature* (1960), Francis Lee Utley expresses reservations about the facile recourse to “oral transmission.” For genuinely “oral” material, he says, “bears the stamp of the collector, place, date, tale-teller, and provides the exact unaltered text”; thus, paradoxically, most “medieval ‘folk tales’ are literary, since that is the only way in which they could have been preserved” (103-4). All these themes were to recur in the scholarship of the next twenty years.

At the same time, during these years immediately following the publication of Waldron’s (1957) and Baugh’s (1959) seminal studies, other scholars were vigorously attacking the problem of oral tradition, often along lines quite outside the usual oral-formulaic framework. Roger S. Loomis’ view that the Arthurian legends were transmitted through both oral and written channels is substantiated not so much by the kind of formal and empirical considerations favored by the Parry-Lord school as by the testimony of medieval authors and especially the evidence of narrative content. Arguing

for Breton origins, "The Oral Diffusion of the Arthurian Legend" (1959a) finds that "internal evidence amply corroborates the external testimony to the oral diffusion of the Matter of Britain before, and even after, it came into favour with poets and prose romancers" (63). More narrowly focused, "Morgan la Fée in Oral Tradition" (1959b) similarly argues for oral diffusion through the activity of "professional entertainers, most of them French-speaking Bretons, who ranged from Scotland to Sicily" (7) recounting tales of the Round Table prior to the involvement of "literary men" (18). Loomis' method here is to cite widely disparate works with common, obscure bits of information or narrative content; in the absence of an extant literary source, these similarities, he argues, are best explained as the results of oral transmission. Though unrelated methodologically, C. A. Robson's "The Technique of Symmetrical Composition in Medieval Narrative Poetry" (1961) similarly calls on oral transmission, in this case to explain discrepancies in an intricate numerological scheme that he sees underlying and informing the Middle English *Sir Launfal* and other Old French and Middle High German narrative works. Although he alludes to Rychner (1955), Robson, like Loomis, is functionally unaware of the oral-formulaic theory, as is illustrated, for example, in his assumption that oral transmission implies artistic naiveté and shorter, unelaborated narrative units.

For both of these authors, writing without reference to Parry, Lord, or Magoun, oral transmission and orality-literacy interactions are fairly conventionally conceived. Such cannot be said of Marshall McLuhan's *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962), which, while characterized by its author as complementary to Lord's *The Singer of Tales*, in fact resembles nothing but itself. Praised by some for his exuberance, imagination, and prophetic powers while condemned by others for what are perceived as grandiose and extravagant generalities, McLuhan in this book subordinates his treatment of communications in the medieval world to a larger thesis or cluster of theses relating to the revolution of consciousness precipitated by the invention of the printing press. Since the dizzying eclecticism of McLuhan's argument eludes summarizing, its bearing on our topic might best be represented by quoting several relevant section headings: "In antiquity and the Middle Ages reading was necessarily reading aloud" (82); "The manuscript shaped medieval literary conventions at all levels" (86); "The medieval monks' reading carrell was indeed a singing booth" (92); "Scholasticism,

like Senecanism, was directly related to the oral traditions of aphoristic learning” (102); “The same clash between written and oral structures of knowledge occurs in medieval social life” (114). McLuhan’s writings have exerted little direct influence on oral-formulaic theory *per se*. Yet the topic areas which to a considerable degree McLuhan pioneered have moved increasingly into the center of recent discussions, particularly those concerned with the relationship between communications media and modes of thought.

Returning to the tamer landscapes of literary criticism, we find in the early 1960s the alliterative masterpiece *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* emerging as one of the first testing grounds for the integration of oral-formulaic perceptions into the canons of critical-aesthetic sensibilities. Though her chapter “Style and the Alliterative Tradition” (1962:52-90) attends more to traditional vocabulary (largely in response to Brink 1920) than to traditional phraseology, Marie Borroff compiles several lists of formulaic phrases. In fact, Borroff’s phrase groups are not usually united by common formulas so much as by common words repeating in the same metrical position (usually the ends of lines) in variable lexical contexts. The oral-formulaic approach is adopted at points by Larry D. Benson (1965a), who sees the romance genre, differentiated by its own peculiar brand of “bookishness” from both the epic and the novel (6-10), as drawing nonetheless on a “continuous oral tradition” (118) surviving from the Old English period. Primarily relevant is Benson’s chapter on style (110-66), in which, to demonstrate the formularity of *Gawain’s* phraseology, he performs the customary formulaic analysis on the poem’s first 14 lines (120). Yet despite this debt to oral tradition, Benson views the Alliterative Revival as a sophisticated *literary* movement that drew on many sources; and in the remainder of the chapter he sensitively discusses variation, syntax, methods of narrative linkage, and other facets of *Gawain’s* style, frequently noting both continuities with and departures from the practice of oral poets.<sup>12</sup>

Since A. C. Spearing’s book on the *Gawain*-poet touches on matters of this kind, at this juncture we will depart from strict chronology to review the several relevant contributions by this scholar. In an early article on Langland’s use of “verbal repetition” (which here means the repetition of individual words within a single passage), Spearing, citing Owst, asserts that this device typifies sermon discourse and thus belongs “to an essentially

oral rhetoric" (1963:736). Broader in its purview, *Criticism and Medieval Poetry* (1964) warns that "close readings" of medieval poetry often disregard the conditions of oral delivery. In fact, the oral performance medium accounts for several characteristics of this poetry — its diffuseness and thinness of texture, its reliance on sound to convey meaning, its formulaic and conventional style, and its episodic structuring (see 18-27). Recognizing an originally oral tradition as a formative influence underlying the Alliterative Revival, Spearing's subsequent book-length treatment of *Gawain* (1970) argues that the traditional style is itself "a kind of communal work of art" which the individual poet, to the measure of his own ability, uses "even while being used by it" (18). Formulas abound, although strict metrical-syntactical definitions do not suit Middle English poetry; for this reason, the formula is most profitably conceived as a "lexical and semantic nexus: an associative tendency among certain words used to express a certain idea" (21).

Several other articles from the mid-1960s take up the problem of formulaic style. Recapitulating the conclusions of a 1960 dissertation, Merle Fifield (1963) extends Oakden's type of study into a new genre by examining the alliterative formulaic tradition as manifested in the thirteenth-century lyric. Fifield's method is quantitative: tables and statistics, broken down by genre and historical period, document patterns of continuity and disjuncture from an ancestral Old English tradition through the thirteenth-century lyric and on to the religious and secular lyric poetry of the two centuries following. John Finlayson (1963), on the other hand, brings more of an interpretive and evaluative slant to his comparison of "formulaic technique" in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* with that in *The Destruction of Troy* and *The Wars of Alexander*. Though he claims to adopt Parry's definition of the formula, Finlayson emphatically rejects Waldron's "rhythmical-syntactical moulds," since these prove only that English "has a discernible syntactical structure" (375). In fact, Finlayson focuses mainly on collocating pairs, such as "gird" and "grip," or "sworde" and "swap," or "cayre" and "conquerour"; his lists of examples and accompanying discussions are intended to show that "a formulaic tradition does not necessarily imply that all poets will use the formulas in the same way with the same effect" (376). Noting further the tendency towards formulaic clustering, Finlayson concludes that the *Morte Arthure*, although composed in writing, is

of “oral character” in Parry’s sense, since it was designed for oral delivery.

This same poem, whose archaisms have always provided a rich mine for oral-formulaists, claimed Karl H. Göller’s attention two years later (1965) in an article stressing the determinative role of the formulaic technique in the establishment of poetic meaning. Generating his own list of examples, Göller argues that semantic, metrical, and formulaic considerations should not be viewed in isolation but in terms of their hierarchical relationship to each other in the context of an oral-formulaic compositional mode. More general and theoretical is Lawrence’s “The Formulaic Theory and Its Application to English Alliterative Poetry” (1966) which, after a discriminating review of the work of Parry, Lord, Magoun, and Creed, devotes several pages (178-82) to the Waldron-Finlayson dispute. Echoing Parry’s concern with metrical and colonic structure, Lawrence judges that Finlayson underestimates “the usefulness of such sub-semantic patterns [i.e., ‘rhythmical-syntactical moulds’] to the worker in a traditional verse-medium—whether oral or written—because he ignores the implications of metre. It is a question of discovering not that the language of alliterative poetry has a ‘discernible syntactical structure’ but that this structure is composed of grammatical units which are co-extensive with metrical units and which exist as such in the poet’s mind” (182).

The last two studies in this section are less exclusively oral-formulaic in their concerns. Scholes and Kellogg (1966), in a major contribution to narrative theory, incorporate a general introduction to oral tradition in their chapter “The Oral Heritage of Written Literature” (17-56), which refers extensively to medieval literature (though seldom to Middle English). Bruce A. Rosenberg’s “The Morphology of the Middle English Metrical Romance” (1967), bringing Proppian as well as oral-formulaic perspectives to the study of story patterns, subdivides this class of narratives into three “structural groups,” those informed by crime-and-punishment, separation-and-reunion, and test-and-reward patterns. Since these categories cut across conventional generic lines, Rosenberg suggests that romance, epic, and ballad might more meaningfully be differentiated by the intended occasion and mode of performance. Although the romances are not formulaic to the degree that *Beowulf* is (74), their structure and governing aesthetic principles (such as the concern for *copia* rather

than brevity) derive from the needs of the performer-audience exchange. This same year, distinguished by the publication of the third of Baugh's articles, marks an end to the first, exploratory stage of oral-formulaic research in Middle English.

### III. 1967-1984

Seldom is it possible to date with any precision the boundary between two phases in a scholarly movement. Nonetheless, the proposition generally holds that the late 1960's brought with them a "second wave" of oral-formulaic scholarship, distinguished from the first on the one hand by an increased heterogeneity and methodological experimentation, and on the other hand by a general retrenchment of hard claims concerning oral versus written provenience.

Treading cautiously in the wake of fifteen years' debate in Anglo-Saxon scholarship, Håkan Ringbom's *Studies in the Narrative Technique of Beowulf and Lawman's Brut* (1968) in its relevant portions represents the earliest attempt to apply Parry-Lord concepts of formula and theme to what constitutes the first sustained narrative work of Middle English alliterative verse. Chapter 5, "Lawman's *Brut* and Formulaic Analysis" (58-76), criticizes the looseness in contemporary scholarly parlance that makes the term "formula" virtually indistinguishable from "repetition." Ringbom goes on to perform the standard formulaic analysis on *Brut* 11. 14,898-15,023, selected because it represents a 25-line expansion on a five-line passage in the French source. Ringbom finds that "close parallels to roughly half the passage can be found more than twice elsewhere in the poem" (70), although he stresses the range of variation which cannot be accounted for through strictly formulaic principles. He concludes that "formula" is less suitable as a "term for Lawman's loosely structured, recurrent phrases" than "iteration," referring to "the purely lexical criterion of collocability" (76). Far more productive is the notion of the oral theme or type-scene as a basic unit of narrative. Concentrating again on Middle English expansions on the French original, Ringbom devotes Chapter 6 (77-104) to three main themes (each broken down into its series of constituent elements)—feasts, voyages, and arrivals, as they appear in Lawman's and Wace's versions. Through this analysis Ringbom finds that the oral-formulaic inclination to recur to certain topics,



presented in the same general outlines with similar though not identical phrasing, does indeed characterize Lawman's artistic and narrative method.

From about this same period, the old problem of the origins of the Alliterative Revival began to be attacked with a renewed vigor. In 1966-67 Elizabeth Salter had tried to discredit Hulbert's "baronial opposition" thesis. But in 1969 it was resurrected again, though in a radically modified form. More pointedly than had any before him, Charles Moorman (1969) argued that these latter-day alliterative poets inherited "a common poetical and thematic tradition, one which originated in Anglo-Saxon literature, was continued during the Anglo-Norman period—probably by means of what had become an oral tradition of alliterative poetry—and re-emerged as written verse in the baronial courts of the middle fourteenth century" (345). Relying largely on the stylistic studies of Oakden, Moorman marshalls as evidence the facts of the alliterative meter, formulaic language, stock narrative materials, and certain native attitudes and outlooks to support his contention that, despite the effects of popularization, Middle English poetry at various stages attests to continuities from the Old English period. A similar view is espoused by Jeff Opland in "The Oral Origins of Early English Poetry," published during the next year (1970).

The applicability of the oral-formulaic theory to poetry of the Alliterative Revival soon began to fuel dissertations. Locating extensive oral-formulaic remains in *Gawain* and the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, Jerome E. Coffey (1969) hypothesizes a gradual evolution from oral to literary styles. James D. Johnson (1970), tabulating the density of formulas (sorted into two categories on the basis of the degree of lexical variation) in the *Morte Arthure* and further examining its oral thematic composition, similarly affirms the value of a modified oral-formulaic approach. Drawing on both oral-formulaic and medieval rhetorical concepts, Hugh W. Tonsfeldt (1975) constructs a model for fourteenth-century alliterative poetry generally and then applies it, again, to the *Morte Arthure*. Two other dissertations, while recognizing an ultimate historical relationship with an oral stage of poetry, prefer to delve into the literary-aesthetic implications of the oral-aural medium, Brenda S. Stockwell (1973) singling out the Middle English lyric and Merrell A. Knighten (1976) Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*.

Several other studies around the turn of the decade limit themselves to particular formulaic or thematic structures. Laila

Gross (1968) keys on one system of phrases in her "The Meaning and Oral-Formulaic Use of *Riot* in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*." A review of the semantic complexities surrounding this word shows that, "since context cannot always be a guide for the meaning of a word, oral-formulaic phrases, if they occur, seem the most trustworthy determinants of meaning" (102). Working on the same level of microstructure but more attentive to points of terminological usage, Eiichi Suzuki (1969) examines the word *molde* ("world") in its manifestations as the stable element in a Middle English alliterative formulaic system, the definition of which he borrows from Donald K. Fry (1967). Turning from stylistic to narrative units, the same author's "Oral-Formulaic Theme Survival: Two Possible Instances and their Significance in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" (1972) finds Stanley B. Greenfield's (1955) theme of exile and David K. Crowne's (1960) "hero on the beach" theme variously realized. Suzuki further suggests that ironic contrasts between the "inherited body of meanings" (27) usually attaching to such themes and their immediate synchronic context need to be recognized in the course of literary exegesis.

In this same burst of scholarly productivity several of Baugh's insights came to further fruition, as younger minds tried to unravel the labyrinthine tangle of orality-literacy processes out of which several of the extant romances evidently originated. In a polemical response to some of Bliss' remarks in his edition of *Sir Launfal*, S. T. Knight (1969) maintains that this poem's author, Thomas Chestre, drew on the earlier Middle English romance, *Sir Landevale*, in an oral rather than a written version. Hypothesizing that oral memorial transmission promotes greater fidelity in the preservation of the source's rhyme-words and greater variation elsewhere, Knight juxtaposes several passages that exhibit this pattern and cites other changes that could be due only to mis-hearing or tricks of memory and not to scribal error. All this evidence bears out the view that "Chestre is a minstrel, rather than a literary poet; this would explain the crudity of some of the poetry and also the bluntness of some of the incidents" (169). Derivation from sources gives way to manuscript variations as the focal subject for James R. Hurt (1970), who brings the ideas of formula and theme to bear on several representative passages from different thirteenth-century manuscript versions of *King Horn*. Hurt rejects the thesis that these manuscripts represent transcriptions of three separate oral performances, advancing the

rival view that “the scribes themselves functioned as oral-formulaic poets and reshaped their source texts” accordingly (57).

Building on the theoretical foundations of his previous article (1966), Lawrence’s “Formula and Rhythm in *The Wars of Alexander*” (1970) resembles Knight’s and Hurt’s projects respectively in that its subject romance has an identifiable source (in this case the Latin *Historia Alexandri Magni de Preliis*) and survives in different manuscript versions. Yet Lawrence’s main point concerns less the genesis of a particular text than the structure and functioning of formulaic traditions themselves, whether oral or written. Through many detailed analyses, Lawrence demonstrates that small variations in word order and word choice in both halves of the line derive from “rhythmical preferences and aversions” (99); in the second half-line, for instance, the poet conspicuously avoids the configuration  $-/x/x$  and selects word combinations embodying the patterns  $-/xx/x$  and  $//x$ . In fact, minor variations in unstressed words between the two extant manuscripts often preserve common features of this type. In short, we need to recognize that single formulaic systems can exhibit a plurality of rhythmic forms and that formulaic, syntactic, and rhythmic structures collaborate in the generation of the traditional formulaic style.

The light which a recognition of formulary diction might shed on “the history of existing texts and the reliability of traditional means of textual editing” (89) receives consideration by William E. Holland (1973), who, following generally in the footsteps of Baugh (1959 and 1967), argues that the numerous variations between the five manuscripts of *Merlin* (known in the Auchinleck version as *Arthur and Merlin*) often result from oral improvisation “in the descent of the text” (96). Approaching this problem more systematically than any of his predecessors, Holland analyzes degrees of variation between some 500 corresponding lines from each of three principal texts; despite an overriding consistency on the narrative level, Holland’s evidence highlights differences of wording and phraseology so “continuous and pervasive” (99) as to render any theory of written transmission altogether implausible. Holland takes the argument a step further, maintaining that “the changes consist largely of substitution of one conventional phrase, one formula, for another” (99); as a demonstration, he performs the usual formulaic analysis on two comparable passages in each of four manuscript versions, finding that roughly half of his 150-line

sampling “is reproduced with some accuracy in other Middle English romances” (105). (Like Baugh, Holland does not provide statistics on formulaicity for variant lines specifically, even though higher formulaic density at these points in the orally revised versions is implied by both of their models.) In so profoundly conventional a narrative genre, Holland sums up, oral variation could enjoy considerable scope; and for this reason “it seems unlikely that any unbroken chain of written texts connects the existing manuscripts” (105).

At this juncture it will be convenient to group together a heterogeneous assortment of articles that bear only marginally on our theme. In “Patterns of Myth in Medieval Narrative” (1971), Bruce A. Beatie adopts McLuhanesque and Parry-Lord outlooks in a review of story patterns in a spectrum of medieval works, including *King Horn* (106-7). In her contribution to *Recent Middle English Scholarship and Criticism: Survey and Desiderata* (1971:67-69), Lillian H. Hornstein briefly situates the oral-formulaic perspective (with particular reference to Baugh) in the broader context of Middle English romance scholarship. Michael Curschmann in “Oral Poetry in Mediaeval English, French, and German Literature: Some Notes on Recent Research” (1967) and Utley in “The Oral Formula, its Critics, and its Extensions” (1973) give passing mention to Middle English.<sup>13</sup> Obviously, the short shrift which I am giving to these articles here in no way reflects on their inherent value or critical interest.

A pair of articles from *Literature and Western Civilization: The Mediaeval World* (1973) offer different slants on the problem of medieval literacy. Developing a model reminiscent of Wilson’s (1926), J. A. Burrow identifies three stages in an evolution of medieval poetry, as are suggested in his title, “Bard, Minstrels, and Men of Letters.” The progressive establishment of the reading habit, which sponsored this complex movement from oral to fully literate composition, engendered literary-artistic difficulties peculiar to each stage, variously figured in *Beowulf*, Chrétien, *Gawain*, *Sir Launfal*, Boccaccio, and Chaucer. In “The Literacy of the Laity” M. B. Parkes, approaching this topic from a historical and sociological rather than a literary standpoint, discusses the degree and (more importantly) the nature of medieval literacy. Parkes proposes, in fact, to differentiate between the literacies of the professional reader (the scholar or cleric), the cultured reader (who reads for recreation), and the pragmatic reader (“who has to read

or write in the course of transacting any kind of business,” 555). Although from the sixth through the twelfth centuries most readers were of the first type, thereafter literacy spread, first among the nobility and later among the middle classes, facilitated by the growth of the book trade towards the end of the Middle Ages. This translates, in literary terms, into a late fourteenth-century minstrel who was “less a transmitter of texts and more a professional musician” (575), even though the formulaic style persisted throughout the period.

To both Burrow and Parkes, the oral theory is a secondary or peripheral concern; the main line of oral-formulaic research resumes with two articles by Johnson, addressing in turn thematic and formulaic problems. “‘The Hero on the Beach’ in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*” (1975) identifies what the author characterizes as a unique Middle English occurrence of this four-element narrative pattern in its “pure form.”<sup>14</sup> Since the proposed “sources” contain no prototype, this theme must have been made available to the creator of the *Morte Arthure* through an oral tradition descending from the Old English. Johnson’s next article, “Formulaic Thrift in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*” (1978), argues (*contra* Fry 1968) that the notion of thrift, if appropriately reconceived, has a role in the poetics of English alliterative verse. Substituting alliterative criteria for the metrical-colonic constraints proposed originally in Parry’s discussions of “thrift” in Homer, Johnson’s claim, illustrated through reference to the “FUNCTION-WORD ADJECTIVE knight” formulaic system, is that the noun in question (“knight,” in this instance) collocates with an adjective selected from a limited range of possibilities (usually between one and five different words) under each initial sound. For example, “*gentil*, which occurs eight times in this system, and *galyards*, which occurs seven times, supply the only choices for soft *g* and hard *g* alliteration respectively” (259). Such systems assisted poets in the narration of typical episodes.

Several articles in the next two years attend to works commonly neglected by oral-formulaists. Alain Renoir’s “Crist Ihesu’s Beasts of Battle: A Note on Oral-Formulaic Theme Survival” (1976) locates an example of Magoun’s (1955b) famous theme in 11. 3712-22 of Lydgate’s *Life of Saint Alban and Saint Amphibal*, a literate production in the fullest sense. And as one might expect in such a context, the theme is deployed to a most untraditional end: for instead of glutting themselves on the

carnage in their usual fashion, the wolf and the eagle, appearing on the site of a recent massacre of 999 Christians, set themselves to defending the corpses against the ravages of other wild beasts. Such transformations are to be expected, says Renoir, when oral-formulaic themes “occur in the written works of authors trained in a later or different tradition” (457). Ranging theoretically and speculatively through several literary works and historical periods, Robert Kellogg’s “Oral Narrative, Written Books” (1977) returns several times to Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* in an exposition on the ironic and rhetorical strategies of works creating “a well defined *oral* narrative persona within a *written* story” (660), usage which Kellogg contrasts with that of genuinely oral poetry. Adverting to the oral theory only indirectly, Francis D. Covella (1976) identifies seventeen major grammatical patterns on the way to contrasting the grammatical styles of the A-, B-, and C-texts of *Piers Plowman*. This “grammatical evidence of multiple authorship” is corroborated by formulaic contrasts between the three texts, a topic that Covella promises to take up in a future article.<sup>15</sup> The author makes no mention of orality; and in fact, as A. J. Colaianne (1978) points out, the possible connection between the “repetitive and digressive style of much of *Piers Plowman*” and the “requirements of oral delivery,” though often casually mentioned, has not yet been the subject of serious investigation (167).

Another major contribution during this period along the general lines set forth by Baugh (1959 and 1967), Hurt (1970), and Holland (1973) is Hoyt N. Duggan’s “The Rôle of Formulas in the Dissemination of a Middle English Alliterative Romance” (1976), which inquires into the source of formulaic language and discrepancies between the versions of *The Wars of Alexander*. Although this work “is at least as formulaic as *Beowulf* or *Morte Arthure* and shares most characteristics of orally composed poetry,” firm paleographic evidence links its two manuscripts to the Latin original “by continuous lines of physical copying” (268). Yet other evidence within the text points equally unmistakably to the “double perspective maintained by a literate poet writing within an essentially oral tradition for oral delivery” (276). Further, many of the differences between manuscripts reflect the operation of a systematic and “consistent variation in lexicon, in formulas, and in rhythmic structure” (273) such as might result from an unconscious transformation in the memory of a performer over the course of

time. As a solution to this tangled state of affairs, Duggan proposes a kind of unintentional poet-performer collaboration: first, a literate author composes with pen in hand in the formulaic manner, and later, manually copying from a manuscript original a poem that he already holds in his memory, a performer acting as scribe inserts “his habitual expressions in preference to the readings of the exemplar” (279). This theory has important implications in the editorial establishment of authoritative texts; and Duggan’s most important principle in this regard, copiously illustrated, is that “the reading that corresponds to an established formula system is likely to be original” (282). He cautiously suggests the applicability of these conclusions to other Old and Middle English alliterative works. This and Duggan’s next article, “Strophic Patterns in Middle English Alliterative Poetry” (1977), both assume a continuous alliterative tradition from the Anglo-Saxon period. Yet this latter study concentrates more on disjunctures, advancing a rather involved theory of 24-line stanzaic structuring that may ultimately have roots in the poetry of Old Norse.

Another leading exponent of formulaic analysis is Susan Wittig, whose approach to the problem of redundancy in the Middle English romance bears the imprint of contemporary developments in linguistic and critical theory. A brief yet substantive treatment of “Formulaic Style in the Middle English Romance” (1977) undertakes to hand-count formulas in 25 narratives, insisting on the strict, Parryist criterion of “verbal-syntactic-metrical correspondence” (253) in the determination of formularity and using each poem separately as the statistical referent. Stressing the conservative character of figures derived by such methods, Wittig tabulates a range in formulaic density from 10% in *Lai le freine* to 42% in *Emaré*. These conclusions are incorporated into *Stylistic and Narrative Structures in the Middle English Romances* (1978), which applies a “linguistic-based model” that borrows from “Kenneth Pike’s tagmemic linguistics and Lévi-Strauss’s analysis of the deep structural patterns of myth” (6). Here Wittig’s hierarchical series of progressively enlarging narrative units, all of them “emic” and therefore holistically defined, is presented as a coherent and integral system. Thus the argument progresses in successive chapters from the syntagmeme, a stylistic abstraction manifested as formulaic expression; to the motifeme, a “minimum unit at the level of narrative discourse” (60); to the type-scene, a “patterned, repeated

configuration of events and characters, composed of obligatory and optional motifs which may be either conditioned or free" (105); to the type-episode, the largest narrative unit within this scheme. Working at all stages through numerous examples from the romance material, Wittig's total exposition threads its course with commendable lucidity through a maze of theoretical abstractions in what stands as the major reinterpretation of Middle English oral-formulaic theory into the terms of structuralist critical discourse.

Two minor treatments of formulaic language appeared at this time. Writing without reference to the Parry-Lord theory, Urs Dürmüller (1975:71-118) tries to sort out "tags" and "formulas," to him pejorative labels, from aesthetically viable instances of repetition in the tail-lines of tail-rhyme romances. Anne H. Schotter (1979) finds subtle and unconventional artistic effects arising from "formulas of clothing in the portrait of the Pearl maiden." The author contrasts her definition of formula as "a recurring collocation of alliterating words used to express a given idea" with the syntactic definition "offered by earlier proponents of the formulaic theory" (189).

With a few minor exceptions I have deferred review of Chaucerian criticism in this section until now, since this area comprises its own discrete field to a large degree. In fact, little headway into the oral dimensions of Chaucer's art has been made in the last two decades, even though the matter is often alluded to. Beryl Rowland, for instance, notes in passing the connection between live presentation and such features of style as "surface simplicity" and formularity (1979:128); John H. Fisher (1980) links oral performance with Chaucer's narrator and stresses the pedagogical value of reading his work aloud. More negative in his view of the significance of the oral medium, Mehl (1974) judges that oral rendering remains for us an "abstract reconstruction which does not really affect our experience when we read Chaucer" (173). Since, moreover, Chaucer envisioned permanence and an ongoing readership beyond the immediate live performance, the oral ambience in his poetry undergoes an inexorable literary reduction and fossilization. Much of the current research seems to proceed on a (usually unstated) platform of this kind. And thus an excellent symposium on "Chaucer's Audience" published in a recent issue of *The Chaucer Review* (1983:137-81) contains only a brief reference to Chaucer's live encounter with listeners (Paul Strohm:



138), even though the orality-literacy problem concerns nothing less than the very medium through which Chaucer's communication with this audience would have been achieved.

Yet the topic of orality has not been altogether abandoned. John Lawlor proposes to develop a view of Chaucer founded on a "steady recognition of the predominantly oral nature of his work," work which was originally published when read "by the author to a small and courtly audience" (1968:9). Trying to mediate between the views of scholars like Mehl and Bronson, Edmund Reiss' "Chaucer and His Audience" (1980) finds authorial ironies and manipulations predicated on an awareness of and reliance on the eventuality of immediate, present listeners. Rosenberg (1980) takes a more radical position, asserting that, in view of its dual design for silent and oral-communal reading, Chaucer's poetry does not fit in with modern attitudes about texts; many of the customary close-reading practices will need to be restructured accordingly. Rosenberg further suggests the relevance of performance factors seldom admitted into literary-critical discourse, such as audience inattentiveness or rudeness, or hypothetical authorial *ad lib* interactions with his audience. Although most of his attention is given to other works, Renoir (1981) briefly recalls the *Canterbury Tales* in a demonstration of the aesthetic relevance of an oral-formulaic context to what would appear from other standpoints to be "fragments." Perhaps the most important study of this group, Rowland's "*Pronuntiatio* and its Effect on Chaucer's Audience" (1982) reviews the history of the arts of recitation and gesture, comprehended in the fifth branch of rhetoric, through the Middle Ages. Emphasizing the predominantly oral character of Chaucer's artistry, Rowland discusses several interpretive consequences of oral delivery, notably the reduction of semantic ambivalence, the identification of poet with narrator, and the limiting of dramatization.

I will conclude this admittedly sketchy review of Chaucerian criticism with two articles that highlight what I feel to be another important implication of the oral theory. In 1977 Julia Dias-Ferreira briefly noted "Another Portuguese Analogue of Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale*"; four years later, John M. Coggeshall discussed in greater detail the resemblances between the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, *Pardoner's Tale*, *Miller's Tale*, *Reeve's Tale*, and four oral yarns from Vance Randolph's Ozark collections. Since geographic and cultural distances argue against literary influence,

both scholars posit traditional oral sources. Of course, they are not the first to do so, nor can I hope in the present space to run down the history of source-and-analog studies in Chaucerian and other Middle English criticism. Yet many scholars seem to write as though oral storytelling did not exist or as though Chaucer would never have deigned to sully his ears with it. In fact, Chaucer's attitudes in this regard have not yet been properly studied; and in many other connections the Parry-Lord insights into oral tradition as a repository for narrative source materials need to be integrated into critical perceptions of the Middle English period's greatest poet.

Returning to the Alliterative Revival, we find in the later 1970's and early 1980's a wave of adverse reactions to the oral-formulaic approach. The most serious critic is Thorlac Turville-Petre (1977), who objects to the vagueness of the term "oral transmission" and finds the lack of contemporary witnesses discrediting to what is anyway an inherently implausible hypothesis of an oral tradition continuing unbroken over this three-century span. Nor is it "easy to understand why all surviving written poetry should have been composed in the loose alliterative style if a tighter and more 'correct' style had still been flourishing in oral tradition" (16). Turville-Petre does not consider the possibility of an oral tradition that itself evolves. Later, he attacks Waldron for his use of "formula." Since other, more exacting concepts like "collocation" or "grammatical unit" are already available, "nothing is to be gained by conjuring up an inheritance of oral verse and naming [the patterns Waldron identifies as] 'syntactically formulaic phrases'" (91).

Turville-Petre is by no means alone in his skepticism. Salter (1978), in a sequel to her 1966-67 article, dismisses oral-traditional continuities in favor of an evolution of the later alliterative verse form out of semi-alliterative prose. David Lawton (1982b:5-6), having misconstrued Duggan (1976), criticizes what he perceives to be that scholar's theory of oral variation, on the grounds that other, scribal-based explanations are available. Derek Pearsall, while he rejects the "fantasies of the theorists of oral-formulaic composition" (1982:44), feels nonetheless that an oral tradition of alliterative verse does comprise one of the backgrounds to the Alliterative Revival. The character of its contribution, however, can be gathered from his comment that "oral transmission makes wretched what it touches, and . . . the longer the process the more

debased the product" (1981:6). Though few scholars express themselves quite so plainly, this pessimistic view of the capabilities of non-literate peoples seems to enjoy some wide currency.

Orality and the formulaic style also receive attention in several of the articles in a recent collection, *The Alliterative Morte Arthure: A Reassessment of the Poem* (1981). Göller's introductory summary of research devotes several pages (9-11) to relevant applications of the oral-formulaic theory. In a study of the poem's audience, Jutta Wurster emphasizes the distinction between author and narrator and accordingly doubts whether in-text references to performance situations, which by this time had probably become literary clichés, can be taken as evidence of oral transmission (44-45 and 54). Manfred Markus in "The Language and Style: The Paradox of Heroic Poetry," focusing on "lexis and syntax," formulaic phraseology, spatial and temporal structures, and the means employed to engage the audience's imagination, finds that while the "author has not yet abandoned the ideals of heroism and chivalry, yet he reveals a deep skepticism in face of those truths" (69). While he doubts its connection with orality, the formulaic technique contributes to this ambivalence by means of listeners' or readers' associations "through a treasury of common literary experience and of conventional verbal collocations" (63).

Yet from the oral-formulaic standpoint, far the most theoretically enterprising of the essays in this volume are Ritzke-Rutherford's. In the first part of "Formulaic Microstructure: The Cluster," the author sets out to schematize key oral-formulaic concepts. Giving careful definitions at all points (see esp. 75), she proposes an analogy between the microstructural series formula/formulaic system/cluster and the macrostructural series motif/type-scene/theme, for both move from the more constrained to the more free, from the more structured to the more amorphous. Thus the cluster, which she defines as "a group of words, usually loosely related metrically and semantically, which is regularly employed to express a given essential idea without being restricted to a certain form or sequence, or to a certain number of lines" (73), provides a kind of generative pool out of which formulas and formulaic systems arise and acquire their meaning. Using numerous examples, the latter part of the article (76-82) documents continuities at this level between the Old and Middle English and argues for the explanatory power of "cluster" within

the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*.

Though it builds on its predecessor, Ritzke-Rutherford's companion article, "Formulaic Macrostructure: The Theme of Battle," attends less to theory and more to its application and aesthetic relevance. As an artist of quality, the creator of the *Morte Arthure* capitalized on tensions unleashed by the subtle, creative manipulation of conventional forms with conventional meanings. Thus the theme of battle, which usually glorifies war and stimulates "the pleasurable identification of the audience with the action and its protagonist," is here imbued "with a new message: war as an instrument of corruption and thing of growing horror, a law unto itself" (95).

The review of the *Morte Arthure* scholarship concludes with three studies by Valerie Krishna. In "Archaic Nouns in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*" (1975), she argues that archaic alliterative synonyms such as *berne*, *gome*, and so on are not stylistically elevated and idealizing but, to the contrary, more generalized and indefinite as designations of "man." The introduction to her subsequent edition (1976) contains a valuable discussion of the "Formulas and Rhetorical Style" (27-34) in this "mysteriously anachronistic work" (34). Yet far more detailed is "Parataxis, Formulaic Density, and Thrift in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*" (1982), which represents the strictest and most systematic application of an unmodified Parry-Lord model to any Middle English poem. Prefacing each section with knowledgeable reviews of scholarship and supporting her assertions statistically, Krishna finds that the Middle English poem, by contrast with *Beowulf* and works of the Cynewulf canon, shows a level of enjambement comparable to that of the poems of the Serbo-Croatian *guslari*; that its formulaic density, according to Johnson (1970), approaches 30% and thus climbs "well over the threshold postulated by Duggan and Lord for oral poetry" (75); and that it is thriftier—draws on a smaller pool of alliterating terms for the hero—than is *Beowulf*. While she stops short of actually claiming that the *Morte Arthure* is orally composed, Krishna does not rule out that possibility, and in any event feels that the poem is highly traditional.

During this same year William A. Quinn and Audley S. Hall, taking *King Horn* for their model text, advance a rather novel theory of oral improvisation in what constitutes a major revision of Baugh 1959. Reduced to its bare bones, the theory runs thus. To the performing minstrel or *jongleur*, rhyming pairs rather than

formulas would provide the real mnemonic key. Therefore, in the process of memorization and in the extemporaneous creation of new lines to cover memory lapses, the poet would employ his “lexicon” of ready-made rhyme associations. Crucial terms are the *cluster*, or the poet’s set of words under a particular rhyme, and the *subgroup*, or particular selections from these that are functionally operative in the processes of recall and invention. The authors explore the implications of their analysis both intratextually (within each *King Horn* manuscript, 49-76) and intertextually (between them, 77-110); they also comment on “stylistic contrasts between the rhyme-crafts of *Havelok the Dane* and *King Horn*, manuscript C” (111-17). Statistically exhaustive by the parameters it sets for itself, *Jongleur* winds its way through many methodological intricacies and incorporates a remarkable number of charts and tables: thus the appendices occupy a full 282 pages. One might in general have wished for greater economy of exposition. Yet the authors have undoubtedly made an important contribution in the attention which they have drawn to the role of rhymes in mnemonic and improvisatory processes.

In the two years following, a pair of articles use oral-formulaic methods on works that had previously been bypassed. Stephen Morrison (1983) studies formulas and formulaic systems (defined according to Waldron 1957) in passages of the *Ormulum* where the poet either addresses the audience or underscores precepts of good behavior as imperatives for the spiritual well-being of Christians. Although formulas occur rarely in the verse of this highly literate poet, these conspicuous exceptions shed light on his compositional practices. In one of the few inquiries at the level of story patterns (1984), I identify in the final 130 lines of *Sir Orfeo* what Albert Lord has characterized as the return sequence. Through a comparison of *Sir Orfeo* with the *Odyssey* and two orally improvised Serbo-Croatian narrative poems, I subdivide this pattern into eleven constituent elements: separation, battle, captivity, release, travel, disguise, an encounter at the boundary, testing, the hero’s self-identification, combat, and marriage (or husband-wife reunion). Drawing on an oral tradition or some other source, the *Orfeo*-poet has fused this highly popular story sequence with a pre-existing Orpheus legend, a fact which not only explains a range of peculiarities in the poem as we have it, but suggests that the poet operated in an aesthetic mode that combined oral and literate features.

This survey concludes with a group of studies concerned with medieval literacy, a subject that seems to have caught fire in the past half-decade. A landmark publication, M. T. Clanchy's *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066-1807* (1979) far surpasses any previous study of literacy in medieval England through its grounding in a massive encounter with the primary historical documents. The first part charts with illuminating detail the growth of record-making. Successive chapters discuss "memories and myths" in their struggles with encroaching literacy, the "proliferation of documents" at various levels of society, the "types of records," the "technology of writing," and the "preservation and use" of writing. Turning from the sheer facts of literacy to the "mentality" and program of attitudes associated with it, the second part studies the uses of French, Latin, and English, the meaning of terms like *clericus* and *litteratus*, the relations between aural and visual in language use, the slow growth of trust in writing, and "practical literacy." Encyclopedic in its mastery of the subject and richly illustrated with useful examples, Clanchy's book has set research into medieval literacy on a wholly new footing.

Several more recent publications explore other dimensions of the problem. In *English Literature in History, 1350-1400: Medieval Readers and Writers* (1981), Janet Coleman analyzes the complex interpenetrations of oral and literate structures in education and other spheres of English cultural life. She sees a comparable shift in modes of thought in sixth to fifth century B.C. Greece and medieval England, made possible by the spread of literacy, and feels that the Alliterative Revival registers the conflicts and interactions between these two mentalities (157-60). Though its subject matter is Latinate rather than English, Brian Stock's *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (1983) bears mention here because it represents to date the major inquiry into the interdependencies of orality and literacy in the organization of medieval thought and experience. The author's central premise, that "after the year 1000, oral discourse increasingly functioned within a framework of legal and institutional textuality" (10), sponsors a wide-ranging examination of many aspects of medieval life. Undoubtedly Stock's thesis and the response it evokes will in time exert considerable influence on literary studies.<sup>16</sup>

The last author we will consider is Walter J. Ong, for many years a leading figure in the interpretation of orality, literacy, and the relations between them as shaping forces in the evolution of human consciousness and culture. Ong's useful term "oral residue," coined in an article originally published in 1965 and reprinted in *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology* six years later,<sup>17</sup> denotes the persistence of oral habits of thought and expression in a world whose discourse is increasingly structured by writing. A fascinating study of agonistic instincts and behavioral structures, *Fighting for Life: Contest, Sexuality, and Consciousness* (1981) includes a chapter on "Academic and Intellectual Arenas" (118-48) which traces the tradition of intellectual debate to its roots in the oral noetic. His next book, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982), includes discussions of Clanchy, the subterranean persistence of oral habits, and the literate restructuring of consciousness (see esp. 96-101).

Yet Ong's most explicit treatment of the medieval period, "Orality, Literacy, and Medieval Textualization," appears in a special 1984 issue of *New Literary History* devoted to "Oral and Written Traditions in the Middle Ages."<sup>18</sup> Remarking that "in the European Middle Ages interactions between orality and literacy reached perhaps an all-time high" (1), he contrasts the oral-visual character of medieval manuscripts with that of printed books. In fact, the "European Middle Ages were bound to orality" not only by the "heavy residue of primary orality that still marked literate cultures everywhere" (3) but by "academic orality," or the penetration of oral practices into an intellectual framework largely organized around texts. At the same time, literacy fed back into the largely non-literate societies that sustained it through a kind of "cultural osmosis" (3). Nowhere, in fact, is the textualization of language more strikingly illustrated than in the phenomenon of Learned Latin, chirographically controlled, mother tongue to no one in the medieval period, and therefore admirably suited to the detached, objective, diereitic thinking for which it provided the medium. This Latin-vernacular "cultural diglossia" (4ff.) provided one significant backdrop to the massive medieval orality-literacy encounter out of which, eventually, the modern world was born.

## IV. Problems and Prospects

When one turns to the task of assessing the oral-formulaic contribution to Middle English studies, one is struck, on the one hand, by a general acceleration of research along these lines, and on the other hand, by the reluctance of many to credit orality with any role at all in the creation or dissemination of Middle English literature. At the outset, then, I would like to recapitulate several of the chief arguments supporting the view that orality exerted a major impact on the structure of literary communications in the later medieval world.

We must begin by acknowledging the bias of our sources. For the object of our search, orality and oral tradition, becomes accessible to us only when it ceases to be oral. Sound, unlike writing, is by its nature ephemeral and eludes direct inspection outside the moment of time during which it resonates. For this reason, it will never be possible to “prove” the existence or influence of a medieval oral tradition through present evidence, in the same way that one can prove, through textual citations, Boethius’ influence on Chaucer. The only irrefutable demonstration in the case of an oral tradition would consist of audio-visual cassettes, which, in the case of the medieval world, will not, unfortunately, be forthcoming. Therefore, to insist on conditions of proof appropriate only to the study of *documents* is simply to foreclose discussion on the subject. By such methods one could never discover an oral tradition even if there was one.

Yet if one allows a measure of indirection, evidence of “oral residue” is quite plentiful. As we have seen, numerous studies document the formulaic and otherwise redundant style of much Middle English romance narrative. It is true that definitions of “formula” vary, and undoubtedly this line of research needs to be systematized. Yet whichever of the available models one prefers, no one has ever denied that the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* exhibits a higher formulaic density than Ezra Pound’s *Cantos*, or Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, or, for that matter, practically any other poetic work of the past several centuries. The arguments of Parry, Lord, and their followers connect this kind of redundant style with the conditions of oral discourse. Undoubtedly, as Benson (1966) and others have shown, writers under certain circumstances will employ the formulaic style as well. Yet this does not sever the connection between formulaicity and orality—quite to the contrary.



It shows instead that written poetry of the formulaic variety is “oral-derived,” that is, composed in proximity to an oral tradition and borrowing from the materials and aesthetic assumptions of an oral poetics.<sup>19</sup> This word “proximity” contains its own ambiguities, of course. Perhaps a sophisticated oral tradition survived as late as the Alliterative Revival; perhaps it stands rather at several degrees of historical remove from that time. Either of these theories is possible, and others could be devised. Yet critics of the oral theory have never, for their part, explained in any way how these formulaic and redundant tendencies could have been generated out of purely written processes without any reference to a prior state of orality. Until they do, and until they can support their view with a clear example, as Parry and Lord did through their studies of Serbo-Croatian oral poetry, the oral-formulaic theory in some modified form will continue to provide the only available account for the genesis of the formulaic style.

Other kinds of internal evidence point to the probability of oral delivery, a practice testifying to continuities with oral tradition at another level. Crosby and Baugh, among others, have reviewed at some length passages in which the poetic narrator addresses a present audience or refers in other ways to the present performance occasion. One must also reckon with in-text descriptions of minstrels and other performers; to dismiss orality is to argue that the historically recognized phenomenon of minstrelsy had no impact on Middle English literature at all. It is possible, as some have pointed out, that references to the oral medium in any particular work are merely literary conventions. Yet the same could be said about certain allusions to readers, writers, and books, information that need not always be acquired through direct encounters with manuscripts; and if Middle English writers held oral tradition in such low esteem as is sometimes argued, one wonders why they would have associated their verse even on a surface level with something so “debauched,” as Pearsall has put it (1981:6). Surely in such a case literary name-dropping would have replaced performance references altogether. The fact is that the mix of allusions to things oral and written defies easy unraveling. Yet as a working hypothesis, the view that it reflects complex orality-literacy interactions has at any rate the merit that it accommodates a historically necessary stage in the evolution of communications.

A thorough and sagacious reconsideration of the evidence

might lead to some surprising insights. For example, one of the most striking allusions to Middle English oral tradition has gone virtually unnoticed. I am referring to the *Canterbury Tales*, which one could with some justice characterize as the description of an oral tradition in action. For no one thinks that the Canterbury pilgrims were reading from manuscripts as they rode, or reciting verbatim from memory. The fiction that Chaucer sustains is rather that they were extemporaneously re-creating tales that they had heard before, selecting and adapting their material to the needs of the performance occasion.

Now obviously evidence of this kind cannot be taken at face value. We can safely assume, for example, that typical monks, knights, and millers of Chaucer's era were not able to improvise rhyming couplets or rhyme royal stanzas in iambic pentameter. Chaucer's drama is a fictional one, used for his own, thoroughly literary ends. One must also remember that frame tales were a medieval literary convention. Yet when all due qualifications have been allowed, a core of orality remains. For can we seriously doubt the reality of oral storytelling of this general type in Chaucer's era? As a realistic artist in many respects, Chaucer's literary imitation of this kind of oral exchange may reveal to us much about the interactional dynamics governing oral traditions in informal settings. Further, in selecting this format for his *magnum opus*, Chaucer apparently assumed that such affairs commanded some general interest. In short, while his testimony must be treated with caution, Chaucer is not valueless as a witness to oral traditional practices and to their shaping power even within the tradition of written literature.

It is probably true, of course, that by the later fourteenth century undiluted, primary orality was largely a thing of the past, even among illiterates. Literacy had indeed made great strides from the times of the Norman Conquest, as Clanchy has shown. Yet one must not forget how slowly monumental historical changes occur. As Eric A. Havelock (1963 and 1982), John R. Goody (1977), Ong (1971, 1981, and 1982), and many others have argued, the movement from orality to literacy entailed a massive transformation in basic patterns of thinking. Only with universal education could one hope to effect such a reform with any degree of thoroughness among a cultural majority. Therefore, to endorse close-reading procedures suited to the exegesis of poetry designed for a fully textualized readership is to assume that the mass-scale

availability of identical-copy editions, translations, glossaries, dictionaries, textual notes, literary interpretive commentaries, source studies, and all the other amenities of modern scholarly life have made no impression on reading and writing habits. Nor should overmuch be made of the fact that medieval narrative presents itself to us in the form of manuscripts, for in doing so we would be confusing ontology with epistemology. Manuscripts define the starting point for our inquiry, naturally, but the mere fact of their existence does not in itself prove what the poems that they record are and how they came into being.<sup>20</sup>

We need to reconsider the comfortable assumption that literate processes or written sources would always have exerted greater appeal for medieval poets than oral processes and sources. For as a considerable body of research now points out, textuality itself has a history, and authors, as men and women of their time, respond to historically and culturally determined perceptions of “texts” configured between such polarities as oral versus written, or aural versus visual, or event versus thing. The question is not simply whether individual medieval authors or readers *could* have discarded such an inheritance, but *would* they have done so? Would an oral-derived perception of “text” have seemed inadequate? If so, why? At any given time, what relative authority attaches to oral versus written discourse? In what ways, if at all, was this issue consciously articulated in the medieval mind? Given the varying levels of literacy and the legibility of manuscripts, was silent reading “entertainment,” and if so, for whom? Did medieval authors compose for a private elite or a general public? What mental procedures could they reasonably expect their audience (of whatever type) to undertake in order to recover an underlying artistic meaning?

None of these problems are simple ones; and since large-scale changes seldom proceed in unilinear fashion, one might expect considerable variation from work to work. Yet in one respect modern literary scholars operate under a handicap in their explorations in this field. For our own backgrounds, reinforced in most cases by a professional commitment, continually spotlight the value and efficacy of writing. This tends to encourage a reduction of all discourse to the terms of what is most familiar. We would not be the first to err in this way: one is reminded of medieval exegetes who thought that the authors of certain pagan classics had intuited truths of Christian revelation. Such reductionism operates

most powerfully when one's most dearly cherished values are implicated and most fully when one is least conscious of it. For this reason, a prime order of business at the present time must be to augment our understanding of the idea of "text" as an evolving, historical phenomenon.

Yet it has been rightly objected that many crucial oral-formulaic terms have been ambiguously applied to Middle English literature. Because of the extreme complexity of the later medieval situation, in the future scrupulous attention needs to be given to problems of definition. For example, the very phrase "oral tradition" could denote, on the one hand, a virtual apprenticeship in oral verbal artistry such as one finds described in Lord's *The Singer of Tales*, and on the other hand, simple informal storytelling in various communal settings, such as we find depicted in the *Canterbury Tales*. Both phenomena qualify as oral traditions, and neither precludes the possibility of art. Yet different systems of rules may well govern each.

Another problematic concept is oral transmission, as Turville-Petre points out (1977:15). For the orally improvising poet and the literary scholar reading a paper at a Modern Language Association convention both transmit information orally. The difference lies in the mediation of texts, and it is precisely the nature and varieties of this function that need to be clarified. For the author or creator can relate to the text in many ways: he might type into a word-processor; he might compose manually on paper, parchment, or wax tablets; he might dictate orally to a scribe; he might formulate discourse in his mind and write it down or have it written down later; he might be an oral poet who can also write in the formulaic manner, but who when he does so restructures his thought and discourse along the lines that literacy would determine; or he might be an illiterate oral poet who, from time to time, composes for dictation. Further, texts might assume different roles in relation to performance. The performer might read from a manuscript that he holds in his lap; he might recite or sing to musical accompaniment, glancing at some form of text when his own resources fail him; he might recite from memory without a present text, as an actor does; he might supplement memory with invention; he might memorize rhyming pairs, stock episodes, or other extracts from a text and re-create on that basis; he might stitch together chunks from various works memorized with varying degrees of fidelity; or he might function as an orally

improvising poet, with the added proviso that he is familiar with a text and that its memory impresses and shapes his rendering. Such performances might in turn beget their own progeny of manuscripts: a performer might at some juncture copy a poem that he has also memorized, as Duggan suggests; he might simply write it out from memory; a second party might transcribe his performance; another skilled semi-oral poet might remember an oral rendering in some kind of outline and copy or create on that basis. In other words, the possible avenues by which a poem might flow from “original creator” to audience are myriad, and different orality-literacy conditions obtain for each of them.

Whether or not such complexities are fully registered in the surviving manuscripts (since here too a variety of factors may have come into play), they probably define a part of the context in which medieval poets created. Any poet envisions the dissemination of his work and will encode meaning in a fashion suited to the medium of that dissemination. Then what were the ruling paradigms for the creators of medieval literature? Did they conceive of themselves as performers as well as creators? When did the creator-performer dichotomy emerge, and how did these two functionaries interact? Was silent reading a poor substitute for live performance, or was live performance a poor substitute for silent reading? Did authors anticipate and design their art for both possibilities? What does the answer to this last question imply aesthetically? Was literature fundamentally a public or private experience? Was it some curious blend of the two? These are just a few of the questions to which a deepening awareness of orality-literacy interactions is bound to give rise.

Progress on any of these problems relating to the human interactional setting of literature will be impossible to achieve without comparable advances in the study of literary structure. In fact, research into formulaic language has already attained a considerable degree of sophistication, although this is not always fully reflected in Middle English studies. Comparative research has increasingly shown that the nature of the formula is in certain respects tradition-dependent, and that definitions derived from the study of one literary tradition do not necessarily apply to another.<sup>21</sup> Milman Parry argued the connection between style and orality carefully in terms of the particular characteristics of Homeric epic diction and the hexameter line. Such practice needs to be followed by his modern-day descendants. Scholars should

always specify precisely what constellation of metrical, colonic, lexical, syntactic, and semantic features comprises their definitions of “formula” and “formulaic system.” The pertinence of Parry’s other “criteria for orality,” such as thrift or enjambement, needs also to be established in terms of the specific conditions of Middle English verse. Research into all these areas should be greatly stimulated when computer programming advances begin at last to facilitate extensive statistical analysis.

Until now, the intellectual arena has largely been dominated by such microstructural concerns; to restore the balance, further attention should be given to the various levels of narrative. The scholarship on Old English, ancient Greek, Serbo-Croatian, and other languages has provided many interesting applications of concepts such as oral theme, type-scene, story pattern, and ring structure. Of course Baugh, Wittig, Ritzke-Rutherford, and others have exhibited considerable imagination in their extensions of such methods. Yet the net needs to be cast out more widely. Until now, only a handful of Middle English poems have come under serious review. If we admit degrees between the poles of “oral” and “written” narrative discourse, and if we make appropriate adjustments for each poem, most Middle English literature might profit from such analysis. Comparative perspectives, if judiciously chosen, might well illuminate structures camouflaged within the narrower compass of Middle English literature itself.

The aim of all such study should ultimately be to arrive at a finer understanding of the type of artistry — oral, literate, or some blend of the two — appropriate to each work. Some Middle English scholars, in their assumption that quality means literacy, seem to doubt that oral art can exist at all. Yet in terms of quality, the same conditions ought to obtain for musical composition, in which case one is left, for example, with the problem of accounting for Indian classical music, a highly subtle and developed art form that has never employed musical notation. One must further reckon with the phenomenon of Homer. For even if one grants (as few would) that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are in all respects literate productions, it seems hardly likely that literary art itself was a single man’s brainchild, sprung full-grown and mature like Athena from the head of Zeus. Since writing was not in use prior to the age of Homer,<sup>22</sup> then presumably verbal artistry existed in oral times. Further, if quality in the verbal arts requires a particular technological base, then logically the history of literature ought to

have been one of progressive amelioration, as the possibilities inherent in literacy were increasingly recognized and exploited. Once again, the example of Homer confounds such a theory from the outset. In short, we might far more sensibly admit that quality is individually determined and that master poets express their talents in the medium that their historical circumstances have made available to them. The fact that few literates could even contemplate the task of improvising an epic poem merely attests to the lack of a lifetime's training in this particular skill.

Yet recognizing the existence of an oral artistry serves us little if we fail to appreciate its distinctive character. Though brilliant inroads into this problem have been laid during the past ten to twenty years, this remains the aspect of the oral-formulaic theory most in need of exploration. In brief, orality seems to promote what we could characterize as a poetics of *presence*. From the synchronic standpoint, the orally improvising poet is present to the performance of his own work and therefore to his own auditors. Further, both he and his audience are present to each same point of narration at the same moment of historical time. And they are both present to the structures through which they access that narration, currently known as "narrator" and "narratee," since the poet-performer actually speaks (narrates) in his own physical voice, and the audience has to structure its responses to the immediacy of his address if it is to understand the narration. From the diachronic standpoint also, the oral performance group participates "presently" in its tradition in a way that silent readers and authors do not. This claim may seem somewhat paradoxical, for in the concrete sense an oral culture's "tradition" does not exist at all: when an oral poet begins to sing or chant, the entire history of song has fallen into silence. Yet precisely this absence of comparands, precisely this lack of present "other" renderings, frees the oral poet from any obligation to valorize his own rendering by differentiating it from his tradition. Rather, his aim—and his vital social function—is to channel traditional lore through his own performance. Thus oral poetry tends to "mean" through traditional associations, through larger narrative or phraseological complexes held in memory by poet and audience and contextualizing the present rendering.

In both of these connections, the synchronic and diachronic, fully literate poetry typically differs from its oral counterpart in that distances intrude far more pervasively and begin to constitute

an important part of the structure of meaning. Poet and reader perform their respective acts privately and never see each other; the line that the poet composes is read a thousand years later ten thousand miles from its source. Since the story thus “speaks itself out” context-free from the printed page, the storyteller is less bound to his own voice and can experiment more freely with narratorial voices. His tradition is “present” to him in the sense that he can recover memory of it in all its specificity through visits to the library; yet the very encroachments of these other texts obligate him to discover his own distinctiveness, to individuate, to assert a degree of distance between his work and that of others. He and his tradition must remain on some level separate, even though he functions within and contributes to that tradition.

This dichotomy, though somewhat crudely delineated here,<sup>23</sup> may point out one of the tensions of the Middle English period. For while oral aesthetics in many ways hung on (as evidenced by the persistence of formulaic language), writing was at the same time precipitating a revolution in thought, in the universities and other levels of society. Thus the Middle English writer looks backward and authenticates his own discourse through tradition; yet more and more regularly his source is a written one, unlike the Anglo-Saxon poet, who usually says “I heard.”<sup>24</sup> Thus a Middle-English author might adopt narrative strategies suited to the “fleshing out” of live performance; yet serious artists like Chaucer would be aware of posterity and would want the naked text to be capable of bearing its own weight. Out of such conflicts, no doubt felt but never verbalized in abstract terms, there gradually emerged the concept of verbal artistry that rules to the present day.

Despite the quantity of research that has been surveyed over the course of these pages, in many respects the oral-formulaic study of Middle English literature is still in its infancy. For a full recognition of the oral element in the literature of this period will require nothing less than a rewriting of literary history in many of its aspects. In exposing the relativity of textual-based aesthetic principles often held to be universal, such a process may help us to recover a kind of literary experience that our culture has long forgotten.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Milman Parry's pioneering studies of the Homeric *epos*, some of them published in French in the 1920's and early 1930's, are collected in translation in *The Making of Homeric Verse* (1971). The sheer quantity of subsequent scholarship in this line is reflected in Foley's recent bibliography of oral-formulaic scholarship (1985), which lists some 1800 items dealing with oral tradition in more than 90 language areas.

<sup>2</sup>In this perhaps overly ambitious attempt to extend my coverage up to within weeks of the time of writing, I have undoubtedly missed a certain amount of relevant scholarship, particularly from the last year or two of the period. Items thus overlooked will be cited in the bibliographies of forthcoming issues of *Oral Tradition*.

<sup>3</sup>This notion was later developed by Baugh (1959 and 1967), as discussed below.

<sup>4</sup>Two subsequent stylistic inquiries growing generally out of this scholarly tradition are those of Brink (1920) and Dunlap (1941), both of whom attend primarily to the level of vocabulary and diction.

<sup>5</sup>For a systematic presentation of this concept, see Fry 1967.

<sup>6</sup>See esp. his treatment of *Piers Plowman* in Chapter 9, "A Literary Echo of the Social Gospel," pp. 548-93.

<sup>7</sup>In his later volume *In Search of Chaucer* (1960:25-32), Bronson returns to this theme, criticizing the recent preoccupation with Chaucer's narrative "persona" on the grounds that this notion overlooks the reality of Chaucer's active presence in the context of oral performance.

<sup>8</sup>See Chapter 5, "Topics" (79-105).

<sup>9</sup>See, for example, Margaret Schlauch's casual reference to practices of oral delivery (1956:175-76) or G. V. Smithers' evocation of "oral corruption" (1957:11-12) in the transmission of the *Kyng Alisaunder* text.

<sup>10</sup>See also his "Bede's Story of Caedman: The Case History of an Anglo-Saxon Oral Singer" (1955a) and "The Theme of the Beasts of Battle in Anglo-Saxon Poetry" (1955b). In fact, Lord had already suggested the applicability of the oral-formulaic approach to Old English literature in his 1949 dissertation, later published in a revised version as *The Singer of Tales* (1960; see esp. 198-202). For more on this phase in the history of the theory, see Foley 1980b:60-62.

<sup>11</sup>See, for example, Finlayson (1963) and Turville-Petre (1977), both discussed below.

<sup>12</sup>A brief discussion of the formulaic character of Middle English alliterative poetry prefaces the inquiry into the authorship of *St. Erkenwald* in Benson 1965b.

<sup>13</sup>Curschmann develops his views further, without reference to Middle English, in "The Concept of the Oral Formula as an Impediment to Our Understanding of Medieval Oral Poetry" (1977).

<sup>14</sup>Johnson does not cite Suzuki 1972.

<sup>15</sup>The major grammatical categories and the evidence presented in the article's six tables derive from Covella's dissertation (1972).

<sup>16</sup>Also of general relevance, though addressing itself minimally to English literature, is Saenger 1982.

<sup>17</sup>See "Oral Residue in Tudor Prose Style," in Ong 1971:23-47.

<sup>18</sup>Though none of the other articles work with Middle English literature to any appreciable degree, nonetheless they represent a new wave of thinking on orality-literacy matters and should engage considerable interdisciplinary interest.

<sup>19</sup>For more on "oral-derived" poetry, see Foley 1981.

<sup>20</sup>Even the briefest reflection will suggest many reasons why orally transmitted poems might be written down; for a sampling, see Baugh 1967:31.

<sup>21</sup>On this point see Foley 1980c.

<sup>22</sup>Of course I am ignoring Linear B and other kinds of writing irrelevant to this particular culture.

<sup>23</sup>For a fuller discussion of this aspect of orality-literacy differences, see Parks 1986.

<sup>24</sup>On this subject see Parks 1987.

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## **The Message of the American Folk Sermon**

**Bruce A. Rosenberg**

The author of *The Art of the American Folk Preacher* (Rosenberg 1970) had intended, in part, to disprove much of the theory of oral composition developed by Milman Parry and Albert Lord. Nearly all of their work had been done in Yugoslavia, the rest in neighboring Balkan states. The resultant research was based upon a language that few interested scholars could read and fewer could analyze. *Folk Preacher* was going to correct that problem by decomposing materials that were immediately available to English-speaking scholars. If the *guslari* used compositional techniques like those of Homer, thus making him accessible in ways that had not been possible before, then the preachers, whose techniques were also analogous, could be analyzed to comment on both. In the event, however, most folklorists found that the “discovery” of the folk preacher (of a certain kind) only reinforced the Parry-Lord thesis, that it was an extension of the Yugoslavian experience in the United States.

Thus, the original intention of the author had been to address oral-formulaic theory, indirectly, through a detailed examination of American folk sermons that were spontaneously composed and orally delivered; but during the course of recording and interviewing—1966 until 1971—the compelling power of American folk preachers commanded attention in its own right. In the final measure, the research of this scholar and others has concentrated as much upon the folk preachers for their own sake (and intrinsic merits) as upon principles of composition in Homer and several medieval narrators. Rev. Rubin Lacy, Rev. Elihu Brown, and Rev. C. L. Franklin eventually crowded off the page of this research the names of Homer, Turolodus, and the *Beowulf* poet. The historical comparisons have been undertaken, and contemporary American

folk preachers have proven to be of interest for what they can reveal not only about the compositional process of the making of *Beowulf* but about themselves and an American oral tradition as well.

These performances were described at length in *Folk Preacher*; nevertheless, the most graphic and effective contextual images are from observers of early nineteenth-century church services. Henry Fearon's 1818 account of a Methodist service, despite its exaggerations and inclination to portray Americans as uncivilized and undisciplined, captures the spirit of the event compellingly. Having heard that American Methodist services displayed "an extreme degree of fanatical violence," he visited an "African" church in which all of the celebrants were black. They numbered more than four hundred. Fearon wrote that the preacher "indulged in long pauses, and occasional loud elevations of voice, which were always answered by the audience with deep groans." After the minister had finished preaching and had departed, an impromptu prayer session followed in which one of the members sang a hymn and, following, another was called on to pray. Fearon felt that "he roared and ranted like a maniac" while "the male part of the audience groaned" and "the female shrieked." One man shouted and another continued for half an hour bawling. A young girl—Fearon thought that she was about eleven years old—was in convulsions while her mother held her up in arms so that the entire congregation might see her ecstasy. A Brother Macfaddin began preaching "with a voice which might almost rival a peal of thunder, the whole congregation occasionally joining in, responsive to his notes. The madness now became threefold increased. . . had the inhabitants of Bedlam been let loose, they could not have exceeded it. From forty to fifty were praying aloud and extemporaneously at the same moment of time: some were kicking, many jumping, all clapping their hands and crying out in chorus. . ." (Fearon 1818:162-67).

This is not dispassionate reporting by our contemporary standards; nevertheless, Fearon's descriptions sufficiently demonstrate that the style of the oral preacher has not changed noticeably since 1818, nor has the response of his congregation. For our immediate purposes one important element is missing from this description, that of the preacher's sermon. We assume that it was as it is today spontaneously composed and orally performed, without the assistance of a manuscript. By the time a black

Methodist or other Fundamentalist has reached the pulpit, he has heard quite a bit of preaching—probably for more than two decades—and has likely done some sermonizing himself. His sermons are not strictly speaking spontaneous, but are derived in large measure from his several years' experience; in that respect they are spontaneous in the way that the heroic songs composed by Parry-Lord singers of tales were spontaneous, in the way that an experienced jazz musician improvises during what used to be called a jam session.

I have partly characterized such sermons as “oral” in that the exclusive mode of delivery is from the preacher’s mouth to the congregation’s ears. A manuscript is rarely used, and, although a few preachers have been observed relying on small note cards to jog their memories, these sermons were never meant for silent reading. For that reason they have never been printed, though a few of the more famous and accomplished men have had their sermons recorded and then produced on phonograph discs. This is an authentic and exclusively oral form of communication.

These are also properly considered as folk sermons. The source of inspiration for Fundamentalist ministers is exclusively the *New Testament*; yet that book is thoroughly absorbed by the ministers who then preach from it from memory. But the preacher has also been exposed to a great deal of non-Scriptural lore during his life, and while he consciously recognizes that only the Bible holds the true Word, he nevertheless has usually deeply assimilated the unofficial traditions of his own culture. For instance, when the Rev. Rubin Lacy, while preaching a sermon on “Dry Bones in the Valley” (16 July 1967) said, “The Word of God/Come to the dry bones/Rise and live,” what was primarily in his mind was the song, “Dem Bones, Dem Bones, Dem Dry Bones,” which was more influential at that moment than was Ezekiel xxxvii, 5. The song has it: “Now hear the Word of the Lord.” Ezekiel said, “Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones.” Also in the back of Lacy’s mind was the well-known spiritual line, “Dese bones gwine rise again”; *rise* is not used by Ezekiel in the King James translation. At another time, while preaching on the appearance of Christ at the end of the world, Lacy described Him “Dressed in raiment/White as driven as the snow” with a “Rainbow ‘round his shoulder.” Now, Revelation x, 1 reads, in part, “and a rainbow was upon his head. . . .” Lacy’s primary inspiration was, again, a popular song: “There’s a rainbow ‘round his shoulder, and a sky



of blue above,” etc. — not even a spiritual. So, even in this most Scripturally influenced of traditions, the popular song and the secularized spiritual have made their impact. Ostensibly and officially deriving exclusively from the written, learned Word, the preaching studied here is in fact heavily influenced and colored by folklore, by oral traditions.

Rev. Lacy had been a blues singer before he ascended to the ministry in 1930 (as he estimated the date), and so the lyrics of many songs should be expected to be racing around his memory and to find their way out in spontaneous sermons. His colleague, Rev. Elihu Brown (like Lacy from Bakersfield, CA), also incorporated folklore in his preaching, as in this sermon of 11 June 1967, “God is Mindful of Man”; here the non-Scriptural tradition employs a cosmic railroad:

Jesus was so concerned about man  
 Until he left richness and glad glory  
 Came down here in this old sin-cussed world  
 Stepped on the train of nature with a virgin woman  
 And brought Himself out an infant baby  
 On the train of nature nine months  
 Stepped off the train at a little old station called Bethlehem  
 Wrapped over there in swaddlin’ clothes  
 Stayed right there. . . .

A common enough metaphor in several spirituals, the glory train had in this sermon been elevated in status. Brown was never a professional singer, but he had spent many years in church choirs and had heard the songs which described the glory train many times. And even if he had never been in a choir, Brown would have had to be willfully closed to the music around him not to have heard these songs.

Oral sermons, like most performances of oral narratives, are difficult to define structurally. These edifying pieces are the products of preachers who may not have had much formal training and are recited for the benefit of peer group members. Usually no manuscript is used, enabling the preacher to draw upon Divine inspiration to a great extent. In those few cases in which a preacher has prepared a manuscript, the text is written as though in prose, but, once behind the pulpit during a holy service, folk

preachers of the kind we have been describing here will break away from the prepared text into their own rhythm and chanting. The following is a partial transcript of a sermon, "Three Strong Men from Jerusalem," written (for his own use) by Rev. Jerry H. Lockett of Charlottesville, VA:

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were three fellows from Jerusalem. They were three Hebrew boys which [*sic*] had been caught in a crisis away from home. The men of the text can justly be styled as fellows, because they were pardners [*sic*], and comrades, in every secse [*sic*] of the word.

They were from the same country, held the same religious convictions, and had been appointed to the same position there in Babylon, by the same King for the same purpose. These three men had reached the same conclusion as to what to do about their religious conclusion.

Lockett's sermon began with these two paragraphs; by the time he had reached the last sentence he had begun chanting. The division of his utterances into sentences and of those units into paragraphs broke down. The basic unit of Lockett's performance became the phrase, its length determined by the length of time required for its utterance. However, the structure that Rev. Lockett intended when he wrote out the sermon remained, in large part, because he always had his notes to remind him of the sequence of ideas that he wished to express. (In this sermon, the sequence of events to be related was simplified because they followed the chronology of the Old Testament account.) After the narrative had been rendered, Lockett interpreted the moral values to be derived from this story.

Few oral folk sermons are even this well organized. The preachers interviewed recalled only the "text-context-application" format, which requires that they begin each sermon with an announcement of the Biblical text for the day, its context within the Bible, and its application to contemporary life and morals. That leaves a great deal of latitude for individual expression, both on the level of the single line and the organization of nearly the entire performance. The length of the sermon varies from fifteen minutes to over an hour, though most last for about thirty

minutes. However, since so much of each sermon is improvised, and is thus flexible, the preacher can spontaneously lengthen or abridge the performance as the immediate situation dictates. That is, if the congregation is listless, bored, or otherwise distracted, he can use any of several dramatic techniques to liven up his preaching (altering vocal volume and pitch, gesturing, changing expression, and so forth) or he can cut the service short. When this is the mode of the composition, generic definition based on structure is difficult—beyond the “text-context-application” formula.

After text and context, then, the sermon’s form is fluid, and is in large measure open to negotiation between preacher and congregation, that negotiation taking place during the performance itself. The sermon’s length, and consequently its form, will probably vary among performances. Nor is it accurate to speak of—or to think of—an ideal sermon in the preacher’s mind. He does not have such an ideal fixed form before he starts each service, but rather a general outline of what needs to be said. The “text” opening, taken verbatim from the Bible, will be the only inflexible utterance in the performance. Fixity is in fact a notion contrary to these preachers’ theology; since they believe that their sermons come from God and they are only His conduits, that He uses their organs of speech when they are preaching, they can hardly be expected to prepare the content and structure of their message when during their performance the Lord will assume command.

A different notion of structural units, and consequently of structure, was posited by Rosenberg and Smith (1975). This research took as the basic elements of structure the semantic groupings of the sermon. For instance, examples taken from four of Lacy’s sermons indicated that the preacher used Biblical names and referred to animals, the Scriptures, life and death, faith, units of time, and colors, among many other semantic categories. State diagrams were then constructed which recapitulated the order in which these semantic components were spoken. Since two of the sermons had been enthusiastically received and in two others the congregation’s response forced an evaluation of “unsuccessful,” the four sermons were then compared to see what, if any, structural differences the state diagrams revealed.

The sermons’ semantic clusters were developed in one of three ways. The most complex, and the oldest, mode of arrangement is

a parallel organization in which themes are introduced one at a time, developed individually, and then combined with other clusters either to be developed further or to be included in a conclusion. This structural type encourages subtle and extended development of the individual elements of an argument; however, to be effective, the audience must have recall of these developments prior to the conclusion when all components are joined into an organic and logical entity. With this type of structure, major themes will have similar distribution patterns: that is, the parallel structure should be reflected in themes that have important concentrations in non-overlapping portions of a sermon before coinciding at the very end.

A second type develops by free association. When the preacher begins with a fixed theme, he then moves from idea to idea in a seemingly random manner. Transitions may occur because of events in the preacher's life which impinge on his consciousness at such performative moments—an event taking place outside the church window that momentarily attracts his attention, a face in the congregation, or whatever stimulus influences the flow of thoughts through an undirected consciousness. Developmental structures of this kind produce truly unique sermons. Because the psychological, social, and physical environments of the churches studied were changing, it would be virtually impossible for a preacher to duplicate the arrangement of themes in an earlier performance.

A third possibility is a clustered structure. Such sermons consist of several major thematic sections that are independent of each other. Within each local development, or cluster, free movement or transition among a subset of ideas is likely to occur. Between ideas, however, there would be few, if any, links. The specific order in which clusters are presented could be the result either of free association or of predetermination. The latter possibility would greatly facilitate the memorization process which is so important for spontaneous composition in oral performances. The preacher could memorize the three or four major clustural developments and, once within a particular cluster, could "shift down" to a memorial partition (a commonly used mnemonic aid) or else freely associate. By using this predetermined mode of development, the preacher would most likely deliver sermons on widely separate occasions that, while not identical, would certainly be strikingly similar. Albert Lord (e.g. 1960:99-123) has made much of similar principles among the Yugoslavian *guslari*.

Thus the state diagrams revealed to Rosenberg and Smith that these seemingly rambling sermons actually contained definite, well-defined ideational structures. This research also demonstrated, by analyzing lexical selection, that a sermon's success is closely related to its specificity. The characteristic mode of development, at least in the case of the preacher whose sermons were analyzed (Rev. Lacy), is through relatively unrelated clustered sequences of themes. Nevertheless, the researchers concluded that development by thematic or ideational clusters may be the most reasonable mode, given both the desire of the preacher to repeat favorite sermons and the demands placed upon his memory by the stresses inherent in performance. By remembering the sequence of a few broad conceptual categories, he may rely for his development on contextual recall or on associative improvisation during actual performance. Finally, the ideational patterns of the successful sermons manifest a simple symmetry which is absent in the unsuccessful performances, and that seems to be a significant compositional factor in this highly organic art form.

Although the original idea of studying the folk sermon was to learn about the compositional techniques of the *guslari*—and by further extension of all oral singers everywhere, if that were possible—the folk sermon is not exactly like those other narrative traditions. And sermon formulas are somewhat different from those of Homer, of the *guslari*, or of the Central Asian *akyn*. The Homeric unit, for instance, is relatively rigid metrically and does not allow variation. Anglo-Saxon verse alliterates, and its metrics are more yielding. The Yugoslav meter is bound neither to the formal metrical patterns typical of Homeric verse nor to alliteration. Nevertheless, the methods of composition are similar enough to allow meaningful comparisons; in some ways what may be said about the folk sermon may be tentatively extended to the oral narratives of other singers of tales.

Lord sought to explain the process by which narratives were composed in the following manner (1960:65-66):

From the point of view of usefulness in composition, the formula means the essential idea. . . . But this is only from the point of view of the singer composing, of the craftsman in lines.

And I am sure that the essential idea of the formula is what is in the mind of the singer, almost as

a reflex action in rapid composition, as he makes his song. Hence it could, I believe, be truly stated that the formula not only is stripped to its essential idea in the mind of the composing singer, but also is denied some of the possibilities of aesthetic reference in context.

Psycholinguists differ from Lord, assuming that the existence of ideas precedes and is discrete from their expression in utterances. The formula, that special group of words, does not “mean” its essential idea, but is rather an expression of it. And the essential idea of the formula does not have priority in the singer’s mind, but rather the idea itself which must then be encoded into an acceptable language. Many linguists hold that the function of language is to convert ideas into sentences: we first have an idea, so this theory goes, and then we formulate the syntactic structure and lexicon with which to express it. After the syntactic structure has been generated, many of the “blanks can be filled in, which process materializes the actual sentence itself out of its deep structure. In many instances, however, key words form the basis of the generation of syntax, so that prior to forming a sentence the speaker has one or more words already in mind” (Deese 1970:50-51). The encoding process then would not necessarily follow the patterning of a generation of the syntax-supplying of lexicon, but could actually begin with the lexical choice. This seems to be what happens when the oral preacher carries over the same important word from line to line, as does Rev. C. L. Franklin in “Moses at the Red Sea” (Rosenberg 1970:108):

What do ya think that ya want  
 Why the *rod* of your deliverance is in your own hands  
 Stretch out the *rod* that’s in your hands  
 I don’t have a new *rod* to give ya  
 5 I don’t have a new instrument to give ya  
 I don’t have a new suggestion for ya  
 I do not have a new plan  
 Your course has already been charted by destiny  
 Stretch out the *rod* that’s in your own hand

Each line has been created either by syntactic analogy with the one preceding, or through similarity of idea, or by the repetition of seminal words which are bridges to following lines and which are

the cornerstones for the syntactic constructions of them. “Rod” is in the preacher’s mind when he chants this sequence, not the least because he is addressing “Moses,” who is about to stretch out his rod to dry the Red Sea. When “the rod of your deliverance” has been uttered, the syntax of the next several lines is being pre-formulated around the seminal word, “rod.” After a triplet using “rod,” it is dropped, but the syntax of the fourth line and most of its lexical inventory is retained. “Rod” has already served its purpose.

Much has been made of the role of memory in oral performance. Lord (1960:36) thought that the singer

does not memorize formulas any more than we as children memorize language. He learns them by hearing them in other singers’ songs, and by habitual usage they become part of his singing as well. . . . The singer has not had to learn a large number of separate formulas. The commonest ones which he first uses set a basic pattern, and once he has the basic pattern firmly in his grasp, he needs only to substitute another word for the key one. . . . The particular formula itself is important to the singer only up to the time when it has planted in his mind its basic mold. When this point is reached, the singer depends less and less on learning formulas and more and more on the process of substituting other words in the formula pattern.

Lord’s description of the compositional process is much like metaphors of the generative theory, the whole description sounding mechanical: new formulas are created by analogy with old ones, and the compositional process is primarily one of substituting words and phrases in unoccupied slots. There is no doubt that this process does often occur. But generative theory argues that given a certain deep structure, an infinite number of surface structures can be generated. Lord ties the creation of new formulas (metrically governed utterances) to the singer’s recollection of “the commonest ones.” Actually, the singer is freed from such “memory” and such hydraulic reliance. He has at his command not several score or even several hundred formulas which can be altered by word or phrase substitution, but rather a metrical deep structure enabling the generation of an infinite number of sentences

or utterances in the meter of his native language.

Memory is certainly involved in traditional conglomerations of formulas, rather than in the creation of a single unit. For instance, in 1967 and again in 1968, Rev. Rubin Lacy was recorded preaching two sermons on the same topic, "The Deck of Cards," a pious version of Aarne-Thompson Tale Type 1613, "The Deck of Cards." This is a type of counting song (see Wilgus and Rosenberg 1971:291) which assigns a religious meaning to each card in the standard deck; the two corresponds to heaven and hell, the three to the trinity, the four to the gospel writers, the five to the five virgins, and so on. A small part of the 1968 sermon included the following passage (Rosenberg 1970:130):

And, God  
Said there's two ways to go  
Heaven  
Or either hell  
Mister Hoyle  
Made a two-spot  
He called it a deuce  
God from Zion  
And put it in the deck  
And God  
Made the father  
Son and the Holy Ghost  
Ain't God all right?  
And Mister Hoyle  
Made a three-spot  
And called it a trey

Several features of these sixteen lines illustrate how Lacy was able to recall this passage with great accuracy even after more than a year had gone by. The lines are closely related associationally. The "counting song" follows the very elementary sequence of the numbers, from one to ten. The identification of each card and its real religious meaning is alternated: God says or does something and Mister Hoyle (His minister on earth?) responds by encoding the Scriptural message in playing card form. Lastly, the syntax of each card-cluster is similar—



So God  
 Made a earth  
 \* \* \*  
 And God  
 Made a year  
 \* \* \*  
 And God  
 Made the Father

— while the responses to God’s acts of creation are syntactically identical, and lexically similar:

Mister Hoyle  
 Made a deck of cards  
 \* \* \*  
 Mister Hoyle  
 Made a two-spot  
 \* \* \*  
 And Mister Hoyle  
 Made a three-spot

Lacy had good recall of this passage because of the simple arithmetic progression which corresponded to, in negatives, what “God” had done. The entire sequence was decomposed into a dozen or so sub-sections, each concerned with a different denomination card, each related with similar syntax; stitching them together produced the whole.

Rev. Lacy’s friend and colleague, Rev. Elihu Brown, liked to describe the birth of Jesus metaphorized as the Glory Train (Rosenberg 1970:169), using similar techniques: “Got on the train of nature/ Stayed there nine months/ Stepped off at the station one mornin’/ Stayed right there/ Until God wanted Him to come on out/ God was so concerned brotheren/ Till He came all the way to this sinful world/ Came in the shape of a baby/ Wrapped Himself in human blood.” Logical progression, of a train on the track and of pregnancy and birth, orders Brown’s passage and assists in his retention of it. Length does not limit these mannered passages—Lacy often used a forty-seven “line” favorite on the Four Horsemen—but the addition of new and thematically disparate information does. If the content of new material is kept within the associational scope of the remembered material, as Lacy

and Brown have done in the above excerpts, the string could be substantially lengthened. Psycholinguists have long ago demonstrated that people can retain only about seven items of information in a random string, but several dozen in a sentence. We, like the preachers, are not limited as much by the amount of information we can process as by the number of symbols we may try to assimilate (Miller 1967:12, 25).

One trick, then, to effect a successful oral performance is for the performer to find ways of organizing his material. Repetition of his narrative, specifically of certain stories or exempla within the frame of the sermon, greatly helps. In repetition, the smaller units, whether sentences or formulas, tend to be grouped in the performer's mind into larger groups: this enables the performance of such strings as "The Deck of Cards" or "The Glory Train." Some literary scholars now call such sequences "themes" and "type-scenes," the former concentrating on the formulaic structure, the latter on the subject described (Fry 1968:48-53). If the oral performer can retain a few themes with reasonable accuracy (enough to make sense in a different performance), his job has been made far easier than if he had tried to manipulate and create anew several hundred formulas. The process of memorization is probably linked to the formation of such large chunks of information, the performer mentally enlarging the blocks until they include nearly all of the material appropriate for the moment (Bousfield and Cohen 1955:83-95).

A new narrative, or a new idea expressed as an exemplum and inserted into a sermon, is put into the idiosyncratic syntax and lexicon of the preacher. His own first interpretation is what the preacher remembers, even when the source is Scriptural; in this context memory is a recollection of the initial verbalization (Carmichael et al. 1932:73-86). This phenomenon provides the basis for the form of orally transmitted narrative. Thus sermons tend to change less the more they are performed, as the preacher recalls not the initial stimuli but his own mental organization of it.

One has only to read (or hear!) several analogous lines from separate sermons that have been repeatedly performed—or to listen to repeated *guslar* songs, for that matter—to appreciate that "by heart" memorization is seldom attained. Many of the sermon lines are non-grammatical jumbles which repeated listening exposure will not decipher. These are the other, salient features of oral communication: when Parry and Lord shifted the focus of their

research, and consequently ours, from the audience to the singer and his difficulties, they left the dynamics of the audience little understood. They changed our understanding of the performer's relationship with his audience, but mainly from the performer's point of view.

Again, the congregation responding to oral performances is in a position analogous to the audiences of other traditional transmissions. Like the *guslari* and possibly somewhat like the audiences of medieval epic and romance, the congregations are tradition-oriented. They expect to hear the old tales, from the Bible as well as from secular traditions, tales they themselves know well. New stories might well be suspect. Even stories used from the Bible are limited in number, there being fewer than fifty favorites.

The tradition-oriented audience brings to each performance a knowledge of narrative tradition, of language (lexicon and formal considerations such as ritualized openings, closings, means of advancing the story, and so on), and of aural style. The congregation enjoys the sermon because they know what is coming next, and how it will be expressed. Too much has been made of the comfort the audience allegedly derives from hearing familiar material; being able to anticipate the performer enables members of the congregation (or of any oral audience) to participate in the performance, to contribute to it (in the case of religious services to call out, rhythmically, to the preacher), to help make what is at that moment being created. Careful listening to audience participation showed that members of the congregation anticipated their preacher not only in the language that was still a few seconds away from his delivery, but occasionally in the melody he would use to express it. Some preachers seem to take their cues from exclamations in the congregation. The services are thus much more than antiphonal; they are mutually communicative and creative.

Many times during these "communicative events" the preacher's words were unintelligible. I could not distinguish the parameters of phonemes even after repeated tape reruns, and it does not seem likely that many members of the congregation could either. Yet during the original performance they responded alertly and vigorously. In this art form the message is pretty close to being the medium (Rosenberg 1970:40) because that message elicits a visceral response to rhythm and melody that is understood by

the congregational listener as having informational content. All of the preachers interviewed for *Folk Preacher* felt that they were imparting ideas.

Recorded sentences have been transmitted with background noise in experiments conducted by D. J. Bruce (1974:245-52), so that the sentences could not be intelligibly heard. The researcher told his subjects the topic of the sentences they were going to hear and then replayed more sentences, again after first introducing the stated subject. Actually, the sentences used for each topic were the same; the interpretation by the subjects differed, however, because each was predisposed toward certain information once given a topic introduction. Everyone heard not so much what he wanted to hear, but what he expected was going to be said. The interpreting apparatus in the brain, in other words, is able to generate sentences which will match input, even if that input is not real but merely expected.

In another experiment (Mehler and Carey 1967:335-38), sentences with different deep structures but identical surface structures, both beginning with the words "they are," were played to subjects, again with disruptively noisy backgrounds. The subjects had the most difficulty in identifying the sentences with the altered deep structure, suggesting that the inability to identify the deep structure distorts the accuracy of perception. To return to the noisy church services, it is clear that something is being understood. That something may not be precisely what the preacher is trying to communicate, but it is meaningful to the congregant, possibly something that he could not paraphrase individually.

The acceptability of sentences is a subjective judgment (Deese 1970:30). Poor grammar is common in oral sermons, not only because of the relatively low level of formal education of the ministers, but because rapid delivery often leads to mistakes. The following utterances were all spoken during moments of relative calm and were clearly enunciated and heard, yet none drew quizzical looks: "But he's a profession in his field," "He saw the dream, meaning seven years of poordom of no prosperity," and "You know, we as a whole, if we are told to do something, that we don't see any sense in doing that we don't think it oughta be did." Communication of some sort was being transacted.

Communication also occurs in the rhythm of language: in one more way, the message has been influenced by the medium.

The meter of the chanted sermon line differs slightly from that of the same line spoken in conversation; attention to the musicality of the language forces this change. Yet usually the pause in an utterance, punctuated in the sermon by an audible gasp, falls at the end of a major component, for example a noun phrase, or between the noun phrase and verb in a verb phrase:

I heard a fellow— Oh Lord  
 Is the strength of my life  
 Then whom shall I fear?  
 And the Lord is my Shepherd.

Phrases are usually broken at the end of a clause:

If He hadn't 'a been my shepherd  
 I'd 'a been gone a long time ago  
 \* \* \*  
 The Lord is the strength of my life  
 Then whom shall I fear?

In those cases when the break between components is not so clearly junctured, as in conversation, the auditor tends to interpret the break himself (Fodor and Bever 1965:414-20). In one experiment, tape-recorded sentences upon which clicks had been superimposed were played to subjects. When later asked to reconstruct the sentences, the subjects showed a marked tendency to place the clicks in the direction of or at the component junctures. The researchers concluded that, even when such delineating factors as hesitation pauses or inflections are not present, listeners interpolate component boundaries on their own. Congregations will, accordingly, punctuate in their own minds what the preacher fails to do behind the pulpit. If the congregation's rhythm is not that of the preacher, during the service they will actually help him regularize it.

Most preachers' performance utterances are grammatically acceptable, and the sermon style may be accurately characterized by a very high proportion of simple, active, declarative sentences. This style does not develop because of poor education or even a low intelligence. We know that nearly all adults have the competence to generate very complicated sentences embodying several transformations. Only speakers who are severely retarded

or who suffer from aphasia may be reduced to generating simple sentences exclusively. Rather, the conditions of performance, particularly the need to generate the next formula rapidly, profoundly influence syntactical structures.

Literary critics used to attribute the simplicity of oral narrative diction to the performer's concern for his audience. This explanation held that if the language was too complex, or the metaphors too recondite, the listener would lose the thread of the story. While trying to interpret what a particular line (and its image) meant, dozens of following lines would have been recited. That is why, so the explanation went, the style of the oral epic is as it is. Now, however, we are certain that the simplicity of oral syntax comes about because it is easier for the oral performer—the preacher—to recite that way, to compose simple sentences. While there is no evidence that simple active sentences have linguistic priority, they may have some kind of psychological priority. This ordering would be demonstrated if we interpreted complex sentences by first reducing them to their basic propositions in simple ones. But the evidence for this hierarchy is not at all decisive (Deese 1970:42-44).

Similar evidence for the ease of processing simple sentences has been deduced from experiments with self-embedded ones. Subjects who could read sentences which contained two embedded clauses were not likely to speak them, nor did they understand them readily when they were heard. Their syntax made them difficult to understand and induced a resistance in people to speak them. Memory is again the limiting factor: we have difficulty processing self-embedded sentences because it is difficult to remember which of the subjects go with separated clauses (Miller and Isard 1964:292-303). Remembering requires that we hold the entire sentence in mind while we sort out the clauses. This is difficult enough for formally educated people who have been coached on interpreting self-embedded sentences, and next to impossible for the oral performers studied.

Memory also exerts pressure on the sequence of clauses within a sentence. Clauses tend to be generated chronologically, matching their sequence to the sequence of the sentences describing them. Memory performs better with temporally arranged sentences, and in an experiment reported in Clark and Clark (1977:129-38) when the input was reversed—so that events were not arranged syntactically as they occurred in the lifeworld—the interpreted

sentence was transformed to correspond to events. Clearly the events have an effect on the way sentences are organized. The simplest sort of plot structure characterizes the stories in the sermons: a straightforward single-strand narrative, each episode of which is introduced by such formulas as “after a while” and “by and by.” The semantic component of speech is what allows us to distinguish between a concatenation of formulas or lines and a semantically related string which we know as the sermon. Each line can no doubt be explicated in terms of generative theory (in recent years itself controversial) and can be described by the lexicon of psycholinguistics. But these theories are less helpful in understanding why certain sentences follow others or why certain speakers prefer certain expressions and particular melodies. The desire to be “scientific” has led linguists to view the formula as a discrete entity, almost autonomous, almost independent of the person who uttered it. The tendency, doubtless unintentional, has led to viewing the oral performer as a kind of applications system. However, creativity exceeds these parameters.

In an interview, the Rev. Otis McAllister of Bakersfield, CA told me that a preacher must entertain as well as educate, though he did not expand on this statement of poetics. He didn’t have to; the aesthetics of chanted sermons are readily apparent. One of the deacons of the Union Baptist Church (Bakersfield) and I once heard a sermon that was unsuccessful. The preacher’s language never became metrical: he never broke through oration into chanting. The deacon evaluated him with the laconic phrase that the preacher was “teachin’, not preachin’”: that is, though the message was theologically and morally sound, it had no aesthetic dimension; its preacher was not “preaching.” Similarly, Rev. Rubin Lacy once summed up his own philosophy with two sentences: “You want to make the people glad twice: glad when you get up and glad when you sit down.” And, “when you’ve said enough, sit down.”

When the sermon’s emotional peak has been reached, the preacher has said “enough,” and he will sit down. If he has properly brought along the congregation’s emotional and spiritual involvement, they will be “glad.” And, in anticipation of his next sermon, they will be glad when he moves behind the pulpit to preach. To a great extent, the reader of this paper who has never heard these orally performed sermons cannot understand what is meant by “enough” and “glad.” To that extent we can only rely

on the old folklorist's maxim that folklore is what gets left out of the performance when it is transcribed onto paper. The preacher's tone of voice, his delivery speed, and the responses of the congregation cannot be heard in a transcribed performance. The experience must be firsthand, or not at all. The only version in print that has come close to capturing the orally preached sermon's ambiance is in the last part of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (see Rosenberg 1969:73-87).

The preacher's skill is not slight. The sermon is developed with care, always with the congregation's emotions and emotional level in mind. But that is only one aspect of this aesthetic sense. Consistent observance of the meter of a single line, together with its rhythmical relationship to the lines of its environment, is perhaps the most important facet of the preacher's musical talent. The line is perpetuated with care in that it must be sustained, it must be consistent with its rhythmic environment, and yet it must be used flexibly throughout if the sermon is to have an impact. The preacher sustains, even develops, his rhythm in order to deepen his congregation's involvement in the performance. But he must have sufficient control of himself to be able to deflect or retard or even suppress the emotional response which he himself has largely created, if that should become expedient. Only a few of the most talented preachers can sustain their own rhythm regardless of the congregation's: an intricate symbiotic relationship is at play during the performance of an oral sermon, and the preacher will have to struggle to bring his audience to his emotional level—whether that is actual or merely desired—rather than descending to theirs. In the chanted sermon, syntax and even diction are greatly influenced by rhythm, and when the latter is irregular, other inextricable problems will inevitably ensue.

In these orally preached and spontaneously composed sermons, found in the American South and Southwest, the congregation and preacher are responding not only to each other (as in antiphonal services), but also to themselves and to God. As the preacher strives to move the congregation—to infuse them with the Spirit of the Lord—so is he moved and infused by them. He may have to struggle to keep above the dulled plateau of a listless audience. But when the congregation is “high” and the Lord's Spirit has entered the preacher, members of the audience withdraw more into their own personal experience. At one point during a successful service, manipulation or stimulation is no longer necessary; this is



the point at which the congregation have given themselves to religious ecstasy and are hardly aware of the preacher at all. At such moments the congregation members would say that they are consumed by the Spirit, and this is the intention of the preacher. At such moments the congregation is not responding to the preacher, nor he entirely to them; they are both responding to the Holy Ghost. This is likely to take the form of shouting, clapping, dancing, foot-tapping, even speaking in tongues. A catharsis occurs at the end of the service; then the congregation will rest, often exhausted yet exhilarated, thoroughly purged (their sins washed away), happy.

In traditional art, to re-invoke a truism, there is no surprise and little suspense. The listener is satisfied aesthetically because of a sense of the logic and justness of the procedure, the inherent dignity of it, because of the gratifying fulfillment of traditional expectations. Those expectations can be fulfilled on the level of the narrative, as when the master returns and casts out the lazy servant who has merely buried his talents. In learned art this effect can be accomplished, as did Wagner in *Tristan und Isolde*, by the retardation and diverting of the prime melody until the final scene when the melody is presented fully at the moment of the lovers' death. Such dramatic moments also occur in sermons, for instance in the passage below, once delivered by the Rev. C. L. Franklin, "Moses at the Red Sea." The Jews hesitate to try the crossing, but for Franklin their obstacle is not water; their task is to recognize that the power to overcome adversity (a Red Sea by any other name) is within each one. In this sermon the individual is embodied in "Moses":

And here they were standing on the brinks of the Red Sea  
 Here they were, when they looked behind them  
 They heard the rattling of the chariot wheels  
 Of Pharaoh who had regretted/ his decree of deliverance  
 5 And decided to recapture them/ and lead them back/  
     into the oppression of Egypt.  
 When they looked on either side/ mountains prevented their escape  
 When they looked before them the Red Sea/ and its perils loomed  
     large/ before their imagination  
 I don't believe you know what I'm talkin' about

10 And the very same folk who had praised Moses  
For his valor and for his bravery  
For his courage and for his insight  
For his great victory of deliverance  
Began to complain  
And Moses said to them stand still  
15 And see the salvation of the Lord  
I don't believe you know what I'm talkin' about  
Stand still  
Some time you know we can get in not only our own way  
And everybody else's way  
20 But it seems sometime we can get in God's way  
Stand still  
My God I heard Him say the thing you need  
Is in your hands  
I don't believe you know what I'm talkin' about  
25 The instrument of deliverance  
Is within your hands  
It's within your possession  
The-the-the way out  
The powers that need to be brought into exertion  
30 Is within you  
Good God  
What are ya cryin' about Moses  
What are ya lookin' for  
What do ya think that ya want  
35 Why the rod of your deliverance is in your own hands  
Stretch out the rod that's in your hand  
I don't have a new rod to give ya  
I don't have a new instrument to give ya  
I don't have a new suggestion for ya  
40 I do not have a new plan  
Your course has already been charted by destiny  
Stretch out the rod that's in your hand

The plot is simple. The Israelites, about to make good their escape, think that they are trapped by the Red Sea, the flanking mountains, and the pursuing Egyptians. They have complained, off stage, to Moses. Rev. Franklin in turn addresses his congregation, the larger community of American blacks, the Jews "caught" at

the Red Sea, and Moses. Each individual must seek within himself for the strength to overcome adversity. But more is happening than just that, more than even the text will reveal. Rev. Franklin thwarts our expectations for an easy solution again and again, presenting physical obstacles and emotional ones, delaying the simple truth that will solve the Jews' problems until the aesthetic moment is right, gradually building up our anticipations, our suspense over formal considerations inherent in his presentation—since we know that Moses and the Jews do escape, there is no informational suspense.

The scene is established in the first two lines of this narrative within a narrative. We know who “they” are, their relation to Moses, and the predicament of the Jews at that moment in history. The next lines establish the fact of the approaching Pharaoh and his army now that he has decided not to let the Jews go after all. But their escape is blocked, at the moment of this tableau, by the water in front of them and the mountains on either side. The Jews begin to panic (lines 9-17): those same people who had before praised Moses for his many virtues now complain of their plight. Moses advises them that they need do nothing, that the Lord will be their salvation. Franklin reaches a subordinate climax (line 17), significantly followed by three lines of evaluation (18-20); the first stage of the “action” is over, and Franklin culminates this section in the exemplum's message: stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. But more than this transcription can show, Franklin indicates the climax of this section through his intonation.

The last twenty-three lines in this episode (18-40) repeat the message content of this sermon (the rod of your deliverance is in your own hands), while the expectation of the congregation for Moses' decisive action is thwarted. They know what that must finally be, of course, but they do not know what Rev. Franklin will say has caused Moses to act, or when he will finally act, or how long the preacher will withhold that information. And while this other suspense is being developed in them, they will come to look at retardation not as a hindrance to their aesthetic pleasure but as something pleasurable in itself.

This portion of Rev. Franklin's sermon also contains within it an instance of fulfilled form which provides one of its subordinate consummations, within the frame of the entire performance. That is, Rev. Franklin develops the emotional intensity of the sermon

slowly from the opening lines to the last, but along the way he infuses it with lesser peaks and troughs. The movement of the entire performance, as can be measured by the preacher's rate of word delivery, his tone of voice, and the frequency and quality of the congregation's responses, is peristaltic. Momentary peaks within sermons are common, since many experienced preachers work towards fruition through a series of them rather than approach the climax in a "straight line." Line 36, "Stretch out the rod that's in your hand," is the culmination of the preceding fourteen lines. As Franklin preached it, the line also relaxed the tension he had been briefly building, though he immediately resumed it while heading toward another subordinate peak. The transition to line 37, "I don't have a new rod to give ya," is provided by "rod." With this utterance a new anaphoric sequence commences which gradually rises in intensity to line 39, "I don't have a new suggestion for ya." The Parry-Lord explanation that new formulas are created by analogy with extant ones looks convincing in this series.

Although the three lines of this anaphoric set (37-39) do not seem alike in their typographical format, Rev. Franklin's interpretation renders them nearly identical in tone and meter. He thus establishes a metrical pattern which arouses an anticipation in his listeners that is largely fulfilled in the hypometric utterance, "I do not have a new plan." This sentence, as chanted, departs from the established pattern ("I don't have a new. . .") and terminates this set. However, Franklin does not end so abruptly, deciding to add a dénouement to the passage which again relaxes the tension that his own anaphoric lines had developed: "your course has already been charted by destiny." The coda is achieved by returning to the language of line 36, "Stretch out the rod that's in your hand." Once again, any transcription is impotent to express the finality with which this line is spoken, but the semantic fulfillment (the answer to Moses' problem) is communicated.

Rev. Franklin's comment on the panic of the Jews and Moses' momentary hesitation occurs in lines 18-21: sometimes we can even get in our own way, we can get in each other's way, and sometimes we can even get in God's way. The right way is that of faith: to stand still and watch the salvation of the Lord. In the next several lines (22-30), Rev. Franklin addresses his congregation in the words that God uses to advise Moses, explicating the previous lines and then applying them to

contemporary life. Finally, in another apostrophe, he again addresses Moses, giving him the ultimate command, further elaborating on the message, retarding the conclusion of the action for just a few seconds more. The last two lines summarize the advice and repeat the call to action. Now, but only now, God's evaluation stops and Moses is allowed to save his people.

In the following eleven lines excerpted from a sermon by the Rev. T. J. Hurley, audience participation and anticipation were present, though to a lesser degree of intensity:

He said Oh Lord  
 It's not my will  
 95 It's not my way  
 It's not my thoughts  
 It's not my ideas  
 It's not my opinion  
 It's not my theories  
 100 It's not what I think  
 It's not what I do  
 It's not what I say  
 No God it's Your will be done

The expectations of the congregation for a dénouement are developed in more than one way in this series. "It's not my will" may evoke a slight anticipation for the following line, which effectively retains the same syntax, altering only the most important word—correctly uttered last—by substituting an alliterative partner. Experiments have shown that the rhythm of language is more readily retained than syntax, and so it is not wild speculation that the rhythms of such sets as "It's not my will/ It's not my way" involve the audience as much as does the lexical anticipation. The length of the set may vary without substantially altering the demand that the series end with the assertion that "No God it's Your will be done." Aphoristically, then, rhythm creates belief, further involving the congregation in its own religious experience, an experience which is induced by metrics even more than by semantics. So too when the famous preacher Rev. J. Charles Jessup begins his defiant challenge, "take it. . .," the audience expects the concluding ". . . or leave it." So with "like it. . .," and ". . . or lump it." Expectations in this instance are based on the frequency with which this sequence and these

particular variations of it are used in ordinary conversation.

One of the most important leitmotifs of this essay—most important “litanies” would be a more appropriate metaphor—has been the insistence that the sermons and the services being written about will never be adequately understood on the printed page, that folk preaching, like folklore, is everything in the performance that does not get copied down in writing. “You’ve got to have been there,” we might say. And yet, in one important way, all of my readers have “been there.” “Everyone” remembers hearing, or has heard of or seen video tapes of, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech. That morning, the 28th of August, 1963, he preached his memorable sermon, and I call it a sermon even though it was received by the more than 200,000 in the audience as a civil rights “speech”—which it also was. Rev. King knew how to give a speech when he wanted to, and he knew how to preach. His speech to the Fellowship of the Concerned (delivered on 16 November, 1961), for example, is a model of a well-reasoned, precisely organized statement on behalf of “Love, Law, and Civil Disobedience” (Hill 1964:345-56). King began:

Members of the Fellowship of the Concerned, of the Southern Regional Council, I need not pause to say how very delighted I am to be here today, and to have the opportunity of being a little part of this very significant gathering. . . . I would also like to express just a personal word of thanks and appreciation for your vital witness in this period of transition which we are facing in our Southland, and in the nation, and I am sure that as a result of this genuine concern, and your significant work in communities all across the South, we have a better South today and I am sure will have a better South tomorrow with your continued endeavor and I do want to express my personal gratitude and appreciation to you of the Fellowship of the Concerned for your significant work and for your forthright witness.

This speech outlined the philosophy that controlled the nonviolent civil rights demonstrations in America, detailing its chief features and manifestations. He concluded in the same tone of irresistably sweet reason:

That is the basis of this movement, and as I like to say, there is something in this universe that justifies Carlyle in saying no lie can live forever. We shall overcome because there is something in this universe which justifies William Cullen Bryant in saying truth crushed to earth shall rise again. We shall overcome because there is something in this universe that justifies James Russell Lowell in saying, truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne. Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown standeth God within the shadows, keeping watch above His own. With this faith in the future, with this determined struggle, we will be able to emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of man's inhumanity to man, into the bright and glittering of freedom and justice. Thank you.

He was teachin', not preachin', almost; the repetition of parallel syntax in the clauses beginning with "there is something . . ." has the stamp of the pulpit. At the Washington Monument in late August of 1963, however, the teacher was subordinated to the preacher. "Five score years ago, a great American. . ." he began, ". . . signed the Emancipation Proclamation." The preaching style soon commanded this speech (Hill 1964:371-75):

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free.  
 One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled  
     by the manacles of segregation and the chains of  
     discrimination.  
 One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of  
     poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity.  
 One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the  
     corners of American society and finds himself an exile in  
     his own land.  
 So we have come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

No American who was alive in 1963 will forget this preached oration's peroration:

So I say to you, my friends, that even though we must face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream.

It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed—we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, sons of former slaves and sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day, even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, that one day, right here in Alabama, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream. . . .

The conclusion of Rev. King's remarks was pure oral sermon:

So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire.

Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York.

Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.

Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado.



Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California.  
But not only that.  
Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.  
Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.  
Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi, from  
every mountainside, let freedom ring.  
And when we allow freedom to ring, . . . (Sentence and paragraph  
format added for emphasis)

The Washington Monument speech called for rousing oratory, not for finely reasoned philosophy. The subject was basically a religious one, though heavily freighted with patriotic cargoes. Situation and subject called for just such a sermon: the formulas, the repetitive syntax and phrases were produced by a highly literate and sophisticated man, whose very different speech to the Fellowship of the Concerned was highly appropriate to that other audience; and his message showed that he could adjust his style of address according to the needs of the situation, and do it with great effect. He was a great speaker, but those of us who remember the Washington Monument speech know also what a great preacher he was. And we know, too, which style had by far the greater impact on the emotions, the spirit, of the audience.

Though Rev. King is dead, we have by no means heard the last of the oral sermon style; we have not been deprived of its great emotive power. At the 1984 Democratic presidential convention in San Francisco, (Rev.) Jesse Jackson delivered a preliminary speech which the Knight-Ridder reporter called “an emotional, triumphant valedictory address for the 42-year-old Baptist preacher who brought out both the best and worst in people in his eight-month campaign for self-respect and dignity for himself, blacks and the disadvantaged” (K.-R. Synd. Art.). Describing the speech in more detail, the reporter wrote that

For 50 spellbound minutes, the noisy Democratic Convention came to a stop last night as Jesse Jackson—a descendant of slaves who became this country’s first major black presidential candidate—talked of the dream, passions and frustrations that inspired his historic bid for the White

House.

Tears, cheers and chants of “Jesse, Jesse, Jesse,” greeted Jackson, who came to symbolize the hopes of millions of black Americans.

Thousands of delegates joined hands and rocked from side to side to a soothing gospel hymn when it was over. (*ibid.*).

When it was over—the next evening—TV reporter David Brinkley was not unduly moved or impressed, pointing out that, after all, Jackson was a Baptist minister and had been doing that sort of thing for years. One’s inference has to be that Baptist ministers all have the ability to move their congregations (which is obviously not so) and that we ought not to be impressed by a preacher’s skill in rousing the Spirit. But no church-goer could agree with this evaluation, which slights a great talent. Such comments are all the more surprising when they come from a professional media commentator who has for decades established a substantial career by his speaking voice.

Rev. Jackson’s speech began conventionally enough: “Tonight we come together bound by our faith in a mighty God, with genuine respect and love for our country, and inheriting the legacy of a great party—the Democratic Party—which is the best hope for redirecting our nation on a more humane, just and peaceful course.” It began conventionally enough (except for the mention of Party) for a sermon, which it was in part. Not yet well into his performance, Rev. Jackson evoked heightened emotion when he apologized (AP Synd. Art., formatting added throughout):

If in my high moments, I have done some good  
Offered some service  
Shed some light  
Healed some wounds  
Rekindled some hope  
Stirred someone from apathy and indifference  
Or in any way helped someone along the way  
Then this campaign has not been in vain.

He continued:

If in my low moments

In word, deed or attitude  
 Through some error of temper, taste or tone  
 I have caused anyone discomfort  
 Created pain  
 Or revived someone's fears  
 That was not my truest self.

\* \* \*

I am not a perfect servant  
 I am a public servant doing my best against the odds  
 Be patient  
 God is not finished with me

This political sermon invokes the message of Rev. Franklin's: "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." In this parable Rev. Jackson places himself in a position analogous to that of Moses at the Red Sea. Like that other public servant, he too is not perfect; his followers should be patient; God is not finished with him (either). These passages are replete not only with parallel syntactical constructions, but with internal rhyme and alliteration as well. Probably this sermon/speech was not composed with that poetry as a conscious compositional element in mind; rather they are the stock in trade of the oral performer of this tradition, one of whose most skilled practitioners is Rev. Jackson. "Suffering breeds character," he told the convention at the close of his sermon (AP Synd. Art.):

Suffering breeds character  
 Character breeds faith  
 And in the end faith will not disappoint  
 Faith hope and dreams will prevail  
 We must be bound together by faith  
 Sustained by hope  
 And driven by a dream  
 Troubles won't last always  
 Our time has come  
 Our time has come  
 Our time has come

"Thousands of delegates joined hands and rocked from side to side to a soothing gospel hymn when it was over," the Knight-Ridder reporter wrote. Rev. Jackson's use of the folk

sermon style—not, in this case, spontaneously composed—for a political speech demonstrates the form’s adaptability. Rev. King’s “I Have a Dream” sermon/speech was on behalf of a cause that evoked deep religious feelings; Rev. Jackson’s performance was more secularized, but not entirely. He asked for forgiveness, pleading that he still had a Divinely inspired mission to fulfill: God was not finished with him yet. While it could be counter-argued that men of such backgrounds might well justify almost any of their actions with Scriptural support, their sermon/speeches demonstrate the close similarities between effective orations and moving sermons. In both instances, the minds of the audience were arrested and their emotions engaged. Revs. King and Jackson prepared manuscripts carefully, but realized that people are not always moved by reason alone; logic penetrates deepest in quiet chambers, by and by. The green in front of the Washington Monument, the Democratic conventional hall—like a church full of expectant worshippers—required another approach. The sermons that have moved millions since 1800 are thus shown to stimulate a response more fundamental than mere emotion, with more breadth than Protestant Fundamentalism.

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## **Social Functions of the Medieval Epic in the Romance Literatures**

**Joseph J. Duggan**

*The Milman Parry Lectures  
on Oral Tradition for 1985*

### I

Studies on the medieval epic in France and Spain have in recent years been devoted largely to individual works or to internal aspects of the texts, rather than to the ways in which contemporaries perceived and used it. This is, I think, partially because the study of medieval literature is largely carried out in the academy, and is thus correlated with teaching: as a result one tends to encounter again and again a handful of texts that are frequently assigned for classroom treatment, and to read even those few through a microscopic lens rather than in a broader context. Treatments taking in the medieval epic in the Romance languages as a whole are rare and outdated; thus it is that, in this field, interest in the social function of epic, such as might have been aroused by synthetic works informed by reader-oriented literary theory—perhaps one should modify that to “listener-oriented” for our purposes—or by the sociology of literature, has not really developed.

I will attempt to delineate in these lectures the functions of the medieval epic composed in French, Provençal, and Spanish from the point of view of the philologist, that is to say of one who is interested in texts and everything that might illuminate them. This includes, among other specialized pursuits, literary theory, textual criticism, evaluative criticism, and sociological criticism. What good does it do to evaluate or to theorize if one does not control the problematics of the text? Of what use is the text once it is established, on the other hand, if one is not prepared to judge

it in relation to other texts? How does one deal with the nature of the text if one is without a theory of texts and how they function in society? I subscribe, then, to Albert Henry's observation that, for medieval literature, textual criticism and literary criticism are one and the same, and I would take that principle a step further: the methods of each pursuit are informed by the findings of the other. A theory of texts should underlie the entire enterprise. Orality is an aspect of that theory of texts.

At the same time awareness of the social situation in which the text was generated and propagated—and by “text” I mean here and in what follows both oral and written manifestations—and of the ways in which the public of listeners, scribes, and readers perceived it, is necessary for its proper establishment, elucidation, and appreciation. Evidence for these topics will be drawn from poets' statements as found in the texts themselves, from the remarks and pronouncements of medieval authors writing both in Latin and in the vernacular, and from observations about the corpus of surviving manuscripts. Both what the poets say and the manner in which they choose to say it are, in my opinion, intimately bound up with situations of performance, readership, and audience response. A theory of the epic text would be incomplete if it were to neglect taking those situations into account.

What is said in these lectures does not necessarily apply to narrative genres other than the epic, or to works composed in prose. Obviously much more evidence is available from north of the Pyrenees than from the Iberian peninsula. Elsewhere I posit that Spanish epic does not derive its distinctive qualities from the French or the Provençal, and that the two bodies of poetry descend from common stock<sup>1</sup>; the validity of those propositions is assumed here, although others will no doubt wish to contest them. I will not argue here either for the primary orality of medieval epic (see Duggan 1973, 1980-81a and b, 1985), but rather will take it as a given to be corroborated, and will try to redirect a little of the energy that is so quickly dissipated in attempting to convince the seemingly unconvincible, toward considering the varieties of social function one encounters in the genre.

The corpus of texts, well over a million lines, is distributed unevenly. Although the issue of determining just where a given poem begins or ends, and whether the various versions of certain heroic legends constitute autonomous works, is at times problematic, one can take it for purposes of discussion that there



are about 132 works in the genre extant in their poetic form. Of these, three are in Spanish, nine are in Provençal, and the remaining 120 are in French or in Franco-Italian (Duggan 1984a). They range in length from under 900 lines, *Le Pèlerinage de Charlemagne*, to over 34,000, *Lion de Bourges*.

The medieval epic is a multifunctional genre. The distance between our mental horizons and those of the jongleurs, scribes, and authors is enormous, and as a result some of the functions they intended undoubtedly never occur to us. Others, however, are well attested. I will concentrate on what I consider to be the most important, namely entertainment, information, sanction of conduct, preserving awareness of the past, and providing models for imitation. I will take them up in that order, adding a few remarks on economic motivations for the performance of epic.

The medieval epic is the work of jongleurs, that is to say, itinerant entertainers—usually male but occasionally female—who, in addition to singing epics and poems belonging to other genres, staged mimes, played instrumental music, danced, juggled, peddled medicines, exhibited trained animals, and performed magic tricks and acrobatics. Often dressed in distinctive clothing (Salmen 1960:55-61; Lejeune 1966), they typically traveled about the countryside carrying their instruments, of which the most popular was the *vielle*, a proto-violin which was the most frequent accompaniment to the epic. They supplied entertainment on festive occasions such as at weddings, baptisms, courts, tournaments, and other celebrations, and at fairs, for which they received in recompense robes, furs, boots, and other articles of clothing, horses, trinkets, and money. As wanderers in a society in which stasis was the norm, they occupied a very low social status.

Writers of ecclesiastical texts often fulminate against jongleurs, thus providing us with indirect evidence for the activities of these vagabonds, whom they call *joculatores*, *histriones*, or *mimi*. These testimonies must be treated with circumspection, however, since the hostile intentions of their authors are manifest. The lapidary judgment of Honorius of Autun, writing his *Elucidarium* in the early twelfth century, is emblematic of the attitude of churchmen: “Habent spem jocularos? Nullam.” [Do jongleurs have any hope (of salvation)? None.] An anonymous thirteenth-century author writing in Latin draws a comparison that shows how at least one cleric conceived of the danger: “Item, sicut auceps possit in laqueo vel rethe aviculam unam doctam quae volitando alas quasi libera

extendat et cantet: sic Dyabolus aliquam jocularicem quae sciat cantiones ad choreas adducit, ut alias secum trahat” [Likewise, just as the hunter of birds places in his snare or net a tamed bird which, flitting about, may extend its wings and sing as if it were free, so the devil entices to dances some female jongleur who knows songs, so that she might bring others with her] (Paris, Bibl. nat. fonds latin 16515, cited in Faral 1910:291). According to Casagrande and Vecchio (1979:914-15), whose article on clerics and jongleurs in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is extremely important, jongleurs were considered so objectionable that they simply fell outside the medieval classifications of social statuses. In that regard they appear to have been treated as worse than prostitutes. I will close these lectures with a thesis to account for the clergy’s seemingly unjustified loathing of jongleurs.

Condemnatory sermons were addressed not to the *joculatores* themselves, but to their audiences, those who patronized them. Caught between the court, their surest source of recompense, and the church, which sought to impose its guidance on the nobles, the jongleur represents—both in the sense of presenting in his works and in the sense of symbolizing—a world threatening to the clerics. The early thirteenth-century *Poème moral* complains that jongleurs enter the church as soon as the service has ended, even before the congregation has had time to rise from its seats, singing, playing *vielles*, and promising to perform songs about Roland, Charlemagne, Ogier, Fernagu, and Aiol (Herzog 1908:60). Obviously this competition must have led to frustration among preachers who had a sterner message to communicate than that conveyed by the jongleurs.

Casagrande and Vecchio (1979:917-23) situate the change toward a more positive view of the jongleur in the works of Bernard of Clairvaux, who compares himself to a jongleur, a transformation that is consolidated by the mendicant orders, and especially the Franciscans, whose founder is styled the *joculator Dei*. The Franciscans’ vagabondage, sense of spectacle, and dependence on contributions from the public emulate the jongleur’s habits. Thomas Aquinas was the earliest theologian to construct a theory by which the jongleur could be rehabilitated through any expedient other than giving up his craft (Casagrande and Vecchio 1979:923): he admits that the jongleur’s profession is work, and that the profit he gains is thus in some way legitimate. For Thomas, the jongleur serves people by bringing them a necessary

*delectatio*, allowing them to turn from their labors to recreation, a respite that will permit them to perform better afterwards.

This *delectatio* is precisely the most obvious function of the *chansons de geste* in medieval society. Jongleurs apparently did not wait for special occasions on which to perform them: poems show the jongleurs, for example, taking dinner in castles, after which they would entertain those present. In his *Roman de la Violette*, dated to the period 1227-1229, Gerbert de Montreuil has the hero, Gérard de Nevers, disguise himself in old clothes as a jongleur; carrying a *vielle*, he comes to a castle, where he waits at the door in the rain until a knight calls him inside, asking him to play his instrument. Soaked to the skin, Gérard asks to put his playing off until after dinner, but the unsympathetic knight, who turns out to be a traitor, reacts angrily. After regretting that he has to do what he has not been trained for, namely to play and sing at the same time, Gérard breaks into song with a passage from the *chanson de geste Aliscans*. "To solace and entertain" those present, he sings four strophes, of which the text only gives one (22 lines).<sup>2</sup> The idea for this scene may have come from the Provençal epic *Daurel et Beton*, in which the jongleur Daurel sings while his lord Guy eats dinner (Kimmel 1971:11. 1940-47); the topic of Daurel's song does not improve Guy's appetite, however, since it concerns Guy's murder of the jongleur's former master, a case in which the hoped-for entertainment turned out to be an aggravation. Jongleurs also performed in public squares and along streets, apparently in any place where a contributing public could gather around them. In *La Prise d'Orange* (Régnier 1966, *AB* text:11. 138-40), the great epic hero Guillaume d'Orange and his knights are lounging under a pine while a jongleur sings to them a "vielle chanson de grant antiquité" [old song of great antiquity]. In the long redaction of *Le Moniage Guillaume* (Cloetta 1906-11:98), Guillaume asks his servant to sing a song about a good story ("d'un bone estoire") to entertain them both while they are traveling through a dangerous forest. The servant complies, and when robbers who are about to attack the pair hear him, they guess that he is "a jongleur coming from a town or city or fortress, where he has sung in the public square." In the shorter redaction the servant sings five lines of the *Prise d'Orange* (Cloetta 1906-11:18).

French epics were popular too in Italy, where their performance gave rise to a curious bastardized language known as

Franco-Italian, basically French larded with Italian forms, that was never a true dialect but was rather a *Mischsprache* usually employed only to present literary works of French provenience to a northern Italian public. An Italian jurist, Odofredo, reports toward the middle of the thirteenth century that blind men sang about Roland and Oliver in the public square in Bologna; that they were blind confirms that the poems were being performed without benefit of writing. Other documents tell us that French singers, whose presence was apparently disruptive in some way, were forbidden from performing in Bologna in 1288.

The awe with which modern scholarship treats medieval epics sometimes makes us forget that their primary ostensible purpose *was* entertainment. Many jongleurs were marvelous storytellers whose narratives have retained a great deal of their attraction. A small number of humorous texts have also survived, such as *Le Pélerinage de Charlemagne à Jérusalem et à Constantinople*, *Jehan de Lanson*, and *Le Moniage Guillaume*, not parodies but rather poems in which the singer plays against the expectations of the genre, producing an effect of light-hearted humor. In one outright parody, the popular *Chanson d'Audigier*, the main hero's adventures are carried out in a scenario of scatological character.

A talented storyteller has a hold over his audience that is extremely powerful. As entertaining singers of tales, the jongleurs might well have aroused jealousy in their clerical contemporaries, especially those whose sermons were perhaps not as spell-binding as *La Prise d'Orange* or *Daurel et Beton*, and it would not be surprising if the Franciscans' practice of preaching in the public byways represented at least in part a decision to emulate their rivals rather than simply condemn them.

A second function of the *chanson de geste* is to provide information about contemporary events, what the great Spanish medievalist Ramón Menéndez Pidal called a *canto noticiario*, an informational song keeping people abreast of current news. Obviously only occurrences of great magnitude would become the subject of song, and since epics are usually about military deeds, Menéndez Pidal had in mind primarily the great battles that are the main subject of heroic poetry. A thirteenth-century treatise, *De septem sacramentis*, makes an exception in its condemnation of jongleurs "si cantant cum instrumentis et de gestis, ad recreationem et forte ad informationem" [if they sing with instruments and concerning deeds, for recreation and perhaps for information]

(quoted in Menéndez Pidal 1957:243).

Menéndez Pidal's concept of the *canto noticiero* was an ambitious one in that he believed that all the epics with historical content began as informational poems (1957:244). Some scholars have doubted the existence of the *canto noticiero*, not so much because of the quality of the information presumed to have been conveyed as because of what they have seen as a lack of evidence external to the epic testifying that it was in fact a vehicle for news.

An anecdote that the chronicler Lambert of Ardes, writing around 1194, tells about Arnold of Guines, a participant in the First Crusade who died around 1140, is relevant to the point at issue (Godefroy Menilglaise 1855:311):

Et tamen antiochenae commendator cantilenae, avaritiae zelo ductus, et magis cupidus temporalis lucri retributionis quam Arnoldus laudis humanae (o gartionum et ministrarium, immo adulatorum injuriosa laudatio! o inertium principum indigna et inanis exultatio!) quia

Virtute et probitate per omnia nobilis heros,  
 Arnoldus eidem scurrae, qui nullo nomine dignus habetur, duas caligas denegavit scarlatinas, de eo digne promeritae laudis praeconium et gloriam subticuit; et de eo in cantilena sua, in qua ficta veris admiscens, multa multorum nichilominus laudandorum gesta sub silentio intacta reliquit, mentionem non fecit. Sed o laudanda et ubique terrarum praedicanda Arnoldi militia! o in omnibus saeculis memoranda probitatis ejus strenuitas et gloria! o humilitatis ejus non despicibilis, sed inenarrabilis in virtutum operibus constantia! qui humanam nullatenus quaerens gloriam, scurrae maluit quantumcumque munusculum denegare, quam in ore scurrae et nomine indigni, licet omni haberetur laude dignissimus, in orbe terrarum deferri et cum instrumento musicari vel decantari. Sed cum ignominiosus ille concentor nomen Arnoldi extinguere curavit, accensa lampade virtutum fama extulit et magnificavit. Quod enim avarus ille et cupidus nomen subtraxit per invidiam, immo per cupiditatem et avaritiam, cognita probitatis ejus gloria, ubique terrarum personuit, et praedicatum est ei in virtutis et laudis magnificentia.

[And nevertheless the intoner of a *Song of Antioch*, motivated by the zeal of avarice, and more desirous of the profit of temporal reward than Arnold was of human praise—oh insulting commendation of servants and minstrels, or rather of flatterers, oh unworthy and empty exultation (exaltation?) of slothful princes—, suppressed the glory and commendation of his justly deserved praise because,

In all things a noble hero in virtue and prowess, Arnold denied to the same jester, who is not considered worthy of any renown, two scarlet shoes; and he made no mention of him in his *chanson de geste*, in which, mixing fictions with truths, nonetheless he passed over in silence, untouched, many deeds of many praiseworthy people. But oh the military service of Arnold, worthy of praise and of publishing in all lands! Oh the glory and robustness of his prowess, to be remembered in all ages! Oh the constancy of his humility, un contemptible, but indescribable in virtuous works!—he who, in no way seeking human glory, preferred to deny however small a gift to the jester rather than to be carried through the whole world as a subject of music and song in the mouth of a jester unworthy of renown, granted that he would be considered most worthy of all praise. But when that disgraceful and disdainful man took pains to extinguish Arnold's renown, fame magnified and exalted it, the lamp of virtues having been lit. For although that greedy and avaricious man removed his renown through envy, nay through greed and avarice, it resounded in all lands once the glory of his prowess had been recognized, and was proclaimed to the magnificence of his virtue and praise.]

Lambert shows obvious hostility to the jongleur, an attitude which, as we have seen, was common among those of his clerical calling. What is important about his testimony is that it shows that the concept of the news of an important event being spread by a *chanson de geste* is not confined to the epics themselves, but is rather a part of the mental baggage of a late twelfth-century cleric who was no friend of jongleurs.

This conclusion does not depend on the veracity of the tale, which may indeed be true but may also be Lambert's attempt to

explain why versions of the *Song of Antioch* circulating in the chronicler's period make no mention of Arnold, whom he obviously wishes to praise. In fact none of the extant versions of the *Song of Antioch*, a poem in the cycle of the First Crusade, includes Arnold's name. If the anecdote is indeed true, it gives an extremely rare glimpse of a jongleur distorting history in the interests of his own economic benefit; even so, the history he distorted would convey information about a great event—the first resounding victory of the crusade to the Orient—to Arnold's contemporaries. If it is not true, Lambert at least found it plausible to use.

The quasi-totality of the poems we now possess that are based on historical events are not contemporary with those happenings, and whether they were originally composed shortly after the events is a question far too complex and controversial to take up here. But two poems, namely the *Song of the Albigensian Crusade*, in Provençal and composed in the first quarter of the thirteenth century by Guilhem de Tudela and an anonymous continuator, and Guilhem Anelier's Provençal song dedicated to the Navarrese civil war of 1276-1277,<sup>3</sup> undoubtedly were meant to function as carriers of information about contemporary events.

The same may be true of the more realistic among the poems of the crusade cycle, the French *Song of Jerusalem* and *Song of Antioch*. In the latter case the poet, Graindor de Douai, claims to have gotten his song from a previous poet, Richard the Pilgrim, who would have been present at some of the occurrences recounted in the text. Graindor's *Song of Antioch* deviates substantially from history, however (Duparc-Quioc 1976), and while some observers have defended the notion that the original song was composed by an eye-witness to the events, Robert Cook (1980:23-39) has argued cogently against such a view. Nevertheless, the audiences who were present at jongleurs' performances of the *Song of Antioch* probably believed that what they were getting was an historical account, and Graindor's claim to have gotten the poem from Richard, even if it was untrue, reinforces my contention that the concept of the *chanson de geste* as an informational genre is present in the period.

The epic poets themselves claim to provide information about great events, and carry that claim a step further in that they present themselves as generating sanctions for the conduct they recount: praise in the case of laudable actions and blame when the

person in question acted basely. Sanctioning is closely related to the informational aspect, since it functions as a special imparting of information, the conferring of value upon deeds.

The locus most commonly cited in any discussion of this function is in the eleventh-century Oxford version of the *Song of Roland*, in which Roland, having just learned that the Saracens are about to attack the rearguard of Charlemagne's army, exhorts his men to fight (Whitehead 1946:11. 1013-14):

Or quart chascuns que granz colps i empleit,  
Que malvaise cançon de nus chantét ne seit.  
[Now let each man take care to strike great blows,  
so that a bad song not be sung about us.]

Later, when King Marsile leads into battle the troops that he had been holding in reserve, Roland evokes again the possibility of an unfavorable song being sung, this time about him and Oliver.

But the *Song of Roland* is by no means the only poem to convey the idea that songs function to sanction conduct in battle. In *Raoul de Cambrai*, from the late twelfth century, the hero Bernier, also encouraging his men to bravery, expresses the fear (Meyer and Longnon 1882:l. 4144) that "Povre chançon en fust par gogleour" [a bad song might be made about it by a jongleur]. Similar phrases are found in *Aspremont* (Mandach 1975: ms. V6, l. 17) and in *La Chevalerie Ogier de Danemarque* (Eusebi 1963: l. 7902).

Presumably, then, the *Song of Roland* and *Raoul de Cambrai* are "good songs" about Roland and Bernier, while they are "bad songs" about the traitor Ganelon and the cruel and impetuous Raoul. But is this concept merely a literary convention, with no reality outside the *chansons de geste* themselves? Once again the passage from Lambert of Ardres' chronicle is of the greatest interest, and likewise in this case it matters little whether the anecdote is true because even if it is not, the fact that a writer contemporary with poems in which the sanctioning function of the *chansons de geste* is taken for granted considered it to be plausible is still sufficient to show that jongleurs were not the only ones to believe in it.

The effect of the epic's sanctioning function in medieval society was perhaps not confined to those whose deeds were being recounted in the poems. The word *geste* in "chanson de geste" could mean "deeds," as one might expect from its etymon, the



neuter plural form of the past participle of Latin *gerere*, but more commonly it signified “tale, narrative” and, from the very earliest examples of its use in Old French, “kinship group, lineage” (Van Emden 1975). In keeping with the well-known medieval principle of solidarity of the kin group (see, for example, Bloch 1961:134-42), the deeds of one member of a lineage could redound to the honor or disgrace of his kinsmen. This idea is expressed clearly in the *Song of Roland* in the speeches in which Roland refuses to sound his horn in order to call back the main body of Charlemagne’s army to repel the Saracen surprise attack (Whitehead 1946:11. 1062-64, 1073-76):

Respont Rollant: “Ne placet Damnedeu  
 Que mi parent pur mei seient blasmét,  
 Ne France dulce ja cheet en viltét “  
 . . .  
 “Ne placet Deu”, ço li respunt Rollant,  
 “Que ço seit dit de nul hume vivant  
 Ne pur paien que ja seie cornant.  
 Ja n’en avrunt reproece mi parent.”

[Roland replies: “May it not please God  
 That on account of me my relatives should be blamed,  
 Or that pleasant France should fall into degradation.”

. . .  
 “May it not please God,” Roland replies to him,  
 “That it should be said by any man alive,  
 Or by a pagan, that I should blow my horn.  
 Never will my relatives be reproached for that.”]

But how far into the future could a man’s deeds affect his kinsman?

Indications are that descendants living long after the deeds of their real or supposed ancestors derived pride from them and perhaps even promoted songs about them. In the *chansons de geste*, Aimeri de Narbonne is the father of Guillaume d’Orange, to whom an entire cycle of epics is devoted. If Aimeri had an historical prototype as count of Narbonne, all traces of him have disappeared from history. Nevertheless, beginning in the last third of the eleventh century, eighteen viscounts of Narbonne are named Aimeri (Lejeune 1966), probably in a desire to associate the family with a legendary epic forebear. Unfortunately, we can rarely trace

the provenience of a *chanson de geste* manuscript back beyond the late Middle Ages, with the result that, although one might suspect nobles of encouraging with their patronage the preservation in writing, or even the generation, of epics extolling the deeds of their ancestral lines, positive proof that the written copies result from genealogical concerns is lacking.

On the other side of the Pyrenees, María Eugenia Lacarra (1980) has shown that two powerful families of late twelfth-century Castile, the Laras and the Castros, are descended respectively from the Cid and the families of the Cid's poetic enemies, García Ordóñez and the counts of Carrión. The Laras and the Castros were on opposing sides in violent political struggles in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, and it now appears likely that the *Cantar de mio Cid* represents an attempt on the part of the Laras to discredit the Castros retroactively, as it were, by shaming their lineage, that of the counts of Carrión—who, incidentally, could not possibly have played in history the treacherous roles that the *Cid* poet assigns them. Since many commentators concerned with dating the poem now believe that it was composed within a quarter century before the year 1207, Lacarra's hypothesis may well carry the day.

A certain type of knowledge of the past pervades the French, Provençal, and Spanish epic, and is not limited to cases in which the deeds of characters with direct ties to the twelfth, thirteenth, or fourteenth centuries are being sanctioned. In fact, as one surveys the work done on the Romance epic over the past two centuries, it is obvious that the fourth function I deal with, preserving awareness of the past, has preoccupied scholars more than any other, probably on account of the obsession with origins passed on from Romanticism, the crucible of modern philology (see Gumbrecht 1986).

The *chanson de geste* presents itself as a true account of historical events. One could bring forth many passages in support of this proposition, but perhaps the most telling is that found in the prologue to the *Chanson des Saisnes*, 6-11, where Jean Bodel distinguishes among the three matters that story-tellers employ (Menzel and Stengel 1906: 11. 6-11) :

N'en sont que trois materes a nul home entendant:  
De France et de Bretaigne et de Romme la grant;  
Ne de ces trois materes n'i a nule samblant.  
Li conte de Bretaigne s'il sont vain et plaisant

Et cil de Romme sage et de sens apendant,  
 Cil de France sont voir chascun jour aparant.  
 [For any knowledgeable man there are only three matters:  
 That of France, that of Brittany, and that of Rome the great;  
 Nor are there any other similar to these three matters.  
 If the tales of Brittany are empty and pleasant,  
 And those of Rome wise and instructive,  
 Those of France are true, as is daily apparent.]

The word I translate as “empty” is *vain*, which has the semantic range “empty, soft, weak.” In this context I take it to signify that, for Jean Bodel, who is certainly closer to medieval mentalities than we are but who was also trying to sell his audience on the historical value of his own song, the matter of Brittany, that is to say the tales of King Arthur and of Tristan and Ysolt, are void of truth, while the matter of France, contained in the *chansons de geste*, is viewed as recounting events that really happened.

Nonetheless, we know that the historical accounts contained in the *chanson de geste* are rarely if ever true according to any modern standard. While many *chansons de geste* retain a kernel of the original historical events that they purport to relate, they are full of inaccuracies, distortions, and outright contradictions if we are to judge them against the evidence of, say, medieval charters and most chronicles. But they constituted an important repository of collective memory, preserving medieval popular society’s view of what the past was like.

The historical Charlemagne and his son Louis the Pious, for example, never conquered a Saracen kingdom nor went to the Holy Land, contrary to what the *Pélerinage de Charlemagne* and other epics tell us; nevertheless, when Pope Urban II preached the First Crusade to the Orient at Clermont in 1095, he is said by the chronicler Robert of Rheims (III: 728) to have exhorted the knights who were present as follows: “Moveant vos et incitent animos vestros ad virilitatem gesta praedecessorum vestrorum, probitas et magnitudo Karoli Magni regis, et Ludovici filii ejus aliorumque regum vestrorum, qui regna paganorum destruxerunt et in eis fines sanctae Ecclesiae dilataverunt” [Let the deeds of your predecessors, the prowess and greatness of King Charles the Great and of his son Louis and others of your kings, who destroyed pagan kingdoms and extended into them the boundaries of Holy Church, move you

and incite your souls to manliness]. While sources other than *chansons de geste* told of Charlemagne's supposed trip to Jerusalem and Constantinople, the fact that Urban invokes the defeat of Saracen kings by both the great emperor and his son Louis and calls them *gesta* leads me to suspect that he was relying at Clermont on his audience's knowledge of history as preserved in the *chanson de geste*.

In many cases writers incorporated the history that they found in epics into their Latin treatises and vernacular histories, usually in an uncritical manner: in Italy, Godfrey of Viterbo; in French-speaking areas Alberic of Trois-Fontaines, Philippe Mousket, Girart d'Amiens, Jean d'Outremeuse, and David Aubert; and in Spain King Alfonso X of Castile and his successors (who refer directly to *cantares de las fiestas* [Menéndez Pidal 1957:287]). One also finds examples of epic heroes incorporated into forged charters as supposed witnesses (for details, see Duggan forthcoming a).

Typically the epic organizes history in genealogical fashion. *Geste*, we remember, means "lineage" as well as "deed." Beginning around 1180, several songs<sup>4</sup> speak of the three great *gestes* into which the French epic is divided; in this sense *geste* would signify not just "lineage" but "series of songs about a lineage," or "epic cycle." The earliest and most extensive account of the three *gestes* is found in Bertran de Bar-sur-Aube's *Girart de Vienne* (Van Emden 1977:11. 8-67):

A Seint Denis, en la mestre abaïe,  
 trovon escrit, de ce ne doute mie,  
 dedanz un livre de grant encesorie,  
 n'ot que trois gestes en France la garnie;  
 ne cuit que ja nus de ce me desdie.  
 Des rois de France est la plus seignorie,  
 et l'autre après, bien est droiz que jeu die,  
 fu de Doon a la barbe florie,  
 cil de Maience qui molt ot baronnie.  
 El sien linaje ot gent fiere et hardie;  
 de tote France eüsent seignorie,  
 et de richece et de chevalerie,  
 se il ne fuserent plain d'orgueil et d'envie.  
 De ce lingnaje, ou tant ot de boidie,  
 fu Ganelon, qui, par sa tricherie,  
 en grant dolor mist France la garnie,

qant en Espangne fist la grant felonnie  
dout furent mort entre gent paiennie  
li .xii. per de France.

Oï avez dire en meinte chançon  
que de la geste qui vint de Ganelon  
furent estret meint chevalier baron,  
fier et hardi et de molt grant renon.  
Tuit seignor fusement de France le roion,  
s'an eus n'eüst orgueil et traïson;  
mes par orgueil, por voir le vos dïson,  
est trebuchiez en terre meinz hauz hom,  
ausin com furent, de verté le savon,  
deu ciel li engres, qui, par lor mesproïson,  
trebuchié furent en l'infernal prison,  
ou il n'avront jamés se dolor non.  
Del ciel perdirent la seinte mansion  
par lor orgueill et par for foloïson.  
Et ausin furent li parant Ganelon,  
qui tant estoient riche et de grant renon,  
se il ne fussent si plain de traïson.  
De ci lingnaje, qui ne fist se mal non,  
fu la seconde geste.

La tierce geste, qui molt fist a prisier,  
fu de Garin de Monglenne au vis fier.  
De son lingnaje puis ge bien tesmongnier  
que il n'i ot .i. coart ne lannier,  
ne traïtor ne vilein losangier;  
einz furent sage et hardi chevalier,  
et combatant et nobile guerrier.  
Einz roi de France ne vodrent jor boisier;  
lor droit siegnor se penerent d'aidier,  
et de s'annor en toz leus avancier.  
Crestienté firent molt essaucier,  
et Sarrazins confondre et essillier.  
.iiii. fiz ot cil Garins an vis fier,  
onques ne furent plus hardi chevalier,  
mien escïent, que en un jor entier  
lor grant bonté ne porroie noncier.  
Li premiers fiz, mentir ne vos en quier,

si fu Hernaut de Biaulende le fier.  
 Li autres fu, si com j'oi tesmongnier,  
 Mile de Puille, qui tant fist a proisier.  
 Li tierz après fu de Genvres Renier,  
 et li carz fu dan Girart le guerrier.

[At Saint-Denis, in the main abbey,  
 we find written—I don't doubt it at all—  
 in a book of great antiquity,  
 that there were three lineages (*gestes*) in strong France;  
 I don't think anyone will contradict me on this.  
 The most powerful is that of the kings of France,  
 and the next—it is right that I should say it—  
 was of Doon of the white beard,  
 the one from Mainz who was a very great lord.  
 In his lineage were fierce and rugged people;  
 they would have had the lordship of all of France  
 and of power and of knighthood,  
 were they not full of pride and envy.  
 From that lineage, in which there was so much treachery,  
 came Ganelon, who by his treason  
 caused great suffering in France the strong  
 when he committed in Spain the great felony  
 that caused the death, among the pagans,  
 of the Twelve Peers of France.  
 You have heard tell in many a song  
 that, from the lineage (*geste*) that sprang from Ganelon,  
 many a great knight was descended,  
 fierce and bold and of very great renown.  
 They would have been lords of the whole realm of France  
 if they had not been given to pride and treason;  
 but through pride—we tell you truly—  
 many a high-placed man has fallen to earth,  
 just as the angels of heaven—we know it in truth—  
 who, through their own fault,  
 were thrown down into the prison of hell  
 where they will feel nothing but eternal pain.  
 They lost the holy mansion of heaven  
 by their pride and their folly.

And like that were Ganelon's kin,  
 who were so powerful and of such great renown,  
 if only they had not been so prone to treason.  
 Of this lineage, which did nothing but evil,  
 was the second cycle (*geste*).  
 The third cycle (*geste*), which was extremely praise-worthy,  
 was that of Garin of Monglane, of the fierce countenance.  
 In his lineage I can well testify  
 that there was not a single coward or good-for-nothing  
 or traitor or base flatterer;  
 rather they were wise and bold knights  
 and good fighters and noble warriors.  
 Never once did they wish to betray a king of France;  
 they endeavored to help their legitimate lord  
 and to further his honor everywhere.  
 They advanced the cause of Christianity  
 and destroyed and confounded Saracens.  
 Garin of the fierce countenance had four sons;  
 never were there bolder knights,  
 in my opinion, with the result that if one had a whole day,  
 one could not do justice to their great qualities.  
 The first son—I have no wish to lie to you—  
 was Hernaut of Beaulande, the fierce.  
 The second, as I have heard tell, was  
 Milon of Apulia, who was so praiseworthy.  
 The third was Renier of Geneva,  
 and the fourth was lord Girart the warrior].

Bertran's claim to have found a written model in the Abbey of Saint-Denis for his concept of the cyclical organization of epic should probably not be taken seriously, as it reflects a commonplace in a genre whose poets frequently attempt to acquire an aura of authenticity by linking themselves with written authorities, and his insistence (*de ce ne doute mie, ne cuit que ja nus de ce me desdie*) only renders the claim more suspect.

That the deeds of Charlemagne's and Garin de Monglane's lineages should aggregate into cycles is natural, and indeed in the case of the second of these, which includes Guillaume d'Orange, compilers of cyclical manuscripts were to transform schematizations

such as Jean Bodel's into codicological reality by collecting disparate songs about the lineage into continuous narratives, patched together by transitional passages that they called *incidences* (Delbouille 1927, 1960; Duggan 1984b). But the other cycle, that of Doon de Mayence, commonly known today as the "Cycle of the Rebellious Vassals," is entirely factitious, a retrospective attempt to link together in one lineage extremely disparate poems about vassals who stood up to or rebelled against the royal power. The traitor Ganelon heads this family of talented but ill-starred barons that Bertran compares, in typical medieval figural fashion, to the fallen angels.<sup>5</sup>

The emphasis on the genealogical is intimately connected with the view of history found in the epic and propagated by the jongleurs, a view that is conveyed in the words of characters. As Bernier tells his companions in *Raoul de Cambrai* (Meyer and Longnon 1882:11. 4141-44):

"Soiés preudoume et bon combateour:  
Chascun remembre de son bon ancesor.  
Je nel volroie por une grant valour  
Povre chançon en fust par gogleour."  
[Be worthy men and good fighters:  
Let each one recall his good ancestor.  
I would not wish for anything  
That a poor song should be made about us by a jongleur.]

Prowess consists in acting as one's ancestors acted, and acting especially like the ones whose exploits were the subject of song, whether they were historical or simply assumed to be so.

## II

[In my first lecture, I discussed four functions of the medieval epic within the Romance cultures: entertainment, dissemination of information, sanctioning of conduct, and preservation of the memory of past events. The main subject of this second presentation is the exemplary function, although I will include some remarks about another aspect of the genre that underlies all those discussed, namely the economic function.]



The world of epic is not, any more than any other world presented in literature, randomly constructed. The characters who make it up—kings and queens, princes, knights, ladies, monks, priests, armorers, merchants, moneylenders, and peasants—and who are supposed to have lived in a certain period of the past stretching from Merovingian times to as late as the poet's own age, constitute a paradigmatic society that the singers hold up for admiration. The audience, in turn, takes those characters as models to imitate or as examples of conduct that is to be avoided. Don Juan Manuel, nephew of Alfonso the Learned, expresses this notion succinctly in his *Libro de los Estados*, completed in 1330, in a passage setting out the daily routine of the ideal emperor (Tate and Macpherson 1974:105): “Et desque oviere(n) comido et bebido lo quel cunpliere con tenprança et con mesura a la mesa, deve oir, si quisiere, juglares quel canten et tangan estormentes ante él, diziendo buenos cantares et buenas razones de cavalleria o de buenos fechos que mueban los talantes de los que los oyeren para fazer bien.” [And as soon as he has eaten and drunk what he wishes with temperance and moderation, he should, if he wishes, hear while still at table jongleurs singing to him and playing their instruments before him, pronouncing good songs and good tales of knighthood and of good deeds, that they might move the desires of those who hear them toward doing well.]

Alfonso the Learned, king of Castile and Leon, tells the reader of his *Siete Partidas* (López 1555: II.21.20) that it was the custom in ancient days that, just as in time of war knights learned how to accomplish feats of arms by watching others do them and by practicing such feats themselves, so in time of peace they learned them by listening:

E por esso acostumbrauan los caualleros, quando comian, que les leyessen las estorias de los grandes fechos de armas que los otros fizieran, e los sesos, e los esfuerços, que ouieron para saber los vencer, e acabar lo que querian. E alli do non auian tales escrituras, fazian lo retraer a los caualleros buenos e ancianos que se en ellos acertaúan. E sin todo esto aun fazian mas, que non consentian que los juglares dixessen ante ellos otros cantares, si non de guerra, o que fablassen en fecho de armas. E esso mismo fazian que quando non podian dormir cada uno en su posada, se fazia leer, e retraer estas cosas sobredichas. E esto era porque oyendo las

les crescian las voluntades, e los coraçones, e esforçauan se, faziendo bien, e queriendo llegar a lo que los otros fizieran, o passaran por ellos.

[And on this account, while they ate, the knights were accustomed to have read to them the stories of great deeds of arms that others had done, and the strategems and the feats of strength that they accomplished so as to be able to win out and achieve what they wished. And when such writings were not available, they had the good and old knights familiar with such matters recall their experiences. They even did more than this, for they did not consent that the jongleurs should say songs before them unless they were about war or treated of military matters. And they did this also that, when each one in his own lodgings could not sleep, he had the above things read and recounted. And this was so that, hearing them, their will and their courage would grow, and they exerted themselves in doing good and striving to achieve what others had done or to surpass their efforts.]<sup>6</sup>

Don Juan Manuel and Alfonso are, of course, writers with a bias toward inculcating in their readers the norms of proper conduct. French texts figuring under this rubric also tend, quite naturally, to have a moralizing tone. In his *Chronique de Bertrand du Guesclin*, the fourteenth-century *trouvère* Cuvelier evokes examples from the epic past that knights should emulate (Charrière 1839:11. 10711-16):

Qui veult avoir le non des bons et des vaillans,  
 Il doit aler souvent a la pluie et au champs  
 Et estre en la bataille, ainsi que fist Rolans  
 Et li bers Olivier, et Ogier li poissans,  
 Les .iiii. fils Aymon, Charlemaine li grans,  
 Li ducs Lions de Bourges . . . .

[Whoever wants to have the reputation of the good and the valiant should go freely into the rain and the field and be in battle, as did Roland and stout-hearted Oliver and Ogier the powerful, the four sons of Aymon, Charlemagne the great,

the duke Lion of Bourges ...]

A Latin tale found in the *Summa praedicatorum* of the late fourteenth-century Dominican John of Bromyard concerns a jongleur of the king of France who was asked why there were no longer such worthy knights as Roland and Oliver; he replied: “Give me a king like Charlemagne and I will give you such knights as you are now naming” (Wright 1842:126).

Thus the sanctioning of conduct, while it might well have applied to those who actually performed the deeds on which jongleurs’ songs are based—if one believes that songs were initially composed shortly after the events they narrate—had its corresponding function, as concerned the later receiving culture, in the provision of models for the future conduct of those who listened to the jongleurs’ songs.

These models were not always displayed in peaceful surroundings, however. The image of the jongleur singing heroic poetry at the head of an army as it moves into battle is among the earliest depictions of the social function of French epic. Guy, bishop of Amiens, who died in 1074, describing in his *Carmen de Hastingae proelio* (Morton and Muntz 1972) the Battle of Hastings, to which he was an eyewitness, ascribes the initial victory of the battle to a jongleur named Incisor Ferri, that is to say the Latin equivalent of the French name Taillefer, who taunted the English by juggling with his sword before the Norman army. William of Malmesbury, writing more than a half-century later, does not mention Taillefer, but asserts that a *cantilena Rollandi*, that is to say a “Song of Roland,” was sung to the Normans before the battle so that “the warlike example of that hero might inflame those who were about to fight” (Stubbs 1889, 2:302). When Wace wrote his *Roman de Rou* in the seventh and eighth decades of the twelfth century, he combined the two accounts available to him and embellished them, stating that Taillefer, a good singer mounted on a swift horse, sang a song before William the Conqueror about Charlemagne, Roland, Oliver, and the vassals who died at Roncevaux. William then granted him the right to strike the first blow. Taillefer killed an Englishman and exhorted his companions to strike (Holden 1970-73:11. 8013-38). Naturally some controversy has arisen concerning the proper interpretation of these details, but even if William and Wace are passing on fabricated accounts—which I doubt—the notion that a jongleur should lead troops into battle while singing was obviously not considered

unlikely by at least one twelfth-century author, and that the jongleur should sing a heroic tale, that is to say a *chanson de geste*, was plausible to both Wace and William of Malmesbury, whose anecdotes show that the exemplary function operated in the High Middle ages as a factor in what John Benton (1978-79) has called the “enculturation of a warrior class.”

Valuable corroboration of this particular manifestation of the exemplary function is found in a curious episode recounted by the eleventh-century Rudolphus Tortarius in his *Miracles of Saint Benedict*: sometime around 1070 or 1080, Burgundian robbers formed an army and invaded the lands of the monastery of Fleury-sur-Loire. Confident of their strength, they had a jongleur (*scurra*) precede them, singing the deeds and wars of the past (*res . . . gestas et priorum bella*) so as to incite them to success. In a sense this testimony is even more precious than that of William of Malmesbury, because it involves a living—though perhaps unintentional—parody: the mob obviously wished to clothe its enterprise in proper military trappings and so assigned a jongleur to lead it while intoning *chansons de geste* in imitation of a genuine military practice (Certain 1858:337).

It is no accident, I believe, that both of these pieces of evidence concern the late eleventh century, the period in which Urban II appealed to the French nobility to imitate the *gesta praedecessorum vestrorum* in undertaking the First Crusade to the Orient. That the practice of jongleurs leading troops into battle while singing heroic poetry is not attested for France in the period in which the extant manuscripts of *chansons de geste* were produced indicates perhaps that it became less common around the turn of the twelfth century. While no jongleur leads knights into battle in the *Chanson de Guillaume*, the poem’s eponymous hero at one point is thought to be carrying back from the battle of the Archamp the body of his dead jongleur, characterized as a singer of epics concerning Clovis, Floovant, Pepin, Charlemagne, Roland, Girart de Vienne, and Oliver, but also as a valiant fighter (Wathelet-Willem 1975:11. 1247-74). Later references come from Italy: a jongleur of Pistoia, author of a song on the taking of the castle of Torniella in 1255, was named Guidaloste, that is to say “Guide-the-army,” and Andrea di Goro, a *cantastorie*, led the assault on the public palace of Florence in 1392 (see Menéndez Pidal 1957:264n).

In the *Chanson d’Antioche* one sees a particularly poignant

extension of the motif of the jongleur leading troops into battle. Before the Christian knights engage the Saracen troops led by Corbaran, the poet catalogues the various *eschieles*, companies ranged into battle formation. He is very well aware of the historical dimensions of his subject as he addresses his audience (Duparc-Quioc 1976:11. 7678-84):

Hui mais orés cançon de bien enluiminee  
 Issi com les escieles istront fors en la pree.  
 Jo nel di pas por çou, bone gens honoree,  
 Que jo ruisse del vo vaillant une denree,  
 Se iceste cançons molt bien ne vos agree,  
 Mais iceste proece doit estre ramembree,  
 Car tels cevalerie n'ert jamais recovree.

[From here on you will hear an inspired song  
 Of how the companies will go forth into the meadow.  
 I do not say this, good, honored people,  
 So that I can ask for a *denier's* worth from you,  
 Unless this song pleases you very much.  
 But such prowess should be commemorated,  
 For such knighthood will never again be recovered.]

The last company is made up of old warriors, silver-haired and seemingly enchanted. One of Corbaran's men, Amidelis, explains to the Saracen leader that these are good knights of ancient days who conquered Spain by the force of their arms (11. 8116-17). The prose version of *Antioche* specifies further that the company is made up of those who triumphed at Roncevaux (Duparc-Quioc 1976:399). It may surprise us to hear the Battle of Roncevaux referred to as a victory, but the writer of the prosification may see it as such either because Roland, the sole survivor of battle, died not of his wounds but from the effort of blowing his horn, or because the ultimate victory over Baligant, recounted in all the surviving French versions of the *Chanson de Roland* except that found in the Lyon manuscript, took place at Roncevaux. In any case this ghostly troop is no doubt meant to provide, within the confines of the *Chanson d'Antioche's* world, the same type of inspiration by example that a jongleur would evoke if he were to be depicted singing a *chanson de geste* as the army proceeded into battle.

Since epic poetry held up models for emulation, political

authorities must occasionally have been tempted to use its portrayals of history for their own ends. After all, penurious jongleurs could no doubt easily be persuaded to depict the deeds of ancient heroes in such a way as to make listeners want to join in contemporary undertakings in imitation of those heroes.

The depiction of the hero and his social status in the *Cantar de mio Cid* is somewhat at variance with history. The poet never mentions, for example, that Rodrigo of Bivar fought in the service of the Arab king of Saragossa, nor that the Cid's wife Jimena was related by blood to the royal family of Castile and Leon. This reticence has the double effect of making the political climate in which the Cid's achievements occur appear much more like that of late twelfth-century Castile than it actually was, and of presenting the hero's ascent from the low nobility to the kingship of Valencia as more dramatic than it was in history. It would not be so striking, after all, if a noble who was already related to the king by marriage should conquer a kingdom from the Moors: hardly a ripple would stir the surface of the social hierarchy. As it is, the poet may have intended *his* Cid's meteoric rise in status, as I will argue in greater detail in a forthcoming book, as an example to be imitated by Castilian knights on the lower echelons of society: if a knight such as Rodrigo of Bivar could rise to kingship through military prowess alone, against formidable odds and exiled from his ancestral home, then any noble, however modest his status, might reasonably attempt to emulate him.

Such a depiction would have been particularly appropriate in one of the darkest periods of the Reconquest, between the Battle of Alarcos in 1195 and the victory of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212 (Fradejas Lebrero 1962:52-57). This stretch of time corresponds well with the proposed dating of the poem to 1207 or shortly before, which has been gaining ground among *Cid* scholars over the past 30 years. If the theory is correct, then the *Cantar de mio Cid* is, among other things, a work of propaganda, a revision of history whose purpose was to entice the reluctant to follow the Cid's example in extending the limits of Christian Spain.

That the Oxford version of the *Chanson de Roland* shared this propagandistic quality is likely. The Oxford version is isolated from the other *chansons de geste* in the dates of its text and of the manuscript in which it is found. It is the only *chanson de geste* that has been dated with some confidence to the late eleventh century, that is to say to about fifty years before the

*terminus post quem* of the next oldest songs (for a summary of dating, see Duggan 1976-77, 1984a). The manuscript was probably copied in the second quarter of the twelfth century, likewise about fifty years before the next oldest manuscript (Samaran 1973, Short 1973, Duggan 1984a). We know that at least three versions of the *Roland* in assonance existed in medieval England—Oxford and the sources of the Norse and the Welsh versions (Aebischer 1954:278-81; Rejhon 1984:66-68)—and we have just considered the legend that a “Song of Roland” was sung at the Battle of Hastings. It is with some interest, then, that one reads in the Oxford version that Charlemagne crossed the salt sea to England and established the tribute of St. Peter’s pence (ll. 372-73).<sup>7</sup> The line immediately preceding that extraordinary claim assigns equally unhistorical conquests of Apulia and Calabria to Charlemagne. Since the Normans did in fact conquer all three areas in the eleventh century, the jongleur’s revision of history is a transparent attempt to legitimize William the Conqueror’s invasion by furnishing an historical antecedent for the military achievements of his highly gallicized subjects. This interpretation would also explain why a song about Roland, the “right arm” of the epic Charlemagne, was more appropriate at Hastings than any other *chanson de geste*.

That the epic should have been used as a tool of political propaganda is not incompatible with its essential orality. According to the chronicler Roger of Howden, writing sometime after 1189, William Longchamp, bishop of Ely, chancellor, and judiciar of England under Richard I, and a Norman by birth, commissioned French singers and jongleurs to sing about him in the public squares in order to increase the fame of his name (Stubbs 1868-71, 3:143). There is no trace of the written word in this anecdote, any more than there is in the vast majority of the stories about jongleurs that have come down to us from the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries.

I suspect that the motivation for writing down many of the *chansons de geste* was genealogical, families wishing to preserve accounts of their imagined—or perhaps in a few cases their real—ancestors. The propagandistic use of epics may, however, also account for the *mise par écrit* in some cases. In this regard Georges Duby’s study of the genealogical concerns of French nobility in the eleventh and twelfth centuries is relevant. Duby reports that families of various categories could trace their lineages back to three epochs: comtal families to the tenth century, families

of castellans to around the year 1000, and the families of petty nobility to the middle of the eleventh century. These limits correspond to the periods at which the fiefs of the respective levels of the nobility began to be passed on in a hereditary system rather than reverting to the sovereign after the holder's death. According to Duby (1973b:297), the desire to push the families' genealogies back beyond those limits to the privileged moment of the Carolingian period described by the *chanson de geste* inspired domestic historiographers to create legendary ancestors. Thus Lambert of Ardres invents in his history of the counts of Guines a Scandinavian pirate, Sifridus, who is said to have seduced the daughter of the Count of Flanders and to have thus founded the lineage of Guines. Duby's studies are based partly on work done by the historian Karl Ferdinand Werner, who has shown that knowledge of the *chanson de geste* furnishes a typical component of the early twelfth-century genealogical legends of French noble families (1960:116-18). While all this suggests the possibility that the epic also invents ancestors for the convenience of noble families and that some *chansons de geste* were copied down as records of mythical ancestral lines, we can unfortunately seldom trace the provenience of a *chanson de geste* manuscript back beyond the fifteenth century.

Wolfgang Van Emden, editor of *Girart de Vienne*, has hypothesized that Bertran de Bar-sur-Aube's version of that poem was composed to please the family of Marie de Champagne, whose daughter Scholastica married William II, count of Mâcon and titular count of Vienne, around 1183, that is to say close to the time when Bertran composed his version. William had suffered several humiliations at the hands of King Louis VII of France, and Van Emden asks whether Bertran's transformation of Girart from a felon into an unjustly persecuted vassal was not politically motivated.

Broader purposes for the Oxford version of the *Chanson de Roland* have been proposed by John F. Benton (1978-79), all of which would come under the heading of the exemplary function as I conceive it: to glorify warfare, to stress the value of fighting the infidel, to inspire loyalty to king and country, and above all to inculcate values of group loyalty. While Benton limited his remarks largely to the *Roland* itself, what he has to say applies to most *chansons de geste* of the cycles of Charlemagne and Guillaume, and to many others outside those cycles.



Alfred Adler's (1975) model of the epic's exemplary function in society is brilliant and *sui generis*. Adler conceives of the epic poets as speculative observers, setting out examples of extreme conduct in response to extreme social pressures: what might happen, for example, if a good vassal were to be confronted by a bad lord, or if a lord were too close to his nephew or unjustifiably alienated from him, and so on. The *chansons de geste* thus portray a system of relations which should be viewed as a whole rather than in fragmentary fashion, so that one has an idea of the full spectrum of human responses to a variety of social situations.

The exemplary function is quite complex. I do not pretend to have exhausted its possibilities, but only to have sketched out a few of them.

In dealing with the last of the six social aspects of epic discussed here, the economic function, one must distinguish between the recompense accorded to the jongleurs themselves and the ways in which others profited from their craft. Jongleurs often tell us in the course of their songs that they are not singing purely for the sake of art. The poet of *Aliscans* formulates the principle by which all jongleurs probably lived (Weinbeck et al. 1903:4579 l-q):

Bien vos puis dire et por voir afermer:  
 Prodon ne doit jougleor escouter  
 S'il ne li veut por Dieu del sien donner.  
 Car il ne sait autrement laborer;  
 De son service ne se peut il clamer;  
 S'on ne li done, a tant le laisse ester.

[I can tell you and affirm for sure:  
 A worthy man should not listen to a jongleur  
 unless he wants to give him some of his own, for God's sake.  
 For he [i.e., the jongleur] does not know how to work otherwise;  
 he [i.e., the patron] cannot demand his service;  
 if one does not give to him [i.e., the jongleur], then let him  
 leave off right there.]

Jongleurs occasionally appeal for money in asides, as in *Gui de Bourgogne* (Guessard and Michelant 1859:11. 4135-37), where the poet states baldly that anyone who wishes to hear the rest of his

song should loosen his purse-strings: since this passage comes toward the end of the text, just before the capture of the legendary Saracen city of Luiserne, it amounts to a threat to leave the audience hanging. A similar passage is found at the beginning of an episode in *Les Enfances Renier* (Cremonesi 1957:11. 1188-90), whose text has been dated by its editor to the second half of the thirteenth century. The poet of *Doon de Nanteuil* conveniently allows us to look in on the beginning of a performance (Meyer 1884:16-17):

Il est einsint coustume en la vostre contree,  
 Quant un chanterres vient entre gent henoree  
 Et il a endroit soi sa vielle atempree,  
 Ja tant n'avra mantel ne cote desramee  
 Que sa premiere laisse ne soit bien escoutee,  
 Puis font chanter avant, se de rien lor agree,  
 Ou tost, sans villenie, puet recoillir s'estree.

[Thus it is the custom in your land  
 when a singer comes among honored people  
 and has, for his part, tuned his *vielle*,  
 that his first *laisse* be listened to  
 before he gets a cloak or a used jacket;  
 then they have him sing on, if it pleases them,  
 or else, without trouble, he can soon be on his way again.]

Thus the jongleur's performance was "on approval": audiences who did not like the subject as announced in the first *laisse* could send him off with no obligation to pay. Other appeals for money are found in *Jehan de Lannon*, *Baudouin de Sebourc*, and *La Naissance du chevalier au cygne* (Gautier 1892, 2:124n). Many a *chanson de geste* mentions gifts of cloaks, capes, furs, and even of precious cups, horses, and mules, extravagant gifts in the medieval economy. On June 14, 1300, at the marriage of Galeas and Beatrice of Este, a chronicler records that more than seven thousand pieces of clothing were distributed to the jongleurs (*ibid.*, 2:134n).

A striking passage in the delightful mid-thirteenth-century *chanson de geste* entitled *Huon de Bordeaux* records a jongleur in the midst of an oral performance. The poem in the Tours manuscript, basis for the edition (Ruelle 1960), is 10,553 lines long. Almost half-way through, at line 4,976, the jongleur announces

that, as the audience can well see, it is evening and he is quite tired. Wishing to take a drink, he will cease his performance. He asks those before him to return the next day after dinner, each one bringing as contribution a *maille*—that is to say a copper coin worth half a *denier*—but not, he specifies, a *poitevin*, which was worth only a quarter *denier*. Judging from that passage, a day intervenes before the next *laisse* begins, although there is no mark in the Tours manuscript to so indicate. The story continues: “Now I should speak again of Huelin [that is ‘little Huon’] who was in the bed of the giant from across the sea.” After the tale has progressed for seven *laisse*s, a total of 521 lines, the jongleur addresses his listeners again, complaining that although he has presented the song, the audience has hardly given him any money. He threatens to end his performance right then and there unless enough donations are given to his wife. No passage of a *chanson de geste* provides a clearer notion of the jongleur at work among his audience. Incidentally, the text also confirms that *Huon* was composed orally and taken down from performance, since no other hypothesis accounts adequately for the poet’s knowing that at this moment in his tale evening was descending, a drink was available, and the audience would be amenable to narrative blackmail.<sup>8</sup> (For discussion of other poets’ statements as evidence for oral composition or transmission, see Duggan 1980-81b.)

The second economic aspect of the *chansons de geste* is the way in which other elements of society profited from them. Joseph Bédier presented in his book *Les Légendes épiques*, first published between 1908 and 1913, the theory that the *chansons de geste* sprang from a collaboration between jongleurs and clerics who wanted to attract pilgrims to their monasteries, churches, and shrines. While this idea has not, as a theory of *origins*, survived the objections of Bédier’s opponents, it might well be reformulated as a theory of *distribution*. The jongleurs’ songs, often referring to heroic mementos or relics that were housed in monasteries located along the major routes of pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela or Rome, undoubtedly inspired many a prospective traveler to undertake a journey that would satisfy both his curiosity about objects associated with epic heroes and his desire for spiritual benefit. Likewise, inasmuch as epics generated a desire to visit the sites of famous battles, such as the Vaubeton of *Girart de Roussillon*, the Aliscans of the Guillaume cycle, or the Roncevaux of the *Roland*, the *chanson de geste*, and perhaps also the *cantar*

*de gesta*, contributed to the movement of people and thus the circulation of goods and money that is such an important element in any economy.

The Church's condemnation of jongleurs is not explicable solely on the basis of their status as economic hangers-on or wanderers or purveyors of spectacle. The fact that jongleurs also perpetuated the conceptions of history of the illiterate majority, whose collective memory was preserved in orally transmitted tales, made them a threat to that segment of society that privileged the written word. Just as, if one is to lend credence to Eric Havelock's (1963) thesis, Plato reacted against the poets because for him they represented the legacy of the preliterate past, so churchmen of the high Middle Ages saw the jongleurs as rivals to their own—literate—view of history informed by the relationship between God and man. For clerics, the theory of history was defined by the three momentous contacts between time and eternity: the Creation, the Incarnation, and the Second Coming (see Duggan forthcoming b). Man's life was seen primarily as a cycle of fall, redemption, and salvation, and the clerical culture, preserved in writing and based, after all, upon the Great Writing, the Scriptures, rejected any rival view of history along with the competing values that it implied.

In the relationship between oral and written culture, the jongleur's narrative epitomizes the pleasure given by the spoken word. Alain of Lille, on the other hand, betrays in his *Summa de arte praedicatoria* a clerical bias in linking the jongleur with undesirable prolixity: "Verbositas hominem mutat in scurram, transformat in mimum, in jocularorem deiicit, humanae naturae deponit dignitatem" [Wordiness turns man into a jester, transforms him into an actor, casts him to the level of a jongleur, lowers the dignity of human nature] (cited in Casagrande and Vecchio 1979:917). The vow of silence is a common enough feature of Christian asceticism, but how many monks have been known to take vows not to *write*? But the principal reason for the opposition between the two cultures, in my opinion, was that the jongleurs' songs, encapsulating as they did another view of the past, calibrated not with Christian history—despite their Christian veneer, inevitable in such a society—but with the worldly achievements of a few heroic lineages, were viewed with hostility, especially during the period in which the great mass of the population had little direct access to written culture.

From the period before the twelfth century, we have only a few scattered references to epic texts, and only one surviving example, the Oxford version of the *Chanson de Roland*. Even that single exception is preserved only in a twelfth-century manuscript, the only epic codex in the Romance languages to which a twelfth-century dating can be ascribed with assurance, that is to say on paleographic grounds (Short 1973, Samaran 1973). With the transformation in the Church's attitude toward jongleurs that began in the twelfth century, outlined in the first of these lectures, the clerics, custodians of the written culture, very gradually began to act with greater security and less suspicion toward them. The thirteenth century, in which St. Francis' followers assumed the jongleur's image and Thomas Aquinas justified the jongleur's salvation, is also the period during which the majority of the epic manuscripts now extant were copied on parchment (Duggan 1984a, 1985) and during which the first epic poets whom we can definitely identify as "authors" created their works in writing. Only then, when the written culture had become somewhat more firmly established, when literacy had begun to make inroads among the aristocracy, and when clerics had started to lose their sense of rivalry with the oral, in certain circles at least, did complete *chansons de geste* penetrate the scriptorium on a large scale.

Despite the fact that what we have of medieval epic texts is preserved in codices, however, the genre was not primarily the product of the scriptorium. I would like to go back for a moment to a topic that I alluded to at the beginning of my opening lecture, namely the theory of the text. If the jongleur typically performed without a book—and I am sure we have noticed the characteristic lack of the object "book" in medieval depictions of the epic in performance, a lack that is just as typical in iconographic representations—then the modern student of medieval literature has an obligation not just to teach and write about the epic as primarily an oral phenomenon, but also to make awareness of that orality a commonplace in the editing of *chansons de geste* and *cantares de gesta*. Contexts of performance contributed just as heavily to a poem's meaning in the Middle Ages as did the other aspects of its existence that have traditionally dominated philological inquiry. Only through a developed textual pragmatics can we hope to approximate an awareness of the attitudes of poet and audience toward the living work. After it was taken down, of course, the text underwent the normal processes of scribal

transmission in its book forms.

I would like at this point to construct the scenario of a late twelfth-century jongleur's performance. I imagine a character seated on a bench in the public square of a fortified town in Picardy, dressed in a loose-fitting shirt and pants, and on top of them a tunic and a coat. He is rather disreputable-looking, somewhat unkempt and in need of a bath. He is intoning, to a repeating melody sustained on his own *vielle*, a *chanson de geste* concerning knights who have gone as pilgrims to the Holy Land and who have been waylaid by a troop of Saracens. It is the second song he has started that day, the other having attracted no audience. In front of him is an open cloth, in its center a smattering of small coins. A rather animated crowd has gathered around him, some—mostly young—seated and listening intently to his tale, others talking to their neighbors or pausing for a moment before passing on to other concerns, still others in the process of arriving or leaving. A few knights and ladies, clad in expensive clothing and furs, are on the edge of a crowd which is mostly made up of townspeople and of peasants who have brought their produce into town to offer it for sale. Seemingly the most fascinated person in his audience is a young noble, about fourteen years of age, whose attention the jongleur holds by praising the brave exploits of the boy's maternal uncle, a man forty years his senior who died many years before on the return journey from Jerusalem. Suddenly a frowning priest pushes his way into the crowd, grabs the youth by the arm, and leads him out of the gathering, but not before the boy has managed to drop his own tunic onto the jongleur's pile of coins.

Is there a text in this scene? Not in the strict sense of a parchment codex, but beside the jongleur is a tonsured clerk, obviously in minor orders, taking down as fast as he can the tale he is hearing. He has a frustrated look on his face that appears to derive as much from the inadequacy of his writing materials as from the speed with which the jongleur is singing.

The song I imagine is familiar to the adult members of the audience, and most of the children, with the exception of the fourteen-year-old, have heard it. On this particular occasion they listen not because it brings them news that they did not know, or because the characters or the plot are new—although certainly some of the episodes, despite their familiar ring, were lacking in previous performances that they had heard—but because it

distracts them from their troubles and assures them once again that they are who they are, descendants of men and woman who knew some of the nobles the jongleur is mentioning.

The six major functions of medieval epic as it existed in the Romance cultures are illustrated in this scenario. The distinctions among them are not always clear, and there were no doubt few such scenes in which all of them came into play. Three were paramount during the period from which our texts descend: the economic function, without which the jongleurs would have little motivation; the entertainment function, without which their enormous popularity could never have been established; and the exemplary function, the primary mechanism of enculturation. Above all, as I have just adumbrated, the epic encapsulated the popular view of what it meant in diachronic terms to belong to a social group. In Ezra Pound's phrase, it was the "tale of the tribe," or, in the period that concerns us, the tale of the kinship group, the region, the language group, as it viewed its own past. As that kind of tale, it took on the qualities of a secular ritual, a reinforcement of group identity, and that was no doubt its most important role in medieval society. In my view the functions filled by medieval epic in modern society are just as fascinating and even more complex, but that would be the subject of another lecture.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>In a forthcoming book on economy and society in the *Cantar de mio Cid*.

<sup>2</sup>The surprising thing is that these are lines 3036ff. of the edition of Weinbeck et al., and *not* the beginning of the text. Gérard thus begins his performance in the middle of the poem.

<sup>3</sup>Both poems are rather chronicle-like in tone, but share the formal characteristics of the *chanson de geste*.

<sup>4</sup>In addition to *Girart de Vienne*, *Doon de Maience*, ll 125-29, and *La Mort Aymeri de Narbonne*, 1-71, 3053-93.

<sup>5</sup>Bertran's division does not, of course, take in the whole of medieval French epic, since it does not account for the Crusade Cycles or for a number of individual poems.

<sup>6</sup>I have consulted the Scott (1931) translation, *Las Siete Partidas*, 428-29,

but have preferred a more literal rendering that brings out nuances pertinent to the present topic.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. 1. 2332: Et Engleterre que il [i.e., Charlemagne] teneit sa cambre [And England, which he held as his bedchamber].

<sup>8</sup>Of the three manuscripts, two (Tours and Turin, closely related in other respects as well) contain the passages in question. See Ruelle 1960:9-15.

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## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Lee Edgar Tyler, Juris Dilevko, and John Miles Foley  
with the assistance of Patrick Gonder

This 166-item list represents the first annual installment in *Oral Tradition's* continuing annotated bibliography of relevant research and scholarship. As such, it attempts to accomplish two complementary goals. First, it continues Foley's 1985 bibliography, *Oral-Formulaic Theory and Research* (Garland), which concentrated on the Parry-Lord theory of oral composition through 1982. Like that volume, the present bibliography is concerned in one dimension primarily with this particular approach to oral tradition. Also like the earlier volume, its coverage will run three years in arrears of the date of publication; thus in the present edition, we have tried to include studies through 1983 (as well as earlier studies not reported in Foley 1985).

Second, however, we have begun to expand the coverage of this listing away from nearly exclusive concentration on the Parry-Lord Oral Theory toward other approaches, and we hope to continue this trend as the journal and the bibliography evolve. While at the present time the greater part of the entries depend in some way on the field of oral theory, we envision the mix of scholarship becoming more and more heterogeneous as time goes on. Nevertheless, we shall continue to attempt to provide a complete listing of Parry-Lord scholarship throughout.

For both of these worthy purposes, we seek the aid of every reader and user of this bibliography. Given the tremendously complex and interdisciplinary nature of research on oral traditions, we are fully aware that the efforts of even a loyal contingent of bibliographers must prove Pyrrhic unless they are backed up by specialists who know the individual fields.

Thus we ask that *all authors contribute to the bibliography on a regular basis by sending two copies of all publications to the editor*. Only in this way, with the active and continuing participation of the very scholars for whom this project was inaugurated, can we assemble a worthy resource. Your books and articles will be annotated for the bibliography; in addition, books and monographs will be listed in the "Books Received" category of the first issue each year, and will also be eligible for review.

All of us involved in compiling this bibliography welcome your suggestions, additions, and most of all your publications. It is our hope that the project will expand and evolve in accordance with current directions in research and scholarship and in response to your bibliographical needs.

### Area Abbreviations

AB	Albanian	AI	American Indian
AF	African	AL	American Literature
AG	Ancient Greek	AN	Afghan
AND	Andaman Islands	KR	Kirghiz

ANR	Anglo-Norman	KZ	Kazakh
AR	Arabic	LA	Latvian
ARM	Armenian	LG	Languedoc
AU	Australian	LT	Latin
BA	Barbar	ME	Middle English
BB	Bibliography	MG	Modern Greek
BG	Byzantine Greek	MHG	Middle High German
BH	Bahamian	MI	Modern Irish
BI	Bible	MK	Molokan
BL	Blues (see also MU: Music)	ML	Melanesian
BQ	Basque	MN	Mongol
BR	British	MU	Music
BU	Bulgarian	MY	Mayan
BY	Babylonian	NR	Narte
CC	Concordance	NW	Norwegian
CD	Canadian	OE	Old English
CH	Chinese	OF	Old French
CN	Contemporary Poetry & Fiction	OHG	Old High German
CP	Comparative	OI	Old Irish
CZ	Czech	ON	Old Norse (Old Icelandic)
DN	Danish	OS	Ostyak
EG	Egyptian	OSX	Old Saxon
EK	Eskimo	PO	Polish
ES	Estonian	PR	Persian
ET	Ethiopian	RM	Romanian
FA	Faroese	RU	Russian
FB	Folk Ballad	SAI	South American Indian
FK	Folklore	SC	Serbo-Croatian
FM	Film	SCN	Scandinavian
FN	Finnish	SK	Sanskrit
FP	Folk-preaching	ST	Scots
FR	French (later than OF)	SU	Sumerian
FU	Fulani	SW	Swedish
GM	Germanic	TB	Tibetan
HA	Haitian	TD	Toda
HB	Hebrew	TH	Theory
HI	Hispanic	TI	Thai
HN	Hindi	TK	Turkish (& the Turkic languages)
HT	Hittite	TU	Tunisian
HW	Hawaiian	UG	Ugaritic
HY	Hungarian	UK	Ukrainian
IE	Indo-European	US	United States
IN	(Asian) Indian	UZ	Uzbek
IR	Iranian	VG	Vogul
IS	Islamic	WI	(British) West Indies
IT	Italian	WL	Welsh
JP	Japanese	YI	Yiddish
JV	Javanese		

## 1. Adkins 1983 (AG)

Arthur W. H. Adkins. "Orality and Philosophy." In Robb 1983a:207-27.

Disputes Havelock's (1983) claims that in a non-literate society only metrical or rhythmic action sequences can be memorized and that an oral culture cannot think systematically or make statements with abstract subjects. Citing the equivalency of such passages as *Phaedo* 100e7-101b2 and *Iliad* 3.168-94, attempts to show that members of an oral culture were capable of raising philosophical questions. Concludes that there is not a necessary link between literacy and abstract thought, since non-literates could be concerned with abstract language, as in *Odyssey* 9.406ff.

## 2. Anders 1974 (FB, BR)

Wolfhart Anders. *Balladensänger und mündliche Komposition. Untersuchungen zur englischen Traditionsballade*. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.

An examination of the methods of oral composition in the English folk ballad tradition, placing particular emphasis upon the roles of memorization, musical accompaniment, and extemporaneous performance in its development.

## 3. Andersen et al. 1982 (FB, CP)

Flemming G. Andersen, Otto Holzappel, and Thomas Pettit, eds. *The Ballad as Narrative: Studies in the Ballad Traditions of England, Scotland, Germany, and Denmark*. Odense: Odense University Press.

A two-part series of ten essays on the ballad traditions of England, Scotland, Germany, and Denmark. Part One is a chronological sample of narrative techniques in English and Scottish ballads; Part Two a stylistic sample of Danish and German ballads. Each part is prefaced by an introduction that places the subsequent findings within the perspective of contemporary ballad research. Emphasis is placed upon the study of narrative technique, especially with respect to oral-formulaic phraseology and structure, but considerable attention is paid to the sociocultural role of the ballad as well. The text of each ballad, with English translations when appropriate, is provided at the beginning of each essay. An annotated bibliography is also appended.

## 4. Andersson 1962 (OF, ON, CP)

Theodore M. Andersson. "The Doctrine of Oral Tradition in the Chanson de Geste and Saga." *Scandinavian Studies*, 34:219-36.

Pointing out the origin of oral theory in classical studies (Hédelin 1715, Wolf 1795, etc.) and its common application in an early form by 1830 to medieval European literatures, he sketches the history of the study of Old French and Old Norse literature as oral tradition from Fauriel's initial steps and Herder's doctrine of *Naturpoesie* through Bédier, Lachmann, and Nordal. Feels that the concept of oral tradition should not be blindly accepted but scrutinized more



closely, especially by scholars working with the sagas.

5. Armistead and Silverman 1979 (HI)

Samuel G. Armistead and Joseph H. Silverman. "Sobre los romances y canciones judeoespañoles recogidos por Cynthia M. Crews." *Estudios Sefardíes*, 2:21-38.

Surveys a total of 37 Sephardic songs and romances collected by Crews and provides annotations, commentary, and complete bibliographical information as well as thematic, title, and first-line indexes.

6. Armistead and Silverman 1980 (HI)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Sobre las *Coplas sefardíes de Alberto Hemi*." *Sefarad*, 40:423-47.

Surveys a total of 60 Sephardic *coplas* identified by Alberto Hemi from the years 1932-38 and 1969-73, providing annotations, commentary, and complete bibliographical information, as well as thematic and title/first-line indexes.

7. Armistead and Silverman 1981 (HI)

\_\_\_\_\_. "El Antiguo Romancero Sefardí: Citas de romances en himnarios Hebreos (Siglos xvi-xix)." *Nueva revista de filología hispánica*, 30:453-512.

Surveys 76 old Sephardic romances, providing annotations and commentary, and concluding "...en cuanto *a*) nos proporcionan citas de romances hoy desconocidos, *b*) nos suplementan en varios casos los testimonios quinientistas impresos y *c*) nos caracterizan una tradición oriental más conservadora y temáticamente más rica que la de hoy, los *incipits* aquí estudiados nos permiten vislumbrar una etapa temprana y sensiblemente divergente de las tradiciones actuales y se nos ofrecen como un complemento precioso e indispensable de lo que hasta ahora se ha recogido de la tradición oral moderna" (497).

8. Armistead and Silverman 1983 (HI)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Adivinanzas Judeo-Españolas de Turquía: Los 'Enigmas' del Rabino Ménaḥem 'Azôz." In *Philologica Hispaniensa: In Honorem Manuel Alvar*. Madrid: Editorial Gredos. pp. 81-92.

Reviews nine Sephardic enigmas published as "Hîdôth (Enigmas—Enigmas)" in the Israeli review *Hêd ha-Mizrâh*, (3, xxxvi[1945]:7 and 3, xl/xli[1945]:12) by Rabbi Menachem 'Azôz with excerpts from the original introduction and commentary of Rabbi 'Azôz. Provides further annotations and commentary for each enigma.

## 9. Arthur et al. 1982 (AI)

Claudeen Arthur et al. *Between Sacred Mountains: Navajo Stories and Lessons from the Land*. Chinle, AZ: Rock Point Community School. Rpt. as Sun Tracks, 11. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1984.

A compilation of history and stories about the Navajo land and culture in Arizona; much of the material was transcribed from oral sources.

## 10. Austin 1983 (AG)

Norman Austin. "Odysseus and the Cyclops: Who is Who." In Rubino and Shelmerdine 1983:3-37.

A psychoanalytical reading of the Cyclops episode which rejects the view that the structural anomalies in the passage are to be attributed to the multiple authorship of an oral poem.

## 11. Auty 1980 (SC)

Robert Auty. "Serbo-Croat." In Hatto 1980a:196-210.

A general overview of Serbo-Croatian oral epic tradition, with attention to history, philology, genre, heroism, oral performance, language, and narrative structure. Relatively little on the Moslem SC epic; concentrates largely on the Christian tradition of shorter songs.

## 12. Bailey 1980 (NR)

H. W. Bailey. "Ossetic (Nartä)." In Hatto 1980a:236-67.

A five-part introduction to the Nartä tales of the Caucasus which discusses the retention in the Modern Ossetic tales of certain archaic linguistic features. Part I provides background information on the tales and the genealogies of the five families upon which the tales are centered. Part II discusses the transmission of the tales (oral and written) and the mode of performance. Part III relates the tales to the social and religious aspects of Ossetic culture. Part IV is a discussion and explanation of the mythical world of the Nartä Part V treats the aesthetic aspects of Nartä performance, including folklore elements, formulism, and the preservation of archaic elements of diction.

## 13. Barnes 1983 (AG)

Jonathan Barnes. "Aphorism and Argument." In Robb 1983a:91-109.

Chiefly an examination of the imitations of Heraclitus, the ancient judgments on Heraclitus the writer, and the fragments themselves in order to determine whether the prose style of Heraclitus is argumentative or aphoristic/oral because of the infrequent use of connectives. Concludes that, despite his use

of asyndeton, his proclivity for connecting and inferential particles supports a placement of Heraclitus squarely within the “newly established canon of philosophical science” (105).

14. Bawden 1980 (MN)

C. R. Bawden. “Mongol: The Contemporary Tradition.” In Hatto 1980a:268-99.

An introduction to the contemporary epic traditions of the Oirat, Buriat, and Kalmuck peoples of Mongolia, providing fairly extensive information on the languages and cultures of these peoples and numerous examples from their respective epics. Discusses in detail the use of parallelism, hyperbole, and formulism in performance and composition, and delineates particular variations in delivery.

15. Belmont 1983 (FK, FR, LT, SK, CP)

Nicole Belmont. “Myth and Folklore in Connections with AT 403 and 713.” *Journal of Folklore Research*, 20:185-96.

Studies occurrences of the narrative theme of the substituted bride and its analogs in versions of the French folktales AT 403 (*The Black and the White Bride*) and AT 713 (*The Mother who did not Bear me but Nourished me*), comparing them to the Vedic hymns of Usas and the Roman *Matralia* rituals. She finds that all establish a link “between three orders of things: the regular alternation between night and day and between the seasons, vegetal and animal fertility, and the proper rearing of children” (194). Examines the analogical relationship of false brides to false mothers as cultural symbols.

16. Ben-Amos 1983 (FK, CP)

Dan Ben-Amos. “Afterword.” *Journal of Folklore Research*, 20:243-46.

Reviews the contributions to this volume by Dégh, Belmont, Calame-Griaule and Görög-Karady, Calame-Griaule et al., Duvernay-Bolens, Labrie, and Tenèze and explicates their interpretive and research methodologies.

17. Berger 1980 (AF)

Iris Berger. “Deities, Dynasties, and Oral Tradition.” In Miller 1980a:61-81.

Explores the role of the orally transmitted legend of Abacwezi in determining historical fact.

18. Bergren 1983 (AG)

Ann L. T. Bergren. “Odyssean Temporality: Many (Re)Turns.” In Rubino

and Shelmerdine 1983:38-73.

An analysis of Odysseus' poetic craft in Books 9-12 from the point of view of the theories of Gérard Genette. Identifying Odysseus' polytropy as analeptic and proleptic, she suggests that such temporal reversal ought to be connected with epic circumstructure. Contends that, in individual episodes such as those involving Polyphemus, Teiresias, and the Cattle of the Sun, narrative anachrony as defined by Genette proves "the tropic character of [Odysseus'] challengers and his corresponding capacity to turn, return, change, and exchange" (42).

19. Block 1982 (AG, LT, CP)

Elizabeth Block. "The Narrator Speaks: Apostrophe in Homer and Vergil." *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 112:7-22.

Examines passages in Homer and Vergil that amount to the narrator's direct intrusion into the action in order to provide commentary. Contends that "a comparison of these narrative intrusions...shows how their nature and effect, linked to the requirements of oral performance (and its narrator and audience), changed when they were adapted from a predominantly oral to a predominantly written literature" (8).

20. Brillante et al. 1977 (AG)

C. Brillante, M. Cantilena, C. O. Pavese, eds. *I poemi epici rapsodici non omerici e la tradizione orale*. Padua: Antenore.

A collection of essays on non-Homeric ancient Greek poetry. Separately annotated are Burkert, Gentili, Hainsworth, Herter, Pavese, and Rossi.

21. Brown 1983 (OF)

Cynthia J. Brown. "The Rise of Literary Consciousness in Late Medieval France: Jean Lemaire de Belges and the Rhétoriqueur Tradition." *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 13:51-74.

Traces the "gradual appearance of artistic self-consciousness" (52) within the Rhétoriqueur tradition through an examination of works by Jean Molinet, André de la Vigne, and Jean Lemaire de Belges. Sees evidence for a direct line of development from narrator intrusion in prologues or epilogues to the *Roman de la Rose* to the Guillaume de Lorris narrator. Speculates that the presence of the self-conscious poet—through a concerned *acteur* figure—is related both to political exigencies and to the development of print technology insofar as the craft of the poet changed when communication could be used for dispensing propaganda to a mass audience.

22. Buchan 1978 (FB, BR)

David Buchan. "Ballad Formulas and Oral Tradition." In *Sunlen: Årsbok för vis- och folkmusikforskning* [for 1978]:122-25.

Offers a general paradigm, based on a study of Scottish ballads, for the study of texts with formulaic language: an examination of the differences inherent in composition during periods when general non-literacy can be documented and a subsequent comparison of such texts with those composed in periods of transitional and then full literacy. Maintains that the notion of the conceptual formula, in addition to that of the verbal formula, provides an important base for consideration of narrative ideas.

23. Buchan 1983 (FB, BR)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Ballad Tradition and Hugh Spencer." In Porter 1983:173-91.

A consideration of the four versions of Hugh Spencer's *Feats in France* from the perspective of structure, function, and context in order to ascertain the presence of elements of traditional re-creation as well as of conservatism in Scottish balladry.

24. Burkert 1977 (AG, CP)

Walter Burkert. "Seven Against Thebes: An Oral Tradition between Babylonian Magic and Greek Literature." In Brillante et al. 1977:29-51.

Attempts to reconstruct the oral saga behind the fragmentary *Thebais*. Finds the less than seventeen extant hexameters formulaic to a high degree, with all of them paralleled in the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Sees the *Thebais* as "another new *oimê*, prompted by the plot of an Assyrian ritual, perhaps destined to celebrate the newly arising city in Boeotia" (45), and very much a part of the ancient Greek narrative tradition. Sensibly argues against absolute dating and assignment of authorship, noting "no Michelangelo without the Renaissance; no Homer without Greek oral poetry" (46).

25. Calame-Griaule and Görög-Karady 1983 (FK)

Geneviève Calame-Griaule and Veronika Görög-Karady. "Introductory Note." *Journal of Folklore Research*, 20:151-52.

Reviews the major trends emerging in oral literature studies and attributes their diversity to "the complex and polyvalent nature of oral narratives" (152).

26. Calame-Griaule et al. 1983 (FK)

\_\_\_\_\_, Veronika Görög-Karady, Suzanne Plaitel, Diana Rey-Hulman, and Christiane Seydou. "The Variability of Meaning and the Meaning of Variability." *Journal of Folklore Research*, 20:153-57.

Discusses the study of folktales as a way of understanding the “Weltanschauung” of a society. Emphasizes the importance of variability both as meaning and, through the use of comparative analysis, as an avenue of study to understand that meaning. Presents a methodology based on “the systematic study of variability through comparative analysis, complemented by recourse to the ethnographic data” (155).

27. Calder 1979 (OE)

Daniel G. Calder. “The Study of Style in Old English Poetry: A Historical Introduction.” In his ed., *Old English Poetry: Essays on Style*. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 1-65.

Provides an overview and concise history of the study of Anglo-Saxon poetic style beginning with the 1655 Junius edition, describing and critiquing in turn the major studies from Hickes (1705) through contemporary scholars, with some emphasis on the contribution of stylistic studies to oral-formulaic theory and the “debate over originality of style and diction within the framework of a conventional and formulaic poetic system” (49).

28. Campanile 1977 (HI, PR, AG, LT, OE, ON, OI, CP)

Enrico Campanile. *Ricerche di culture poetica indoeuropea*. Pisa: Giardini.

Considers the formal features of (reconstructed) Indo-European poetry, as well as its cultural and ideological backgrounds, by collating information from surviving ancient poetries. The witnesses summoned include the Vedas, Sanskrit, Avestan, Persian, ancient Greek, Latin, Germanic, Old English, Old Norse, and Old Irish.

29. Cantarella 1970 (AG, CP)

Raffaele Cantarella. “Omero, tra formula e poesia.” In *Atti del convegno internazionale sul tema: La Poesia epica e la sua formazione*. Ed. Enrico Cerulli et al. Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. pp. 63-77.

Aware of the research of Parry and Lord, he discusses the phenomena of oral poetry, Mycenaean Linear B, formulaic structure, the poet’s originality, the Serbo-Croatian analog, and Homeric epithets. Concentrates on the diachronic perspective, Homeric language, and the relationship between formulaic density and orality.

30. Carton 1981 (OF)

Jean-Paul Carton. “Oral Traditional Style in the Chanson de Roland: ‘Elaborate Style’ and Mode of Composition.” *Olifant*, 9:3-19.

Reviews the controversy surrounding Duggan’s (1973) extension of the

Parry-Lord theory to the *Song of Roland* and applies Miletich's (1973, 1974) methodology in an analysis of "elaborate style," or "a delay in the flow of the narrative line through the use of certain kinds of repetitions" (5) in the *Roland*. Concludes that the "narrative style of the *Roland* differs considerably from that of oral-traditional or folk poetry and indicates that the poem is most likely not an orally composed text but a literary text which contains both written (or learned) as well as oral or folk stylistic elements" (5-6).

31. Clunies Ross 1983 (AU)

Margaret Clunies Ross. "Modes of Formal Performance in Societies without Writing: The Case of Aboriginal Australia." *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 1:16-26.

Describes the oral traditions of the Australian Aborigines, describing the "formal performance" as possessing three characteristics: "firstly, that those who practice them consciously consider them to constitute an entity separable from other behavior sets; secondly, that the entity possesses consistent structural features over and above those of the communication medium itself; and thirdly, that it is performed in specific contexts that the practitioners recognise as conventional and appropriate" (18). Enumerates the characteristics of non-literate modes of formal performance.

32. Cohen 1980 (AF)

David William Cohen. "Reconstructing a Conflict in Bonafu: Seeking Evidence Outside the Narrative Tradition." In Miller 1980a:201-20.

Relates the tale of the conflict between Womanfu and Nofa, arguing that the story, as well as the depiction of the context of which it formed a part, reveals the character of the political situation in the pre-colonial Lake Plateau region.

33. Colahan and Rodriguez 1983 (HI, CP)

Clark Colahan and Alfred Rodriguez. "Traditional Semitic Forms of Reversability in Sem Tob's *Proverbios Morales*." *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 13:33-50.

Cites evidence that the Castilian *Proverbios Morales* ultimately employ Semitic literary forms which "derive from an antithetical rhetorical tradition in medieval Semitic literature" (33). Proposes that such a stylistic feature suggests an intellectual relativism in the author's world view.

34. Constantinides 1983 (AG, MG)

Elizabeth Constantinides. "Andreiomeni: The Female Warrior in Greek Folk Songs." *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 1:63-72.

A structuralist analysis of conventions employed in the description of female warriors in Greek folk songs.

35. Craigie 1977 (HB, UG, CP)

P. C. Craigie. "The Problem of Parallel Word Pairs in Ugaritic and Hebrew Poetry." *Semitics*, 5:48-58.

Argues for caution in considering M. J. Dahood's proposal (*Ras Shamra Parallels*, vol. 1) that the cognate parallel word-pairs in Ugaritic and Biblical poetry constitute evidence of a "Canaanite thesaurus" from which the Ugaritic and Hebrew poets both drew.

36. Cross 1958-59 (OE)

J. E. Cross. "On *The Wanderer* Lines 80-84: A Study of a Figure and a Theme." *Vetenskaps-Societetens i Lund Årsbok* [for 1958-59]:75-110.

Argues for a Latin Christian source for the *sum*-figure in *The Wanderer* and other Old English poems, contra Magoun's (1955b) explanation using the "Beasts of Battle" theme.

37. Culley 1970 (HB)

Robert C. Culley. "Metrical Analysis of Classical Hebrew Poetry." In Ed. J. W. Wevers and D. B. Redford. *Toronto Semitic Texts and Studies*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. pp. 12-28.

Reviews various opinions on the metrical structure of Biblical Hebrew poetry and suggests a descriptive approach through syllable-count. Mentions during the discussion of methodology the additional problems posed by orally composed poetry: "we do not know which texts were composed and transmitted orally or how such texts came to be written down" (13). Notes the features of dialect and parallelism typical of oral traditional material.

38. Curschmann 1983 (ON)

Michael Curschmann. "The Prologue of *Thithreks Saga*: Thirteenth Century Reflections on Oral Traditional Literature." *Scandinavian Studies*, 56, ii:140-51.

Discusses *Thithreks Saga* as one of "two occasions in the history of medieval Germanic heroic literature when the transition into a new medium of communication, coupled with an act of deliberate compilation, has given rise to a certain amount of retrospective reflection and stock taking" (140). Maintains that "this literary saga model builds on its own concept of orality and its role in human affairs" and that "writing as well as memorization, in addition to oral composition *ad hoc*, are integral parts of this concept" (146). Goes on to conclude that the distinction between oral and written is never



absolute, and that “one is really not so surprised to read, towards the end, that such a text can apparently lead back again quite naturally—through memory—to purely oral informal prose” (148).

39. Cushing 1980 (VG, OS, CP)

G. F. Cushing. “Ob Ugrian (Vogul and Ostyak).” In Hatto 1980a:211-35.

A general introduction to the languages, culture and religions, and oral traditions of the Vogul and Ostyak peoples of northwest Siberia and to the research performed to date on their epics. Relates several tales of hero-gods, providing examples of the epic’s formal introduction, heroic characteristics, themes associated with war and with peace, and the religious and mythical significance of the Ob Ugrian heroic epic.

40. Damon 1961 (AG)

Philip Damon. *Modes of Analogy in Ancient and Medieval Verse*. University of California Publications in Classical Philology, 15:261-334.

In Chapter 1 (“Homer’s Similes and the Uses of Irrelevance,” 261-72), he explores the “irrelevant” structure and content of the Homeric epiphoneme and, viewing it as a traditional usage, relates it to the frequently contradictory deployment of formulaic elements. In Chapter 2 (“Sappho’s Similes and the Uses of Homer,” 272-80), he describes how Sappho fuses a traditional simile to a metaphorical pattern of her own design and thus embodies a Homeric conceit in a conscious figure.

41. Dégh 1983 (FK)

Linda Dégh. “Foreword: A Quest for Learning.” *Journal of Folklore Research*, 20:145-50.

Provides an introduction to the contents of this issue with a review of the fieldwork and publications of the Oral Literature Research Group.

42. Dessau 1961 (OF, HI, SC, CP)

Adalbert Dessau. “Relations épiques internationales: Les Changes de thèmes entre légendes héroïques françaises et espagnoles.” In *Atti del 2° Congresso Internazionale della “Société Rencesvals.”* [= *Cultura Neolatina*, 21]. pp. 83-90.

Without taking a firm stance on the oral or written composition of the *Roland* and the *Cid*, he treats the traditional character of the narrative elements, comparing the accounts of Serbo-Croatian oral epic given by Gesemann (1926) and Murko (1931).

## 43. Doan 1983 (OI)

James E. Doan. "A Structural Approach to Celtic Saints' Lives." In Ford 1983a:16-28.

A structural interpretation of a group of four Welsh and Breton Saints' *vitae* from the seventh to eleventh centuries, highlighting particular elements suggesting oral origins in the tales.

## 44. Duggan 1982 (OF)

Joseph J. Duggan. "The Manuscript Corpus of the Medieval Romance Epic." In *The Medieval Alexander Legend and Romance Epic: Essays in Honour of David J. Ross*. Ed. Peter Noble et al. Millwood, NY: Kraus International Publications.

An overview of the extant corpus of 312 texts and fragments of the medieval Romance epic combining discussion of the nature of the texts, problems in definition, and critical approaches with a description of the chronological distribution of the manuscripts and their contents. Contains a list of 30 Romance epic manuscripts.

## 45. Dunn 1980 (JP)

C. J. Dunn. "Ainu." In Hatto 1980a:328-44.

An overview of the heroic and epic traditions of the Ainu peoples of northern Japan, offering a description of religion, cults, and gods as well as a discussion of Ainu literature (which is completely oral) and its various genres. Discusses possible origins of the Ainu epic tradition and describes modes of its performance.

## 46. Duvernay-Bolens 1983 (SAI)

Jacqueline Duvernay-Bolens. "All but One: The Sense of Moderation in Toba and Mataka Myths." *Journal of Folklore Research*, 20:171-84.

A study of the recurring formulaic expressions equivalent to the Modern English phrase "all but one" in oral narratives of the Toba and Mataka tribes of the Pilcomayo River basin of Paraguay. Notes the widely divergent range of uses of the formulas and identifies two particular applications: situations in which "all but one" member of a group are successively selected and those in which only one is selected and all others dismissed. Cites seven examples from Toba and Mataka narrative myth.

## 47. Evers 1980 (AI)

Larry Evers, ed. *The South Corner of Time: Hopi Navajo Papago Yaqui Tribal Literature*. Sun Tracks. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Each of the four sections is devoted to a different tribal literature and contains a core of oral narratives, including songs, tales, and autobiographical and historical accounts. The editor notes the importance of keeping the intended audience in mind, since that audience brings to the performance innumerable associations gained from prior experience.

48. Farrell 1983 (TH)

Thomas J. Farrell. "IQ and Standard English." *College Composition and Communication*, 34:470-84.

Presents an environmental hypothesis to account for the problem of black children scoring lower than white children on standardized IQ tests, taking exception to Arthur R. Jensen's hypothesis that such differences could be accounted for by a hereditary or genetic explanation. Suggests that the essentially oral culture of American blacks can account for much of the disparity in IQ scores, and concludes that "IQ test scores reveal that black ghetto children have not developed the power of abstract thinking and they do not speak and write standard English" (481) and that "IQ differences have nothing to do with genetics or race per se, but can be accounted for entirely in terms of environmental or cultural differences" (481).

49. Foley 1981 (SC, OE, AG, CP)

John Miles Foley. "Editing Oral Texts: Theory and Practice." *TEXT (Yearbook of the Society for Textual Studies)*, 1:75-94.

Proposes solving the problem of variant and equally authoritative texts of an oral work by employing a computerized text-processor that "reads" all variants simultaneously, giving priority to no single text. The program locates formulaic and thematic correspondences and sets them alongside each other, thus re-creating the multiformity characteristic of an oral traditional work. Includes examples of the operation of the program upon South Slavic oral texts from the Milman Parry Collection.

50. Foley 1982 (SC, AG, OE, CP)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Computerized Editions of Oral Poetry: The Evolution of the Text-Processor HEURO-1." In *Actes du Congrès d'informatique et sciences humaines*. Ed. L. DeLatte. Liège: Université de Liège. pp. 377-85.

A shorter account of the project more fully described in Foley 1981. The present report also suggests extensions to Old English and ancient Greek epic.

51. Foley 1983 (OE, SC, CP)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Literary Art and Oral Tradition in Old English and Serbo-Croatian Poetry." *Anglo-Saxon England*, 12:183-214.

Begins by considering the differences between the Moslem epic tradition of the South Slavs, on which the Parry-Lord oral theory is based, and the Christian tradition of much shorter epic songs, stressing the fact that the Christian songs provide an opportunity for a poet to manipulate inherited traditional patterns of language and narrative. The Christian songs thus exhibit both oral provenance and "literary" aesthetics, a combination that does not exist in the Moslem material and which therefore was thought to be impossible in other oral traditions. The Christian poems are then compared to shorter Old English poems, such as the elegies, which also combine literary art and the elements of oral tradition.

52. Fontenrose 1983 (AG, MG, FK, CP)

Joseph Fontenrose. "The Oracular Response as a Traditional Narrative Theme." *Journal of Folklore Research*, 20:113-20.

Argues that storytellers, after the foundation of oracular shrines, began to attribute popular legends and prophecies to the oracular divinities because the oracles were "of the same kind as those found in folktales and legends" (119). Citing several examples of such stylistic oracularization of legend and prophecy in Modern Greek folktales, he contends that they are thus direct descendants from ancient Greek folklore.

53. Ford 1983a (OI, WL)

Patrick K. Ford, ed. *Celtic Folklore and Christianity: Studies in Memory of William H. Heist*. Santa Barbara: McNally and Loftin.

A collection of essays on various aspects of the influence of Christianity on early Celtic literature. Separately annotated are Doan, Ford 1983b, J. Nagy, and Slotkin.

54. Ford 1983b (OI)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Aspects of the Patrician Legend." In Ford 1983a:29-49.

A diachronic examination of fire and snake symbols in Patrician legend from their origin through collected tales of the Oral tradition in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

55. Fowler 1984 (AG)

Barbara Hughes Fowler. "The Archaic Aesthetic." *American Journal of Philology*, 105:119-49.

A composite overview of aesthetic principles surrounding common themes in archaic Greek lyrics.

## 56. Friedman 1983 (FB)

Albert Friedman. "The Oral-Formulaic Theory of Balladry: A Re-Rebuttal." In Porter 1983:215-40.

Rejects the notion that oral-formulaic theories apply to the Child corpus of English and Scottish popular ballads: "to fit the ballad into the spectrum of European narrative poetry requires a wrenching of criteria" (229). Disputes, because of considerations regarding the accompanying music, that the ballad commonplace is a device of oral composition and endorses a theory of "memorial transmission" (231) which does not preclude the adaptation and variation of text.

## 57. Gentili 1977 (AG)

Bruno Gentili. "Preistoria e formazione dell'esametro (I cosiddetti dattilo-epitriti nella poesia orale preomerica, nelle iscrizioni archaiche e nella lirici citarodica e corale da Stesocoro a Pindaro)." In Brillante et al. 1977:75-86.

Includes relevant discussion of those sections of metrical arguments by Parry, G. Nagy, and Peabody that touch on formulaic structure.

## 58. Gossen 1974 (MY)

Gossen, Gary H. *Chamulas in the World of the Sun: Time and Space in a Maya Oral Tradition*. Rpt. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland, 1984.

Aims to present the oral tradition of a contemporary Mayan community as a complete information system. All genres as defined by the Chamulas are considered both as works in themselves and in relation to the cultural background. Offers an alternative analytical language that takes into account the general sociological nature of the data on oral aesthetic forms as well as concrete data on a specific oral tradition. Contains sample narratives, games, prayers, and songs.

## 59. Hague 1983 (AG, EG, BI, CP)

Rebecca H. Hague. "Ancient Greek Wedding Songs: The Tradition of Praise." *Journal of Folklore Research*, 20:131-43.

Working from the premise that wedding songs are a genre with characteristic themes and language, contends that Greek wedding songs as found in Homer, Xenophon, Lucian, and Aristophanes follow a definable pattern of praise of the bridegroom in terms of a comparison with things of nature, especially plants. Suggests, following Dornseiff (1936), that a similar pattern of motif and imagery in Egyptian and Biblical songs argues for "a very old tradition of wedding songs common to many peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean" (139).

## 60. Hainsworth 1977 (AG)

J. Bryan Hainsworth. "Criteri di oralità nella poesia arcaica non omerica." In Brillante et al. 1977:3-28.

A review of scholarly opinions on the orality of non-Homeric AG poetry, with special emphasis on the criteria for definition and including formulaic analyses of sample passages from the *Iliad* and from Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*.

## 61. Hainsworth 1980 (AG, CP)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Ancient Greek." In Hatto 1980a:20-47.

Covers the historical setting of the Homeric epic, along with the literary situation, content, ethos, heroism, historicity, manner of composition and performance, style, social function, audience, and other topics. Fine general introduction for the comparatist.

## 62. Hansen 1983 (AG)

William Hansen. "Greek Mythology and the Study of the Ancient Greek Oral Story." *Journal of Folklore Research*, 20:101-12.

Argues for a more comprehensive view of the ancient Greek oral story, one which includes comic tales, fables, and the like from sources as disparate as Herodotus, Pausanias, and Plutarch in order to remedy the lack of a "systematic treatment of the folktale or of the traditional story" (103). Sees this approach as alleviating the problem that material which does not qualify as mythology *per se* is very often not included in handbooks of the Greek folktale.

## 63. Harms 1980 (AF)

Robert W. Harms. "Bobangi Oral traditions: Indicators of Changing Perceptions." In Miller 1980a:178-200.

Focuses on the Bobangi society and its traditions for an example of the analysis of change in oral tales. Claims that changes point to underlying shifts in the cultural, social, and political realities that the traditions reflect. Concludes that the same characteristics of oral tradition which complicate the reconstruction of historical narratives can prove useful in providing evidence of an underlying process of change.

## 64. Harsh 1937 (AG)

Philip W. Harsh. "Repetition of Lines in Euripides." *Hermes*, 72:435-49.

Argues that lines repeated in the Euripidean corpus are valid and should not be rejected indiscriminately as interpolations. Points to various artistic purposes such as characterization, emphasis, and comedy for which Euripides may have employed repetition and suggests that some repetitions may be considered to be formulas.

65. Harvey 1980 (HI)

L. P. Harvey. "Medieval Spanish." In Hatto 1980a:134-64.

In the section of this introductory essay devoted to the place of epic in the contemporary literary tradition, he argues that the *Poema de Mio Cid* "belongs to an oral genre...and appears to be an exceptional case of an oral epic set down in writing" (146). His analysis of the Castilian tradition proceeds from this judgment.

66. Hatto 1980a (AF, AG, HI, JP, KR, MHG, MN, NR, OF, OHG, OS, SC, SK, VG, CP)

A. T. Hatto, ed. *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry. Volume One: The Traditions*. Publications of the Modern Humanities Research Association, 9. London: The Modern Humanities Research Association.

Separately annotated are Auty, Bailey, Bawden, Cushing, Dunn, Hainsworth, Harvey, Hatto 1980b, Hatto 1980c, H. Morris, Ross, and Smith.

67. Hatto 1980b (OHG, MHG, CP)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Medieval German." In Hatto 1980a:165-95.

Views the medieval German heroic lay (the *Hildebrandslied* is the sole surviving example) as a "highly artistic tradition [that] grew from an established tradition of improvisation" (116). Illustrates the development from this stage to the longer narrative form typified by the *Nibelungenlied* and other Middle High German texts.

68. Hatto 1980c (TK)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Kirghiz: Mid-Nineteenth Century." In Hatto 1980a:300-27.

A two-part general overview of the recorded heroic epic tradition of mid-nineteenth-century Kirghizia. In Part I he discusses the oral-formulaic nature of the poetry in its various genres and surveys the corpus of extant texts, explicating such aspects of the poetry as its heroic ethos, its diction and style of performance, and its idealization of the Khans. Part II examines in more depth the cycle of epic poetry surrounding the Kipchak hero Manas as an example of Kirghiz epic style and speculates on the possible origins of the epic in Kirghiz tradition.

69. Havelock 1983 (AG)

Havelock, Eric A. "The Linguistic Task of the Presocratics." In Robb 1983a:7-82.

In Part One, "Ionic Science in Search of an Abstract Vocabulary," he proposes that the Ionian Pre-Socratics, writing in a period "poised between non-literacy and literacy" (9), would have composed under both a form of immediate audience control in the style of oral poetics and in expectation of a "reception at the hands of readers" (9). Presents evidence from Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Empedocles which shows that these philosophers were concerned to reject the terms of common speech, and hence the rhythmic and narrative precepts of oral poetry. Shows that they attempted to provide an alternative in the form of comprehensive statements designed to replace particular instances, thereby changing the epic language by originating new syntactical relationships, the effect of which was to universalize and unify application. While suggesting that one way of so doing was the Parmenidean use of the verb *einai*, he realizes that it was not until words were "stretched...out of the specificity of a human being to the dimension of cosmic reality" (32) that the beginning of conceptual thought was possible. Thus, still adhering to his belief that thought does not precede language, he concludes that the Pre-Socratics were the linguistic originators of the categories of time, space, matter, and motion. In Part Two, "The Language of the Milesian 'School'," he holds that the prime source—the *Doxai* compiled by Theophrastus—from which our knowledge of Milesian thinking derives, does not employ the language of the Milesians themselves, but rather imposes the conceptual and categorical language of the Aristotelian school upon the original Presocratic thoughts. Proposes that the fragments of undoubted Milesian origin are an attempt "to rationalize the cosmic architecture of Hesiod's *Theogony*" (69) and "to comment upon and correct the cosmic imagery of Homer" (80) in a language close to that of the original epic verse. Thus he posits a linear progression of conceptual language by questioning the likelihood of the Milesians, chronologically pre-Heraclitean, being linguistically more advanced than Heraclitus—an individual who still retained elements of oral poetry in his compositions.

70. Heinemann 1984 (ON)

Frederick J. Heinemann. "The Hero on the Beach in Fóstbroethra Saga." *Neophilologus* 68:557-61.

Discusses the occurrence of the oral-formulaic "Hero on the Beach" theme-composition in a fight in Chapters 4-5 of the Fóstbroethra Saga, a unique occurrence in the corpus of saga literature. Suggests that this occurrence is congruent with the idea that sagas "derived their present form from oral sagas" and calls for a more comprehensive formulaic study of the sagas to "demonstrate how saga style expresses saga mind" (560).

71. Henige 1980 (AF)



David Henige. " 'The Disease of Writing': Ganda and Nyoro Kinglists in a Newly Literate World." In Miller 1980a:240-61.

Questions the oral nature of the tradition of kinglists and argues that such lists demonstrate an oral-written confluence and are not a true reflection of African society and history.

72. Hershbell 1983 (AG)

Jackson P. Hershbell. "The Oral-Poetic Religion of Xenophanes." In Robb 1983a:125-33.

Argues in agreement with Havelock for the inclusion of Xenophanes in the oral poetic tradition; states that Xenophanes had to work within the extant tradition, given the memorial-rhythmic collocation present in oral cultures, if he wished to "correct and replace" (128) Homeric and Hesiodic concepts of the universe with his own. Contends that Xenophanes' advances were not so much in the realm of positing one divinity and arguing against a plurality of gods, but in rejecting anthropomorphism.

73. Herter 1977 (AG)

Hans Herter. "L'Inno Omerico a Hermes alla luce della problematica della poesia orale." In Brillante et al. 1977:183-201.

Argues against the interpretation of shared formulaic lines in Homer and the Hymns as evidence of the orality of the latter, noting also differences in genre, provenance, and audience.

74. Holoka 1983 (AG)

James P. Holoka. "'Looking Darkly (*Hypodra idôn*)': Reflections on Status and Decorum in Homer." *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 113:1-16.

Examines all 26 Homeric occurrences of the formula *hypodra idôn* ("looking darkly") to show that its force is to connote "irritation and resentment and...to stop short an offender against social decorum" (4). Thus it amounts to conveying a nonverbal signal that one character's "infraction of propriety" (16) has brought interpersonal relations to the breaking point.

75. Holzapfel 1978 (FB, SCN)

Otto Holzapfel. "Skandinavische Volksballadenformeln: Merkmal traditioneller Improvisation oder literarischer/verbaler Tradierung?" In *Sumlen: Årsbok for via- och folkmusikforskning* [for 1978]:102-21.

Discusses the question of improvisation and variability in texts of Scandinavian folk ballads; delineates strophic, "typische," narrative, and epic structures in

the ballad “Stolt Ellensborg.”

76. Irwin 1981 (AF)

Paul Irwin. *Liptako Speaks: History from Oral Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

A description of the Liptako oral tradition, containing chapters on lineage, the transmission of the oral tradition through generations of changing political and economic forces, the chronology of the Liptako oral tradition, and the role of the oral tradition in politics and in holy wars.

77. Janko 1981 (AG)

Richard Janko. “Equivalent Formulae in the Greek Epos.” *Mnemosyne*, 34:251-64.

Building largely on the work of Parry, attempts an explanation of Hainsworth’s observation that particular formulae tend to recur within short stretches of the *Iliad*. Concludes that such a distribution supports no artistic scheme of analysis, but only the fact that memory of a previous choice of formulaic epithet influenced the poet’s choice between equivalent formulae.

78. Janko 1982 (AG)

\_\_\_\_\_. *Homer, Hesiod, and the Hymns: Diachronic Development in Epic Diction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Attempts a quantification of language and phraseology with respect to archaism and innovation, based upon the frequency of occurrence of the digamma, alternative morphs, and regional linguistic developments, in order to ascertain approximate relative dates and sequences of composition for the Homeric and Hesiodic canons. Arguing that “consistent treatment of several features” in a work is a “chronological indicator,” he suggests that the texts in question “were fixed at the time when each was composed” (191).

79. Jason 1977 (RU)

Heda Jason. “Precursors of Propp: Formalist Theories of Narrative in Early Russian Ethnopoetics.” *Poetics and the Theory of Literature*, 16:471-516.

Reviews the works of Russian “ethnopoeticians” through the 1930’s and provides an overview of the methodologies of Rybnikov, Veselovskij, Eleonskaja, Shklovskij, Skaftymov, Volkov, and Nikiforov. Contains a summary of concepts introduced by these scholars and a brief discussion of the reasons behind structural research in ethnopoetics.

80. E. Jeffreys 1978 (BG)

Elizabeth M. Jeffreys. "The Later Greek Verse Romances: A Survey." In E. Jeffreys et al. 1978: 116-27.

After a review of approaches to these texts and comparative research into the traditions, she suggests that "examination of the vernacular romances and other works in early demotic in terms of an oral-formulaic style promises to bring helpful insights into the genesis of both the language and the literature" (124). Cautions, however, that one must avoid generalizations and pay careful attention to the idiosyncratic nature of the Byzantine romances and to the manuscripts in which they are found.

81. E. Jeffreys and M. Jeffreys 1983a (BG)

\_\_\_\_\_ and Michael J. Jeffreys. "The Style of Byzantine Popular Poetry: Recent Work." In *Okeanos: Essays Presented to Ihor Ševčenko on His Sixtieth Birthday by His Colleagues and Students* (= *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, [1983]:309-43).

Confronts three problems that affect the study of Byzantine vernacular poetry: (1) repetitious phraseology, (2) relations between and among different manuscript versions, and (3) the mixed language (dialectal forms and anachronisms) used by the poets. After a review of the various avenues of research, they recommend that attention "be concentrated away from the individual Byzantine vernacular poems, and on the oral tradition which must lie behind them—its metre, its language, its subjects, its formulaic techniques, its social position and function" (334).

82. E. Jeffreys and M. Jefferys 1983b (BG)

\_\_\_\_\_. *Popular Literature in Late Byzantium*. London: Variorum Reprints.

A collection of reprinted articles on various aspects of the Byzantine language and literature. Of special interest and separately annotated is M. Jeffreys 1975, q.v. Annotated in Foley 1985 are E. and M. Jeffreys 1971, 1979 and M. Jeffreys 1973, 1974.

83. E. Jeffreys et al. 1978 (BG)

\_\_\_\_\_ and Ann Moffatt, eds. *Byzantine Papers: Proceedings of the First Australian Byzantine Studies Conference, Canberra, 17-19 May 1978*. Canberra: Humanities Research Centre.

A collection of chiefly historical accounts. Separately annotated is E. Jeffreys 1978, q.v.

84. M. Jeffreys 1975 (BG)

Michael J. Jeffreys. "Digenes Akrites Manuscript Z." *Dodone*, 4:163-201. Rpt. in E. & M. Jeffreys 1983b: V.

Argues that oral composition played a part in the creation of many popular Byzantine poems (including *Digenes Akrites*) that now survive only in manuscript, but that not all of the extant tales of *Digenes Akrites* are the "direct result of oral composition or transmission" (167). Finds that the Z manuscript can be explained by the compilation theory and that a likely stemma can be constructed, as opposed to the E manuscript, which shows signs of oral performance or oral composition.

85. M. Jeffreys 1981 (BG)

M. Jeffreys. "Byzantine Metrics: Non-Literary Strata." *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 31:313-34.

A history of the development of Byzantine metrics that takes account of the oral roots of many of the surviving texts, with emphasis on the artificial oral *Kunstsprache* employed in verse composition. Understands the oral tradition as existing in the "non-literary strata of Byzantium" before "inspiring learned experiments in the twelfth century and appearing in its own right in the fourteenth" (333). Concludes that "within the decaying antique forms we shall be able to observe the birth and development of new metres which, after a period of preservation among the non-literary strata of Byzantine society, came into literature in the last centuries of Byzantium and served as the basis of all Greek poetry, until the displacement of stichic metres at the beginning of this century" (334).

86. Jensen 1981-82 (AG)

Minna Skafte Jensen. "A Note on Homer's Use of the Word *kranaós*." *Classica et Mediaevalia*, 33:5-8.

Sees the Homeric use of *kranaós* ("rocky, rugged") in connection with Ithaca as evidence of the Pisistratean recension of Homer: "by applying the adjective proper to Athens to precisely Ithaca [an expert Homericist] established allusive connections between the home country of the clever hero of the Trojan return story and that of the clever hero of the contemporary Athenian return story" (7).

87. Jensen 1983 (AB, AG, CP)

Minna Skafte Jensen. "Studimi krahasues i epikës: disë konsiderata." *Kultura popullore*, 2:117-22.

Against the background of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, she compares seven versions of an Albanian epic in order to illustrate the narrative morphology typical of oral-formulaic composition.

## 88. Kahn 1983 (AG)

Charles H. Kahn. "Philosophy and the Written Word: Some Thoughts on Heraclitus and the Early Greek Uses of Prose." In Robb 1983a:110-24.

Reviews the evidence for understanding sixth-century figures, especially Heraclitus, as having a "special role in developing a new type of prose literature" (111), as possessing "a body of technical literature" (114). Citing such passages as Diogenes IX.6 et al., disagrees with the view that Heraclitus' work was non-literary and implies that he would have understood that prose was the true medium for recording, preserving, and changing the world.

## 89. Kavros 1981 (OE)

Harry E. Kavros. "Swefan after Symble: The Feast-Sleep Theme in *Beowulf*." *Neophilologus*, 65:120-28.

Arguing that "themes in oral-formulaic poetry are traditional but not necessary" (120), he studies the aesthetic impact of the "feasting-sleeping" theme in *Beowulf* and other Old English poems.

## 90. Kirk 1983 (AG)

G. S. Kirk. "Orality and Sequence." In Robb 1983a:83-90.

Reviews the essential aspects of the movement away from an oral-based culture towards a literate one. Determines that an important factor in such a transition was the movement from an aorist-sequential narrative to a present-tense dominated discourse concerned not with events, but permanent relationships.

## 91. Kuiper and Haggio 1983 (TH)

Koenraad Kuiper and Douglas Haggio. "Livestock Auctions, Oral Poetry, and Ordinary Language." *Language in Society*, 13:205-34.

Considers the language used by livestock auctioneers in North Canterbury, New Zealand, finding oral-formulaic and other features to be the result of performance constraints in this medium. Presents evidence that formulas are not confined to oral literature, and that "the difference between traditional oral formulaic and ordinary spoken language is one of degree, not kind" (205).

## 92. Labrie 1983 (AG)

Vivian Labrie. "Cartography and Graphic Analysis of the Physical Universe in the Odyssey Story." *Journal of Folklore Research*, 20:219-42.

Addresses the question: “is a story perceived in its written form the same as a story perceived orally?” (219), and examines particularly the role of “written cultural tradition” in perception. She deals with the “alphabetical conditioning” of literate researchers and the world-view of the non-literate storyteller, considers briefly the psychological origins of writing systems, and delineates a procedure of “dynamic cartography” through which one may “cartograph the ‘journey’ so important to storytellers” (230), illustrating the manner in which an oral storyteller understands and denotes structural developments and spatial relationships and movement in his narrative.

93. Lang 1983 (AG)

Mabel L. Lang. “Reverberation and Mythology in the *Iliad*.” In Rubino and Shelmerdine 1983:140-64.

Analyzing the episodes in the *Iliad* dealing with interrelations among divinities and divine-human relationships, she examines the Niobe story in Book 24 in terms of the correspondence between non-Trojan War exempla and the *Iliad* episodes which they explain. Suggests that there existed a “process of reverberation between inherited material influencing the *Iliad* and...the *Iliad* narrative influencing inherited narrative material” (140).

94. Lincoln 1983 (AI)

Kenneth Lincoln. “Native American Literatures.” In Swann 1983:3-38.

An excellent, readable introduction to the plethora of American Indian literatures in historical and cultural context. Considers the phenomenological differences between the oral and the written word and recognizes the status of any single text or performance: “‘Text’ is only a stop-time facet of the embracing mode and texture of a cultural performance” (18). Also includes mention of formulaic structure. [Rpt. in part from *The Southwest Review*, 60, ii(1975):101-16 and *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 1, iv(1976):14-21 and 4, i-ii(1980):1-17.]

95. Long 1973 (FB)

Eleanor R. Long. “Ballad Singers, Ballad Makers, and Ballad Etiology.” *Western Folklore*, 32, iv:225-36.

Suggests an approach to the problem of ballad etiology based upon an “intensive study of individual singing styles” (228) and proposes four basic types of folk artistry—perseverating, confabulating, rationalizing, and integrating—as aids in the study of Scottish ballad texts and in separating narrative themes from textual traditions.

96. Long 1980 (FB, CP)

\_\_\_\_\_. “‘Young Man, I Think You’re Dyin’”: The *Twining Branches* Theme in

Christian Legend and in English Tradition." *Fabula*, 21, iii/iv:183-99.

Posits the existence, in the English ballad tradition, of the "twining branches" motif—a reconciliation of lovers only in death symbolized by the intertwining of branches of a rose—in connection with the romance of Tristan and Isolt and derivative stories. Surmises that this may be either a folkloristic oikotype derived from Greek oral tradition or a distinctly English innovation.

97. Longworth 1982 (OF, FB)

Robert M. Longworth. "Sir Orfeo, the Minstrel, and the Minstrel's Art." *Studies in Philology*, 79:1-11.

Supporting the view that improvisations are to be expected given the oral nature of medieval methods of performance, contends that a definitive text of *Sir Orfeo* should not be sought because of the duality—oral and literate—of the medieval romance heritage. Provides evidence, based upon the four versions of the tale, of ornamental license which does not impinge upon, but rather artistically supplements, the fundamental structure and meaning of the story.

98. Lord 1980 (AG, SC, OE, CP)

Albert Bates Lord. "Memory, Meaning, and Myth in Homer and Other Oral Epic Traditions." In *Oralità*. Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo. pp. 37-67.

Explores various kinds of repeated lines and phrases, distinguishes between the "type-scene" and the Parry-Lord "theme," and discusses the mythic meaning behind the story-patterns that underlie epic narrative.

99. Lord 1981 (BU, RU, SC, UK, CP)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Comparative Slavic Epic." *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 5:415-29.

Considers the formulaic and thematic structures typical of oral poetry in Russian (the *bylina*), Ukrainian (the *dumy*), Serbo-Croatian (the epic), and Bulgarian (the epic).

100. Lord 1982 (MU, SC)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Béla Bartók as a Collector of Folk Music." *Cross Currents*, 1:295-304.

Examines the collecting career of Bartók, with emphasis on his field methods and his sense of tradition in folk music. Substantial quotation from his published field notes for illustration of techniques.

101. Lord 1983 (BU, RU, SC, CP)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Aspects of the Poetics of Bulgarian Oral Traditional Narrative Song." In *Literaturoznanie i folkloristika u čest na 70-godišnjata na akademik Pet'r Dinekov*. Sofia: Bulgarska Akademija na Naukite. pp. 353-59.

Illustrates formulaic structure and various manifestations of "interlocking style" in Bulgarian narrative, with references to the Serbo-Croatian and Russian traditions.

102. MacCana 1972 (OI)

Proinsias MacCana. "Conservation and Innovation in Early Celtic Literature." *Etudes celtiques*, 13:61-119.

Explores the limited definition of literature as a written medium and charts the simultaneous development of both oral and written traditions of literature in Ireland, emphasizing the impact of oral transmission on the development of early Irish literary history.

103. MacCana 1981 (OI)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Mythology in Early Irish Literature." In Robert O'Driscoll, ed. *The Celtic Consciousness*. New York: Braziller and Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981. pp. 143-54.

Provides a brief introduction to the historical context of early Irish written literature and its development from oral traditional sources from the viewpoint that "oral literature did not cease with the coming of writing; on the contrary, it continued as abundant as ever, independent of the written literature although not necessarily unaffected by it. In the nature of things, however, we can know it only in so far as it is reflected in the written texts" (145). Compares and contrasts the *Noinden Ulad (The Debility of the Ulstermen)* with an early version of the Deirdre story, demonstrating that "while immersed in native tradition, the author is also able to exploit it for his own literary ends, so that in the finished composition mythological concept and literary artifice combine and fuse in an indissoluble unity" (148), and goes on to discuss the relationship of Christianity to the pagan myth, citing *Caillech Bhérri (The Hag of Beare)* as an example of the literary fusing of the two systems. Concludes that the clerical authors were men who were "admirably equipped by instinct and training to approach the orally transmitted mythology with a combination of sympathy and sophistication" (154).

104. Mair 1983 (CH)

Victor H. Mair, ed. and trans. *Tun-huang Popular Narratives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

A translation of four vernacular Chinese stories from the seventh through tenth centuries that stand at the intersection of popular storytelling and the beginnings of fiction and drama. Introduction includes comments on the oral



storytelling tradition.

105. Mandler and Johnson 1977 (TH)

Jean M. Mandler and Nancy S. Johnson. "Remembrance of Things Parsed: Story Structure and Recall." *Cognitive Psychology*, 9:111-51.

Describes the structure of both single- and multi-episode stories in terms of tree structures containing basic units and their connections, analyzing the underlying structures of simple stories and examining the implications such structures have for recall.

106. Margolis 1983 (AG)

Joseph Margolis. "The Emergence of Philosophy." In Robb 1983a:228-43.

Disagrees with Havelock's (1983) view about the conceptual capacity of members of an oral culture inasmuch as such a culture, while lacking an alphabet, "is bound to produce either a philosophical practice or an alternative but equally abstractive practice" (234). Disputes the view that philosophy had to await the Ionians in the sixth century because there is no reason that a non-democratized philosophical tradition could not have existed co-extensively with a general popular oral culture. Supports his own view by pointing to the verse philosophy of Parmenides and the *Epicheirêmata* of Zeno, and holds that such an impulse could well have begun with the Milesian school.

107. Maxwell 1983 (AF)

Kevin B. Maxwell. *Bemba Myth and Ritual: The Impact of Literacy on an Oral Culture*. American University Series, XI, 2. New York and Berne: Peter Lang.

Basing his analysis on the orality-literacy studies of Walter J. Ong and his own fieldwork among the Bemba in 1978-79 and 1981, Maxwell treats the implications of orality for this people's belief-system and the changes wrought by the onset of literacy. Sophisticated consideration of hermeneutical realities includes observations such as the following on intelligence: "A proverb expresses the idea: *Mano nambulwa* 'wisdom consists in being told'" (12).

108. McAllister 1978 (AI, CN, CP)

H. S. McAllister. "'The Language of Shamans': Jerome Rothenberg's Contribution to American Indian Literature." *Western American Literature*, 10:293-309.

An assessment of the contribution of the publication of Jerome Rothenberg's *Shaking the Pumpkin* (1972), an anthology of North American Indian traditional poetry, to the field of American Indian studies. Explicates the nature of the "aural word" (297) and the aesthetic differences in reading, as

opposed to hearing, poetry. Praises Rothenberg's success at communicating a "non-European sense of man's relationship to his language" (309).

109. Mieder 1982 (BB, FK)

Wolfgang Mieder, ed. *International Proverb Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography*. New York: Garland.

A thoroughly annotated listing of international scholarship from 1800. Contains 2142 entries, together with name, subject, and proverb indexes.

110. Mieder and Dundes 1981 (FK)

\_\_\_\_\_ and Alan Dundes, eds. *The Wisdom of Many: Essays on the Proverb*. New York: Garland.

Reprinted essays on the proverb, providing overviews and discussions of definitions and of function and meaning in social context, examples of proverbs in literary milieus, individual proverbs, and other subjects, such as the use of proverbs in psychological testing and in modern media.

111. Miller 1980a (AF)

Joseph C. Miller, ed. *The African Past Speaks: Essays on Oral Tradition and History*. Hamden, CT: Archon.

A collection of essays on the interrelationship between oral tradition and history. Separately annotated are Berger, Cohen, Harms, Henige, Miller 1980b, Packard, Schechter, Sigwalt, Vansina, Yoder.

112. Miller 1980b (AF)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Introduction: Listening for the African Past." In Miller 1980a:1-60.

Claims that the only real expression of the African past survives in oral, not written, form. Thus, true evidence is often indirect. Particularizes the definition of oral tradition as a narrative intended to describe eras before the time of the person composing or relating it. Offers a background of African oral tradition, defining terms, concepts, and structures.

113. Mondì 1983 (AG, FK)

Robert Mondì. "The Homeric Cyclopes: Folktale, Tradition, and Theme." *Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 113:17-38.

Understanding the sources of the *Odyssey* to be oral traditional, he argues that the apparent inconsistencies in the characterization of Polyphemos and the Cyclopes are attributable to a diachronic displacement: "the man-eating ogre

Polyphemos stems from a folk tradition which is not specifically Greek; but the Cyclopes themselves—the storm-demons who arm Zeus with the thunderbolt—clearly are products of Greek mythological speculation” (22).

114. H. Morris 1980 (AF)

H. F. Morris. “East African: The Bahima Praise Poems.” In Hatto 1980a:345-76.

A five-part overview of the traditions surrounding the praise poem genre of the Bahima tribes of Uganda and Tanzania. The first part, “The Background,” provides information regarding Bahima political, religious, social, and linguistic characteristics in the kingdom of Ankole. The second part, “The Literary Tradition of the Bahima,” discusses the oral literary tradition and its mode of performance. The third part, “The Nature of the Praise Poems,” describes the two categories of the genre—those composed by men and those composed by women—and delineates their characteristics, providing numerous examples in translation. The fourth part, “The Development of the Tradition of Praise Poetry,” discusses the creation and transmission of the oral literature of the Bahima and the adaptation of its traditional patterns to contemporary material. Part V, “An Appreciation of Some Examples,” presents three examples of Bahima praise poetry (one a 76-line *ekyevugo* on the Second World War) with annotations and critical commentary.

115. J. Morris 1983 (AG)

James F. Morris. “‘Dream Scenes’ in Homer, A Study in Variation.” *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 113:39-54.

In answer to Arend’s (1933) and Gunn’s (1971) charges of Homer’s clumsiness or lack of pattern in the “dream scenes,” he attempts “to show that Homer’s variation of the description, likeness, and standing elements in these scenes is typologically meaningful and consistent” (40). The conclusion reached is that Homer is a skillful literary craftsman “firmly in control of his traditional forms” (53).

116. G. Nagy 1983 (AG, IE)

Gregory Nagy. “On the Death of Sarpedon.” In Rubino and Shelmerdine 1983:189-217.

An etymological investigation into the meaning of *tarchuô* in *Iliad* 16.456 based on the premise that both the Greek language and Greek institutions are “cognate with the corresponding institutions of other Indo-European-speaking peoples” (192). Suggests that the implication of “overcoming the obstacle of death” inherent in the word (derived through Anatolian from the Indo-European) is corroborating evidence for the existence of a cult of heroes ultimately derived from the worship of ancestors.

117. J. Nagy 1983 (OI)

Joseph F. Nagy. "Close Encounters of the Traditional Kind in Medieval Irish Literature." In Ford 1983a:129-49.

A continuation of the scholarship of Proinsias MacCana, examining such medieval Christian tales as *Síaburcharpat Con Culáinn* and *Acallam na Senórach* and demonstrating the probability of their origins in the Oral tradition.

118. O'Coileáin 1977 (OI)

Seán O'Coileáin. "Oral or Literary? Some Strands of the Argument." *Studia Hibernica*, 17/18:7-35.

Discusses various aspects of the application of the Parry-Lord theory of oral-formulaic composition to the extant corpus of Old Irish texts.

119. Omidshar 1984 (PR)

Mahmoud Omidshar. "Storytellers in Classical Persian Tales." *Journal of American Folklore*, 97:204-12.

Translates six passages from Persian historiographical and theological works which adumbrate the early storytelling tradition in Persia.

120. Opland 1969 (AF, OE, CP)

Jeff Opland. "On the Necessity for Research into the Bantu Oral Tradition." In *Papers in African Languages 1969*. Cape Town: School of African Studies, University of Cape Town. pp. 79-84.

Reviews the theory of oral-formulaic composition and compares the literary situation among the Bantu, who are undergoing a transition from a primarily oral culture to a literate one, to that of the Anglo-Saxons, suggesting that studies in the Bantu oral tradition may have relevance to the analysis of transitional poetry found in Old English manuscripts.

121. Opland 1970 (AF)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Two Xhosa Oral Poems." In *Papers in African Languages 1970*. Cape Town: School of African Studies, University of Cape Town. pp. 86-98.

Provides a brief review of oral traditional studies in general and a discussion of the applicability of Lord's work in non-Indo-European cultures before describing the oral praise-poems of the Nguni and the distinction in that tradition between spontaneously composed oral poems and those that are memorized. Demonstrates the difference in roles between the oral poet and the "memorizer," with the former having the ability to comment on current

affairs or even on the trend in an important debate. Presents transcripts of and commentary on two Xhosa oral poems as examples of this African oral tradition.

122. Opland 1983a (AF, CP)

\_\_\_\_\_. *Xhosa Oral Poetry: Aspects of a Black South African Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

A study of the history and present character of Xhosa oral poetry from documentary evidence and the author's fieldwork, with special emphasis on the court poet (*imbongi*).

123. Opland 1983b (AF, OE, CP)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Scop and *Imbongi* III: The Exploitation of Tradition." In Norman Simms, ed. *The Word-Singers: The Makers and the Making of Traditional Literatures*. Hamilton, New Zealand: Outrigger. pp. 44-59.

Finds in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and Xhosa oral poetry an "exploitation" of literary tradition by artists who possess an "objective awareness" of such traditions. Defines *exploitation* as "the deliberate use of a traditional element in order to extend or deny its relevance in altered circumstances" (45). Cites examples of the Old English *Seafarer* and the contemporary Xhosa *imbongi* D. L. P. Manisi and discusses the functions of *scop* and *imbongi* in their respective societies.

124. Packard 1980 (AF)

Randall M. Packard. "The Study of Historical Process in African Traditions of Genesis: The Bushu Myth of Mahiyi." In Miller 1980a:157-77.

Analyses the historical value of oral myth. Concludes that Bushu traditions in particular suggest that while specific events described in traditions of genesis are often ahistorical, they may in certain cases symbolize historical processes of considerable duration.

125. Pattison 1982 (TH)

Robert Pattison. *On Literacy: The Politics of the Word from Homer to the Age of Rock*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Through a discussion of the advent of writing in Greece and of oral Christianity in a fully lettered Latin world, he develops a view of literacy as a non-essential feature of human mental and economic development. Suggests also that literacy should not be defined by the technologies of rhetoric and writing, but rather should be viewed as the consciousness of the problems posed by language.

## 126. Pavese 1977 (AG, CP)

Carlo O. Pavese. "Poesia ellenica e cultura orale (Esiodo, gli 'Inni' e la tradizione orale)." In Brillante et al. 1977:231-59.

In considering the possible oral composition of Hesiod's *Theogony* and several Homeric Hymns (to the Pythian and Delian Apollo), he reports a comparative analysis of formulas, formulaic expressions, and modified formulas shared between various texts. Also treats economy (or thrift), the systematization of the diction, the testimony of rhapsodes, the history of the uses of writing in ancient Greece, and the question of the independence of the Hymns. Stresses his five-part taxonomy of ancient poetry and the differences between ancient Greek and later comparands (Old English, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Old Norse).

## 127. Porter 1983 (FB)

James Porter, ed. *The Ballad Image: Essays Presented to Bertrand Harris Bronson*. Foreword by Wayland D. Hand. Los Angeles: Center for the Study of Comparative Folklore and Mythology.

A collection of essays on the ballad. Separately annotated are Buchan, Friedman, and Shields.

## 128. Renoir 1983 (OE)

Alain Renoir. "The Old English *Ruin*: Contrastive Structure and Affective Impact." In *The Old English Elegies: New Essays in Criticism and Research*. Ed. Martin Green. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press. pp. 148-73.

An analysis of *The Ruin* in terms of audience response as based on its knowledge of the Old English rhetorical tradition and archetypal paradigms embodied in the elegies and elsewhere. Suggests that the poem's power derives from the fact that its expression of the relationship between splendor and decay is "unexpected and therefore noticeable" (154). Adduces examples of such differentiation in the poem's diction, syntax, and rhetorical patterns.

## 129. Robb 1983a (AG)

Kevin Robb, ed. *Language and Thought in Early Greek Philosophy*. La Salle, IL: Monist Library of Philosophy/ The Hegeler Institute.

A collection of essays on the development of early Greek philosophy and language. Separately annotated are Adkins, Barnes, Havelock, Hershbell, Kahn, Kirk, Margolis, Robb 1983b, and Willard.

130. Robb 1983b (AG)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Pre-literate Ages and the Linguistic Art of Heraclitus." In Robb 1983a:153-206.

Establishes the pre-literate and protoliterate condition of Heraclitus' audience and argues that Heraclitus composed his works both with a maximum economy of words and with mnemonic devices. Suggests a possible Semitic influence on Heraclitus with respect to the form of his sayings, inasmuch as he uses parallelism to create a poetic unit and thus make it memorable for an oral audience. Examines the first fifteen fragments of Heraclitus as printed by Diels from the point of view of the density of oral compositional devices employed therein, concluding that Heraclitus intentionally used devices of mnemonic utility and persuasive euphony.

131. Roemer 1983 (AI)

Kenneth M. Roemer. "Native American Oral Narratives: Context and Continuity." In Swann 1983:39-54.

Concentrates on establishing a context for American Indian oral narratives through discussion of genre distinctions (creation stories, emergence narratives, migration tales, trickster stories, hero tales, accounts of journeys to other worlds, etc.), tribal differentiations, language and style, and types of repetition. Emphasizes the variety and vitality of such narratives, as well as their ability "to adapt creatively to the present" (52).

132. Rose 1971 (AG)

G. P. Rose. "Odyssey 15.143-82: A Narrative Inconsistency?" *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 102:509-14.

Disagrees with Gunn's (1970) and Hoekstra's (1965:117, n. 3) assertions that there is a narrative inconsistency in the scene of Telemachos' departure from Menelaos' palace in the *Odyssey* (15.144ff.) Sees the apparent "nod" not as evidence of oral composition but as a feature of Homeric characterization: "the interrupted departure puts the final, convincing touch on an amusing tension that has developed between Telemachos' impetuous eagerness to return home and Menelaos' persistent failure to incorporate this in his mind" (510).

133. Rosenberg 1971 (FP)

Bruce A. Rosenberg. "The Aesthetics of the Folk Sermon." *Georgia Review*, 25:424-38.

A discussion of the oral traditional aspects of the extemporaneous sermon composition of the American folk-preacher, including citations from actual recorded sermons. Places particular emphasis upon the preacher-audience interaction during the sermon and the manner in which a sermon's aesthetic qualities serve to enhance its goal of edification.

134. Ross 1980 (OF, CP)

D. J. A. Ross. "Old French." In Hatto 1980a:79-133.

A general introduction to the Old French *chanson de geste*, which includes commentary on a period of oral-formulaic composition and oral transmission preceding the surviving texts (96-104).

135. Rossi 1977 (AG)

Luigi E. Rossi. "Gli oracoli come documento di improvvisazione." In Brillante et al. 1977:203-19.

Warns against an easy equation of "oral" and "improvised" and argues that "una certa *formularità oracolare* non prova una oralità autonoma degli oracoli" (216).

136. Roth 1977 (FB)

Klaus Roth. "Zurmündlichen Komposition von Volksballaden." *Jahrbuch für Volksliedforschung*, 22:49-65.

Examines various aspects of extemporaneous oral composition, improvisation, and memorization in the European folk ballad tradition with an awareness of the effects of musical accompaniment and audience-performer interaction.

137. Rubino and Shelmerdine 1983 (AG)

Carl A. Rubino and Cynthia Shelmerdine, eds. *Approaches to Homer*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

A collection of recent critical essays on Homer. Separately annotated are Austin, Bergren, Lang, G. Nagy, and Simpson.

138. Russo 1983 (AG, FK)

Joseph Russo. "The Poetics of the Ancient Greek Proverb." *Journal of Folklore Research*, 20:121-30.

Shows that the Greek proverb is identifiable as a formal genre with distinct linguistic and stylistic features. Using the example of the Candaules and Gyges episode of Herodotus I.6ff., he demonstrates that a thorough knowledge of the proverb genre allows for a clearer interpretation of relevant passages.



## 139. Sale 1984 (AG)

William Merritt Sale. "Homeric Olympus and Its Formulae." *American Journal of Philology*, 105:1-28.

In an attempt to explain the existence in Homer of two sets of formulas denoting the home of the gods, he proposes, in the context of Parry's definition of the formula, that the *ouranos*-set of formulas evolved after the *olympos*-set in order to fill a metrical gap in the latter. Argues that, based upon occurrences of four formulaic sets, Olympus and Ouranos are one and the same, and that, since the formulaic method of expressing "Olympos" is the more highly developed, the concept of "Olympos-Ouranos" is a relatively late one.

## 140. Sayre 1982 (CN)

Henry M. Sayre. "David Antin and the Oral Poetics Movement." *Contemporary Literature*, 23:428-50.

A discussion of the antagonism between formalist academic poetry and avant-garde poetics, with particular attention to the theories and implications of David Antin's essay "Modernism and Postmodernism," the "first manifesto" of the oral poetics movement in America.

## 141. Schein 1983 (AG)

Seth L. Schein. *The Mortal Hero: An Introduction to Homer's Iliad*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

A review of the developments in Homeric scholarship in this century with particular stress on the positive and negative implications of the oral tradition theory. Overview of the functions of the gods, war, death, and heroism in the poem and chapters on the character and role of Achilles and Hektor.

## 142. Schechter 1980 (AF)

Robert E. Schechter. "A *Propos* the Drunken King: Cosmology and History." In Miller 1980a:108-25.

Renounces an unsophisticated literal reading of oral tales and treats the traditions as representations of real historical events and processes. Focuses on tales from the Luba and Lunda areas. Concludes that traditional historical literature only twists the facts in order to make the past conform more closely to accepted cosmological categories.

## 143. Shields 1983 (FB, OF, HI, ST)

Hugh Shields. "Impossibles in Ballad Style." In Porter 1983:192-214.

Points to *adynaton* as a stylistic feature of oral composition in many genres ranging from the Old French *chansons de geste* to 16th-century Spanish ballads. Reviews examples of embellishment deployed with a high degree of conventionality in the Scottish ballad tradition.

144. Sigwalt 1980 (AF)

Richard Sigwalt. "The Kings Left Lwindi; The Clans Divided at Luhunda: How Bushi's Dynastic Origin Myth Behaves." In Miller 1980a:126-56.

Examines selected aspects of the original tradition surrounding the Mwoca dynasty. Argues that myths which comprise this tradition yield firm historical data. Concludes that "myth can help make our understanding of the past richer, but only with the tools of comparative ethnography and only if we admit that our goals are not to recover historical personages and specific events, but to understand the broad current of human change" (154).

145. Simpson 1983 (AG)

Richard Hope Simpson. "Mycenean Greece and Homeric Reflections." In Rubino and Shelmerdine 1983:122-39.

A reassertion and defense of the tenet that the Achaean section of the Catalogue of the Ships in the *Iliad* is "a remarkably good poetic reflection of Mycenean Greece as so far revealed by archeology" (123). While observing that precision is not to be expected in Homeric descriptions, maintains that general inferences may be drawn, since Homer gives "the traditional details of people and places, as handed down by oral poets before him" (125).

146. Slotkin 1978 (OI, SC, CP)

Edgar M. Slotkin. "Medieval Irish Studies and Fixed Texts." *Eigse*, 19:437-50.

Making careful distinctions between oral and literary composition and between "creative" and "retentive" oral transmission, he considers the complex case of the medieval Irish saga manuscripts and their provenance. Notes that "scribes did not treat saga texts as fixed texts in the way in which we think of fixed texts. They do seem reluctant to leave out anything in the manuscript before them. Yet they may add or rearrange or 'correct,' if they deem it necessary and the context seems proper" (449-50). Includes comparisons to Serbo-Croatian epics.

147. Slotkin 1983 (OI, FK, CP)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Folkloristics and Medieval Celtic Philology: A Theoretical Model." In Ford 1983a:213-25.

Argues in favor of combining folkloristics and philology in the pursuit of a

scholarly methodology suitable to the needs of medieval Irish narrative. Emphasis on Parry-Lord approach to style.

148. Smith 1979 (IN)

John D. Smith. "Metre and Text in Western India." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 42:347-57.

As part of an explanation of meter in the medieval *Viśaḷadevarasā* and the modern Rajasthani oral epic, he provides textual history and comparisons. In addition to his metrical findings, he proposes that oral composition of the type observed in the modern epic always includes "extra verbiage," thus personalizing a given singer's performance with non-metrical material; this process would account for irregularities in some manuscript texts.

149. Smith 1980 (SK, IN, CP)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Old Indian: The Two Sanskrit Epics." In Hatto 1980a:48-78.

An introductory essay on the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, with attention to their relation to oral tradition and the complex literary history underlying the received texts. Uses his own experience with the modern Pābūjī epic as a comparative gloss.

150. Smith 1981 (IN)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Words, Music, and Memory." In *Memory and Poetic Structure: Papers of the Conference on Oral Literature and Literary Theory Held at Middlesex Polytechnic, 1981*. London: Middlesex Polytechnic. pp. 50-65.

Reports that oral performances of the West Indian epic of Pābūjī are formulaic yet repeated near-verbatim in each singing. Ascribes this apparent paradox to the set of processes and constraints involved in this traditional performing art. Notes that a singer does not learn the text by heart: "What he has learnt by heart are all the major occurrences of the story, and all the obligatory formulae; performance consists of a process of recalling and matching these" (57).

151. Stone and Gillis 1978 (MU, AF)

Ruth M. Stone and F. J. Gillis, eds. *African Music and Oral Data: A Catalog of Field Recordings 1902-1975*. Ann Arbor: Books on Demand.

A catalog of non-commercial collections of African music and oral data providing concise summaries of collections and phonograph recordings with references to primary resources.

## 152. Swann 1983 (AI)

Brian Swann, ed. *Smoothing the Ground: Essays on Native American Oral Literature*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

A collection of twenty essays (approximately half of them reprinted) on American Indian oral literature, with emphasis on context and overview, the question of translation and literary criticism, example stories, and the blend of cultures. Separately annotated are Lincoln and Roemer. Tedlock is treated in Foley 1985.

## 153. Talashoma 1983 (AI)

Herschel Talashoma, narr. *Hopitutuwutsi: Hopi Tales*. Rec. and trans. Ekkehart Malotki, illus. Anne-Marie Malotki. Sun Tracks, 9. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

A collection of 42 brief oral tales in a facing-page bilingual format, followed by a glossary of names and terms (and a brief phonology) and a selected bibliography.

## 154. Tenèze 1982 (FK, FR)

Marie-Louise Tenèze. "The Devil's Heater: On the 'Contexts' of a Tale." *Journal of Folklore Research*, 20:197-209.

Examines the "service in hell" motif in the French oral tradition, emphasizing "the complementary importance of looking at folktales *stricto sensu* within the broader perspective of traditional oral prose narratives" (197). Illustrates the differing meanings one motif may possess "depending on its needs and uses" (199).

## 155. Thomas 1983 (CD)

Gerald Thomas. *Les Deux traditions: Le Conte populaire chez les Franco-Terreneuviens*. Montreal: Les Editions Bellarmin.

Basing his analysis on fieldwork begun in 1970, the author surveys the oral folktale traditions of the Terre-Neuve province in Canada. Finds two traditions—"private and familial" versus "public"—and discusses performers from each. Also includes numerous examples of both types of folktales.

## 156. Trypanis 1977 (AG)

C. A. Trypanis. *The Homeric Epics*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips, Ltd.

A survey touching on the authorship question, theories of dating, oral epic narrative technique and artistry, and the structure of the poem in terms of "principal traditional epic themes" (12). A final chapter dealing with the

influence of the Homeric epics briefly examines the contributions of the Alexandrian scholars to Homeric studies.

157. Tsopanakis 1983 (AG)

Tsopanakis, Agapitos G. *Homeric Researches: From the Prosodic Irregularity to the Construction of the Verse*. Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies.

Interprets the complexity of the ancient Greek hexameter, and even of Homeric formulaic phraseology, as the result of combinations of metrical word-types. Also considers grammatical and rhetorical forms as sources of complexity and irregularity.

158. Vansina 1980 (AF, TH)

Vansina, Jan. "Memory and Oral Tradition." In Miller 1980a:262-79.

Analyzes the impact of memory on oral traditional literature and claims that the repeated passage of a message through several memories compounds its effects. Summarizes relevant findings in psychology on memory and discusses the implications of these findings for personal reminiscences and for the oral tradition which stems from such reminiscences.

159. Vivante 1979 (AG)

Paolo Vivante. "Rose-fingered Dawn and the Idea of Time." *Ramus*, 8:125-36.

Argues that the "rosy-fingered dawn" formula is not merely a convenient element of diction but that it "reflects a mode of perception and thought" (125) and must be explained poetically. Views the phrase as engendering an extra-narrative meaning that provides a continuing context for any particular situation: "It is this persisting aspect of continuous time which gives life to the encompassing stylization by imparting rhythm into any happening, so that even the most tragic event takes the form of a natural phenomenon. The recurring phrases are like key-notes to this pattern" (136).

160. Watkins 1982 (IE)

Calvert Watkins. "Aspects of Indo-European Poetics." In Edgar C. Polomé, ed. *The Indo-Europeans in the Fourth and Third Millennia*. Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers. pp. 104-121.

A survey of the features of Indo-European poetics, including discussion of the role of the poet and poetry in an oral society, formal aspects such as the poet's techniques, and the character of poetic language and message. Focuses on the formulaic element in the poetry and proposes that formulas are "different realizations" (112) of a synchronic thematic deep-structure text and of a diachronic prototext. Explicates the relationship between oral poetic transmission of societal knowledge and poetic definitions couched in formulas.

## 161. Webber 1983 (OE)

Phillip Webber. "Pre-literate Formulaic Patterns Suggested by Old English *earfoþe*." *Michigan Germanic Studies*, 9:109-12.

A study of several occurrences of the Old English word *earfoþe* ("hardship") in the Anglo-Saxon poetic corpus, concluding that the word's usage, especially in E-type half-lines, may be a "fossil trace" from a "period antedating the production of written records" and that "it is also possible that we are dealing, in some instances, with non-formulaic half-lines, in which the poet senses and avails himself of the rhythmic 'valence' established for a word by previous—and perhaps indeed ancient—usage" (111).

## 162. Willard 1983 (AG)

Dallas Willard. "Concerning the 'Knowledge' of the Pre-Platonic Greeks." In Robb 1983a:244-54.

Averring that such a thesis is not necessary to support Havelock's view of the development of Greek culture from orality to literacy, argues against Havelock's contention that the pre-Homeric Greeks could not possess "knowledge" in the sense of "a true generalization couched in the language of universals" (245) because not all thought is a linguistic activity.

## 163. Winn 1981 (MU, AG)

James Anderson Winn. "The Poet as Singer: The Ancient World." In his *Unsuspected Eloquence: A History of the Relations between Poetry and Music*. New Haven: Yale University Press. pp. 1-29.

During a discussion of the roots of ancient Greek music and musical theory, he points out that melodic pitch-accent constituted an important (but still largely unstudied) aspect of oral-formulaic composition, maintaining that "each of the verbal formulae from which the lines are constructed has a melodic identity, a fact which doubtless helped the bard retain it in his memory" (6). Also fully aware of the effect of the advent of literacy (14 ff.).

## 164. Woodward 1984 (HI, CP)

L. J. Woodward. "Hebrew Tradition and Luís de León." *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 61:426-31.

A two-part note offering first a review of lore supporting the author's views of the intellectual development of Luís de León, and secondly the author's interpretation of details in three of de León's poems in light of Hebraic oral commentary and the Kabbala.

165. Wright 1977 (AG)

H. Curtis Wright. *The Oral Antecedents of Greek Librarianship*. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press.

Traces the idea of the library from its evolution to its realization, from ancient Greek oral culture forward to Alexandria. In the process (especially Chapter 4) he divides early Greek civilization into four periods, based on the inroads made by literacy: preliterate, assimilative, transitional, and bookish. Includes a section on the Parry-Lord theory and its implications (129-40).

166. Yoder 1980 (AF)

John C. Yoder. "Historical Study of a Kanyok Genesis Myth: The Tale of Citend a Mfumu." In Miller 1980a:82-107.

Argues that genesis stories, because they are mythical in nature, should not be overlooked in historical inquiry. Focuses on Kanyok myth and claims that its older, often archaic, elements can be placed within appropriate time settings, enabling one to trace the general evolution of the genesis tale as well as ideals and culture at remote periods of the Kanyok past.

## About the Authors

*Joseph J. Duggan*, Professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of California/Berkeley, has made many important contributions to the study of medieval texts with roots in oral tradition, perhaps most notably *The Song of Roland: Formulaic Style and Poetic Craft* (1973) and *Oral Literature: Seven Essays* (1975). He is editor of *Romance Philology*.

A native Romanian with scholarly training in the Romance literatures, *Eliza Miruna Ghil* (University of New Orleans) is well qualified to provide this portrait of Vasile Tetin and to work on the medieval French tradition from a uniquely comparative point of view.

*Elizabeth and Michael Jeffreys* (University of Sydney) often work as a team in their investigations of Byzantine popular poetry, studies which regularly treat the oral tradition out of which these works emerged. Some of their numerous articles in this field are gathered together in *Popular Literature in Byzantium* (1983).

*Albert B. Lord* (Harvard University, Emeritus) truly needs no introduction for anyone working in the field of oral tradition. His comparative research, especially *The Singer of Tales* (1960), in effect established the Oral Theory as a method subsequently applied to dozens of different traditions. He is near completion of a sequel to that landmark volume.

A medievalist and comparatist, *Alexandra Hennessey Olsen* (University of Denver) has been especially interested in the blend of Christian Latin learning and Germanic oral tradition that underlies Old English poetry. Her books on *Guthlac of Croyland* (1981) and *Cynewulf (Speech, Song, and Poetic Craft)*, 1984) typify her approach.

*Ward Parks* (Louisiana State University) combines training in the Old English and Homeric Greek traditions with an expertise in modern critical theory, as exemplified in essays published in *Anglo-Saxon England*, *Neophilologus*, and elsewhere. He is presently working on a monograph on “flyting and fighting” in traditional poetry and a source study of Blind Harry.

*Bruce A. Rosenberg* (Brown University) is well known for his studies of medieval literature and folklore, particularly *The Art of the American Folk Preacher* (1970) and related subsequent articles. He has also written authoritatively on the oral formula, folktale morphology in *Beowulf*, and the oral performance of Chaucer’s poetry.





## Meetings and Professional Notes

### Oral Tradition and Literacy Changing Visions of the World

Oral tradition is a peculiarly exciting field of study, overlapping as it does the usual boundaries between academic departments. The potential of the field for drawing together scholars from a wide variety of disciplines was very well demonstrated by a recent conference on "Oral Tradition and Literacy—Changing Visions of the World."

Organized under the patronage of the Medieval Society of Southern Africa as part of the 75th anniversary celebrations of the University of Natal, South Africa, our conference took place on the Durban campus of that university from July 22-25, 1985. The conference sought to throw light particularly on the problematic area where orality and literacy overlap and interreact. And to this end the conference brought together a large number of delegates from many different subject-areas—classical, medieval, and modern languages, African studies, anthropology, music, history, communications, and religious studies.

The conference organizers were extremely fortunate to secure as keynote speaker Professor Albert B. Lord of Harvard University. It was a privilege to have with us at the conference a scholar whose fieldwork and writings have been so fundamentally important to the growth of oral studies over the last half-century. Our other invited speakers were the distinguished Africanist, Dr. Elizabeth Gunner of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London; and Professor Jeff Opland, a scholar widely known in the field of Anglo-Saxon and Xhosa oral poetry, at present visiting professor in the Department of African Languages at the University of South Africa.

Besides some 25 papers the conference program also included two evenings of live performance. The first of these was an exciting performance by *Abafana Bomoya* ("The Boys of the Wind") of the music, song, and dance of Zulu migrant workers, combining traditional rural and new urban styles. The second evening turned out to be one of the highlights of the conference. Billed as "Nguni oral poetry performed and explained," the occasion put on display the talents, and very different styles, of three contemporary oral poets, two Zulu and one Xhosa. The first was a teenager, still learning his craft, who distributed a prepared text but then deviated from it in actual performance. The second was a retired school-teacher who once, some years ago, but never since, was moved to compose a poem in the oral traditional style on the contemporary political situation. He had often declaimed his poem at public meetings, with great success, and he now performed it for us. The third performer was the greatest living Xhosa praise-poet, David Manisi. Mr. Manisi gave an electrifying demonstration of oral poetic composition-in-performance which will not easily be forgotten by those who were there. When it was suggested from the floor that his poem had not,

perhaps, been entirely improvised, Mr. Manisi immediately delivered a new impromptu poem directed at the doubter! The performances were followed by questions and a panel discussion involving Dr. E. Gunner and Professors A. T. Cope, J. Opland, and Albert B. Lord. (An edited videotape of the evening is being prepared; inquiries should be directed to the authors of this article.)

The keynote address of the conference was delivered by *Professor Albert B. Lord* and bore the title *Words Heard and Words Seen*. His lucid and comprehensive paper drew together many themes that were to re-emerge later in the conference. Professor Lord insisted that although oral and written literature employ different methods of composition, the worlds they inhabit are not wholly separate. Both deal in words: "words heard, when set in the forms of art, are oral literature; words seen, when set in the forms of art, are written literature. When writing enters an oral tradition the forms of literature do not immediately change. An "oral residue" persists in the new written tradition, sometimes for many centuries. Professor Lord concluded by combating the "popular misconception that oral literature is crude, formless, unstructured, that without writing one cannot create intricate structures of verbal expression." He offered a number of examples of stylistic and artistic excellence in oral literature, drawn from South Slavic song and from the Finnish *Kalevala*.

The conference papers after the keynote address were grouped into the following sessions:

*Early European Societies*

First in this session *Professor R. Whitaker, University of Natal, Durban*, spoke on *Oral and Literary Elements in Homer's Epics*. Whitaker's paper surveyed the history of the idea of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as oral poems. He showed how, in the modern period, this idea first arose in the eighteenth century, remained dormant for much of the nineteenth century, and was then developed in the twentieth century in new ways and with far-reaching results by Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord. Subsequently much research has dealt with the problematic "gray" area between oral and literate. Whitaker concluded by arguing that controversy about the manner of composition of the Homeric epics should not lead us too far away from our primary task—appreciation of the epics as works of literature.

*Professor W. J. Henderson, Rand Afrikaans University*, spoke next on *Oral Elements in Solon's Poetry*. Henderson showed how Solon was a transitional figure in Athenian constitutional and literary history, making his contribution when Athens was emerging from the earlier tribal socio-political structures. Solon stood on the threshold between a predominantly oral and an increasingly literate society. He offered Athens a written code of laws, yet, significantly, he felt it necessary to use the medium of poetry to explain and justify his constitutional reforms. Against this background Henderson argued that Solon's poetry could not be classified either as purely "oral" or as purely "literate."

Moving on many centuries, the next paper was *Syntax and Rhythm in the Song of Roland: Evidence of a Changing Vision of the World?*, delivered by *Professor L. Peeters, University of Pretoria*. Peeters began by arguing that the difference between oral and written is not absolute; long before he inscribed words man used visual signs, paintings, to convey meaning. With regard to the *Song of Roland*, Peeters showed that the indissoluble unity between syntax and rhythm in the poem, and the fact that it was governed by laws of melody, proved beyond doubt that the poem was meant to be

performed. But the scholar's main task was not to decide whether the poem was "oral" or "literate," but to interpret its profound spiritual and symbolic meaning for its and our own time.

*Dr. P. Buchholz, University of South Africa*, read a paper entitled *Pagan Scandinavian 'Witchdoctors' and their God in Medieval Christian Perspective*. Buchholz discussed material from a culture and period (medieval Scandinavia) in which a predominantly oral tradition changed to a mode of expression strongly influenced by literacy and in which paganism lingered on into the Christian era. The figure of the pagan "magician" obviously required some editing or comment by a Christian author dealing with him in writing. Yet, Buchholz showed, because Scandinavian paganism and Christianity shared a religious belief in the supernatural, it required only relatively minor transformations to incorporate the pagan "witchdoctor" into a Christian world view.

In her conference paper *Mrs. A. E. Stewart Smith, University of Cape Town*, dealt with *Non-aristocratic Poetry: The World beyond Beowulf*, examining the charms, gnomes, and riddles of the Anglo-Saxon tradition. Stewart Smith argued that these could throw light on the life of the ordinary people of those times, a life lived in the shifting reality of a heroized past and a harsh present. These less aristocratic writings revealed the world huddled round the mead-hall in historical, sociological, and human detail. They were evidence of a flourishing and popular practice in vernacular literature inheriting from the oral tradition and expressing the interest of their present.

Taking us into a different genre, *Mr. M. P. Bezuidenhout, University of Port Elizabeth*, discussed *Oral Tradition in Medieval Church Songs, with Special Reference to Manuscript Grey 64 in the South African Library*. Bezuidenhout described this manuscript, a late thirteenth-century composite Office-book from central or southern Italy, containing a number of plainchant melodies in Beneventan notation. He showed that the music in the manuscript did not represent a literate tradition. Several features of the notation indicated that the melodies could not have been read without some knowledge of the plainchant repertory. Bezuidenhout concluded, therefore, that the manuscript could be regarded as a document to be used for the regulation of an oral tradition.

*Mr. B. S. Lee, University of Cape Town*, in his paper, *Margery Kempe: An Articulate Illiterate*, argued that the autobiography of this woman (c. 1373-1438), which was dictated to two writers, illustrated the transition from orality to literacy. Lee examined the modes of thinking associated with Kempe's illiteracy, and the ways her amanuenses coped with them. Lee attempted, first, to distinguish various contributions to her *Book*, then to trace her spiritual development from unreflecting illiteracy to a kind of semi-literate self-consciousness, and finally to identify signs of her illiteracy evident in the extant text.

Finally in this session *Professor E. Sienaert, University of Natal, Durban* (to whom the credit belongs for having conceived the conference and overseen its organization) gave a paper illustrated by slides, *Reading a Story Carved in Ivory: La Chastelaine de Vergi*. Sienaert described the complex iconographic language to be found in medieval illustrations of the Bible and also in secular representations carved in ivory. He then interpreted the iconography of a representation of the tragic thirteenth-century love-story, *La Chastelaine de Vergi*, on an ivory casket in the Louvre. Sienaert argued that the use of a generally known language of gestures by the artist would have given even illiterate viewers a ready grasp of this "literary" story.

*Contemporary African Literature in European Languages*

Our second session opened with a paper, *From "Griot" to Folk-tale: The Tales of Amadou Koumba by Birago Diop*, given by Mrs. J. Neethling, Rand Afrikaans University. Neethling's argument was that, although Diop purported merely to be transcribing into French stories and fables told him by Amadou, son of Koumba, Diop himself was a highly creative and original storyteller. His efforts to preserve part of a rich heritage of oral literature were successful due to his literary skill, ready wit, and talent for acute observation. Neethling observed that in his three volumes of stories he retained many of the rhetorical devices of his oral sources, thus creating an air of informal authenticity.

In her paper, *From the Spoken Word to the Book—A Study of the Oral Tradition in A. Kourouma's Novel, The Suns of Independence*, Dr. A. Wynchenk, University of Cape Town, first briefly outlined the history of writing in West Africa. She then discussed the influence on the novel of a culture with strong oral traditions, with particular reference to *The Suns of Independence*. Wynchenk contrasted this with the typical West African novel. She analyzed the role given to the usual ingredients of the oral tradition—genealogy, riddles, song, etc. Wynchenk finally discussed the allowances made by Kourouma for the modern mentality and the choice of interpretations he offered the novel's readers.

One of our visitors from the north, Dr. B. J. Soko, University of Malawi, then read a paper on *Translating Oral Literature into European Languages*. Soko stated that his fieldwork and study of oral literature had shown that much was left out when a text deriving from the oral tradition was translated from an African language into a European one. He discussed various possible solutions to this problem and also pointed out that where oral traditions had been written down, the oral performance had usually disappeared. Soko examined people's reaction to this situation.

Moving into the realm of children's literature, Professor E. R. Jenkins, Vista University, gave a paper entitled *Marguerite Poland and the Tradition of Anthropomorphism in Animal Stories*. Jenkins outlined the work of Poland, South Africa's leading writer in English for children, many of whose stories, deriving from African and San folktales, have talking animals as their chief characters. Jenkins argued that the literary antecedents of her stories included also the "art" versions of European talking-beast fables and the classic animal stories of English children's fiction of the last 150 years. He concluded that Poland's achievement lay in her evocation of South African flora and fauna and in the vision and originality of her beautifully told stories.

*Recording Oral Tradition*

Vicissitudes in the recording of oral traditions formed the subject of the third conference-session.

Professor D. M. Moore, University of Fort Hare, spoke on *Oral Testimony and a Community in Transition*. Moore dealt with some of the real problems the historian experiences when attempting to collect and evaluate oral testimony in a transitional society. His discussion centered on the effect of political, economic, and social aspects of change upon both the informant and the fieldworker, and ultimately upon their product—the testimony. Moore drew attention to the need to be aware of certain problems while engaged in the oral history of the Cape Eastern Frontier, and the need to preserve the dwindling store of "living history."

Dealing with the same geographical area, *Mr. C. J. de Wet, Rhodes University*, read a paper, *Perceptions of Village History (1854-1950)*. de Wet traced the way people in a rural Ciskei village perceived the history of their village from 1854, when it was established, through to 1950. Focusing on the history of the village headmanship, de Wet showed how this reflected the nature of the often uneasy relationship between the village and the authorities. de Wet made use of both oral and archival accounts and analyzed the contrasts between different oral accounts, and between the perceptions of the villagers, and of the authorities, of the history of the headmanship.

*Father D. Dargie, Lumko Missiological Institute, Mount Frere, Transkei*, looked at *Problems of Music Literacy: Gains and Losses, with Reference to Xhosa Music*. Dargie argued that, although there could be no doubt of the great value of music literacy, nevertheless it seemed that even in Europe the system that had developed was not adequate to represent medieval music. For African music the method of staff notation as used in Western music was not able to cope with all that should be transcribed; and the sol-fa method was totally inadequate. He concluded that in using this method in Xhosa music we took away far more than we gave. (Dargie illustrated his talk with recordings and spirited performances on various Xhosa instruments.)

Lastly in this session, *Dr. R. Belcher, University of Natal, Durban*, gave a paper entitled *From Literature to Orality and Back: The Griqua Case-history*. Belcher outlined the history of the Griqua oral tradition, going back to their first leader, Adam Kok I, in the early eighteenth century. He pointed out that religious hymns entered Griqua tradition from printed hymnals but were then handed down orally. Griqua secular tradition, however, consisting of historical accounts and topical poetry, was from the start wholly oral. Belcher showed how a movement from orality to the use of writing started in the early twentieth century with Chief le Fleur I, who focussed the Griquas' national sentiments through his historical writings. This movement has since grown in strength.

#### *Oral Tradition and Education*

Here our first speaker was *Professor G. J. Hutchings, University of the Transkei*, with his paper, *Home-made Furniture: The Oral Tradition in English and Academic Attitudes*. Hutchings deplored the neglect of oral literature by English departments in South African universities. He argued that this distorted the nature of English literature, as critics were cut off from the sources of writers' inspiration; there was a warning here for students of African literature. Hutchings then considered possible approaches to oral literature in English in relation to two topics, Elizabethan lyric and the critical problem of "realism" in the novel, with particular reference to *Wuthering Heights*.

Our second Malawian visitor, *Dr. F. Moto, University of Malawi*, spoke next on the topic, *From Oral Tradition to the Written Word: The Malawian Experience*. Moto's argument was that communication between policy-makers and the majority of their people was crucial to the progress of any nation. To this end literacy programs were seen as essential. But people acquiring information from verbal or visual messages had to attach meaning to symbols with which they were not familiar, and this was no easy task. Moto highlighted in his paper the likely perception of himself and his world.

Returning to the area of the Eastern Cape, *Mr. P. A. McAllister, Rhodes University*, dealt with *Conservatism as Ideology of Resistance among Xhosa-speakers: The Implication for Oral Tradition and Literacy*. His paper

presented traditional Xhosa conservatism as an attempt to maintain a particular vision of the world. This had to be understood in the context of the conditions under which Xhosa-speakers had been incorporated into the South African political economy. McAllister argued that oral tradition, especially formal oratory, was one of the ways in which the conservative world-view was created and maintained; this ideology had certain implications for attitudes towards literacy and education.

*African Societies: Literature*

One of our invited speakers, *Professor J. Opland, Visiting Professor, University of South Africa*, opened this session with his paper, *The Transition from Oral to Written in Xhosa Literature*. Opland showed how Xhosa oral forms were exploited in early publications by Christian missionaries for didactic purposes, while later missionary editors rejected appeals to use their publications for the preservation of oral tradition. He outlined the way in which published books followed the imperatives of western genres, often in response to the dictates of school syllabi. But the independent black newspapers—popular, ephemeral, but designed for an adult readership, unlike the books—gave evidence of a fascinating interplay between oral and written modes, a truer “transition” than published books reflected.

From Xhosa we moved to Zulu literature, with a paper by *Professor A. T. Cope, University of Natal*, entitled *Literacy and the Oral Tradition: The Zulu Evidence*. Cope argued that the Zulu evidence could not contribute much to the thesis that a people’s “vision of the world” changed with the transition from orality to literacy, and he stated his reservations about this general claim. Cope then considered the relationship between modern Zulu written poetry and the oral tradition, taking in turn the poets B. W. Vilakazi and J. C. Dlamini who, though aware of it, could not write in the heroic style, and C. T. Msimang who wrote successful praise-poems. He also gave an example of a praise-poem “literally” or “papyrally” prepared in advance for oral presentation.

The third and final paper in this session, *Colonial Conquest and Popular Response in N. Cameroun (1896-1907); How Literature Becomes Oral Literature*, was delivered by *Dr. V. Erlmann, University of Natal*. Erlmann examined a genre of oral literature in the Fulbe society of Jam’aare, called *mbooku*. Originating in 1890, *mbooku* poems related historical events that occurred in the Lake Chad region between 1881 and 1907. He showed how *mbooku* emerged in response to the decline of traditional Islamic society and to European colonial conquest, and how the texts combined structural elements of traditional Fulbe performance with the imagery and conservative ideology of classical Arab eschatological literate poetry.

*African Societies: Religion*

The final session of the conference was opened by our third invited speaker, *Dr. E. Gunner, School of Oriental and African Studies, London*, with a paper on *The Word, the Book and the Zulu Church of Nazareth*. Gunner began by questioning the evolutionist approach to oral poetry implicit in the work of a scholar such as Bowra, and also the oral-literate dichotomy set forth in the work of Walter Ong. She demonstrated the reliance on both the spoken and sung oral tradition and on the printed word, with regard to the traditions and practice of the AmaNazareth Church founded by Isaiah Shembe. Gunner’s paper argued the case for the interrelation of the oral and literate modes rather than linear progression.

Lastly, *Dr. J. Hodgson, University of Cape Town*, gave a paper entitled *Fluid Assets and Fixed Investments: 160 Years of the Ntsikana Tradition*. Hodgson's thesis was that if a symbol was to have maximum authority it must meet deep needs in the contemporary situation, while the vitality of the tradition from which it was taken had to be maintained. Her paper showed how the writing down of the story of Ntsikana (c. 1780-1821), who was associated with the beginnings of Christianity among the Xhosa-speaking people, became a fixed investment perpetuating the living tradition, while the oral sources were fluid assets used in each generation to add prestige to Ntsikana's role as historic prophetic figure.

What conclusions emerged from the conference papers and the discussions that followed them? Most important, perhaps, a renewed sense of just how complex the field of oral studies is. It became clear to us as we considered the problem that cultures do not change from orality to literacy in any simple obvious way. In fact, many delegates doubted whether a complete changeover does ever occur; they argued rather that, even after the introduction of literacy, orality persists alongside and interacts with the new mode. The extent to which literacy may oust orality will vary a great deal from culture to culture and from period to period; and even within a single culture the oral mode may continue to be preferred in some genres or activities while being displaced by literacy in others.

A further important point to emerge from our discussions was that, even where the "vision of the world" of a predominantly oral traditional culture does change significantly, the coming of literacy may be only one among many factors contributing to the change. The advent of literacy may be bound up with the introduction of a new religion—as was the case in medieval Europe and in colonial Africa—and with processes of industrialization, urbanization, and with alterations in political and social institutions. In sum, the orality-literacy shift is a historical phenomenon, and we need to examine it against the background of the society and the period in which it occurs before we can attempt to make significant generalizations.

The great success of the conference has led to plans for another similar conference two to three years hence. Further, the Durban-based organizing committee is now involved in the setting up of a regular "Seminar for Oral Studies" at the University of Natal. The Seminar will meet several times a year to hear and discuss papers given by members of many different academic departments on the whole range of oral studies.

Finally, plans are well underway to publish the proceedings of the July 1985 conference as a book. We shall keep readers of this journal informed of future developments.

University of Natal  
Durban

Richard Whitaker  
Edgard Sienaert





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An announcement of interest to readers of *Oral Tradition*:

1987

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES  
SUMMER SEMINARS FOR COLLEGE TEACHERS

*“THE ORAL TRADITION IN LITERATURE”*

*Director: John Miles Foley*

Over the last several decades, scholars have begun to appreciate the enormous significance of the oral traditions that lie behind some of our most important works of literature. Furthermore, since the publication of Albert Lord's *The Singer of Tales*, it has become apparent that works with roots in oral tradition demand interpretation on their own terms. This seminar will have as its fundamental goal the formulation of a poetics that will facilitate the understanding of oral traditional works *sui generis*. By considering both primary oral texts (Yugoslav, Native American, and African epics and other genres) and works with roots in oral tradition (the Bible, the Homeric epics, *Beowulf*, *The Song of Roland*, and *The Poem of the Cid*), participants in this seminar will explore theories of creation and transmission, oral performance, and the implications of structure for meaning from a comparative perspective.

College teachers are encouraged to apply for this NEH Summer Seminar, to be held at the University of Missouri/Columbia from June 15 to August 7. The twelve applicants selected will be awarded stipends of \$3500 to defray travel and housing expenses. For further information, please write to John Foley, Center for Studies in Oral Tradition, Department of English, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211.