



# ORAL TRADITION

Volume 7, Number 2

October, 1992

Slavica



**ORAL**  
**TRADITION**

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Volume 7

October 1992

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Slavica Publishers, Inc.  
P.O. Box 14388  
Columbus, Ohio 43214

ISSN: 0883-5365

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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.

*Oral Tradition* appears twice per year, in March and October. Annual subscription charges are \$18 for individuals and \$35 for libraries and other institutions.

All manuscripts, books for review, items for the bibliography updates, and editorial correspondence, as well as subscriptions and related inquiries should be addressed to the editor, John Miles Foley, Center for Studies in Oral Tradition, 301 Read Hall, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211.

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## Editor's Column

Under its new format of a biannual, but with at least the same number of total pages per annual volume as in past years, *Oral Tradition* closes 1992 with this issue. The shift in format is the result of two principal concerns, the one economic and the other academic. Happily, this modification will not at all affect the number and quality of the articles and other features we will continue to bring to our readership, since the overall capacity of the journal will not change. We are committed to an annual volume of 380-400 pages, a figure which has actually translated to more and more space as the methods of typesetting have evolved.

Because *Oral Tradition* serves a very diverse readership, we have been contemplating a way of increasing the heterogeneity of the contents of each issue in an effort to keep readers informed of activity in as many different areas as possible. At the same time, we hoped to be able to feature "clusters" of from three to five essays on a particular subject, approach, or area to complement the variety inherent in a miscellany. Longer single issues, on the order of 180-200 pages, as opposed to our standard triquarterly length of 120-130 pages, promote both greater heterogeneity in coverage and increased opportunity for the focus provided by clusters (without sacrificing variety). We trust this new format will serve the interdisciplinary field well.

The present issue, like its immediate predecessor, illustrates the flexibility made possible by the new format. Among the eight articles included are Emmanuel Obiechina's lead essay on the role of what he calls "narrative proverbs"—imbedded stories from oral tradition—in the African novel. Professor Obiechina goes far beyond mere identification or structural analysis to an inquiry into the dynamics of employing oral traditional material, with its attendant resonances, in a highly literate genre. Next Sioned Davies offers a meticulous and synthetic view of storytelling in medieval Wales; among her concerns are traditional "themes" that recur in numerous sources and inform the narrative in particular ways. Traditional structures and their implications are also emphasized in Marilyn Desmond's essay on "*Beowulf*: The Monsters and the Tradition," in which she traces significant patterns in the Old English poem and weighs their

importance to a "reading" of this oral-derived traditional text.

We are fortunate indeed to be able to include the third part of Mark Edwards' magisterial survey of scholarship on Homer and oral tradition in this number. While the first two installments (*OT*, 1 [1986]: 767-808 and 3 [1988]: 191-228) treated research associated with the formula, this section covers the type-scene or theme. Following the Edwards essay is our initial cluster, this one on Slavic Oral Traditions. The first of three articles, by Mary P. Coote, deals with the composition of South Slavic women's songs (*ženske pjesme*), a comparatively neglected genre, at least in North American scholarship, that deserves to be better known. The middle paper in the cluster is by the very gifted comparatist Svetozar Koljević, who has according to latest report safely left war-torn Sarajevo for the comparative safety of Belgrade; his forward-looking remarks center on the knotty problem of repetition and invention in the South Slavic epic songs. Alla Astakhova, a colleague from Moscow State University, rounds off the triad with an intriguing study of East Slavic charms. In the Symposium section Hiroyuki Araki offers a very useful overview of studies in oral tradition in Japan.

Future issues of *Oral Tradition* will feature a cluster of essays on ancient Greek (8, i), as well as articles on the Finnish *Kalevala*, Hispanic balladry, Old French *chansons de geste*, Arabic women's songs, American frontier preaching, and African American rap music, among other areas. Special issues on Native American and African oral traditions are nearing completion, Lord-Parry lectures by Ursula Schaefer and Richard Bauman are pending, and a six-essay cluster on editing and oral tradition is in the planning stages.

Let me close this column by calling attention to the Albert Bates Lord Studies in Oral Tradition, intended as a companion to the journal. To date nine volumes have appeared: Jacob Neusner's *Oral Tradition in Judaism*, Stephen Glosecki's *Shamanism and Old English Poetry*, Ruth Webber's *Hispanic Balladry Today*, Judith Seeger's *Count Claros: Study of a Ballad Tradition*, Murray McGillivray's *Memorization in the Transmission of the Middle English Romances*, Edgard Sienaert's and Richard Whitaker's translation of Marcel Jousse's *The Oral Style*, Karl Reichl's *Turkic Oral Epic Poetry*, J. Michael Stitt's *Beowulf and the Bear's Son*, and *De Gustibus: Essays for Alain Renoir*. Books by Carolyn Higbie on Homer and Zinta Conrad on African trickster tales are in press. The Lord series is published by Garland, and can be ordered from that firm.

*John Miles Foley, Editor*

## **Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel**

**Emmanuel Obiechina**

### **I. The Interplay of Orality and Literacy in African Literature**

To begin with a theoretical question, what happens to the development of literature when a relatively new cultural system based on the written word is superimposed upon an ancient oral traditional culture? The first discovery is that the oral culture does not immediately disappear by the mere fact of its being in contact with writing, nor does the literature of the oral society disappear because of the introduction of written literature.<sup>1</sup> Rather, a synthesis takes place in which characteristics of the oral culture survive and are absorbed, assimilated, extended, and even reorganized within a new cultural experience. Also, vital aspects of the oral literature are absorbed into an emerging written literature of greatly invigorated forms infused with vernacular energy through metaphors, images and symbols, more complex plots, and diversified structures of meaning. Such a happy synthesis is possible insofar as certain conditions are present at the meeting point of the oral and written traditions, including the extent to which the synthesizing artist, that is the storyteller or poet, is well rooted in the oral rhetorical forms or narrative traditions, the extent of the familiarity the artist assumes the audience to have with the oral rhetorical or narrative conventions, the extent to which the artist expects the audience to be composed of readers or listeners, and the extent of the artist's skill in controlling the literary form, in the sense of being capable of

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<sup>1</sup> The relationship of orality and literacy is discussed in all its complex ramifications by Walter Ong (1982), who observes that "writing from the beginning did not reduce orality but enhanced it" (9).

assimilating into it an experience produced in a non-literate tradition or a formal style that originally belonged to the oral traditional society.<sup>2</sup>

The situation in modern Africa amply illustrates the point about the merging of the worlds of orality and literacy. The superimposition of alphabetic writing upon the oral cultures of Africa in the nineteenth century did not extinguish the oral traditions upon which African cultures and literatures had long been established. The immediate result was that African indigenous languages were written down and brought into the mainstream of the world repertoire of literate languages,<sup>3</sup> and, additionally, a substantial body of Africa's oral literatures—from epics and extended forms to unicellular tales and verbal art—was written down, recorded, and archived. But beyond activities related to literary and cultural retrieval and preservation are the challenges and stimuli that the interface of oral and written traditions provides to creative artists practicing in the region. A large volume of written works built on synthesis of the two traditions has emerged in Africa, to which critics have given considerable attention. The conditioning of this literature by the African oral tradition has been discussed in several critical works.<sup>4</sup> In recent times, critics continue to explore the deep structures of the texts, optimally forcing them to yield up their meanings and insights. It is no longer possible to undertake a meaningful critical discourse of African literature, whether written in the indigenous languages or in the languages of the former colonial powers, without seriously adverting to its oral traditional constituents in the matrix of composite forms and contents. Nor indeed is it expedient to ignore the tensions arising from the old/new, traditional/modern, oral/written, and indigenous/foreign configurations that characterize the texts and contexts of the new literature of Africa.

The novel as a representative “literary” form provides a good example of this assimilation and synthesis of the two traditions in that it more demonstrably illustrates the transformations that occur when the

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<sup>2</sup> These criteria are taken from Foley 1986:14. From their autobiographies and gleanings from interview accounts, it is obvious that African writers have been well exposed to the oral and literary traditions and are thus able to synthesize the two in their works.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion, see the chapter entitled “Growth of Written Literature in English Speaking West Africa” (Obiechina 1990:1-20 and also Gérard 1981).

<sup>4</sup> Reference could be made to Lindfors 1973, Iyasere 1975, Obiechina 1975, Schmidt 1968, and Echeruo 1966.

pressures of social and formal realism make such assimilation inevitable. For example, it is impossible to ignore orality in a form that prides itself on a life-like portrayal of reality when exploring the life and experience of people more than seventy per cent of whom at any given moment live within traditional oral societies throughout the varied contexts of precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial history, and who have continued to sustain traditional solidarities and to espouse values, beliefs, and attitudes conditioned and nourished by the oral tradition. Even those of them caught up in the modern, urban, industrial-technological sector are not infrequently in contact with their traditional and rural roots and thus are not totally divorced from a sense of their own traditions. The oral traditional impulse is therefore strong in the modern African novel, which embodies these experiences, especially because the writers themselves are a product of both the oral tradition and literate education.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, a return-to-roots movement in African literature as a means of giving maximum authenticity to the writing made the writers look to their indigenous poetics to create works that will endure by drawing upon their living oral tradition to enrich forms, techniques, and styles received through literate education.<sup>6</sup> One major aspect of this interplay of the oral and literary traditions in the African novel is the phenomenon of the-story-within-the-story, or the *narrative proverb* as we shall more insistently refer to it in this discussion. Reflecting a habit of orality in life and literature, the novelists introduce oral stories—myths, folktales, fairy tales, animal fables, anecdotes, ballads, song-tales, and so on—within the narrative matrices of their works, in the development of their plots and themes, and in the formulation of their artistic and formal principles. These embedded stories are referred to as narrative proverbs because they perform organic and structural functions of proverbs in oral speech and in creative literature.

The choice of narrative proverbs as a focus for this discussion is not arbitrary. In no aspect of its form is the African novel more “oral” and “traditional” than in its use of proverbs, a fact that has been acknowledged

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<sup>5</sup> Iyasere (1975:107) is right in his observation that “the modern African writer is to his indigenous oral tradition as a snail is to its shell. Even in a foreign habitat, a snail never leaves its shell behind.”

<sup>6</sup> What we have here is a process akin to that identified by Ivan Illich (1972) as de-schooling, whereby writers return to their oral sources for ideas, subject matter, values, forms of thought, and styles in a move that counteracts the narrow conditioning from formal, school education. It assured a return to the idiom of African Languages and the roots of African oral tradition.

by critics in essays and monographs.<sup>7</sup> The same concentrated attention has yet to be extended to these self-contained stories embedded within the novels, even though they do the work of proverbs in an extended manner.<sup>8</sup> The story itself is a primary form of the oral tradition, primary as a mode of conveying culture, experience and values and as a means of transmitting knowledge, wisdom, feelings and attitudes in oral societies. The story embedded within the narrative matrix of a novel, therefore, provides an exceptionally lucid example of the interplay of orality and literacy which demands serious critical attention.

## II. Narrative Proverbs and the African Novel

Narrative proverbs are autonomous stories that appear in different genres and narrative registers within different structural linguistic plans and are embedded inside larger, more inclusive narratives. They function as images, metaphors, and symbols and advance the meanings and formal qualities of the narratives in which they occur. They are extensively used in the works of African novelists—in the novels of female and male African novelists, in those of older and newer writers, in works produced in the different regions of Africa south of the Sahara—and they extend across broad ideological and generic divides. Because narrative proverbs in African novels cut across gender, genres, ideologies, regions, and generations, it is legitimate to assume that their use is an essential feature of the poetics of the African novel, a feature that derives from the interplay of creative principles of oral and literary traditions.

Obviously, the sort of rigid distinction that some critics aspire to establish between the story as a product of orality and the novel as a product of literacy breaks down when applied to the African novel. It breaks down because it does not accommodate the poetics of narrative synthesis in which oral and literate narrative forms and styles interfuse. For example, the sort of formal distance that Walter Benjamin assumes when he claims that “what differentiates the novel from other forms of prose literature—the fairy tale, the legend, even the novella—is that it neither comes from oral tradition

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<sup>7</sup> Reference should be made to the discussion of proverbs in African novels in “The Palm-Oil With Which Achebe’s Words are Eaten” in Lindfors 1973:73-93; Obiechina 1975:155-82; and Shelton 1969.

<sup>8</sup> The only examples of such studies I know are Lindfors 1973, Lewis 1976, and Traoré 1991.

nor goes into it”<sup>9</sup> would be of little validity when applied to the African novel. In Benjamin’s view, “the storyteller takes what he tells from experience—his own or that reported by others . . . the novelist has isolated himself” (*idem*). In the African novel, the embedding of the story produces a totally different narrative and epistemological situation. The African novel is not a sole product of an individual consciousness (even though the novelist is a conscious individual artist), but is mediated by communal consciousness and impulses arising from group sensibility. The story when used as a proverb is drawing upon group habits of speech and narration as a means of giving shape to experience, drawing upon what could be called the populist impulse in art and life.

Like the use of proverbs proper, the embedding of stories in the novels is based upon two main principles of the African oral tradition—authority and association—through which an idea is given validity by being placed side by side with another idea that bears the stamp of communal approval and by its being linked to the storehouse of collective wisdom. Similarly, a story is made to supply illustrative, authoritative support to an idea, a point of view, a perception, or perspective in conversation or oral discourse, and is thus vested with much greater significance than is the case in a non-traditional context. The mutual exchangeability of proverb and story is possible because both are the common stock of oral tradition and are strongly built into the structures of meaning, feeling, thought, and expression of an oral people. The tendency to validate individual positions by placing them within the objectifying matrices of stories and proverbs has been adopted by African novelists in their attempt to marry creative impulses from their oral tradition with those within the written tradition.

Having been first nurtured within their oral tradition before being exposed to literate education, African writers are fully aware of the uses of the story as a communal form that transcends the narrow limits of pure aestheticism and entertainment to encompass broad social and ethical purposes. They stress the importance of the story not only in their discursive and social-philosophical writings but also in their creative works. Thus, Leopold Sédar Senghor, the doyen of African letters in French-speaking Africa, comments as follows in his preface to Birago Diop’s *New Tales of Amadou Koumba*:

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<sup>9</sup> Benjamin 1969:87. It should be noted that even though this view is widely held of the Western novel, a growing body of opinion differs from that expressed by Benjamin. For example, Mikhail Bakhtin in “Epic and Novel” (1981:38) argues that “the novel’s roots must ultimately be sought in folklore.”



The traditional African narrative is woven out of everyday events. In this it is a question neither of anecdotes nor of things taken from life. All the events become images, and so acquire paradigmatic value and point beyond the moment.<sup>10</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, that stories function as proverbs in conversation and oral discourse in African traditional societies, and are so readily assimilated within an extended written narrative form like the novel that explores life in terms of its functional and ethical values. Chinua Achebe, the foremost African novelist, is just as emphatic in identifying the social and ethical significance of the story through one of his vernacular characters in his latest novel, *Anthills of the Savannah*. He extols the story above other creative forms:

So why do I say the story is chief among his fellows? . . . Because it is only the story that can continue beyond the war and the warrior. It is the story that outlives the sound of war-drums and the exploits of brave fighters. It is the story, not others, that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of cactus fence. The story is our escort; without it, we are blind.<sup>11</sup>

This central position given to the story in oral tradition and recognized by African writers in the shaping of their literary world and works further justifies its being made to loom so large in the context of “oral-written” interactions such as we find in the narrative proverbs within African novels.

A typical oral narrative has a structure built around the narrator, the actors, a story or sequence of events, and an audience; often an element of performance is also present. Each story is a complete unit, self-contained and adequate within its genre but functioning, in an attributive context, as an extension of some essential aspect of the plot of the larger narrative; each functions as a proverb and is thus in an ancillary status to the mainline

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Jahn 1961:211.

<sup>11</sup> Achebe 1987:124. It is interesting to compare this exegetic view of the story with the epigraph to Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony* (1977:2), which contains these sentiments: “I will tell you something about stories. . . . They aren’t just entertainment. . . . They are all we have . . . to fight off illness and death. You don’t have anything if you don’t have the stories.” The significance of the story in oral and oral-based cultures has been well established in native American novels of return, not only in the work of Silko but also in the novels of McNickle, Momaday, and Welch.

narrative, feeding into it some insight and adding cumulatively to the complication of the plot. Each narrative proverb is a vital tributary to the main flow of the narrative, or to use a botanical metaphor, a substantial branch on the main stem of the giant tree.

The critical factor in the successful use of narrative proverbs in African novels is that the novelists are adequately inducted into the oral and written traditions and are thus able to handle the interplay of the two traditions. They are able to combine the facilities of an oral narrator with those of a modern novelist. In the one context dealing with the oral component of experience, they have to exercise the facilities of the oral narrative performer, to live the material imaginatively (as a narrative performance) before converting it into written form, in accordance with the generic logic that the novel imposes as a fully developed written narrative. Part of the demand of orality is of course the effect of memory for triggering these stories in the context of oral cultures that are still living and breathing today's air. To be able to use the stories, especially those of them extrapolated from the oral traditional repertoire, requires that the novelists be well grounded in the tradition of oral storytelling. But it ought to be stated that knowledge of specific traditional stories is not an absolute precondition to the use of narrative proverbs. That absolute condition is an awareness of the technique of narrative embedding, since what matters here is not that the story be traditional but that it be well and adequately prepared for embedding in the function of a proverb. Many of the novelists invent their own stories, but trim them to the proper forms in which they are embedded.

The written nature of the novel imposes considerable constraints on the performance characteristics of the oral stories. In the first place, the paralinguistic features, such as gestures, body movements, voice pitches, and so on, are necessarily reduced, if not eliminated altogether, in the oral texts featured in the novels. Second, the novel's formal qualities, especially the demands of plot, characterization, setting, and narrative viewpoint, impose further curbs on the scope of oral traditional material capable of being assimilated. A consideration of the emerging synthesis would, therefore, focus attention not only on the form and content absorbed but also on the modifications that they have to undergo to prepare them for assimilation. Third, the embedding of narratives requires the embedding of contexts, because the link between the embedded story and the mainline narrative is based on contextual affinity, since the practice of embedding itself arises from the tradition of proverbialization that in turn thrives on analogy and association. Fourth, the embedding of a story necessarily

affects the plot structure of the novel in which it occurs. Instead of the usual linear plot structure that follows the Aristotelian principle evidenced in most conventional novels, there are in African novels movements forward and backward along symbol-referent trajectories that radically influence their plots.<sup>12</sup> Fifth, the embedding of the narrative proverbs necessarily reduces the tempo of narrative, since the reader is constantly compelled to slow down in order to absorb the full import of a newly embedded story, to decipher it as a symbol or image, to relate symbol/image to its referent and to relate them (story, symbol/image, and referent) to the structure of the novel's total meaning. And, finally, as a result of these characteristics of African novels with embedded stories, the only effective way to extract from them their highest value, meanings, visions, and insights is through close reading of the texts. These general remarks will be concretized when related to specific texts.

### III. The Example of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*<sup>13</sup>

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is the best example of the use of narrative proverbs to express the distinctive quality of African fiction. Many African novelists employ the technique of narrative embedding, but in *Things Fall Apart* we have the most elaborate and the most successful use of the strategy for diverse formal, thematic, and aesthetic purposes. In this novel there are nine embedded narratives, of which seven are folktales and mythic stories, one a pseudo-history, and one an anecdote. Each embedded story brings something to the total meaning of the novel, some insight to clarify the action, to sharpen characterization, to elaborate themes and enrich the setting and environment of action. Most importantly, the narrative proverbs help to define the epistemological order within the novel. The reader is made aware that the world of *Things Fall Apart* is traditional,

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<sup>12</sup> Obviously such a plot structure is often misunderstood by critics who do not realize the underlying structural relationship between the embedded stories and the mainstream narratives. Thus, Charles Larson sees one of the plot structures of a great many African novels as the "loose narration of separate events, stories, and tales" (1972:18), without at the same time being cognizant of the integrative principle that links the separate stories to the mainline narratives.

<sup>13</sup> Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* was first published in 1958. It underwent several reprints, and by 1990 it had sold five and a half million copies in its English editions and been translated into forty-six languages.

that within it knowledge is attained through analogy, allusion, and metaphoric extension, with each embedded narrative representing one or another aspect of the many-sided action of the novel and used to define life and communally shared values.

The subject matter of *Things Fall Apart* is the encounter of European and African worlds at the beginning of British colonization of Igboland in the southeastern part of what is today known as Nigeria. The action could be located in the 1880s. The hero of the novel is Okonkwo Unoka, a powerful wrestler and warrior of the Umuofia clan, who leads the resistance against British imperialism and Christian missionary incursion into his society. He is a rash, impetuous man in addition to being a strong man. In the end, his character weaknesses and the overwhelming force of the enemy combine to defeat him and the cause for which he struggled.

Okonkwo's world is entirely traditional, subsisting within an oral culture with its intimate face-to-face social configurations and a world-view and value system that have been handed down from great antiquity. The use of narrative proverbs in the structuring of the action of the novel is a major constructive strategy in the expression of the oral traditional impulse in the lives of the characters and in defining their vernacular sensibility. Orality is in this novel more than an intrusion of an exterior style; it is a means of achieving the poetics of verisimilitude and a life-like portrayal of the experience.

### *1. Cosmic Quarrel Between Earth and Sky*

The first embedded narrative is the cosmic myth of the quarrel between Earth and Sky. It is embedded in the context of the crisis of confidence between Okonkwo and his son Nwoye, a sensitive teenager who is afraid of his father. His father wants to bring him up in the warrior tradition by telling him "masculine stories of violence and bloodshed," while Nwoye prefers "the stories that his mother used to tell," which include the cosmic myth of the primeval quarrel of Earth and Sky (38):

He remembered the story she often told of the quarrel between Earth and Sky long ago, and how Sky withheld rain for seven years, until crops withered and the dead could not be buried because the hoes broke on the stony Earth. At last Vulture was sent to plead with Sky, and to soften his heart with a song of the suffering of the sons of men. Whenever Nwoye's mother sang this song he felt carried away to the distant scene in the sky where Vulture, Earth's emissary, sang for mercy. At last Sky was moved to pity, and he gave to Vulture rain wrapped in leaves of coco-yam. But as

he flew home his long talon pierced the leaves and the rain fell as it had never fallen before. And so heavily did it rain on Vulture that he did not return to deliver his message but flew to a distant land, from where he had espied a fire. And when he got there he found it was a man making a sacrifice. He warmed himself in the fire and ate the entrails.

The myth is narrated, not performed as would be the case in a true oral context. The paralinguistic features are absent, though by way of enhancing our response to it, the narrator informs us that whenever Nwoye's mother sang the song with which Vulture softened the heart of Sky, Nwoye "felt carried away to the distant scene in the sky." The song-text itself is not included, nor is the singing of the song. However, the main narrative sequences or what Scheub calls the "core-clichés" of the myth are present:<sup>14</sup>

- (i) quarrel of Earth and Sky—cause is a struggle for supremacy
- (ii) Sky asserts supremacy by withholding rain
- (iii) suffering comes to Earth: crops wither; the dead cannot be buried . . . .
- (iv) Vulture is sent as emissary to sue for peace
- (v) Vulture's song softens the heart of Sky
- (vi) Sky relents, gives rain wrapped in coco-yam leaves
- (vii) Vulture's talon pierces leaves and water escapes as rain
- (viii) Vulture is drenched, flies to a distant land where he espies fire
- (ix) Vulture warms himself in sacrificial fire; eats the entrails

The narrative sequences are complete except for the missing etiological tail. Conventionally, the myth should end with the explanation of why whenever sacrifices are being offered vultures are to be seen hovering in the sky and often descend to eat the substance of the sacrifice. The absence of etiology is understandable; it is not structurally relevant to the themes of *Things Fall Apart*.

As a metaphor, the myth serves a number of structural, thematic, and ideological purposes in the novel. First, it brings into sharp focus the unequal relationship between Okonkwo and Nwoye. Okonkwo is pictured as an archetypal masculine figure who rules his household with a heavy hand and keeps his wives and children down and in mortal terror of him. Nwoye is crushed by his father's violence. On the microcosmic level of action, the myth throws light on the internal situation of Okonkwo's life and his immediate concerns, revealing the alienating relationship that exists between him and his oldest son and that builds up systematically until total

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<sup>14</sup> See Scheub 1970.

rupture, when son abandons father and the traditional world to join the Christians and the new forces of triumphant imperialism. The conflict between father and son, analogous to the quarrel between Sky and Earth, is built on their being so different in character: Okonkwo condemns stories and storytelling (unless they be heroic), which he regards as a symptom of effeminacy and degeneracy, while Nwoye relishes stories other than those of war and bloodshed. Paradoxically, the myth endorses the triumph of imagination over power in that the cosmic quarrel is resolved not through overt demonstration of masculinity and power but through conciliation and affectivity and the agency of song. By extension, therefore, the myth underwrites the feminine principle of creativity over sheer masculinity. Nwoye's espousal of the feminine principle and Okonkwo's dedication to the masculine create an unbridgeable impasse that ends in total alienation. The story thus sharpens the focus on characterization.

The myth provides another level of analogy. Both Okonkwo and Vulture are flawed messengers. Earlier in *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo is dispatched as an emissary to Mbaino to present an ultimatum and exert redress on behalf of Umuofia clan for the Umuofia woman murdered there. Okonkwo brings back Ikemefuna, a young sacrificial hostage. Unlike Vulture who accomplishes his mission with song, Okonkwo appears at Mbaino "as the proud and imperious emissary of war" (9). But Okonkwo's mission does not end with bringing back Ikemefuna, just as Vulture's does not end with bringing rain; he is yet to deliver his message. Okonkwo is given custody of Ikemefuna until he is demanded by the elders. His extended mission does not end until he has transacted this final mandate. Like Vulture, however, he fails to round off his mission. Contrary to the counsel of his oldest kinsman, he follows the train of the sacrificial crew and quite unnaturally cuts down the boy who calls him "father."

This myth also functions as a macrocosmic paradigm in that it broadly represents the historical confrontation of Europe and Africa, the main stem of nineteenth-century imperialism with its totalizing cultural, political, ideological, ethico-philosophical, and institutional oppositions, and as an analogy to the conflicts. It foreshadows the triumph of imperialism and the defeat so poetically evoked in the title of the novel. Imperialism is symbolized by Sky and Umuofia clan by Earth. In the unequal conflict between them, imperialism, like Sky, predictably wins.

## 2. *The Locust Myth*

In the same chapter seven of the novel in which the myth of the cosmic quarrel between Earth and Sky appears, we have two other embedded pieces, the Locust Myth and Ikemefuna's Song. In the third year of Ikemefuna's arrival into Okonkwo's household and on the eve of his tragic death, a locust swarm descends on Umuofia. The event triggers the telling of the locust myth (38):

The elders said locusts came once in a generation, reappeared every year for seven years and then disappeared for another lifetime. They went back to their caves in a distant land, where they were guarded by a race of stunted men. And then after another lifetime these men opened the caves again and the locusts came to Umuofia.

This myth provides a handle on a phenomenon that is outside the immediate focus of everyday experience. The locusts, according to the myth, appear once in a lifetime and stop over for seven years in a row before disappearing for another lifetime. Ancestral wisdom provides an insight into a distanced, inaccessible, but not inconsequential experience. Even though locusts are eaten with gusto by Umuofia people, their coming is no mean ecological disaster and so attains a place in the epistemological framework in the manner of a myth. The mythopoeic reality is in the novel balanced with empirical reality, the evidence of the senses: "Locusts are descending,' was joyfully chanted and men, women and children left their work or their play and ran into the open to see the unfamiliar sight" (39). The full impact of the myth and of the realistic reporting of the coming of the locusts is only partially felt at this stage. Within the microcosmic scope of the action, it is an event filled with portent and omen as the full strength of the invasion is felt (39):

At first, a fairly small swarm came. They were harbingers sent to survey the land. And then appeared on the horizon a slowly-moving mass like a boundless sheet of black cloud drifting towards Umuofia. Soon it covered half the sky, and the solid mass was now broken by tiny eyes of light like shining star-dust. It was a tremendous sight, full of power and beauty.

As Okonkwo, his son Nwoye and Ikemefuna sit "crunching happily" and "drinking palm-wine copiously," Ezendu, "the oldest man in this quarter of Umuofia," pays Okonkwo a visit, takes him outside earshot of the children, and tells him two things—"That boy calls you father. Do not bear a hand in his death" and informs him further: "Yes, Umuofia has

decided to kill him. The Oracle of the Hills and the Caves has pronounced it” (40).

The juxtaposition of the coming of the locusts and this major moral upheaval is important. The locust myth prepares the ground for this radicalization of events in the narrative. It is as if by opening the mythic “caves” from which the locusts emerge, the “stunted men,” the Igbo equivalent of the fates of the Greek mythology, also open up a pestilential phase of events that would consume the hero and quicken the tempo of the fall of the old dispensation. On the macrocosmic plane, the locust myth prepares us imaginatively, epistemologically, to deal with the phase of European imperialism in this part of Africa. History is elucidated through mythology as locust invasion prefigures imperialist invasion. This aspect of the myth will be explored fully later in the cluster of embedded narratives in the fifteenth chapter of *Things Fall Apart*.

### 3. *Ikemefuna’s Song*

This is not a full folktale text but a song extrapolated from a folktale.<sup>15</sup> The full tale is the story of a perverse, headstrong king who breaks a taboo by eating roast yam offered in sacrifice to the gods. The song is an attempt by the people to dissuade the king from an action that would compromise both himself and his high office (42):

Eze elina, elina!	King, do not eat [it], do not eat!
Sala	Sala
Eze ilikwa ya	King, if you eat it
Ikwaba akwa oligholi	You will weep for the abomination
Ebe Danda nechi eze	Where Danda [white ant] installs king
Ebe Uzuzu nete egwu	Where Uzuzu [Dust] dances to the drums
Sala	Sala

The song is based on the oral practice of call and response. In the novel, the body of the narrative is omitted and the song has been telescoped. There are only two responses to five calls, two *Salas* to five lines of verse, whereas in the oral traditional text, there is a *Sala*-response after each line

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<sup>15</sup> According to C.T. Msimang (1986:193), songs are among the prominent features of the folktales most frequently assimilated to the Zulu novel. Of the nine novels that form the subject of his study, seven contain songs that are embedded into the plots.



of call. There is no immediate pressure to reproduce the full tale or the full song-text here. The condensing of the oral component within the written form is a reordering of the experience in a compromise strategy that judiciously determines how much of the oral material is admissible to secure a balance between the oral and written impulses.

The singer of this ditty is Ikemefuna, the child hostage ostensibly on his way back to his original home but in reality on his way to being sacrificed by the Umuofia people for the murder of their kinswoman by Ikemefuna's people. The embedded song brings complex ironic twists into the narrative at this stage. Ikemefuna is singing the song in his mind and walking to its rhythm to divine whether his mother whom he last saw three years before is still alive. The first irony is that it is he, Ikemefuna, who is at risk and not his mother. He will be cut down a few moments after humming the ditty. Then, the full import of both the tale and the song apply more appropriately to Okonkwo Unoka, who had been his guardian in Umuofia and whom the old man had warned not to take a hand in Ikemefuna's murder. Okonkwo does not heed the advice and it is actually his hand that cuts Ikemefuna down in the fatal bush. The reversal in Okonkwo's fortunes seems to begin with this brutal assault on the traditional moral order. The abbreviated folktale here functions as a moral gauge that determines how low the hero has fallen on the moral scale. He has made mistakes before, and some of these have been quite serious, but none up to this point has been as serious as the murder of a child who called him "father." His best friend Obierika, who is also a major center of consciousness in the novel, reproaches him roundly for this moral failure: "If I were you I would have stayed home. What you have done will not please the Earth. It is the kind of action for which the goddess wipes out whole families" (46).

The web of irony becomes even more tangled when it is remembered that Okonkwo's descent into the abyss of defeat begins with the unintentional murder of Ezeudu's son, which necessitates his mandatory exile for seven years and which, in turn, leads to his loss of his place in the clan, an event that hurts him psychologically. Ezeudu is the old man who had warned Okonkwo to take no hand in Ikemefuna's death because the boy called him "father." It is as if the gods have decided to use the old man's son to punish the errant hero. Ikemefuna's song is a means of tying up a strong emotional nexus from the different strands of ironies and ironic intersections in the narrative. The "king" has been warned, and since he has heedlessly broken taboo, the song foreshadows his fall down the tragic precipice. His death is predicted in the song by the lines "Where Danda

[White Ant] installs a king” and “Where Uzuzu [Dust] dances to the drums.” The hero’s death by suicide ensures his final annihilation in the situation in which only white ants and the dust will claim him; he is not permitted the comfort of a reunion with his ancestors and his clan.

#### 4. *The Mosquito Myth*

This myth is narrated soon after Ikemefuna’s death. Okonkwo’s conscience is beginning to recover its serenity after three days of great internal turmoil. On the third night, he falls deeply asleep but is tormented by mosquitoes. His mind recalls the mosquito story told him by his mother when he was a child (53):

Mosquito . . . had asked Ear to marry him, whereupon Ear fell on the floor in uncontrollable laughter. “How much longer do you think you will live?” she asked. “You are already a skeleton.” Mosquito went away humiliated, and any time he passed her way he told Ear that he was still alive.

An etiological myth, this story answers Okonkwo’s question, “Why do they [mosquitoes] always go for one’s ears?” But the myth is important for many reasons. First, the story reveals that Okonkwo has had the same exposure to the humanizing mother’s story sessions as any other normal child. Up to this point, the reader has not had any real evidence that the hero has had the advantage of normal maternal care. We know that because his father was such a colossal failure and could not provide him with those opportunities fathers normally gave their sons under the traditional system, Okonkwo came to hate everything his father loved, including the life of the imagination, for his father was a poet and musician in addition to being improvident and a laggard. But if his father let him down, the context of this myth shows that his mother did not. The effect of the revelation is to transfer to Okonkwo greater responsibility for his actions, especially those acts of brutality that seem to arise from his gender imbalance. Mother’s stories, which Okonkwo despises as “silly,” are actually the means to sensitizing young people to the values and social attitudes that prepare them to participate constructively in the life of the community. By cutting himself off from wholesome feminine influences in favor of overcompensating masculinity, the hero sets the stage for a life that is to be filled with crises and pain, in spite of its great potentialities and achievements.

The myth serves to stress the strength of conscience. After killing Ikemefuna, Okonkwo is trying very hard to smother his conscience, to

relieve himself of the responsibility of his fall. But conscience is a hardy thing; it is not easily killed. The mosquito myth is the authorial metaphor that underlines that fact.

Like all metaphors and images, the mosquito myth is open to many interpretations. On the macrocosmic plane on which the novel also moves, the myth could be seen as a paradigm of anticolonial struggle in which all who make their gesture of defiance to the foreign conqueror will be keeping alive the everlasting and indomitable spirit of freedom. In that broadened parameter of dialectal oppositions between worlds and systems, between colonialist Europe and colonized Africa, Okonkwo Unoka and the people of Umuofia become part of a historical movement of resistance against imperialism, disturbing its self-assurance and its will to dominate. In that context also, *Things Fall Apart* can be regarded as an anti-colonial discourse.

### 5. *The Tortoise and the Birds*

This is a trickster tale in which the trickster is caught in his own web of intrigue. It is the fullest text of a traditional folktale in *Things Fall Apart*. Since it is three pages long, the narrative sequences that constitute the tale will suffice here:

- (i) Birds are invited to a feast in the sky
- (ii) Tortoise decides to join the birds, but he cannot fly
- (iii) Tortoise borrows feathers from the birds
- (iv) Tortoise hatches a ruse: each guest to have a new name to party<sup>16</sup>
- (v) Tortoise assumes the name “All-of-You”
- (vi) Sky-hosts present food to “All-of-You,” meaning the birds
- (vii) Tortoise (“All-of-You”) eats the best food and meat
- (viii) Birds, angry with Tortoise, strip him of their feathers
- (ix) Tortoise decides to risk a free-fall from the sky
- (x) Tortoise sends Parrot to request wife to mass “all the soft things”
- (xi) Parrot spitefully asks her to bring out “all the hard things”
- (xii) Tortoise falls on hard things and his shell is broken up
- (xiii) Medicine man patches up the shell
- (xiv) “That is why Tortoise’s shell is not smooth”

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<sup>16</sup> This means that each of the guests should not use his/her original name, but should assume a *new* name to be used for this specific occasion—to be used at the party in the sky.

We are constantly informed as part of the domestic setting of *Things Fall Apart* that folktales are told to children by their mothers. Here is an actual domestic scene at which a mother (Ekwefi) tells her story to her only child (Ezinma). The story is merged into the broad narrative and the widest scope is given to the representation of the actual words of the mother, who tells the story and daughter who is the audience. The outline of the structure of the folktale is preserved through the use of quotation marks. Some conventions of folktale narration are also preserved, including the “once-upon-a-time” formula at the beginning and the etiological explanation at the end. The actual words of the characters (Tortoise and the Birds) are reproduced. The third-person narrator of the novel assumes the role of recorder, though occasionally he merges, when appropriate, with the folktale narrator. Paralinguistic aspects of performance are of course absent, but as much of other features as could be accommodated in written form are enclosed. For example, the one-person audience is active and participant; she makes comments, asks questions, and demands that a story with a song be told.

The story is both etiological and moral. It explains why tortoise shell is rough, hard, and uneven, but interesting though this incidental information may be, it is not the main reason why this elaborate tale is included as a subtext. The more substantial reason is moral: it dramatizes the evil of extreme egocentricism. As a typical trickster tale, “Tortoise and the Birds” serves numerous purposes in the novel. The hero is an individualist whose relationship to his community has many points of ambivalence. Just as in pursuit of individualistically determined obsessions the trickster comes into conflict with society, so Okonkwo shares the tendency towards an overwhelming sense of ego that brings him into conflict with the group. The fate of Tortoise the egoist prefigures Okonkwo’s fall in *Things Fall Apart*. Even though Okonkwo does not enjoy the mental agility and quickness of wit of Tortoise, he possesses the effrontery, drive, and existential energy with which Tortoise is generously endowed in this narrative proverb. It is this propensity to be individualistic that Tortoise shares with the hero of *Things Fall Apart* and that makes the tale something of a paradigm in relation to the novel. Okonkwo offends his society numerous times and is seriously punished on every occasion. Analogously, just as Tortoise falls to pieces at the end of the folktale, Okonkwo Unoka commits suicide in his moment of defeat. The folktale world has built into it the mechanisms, magical and otherwise, for restoring errant characters, but such facilities are absent in real life and realistic literature in which it is easy for the defeated to attain damnation.

Okonkwo Unoka's overwhelming weakness is his hubris, including his overassertiveness of individual passions and obsessions. He is brave and he is capable and an achiever, but he cannot be "All-of-You," he cannot fill the place of the Umuofia clan. He cannot impose his will on it. His glory is secure and well-based in those actions in which he is in full accord with the will of the group, but when his actions are at odds and discordant to the will of the group, he risks isolation and ultimate defeat. This is particularly the case in the final episode of Okonkwo's tragic life. While the clan is deeply involved in the search for a fitting response to the threat of imperialism hanging over it, Okonkwo kills a court-messenger, hoping by so doing to precipitate a war. But the clan has not come to a decision and so Okonkwo is isolated and, true to his character, decides on suicide, thereby cutting himself off further from his people.

Interestingly, the folktale is told by Ekwefi to Ezinma, the two people in *Things Fall Apart* with whom there is discernible emotional linkage with the sardonic hero. They come closest to evincing feelings of affection from him. Their story is linked to a major strand of the nexus of themes found in the novel—the question of Okonkwo's disruptive individualism and his final rupture with his people—that has always intrigued readers. The tale of "Tortoise and the Birds" should clarify the dilemma of why the champion of tradition should be abandoned by the very people he is trying to save. Such a question suggests that the people of Umuofia are careless of their deeper interests by not standing by their bold leader at a critical point in which their survival is precariously balanced. On the other hand, a different set of questions could be posed, such as: How much of Okonkwo's actions stem from inner personal drives and how much from communal consensus? How much from the impulse to set up Okonkwo Unoka, to restore his place in the clan after his exile and to reestablish his interrupted ambition to become "one of the lords of the clan?" The story of "Tortoise and the Birds" helps to explain the apparent dilemma. When Okonkwo assumes the role of "All-of-You," he alienates himself from a world he so passionately attempts to sustain.

## 6. *The Abame Story*

Even though it constitutes a historical or pseudo-historical narrative, the Abame story assumes an aspect of a cautionary tale presented as an oral performance. In context, it is the first demonstration of the power of imperialism, a power based upon force and coercion. While Okonkwo is in

exile in his motherland of Aninta, his friend Obierika in the company of two other Umuofia men pays him a visit. They are received by Okonkwo and his maternal uncle Uchendu and entertained with palm-wine. Their conversation revolves around travels and Uchendu enumerates the clans he had visited in his youth. The mention of Abame among them triggers the memory of the recent tragedy that has befallen that clan and its people, and Obierika tells the story of its destruction. He dramatizes his story, giving it the form of an oral performance complete with audience-performer interactions, judicious pauses, repetitions, oral patterns of speech, verbal nuancing, tentative statements, corroborations, shifting emphases, speaking voices, and so on.<sup>17</sup> The narrator meticulously interpolates oral features in the actual telling of the story, while the author supplies some other features in comments that frequently read like stage directions. Indeed, this particular narrative proverb can be neatly segmented into its dramatic units by closely following the authorial comments (which function as stage directions) and the speech-acts of the teller of the story. The Abame Story is a narrative performance in three parts (97-98):

Part I: [*Narrative Opens*]

- (i) Narrator makes affirmative statement followed by comment: “Abame has been wiped out. . . . It is a strange and terrible story.”
- (ii) Narrator adduces sensory evidence: “If I had not seen the few survivors with my own eyes and heard their story with my own ears, I would not have believed.”
- (iii) Narrator seeks corroboration from companions: “Was it not on an Eke day that they fled into Umuofia?”

Stage Direction: (*Companions nod their heads*)

- (iv) Narrator repeats statement, now in greater detail and more emphatically: “Three moons ago . . . on an Eke market-day a little band of fugitives came into our town. Most of them were sons of our land whose mothers had been buried with us. . . .”

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<sup>17</sup> We could conveniently relate this performance to Dennis Tedlock’s comment (1972:219-42) on Zuni narratives as drama: “My own consideration of the paralinguistic features of Zuni narratives, including voice quality, loudness, and pausing, has led me to treat these narratives not only as drama but as poetry, with each pause indicated by a line change as in written poetry and other oral features noted in parentheses at the left-hand margin as in a play.”

Stage Direction: *(There is a pause here. Narrator drinks his palm-wine and Okonkwo refills his horn)*

*[End of Part I]*

Part II: *[Part II Begins]*

- (v) Narrator makes another affirmative statement: “During the last planting season a white man had appeared in their clan.”

Audience Participation: *Okonkwo intervenes with the suggestion that the white man must be “an albino.”*

- (vi) Narrator dismisses suggestion and continues: “He was not an albino. He was quite different.”

Stage Direction: *(Narrator pauses to sip his palm-wine)*

- (vii) Narrator continues to give information: “The white man was riding an iron horse. The elders consulted their Oracle and it told them that the strange man would break their clan and spread destruction among them.”

Stage Direction: *(Pause. Obierika again drinks a little of his wine)*

- (viii) Narrator continues giving information: “And so they killed the white man and tied his iron horse to their sacred tree because it looked as if it would run away to call the man’s friends.”
- (ix) Narrator adds a new layer of information triggered by the memory: “I forgot to tell you another thing which the Oracle said. It said that other white men were on their way. They were locusts, it said, and that first man was their harbinger sent to explore the terrain. And so they killed him.”

Audience Participation: *Another audience intervention:*

“What did the white man say before they killed him?” asked Uchendu.

“He said nothing,” answered one of Obierika’s companions.

“He said something, only they did not understand him,” said Obierika.

“He seemed to speak through his nose.”

“One of the men told me,” said Obierika’s other companion, “that he repeated over and over again a word that resembled Mbaino. Perhaps he had been going to Mbaino and had lost his way.”

*[End of Part II]*

Part III

- (x) The audience intervention over for the time being, Obierika resumes his story: “Anyway, . . . they killed him and tied up his iron horse. This was before the planting season began. For a long time nothing happened. The rains had come and yams had been sown. The iron horse was still tied to the sacred cotton tree. And then one morning three white men led by a band of ordinary men like us came to the clan. They saw the iron horse and went away again. Most of the men and women of Abame had gone to their farms. Only a few of them saw these white men and their followers. For many market weeks nothing happened. They have a big market in Abame on every other Afo day and, as you know, the whole clan gathers there. That was the day it happened. The three white men and a very large number of other men surrounded the market. They must have used a powerful medicine to make themselves invisible until the market was full. And they began to shoot. Everybody was killed, except the old and the sick who were at home and a handful of men and women whose *chi*<sup>18</sup> were wide awake and brought them out of that market.”

Stage Direction: (*There is another pause*)

- (xi) Narrator concludes: “Their clan is now completely empty. Even the sacred fish in their mysterious lake have fled and the lake has turned the color of blood. A great evil has come upon their land as the Oracle had warned.”

Stage Direction: (*A long silence. Uchendu ground his teeth together audibly.*) Then he burst out: “Never kill a man who says nothing. Those men of Abame were fools.”

[End of Part III]

The Abame story is a typical oral narrative that, as Lord (1960:13) tells us, is composed in performance. All the main parts of an oral narrative performance are present: the narrator, an audience, a story or a sequence of events, and the element of a performance. The narrator is in close contact with his audience, drawing upon shared knowledge and values, seeking corroboration of collectively shared intelligence, and the audience in its turn participating, intervening when necessary, proffering comments, correcting impressions, and adding details. The speaking voice is audible with its oral rhythm of judicious pauses in the control of the flow of information. There are repetitions of key incidents or words. For example, “iron horse” is repeated five times in the story and the killing of the white

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<sup>18</sup> *Chi* is an individual’s spirit-double. It could also mean his destiny. *Chi* is a major concept in Igbo cosmology.



man as many times—these are the key material facts of the story on which other things are hinged; repetition is a mode of deploying emphases in oral narrative and performance. The pauses are made more dramatic by the introduction of palm-wine, an indispensable beverage at West African social gatherings. The climax of the interaction of narrator and audience is Uchendu's response to the Abame story in the nature of his own story of the Kite, the Duckling, and the Chicken, which becomes a sort of narrative coda to the Abame Story. Again, this narrative response is triggered forth by the remembrance of a well known story that has direct bearing on the situation just dramatized.<sup>19</sup>

### 5. *The Kite Myth (Uchendu's Story)*

Mother Kite once sent her daughter to bring food. She went, and brought back a duckling. "You have done very well," said Mother Kite to her daughter, "but tell me, what did the mother of this duckling say when you swooped and carried its child away?" "It said nothing," replied the young kite. "It just walked away." "You must return the duckling," said Mother Kite. "There is something ominous behind the silence." And so Daughter Kite returned the duckling and took a chick instead. "What did the mother of this chick do?" asked the old kite. "It cried and raved and cursed me," said the young kite. "Then we can eat the chick," said her mother. "There is nothing to fear from someone who shouts." Those men of Abame were fools. (98-99)

Ordinarily an etiological myth that explains why kites eat chickens but not ducklings, the myth goes beyond etiology in this context; it is an extended response to the Abame Story. Uchendu the teller of the myth had intervened while Obierika was telling the Abame story to inquire what the white man said before the Abame people killed him. He is, as it were, following up on that intervention and proffering ethical comment on the murder of a lone traveller who offers no provocation and whose silence is therefore ominous for the perpetrators of crime. Ensuring the safety of travellers is one of the most firmly held ethical-religious values of traditional African societies, for travellers are under the special protection of some of the most tenacious deities. The myth therefore supplies a moral coda to a story that in turn provides a major sign-post on the thematic

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<sup>19</sup> This follows the general oral principle identified by Tedlock (1983:14): "Among the Quiché . . . stories occur to people only when conversation or chance events bring them to mind."

structuring of the larger narrative. The myth thus functions as an explanation within an explanation. Coming at the end of the highly dramatic telling of the Abame story, it is told simply, in straightforward dialogue, within a simple narrative rhythm, and is very tersely controlled. The effect is sobering; the lowering of the narrative register makes it easier to absorb the full impact of the terrible events that are forcing themselves on the consciousness and being given expression in story. One might even say that these stories are a means of coming to grips with events that are shaking the foundations of the stability of the old world and filling the people's lives with anxieties and strange forebodings.

The Abame Story with its mythic coda exemplifies the best technique of narrative embedding in the African novel. The critical issue that the novel has to confront is how to bridge the epistemological gap between the known world of the traditional people and the (as yet) nebulous world of the Europeans threatening the inner stabilities of the traditional world. These embedded stories attempt to provide such a bridge. Here one must re-introduce the Locust Myth, because it brings an important dimension into this attempt to reconstruct the mode of knowing and absorbing a new and threatening experience.

At the beginning of *Things Fall Apart*, the spatio-temporal dimension of experience is defined by Umuofia and its neighborhood, the "nine villages and even beyond" (3) mentioned in the opening sentence of the novel. Okonkwo's fame is said to be known within that compass. And this limited world is also defined by Okonkwo's uncle Uchendu, who is reputed to be a widely travelled man. The scope of his mobility, physical and social, is still very much limited to a handful of clans within easy reach of one another. The world of nineteenth-century European imperialism is yet unknown, and so also the full scope of the threat of Christian evangelism to this non-Christian land. The intrusion of these forces introduces a radical new dimension requiring new knowledge, a new epistemological chart to aid the navigation of the bewildering events that are causing great anxiety and emotional upheaval. As an initial response, the people draw upon their regular sources of knowledge, upon their myths and proverbs and from the authority of their oracles, elders, and ancestors, as well as on the resources of memory and the evidence of their own senses.

In the Abame story, the people consult their oracle, who predicts as closely as possible what is going to happen. The lone white man would destroy their clan. Next, the lone white man is only a harbinger of others already under way. And, finally, the white men are "locusts." What is under way is imperialist invasion. Within the traditional mind-set and

imagination, the mythic scaffolding and the concrete image take shape and build a perception of the mighty threat. To appreciate this perception, the reader of *Things Fall Apart* is expected to travel back along the track of memory from chapter fifteen to chapter seven where the locust myth and the locust invasion are described. In the process, myth transforms to metaphor and metaphor transforms reality, investing it with clarity. Myth, metaphor, history, and reality interfuse in a mode that operates largely through association. On the microcosmic level of experience, we have a particularized event of the murder of a solitary white man riding an iron horse and the terrible reprisals against a doomed clan. On the macrocosmic plane, however, we have the parabolic extension of the event that encompasses the global scope of imperialism, with the locust invasion symbolizing imperialist invasion with its attendant devastations and destructions.

The linguistic register draws the two events together and establishes the vital links. Of the locusts in Umuofia we are told that “at first, a fairly small swarm came” and that “they were the harbingers sent to survey the land” (39). Of the coming of the white men, the Abame oracle informs us as follows: “Other white men were on their way. They were locusts . . . and that first man was their harbinger sent to explore the terrain” (97-98). The connection is deliberate. The locust myth bridges the gulf of cognition; it establishes the link between the known and the unknown. The oracle could draw upon the locust paradigm to explain the threat posed by imperialism. The people already know about locusts, both the myth attaching to them and their threat of ecological and economic disaster. The people do not know about the white people and the threat of imperialism, but the oracle does. The oracle draws upon the locust phenomenon to explain the phenomenon of imperialism. No wonder the people of Abame attempt to nip the threat of imperialism by getting rid of the lone white man, described as a “harbinger” of imperialism that is in turn likened to an invasion by locusts. Everything hangs together.

It should be noted that in both the locust myth and the threat of imperialism the people attain their knowledge through a recourse to authority. The elders are the authority behind the locust myth, while the oracle provides the insight with regard to the threatened imperialist invasion; both constitute sustainable sources of knowledge.

The Abame story, the Kite Myth and the Locust metaphor strategically are aired while Okonkwo is in exile, as if for his distinct advantage, to alert him to the changed and changing circumstances of life since he went into exile. In that context, the Abame story would be seen as

a cautionary tale that illustrates the power of imperialism, the style of the new administration and its reliance on coercive violence. Unfortunately, the lesson is lost on the hero. While his uncle responds with the Kite Myth, Okonkwo responds in a manner totally in character: “They [people of Abame] were fools. . . . They had been warned that danger was ahead. They should have armed themselves with their guns and their matchets when they went to market” (99), a warrior’s response which misses the fine points of the cautionary tale. When Okonkwo ultimately returns to Umuofia, it soon becomes clear that he lacks the flexibility and sensitivity necessary for survival at a very difficult and dangerous time.

Two other narratives, the Snake-Lizard Myth (59) and the anecdote of the Expert Thieves of Umuike Market (74), are not as organically integrated to the development of form and content in *Things Fall Apart* as the seven described above. It is quite clear that the embedded narratives constitute a network of metaphors and images which enrich the setting and narrative texture of the novel, as well as sharpen characterization, deepen thematic discourse and clarify vision and the novel’s overall meaning. They help to control the moral direction of the action in *Things Fall Apart*.

#### IV. The Ubiquity of Narrative Proverbs in African Novels

*Things Fall Apart* has been extensively discussed in order to illustrate the phenomenon of narrative embedding in the African novel as an essential principle of its poetics of synthesis, its drawing from an oral tradition that is still very much alive and its assimilating this tradition to the inherent literary qualities of the novel. The author of *Things Fall Apart* has most profoundly and competently achieved this marriage of traditions, of worlds, and of creative styles. The achievement would have been purely accidental if the phenomenon of embedding narrative proverbs were restricted to *Things Fall Apart*, or only to Achebe’s novels. But indeed the practice is widespread in African novels and, as noted earlier, transcends gender, genres, generations, regions, ideologies, and narrative registers, a phenomenon that shows that the practice is well grounded and has arisen from the roots of a shared cultural condition nourished by the African oral tradition and defined by the central position that the story occupies within it.

In Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), which is set in post-independence Ghana, there are at least three embedded stories, the Chichidodo Story (44-45), Aboliga the Frog’s Tale (62-63), and

the myth of Plato's Cave (79-80), all framed in the context of a critique of post-colonial Ghana, its politics, and its ruling class. The embedding of the narratives helps to reinforce the parabolic texture of the novel and to give it thematic direction and sharpen its moral force. The central character of the novel, simply called *the man*, is a morally upright clerk at the Ghanaian railroad. At a time and place where many people succumb to the seductions of corruption, the man continues to preserve his moral integrity, but his wife thinks he is weak and unable or unwilling to provide material comfort to his family. The chichidodo slur is told in the context of this domestic war between the morally fastidious husband and the deeply resentful wife. The man's refusal to accept a bribe copiously offered him by a lumber merchant triggers off a crisis because his wife thinks that he ought to have accepted the bribe (44-45):

The woman's mouth opened, but she let it close again. Then she said, "It is nice. It is clean, the life Estella is getting."

The man shrugged his shoulders. Then he spoke, it was with deliberate laziness. "Some of that kind of cleanness has more rottenness in it than the slime at the bottom of a garbage dump."

"Mmmmmmm . . ." the woman almost sang. The sound must have been taken as a murmur of contentment. "You are the chichidodo itself."

"Now what do you mean by that?" The man's voice was not angry, just intrigued. Very calmly, the woman gave him her reply.

"Ah, you know, the chichidodo is a bird. The chichidodo hates excrement with all its soul. But the chichidodo only feeds on maggots, and you know the maggots grow best inside the lavatory. This is the chichidodo."

The woman was smiling.

Now, the chichidodo is not really a true traditional story but a naming slur made up by the man's wife in the form of a narrative proverb and embedded in the context of the trading of insults. When the man moves away from the abstract exposition of corruption as a moral evil towards metaphorically concretizing it in scatological terms, the man's wife rises to this level by this metaphorical slur that serves the function of a proverb. If corruption is so all-pervasive, she seems to ask, is it possible that you or anyone else can escape its taint? The chichidodo proverbial slur imputes to the man a certain complicity in corruption; it is meant to deflate his moral posture. It is of course not true, because the man and his friend the naked man strive hard to maintain their moral integrity in the face of strong social pressures to compel them to conform.

The dialogue reveals the mixture of oral and written impulses within

the novel. Qualities of facial and physical expressions that in true oral exchanges are actually performed have had to be described here, but the “chichidodo” naming slur is given all the poignancy of oral delivery. The repetition of the substantive rather than its pronoun preserves the oral quality of the piece and thereby enhances its effect. The repetition of the proper noun creates immediacy and gives poignancy to the insult.

Aboliga the Frog’s story of the “old manchild” is of the same texture and effect as the chichidodo. It is also an embedded story that functions as a metaphor, except that in this case the story’s application is to the nation rather than to an individual. It is built largely as analogy (63):

It [old manchild] had been born with all the features of a human baby, but within seven years it had completed the cycle from babyhood to infancy to youth, to maturity and old age, and in its seventh year it had died a natural death.

The analogy with a country that has moved rapidly, almost instantly, from the optimism of independence to post-independence disillusionment is strongly communicated in the story of “old manchild.” The much more elaborate myth of Plato’s cave explores the predicament of the morally fastidious people striving heroically, but unsuccessfully, to bring light to people deeply entrenched in their darkness. Through these embedded stories the postcolonial leadership is severely strictured and serious doubts are raised about the adequacy of the programs of political and economic action in the new state.

The characters of this novel are not strictly traditional, nor are the stories that are used in the embedding style, but both characters and style are sufficiently close to reflect a viable synthesis of tradition and modernity, a compositeness that absorbs vital elements of the oral and literary styles. The characters seem to have had access to what Armah calls “the ancient dignity of formal speech” (174) that manifests itself in oral language habits that in the best contexts find expression in the use of both proverbs proper and narrative proverbs.

African women writers also use narrative proverbs to great effect in pursuit of themes that are pertinent to women, such as marriage, child-rearing, and economic exploitation of women. They adopt this oral traditional style in their attack on sexism in traditional and modern African societies. Even though these writers cannot answer to the full description of the radical or even conventional feminists, they show clear awareness of the wrongs women suffer in male-dominated societies and use the novel of

social criticism to exert pressure for reform. The two outstanding women novelists who also use narrative embedding as a mode of attack are Flora Mwapa and Buchi Emecheta. In their novels, the embedded story becomes a metaphorical weapon in the feminist critique of traditional or customary practices that are flawed or a contemporary lifestyle that is discredited.

Marriage is a major theme of Flora Mwapa's *Efuru* (1966), the first novel by a woman in English-speaking West Africa. The heroine Efuru, a traditional character, does the most untraditional thing by marrying a man who paid no bride price to her parents and without first obtaining their consent. The marriage proves unsuccessful as the husband walks away from it and never returns. Then she marries a modern, school-educated man, but the marriage also fails because her husband is not trusting enough. Finally, she becomes a votive worshipper of Uhamiri, "the woman of the lake," who endows her with wealth, beauty, and grace but no child, since her only daughter dies with her first marriage. In between the two failed marriages is embedded Eneke's story (105-10) of "the girl who disobeys her mother and is married by a spirit." Eneke, the specialist village raconteur, tells this moonlight fairy tale in full session, before a participant audience of women (including Efuru) and children. The story is interspersed with lively songs containing audience responses.

Thematically, the story is analogous to Efuru's first marriage and underlines the risks of contracting marriage outside the traditional norms. That is only part of the meaning. On a deeper level, the tale endorses female bonding and is almost misogynic. In Eneke's story, after the errant girl has been claimed by the odious maggot-eating spirit, the couple go on a round of farewell visits to the forlorn girl's four sisters (Eke, Orié, Afo, and Nkwo) preparatory to their descent to the spirit-world. The first three sisters unkindly send them on their way. Only the youngest and kindest sister Nkwo takes them in and tries to save her sister. While the spirit-groom is fast asleep, she takes out her family and house valuables and sets the house on fire together with the spirit. The tale thus underlines the necessity of women to help one another to surmount the unequal gender relationship in society. The mainline of the plot of *Efuru* also stresses this bonding through the strong and steady support that Ajanupu provides to Efuru. It is also significant that Efuru finds salvation and solace in "the woman of the lake" after her second marriage collapses like the first. Male influences in the main narrative and embedded tale are singularly malevolent, while the strongest women exercise benevolent influence on the fate of other women.

The flowering of the feminist consciousness is also real in Buchi

Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979). In this and two other novels (*The Bride Price*, 1976 and *The Slave Girl*, 1977) the story of the slave woman is embedded as a paradigm of women's life under the patriarchal system. Nnu Ego, the main character of *The Joys of Motherhood*, is the incarnation of the slave woman whose story is embedded in the novel as a narrative proverb. The story is told of the burial of the local chieftain's chief wife, the type of event that customarily requires that her personal slave be buried with her and her personal possessions. On this occasion, the slave woman does not willingly leap into the grave but has to be cut into it.<sup>20</sup> Before she finally dies, she says to her master the chieftain: "Thank you for this kindness, Nwokocha the son of Agbadi. I shall come back to your household, but as a legitimate daughter. I shall come back" (23). And back she does come as the beautiful offspring of a love affair between the chieftain and Ona, a local belle whose father would not permit her formally to marry any man until she has supplied a male heir to the sonless family.

The novel is built on a tissue of cross-cutting ironies. First, hardly any real difference exists between the life of the slave woman and that of Nnu Ego whom she reincarnates; or between their lives and that of Ona, Nnu Ego's mother, who is denied free choice of husband because her father wants her to produce a male heir for his family. Secondly, the novel does not demonstrate that there are joys in motherhood. Nnu Ego has had several children, and yet she ends her far-from-joyous life on a solitary village bush-path "with no child to hold her hand and no friend to talk to her" (224). The thematic deep structure of the novel is controlled by this network of ironies built on the image of the slave woman.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o is the major novelist from east Africa who has employed the novel most consistently as a mode of political discourse in his critique of the postcolonial politics of neocolonial Kenya in such works as *Petals of Blood* (1974), *Devil on the Cross* (1982), and *Matigari* (1986); the last two were written first in Gikuyu and then translated into English. The oral traditional impulse sharpens Ngugi's populist advocacy while showing up the bourgeois lifestyle to be attacked. The narrative proverbs provide the necessary contrasts between what is and what ought to be in an emergent nationhood. In *Petals of Blood*, for example, the revisionist politics of Nderi wa Riera are brought into sharp focus through the story of Hare and Antelope (1974:178-79):

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<sup>20</sup> She is slashed with a cutlass and thrown into the grave.



Hare and Antelope once fell into a hole. “Let me climb on your back first, then I shall pull you out,” said Hare. So Hare climbed on Antelope’s back and out he jumped onto dry sunny ground. He dusted himself up and started walking away. “Hey, you are forgetting me,” shouted Antelope. Hare lectured Antelope. “Let me advise you my friend. I fell into the same hole with you by mistake. The trouble with you, Mr. Antelope, is that you go jump-jumping leap-leaping in the air instead of firmly walking on the ground and looking to see where you are going. I am sorry but you have only yourself to blame.”

This story is told by Abdulla, a veteran of the Mau Mau resistance war and now a member of the delegation from famine-wracked, drought-stricken Ilmorog to their parliamentary representative in Nairobi. They come to ask for desperately needed government relief, but their M.P., Nderi wa Riera, rolls them out a lecture on the virtues of self-reliance. No wonder that the next time he canvasses the people for support he will be pelted with rubbish.

In *Matigari*, the embedded story is about Leopard and Hare. The context is the popular assembly summoned by the Minister of Truth and Justice to hear the people’s grievances. People are asked to speak their minds openly and bluntly but Matigari counters with this tale (1986:112):

Leopard once asked Hare: “My friend, why don’t you ever pay me a visit?” Hare answered: “I have seen a lot of people enter your house, but I have never seen even one of them leaving.” All the people you see here are like Hare. They have eyes and ears to see and hear whatever is happening around them.

The precaution is of course necessary because a citizen, Ngaruro wa Kĩrĩro, speaks plainly, asks plain questions, and is immediately grabbed by the police and hauled to prison. Matigari, the hero of this novel, therefore, decides to speak in riddles, thus revealing as well as concealing meanings and intentions.

In these novels that radically critique the politics, political action, and morality of a postcolonial state, the oral tradition provides essential metaphors and familiar structures for the exploration of pertinent themes and decoding of the intricacies of borrowed new institutions and values. Thus, as the peasants and proletarian characters oppose their ideological interests to those of their rulers in the dialectics of postcolonialism, especially in the context of abuses and misrule, the embedded oral story becomes a mighty weapon in the armory of the dispossessed in their attempt to recover at least moral initiative. The story becomes a paradigm

of the political situation in which the black bourgeoisie, the new ruling elite, become Leopard and the masses become Hare, and the folktale becomes a paradigm of the unequal relationship between the powerful and the powerless. The people, like Hare the trickster, develop mechanisms of survival under the predatory pressures of their rulers. Ngugi draws creative energy and insights from the Gikuyu oral tradition and vernacular style in which the use of the narrative proverb and the riddling style are prominent.

The embedding of story extends even to comic or facetious contexts as in John Nagenda's *The Seasons of Thomas Tebo* (1986), an allegorical novel of modern Uganda. The story describes how Tebo, a "magical" youth, loses his innocence and is sucked into a spiral of violence and the turbulence of politics. The embedded story is contextualized by sexual abuse, which is part of the inner pattern of the action. Jane, mother-to-be of Tebo, is taken advantage of while in a drunken, unconscious state, by "Big," Jane's best friend's boorish lover. Subsequently, she is teased by him about this incident in a coded conversation understood only by both of them. She cuts the man back with the story of "the Princess and the Forest Leper" (12):

Once upon a time, a princess fell asleep when she shouldn't have since there was a leper in the forest. His weak hand was like a feather and she did not wake up when it touched her, otherwise she mightn't have been too late to save herself. Her sleep and his feather of a hand undid her and that's the moral of the story.

This is not a traditional tale but an individual story spun on the spur of the moment. Yet, a true folktale form is competently simulated, including the formulaic time-distancing and the built-in exemplum. But this is only one aspect of the embedded narrative. There is the other aspect in which it is part of the allegorical pattern of the novel. The allegory symbolizes the dilapidation of one of the most promising nation-states in Africa through the life of Thomas Tebo. The embedded incident explains the inauspicious antenatal background of the "magical" youth and, therefore, of the new state. The antenatal "rape" of Tebo's mother by "Big" suggests that the causes of the modern collapse of the state have to be traced as much to the bad pre-independence policies of the colonial authority (the "Big" of the narrative), no doubt, as to weaknesses internal to the country (the Princess' sleep of innocence).

In conclusion, it should again be emphasized that the embedding of narrative proverbs is a very small aspect of the representation of the oral tradition in the novel of Africa, in texts that bear the full weight of African

experience and embody African realities. In the broadest sense, every aspect of the oral tradition is present, from narratives of epic style to myths and mythopoeic recitations, songs for all occasions, proverbs and figures of speech, folktales and fables, chants and incantations, names and naming styles, ideophonic and onomatopoeic expressions, the worldview, ceremonies, language, and imagery rooted in the traditional cultures of Africa. And all these are assimilated to the form and give it distinctive qualities of its own, penetrating and transforming its structure and extending its scope and making it a dynamic vehicle for exploring historical, social, cultural, political, personal, and psychological themes, for articulating human problems and dilemmas and for raising and integrating consciousness.

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## Storytelling in Medieval Wales

Sioned Davies

### The Storyteller

Very little is known of the storyteller and his functions in medieval Welsh society. Welsh sources imply that tales were recited *in prose* by professional storytellers—the *cyfarwyddiaid* (singular *cyfarwydd*). In medieval Ireland, there is evidence to suggest that the composition of both prose and poetry was linked to the *fili*, the poet, although storytelling was not one of his main functions.<sup>1</sup> In Wales, however, there is no direct evidence regarding the relationship between the *bardd* (poet) and *cyfarwydd* (storyteller). One much quoted passage in an eleventh-century tale tells of Gwydion and his companions visiting the court of Pryderi in the guise of poets<sup>2</sup>—

They were made welcome. Gwydion was placed beside Pryderi that night. “Why,” said Pryderi, “gladly would we have a tale [*cyfarwyddydd*] from some of the young men yonder.” “Lord,” said Gwydion, “it is a custom with us that the first night after one comes to a great man, the chief bard [*pencerdd*] shall have the say. I will tell a tale gladly.” Gwydion was the best teller of tales [*cyfarwydd*] in the world. And that night he entertained the court with pleasant tales and storytelling [*cyfarwyddydd*] till he was praised by everyone in the court.

—while on another occasion Gwydion, in the guise of a poet from Glamorgan (in South Wales) is made welcome at a North Wales court and narrates *cyfarwyddydd* (stories) after feasting (Jones and Jones 1949:67). Both passages are open to interpretation regarding the role and significance

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<sup>1</sup> Mac Cana 1980; see also Bromwich 1978:lxxxiii-lxxxvi.

<sup>2</sup> Jones and Jones 1949:56-57; for the Welsh, see I. Williams 1930:69. From this point on, all quotations from Jones and Jones 1949 will be made by page number(s) only.

of the poet/storyteller in medieval Wales. The implication is that the poet would travel from court to court, even from north to south of the country; he was a welcome guest and would be honored with the seat next to the ruler of the court; the *pencerdd* (chief poet) was accompanied by a retinue of lesser poets; it was not the rule for the *pencerdd* to narrate stories, rather this was the domain of the lesser poets; and finally, the purpose of the *cyfarwydd* was to entertain. Even so, this does not necessarily equate the poet with the storyteller—one could argue, with Mac Cana (1980:138), that the term *cyfarwydd* is an occasional title that primarily denotes a function rather than a social or professional class. It must be emphasized that there is a paucity of evidence regarding the poet/storyteller relationship in medieval Wales. The medieval law tracts, for example, do not list the *cyfarwydd* among the 24 officers of the king's court, although the *pencerdd* holds an important position (Jenkins 1986:3-41). The passages discussed may also reflect what the author thought to be past usage and therefore may not be historically accurate (Roberts 1984:212).

It must be remembered, however, that storytelling has been one of the main functions of the poet in Europe throughout the centuries. The convention in most Indo-European countries was that a story should be narrated in verse. The *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and Virgil's *Aeneid* are metrical narratives; the bulk of Anglo-Saxon literature was in alliterative verse—the epic *Beowulf*, the shorter epic *Waldhere*, the heroic poems of *Finn*, *Deor*, and *Widsith*. On the other hand, English *prose* literature tends to be religious, historical, or philosophical in its appeal. In France, non-didactic literature was in metrical form until the end of the twelfth century—Old French epics such as *The Song of Roland* were composed in assonant verse; the series of French romances produced in the third quarter of the twelfth century were versified. It would seem, therefore, that Celtic narrative literature follows a totally different pattern, for in Ireland and Wales the earliest surviving narrative texts are in prose. The nature of the poetic tradition seems to have been different among the Celts too: verse was mainly, if not wholly, employed for elegy and eulogy.

The situation in medieval Wales was, therefore, a complex one, which our fragmentary evidence, as emphasized by Brynley Roberts (1984:212) cannot adequately portray. Medieval Welsh bardic triads affirm a strong connection between *cyfarwyddyd* and *barddoniaeth* (poetry):

Three things pertain to the poet:  
 Poetry, memory, and *cyfarwyddyd*. . . .  
 There are three types of *cyfarwyddyd*: heroic verse, histories,

and poetry.

(G. Williams and Jones 1934:134)

According to another triad:

Three things give a poet amplitude:  
 Knowledge of histories, and poetry, and heroic verse.  
 (*ibid.*:18)

—while a late medieval treatise states:

The three memories of the bard are:  
 knowledge of history, language and genealogies.  
 (Bromwich 1974:52)

It would seem that the original meaning of *cyfarwyddyd* was not “tale,” but rather “traditional lore” or traditional learning that was necessary for society to function (Roberts 1988:62). The term itself is connected etymologically with “knowledge, guidance, perception,” and the *cyfarwydd* was “the guide, well-informed person, expert” (Mac Cana 1980:139). Various classes of learned men would have been responsible for the different aspects of *cyfarwyddyd*, including the lawyers, medciners, and bards. The bardic *cyfarwyddyd* would have been transmitted in verse form (panegyric verse, gnomic poetry), while other material would have been transmitted in the form of oral narrative. Although originally these narratives were intended to be informative, they came to be viewed more and more as entertainment (Edel 1983), hence the later semantic development of *cyfarwyddyd* in Middle Welsh where it is commonly used for “story, narrative,” and *cyfarwydd* for “storyteller.” Or as suggested by Mac Cana (1980:139), what may have happened is that the semantic range of the word *cyfarwydd* used as a quasi-literary term became gradually narrowed until in the end it was virtually confined to only one, and that a lesser one, of its older connotations.

## The Tales

What of the content and style of the storytellers’ tales? We obviously have no oral records of the period, and must therefore turn to written medieval texts of native Welsh tales. As stated by Robert Kellogg (1991:137), the earliest vernacular texts represent a collaboration between the two cultures, oral and literate. Although these Welsh tales were the



product of a literary culture, the inherited rules of oral art surely played an essential role in their composition. Unfortunately, few such tales have survived—eleven in all. They have been preserved mainly in two Welsh collections, the White Book of Rhydderch (c. 1350) and the Red Book of Hergest (c. 1400).<sup>3</sup> Fragments also occur in a manuscript earlier by a hundred years or so, while certain of the stories must have been known in their present redaction well before the time of the earliest of these manuscripts. The tales are known today as the *Mabinogion*. This collective title was first given to the tales by Lady Charlotte Guest who translated them into English between 1838 and 1849 (Guest 1849). However, the word *mabinogion* occurs only once in the original text, and is almost certain to be a scribal error. Yet, *mabinogion* has become a convenient term to describe this corpus of prose tales, although we should not perceive them as a unified collection of any kind—they all vary in date, background, and content. The earliest tales seem to be *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi* (*The Four Branches of the Mabinogi*), generally referred to as *Pwyll*, *Branwen*, *Manawydan*, and *Math*, dated c. 1060-1120; *Culhwch ac Olwen* (*Culhwch and Olwen*) is the earliest Arthurian prose tale, dated c. 1100; *Breuddwyd Maxen* (*The Dream of Maxen*) and the three Welsh Arthurian romances of *Owein*, *Peredur*, and *Gereint* with their counterparts in the French poems of Chrétien de Troyes belong to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys* (*The Encounter of Lludd and Llefelys*) first appears in the thirteenth century when a Welsh translator of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* inserted it into his translation—the episode then appears as an independent tale in the White Book and Red Book manuscripts; *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* (*The Dream of Rhonabwy*) is the latest of all and is a parody on the Arthurian age (Mac Cana 1977; Jones 1976; Roberts 1986).

### Oral Influence on Written Tales

These are the only remaining examples of traditional Welsh narrative—obviously much has been lost as testified by allusions in these and other sources, especially the bardic triads (Bromwich 1978). It must be emphasized at the start that great care is needed when analyzing these tales, especially if they are to reveal something about the art of storytelling in

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the manuscripts, see Huws 1991 and G. Charles-Edwards 1979-80.

medieval Wales. The relationship between these written texts and oral versions of the same tales is unclear. It is not known whether the authors themselves were *cyfarwyddiaid* who wrote down their oral versions or whether the tales were conceived as written compositions, the authors taking elements from a number of sources, including oral ones. Also, what can be said of one tale does not necessarily follow for any of the others—they all have differing backgrounds and sources. However, I should like to put forward the thesis that the tales of the *Mabinogion* are the work of a number of *cyfarwyddiaid* and/or redactors who recognized and respected the same prime criteria when narrating a story. Thus, although our extant texts have been greatly influenced by their being committed to writing, the “authors” were still very conscious of the demands of a successful oral performance, or were so familiar with them that they could not break away from the stylistic methods used by the *cyfarwyddiaid*. We may also have influences from further afield. But in the main it is the narrative techniques and artistic vitality of tellers of tales *per se* in early and medieval Wales that determine the style of the *Mabinogion*.

In an attempt to assess the extent to which oral techniques may have influenced the written medieval texts, it would seem prudent to examine texts whose provenance is already known. As emphasized by Slotkin (1991), the speculations of writers like Walter Ong and Eric Havelock are no substitutes for immersing oneself in genuine oral narrations. Slotkin argues that until we uncover the basis of the poetics of oral narration from genuinely oral texts, we cannot say anything definite about texts from the Middle Ages (21). Unfortunately, Wales today has no developed storytelling tradition that could provide a model by which to assess Middle Welsh tales. The Welsh Folk Museum at St. Fagan’s, Cardiff, has been responsible for the collection and study of folk tradition since 1946. However, as yet there has been no detailed analysis of the stylistics of the corpus. It is hoped that the setting up of an M.A. in Welsh Ethnological Studies, taught jointly between the Department of Welsh at Cardiff and the staff of the Folk Museum, will be a step in the right direction. Even so, as emphasized by Roberts (1988:79), much of the material is anecdotal, humorous, and brief. We must, therefore, rely mainly on the evidence offered by modern-day Irish and other oral tellers, and attempt to draw some general conclusions regarding the nature of oral performance and its influence on written medieval texts.

*Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi*  
*(The Four Branches of the Mabinogi)*

I should like to proceed by focusing on one group of tales from the *Mabinogion*. An analysis of the complete corpus is obviously beyond the scope of this article, but is the subject of a volume currently in preparation by the author. I shall therefore analyze specific features in detail, and also draw comparisons with other tales from the corpus.

The *Four Branches of the Mabinogi* were composed between 1060 and 1100 (T. Charles-Edwards 1970; SimsWilliams 1991). They consist of four branches or tales, commonly known as *Pwyll*, *Branwen*, *Manawydan*, and *Math* (Davies 1992b). Their roots lie in Celtic mythology—their characters are otherworld beings, and their world is one where the supernatural impedes on the lives of everyday mortals. It is generally held that the *Four Branches* are the work of one individual, not a reporter’s transcript of a spoken tale, but the product of one mind, a deliberate artistic piece of literature. Indeed, the author may well have been Sulien, bishop of St. David’s, or his son Rhigyfarch. Even so, the author is clearly drawing on traditional sources for his material. He states on two occasions (40, 75): “And that is what this *cyfarwyddyd* says of their encounter. ‘The men who set forth from Ireland’ is that”; “And according to the *cyfarwyddyd*, he was lord thereafter over Gwynedd.”

In other words, he is trying to distance himself from the traditional material. As Kellogg says of the Compiler of the Codex Regius 2365 (a thirteenth-century Icelandic manuscript), he is capable of stepping out of the fictional world and referring, from outside, in the voice of a thirteenth-century scholar to the poems as poems (1991:138)—here a twelfth-century scholar is referring to the tales as tales. Like the Icelandic compiler, too, the Welsh narrator refers to “former times”: “They had the boy baptized with the baptism that was used then”; “they baptized her with the baptism they used at that time” (20, 68). He, like the Icelandic compiler, is aware of himself as occupying a boundary between two worlds—his own rational, scholarly, literary world and the more fantastic world of ancient myth and legend from which the tales have come down (Kellogg 1991:139). Even so, I would argue that his style still remains, to a large extent, indebted to the oral craft of the *cyfarwydd*.

### Some Oral Features of Medieval Welsh Storytelling

I shall now examine three features that are very much in evidence in the *Four Branches*, namely, additive style together with an emphasis on chronological order, dialogue, and the formula.

#### *Chronological Order and Additive Style*

Throughout the four tales there is an emphasis on chronological order, logical and harmonious progression. The main purpose of the storyteller was to entertain, as testified by Gwydion, and we see the narrator progressing from one event to the next, without pausing for explanation. The *Four Branches* have a clear chronological and episodic structure, with a single strand to the narrative.<sup>4</sup> The narrator carefully covers the transition from one period to the next—the interstices between the important and exciting occasions are always filled. The art of linking major events was an important part of his craft and is apparent in passages such as (11,31):

They came to the court and they spent that night in song and carousal, so that they were content. And on the morrow they spent the day until it was time to go to eat.

They continued to converse that night, while it pleased them, and to carouse. And when they perceived that it was better for them to go to sleep than to sit any longer, they went to sleep.

The effect of this emphasis on progression is noticeable on the *Four Branches* and also on the other tales of the *Mabinogion*.

A great number of “connectors” are apparent throughout the tales; “and then,” “and upon that,” “and the following day,” “and that day,” and so forth. The sentences are linked by conjunctions or joining phrases—the emphasis is on the additive style throughout. Note the opening passage from *Pwyll* (3):

Pwyll prince of Dyfed was lord over the seven cantrefs of Dyfed; and once upon a time he was at Arberth, a chief court of his, and it came into his head and heart to go a-hunting. The part of his domain which it pleased him to hunt was Glyn Cuch. And he set out that night from Arberth, and came as far as Pen Llwyn Diarwya, and there he was that night. And on the morrow

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Olrik 1965:137; Ong 1982:139-47; Rosenberg 1990:154.

in the young of the day he arose and came to Glyn Cuch to loose his dogs into the wood. And he sounded his horn and began to muster the hunt, and followed after the dogs and lost his companions; and whilst he was listening to the cry of the pack, he could hear the cry of another pack, but they had not the same cry, and were coming to meet his own pack.

It has been claimed that additive style is a common feature of oral prose narrative.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, it is extremely common in the samples I analyzed from the Welsh Folk Museum corpus.

### *Dialogue*

Another feature of oral prose narrative seems to be the extensive use of dialogue. Delargy remarks upon this when discussing Irish narrative (1945:33):

A characteristic feature of early and medieval Irish prose narrative is the effective and skillful use of dialogue, and this is very marked in the modern Gaelic folk-tale. . . . A good story-teller rarely departs from *oratio recta*. . . .

—as does Alan Bruford in his study of *Gaelic Folk-Tales and Mediaeval Romances* (1969). In the Middle Ages, oral entertainment was the prime means of entertainment, and conversation must therefore have been all-important. The ability to hold a good conversation was a great virtue. Pryderi says of his mother: “I am sure that you have never heard a better conversationalist than she,” while the king of the Otherworld’s wife possesses the same virtue: “And he began to converse with the queen. And of all he had ever seen to converse with, she was the most unaffected woman, and the most gracious of disposition and discourse” (41, 5-6) .

Conversation would therefore have been a perennial form of entertainment. Indeed, the original meaning of the Welsh verb *ydddiddan* (“to converse”) was “to entertain each other.” What would have been the content of such conversations in the Middle Ages? There would no doubt be news and gossip. But also, surely, anecdotes and humorous occurrences would be related. Teyrnon’s conversation is concerned with the story of Pryderi’s youth (22):

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Ong 1982:38; Tannen 1982.

When they had finished eating, at the beginning of the carousal, they conversed. Teyrnon's conversation was an account in full of his adventure with the mare and the boy . . . .

Matholwch tells a story as he is conversing: "As much as I know, I will tell you. I was hunting in Ireland one day . . ." (30). Indeed, so often did people relate anecdotes and tales to each other, that *ydddiddan* became a term for a tale, as the romance of *Owein* suggests (155-56):

"Now," said Cei, "it is for you to pay me my *ydddiddan* [story]." "Cynon," said Owein, "pay Cei his *ydddiddan*." "God knows," said Cynon, "an older man and a better *ydddiddanwr* [teller of tales] are you than I. More have you seen of wondrous things. You pay Cei his *ydddiddan*." "You start," said Owein, "with the most wondrous thing you know." . . . "I was the only son of my father and mother, and I was high spirited . . ."

An *yiddiddan*, like a *cyfarwyddyd*, is to be full of "wondrous things." There is one main difference, however, between the two narrative forms. In his *yiddiddan*, Cynon talks in the first person; throughout he makes remarks to Cei, and although they elicit no response, Cei is still the chief auditor (157):

And this I tell you, Cei, that I am sure . . .

Thus the tale is an *ydddiddan* (= "conversation") in so far as Cynon addresses another character, and also speaks in the first person. In a *cyfarwyddyd*, however, the narrator is totally divorced from the tale—he himself took no part in the action of the story. A *cyfarwyddyd* ("storyteller"), of course, could also narrate *ydddiddaneu*—Gwydion entertains the court with "ymdidaneu digrif" ("pleasant dialogues") (57). It seems to me that an *ydddiddan*, therefore, was a short anecdote recited by a speaker, probably concerning his or her own experiences (cf. Ford 1975-76). But in his performance, a storyteller could also make use of *ydddiddan* in its original sense: he could re-create conversation and dialogue in order to vary his rendering and to create a dramatic atmosphere.

It is clear that dialogue plays an essential part in the *Four Branches*:

% of direct speech in narrative

<i>Pwyll</i>	42%
<i>Branwen</i>	39%
<i>Manawydan</i>	43%
<i>Math</i>	37%
Overall	40%

Note the figures for the other tales of the *Mabinogion*:

% of direct speech in narrative

<i>Peredur</i>	41%
<i>Owein</i>	44% (including Cynon's tale)
	27.5% (discounting Cynon's tale)
<i>Gereint</i>	38%
<i>Culhwch ac Olwen</i>	45% (including lists)
<i>Breuddwyd Maxen</i>	16%
<i>Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys</i>	20%
<i>Breuddwyd Rhonabwy</i>	21.5%

These statistics are quite revealing. *Cyfranc Lludd a Llefelys* is known to have a learned Latin context—it is not a tale deriving directly from oral tradition; *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, too, claims to be a written text from the beginning, rather than a tale with a long oral background (152):

And this *ystoria* [tale] is called the Dream of Rhonabwy. And this is why no one, neither poet nor *cyfarwydd*, knows the Dream without a book, because of the many colours of the horses, the many rare hues both of their armour and their accoutrements, and of the valuable cloaks and precious stones.

One could agree with Brynley Roberts when he says that such colorful descriptive passages would not have taxed the trained memory of an oral storyteller, indeed that they are of the essence of his art, and the gloss is an attempt to explain why the tale was commonly read, not recited (1984:213). It should also be noted that the term *ystoria* (from Latin *historia*) is used for many texts, including religious and instructional manuals translated from Latin, and seems to refer to texts emanating from a written rather than an oral background. Does this suggest, therefore, that a high percentage of dialogue within a narrative is an indication of an oral background?

One characteristic of the *Four Branches* is the constant use of identification tags or speech markers in passages of dialogue—*heb ef / heb hi* (“he said” / “she said”) is the most common. Sometimes the narrator states who is going to speak and to whom; then the speech occurs within which another speech marker, usually involving a pronoun, is embedded: “The horseman drew near him, and spoke to him thus, ‘Chieftain,’ he said, ‘I know not who you are . . .’” (4). This technique is very common in contemporary oral storytelling—recordings that I have analyzed in the Welsh Folk Museum archive prove this beyond any doubt. Alan Bruford attempts to explain the feature in his discussion of dialogue in Irish romances (1969:34):

It may seem unduly full of apostrophes to the hearer and assertions by the speaker’s word, but this again is required by oral delivery. If the speaker begins “A *Chonail* . . .” the audience realizes at once that he is speaking to Conall; they might have forgotten who was present at this stage.

Rarely is the embedded marker omitted—this is by far the most common way of dealing with dialogue in the *Mabinogion* tales. There are very few examples of direct speech without markers in the *Four Branches*, *Gereint*, and *Owein*; in *Peredur* and *Culhwch ac Olwen*, however, the instances are far more numerous, and passages of dialogue without markers also occur. Indeed, the major dialogue scenes in *Culhwch ac Olwen* are all conveyed without identification tags. Another significant point is that a comparison of the Red Book and White Book versions of *Culhwch ac Olwen* shows that the Red Book version often inserts speech markers, while in the White Book version they are omitted. I have tried to show elsewhere that the Red Book version of *Culhwch ac Olwen* contains more features associated generally with oral narrative (1992a). Can we therefore take the overwhelming presence of speech markers as a suggestion of an oral background? Note also that *Peredur* has many passages without speech markers—the narrator claims to be drawing on an *ystoria*: “And Peredur ruled with the empress fourteen years, as the *ystoria* [story] tells.” Much more research and analysis must be undertaken before any definite conclusions can be reached, if then; also, one feature alone, without other kinds of evidence, is no evidence of orality. However, the occurrence, presentation, and function of dialogue in our written texts may in the future reveal more about the nature of storytelling in medieval Wales.



*The Formula*

Much has been written on the significance of the formula in oral poetry. According to Milman Parry, the formula developed as an element in oral composition: in the course of time the need for a particular phrase arises over and over again; the phrase therefore becomes fixed and the poet uses it regularly, thus creating a formula. The unlettered singer builds up a reserve of ready-made formulas that enables him to rise immediately to most needs that his subject forces on him. According to Parry's theory (1971), the main feature of orally composed poetry is its formulaic character, and the recurrence of formulas brands a poem as oral. The use of Parry's methods has been accompanied by increasing questions about the validity of some of his most basic assumptions and definitions, including his definition of a formula (e.g., Finnegan 1990). Also, there is little agreement on whether formulaic style implies oral composition, whether literacy and oral composition are always mutually exclusive. Many believe Parry's definition of the formula to be too narrow (e.g., Russo 1976), and feel that it should embrace more than the fixed noun-epithet combinations of Parry's first study. Indeed, Parry himself emphasizes a formula-system, introducing the concept of the open variable combined with the fixed element to form a larger unit, and prepares the way for further broadening of the definition by saying that there were still "more general types of formulas": not only were there fixed or verbatim formulas, but also fluid formulas that resemble others "in rhythm, in parts of speech, and in one important word" (Russo 1976:32; Parry 1930 [1971]:133).

*The Formula and Prose Narrative*

To what extent can these theories be applied to prose, and to medieval Welsh prose in this particular case? Meter is an essential ingredient in the Parry-Lord formula. Even so, there have been many attempts to adapt the theory to prose. İlhan Bağöz, for example, in his treatment of the *hikaye* of Azerbaijan, argues that verbal repetition is a distinct feature of orally transmitted literature, prose and verse alike (1978:1; Gray 1971). He defines the prose formula as a traditional, literary unit of verbal repetition that expresses a given essential idea (formula-thought) in one or more phrases (3). Isidore Okpewho, too, comes to the conclusion that there is nothing particularly metrical about the formula: ". . . the formulary device is simply a case of memory pressed into a pattern

of convenience, and is by no means peculiar to a prosodic context . . .” (1977:190). Kevin O’Nolan applied the formula concept to Irish medieval prose romances and he also concluded that meter has no essential connection with formulas, in spite of Parry’s definition (1969, 1975, 1978). Edgar Slotkin, in an excellent paper entitled “The Oral Hypothesis of Medieval Celtic Literature” delivered at the International Celtic Congress, Paris, 1991, strongly criticized O’Nolan’s theory. Slotkin’s thesis is that there is no such thing as an oral prose formula in the sense of the unit defined by Parry and Lord. One must be able to show that there is a high density of formulas in a text and that they are necessary to the composition before one can argue for an oral provenance—this is not the case in O’Nolan’s research. Slotkin’s paper raises very important issues. However, I would tend to agree with Rosenberg (1981:443), who argues that in almost all applications of the theory to national literatures the starting point has been a modification of the original conception, adjusted to suit the demands of the particular language being studied and the tradition in which it was being performed. There are difficulties in adapting the classical Parry-Lord analyses to prose narratives. Perhaps it would be safer to avoid the term “formula” with all its connotations, and employ another term such as “verbal repetition” or “traditional pattern” when dealing with prose. However, in spite of the possible confusion, I have chosen to use the term “formula” in my analysis of medieval Welsh tales, although I wish to make it clear that I do not use it in the Parry-Lord sense. Neither do I equate the presence of formulas with oral composition. The eleven tales of the *Mabinogion* are not markedly formulaic (Roberts 1984:216), yet I would argue that certain phrases and descriptions are used so frequently that they must be more than chance combinations: we can be fairly certain that we are dealing with an acquired technique. The suggestion is that the authors were drawing on a stock of stereotyped forms of expression or formulas, and that they would build on these formulas as the need arose. This is not to say that the tales were composed orally; yet the implication is that these formulas were part of the technique of the oral storyteller and that the oral style has left its mark on the written texts (Davies 1988b).

### *Linguistic Formulas*

These consist of oaths and greetings and are apparent in dialogue passages; they were, perhaps, part of the everyday language of the period.

Although they do not further the development of the plot in any way, they are important as regards the presentation and maintaining of dialogue.

## GREETINGS

By means of the greeting formulas two characters are brought face to face with each other; the oaths, on the other hand, may occur several times within the same speech, and normally under the same conditions. In the *Four Branches* two formulas occur in conjunction with each other when greeting, that is one character greets and the other replies at once. *Duw a rodo da yt* (*a chraessaw duw wrthyt*) (“God be good to you [and God’s welcome to you]”) is the usual answer. The first greeting is *Dyd da itt* (“Good day to you”), *Henpych guell* (“Greetings”), or an indirect greeting, that is, *cyfarch guell idaw* (“he greeted him”). Here is an example from *Pwyll* (I. Williams 1982:13-14, Jones and Jones 1949:13):

a guedy y dyuot y gynted y neuad kyuarch guell a wnaeth y Wawl uab  
Clut a’y gedymdeithon o wyr a gwraged. “Duw a ro da yt,” heb y Gwawl,  
“a chraessaw Duw wrthyt.”

[and when he came to the upper part of the hall he greeted Gwawl son of  
Clut and his company of men and women. “God be good to you,” said  
Gwawl, “and God’s welcome to you.”]

Note how the author plays on this formula when describing Pwyll and Arawn’s first encounter: “‘Ah lord,’ he [Arawn] said, ‘I know who you are, and I will not greet you’” (4). Usually it is the character of lower status who greets first, and the other responds by wishing him *graessaw Duw* (“God’s welcome”) (T. Charles-Edwards 1978). Pwyll believes Arawn is refusing to greet him because of his status: “‘Yes,’ he [Pwyll] said, ‘and perhaps your status is such that it should not do so’” (4). When Pwyll realizes that Arawn is a king, and therefore of higher rank than he, he responds immediately: “‘Lord,’ he said, ‘good day to you’” (4). This is an interesting example, therefore, of manipulating a formula for a specific purpose. Turning our attention to the *Mabinogion* tales as a whole, we find that although formal greetings are not extensively used, the narrators nevertheless adhere to the same formulaic phrases when the occasion does arise.

## OATHS

The oath or curse is an example of an emotive or expressive function of language (Crystal 1987:4). Sex, excretion, and the supernatural are the main sources of swear-words. In the *Mabinogion* tales, the majority of oaths refer to God. The following oaths are found in the *Four Branches*:

<i>y rof i a Duw</i>	(“between me and God”)
<i>dioer</i>	(“God knows”)
<i>yr Duw</i>	(“for God’s sake”)
<i>ym kyffes y Duw</i>	(“by my confession to God”)
<i>oy a arglwyd Duw</i>	(“oh lord God”)
<i>oy a uab Duw</i>	(“oh son of God”)
<i>oy a Duw holl gyuoethawc</i>	(“oh all powerful God”)
<i>oy a Duw</i>	(“of God”)
<i>meuyl ar uy maryf</i>	(“shame on my beard”)

A detailed analysis of the oaths in the *Mabinogion* corpus points to the existence of some sort of system—they have a particular location within the speech, various oaths occur under the same grammatical conditions (e.g., after a negative), and most oaths are followed by a speech marker (e.g., “he/she said”).

*Variable Formulas*

The oaths are verbatim formulas; the greetings are combinations of verbatim units that combine to give a longer formula. Another type of formula is found to be much more common in the *Mabinogion* corpus, namely the variable formula, where identity is established by similar structural patterns and repetition of key words. There are two categories within this type of formula—the first combines formulaic units to give a longer formula, while the second consists of one verbal pattern only.

## PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Variable formulas are employed in the *Four Branches* to describe

physical appearance.<sup>6</sup> There are very few long and detailed descriptions in the branches, and very few adjectives; for example (I. Williams 1930, Jones and Jones 1949:13):

wynt a welynt yn dyuot y mywn, guas gwineu mawr teyrneid a guisc o  
bali amdanaw

[they saw enter a tall princely auburn-haired youth, and a garment of  
brocaded silk about him]

For another example (I. Williams 1930:35, Jones and Jones 1949:30):

A mi a welwn gwr melyngoch mawr yn dyuot or llyn

[And I saw a large ginger-haired man coming from the lake]

Most of the descriptions are introduced by the verb *gweld* (“to see”); the character’s name is not mentioned; a brief description of the character’s garment is sometimes given, following the same pattern—

gwisc o bali amdanaw	[a garment of brocaded silk about him]
gwisc o urethyn . . . amdanaw	[a garment of cloth . . . about him]

—and reference is made to hair color without using the noun *gwallt* (“hair”) at all. Although there are only a few (7) short descriptions in the *Four Branches*, yet the common elements suggest the existence of a particular convention when describing physical appearance. Indeed, the same type of simple description can be seen throughout the tales of the *Mabinogion*. One feature that becomes apparent is that every description has been structured in a particular way: formulas, or rather short formulaic units, are combined, containing a noun + descriptive element (an adjective/adjectives or *o* [“of”] + material of garment). These formulaic descriptions found in the *Four Branches* are therefore examples of a technique that was used extensively. When we examine the *Mabinogion* tales in general, we find that the narrators adhere to a particular order: the type of character, e.g. lady, nobleman; hair color + age/size; additional adjectives, e.g. “princely,” “handsome”; garment; footwear. Not every stage is included in each description. We therefore find other authors building on the simple descriptions found in the *Four Branches*, that is, increasing the formulaic

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<sup>6</sup> See Davies 1988a for a detailed analysis of descriptions of physical appearance in the *Mabinogion* corpus.

units to create a fuller picture. The author of the *Dream of Rhonabwy*, at first sight, seems to have moved away from the formulaic patterns when describing people; however, a close analysis shows that he is creating within the tradition (Davies 1988a; Bollard 1980-81).

## COMBAT

*Pwyll* is the only branch to employ a combat formula (6):

And thereupon the two kings approached each other towards the middle of the ford for the encounter. And at the first onset the man who was in Arawn's place struck Hafgan on the centre of his shield's boss, so that it was split in two and all his armour broken, and Hafgan was his arm and his spear's length over his horse's crupper to the ground, with a mortal wound upon him.

There are four components to this formula: the *gossod* ("attack"); the place of attack; the result of the attack on the enemy's arms; the result on the enemy himself. This formula is used extensively in *Gereint*; much detail is omitted in *Peredur* and *Owein*, although the basic pattern is visible and key words repeated.

## TRANSITION

It has already been observed that in oral narrative great care is taken to cover the transition from one period to the next. When attempting to outline the action from one day to the next, formulaic units are combined in the *Four Branches*. There are three stages here: *treulaw / dilit* ("spend" / "follow") ; *cysgu* ("sleep"); *trannoeth* ("the following day"). There are six examples in *Pwyll*, three in *Branwen*, five in *Math*, but not one in *Manawydan*. Note two examples (16, 26):

They ate and caroused and time came to go to sleep. And Pwyll and Rhiannon went to the chamber, and spent that night in pleasure and contentment. And early the following day . . . .

They continued to carouse and converse that night, while it pleased them. And when they perceived that it was better to go to sleep than to continue the carousal, to sleep they went. . . . And that night Matholwch slept with Branwen. And the following day all the host of the court arose . . . .

This variable formula in its fullest form is also used in *Gereint*, while in *Peredur* and *Owein* the author combines only the “going to sleep” and the “tomorrow” elements. The other four tales do not use the time-lapse formula at all—the events in the *Dream of Rhonaby* occur within the space of one day; in the *Dream of Maxen* the time lapse is much longer—one year, seven years; in *Culhwch and Olwen* the episodes are complete units in themselves—different characters appear in many of the episodes so that continuity is not preserved by following the adventures of one hero as in the Romances and the *Four Branches*.

## FEASTING

Sometimes a further formula precedes the time-lapse formula, describing the welcome, preparation, and seating arrangements at table. In this context units are combined yet again to express (a) the welcome and preparation; (b) sitting at table; (c) the seating arrangements; (d) the beginning of the feasting. The same basic structure is again found in all examples (26):

At Aberffraw they began the feast and sat down. This is how they sat: the king of the Island of the Mighty, and Manawydan son of Llŷr on one side of him, and Matholwch on the other side, and Branwen daughter of Llŷr next to him. . . . And they began the carousal.

Although the units in this formula are not verbatim, key words are employed during each stage of events, giving the impression of familiarity. This formula is found in its fullest form in the *Four Branches*, although examples do also occur in the Romances.

## APPROACH TO A BUILDING

Lastly in this first category of variable formulas, formulaic units are combined when describing an approach to a building. Each description is preceded by the verb *gweld*, that is, the listener sees everything through the eyes of the protagonist. It is interesting to note the use made of detailing or precise focusing, for example (47):

And with that word, out she went, and in the direction he told her the man and the fort were, thither she proceeded. She saw the gate of the fort open . . . and in she came. And as soon as she came, she saw . . . .

W. Evans (1960:109, 143-47) refers to this as the observing eye technique, while Roberts (1984:218) compares it to a television camera panning and finally centering on the significant object or person. Rosenberg notes the importance of the natural chronological pattern in relation to the memory and oral performance (1990:154):

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.

Such a technique is also apparent in modern Welsh oral storytelling.<sup>7</sup> This formula is exploited to the full in *Peredur*, the key words being “made for / came to the court,” “open door,” “when he came,” “made for the hall.” The formula also occurs in the *Dream of Maxen* and the *Dream of Rhonabwy*.

I would argue, therefore, that authors combine formulaic units to make a variable formula, thereby creating a longer descriptive passage. Although these formulas are not repeated verbatim, identity is established by a repeated structural pattern and by the repetition of key words. There is another type of variable formula, where a number of formulaic units are not combined. Instead, there is only one verbal pattern, and a clear structure within that. These variable formulas are therefore much shorter than the ones previously discussed.

## OPENING

Three of the four branches begin in the same way, with the name of a lord, the name of his land, and the location of the lord at that particular time. Before the last element there is a “time” phrase which focuses the attention on a particular event (3, 25, 55):

Pwyll, prince of Dyfed was lord over the seven cantrefs of Dyfed; and once upon a time he was at Arberth, a chief court of his . . . .

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<sup>7</sup> For example, Welsh Folk Museum Tape 1297.



Bendigeidfran son of Llŷr was crowned king over this Island and exalted with the crown of London. And one afternoon he was at Harlech in Ardudwy, at a court of his . . . .

Math son of Mathonwy was lord over Gwynedd . . . one day . . . .

A similar opening formula is found in the other *Mabinogion* tales (155, 79):

The emperor Arthur was at Caer Llion on Usk. He was sitting one day . . . .

Macsen Wledig was Emperor of Rome . . . and one day . . . .

Very often the opening formula will be employed to begin a new episode in the middle of a story.

## CLOSING

Each branch ends with the same formula: “and thus ends this branch of the Mabinogi” (24, 40, 54, 75). In *Manawydan*, however, a phrase precedes this formula: “And because of that imprisonment that tale was called Mabinogi Mynweir a Mynord” (54). This is another type of closing formula, seen at the end of other tales (152, 182):

And this story is called the Dream of Rhonabwy.

And this tale is called the tale of the Lady of the Fountain.

The title of the tale is therefore sometimes incorporated into the closing formula.<sup>8</sup> It would appear that there was a set way of opening and closing a narrative—by using a variable formula that was changed according to the pattern and details of each particular tale.

## TAKING COUNSEL

Variable formulas are also adopted when taking counsel, that is, when the king or leader calls upon his counselors and asks for their advice: “Immediately the following day they took counsel. What was determined

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<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of titles in the *Mabinogion*, see Davies 1990.

in counsel was . . .” (26). Examples of this formula are also to be found in the other tales of the *Mabinogion*. As with all formulas, of course, their existence in a text depends on whether the content calls for such a formula.

## HORSES

Finally, a variable formula consisting of one verbal pattern is employed when introducing a horse into the narrative: *ef a welei uarchawc y ar . . .* (“he saw a rider on . . .”). There are only two examples in the *Four Branches*, and both are in *Pwyll*; for example (I. Williams 1930:9, Jones and Jones 1949:9):

wynt a welynt gwreic ar uarch canwelw mawr aruchel, a gwisce eureit  
llathreit o bali amdanei

[they saw a lady on a big fine pale white horse, with a garment of shining  
gold brocaded silk upon her]

Note that the formula describing her dress follows immediately. It is impossible to draw any conclusions from only two examples; however, this formula is used extensively in the three Romances, especially in *Gereint*. What is particularly interesting about these descriptions is the string of adjectives employed to describe the horse—compound adjectives, very often alliterative, and rhythmical (Goetinck 1976:59, Jones and Jones 1949:219):

y ar palfrei gloywdu, ffroenuoll, ymdeithic, a rygig wastatualch, escutlym,  
ditramgwyd ganthaw

[on a gleaming-black, wide-nostrilled, easy-paced palfrey, of proud and  
even tread, fast-stepping and unfaltering]

For another example (J. Evans 1907:211, Jones and Jones 1949:254):

y ar cadueirch cadarndeu eskyrnbraf meswehyn froenuolldrud

[on chargers strong, thickset big-boned, ground-devouring, wide-nostrilled  
and mettled]

The rhythmical quality arises from the adjectives—two syllables, often three with a central stressed syllable flanked by unstressed syllables (Roberts

1984:219). This implies movement, excitement, and is without a doubt an important aural feature of the tales.

### *Doublets*

The third type of formula seen in the *Four Branches* and in the *Mabinogion* tales in general is the doublet, a combination of two words that are to all intents synonymous and very often bound together by alliteration. Many doublets in the *Four Branches* also occur in the other tales, e.g. *tir a dayar* (“earth and land”); *y gyuoeth ac y wlat* (“his land and country”); *hut a lledrith* (“magic and enchantment”). There are also numerous doublets that occur only once; even if one cannot prove that they are part of the traditional system, in all probability they do reflect an attempt on the part of the narrators to adapt traditional techniques to suit their favored mode of expression.

### **Conclusion**

Having examined the evidence offered by the *Four Branches*, and having briefly and rather superficially drawn comparisons with the other tales of the *Mabinogion* corpus, I should like to argue that the narrators have been greatly influenced by the oral storytelling techniques of the medieval *cyfarwyddiaid*. A brief survey of the data in the Welsh Folk Museum shows that a chronological order and an additive style are characteristic of oral storytellers. Dialogue, too, plays a very important part in their narrative, together with speech markers. These are features, of course, that many scholars have shown to be characteristic of oral texts. I should also like to argue that the medieval Welsh narrators were drawing on a stock of traditional verbal patterns or formulas that were familiar to them, and that these formulas also derive from an oral style. This is not to say that the tales were composed orally, rather that they have been influenced by the stylistic methods of oral storytellers.

I have chosen here to concentrate on three features only—many other stylistic techniques need to be examined, and all the tales analyzed and rigorously compared before we can say anything meaningful about storytelling in medieval Wales. Much research remains to be done on the actual relationship between orality and literacy in medieval Wales; the boundaries between oral and literate cultures are difficult and perhaps

impossible to identify. This is highlighted in an episode in *Branwen*, the second branch of the *Mabinogi* (Jones and Jones 1949:32). Branwen is mistreated on her return to Ireland; she rears a starling, teaches it language, and instructs the bird what manner of man is her brother, the king of the Island of the Mighty. She ties a letter to the bird's wings and sends it off to Wales to seek her brother. Perhaps the two boundaries touch here; in an oral culture, the starling, having been taught words, would surely have delivered the message by mouth; in a literate culture spoken words are not enough—the message has to be written down. When Branwen's brother receives the letter, it is read out loud to him—even in a literate culture, the aural has its place.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This paper was delivered during a study visit at the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition, University of Missouri, October, 1991. Parts of the paper have been revised in the light of more recent research and discussion. I should like to thank John Foley for making my visit to Columbia such a rewarding one—it was a stimulating beginning to a year's study leave. My thanks are also due to Professor Edgar Slotkin for all his exciting ideas and kind advice.

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## ***Beowulf* : The Monsters and the Tradition**

**Marilynn Desmond**

Grendel's attack on Heorot and the resulting battle with Beowulf is undeniably the most vivid and memorable scene in *Beowulf* and quite possibly in all of Anglo-Saxon narrative. Arthur Brodeur has commented on its narrative power (1959); Stanley B. Greenfield has analyzed the style of the passage on more than one occasion (1967, 1972); Alain Renoir has called the scene "one of the most effective presentations of terror in English literature" (1968:166); George Clark has described this scene as a version of the theme he calls "The Traveler Recognizes His Goal" (1965). Almost every book on *Beowulf* touches on the narrative qualities of this scene,<sup>1</sup> and many an article on *Beowulf* will include some discussion of it.<sup>2</sup> Thus Grendel's attack on Heorot is not only the most memorable scene in the text; it is also one of the most heavily glossed.

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<sup>1</sup> Modern scholars quite frequently use this passage to exemplify the narrative qualities of the poem as a whole. For instance, see Niles (1983:147-48, 167-68), who discusses this scene as an example of "barbaric style," especially what he terms the "narrative principle of contrast" (168). This scene is also discussed in Irving 1968:20-28, 101-12; and 1988:1-35, and Renoir 1988:125-27.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see Harris 1982, on the scene as exemplifying the techniques of "variational pattern and effect" (105); Kavros 1981, on the feast-sleep theme; Hanning 1973, on the "images of division, usually involuntary or compelled division, which can be said to control our response to Grendel's last visit to Heorot" (206); Storms 1972, on the effectiveness of this scene in presenting terror; Lumiansky 1968, on the scene from the point of view of the "dramatic audience" (77); Ringler 1966, on the idea that "the *Beowulf* poet's reiterated assertions that his hero will triumph over Grendel, as well as his concentration during the fight on Grendel's state of mind . . . are in fact premises of an elaborate structure of ironies" (66); Evans 1963, on Grendel's approach to the hall as an example of the way a story in Germanic epic "unfolds, not in a continuous action but in a series of vivid 'stills'" (117); and Culbert 1963, on the contention that "the poet is most effective at precisely the wrong points in the poem. Greater narrative skill was employed in the depiction of the fight with Grendel than was displayed in the narration of either of the other combats" (58-59).

The other two occasions on which a monster attacks the hall have engendered much less discussion. The first, a fairly colorless passage that summarizes Grendel's first attack on Heorot (and his seizure of thirty thanes), consists of a mere fourteen lines (115-129a). The attack of Grendel's mother (1279-1304a) is somewhat more vivid than Grendel's first attack, but much less fully realized than the scene in which Grendel meets Beowulf,<sup>3</sup> though it has been characterized as a scene that imposes "a sudden dreadful fear" (Brodeur 1959:95). Yet all three scenes aptly fit their context: their quality as scene or summary is exactly suited to whatever slowly developed terror or sudden fear the narrative requires at that moment. The differences among these scenes are obvious, but their similarities much less so; indeed, they are all variations on one scene. These three scenes—including the most frequently discussed one in the text—are all manifestations of a single traditional episodic unit found in oral and oral-derived narratives.

The surviving corpus of Anglo-Saxon poetry shows considerable evidence of an oral tradition, attested to by repeated phrases (formulas) and episodes (themes and/or type-scenes) discernible within the relatively small number of texts available to modern readers. Though some contemporary scholars remain skeptical that such demonstrably oral-formulaic elements in Anglo-Saxon poetry testify to a predominantly oral poetics and a pre-literate cultural context within which Anglo-Saxon poetry was composed and transmitted, such skepticism perhaps results from the fact that modern print culture—and to some degree the scholarship it generates—privileges the written text produced to circulate as a material artifact among literate readers, especially in the construction of a literary tradition. Through the ethnographic efforts of modern folklorists and students of oral cultures, however, a sizeable body of data now makes it possible for the Anglo-Saxon scholar to argue not only for the highly sophisticated, literary qualities of oral traditional narratives, but also for the Germanic cultural context that such oral poetics represent, particularly in contrast to the written, manuscript-based culture of the monastic Latin tradition of Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>4</sup> In addition, contemporary cultural studies provide Anglo-Saxon scholars with entirely new models and categories for the study of language and culture beyond authorship, such as Bakhtin's notion of

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<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the undeveloped qualities of this scene account for the priority of the battle with Grendel rather than that with Grendel's mother. See Nitzsche 1980 and Irving 1988:70-73.

<sup>4</sup> See Olsen 1986:550-57, 1988:141-57.

“heteroglossia” (1981) or Brian Stock’s “textual communities” (1983).

Nonetheless, a significant amount of contemporary scholarship still addresses the topic of oral-formulaic poetics from a quantitative perspective. That is, theoretical discussions of the oral tradition in Anglo-Saxon poetry are often framed by questions of measurement: does the oral-formulaic texture of Anglo-Saxon poetry amount to an oral tradition, a “mixed tradition,” or a written tradition derived from an oral tradition? Though such “quantitative” questions often generate valuable discussions concerning the methodological basis of oral-formulaic studies and thereby assist the modern *reader* in characterizing the nature of an oral tradition, such emphasis on the quantity of oral vs. written tends to reify the single written text in our possession as the product of a single (though almost always unknown) author and a frozen historical moment. The rhetorical poetics of anonymous, Anglo-Saxon poetry, however, suggests that we conceptualize the cultural context of such poetry in larger terms; indeed, we might look at the written texts we have as the material record of cultural forces, transformed over centuries of complex interactions between various traditions, for which written and oral are simply two possible categories. In such a theoretical context, we might look to the oral features of an Anglo-Saxon poem for traces of dominant concerns of Anglo-Saxon culture, mythically represented. The fact that the narrative of *Beowulf* revolves around a structurally central, repeated episode, “The Monster Attacks the Hall” (MAH), as we shall see, has implications not only for our understanding of the poetics of the narrative, but also for our appreciation of *Beowulf* as a manifestation of culturally powerful themes.

Despite the paucity of texts, Old English literature displays a significant number of formulaic episodes, known either as “type-scenes” or “themes,” depending on the context in which they occur and the methodology used to characterize them. Scholars have already unearthed, labeled, and described a large number of formulaic narrative units.<sup>5</sup> However, as a type-scene, MAH does not represent just any formal unit embedded in the text that invites description and commentary, but constitutes the central organizing unit from which and around which the

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<sup>5</sup> For a thorough survey of themes in Old English poetry, see Foley 1980:51-91; Olsen 1986:577-88; and Foley 1990:331-33. Among the most significant themes classified and discussed by these scholars are themes of death (Taylor 1967); sleep-feast themes (Kavros 1981; DeLavan 1980); the hero on the beach (Crowne 1960; Fry 1967); the theme of exile (Greenfield 1955); the theme in which a traveler recognizes his goal (Clark 1965); themes for the presentation of sea voyages (Ramsey 1971); and the beasts of battle theme (Magoun 1955; Bonjour 1957).

first two-thirds of *Beowulf* develops. This particular type-scene is the structural and thematic unit that represents the narrative itself; its deployment in *Beowulf* illustrates the narrative logic of the epic.

There is no single accepted definition or description of the type-scene (or theme) or of its smaller unit, the motif, nor is there any agreement about how these units are located in Anglo-Saxon poetry. The past few decades, however, have produced increasingly rigorous and thus increasingly useful definitions of these terms and their function in Anglo-Saxon narrative. In the investigation of the type-scene as an episodic unit in narrative, the most promising avenues have been mapped by Donald K. Fry and John Miles Foley. However, since these two scholars do not use the same terminology, my own working definition of “type-scene” and my examination of MAH must distinguish between Fry’s and Foley’s contributions to the field. According to Fry (1968, 1969) the type-scene is the building block of narrative (“a recurring stereotyped presentation of conventional details used to describe a certain narrative event” [1968:35]); non-narrative clusters of images are, according to Fry, best considered themes (*ibid.*). As a narrative unit, a type-scene<sup>6</sup> is discernible because it consists of smaller units—or details—termed “motifs” that recur in the same order, and which, taken together, function as the unit that advances the plot by presenting a stock situation in the narrative. To Fry’s description of the type-scene as a narrative element, we must add Foley’s argument that this “recurring stereotyped presentation” must exhibit some form of verbal correspondence, though not necessarily the strict or simple repetition of formulas.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Fry’s work has clarified and focused much of the discussion of oral-formulaic composition in Anglo-Saxon poetry. However, his terminology, especially his preference for the term “type-scene,” has not been universally accepted. For other theoretical discussions, see Magoun 1955; also Creed 1959 and Diamond 1961.

<sup>7</sup> Foley asserts that the repetitive element of the Anglo-Saxon theme—the linguistic representation of each motif—is the “stave root.” He defines this term as “principally the roots of alliterating words although non-alliterating words may at times be included” (1976: 221). He stresses that verbal correspondence can be found in the roots of words: “single words will constitute thematic resonance in the verbal dimension” (1980:131). And again:

we cannot expect a large proportion of whole-line or half-line formulas as verbal correspondence in Old English poetry, since that expectation presupposes a colonic formula. . . . Old English prosody tends away from colonic phraseology . . . what we *can* expect as thematic data are highly variable half-lines which may have in common only their stressed cores (*ibid.*).

Type-scenes are identifiable as narrative units that betray a similar sequence of narrative details, and these details should ideally display some verbal correspondence.<sup>8</sup> Most studies of oral-formulaic units in ancient, medieval, or modern literatures present the results of theme- or type-scene-hunting in a variety of texts in order to illuminate the occurrence as a traditional element in any one context. However, *Beowulf* and Anglo-Saxon poetry provide only a small territory for type-scene comparison, and in the area of monsters we are particularly limited.<sup>9</sup> MAH occurs in only

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See further Foley 1990:chs. 6, 9.

<sup>8</sup> All discussions of oral-formulaic “themes” or “type-scenes” depend to some extent on finding “verbal correspondence” among motifs. However, the technical requirements for this “verbal correspondence” range from Greenfield’s “verbal echoes” (1955:7) to Foley’s stave root. My own approach is to give priority to verbal correspondences that include some sort of formulaic repetition, as well as semantic and syntactical parallels; such motifs exemplify the formulaic formation Anita Riedinger calls thematic: “a verse which signifies a recurrent image, idea, or event” (1985:295).

<sup>9</sup> Attempts have been made to connect Grendel, and thus the “Grendel-Story,” to several literary and folkloric traditions that record or depict monsters; however, *Beowulf* is the only extant poetic narrative text in Anglo-Saxon that includes monsters. Grendel has been linked to the Latin prose texts that catalogue monsters, especially as represented by the Anglo-Saxon versions of the *Mirabilia* (“The Wonders of the East”), which, along with a prose Anglo-Saxon version of the *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle*, are found in the *Beowulf* codex (MS. Vitellius A xv; for a full description of the codex, see Sisam 1965:65-82). For a skeptical consideration of *Beowulf* and the prose texts with which it survives, see Kiernan (1981), who argues that the *Beowulf* manuscript first existed as a distinct codex, and who cautions against considering the manuscript as a whole to represent an Anglo-Saxon anthology of monsters, since “even the dullest anthologist would realize that Grendel outmonstered anything *The Wonders of the East* had to offer, much less *Alexander’s Letter* on St. Christopher’s curious pedigrees” (140). On the connection, frequently made, between another Latin prose text on monsters, the *Liber Monstrorum*, and *Beowulf*, see Whitbread (1974), who explores the implications of the possible connections often noticed between two texts. These connections are also discussed by Whitelock (1951:52-53), Sisam (1965:6), Goldsmith (1970:90-99), and Chadwick (1959:171-203); see further Brynteson (1982), who discusses the manuscript tradition of monster lore and the *Beowulf* codex. The Latin texts, including reproductions of manuscript illuminations, are found in Rhodes 1929 and Porsia 1976; the text of the Anglo-Saxon translations in Rypins 1924. On the place of monsters in medieval literature, see Friedman (1981), who sees Grendel in the context of a literary tradition of “the universally condemned figures of Christian history” (106), through which the poet has produced “the most interesting monster of the

one surviving Anglo-Saxon text, but its occurrence and deployment in *Beowulf* illustrate the narrative properties of oral-formulaic type-scenes, since this type-scene presents the narrative problems that the plot must solve. As such, MAH illustrates the basic structure of the text as a production of narrative units that generate the series of episodes that constitute the narrative itself.

When a monster attacks the hall in *Beowulf*, he or she does so quite predictably. As already noted, the *Beowulf*-poet narrates three attacks directly: Passage I (115-29a) depicts Grendel's first attack, Passage II (702b-828a) Grendel's last attack on the Hall—the central and most fully developed use of MAH—and Passage III (1279-1304a) the attack by Grendel's mother. These three passages vary considerably in length. The long, central attack by Grendel is framed by the two short versions of the type-scene (see diagram) that pre-cede and follow it by several hundred lines. In addition, all three examples occur early in the text, well within the first half of the poem, and spaced at comparable but unequal intervals: 573 lines separate the first two attacks, and the third attack follows after 451 lines. The relatively short space between presentations of MAH results in a noticeable balance in the overall movement of the poem. MAH structures and dominates the first half of *Beowulf*.

A glance at the schematic versions of Passages I and III show the four recurring motifs, the skeleton of this stereotyped narrative unit (see diagram): 1) The monster approaches and enters the hall when its occupants are asleep; 2) the monster seizes one or more sleeping men; 3) the monster departs to his or her home in the fen; and 4) the men respond to the attack. All four elements occur each time a monster attacks the hall, yet each episode is distinct, its features dependent on its context and participants. MAH itself is flexible in length and treatment; this sort of flexibility within such a stock outline demonstrates the potentials of an individual type-scene to structure and generate traditional narrative.

The outline of Passages I and III demonstrates the basic properties of MAH. The contrast between these two short passages and Passage II shows the poet's manipulation and expansion of this type-scene, which is—like the monsters—at the center of the poem. Although we do not quite find simple repetition of lines or formulas in Passages I and III, there do exist striking verbal and imagistic echoes in the parallel motifs of each passage. Such echoes provide a form of “verbal correspondence” necessary for the type-scene, according to Foley.

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Middle Ages and the most extreme statement of hostility toward monsters generally” (107).

## The Monster Attacks the Hall

MotifPassage I

1. Gewat ða neosian, syððan niht becom,  
 hean huses, hu hit Hring-Dene  
 æfter beorþegne gebun hæfdon.  
 Fand þa ðær inne æþelunga gedriht  
 swefan æfer symble;

(115-19a)

2. þritig þegna;

ond on ræste genam

(122b-123a)

3.

huðe hremig to ham faran,  
 mid bære wælfylle wica neosan.

(123b-25)

4.

þa wæs æfter wiste wop up ahafen,  
 micel morgensweg.

(128-29a)

Passage III

Com þa to Heorote, ðær Hring-Dene  
 geond þæt sæld swæfun. Þa ðær sona wearð  
 edhwyrft eorlum, siþðan inne fealh  
 Grendles modor.

(1279-82a)

hraðe heo æþelunga anne hæfde  
 fæste befangen,

(1294-95a)

Heo wæs on ofste, wolde ut þanon,  
 (1292)

þa heo to fenne gang.  
 (1295b)

Hream wearð in Heorote;  
 (1302a)

*Motif 1—The Monster Approaches the Hall While Its Occupants Are Asleep.* The verbal correspondence of the words *swefan* (119a) and *swæfun* (1280a), both in an a-verse, delineates the first motif of the type-scene. Since all three versions of this type-scene directly follow themes of feasting, the sleeping men are logical and appropriate transitional devices, and their vulnerability heightens the terror and doom of the monster's attack.<sup>10</sup> The first line of each passage describes the monster's approach. Although the verbs for the monster's action (*gewat*, *com*) are semantically parallel, they obviously do not correspond on a morphemic level; nevertheless, *com* in Passage III verbally echoes the *becom* of Passage I, and the *Hring-Dene* are mentioned by name in each passage (116b, 1279b). Likewise, the adverb *inne* occurs in each passage, though not in parallel constructions ("Fand þa ðær inne," 118a; "siþðan inne fealh," 1281b<sup>11</sup>); this innocuous word is suggestive, in both passages, of the penetration of the hall by the monster. In each version of the first motif, the action is described in similar if not corresponding language, and both instances of the opening motif emphasize that the monster approaches while the men sleep. These two formulaic events—the movement of the monster and the simultaneous paralysis of the men in sleep—represent the most basic, most formulaic, and yet most dramatic features of motif #1 as a narrative element.

*Motif 2—The Monster Seizes One or More Sleeping Men.* The attack itself is formulaically organized around verbs for seizing. In Passage I, the force of the statement lies in the verb *geniman*: "ond on ræste genam, / þritig þegna" (122b-23a) ["and he seized thirty thanes from their bed"]. In Passage III, the emphasis falls on the verb *befon*: "hraðe heo æþelinga anne hæfde / fæste befangen" (1294-95b) ["quickly she had firmly seized one of the men"]. However, the phrase *on ræste* also occurs in Passage III as part of a statement that amplifies the first statement of the motif: "þone ðe heo on ræste abreat" (1298b) ["he whom she killed in bed"]. In Passage III, the six lines' separation between the verb that denotes seizure and the occurrence of the phrase *on ræste* separates the motif into two elements: the seizure of the thane(s) and the fact that this seizure occurs when the victims are asleep. Such separation enhances the dramatic potential of the motif, since the summary of the monster's attack in Passage I becomes a slightly more developed scene in Passage III. Likewise, the second element of the

<sup>10</sup> See Kavros 1981, DeLavan 1980, and Riedinger 1985.

<sup>11</sup> All quotations are from Klaeber 1950, without diacritics.



motif—the repetition of the term *on ræste*—is linked to the second element of the first motif, the verb that describes the men as sleeping (*swefan*, *swæfun*). Indeed, the skeletons of motifs 1 and 2 are parallel: in the first motif, the monster approaches while the men are asleep; in the second, he or she seizes a thane (or thanes) from his (their) rest. Thus, the semantic correspondence of the two verbs in the second motif (*genam*, *befangen*) provides the organization for the second motif within the type-scene. The depiction of both attacks illustrates the extreme economy made possible by the brevity and flexibility of each motif.

*Motif 3—The Monster Departs to His or Her Home in the Fen.* The departure of the monster is treated somewhat differently in each of these two passages, a difference that demonstrates the expansion of a motif within a type-scene. Passage I straightforwardly notes Grendel’s return to his home, but in Passage III the monster’s desire to leave is noted before her actual departure. The two statements together constitute the motif: “Heo wæs on ofste, wolde ut þanon” (1292) [“she was in haste, she wished to be gone”], followed a few lines later by “þa heo to fenne gang” (1295b) [“when she went to the fen”]. In the absence of verbal correspondence, the parallel structure of the two phrases suggests parallel ideas: “to ham faran” (124b) and “to fenne gang” (1295b). The expansion of passage III makes possible the representation of a tension between the monster’s desire and her actions, a tension that makes Passage III far more dramatic than Passage I.

*Motif 4—The Men Respond to the Attack.* The final motif generates a form of closure for the type-scene: the inhabitants’ response to the attack, described by the terms *wop* (128b), *morgensweg* (129a), and *hream* (1302a), shifts the focus of the narrative from episode to emotion, from action to reaction, from event to realization of that event. The two occurrences cohere semantically, given the similar meanings of these nouns. The fourth motif acknowledges an awareness of the significance of the event for the characters in the narrative. MAH even stripped down to its skeleton, or perhaps especially when so simply expressed, effectively evokes the shock and horror of what is, in *Beowulf*, a stock situation.

The attack by Grendel’s mother (Passage III) illustrates the potential for expansion and manipulation of a basic type-scene. Though its twenty-five lines represent a significant expansion of the fourteen lines of Passage I, the elements of the type-scene—the individual motifs—nevertheless occur quite densely in Passage III. In addition, the second and third motif each break into two separate units. Passage III illustrates the poet’s ability to repeat, interlock, amplify, and vary the motifs and the order of the motifs in any given type-scene. For example, the first statement of motif 2 (the

attack), is sandwiched between two statements of motif 3 (the monster's desire to depart and the actual departure):

Heo wæs on ofste, wolde ut þanon,  
feore beorgan, þa heo onfunden wæs;  
hraðe heo æþelinga anne hæfde  
fæste befangen, þa heo to fenne gang.  
(1292-95b)

[She was in haste, she wished to be gone to preserve her life, when she was discovered. Quickly she had firmly seized one of the nobles, then she went to the fen.]

Then, once the monster has departed, the poet reiterates the second motif when he identifies the seized thane and observes that he had been taken from his bed:

Se wæs Hroþgare hæleþa leofost  
on gesiðes had be sæm tweonum,  
rice randwiga, þone ðe heo on ræste abreat  
blædfæstne beorn.  
(1296-99a)

[To Hrothgar, he was the most beloved noble in the position of retainer between the two seas, a powerful shield warrior, that one whom she seized from his bed.]

Likewise, the “seizure” itself is elaborated and emphasized after the closure of the fourth motif, when another seizure comes to light—the theft of the “well-known hand”:

heo under heolfre genam  
cuþe folme; cearu wæs geniwod.  
(1302-3)

[She seized that well-known hand, covered in blood. Care was renewed.]

The final elaboration of the last motif—the response of the men to the attack (“cearu wæs geniwod”) completes this instance of MAH and varies the basic statement of motif #4. The traditional poet is able to repeat, in an interlocked pattern, the elements of the action, represented by each motif, that are dramatically important to the context of the type-scene. Passage I

contains a single statement of each of the three motifs; Passage III intensifies the dramatic possibilities of the type-scene through amplification and repetition of the motifs in the interlocked pattern. But the most intensified and amplified version of MAH is the 126-line version in which Grendel attacks Heorot (702b-828a), hereafter referred to as Passage II.

Passage II further illustrates the repetition and elaboration of the same four motifs that structure the type-scene in Passages I and III. Even the core words or phrases of the motif are repeated; the approach of the monster (motif #1) is described in four separate assertions. Three of these statements include the verb *com*:

**Com** on wanre niht  
scriðan sceadugenga. (702b-3a)

Da **com** of more under misthleopum  
Grendel gongan. (710-11a)

Wod under wolcnum to þæs þe he winreced. (714)

**Com** þa to recede rinc siðian  
dreamum bedæled. (720-21a)

This passage is structured around four straightforward statements of motif #1. Each statement deepens the tension of the narrative simply by varying the initial motif—the smallest element—of the type-scene as a narrative unit. The formulaic quality of this motif is suggested by the repetition of the verb *com* in three of these four statements as well as the first half-line of Passage III (“Com þa to Heorote” [279a]). Indeed, echoes of this motif can be found elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon poetry, in other formulaic combinations of *com*-plus-infinitive, most specifically in the metrical charms and riddles.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The parallelism of this passage has been frequently discussed. Of particular note is its identity as an example of an “envelope pattern” (Bartlett 1935:9-11): “the last phrase ‘ofer þa niht’ [736a] echoes the opening phrase ‘on wanre niht’ [702b] and rounds off the whole” (50). She describes the repetition thus: “. . . the narrative proceeds by a series of more or less parallel steps which have a cumulative force . . . while each of the three, four or five members is a step marking progress in the whole, each succeeding step also repeats, with variation and amplification, the first one” (49). See the analogous phrases in metrical charms: “Nine Herbs Charm”: “wyrn com snican, toslat he man,” 31; and “Against a Dwarf”: “Her com in gangan, in spiderwiht,” 9; “þa com in gangan dweores sweostar,” 13. The formulaic structure is made even more visible in its use to introduce riddles: “Wiht cwom æfter wege wrætlicu liþan,” “Riddle 33”; “Hyse cwom gangan, þære he hie wisse,”

The sleeping men, the second element of motif #1, are mentioned twice in Passage II. First the poet makes a general observation, then distinguishes the one exception:

Sceotend swæfon,  
 þa þæt hornreced healdan scoldon,  
 ealle buton anum. (703b-5a)

[The warriors slept, they who had to guard that house, all but one.]

The sleeping men have frequently disturbed and dismayed modern readers of this poem, not without reason, since their sleepiness at such a critical time does seem difficult to explain (as Klaeber put it, “How is it possible for the Geats to fall asleep?” [154]).<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, the stock element is retained despite such apparent inappropriateness: in this passage, the poet makes the traditional statement of motif #1 (“Sceotend swæfon”) and then contradicts it to fit the context (“ealle buton anum”). In terms of the type-scene, the sleeping men are an essential detail, no matter how incongruous. Twenty-six lines later, the sleeping men—as Grendel sees them—are mentioned again:

Geseah he in recede rinca manige,  
 swefan sibbedriht samod ætgædere,  
 magorinca heap. (728-30a)

[He saw in the hall many warriors, a band of kinsman,

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“Riddle 54”; and “Wiht cwom gongan þær weras sæton,” “Riddle 86.” See also Foley 1990:209-12. I am grateful to Geoffrey Russom for suggesting this line of inquiry and bringing these specific passages to my attention.

<sup>13</sup> Klaeber’s question has been answered in a variety of ways, from Swanton’s hypothesis (1978:192)—“possibly they had been entertained too well”—to Niles’ attempt to view the sleeping thanes as an abstract representation of a literary style: “The hero manifests whatever qualities are necessary for success in a certain situation—vigilance and self-discipline, here—and his companions show the opposite traits” (1983:168). Other scholars attempt to account for the sleepiness of the thanes by reference to traditional or “source” material: see Puhvel (1979:94), who comments: “With all due allowance for travel fatigue and the effects of the beverage served in Hrothgar’s hall, it is not easy to account for such *sang-froid*, fatalism, or simply apathetic lethargy on the part of every single member of Beowulf’s elite band of Geatish warriors.” Puhvel explains this episode by reference to the Celtic “Hand and the Child” folktale, which accounts for the sleeping thanes as the “incongruous survival of source material” (97).

sleeping all together, a band of young warriors.]

This variation in motif #1 develops the narrative potential of the type-scene through repetition or elaboration of its basic elements. Likewise, the monster's penetration into the hall, merely noted in Passages I and III, is vividly depicted in this scene through an expansion of details. The monster opens the door and moves across the floor; the hall is described carefully. Each element of MAH is given more attention here than in either Passage I or III, and through such repetition, variation, and elaboration, the type-scene acquires the dramatic qualities of a fully developed narrative scene.

The second motif—the seizure of a thane—is developed in three parts. Grendel first anticipates the attack he is about to make:

mynte þæt he gedælde, ær þon dæg cwome,  
atol aglæca anra gehwylces  
lif wið lice. (731-33a)

[The terrible fiend thought that, before day came, he would sever the life from the body of each one of them.]

He then seizes one thane, and finally makes his ill-fated attack on Beowulf. In spite of the drama and detail of this episode, the formulaic qualities of motif #2 provide the structure and language of these narrative details. Grendel's seizure of Hondscioh echoes the corresponding motif from Passage III: “ac he gefeng hraðe forman siðe / slæpende rinc” (740-41a) and “hraðe heo æðelinga anne hæfde / fæste befangen” (1294-95a). Grendel's attempt on Beowulf, who is described by the formulaic expression as a “rinc on ræste” (747a [see motif #2, Passages I and III]), echoes the core elements of motif #2: “he onfeng hraþe” (748b). Except for the use of *geniman* in Passage I, the expression of motif #2 depends on variations of the core verb *fon*, to grasp or seize (*befangen*, *gefeng*, *onfeng*). The heavily articulated elements of motif #2 are evident in this highly elaborated version of the type-scene. In addition, the motif requires that the monster seize one or more of the thanes; thus, the type-scene dictates that Beowulf must lose at least one man in the monster's attack. Beowulf's recalcitrance in this scene, his delay in challenging Grendel until after Hondscioh has been killed, invites all sorts of questions. As the editors of *Explicator* suggest, “the question which naturally comes to mind is why

Beowulf did not intervene in an attempt to save his retainer's life?" (1942).<sup>14</sup> Hondscioh, however, is sacrificed to the demands of the type-scene as the traditional narrative unit; consequently, the poet fulfills the demands of the type-scene when Grendel seizes Hondscioh. Like the statement that all the men are asleep, the seizure of a thane constitutes a traditional stock element around which the poet structures the narrative.

The type-scene also demands that the monster depart (motif #3), although when Grendel leaves Heorot this time, he leaves behind his arm and shoulder. The poet effectively depicts the slaying of Grendel without sacrificing the traditional exit of the monster. Grendel's desire to leave the hall is also noted several times before he departs, once at line 735 and again at line 761. Of course, the tug of war goes on for 56 lines, until Grendel actually departs, once again to seek his home in the fen. In Passage I he goes off "wica neosan" (125b). Passage II represents the departure similarly:

scolde Grendel þonan  
feorhseoc fleon under fenhleoðu,  
secean wynleas wic. (819b-21a)

[Mortally wounded, Grendel had to flee thence, to seek his  
joyless abode under the marshes.]

This fifty-six-line sequence amplifies the sort of dramatic tension evident

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<sup>14</sup> Beowulf's behavior in this scene has provoked a variety of explanations from modern readers. The editors of *Explicator* provided the most ingenious explanation—based altogether on a modern sensibility: "When Beowulf, after boasting to slay Grendel, saw the monster burst into Heorot . . . it is remarkable that the hero did not spring forward to attack him. . . . And Beowulf continued to watch while Grendel sprang on a sleeping thane. . . . This behavior . . . may be explained as the earliest example in English literature of the use of the scientific method. Beowulf watched the attack upon the sleeping thane in order to learn Grendel's tactics well enough to defeat him later." This quite "natural" question and answer effectively illustrate how modern readers seek to understand motivation in narrative, though in this case, the answers to such questions lie in the narrative tradition, not the characters themselves. Niles much more recently tries to negate the propriety of such questions: "The principle of contrast, together with a desire to magnify terror, calls Hondscioh into being and insists that he be handed over to the monster without the least outcry of protest" (1983:168). See also Chambers' explanation based on the folktale the "Bear's Son" (1959:63-64); likewise, see Lawrence 1928:178-79. That the narrative invites the modern reader to ask such questions is obvious; in finding the answer in the traditional episodic unit—the type-scene—we may understand more specifically the sorts of questions that we may meaningfully ask of the narrative.

on a much smaller scale in the deployment of motif #3 in Passage III when Grendel's mother wishes to be gone (1292). In both passages, the type-scene allows the poet to expand the basic motifs by including the point of view of the monster. In this passage, the conflict between the monster's desire to depart and his inability to do so provides a traditional narrative tension, with motif #3 developed here in its fullest form.

The closing motif (#4—the response of the men to the attack of the monster) must be different in this passage, for although the hall has been attacked, it has also been purged. Obviously, the outcry that concludes Passages I and III would be inappropriate here. Instead, Beowulf rejoices (827b-28a): “Nihtweorce gefeh, / ellenmærpum” (“He rejoiced in his night's work, his heroic deeds”). In addition, there is an ironic reversal of the expected outcry: Grendel's response “sounds through the hall,” “reced hlynsode” (770b). The terms *sweg* (782b) and *wop* (785b) in this passage echo the closing motif of Passage I (“wop up ahafen / micel morgensweg” [128b-29a]). The last motif in this type-scene is flexible enough to allow the poet to assign the terrible lament to Grendel, and to close the passage with Beowulf's rejoicing.

Passage II—the central manifestation of the central type-scene of *Beowulf*—demonstrates both the artistry of the poet and the traditional qualities of his narrative language. The often-noted vividness of the scene, especially the dramatic development of point of view and narrative tension, depends on the poet's manipulation of traditional elements. The contrast between the skeletal narrative summary of Passage I and the fully realized scene of Passage II demonstrates the narrative properties of oral poetry. A highly developed, striking scene such as Grendel's attack on Heorot consists of a series of variations, elaborations, and amplifications of the same four basic motifs found in Passages I and III.

The three occurrences of this type-scene, “The Monster Attacks the Hall,” dominate the first third of the narrative of *Beowulf* (lines 1-1306a). The central representation—Grendel's battle with Beowulf—occurs roughly in the center (702b-828a) of the lines that span the narrative between the monster's first attack (115-29a) and the last (1279a-1304a). The narrative is structured around these attacks. In addition, other traditional narrative units, such as sleep-feast themes<sup>15</sup> and arrival scenes,<sup>16</sup> provide transitions; episodic and digressive narrative material, such as the Unferth episode,

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<sup>15</sup> See Kavros 1981 and DeLavan 1980.

<sup>16</sup> See Clark 1965:168.

elaborates the significance of Beowulf's character and of the events in the narrative.<sup>17</sup> The structure of the first third of *Beowulf* emerges from the steady accumulation, variation,<sup>18</sup> and elaboration of type-scenes, especially the central type-scene for this particular narrative, "The Monster Attacks the Hall." In fact, MAH appears to be the central narrative unit—the core or skeleton of the narrative—that organizes and focusses the first 1300 lines of the text. The most essential unit comprises the 126 lines that chronicle Grendel's final attack on the hall: this episode presents the most dramatic and developed version of the type-scene. It justifies all the episodes that occur before it and closes off the possibility of additional repetitions, at least with Grendel as the agent in the attack. Grendel's mother, of course, provides the agency for the third occurrence of MAH, and this passage, like Passage I, generates more narrative: Passage III poses a problem for which the characters in the narrative must find a solution.

Each occurrence of this type-scene echoes all the possibilities of repetition or cessation, illustrating a principle of traditional narratives so effectively characterized by Foley: "The ritual nature of the theme [or type-scene]... may prove to be of considerable importance in successfully interpreting traditional poetry. For echoes of one occurrence of a given theme reverberate not simply through the subsequent linear length of a given poem, but through the collective, mythic knowledge of a given culture" (1976:231). MAH and its narrative possibilities exemplify the single most mythic element in *Beowulf*—the nocturnal attack of a monster

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<sup>17</sup> See Clover 1980.

<sup>18</sup> On the rhetorical properties of variation, see Brodeur 1959:39-70, Greenfield and Calder 1986:127-28, Greenfield 1972:65-66, and Harris 1982. Greenfield and Harris both quote Fred C. Robinson's definition of variation from his unpublished thesis. Harris attempts the most complete definition of variation: "The definition of variation adopted here is that of Professor Robinson: 'Its [variation's] essence, then, is structural and semantic repetition, with a variety of wording.' Accordingly, I define variation as parallel words or groups of words which share a common reference and occur within a single clause (or, in the instance of sentence variation) within contiguous clauses" (98). Harris wishes to draw firm distinctions between variation and parallelisms: "Variation depends on repetition of form and meaning: parallelisms... stress syntactic, not semantic, parity" (105). He comments that the triple "*com-þa*-infinitive of Grendel's approach to Heorot . . . stresses Grendel's steady advance, but it simultaneously pauses to let the poet insert additional information—a type of variational pattern and effect, but one stretched far beyond the formal limits of variation" (105). The central presentation of this type-scene, "The Monster Attacks the Hall," depends heavily on the rhetorical expansion, through parallelisms and variation, of the skeleton of the scene. See further Robinson 1985.



on sleeping men in a communal hall.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the outline of MAH represents the structure of the first third of *Beowulf*. Such a structure—the sequence of traditional narrative elements dominated by the type-scene that represents the monster’s attack on the hall—is more difficult to chart schematically than other structures, such as ring composition,<sup>20</sup> that have been perceived in the poem. The traditional structure is a fluid narrative logic consisting of type-scenes and themes, interconnected, expanded, and developed as the context demands.

As the narrative moves away from the first 1300 lines, the focus of the story shifts. The monster no longer attacks the hall; rather, Beowulf seeks out Grendel’s mother and attacks her in her “hall.” As James Rosier noted three decades ago, Beowulf’s attack on Grendel’s mother in her abode is narrated as the inverse of Grendel’s attack on Heorot. He commented on the transference of the terminology in this fashion (1963:12):

The mere-dwelling is called *niðsele*, “hostile hall,” and *hrofsele*, “roofed hall.” Just as Grendel is ironically referred to as a “hall-thane,” so Beowulf is here called a *gist* (1522) and then *selegyst* (1545). The word, *aglæca*, “monster,” is a common name for Grendel and his mother is called an *aglæcwif* (1259); as he approached the mere-hall, Beowulf likewise is referred to as *aglæca* (1512) in the transferred sense, “warrior or terrible one”.... Even the famous *þa com* pattern delineating Grendel’s progress from the mere to Heorot recurs in a varied form to depict the movement of Beowulf and his thanes as they return from the mere to the hall. . . .

Rosier’s analysis demonstrates the traditional inversion of the monster’s attack, which becomes the hero’s attack. While Beowulf’s battle with

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<sup>19</sup> See Hume 1974 and Irving 1989:134-67.

<sup>20</sup> Several highly articulated formal patterns have been proposed for *Beowulf*. Niles, for instance, finds a rather tight example of ring composition, “a chiasmic design in which the last element in a series in some way echoes the first, the next to last the second, and so on” (1983:152; 1979), and provides a careful diagram of the way in which ring composition accounts for the formal pattern of the poem (1979:914). See also Andersson (1980:90-106), who has proposed another pattern that would account for the “inventory of conventional situations.” As he describes this pattern, “The poet drew his settings from the scenic repertory of the older heroic lay” (105), which results in a “thematic design . . . a kind of *memento mori* dwelling insistently on the transitoriness of earthly things” (104). Andersson suggests that this design constitutes a formal pattern of rising and falling episodes. For a discussion of the formal qualities of *Beowulf* in Proppian terms, see Barnes 1970 on the formal patterns of folklore in the structure of *Beowulf*. See also Rosenberg 1971.

Grendel's mother does not develop in ways as predictable and "formulaic" as the three manifestations of "The Monster Attacks the Hall," this section of the narrative develops out of, inverts, and fulfills the earlier structures generated by the type-scene itself. The type-scene can generate narrative episodes that are more complex than the simple elaboration of a core unit.

When Beowulf returns to Hygelac's court, he narrates his exploits in the battles against Grendel and his mother. Of the 152 lines in this section of direct discourse, about half (73 lines) narrate the two attacks of the monster and the battle with Grendel's mother. The Grendel story itself is introduced with a direct comment by Beowulf: "Ic sceal forð spreca / gen ymbe Grendel" (2069b-70a) ["I must speak forth then about Grendel"]. As a storyteller, Beowulf actually relies on a stripped-down, shorthand version of MAH when he narrates the two attacks on the hall. Yet he also edits the tale; he makes no mention of the sleeping thanes, a standard element of motifs #1 and #2 in earlier versions of the type-scene. He summarizes Grendel's approach:

gæst yrre cwom,  
eatol æfengrom    user neosan  
ðær we gesunde    sæl weardodon. (2073b-75)

[The angry demon came, terrible in the evening, to attack  
us where we unharmed occupied the hall.]

The "scriðan sceadugenga" of Passage II (703a) who bore God's anger (711b), simply becomes "gæst yrre cwom / eatol æfengrom." Instead of the sleeping men, Beowulf mentions only that they occupied the hall, "gesunde." The second motif, the seizure of the thane, is particularized here into an elegiac statement about Hondscioh:

þær wæs Hondscio    hild onsæge,  
feorhbealu fægum;    he fyrrest læg,  
gyrded cempa. (2076-78a)

[Then was the battle fatal to Hondscioh, a deadly evil to the  
fated one; he fell first, an armed warrior.]

Since we now see this episode from Beowulf's point of view, we hear about the glove that Grendel used to carry off warriors and the monster's desire not to leave empty-handed, *idelhende* (2081b). Motif #2, the seizure of a sleeping thane, is reflected in these comments by Beowulf when he emphasizes the grip of Grendel and his intention to stuff thanes into his

glove. Motif #3 is represented by Beowulf's comment that Grendel did depart and leave his hand behind in Heorot (2096a-2100). The reaction to the event, motif #4, here becomes a summary of Beowulf's rewards, which he begins to enjoy the next day "syððan mergen com" (2103b).

Beowulf's narration of the attack by Grendel's mother, which immediately follows the account of the feast and celebration, is likewise patterned on the motifs of MAH. When night falls, "oð ðæt niht becwom / oðer to yldum" (2116b-17a), Grendel's mother approaches: "Grendeles modor, / siðode sorhfull" (2118b-19a). As Beowulf narrates the second motif, he again omits the sleeping men and names the victim, in a passage that parallels his naming of Hondscioh:

þær wæs Æschere,  
frodan fyrnwitan feorh uðgenge. (2122b-23)

[There was Aschere, the wise old counselor, departed from life.]

Since Beowulf is not present at this attack, he has no eyewitness details to add to his narration of events. Instead, he repeats a formula he has just employed twenty-one lines earlier ("syððan mergen cwom" [2124b]) to provide a transition to a compilation of motifs #2, #3, and #4: the seizure of a thane, the departure of the monster, and the response of the inhabitants. For in the morning, the death-wary Danes realize that

hio þæt lic ætbær  
feondes fæðmum under firgenstream. (2127b-28)

[She carried that body in her fiendish arms under the  
mountain stream.]

Although the skeleton of MAH is employed twice in this short passage, Beowulf's narration differs from that of the early representation of these episodes in the poem. He omits all details that specifically refer to the participants, except to name both victims, depict his own role in events, and add his personal version of the fight with Grendel. Beowulf patterns his account as the *Beowulf*-poet does, but Beowulf the narrator attempts to explain the events, not to embellish them. In the first-person, direct discourse of the account, the type-scene develops something of the tone and logic of elegy. In Beowulf's hands, this type-scene serves a different purpose than it does in the hands of a *scop*-proper: the hero's manipulation of this type-scene effects closure, even though he uses the same traditional

elements that dominate the development of the narrative itself. In his version, he fixes the episodes, and the two attacks become history, recounted as history. As direct discourse within narrative, these two final versions of MAH form a retrospective version of episodes already represented by the traditional narrative of the poem. In producing his narrative account, Beowulf completes the first two-thirds of the narrative. As a storyteller, he demonstrates the relationship between event and narrative: his version of the monster's attack is reduced to recognizable, reductive narrative units that have lost the compelling dramatic quality they display in the earlier presentation of the poem.

Many traditions have been proposed to account for Grendel. The origin of the "Grendel Story" has been sought in folklore, in Irish and Scandinavian literature, and in the tradition of Latin prose texts that catalogue the monsters.<sup>21</sup> However, Grendel's presence in *Beowulf* is confined largely, though not exclusively, to his appearance in this highly articulated traditional type-scene. The type-scene itself bears little resemblance to the folklore analogues so often discussed, nor does it bear any affinity to the representation of the monsters in the Latin prose accounts of monsters. The tradition behind the pattern that represents the monster's attack on the hall need not be specifically sought in other literary or folklore texts. The type-scene itself, as a structural and structuring unit, suggests that the tradition that it represents is an ancient oral tradition, too ancient and too "traditional" to make the search for analogues, whether in folklore or literature, very meaningful. More than fifty years ago, J. R. R. Tolkien (1936/1968) asserted that the monsters in *Beowulf* are not an "inexplicable blunder of taste" (23), but an essential element in a poem that expresses the "northern mythical imagination" (31). Indeed, the mythical priority of the monsters is exemplified by their formulaic presentation in this type-scene. "The Monster Attacks the Hall" is a highly articulated formulaic unit that represents the central thematic episode of the poem. As a traditional narrative unit, it clarifies two "problems" in the plot of the narrative—namely, the fact that Beowulf's men fall asleep in Heorot and that Beowulf does not challenge Grendel until Hondscioh has been killed.

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<sup>21</sup> A longstanding critical discussion focusses on the possible connections between Grendel and the *Grettis Saga*; likewise, discussions frequently seek to connect the poem to the folktale "The Bear's Son." See Chambers 1959:173ff. and Lawrence 1928:182; on the possible connections with Irish folklore, see Puhvel (1979), who proposes a folktale, the "Hand and the Child," which he finds to be a more likely analogue than "The Bear's Son." For a skeptical consideration of the Latin tradition (*Liber Monstrorum*) in relation to *Beowulf*, see Whitbread 1974. See also note 9.

These are traditional stock elements of the monster's attack, and in *Beowulf* we have very traditional monsters indeed.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> An earlier version of this paper was read at the Old English Colloquium, University of California, Berkeley, March 24, 1984. I am greatly indebted to the following readers for their critical comments on this paper: Raymond Oliver, Alain Renoir, Laura Morland, and Paul Szarmach.

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# Homer and Oral Tradition: The Type-Scene

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Terminology and Definitions

Since our concern is with type-scenes only, our first business must be to define the terminology. Following Milman Parry (1971:451-52), A. B. Lord used the term “theme” for “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” (Lord 1938:440). But within such a definition several different types of recurrent pattern can be distinguished, and more precision is needed. Here the following definitions will be used:

*1.1.1* A TYPE-SCENE may be regarded as a recurrent block of narrative with an identifiable structure, such as a sacrifice, the reception of a guest, the launching and beaching of a ship, the donning of armor. Many of the commonest of these were identified and studied nearly sixty years ago as “typischen Szenen” (Arend 1933). In narratological terms, an amplified type-scene is not necessary to the “story,” the “content or chain of events (actions, happenings), plus what may be called the existents (characters, items of setting)” (Chatman 1978:19; de Jong 1987:31 uses the term *fabula* for this), but is a part of the “discourse,” “the expression, the means by which the content is communicated” (Chatman *ibid.*; “story” in de Jong). The poet could have told how Telemachus went on his adventures, and met old Nestor (the “story”), without necessarily narrating for us the fullest extant example of the type-scene of sacrifice (*Od.* 3.417-72).

Verbal repetition between different instances of a type-scene may or may not occur; Lord’s later definition of “theme” as “not simply a repeated subject, such as a council, a feast, a battle, or a description of horse, hero, or heroine.... The ‘theme’ in oral literature is distinctive because its content is expressed in more or less the same words every time the singer or storyteller uses it. It is a repeated passage rather than a repeated subject” (1991:27) does not apply to Homeric type-scenes.

Nagler (1974:112) includes the type-scene in his “motif sequence.” His definition is “an inherited preverbal Gestalt for the spontaneous generation of a ‘family’ of meaningful details” (1974:82). Nagler’s theoretical analysis (see 1.3 below), and his insistence that there is no “standard” form of a type-scene from which given examples may be said to deviate more or less, is useful in eliminating the question whether (for example) the arming of Ajax (simply *Aias de korussetai nôropi chalkôi*, “Ajax armed himself in gleaming bronze,” *Il.* 7.206b) should be called an arming type-scene. “Arming” is a “preverbal Gestalt” in the poet’s mind,

emerging into language as a more or less amplified type-scene, or as a verb alone, depending upon the poet's intention at that moment.

1.1.2 A STORY PATTERN (or NARRATIVE PATTERN) is a recurrent structure of plot, of the type associated particularly with Vladimir Propp (1968; first published 1926). Among the most familiar of these is the "withdrawal, devastation, return" pattern, easily traceable in both *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (Lord 1960:159-97; M. Lord 1967; Nagler 1974:131-66; Edwards 1987a:61-66; 1991:15-19). The wanderings of Odysseus provide many instances (see, for example, Most 1989). Less obviously, Diomedes and Achilles both fight with Trojan warriors, then with deities, then engage a single opponent in a lengthy scene including conversation (*Iliad* 5-6, 22; Edwards 1987a:198). These plot structures are commonly called themes; narratologically, they form the "story" (or fabula). Work in this area is not included in the present survey.

1.1.3 Any recurrent small-scale item (a trope, a topos) that does not fit well within either of the above terms may conveniently be termed a MOTIF. Many different types of repeated items may be included in this term (but not in the present survey): the "But X did not know..." motif (*Il.* 1.488-92, 13.521-25, 13.673-78, 17.377-83, 22.437-46), the "So might one say..." motif (*Il.* 3.297-301, 3.319-23, etc.), the "No two men now could..." motif (*Il.* 12.447-49, 17.283-87, etc.). For examples of other such motifs see Edwards 1987a:65-66, Kirk 1990:15-27, Edwards 1991, index s.v. "motif."

1.1.4 The cumulative index in Volume 3 of the Oxford University Press Commentary on the *Odyssey* (= Russo 1992:430-47) lists a variety of type-scenes under "typical scenes" and others separately, often carried over from indexes to the earlier volumes; e.g., "*peira*" appears separately (as well as "testing"), and also dreams, feasting (under "food"), funeral customs, hospitality, oaths, and ships. "Deliberation between alternatives" is listed under "typical scenes," but "decision-scenes" have their own entry and further references. There is also a listing under "themes," which includes what are here termed "motifs." In the Cambridge *Iliad* Commentary, Volume 1 (Kirk 1985) the main pertinent entry is "theme (motif)," and there is little under "typical scene"; "sacrifice" has a separate entry. In Volume 2 (= Kirk 1990) there are entries under both "typical scenes" and "typical motifs and themes," and a separate listing under "sacrifice." Volume 4 (= Janko 1992) lists "type-scene," under which there are

cross-references to other entries. Volume 5 (Edwards 1991) lists “type-scenes,” “story patterns,” and “motifs, repeated.” The indexes to Volumes 3 and 6 are not yet available, but thanks to my access to the page-proofs some references to work in these volumes has been included in this survey.

*1.1.5* Work on long Homeric similes, though they have some of the characteristics of type-scenes (cf. Russo 1968:287-88), is not included in this survey (on these similes, see most recently Edwards 1991:24-41). Neither is work on descriptive passages, though they are often composed of a combination of similes and motifs (see Edwards 1991:96 and index s.v. “description”). Some aspects of Homeric speeches are included (see section 6).

## 1.2 *Characteristics of Homeric Type-Scenes*

Before tracing the history of scholarship on Homeric type-scenes, it may be useful to summarize some of the important aspects of Homeric usage that have been established or suggested.

*1.2.1* The whole of Homeric narrative can be analyzed into type-scenes. This seems to have been first stated (for the battle scenes) by Fenik (1968:Summary): “The result [of this study] demonstrates that almost all the *Iliad*’s battle narrative consists of an extensive, but limited, store of ‘typical’ or repeated details and action-sequences which undergo numerous and repeated combinations.” Nagler (1974:81) broadened this to include other narrative (“it now seems equally plausible that all narrative episodes are equally ‘type scenes,’ if one means by this term that they are realizations of poetically significant motifs”). Edwards (1980a) demonstrated this in the case of *Iliad* 1.

*1.2.2* Type-scenes may be said to be composed of a structure of certain elements in sequence. But there is no “standard” form of a type-scene from which a given example deviates more or less (see 1.1.1 above).

*1.2.3* Elaboration or amplification of a type-scene conveys emphasis (see Austin 1966). The quality (pertinence, relevance, effectiveness, originality, and so forth) of the material used for elaboration depends upon, and defines, the quality of the poet. Comparison of different examples of the same type-scene can throw light upon the poet’s methods and intentions (see Edwards 1980a:1-3).

1.2.4 Type-scenes may be closely related in form; for instance, the scenes of a hero arming or donning clothing, or a female adorning herself for conquest (see 2.4, 3.8). The arrival and reception of a guest and those of a messenger share some features, and the poet may switch from one to the other (see 3.1.1, 3.2). Or the type-scene may be adapted for a special situation, such as the arming of Athena in *Iliad* 8 and that of Odysseus and Diomedes for their night patrol in *Iliad* 10, or the sacrifice of a pig instead of a cow by the swineherd Eumaeus in *Odyssey* 14.

1.2.5 A type-scene may be used for a special purpose, usually with elaboration and adaptation; or replaced by a surrogate. The catalogue of Greek leaders in *Iliad* 3 is not used to introduce the heroes either to the audience or (essentially) to Priam and the Trojans on the wall, but to allow the poet to depict the character of Helen (see Edwards 1987a:191-93; 1987b:53-59). The routine capture of a victim's horses by a victorious warrior becomes the vehicle for Zeus's gloomy reflections on the sorrows of immortal horses given to mortal men (*Iliad* 17; see Edwards 1991:104-5). Hector never receives the honor of a regularly structured arming scene, but instead the poet substitutes the foreboding remarks of Zeus as he dons the divinely made armor he has stripped from Patroclus (*Iliad* 17; see Edwards 1991:80). This technique was identified some years ago in the *Hymn to Demeter*: "At the same time these ['typical scenes'] preserve an individual character, and sometimes a traditional *schema* is used for a very particular purpose, the representation of the *aitia* for Eleusinian ritual. This reuse of traditional patterns is most skilful, and suggests a poet who was to a great extent in control of his techniques" (N. Richardson 1974:58-59; see also Russo 1968:286-87).

1.2.6 The poet may occasionally abruptly alter or interrupt the structure of a type-scene for a special effect. Hector visits his wife in Troy, but the audience's expectations are shattered when he finds her not at home (*Iliad* 6; see Edwards 1987a:209). After Thetis' last visit to her beloved son in *Iliad* 24 she does not return to Olympus (the regular concluding element of a divine visit) but remains talking with him, reminding us that they both know they will not have much time left together before his death (Edwards 1987a:305; N. Richardson 1992:290).

1.2.7 A short version of a type-scene sometimes precedes a longer one. The Trojan Agenor stands alone to face Achilles, reflects aloud, and decides not to run before him, just before Hector endures the same experience (*Iliad* 21,

22). The young Tros begs Achilles for mercy (without direct speech) not long before Priam's young son Lycaon makes a similar appeal, in which both parties make moving speeches (*Iliad* 20, 21). See Edwards 1987b:50-53; 1991:19-20; Hainsworth 1993:244. Sometimes the second occurrence may be used for a different purpose; first the Myrmidons cut their hair in honor of the dead Patroclus, then Achilles does the same, declaring he knows now he will never return to dedicate it to the river of his homeland (*Il.* 23.135-51).

1.2.8 Besides the comparison of different examples of the same type-scene, the poet's originality in the use of conventional material can be observed by examining sequences of type-scenes, that is, the functional relationship of type-scenes to the story pattern. A divine intervention may be preceded by the suffering of the hero, a debate on Olympus, or the plan of Zeus (see Minchin 1985, 1986). "Within these eighteen lines (*Iliad*] 24.1-18) the singer, in his use of completely familiar material, in his expansion of the familiar and, finally, in his creative exploitation of traditional themes, has revealed a sensitivity to the efficacy of variation in narrative pace and pitch, and skill in its regulation" (Minchin 1985:275). Ring composition, so common in the Homeric poems (see Edwards 1991:44-48, N. Richardson 1992:4-14), may also be observed in the arrangement of type-scenes (see Parks 1988).

1.2.9 A type-scene may carry a significance that goes deeper than the surface level, and invoke meanings inherited from the whole tradition of oral poetry. Thus the feast type-scene is "a celebration of community, an affirmation of comity and hospitality near the center of the Homeric world.... Symbolizing as it does the *kosmos* of the properly functioning Homeric society, the Feast serves as a metonymic cue that summons that highly valued, almost ritualistically appropriate context to each of the very different narrative situations in which it appears" (Foley 1991:34-35). This is building upon Nagler's perception that "one of the obviously crucial skills in the artistry of oral verse composition [is] when and how to bring into play the meanings inherent in the traditional diction" (Nagler 1967:307).

1.2.10 Use of type-scenes is probably a better test for orality, at least in Greek poetry, than use of formulae. This was already noted by Milman Parry (1971:451-52): "The arguments by the characterization of oral style (of which the most important is probably the theme) will prove only the



oral nature of the Homeric poems” (written 1933-35; cf. Parry 1971:xli). Nagler, though speaking primarily of story patterns, also has in mind the type-scene of the *aristeia* when he observes that it is “By his use of this type of structure and technique (and not, I fear, by formula count) that the spontaneous-traditional poet really differentiates himself from the writer” (1974:202). This is probably because formulaic language is more immediately obvious, and hence more likely to be imitated by a writer, than type-scene structure. So far little attention has been paid to this aspect of oral vs. written style.

### 1.3 *A Short History of Research*

This section gives a brief chronological account of the most significant work in the development of the study of type-scenes, including those studies that deal with a number of different scenes.

The pioneering work, Arend 1933, studied Homeric scenes depicting arrival (including visits, messages, and dreams), sacrifice and meal-preparation, journeys by sea and by land, donning armor and clothing, retiring to sleep, deliberation, assembly, oath-taking, and bathing. (Details appear below in the appropriate categories.) Arend diagrammed such scenes, showing that they are each built up of a sequence of elements that normally occur in the same order, some elaborated to a greater or lesser extent to suit the context, others appearing in minimal form or even omitted altogether. Free from the Analysts’ search to determine the original and the derivative versions of a repeated event or verse, and not attempting to find subtle allusions between repetitions of the same scene, Arend saw the careful variety Homer imposes on different examples of the same scene, and noticed that arrival, visit, and messenger scenes may run together. Arend had no predecessors in Homeric studies, though his conception of the type-scene had actually been anticipated in V. V. Radlov’s work on Turkic oral poetry, published in 1885 (see Foley 1988:10-13). Though he makes a number of comparisons between Homeric techniques and those observable in the heroic poetry of other nations, Arend failed to realize that the techniques of oral poetry were responsible for the similarities he found.

Milman Parry wrote an appreciative review of Arend (1971:404-7; published in 1936), pointing out that such schematized composition occurs because the poet has learned it from his tradition, and that Homer is likely to have had finer resources for elaboration, a “more ample art,” than ordinary singers of his time. This skill in “adornment” arises from a richer tradition and a poet with the skill to make the fullest use of it; “Homer, with his overwhelming mastery of the traditional epic stuff, enriches the

course of his story now with one group of details, now with another, though each group for a given action will tend to center about certain key verses and to follow a certain general pattern” (1971:407).

In his last years Parry became very interested in type-scenes (under the term “themes”), and in his unfinished *Ćor Huso* he identified them as probably the most important characteristic of oral style (1971:451-52; cf. xli). He also remarked on the importance of elaboration, referring to it as the “tempo” of the narrative (452), and (speaking specifically of South Slavic) observed that the intended length of a poem can be deduced from the fullness with which the opening theme is developed (453). He saw that the appropriateness of the elaborating material defined the quality of a song: “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. That oral material, if properly applied, is good in itself, and accordingly whether more or less of it is used is not the deciding factor in the quality of a song, but rather the appropriateness of its use” (461).

Coincidentally, in the same year as Arend, G. M. Calhoun published a paper (1933) discussing not only repeated lines but also a number of repeated scenes; his analysis was much briefer than Arend’s, but he too observed the effects of different examples of the same type-scene, and had the discernment not to attempt to find the original version of a repeated passage. Though he listed a number of type-scenes (14-17), Calhoun did not analyze them into their component elements as Arend did, and for that reason his work is not included in the references in this survey.

Five years later Albert Lord’s first contribution to the subject appeared (Lord 1938). Defining the “theme” as mentioned above (1.1), he discussed it mainly in South Slavic epic, remarking that “The remains of early Greek epic are not abundant enough to prove with mathematical exactness that everything in the poems is formula and theme,” but adding “Everyone knows that there are many recurrent themes in the poems, banquet scenes, beaching of ships, and so on” (with a reference to Arend 1933; 1938:443). Some years later (1951), Lord noted that South Slavic singers, in conversation, stressed that the ornamentation of a song must be appropriate and not overdone, and after a short discussion of the type-scenes (“themes”) that begin *The Wedding of Smailagić Meho* he discussed the ornamentation in the “themes” that begin the *Odyssey*—that of the wanderer detained from returning home (which would here be called a story pattern), the divine assembly (a type-scene), Athena’s bringing Odysseus’ plight to the attention of Zeus and the determination of a plan of action (elements of

the story pattern), and her journey to Ithaca (another type-scene). He then took the important step of comparing the ornamentation in two examples of the same type-scene, Telemachus' stay with Nestor and his brief overnight stop en route to Sparta.

In his major work, *The Singer of Tales*, Lord devoted a chapter to "The Theme" (1960:68-98), which deals in detail with South Slavic epic but also notes the varying degrees of elaboration in the *Iliad* arming scenes (89-91). In a later chapter he refers again to thematic structure as an indication of oral composition ("Another corroborative test for oral composition is less easily applied—though just as decisive [as formulaic techniques]—because it requires a greater amount of material for analysis than is usually available from the poetries of the past. This is the investigation of thematic structure" (145). He then compares the seven examples of the assembly type-scene in *Iliad* 1 and 2, pointing out how each is adapted to its context. In his chapter on the *Odyssey* he mainly discusses story patterns, though he includes a long section on the recognitions, which may well be considered variations on a type-scene (169-85). His *Iliad* chapter deals with the story pattern of withdrawal-devastation-return (186-97).

Two years earlier, the fullest detailed literary analysis to that date of the examples of a particular type-scene (under the name "formula") had been published by J. Armstrong (1958), who referred to Parry and Calhoun but not to Arend or Lord. Armstrong analyzed the four main arming scenes, with notes on some other instances, pointing out the importance of elaboration ("There is excellent critical authority to support the view that the long formula serves to heighten the importance of a new departure or an impressive moment" [342]) and making good remarks on the significance in Patroclus' arming of the mortal horse Pedasos and of Patroclus' inability to wield Achilles' great spear. On the broader scale, G. S. Kirk's monumental account of the Homeric poems has a number of index entries to type-scenes (as "themes"), and besides dealing with some story patterns he mentions some important battle type-scenes and analyzes *Iliad* 102-357 into its component type-scenes (1962:72-80).

Soon afterwards Dimock discussed Lord's "themes," suggesting they "give pleasure first by fulfilling the audiences' assumptions about how the heroes carried out the business of ordinary day-to-day living and by providing a background of the expected against which the unexpected may show forth to better advantage" (1963:50). More significant was Austin's article (1966), in which he countered the view of those who denied organic unity in the Homeric poems and accepted irrelevancy as a characteristic of

oral style, by showing that the so-called digressions in the *Iliad* are in fact relevant to the structure of the poem. Many “digressions,” such as speakers’ narration of myths or genealogies, have value as patterns for action or establish the character’s claim to a hearing, and the length of the “digression” corresponds to its significance: “The expansion of the anecdote is a form of *amplificatio*, or what later Greek rhetoricians called *auxêsis*, a heightening of the subject” (306). This applies to the elaboration of type-scenes as well: “No expansion of a stock theme is given for its own sake, nor is any story told for its own charm; elaboration, whether of a scene in the present or of a story from Nestor’s past, is a sign of crisis” (308). He points out that “the careful description of the mundane details of Odysseus’ embassy to Chryses is the dramatic representation of the importance of the mission,” and in the long account of Thetis’ visit to Hephaestus to ask for armor for Achilles, “The social amenities are played out at length, and their elaborate execution is Homer’s stylized form of emphasis” (308, 309).

Next appeared Russo’s categorization of Homeric type-scenes (1968). He identified (1) verbatim repetitions, or a core of identical verses with varying additional lines that do not affect the character of the passage (e.g., sacrifice scenes; 280-81); (2) the same kind of repeated type-scene, “handled more creatively” (e.g., arming scenes; 281-86); (3) scenes where the recognizable stock pattern or type is handled rather loosely, or distorted so much that it seems the poet is twisting traditional elements into quite new meanings under the impulse to innovate (e.g. deliberation scenes, see 6.2 below; 286-87); and (4) “scenes of almost total nonrepetition,” of which he suggested similes might be considered an example (287). Russo’s categories demonstrate the different usages possible, but are not otherwise very helpful.

Also in 1968 appeared a monograph by B. Fenik, a work of the highest importance for the understanding of the battle scenes of the *Iliad*. The author summarizes the work thus: “This book is a study of the repeated, recurrent details in the *Iliad*’s battle scenes. It consists of a line-by-line analysis of the battle description in six books of the *Iliad* [5, 8, 11, 13, 16, 17], whereby each incident, each detail of action or description is compared with similar or identical details elsewhere in the poem. The result demonstrates that almost all the *Iliad*’s battle narrative consists of an extensive, but limited, store of ‘typical’ or repeated details and action-sequences which undergo numerous and repeated combinations” (Summary). The analysis includes both the repeated elements of duels and the larger type-scenes of battle such as retreats, rallies, routs, consultation

patterns, rebukes, and many others (which can be easily found in the “Index of Subjects”; most are listed in section 2 below). Fenik also identifies examples where a familiar pattern has forced inclusion of a standard element where it is inappropriate or could not be developed (53), the misuse of a motif (69-70), the unsuccessful adaptation of a group of typical details (94-95), the unusual combination of elements (98), and an error in realism caused by the force of the normal type-scene (132). He finds nothing to suggest multiple authorship; “Untypical details are, for the most part, lightly distributed over the battle scenes so that most unfamiliar elements are imbedded in purely typical surroundings” (230). The only major exceptions are the ending of Book 13, most of Book 8, and a large part of Book 21.

Fenik’s subsequent work on the *Odyssey* (1974) is harder to categorize—and to consult, for unfortunately it has only an *index locorum*. The study is based on the reception of Odysseus in Alcinous’ palace, and Fenik deals primarily with what may be called “motifs”—the poet’s habit of doubling a role, the tendency for a character to hold back the giving of his name, the occasional derisiveness of deities towards humans, the discontinuity that arises when an action or an idea is introduced, then suspended for an intervening narrative, then re-introduced, the recurrence of a type-scene or motif within a short space, the anticipation of a scene before its full development. The volume is full of valuable observations, but to derive the best use from it one must make one’s own notes and index.

Hainsworth’s bibliographical survey (1969:25-26, under “Theme”) mentions the main work to that date and stresses that in type-scenes and battle-scenes no two instances are exactly alike. He uses, however, a very restricted definition, saying that “typical scenes... fill only a very small part of the Homeric narrative.” Holoka’s survey (1973:279-81, under “Theme”) is fuller, and lists and summarizes items to that date in alphabetical order of author’s name. His later surveys (Holoka 1979, 1990a, 1990b) do not separately list themes or type-scenes.

Two important advances were made about this time by D. M. Gunn. In the first (1970), the author indicated apparent inconsistencies in the type-scene of departure when Telemachus and Peisistratus leave Menelaus’ palace (*Od.* 15.130-82) and in that of Hermes’ arrival at Calypso’s cave (*Od.* 5.85-91). Gunn attributes these to errors on the poet’s part (but see 3.1.1) and thinks they suggest dictation by the singer, rather than his writing down his own song. In Gunn 1971 the author compares examples of three type-scenes that occur in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (Supernatural Visitant, Guests for the night, Feasting) and shows that the handling in the

two poems is indistinguishable, concluding that “all the evidence points to the conclusion that the two great poems are the work of a single artist” (31). So far, no one else seems to have detected any significant and consistent differences between the type-scenes in the two poems. Notice is also taken of type-scenes in Patzer’s monograph (1972:26-40 and 48-49), in which he attempted to reconcile the theory of oral poetry with Homer’s individual genius, denying that oral technique and poetic art are incompatible.

About the same time as Fenik’s practical analyses, new theoretical insights were being produced by M. N. Nagler. In his preliminary article (1967) he reviewed the state of scholarship on the Homeric formula and enunciated his fundamental principles, based on generative grammar: each item in a group of “formulaic” phrases should be considered “an allomorph, *not of any other existing phrase*, but of some central Gestalt—for want of a better term—which is the real mental template underlying the production of all such phrases” (281); “oral-formulaic composition is a language... the training of the oral bard is more like the acquisition of a linguistic skill than the memorization of a fixed content” (310); “All is traditional on the generative level, all original on the level of performance” (291). He also indicated some of the connotations of the “attendance type-scene” (chastity) and the detaining-female-temptress story pattern (298-307). In his subsequent book (1974), Nagler gave a fuller treatment of formulae (as “The Traditional Phrase”), type-scenes (as “The Motif” and “The Motif Sequence”), and the story pattern (as the plot structure). Using a rather wider definition than usually covered by “type-scene,” (“‘motif’ and ‘motif sequence’ together will take in a larger spectrum than is usually included in the concept of the type scene or action pattern,” 112), he points out again that “a type scene is not essentially a fixed sequence of the type implied by Arend and others...” but “an inherited preverbal Gestalt for the spontaneous generation of a ‘family’ of meaningful details.... In practice, therefore, not only are no two passages normally the same *verbatim*, they need not be of a pattern (an identical sequence of elements) in order to be recognized as the same motif” (81-82). Discussing a number of “motif sequences,” Nagler gives a deeply perceptive and valuable account of the connotations of chastity and violation, attendance and aloneness, convening an assembly, consolation, and so forth.

N. Richardson’s thorough study of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* should be mentioned here, because his introduction includes a section on type-scenes (1974:58-59) and he constantly indicates the parallels between Homeric type-scenes and those in the *Hymn*.

In Edwards 1975 the author, after a brief bibliography of previous

work on Homeric and Old English studies, discusses the problems raised in Gunn 1970 and suggests that it is the junction of type-scenes that gives rise to the poet's difficulty. Similarly, minor problems in Circe's reception of Odysseus (*Od.* 10.308ff.) and Achilles' of Priam (*Il.* 24.596-98) can be explained as the adaptation of a regular type-scene to include an unusual element. A few years later, Edwards documented the view that all Homeric narrative can be analyzed into type-scenes (see 1.2.1) by an analysis of *Iliad* 1 (1980a). He also reaffirmed the ideas that color is given to the narrative by controlled elaboration of details in the type-scenes, that comparison of a particular instance with other occurrences allows the identification of special features that invite attention and explanation, and noted the occasional adaptation of a type-scene for a special purpose, or its replacement by a surrogate (3). A dissenting voice was heard in Tsagarakis 1982:47-133, disapproving of much of the work of Arend, Fenik, and Beye on the grounds that they seek to impose too great a uniformity on the structural patterns, and that more attention should be paid to the immediate context. Schwabl 1982 discusses the significance of repetitions, including those of type-scenes.

In 1984 appeared C. Sowa's book, completed some years earlier, which though mainly concerned with story patterns in the *Homeric Hymns* discusses the type-scene concept (1984:15-18), though under a very limited definition ("the type scenes are isolated in certain parts of the poem" [16]). She gives a full treatment of the abduction or allurements type-scene. In the same year, Thornton's study examines the usage of several type-scenes ("motif-sequences," 1984:73-92), comparing examples of the *aristeia*, the assembly, the call for help, duels, arming-scenes, and supplication. She also discusses the different types of elaboration ("appositional expansions," 104-10). Foley 1985, a comprehensive bibliography of work on oral poetry, is very useful for reliable summaries but does not index type-scenes separately.

At this time the volumes of the new Commentaries on both Homeric poems began to appear. The English version (Heubeck 1988, Heubeck 1989, Russo 1992) of the 6-volume Mondadori commentary on the *Odyssey* (in Italian), which originally appeared between 1981 and 1986, has a cumulative index in the third volume (see 1.1.5). Significant annotations from this Commentary are included in the listings below.

The 6-volume Cambridge *Iliad* commentary, beginning with Kirk 1985, has indexes to each volume (see 1.1.4). The second volume (Kirk 1990) contains an introductory section on "Typical motifs and themes," where the author discusses repeated patterns of various types, accepting that

“the whole *Iliad*... can be analysed in terms of its basic and typical themes and their variants” (16). Kirk goes on to examine the typical components in *Il.* 5.1-200 (a battle scene) and in Hector’s reply to Andromache (*Il.* 6.441-56), and identifies and analyzes the six standard components of Homeric battle and their subdivisions (16-26). The third volume of the series to appear (Edwards 1991) includes an introductory section on “Composition by theme,” divided into (i) “Type-scenes” (11-15), (ii) “Story patterns and neoanalysis” (15-19), and (iii) “Anticipation, preparation, and adaptation” (19-23). Part (i) gives a brief general account of type-scenes and analyzes the structure of *Iliad* 17-20. Part (iii) discusses cases where a shorter version of a type-scene precedes a longer one (see 1.2.7). Edwards also examines the relationship of a short to a long form, and the occasional adaptation of a scene (or element in one) for an unusual purpose. The introduction to each book gives an analysis of its type-scenes, as is also the case in the fourth volume to appear (Janko 1992). Volume 6 has an introductory section on “Themes,” most of which would here be termed story patterns (N. Richardson 1992:14-19). Pertinent comments on type-scenes from all these volumes are listed in the relevant section below.

Among work of the last few years, Edwards 1987a contains a chapter on type-scenes (71-77), a section on battle-scenes (78-81), and an analysis of the battle in *Iliad* 13 (241-44). In Edwards 1987b the author examines cases where a short form of a motif or type-scene precedes a longer example, and small-scale and large-scale cases where Homer seems to be using a conventional motif for a new purpose (see 1.2.5 above). Bannert 1987a gives a brief account of arming, challenge, and sacrifice type-scenes. Bannert 1988 studies repetitions of all kinds in Homer, saying that there are associations, references and interconnections everywhere in the Homeric poems, and these typical, or better, stylized forms of representation (“typische, oder besser: typisierte Darstellungsformen”) include significant elements that encourage such associations (24). He compares parallel scenes of many kinds.

Foley’s history of the theory of oral composition (1988) has index listings for both “typical scene” and “theme,” and includes an account of probably the first scholar to identify the use of type-scenes in oral poetry, V. V. Radlov in his study of Turkic poetry (1885). Using the term “Bildtheile,” Radlov wrote: “The singer is thus able to sing all of the previously mentioned ‘idea-parts’ in very different ways. He knows how to sketch one and the same idea in a few short strokes, or describe it in detail, or enter into an extremely detailed description in epic breadth. The more adaptable to various situations the ‘idea-parts’ are for a singer, the more



diverse his song becomes and the longer he can sing without wearying his audience by the monotony of his images. The inventory of ‘idea-parts’ and the skill in their manipulation are the measure of a singer’s ability” (quoted in translation in Foley 1988:12). This is a good summary of the usage of type-scenes. In the course of his history Foley deals with a number of type-scenes in the oral poetry of various cultures.

In a later comprehensive work on three traditions of oral poetry (Foley 1990), the author has a chapter on “Thematic Structure in the *Odyssey*” (240-77) that includes a good account of prior scholarship on type-scenes (240-45; Foley, following Lord, often uses the term “theme”). He then examines three Odyssean type-scenes: bath, greeting, and feast, including the amount of verbal repetition (“the actual verbal expression of this [bath] theme consists not of a completely fossilized run of hexameters but rather of a fluid collection of diction that can take on numerous different forms” [252]) and the way in which (for instance) the Bath theme is embedded in the hospitality theme, usually preceding a feast (255). Foley concludes that type-scenes have no narrow definition: “Traditional narrative pattern manifests itself in different ways—sometimes in an ordered and tightly knit series of discrete actions... and sometimes in a looser aggregation of general outlines that leave more room for individualized variation” (276). Verbal correspondence also varies from one type-scene to another.

In his most recent book, Foley develops the concept of “traditional referentiality” (1991; see 1.2.9). In oral poetry, “Traditional elements reach out of the immediate instance in which they appear to the fecund totality of the entire tradition, defined synchronically and diachronically, and they bear meanings as wide and deep as the tradition they encode;” “Traditional referentiality... entails the invoking of a context that is enormously larger and more echoic than the text or work itself, that brings the lifeblood of generations of poems and performances to the individual performance or text” (7). This conception goes beyond (and includes, cf. Foley 1991:137-39) the comparison of each instance of a type-scene with other instances, whose value had previously been demonstrated (e.g. in Edwards 1980a), and also builds upon Nagler’s perception that “one of the obviously crucial skills in the artistry of oral verse composition [is] when and how to bring into play the meanings inherent in the traditional diction” (1967:307).

On Minchin’s work (1985, 1986) see 1.2.8. Mention should also be made of Fenik 1991, in which the author, while examining oral structures in the mediaeval Greek epic *Digenis Akritis*, finds many parallels between the type-scenes in that poem and in Homer.

## 2. BATTLE

### 2.1 *General*

Of the large topic of Homeric battles, Arend studied only arming scenes (see 2.4 below). The fundamental work, consolidating much that had been done previously (espec. Strasburger 1954) and gathering all together in a uniform approach and comprehension, was Fenik 1968, the results of which have been used extensively by G. S. Kirk and the other authors of the recent Cambridge Commentary on the *Iliad*. Fenik analyzes line-by-line the battle scenes in *Iliad* 5, 11, 13, 17, 16, and 8 (in that order), identifying and comparing the structures and type-scenes and indicating the interplay and the sequences of the various elements from which the duels, the ebb and flow of the battle action, and the descriptive passages are composed: “The poet put together his battle description in much the same way as he constructed his verses and sentences, namely out of smaller, relatively unchanging ‘building blocks’—phrase and sentence formulae at one level, typical descriptive details and action-sequences at another” (Summary). A short but very useful subject index, mainly of type-scenes, as well as an index of names and an *index locorum*, make the book easy to use, once the reader has grown accustomed to the regrettable old practice of using Greek letters for book numbers. The Introduction provides good and clear illustrations of the way a Homeric battle is put together, and there are many good theoretical comments, such as (for example) the pressure exerted by type-scene structure for inclusion of a detail unsuitable to the context (103), the flexibility of the general structure (165), and the use of a type-scene element in an unfamiliar place (115). The main type-scenes listed by Fenik are mentioned below, but there is far too much in this volume to attempt to include it all here.

A second major study is Latacz 1977, which includes detailed work on the problems of battle tactics, the meaning of the phalanx formation, the relationship between duels and mass battle, the use of *promachoi* (fighters in the front rank), and the correspondences with the battle-poetry of Callinus and Tyrtaeus. Latacz divides the battle action into (1) an exchange of missiles; (2) duels; (3) mass fighting at close quarters; and (4) the retreat of one side, after which the action returns to one of the earlier stages. The work includes a detailed Table of Contents and an *index locorum*. Niens 1987 is a further book-length study of *aristeiai*, with a special comparison of those of Achilles and Agamemnon and a study of the balancing episodes in *Iliad* 12-15 and an examination of the shorter, isolated match-ups in the battle-scenes. A further look at the structuring of *promachoi* and mass

fighting is taken in van Wees 1986 and 1988.

Among a good deal of earlier work, mention may be made of Beye 1964, a study of the form of the entries in the Catalogue of Ships in *Iliad* 2 and the similar structure of the *androktasiai*, the accounts of men killed. Both have a three-part structure: the “basic information” about the hero (his name and usually his city); the “anecdote” (often something about his parents, wife or children); and the “contextual information” (what happens to him). He also shows how the killings are linked together in battle scenes and the sources of the names of the slain, and provides a survey of the main killing scenes (358-62). Van Thiel 1977 compares a number of battle episodes from the Analytic point of view. Gruen 1979 examines the structures of recurrent elements in the narrative of battle action, especially the “revenge schema” as a standard of social conduct. Fenik, in a later book (1986:5-43), analyzes the structure of the battles in *Iliad* 11-13. Two general books also devote sections to battle; Mueller 1984:77-107 gives a good general account, including duels, wounds, anecdotes after death, vaunts, catalogues, *aristeiai*, and general structures; and Edwards 1987a devotes a chapter to battle scenes and gives an analysis of the battle in *Iliad* 13 (78-81, 241-44).

In his general book on Homer, G. S. Kirk had discussed the patterns of duels and gave an analysis of a battle scene (*Il.* 16.102-357; Kirk 1962:75-80). In the first volume of his Commentary he analyzes the fighting in *Il.* 4.457-544 (1985:385-86), and in the second he discusses the “six standard constituents of Homeric battle,” that is, mass combat; individual contests; speeches; similes; divine intervention; and individual movements, e.g., from or to the camp or the city. He also lists the subdivisions of each (1990:21-26). See also the index to Janko 1992 s.v. “battle,” “duel,” “fighting (patterns in),” and “killing.”

In passing, mention may be made of C. Armstrong 1969, a brief listing of the body-count in the *Iliad*, and Garland 1981, where one can find statistics about wounds, the deaths of named heroes (total 188 Trojans, 52 Greeks), the metaphors for death (including *hapax legomena*), and an index to the deaths of named heroes. Three authors have compared Virgilian battle scenes with those of the *Iliad*: Kühn 1957 (arming scenes), Krischer 1979 (battle-speeches and *aristeiai*), and Willcock 1983 (structure of battle descriptions).

## 2.2 Structure of battle descriptions

Besides the works mentioned in the previous section, particular aspects of the structure of battle scenes have been studied in the following: calls for

help, by Thornton 1984:86-92, Edwards 1991:62, and Janko 1992:105; the rebuke pattern, by Kirk 1990:109 and Edwards 1991:62; the ambush, by A. Edwards 1985; the position and function of the army's leaders, and the meaning of "phalanx," by van Wees 1986; siege-poetry, by Hainsworth 1993:328-29, 343-45. Hainsworth 1966 demonstrates that the type-scene of armies joining battle includes a sequence of deliberation, meal, council of chiefs, arming or parade, and the charge; see also Edwards 1991:290. Segal 1971 traces the motif of mutilation of a corpse through *Iliad* 16-24, showing how the adoption or adaptation of conventional patterns produces different poetic effects. Tsagarakis 1982:119-26 holds that Fenik imposes too great a uniformity on the structural patterns of battle, especially those of the rebuke and the call for help. One of the longest and most significant general descriptions of battle (as distinct from duels and other specific actions) is analyzed by Edwards 1991:95-96 (*Il.* 17.360-425). See also Hainsworth 1993:226-27.

### 2.3 *Aristeiai and duels*

Besides the major works (Fenik 1968 and Latacz 1977; see 2.1), the triumphs of a particular hero (his *aristeia*) are studied in Krischer 1971, where the author analyzes the possible components of an *aristeia* (flashing weapons; departure for battle; killings and pursuit of the enemy; wounding of the hero; recovery, thanks to a deity; single combat with the enemy leader; and struggle over the corpse, which is removed by divine intervention) and compares the major examples (Diomedes, Agamemnon, Hector, Patroclus, and Achilles). This formulation and the earlier analysis into eight elements by Schröter 1950 (which I have not seen) are discussed by Thornton 1984:74-82 in light of the *aristeiai* of Agamemnon and Diomedes. Heubeck 1989:33, a propos Odysseus' attack on the Cyclops, notes the adaptations of a normal *aristeia*, including the hero's final taunt (38). See also Bannert 1988:11-16, Kirk 1990:54 (on *Il.* 5.9-26), Edwards 1991:298-99, Janko 1992:73, and Hainsworth 1993:255-56.

Kirk 1978:18-40 analyzes and compares the elements in the formal duels in *Iliad* 3 and 7, together with the aborted duel between Diomedes and Glaucus in *Iliad* 6 and the mock duel in *Iliad* 23. He finds many structural but few verbal parallels. Duban 1981 also studies and compares these formal duels and that between Achilles and Hector. Fenik 1986:5-43 deals especially with the duels in *Iliad* 11-13. Tsagarakis 1982:104-18 claims that in his treatment of duels Fenik "imposes a preconceived pattern upon the structure, thus destroying its individual form" (108). Postlethwaite 1985 points out that the illogical duel between Paris and Menelaus in the

tenth year of the war can be explained by the poet's desire to present a marriage contest with Helen as the prize. See also Latacz 1977:77-78 and Thornton 1984:93-100.

#### 2.4 Arming

A warrior donning his armor before battle is an obvious type-scene in any tale of a fighting hero. Arend 1933:92-98 began the study of this Homeric unit, schematizing the four major Iliadic examples (Paris, Agamemnon, Patroclus, Achilles) in his Plate 6. He also discussed the arming of Athena, the adaptations for the arming of Odysseus and Diomedes in *Iliad* 10, and some short forms. Apparently without knowledge of Arend's work, J. Armstrong (1958) examined these four main arming-scenes, showing the poet's subtle manipulation of the basic elements to achieve different poetic effects. Kakridis 1961 studied in particular the donning of Achilles' two sets of armor, the one by Patroclus and Hector, the other by the hero himself. Russo 1968:282-86 identified the core and the embellishment in these scenes. Patzer 1972:29-40 treated the arming of a hero as the prototype of the dressing of a warrior and the arming of a god. He saw that Patroclus' failure to take Achilles' spear, and his driving a mortal horse, portend his death. Patzer took the armings of Paris and Patroclus as a "Grundform," but this identification of a basic form is not theoretically sound (see 1.1.1). Tsagarakis 1982:95-99 shows the differences between the short and long arming scenes. Kirk 1985:313-16 gives a detailed examination and comparison of arming type-scenes. Edwards 1987a:72-74 notes the basic structure and some adaptations. See also Edwards 1980a:3, Thornton 1984:100-103, Bannert 1988:11-16 and 159-67, Danek 1988:203-29 (on the arming scenes in *Iliad* 10), Heubeck 1989:58 (on Odysseus' arming against the Cyclops), Edwards 1991:13 and 276-80, Janko 1992:333-37, Russo 1992:243-44, and Hainsworth 1993:214-16. The disarming of Ares by Athena and of Patroclus by Apollo is discussed in Janko 1992:242 and 412.

#### 2.5 Catalogues, androktasiai, and anecdotes

The standard work on the Homeric techniques for providing names for casualties (*androktasiai*) and adding short, often pathetic obituaries (usually called "anecdotes") is Beye 1964. Tsagarakis 1982:127-33 examines instances where he claims that Beye's pattern does not fit. The massive catalogues of Greeks and Trojans in *Iliad* 2 are studied by Powell 1978, Edwards 1980b, and Kirk 1985:170-73. Mueller 1984:89-93 and Kirk 1990:130-31 list the standard elements in the anecdotes. Bannert

1988:125-51 studies the Epipoleis in *Iliad* 4 and the funeral games in *Iliad* 23. Janko 1992:339-40 comments on the catalogue of Myrmidons in *Iliad* 16. See also Hainsworth 1993:158, 325-26. For the total casualty figures see 2.1.

### 2.6 Battle speeches

Speeches of various types are an important part of the conventions of a Homeric battle. Edwards 1987a:92-94 identifies (with examples) *paraineseis* (exhortations); challenges; vaunts; conferences; rebukes; and calls for help. The Diomedes-Glaucus challenge and response is examined by Gaisser 1969. Latacz 1977:246-50 lists 65 *paraineseis*, 38 on the Greek side and 27 on the Trojan, but despite his title does not comment on their structure or content. Mueller 1984:93-95 comments on vaunts, and Kirk 1990 comments on rebukes (1990:109, 140, 281). See also the index to Janko 1992 s.v. “exhortation,” “rebuke,” “taunt,” and “vaunt.” For supplications, another significant type of battle speech, see 3.7; for decision monologues see 6.2.

## **3. SOCIAL INTERCOURSE**

### 3.1 Hospitality in General

Reece 1992 is a full-scale treatment of all aspects of the hospitality type-scene (he finds four in the *Iliad*, twelve in the *Odyssey*, and two in the *Hymns*). He counts 38 possible conventional elements, examines the major ones in detail, and devotes chapters to the scenes in Ithaca, Pylos, Sparta, Phaeacia, Polyphemus’ island, Eumaeus’ farm, and Odysseus’ palace. Foley 1990 gives a detailed study of three components of hospitality scenes in the *Odyssey*—bath, greeting, and feast, which are included in the listings below (3.1.2, 3.5, 3.1.3). Levy 1963 differentiates the idea of honoring a stranger because he may be a god (*Od.* 17.483-87) from that of doing so because it is the will of Zeus (*Od.* 14.56-58, etc.), suggesting the first is from folktale, the second from the epic tradition. Though not treating them as type-scenes, Segal 1967 discusses the “motifs” of sleep, bath, purification, and crossing a threshold, which signify a transition and very often danger of some kind. Rose 1969 examines Odysseus’ reception on Phaeacia and points out some failures in Phaeacian hospitality, such as Alcinous’ slowness in addressing his suppliant-guest and asking his identity before he has finished eating. Thornton 1970:38-43 has a chapter on guest-friendship that deals with this material. Vagnone 1987 examines scenes of sacrifice, meal, and retiring to

sleep, providing a diagram showing repeated verses in the main sacrifice scenes and listings of repeated verses in the others, including the “But X could not sleep” motif that often follows. Pedrick 1988 remarks that “the noble woman’s *kleos* in the *Odyssey* is intimately bound up with how she treats her guests” (85), and compares parallel series of scenes showing a woman’s welcoming gestures, in an *oikos* under her husband’s authority and under her own. In stable *oikoi* like those of Nestor, Menelaus, and Alkinous, the woman arranges the bed when the guest arrives, supervises the bath before the feast, and provides gifts of clothing on his departure, thus helping to cement the relationship of *xenia* between the guest and her husband. When a woman is the mistress (Calypso, Circe, Penelope), there is hesitation and ambiguity.

### 3.1.1 Arrival and Reception of a Guest

Arend 1933:28-34 (with plates 1-2) studied Homeric type-scenes depicting arrival; this is his first chapter, and he goes into a lot of detail to establish the basic principles of a type-scene. In its simplest form, a person sets off (sometimes the initiative is given), arrives at his destination, finds the person sought, approaches, and addresses him. Arend’s very detailed study and diagrams (Schemata 1-5) bring out the presence or absence of various elements such as a description of the residence, the greeting by the visitor, and the presence of bystanders. He also notes that the omission of elements can be important (32), and the occasional negation of an element, as when Hector arrives at his house and does not find his wife there (33-34).

Arend treats visit scenes separately (34-53 and plate 3), because in arrival scenes the person arriving takes the initiative, whereas in visits the reception of the visitor is described. The occupation and companions of the person visited are sometimes described, the host expresses surprise, leaps up and draws the visitor within, offers him a seat and refreshment, and finally begins the conversation. Arend notes (35) that sometimes the elements of arrival and visit scenes may be mingled, as when the envoys arrive at Achilles’ dwelling as Agamemnon’s messengers and are received as visitors (*Iliad* 9). He gives a full analysis of the much-elaborated “visit” of Priam to Achilles (*Iliad* 24) and of the many visit scenes in the *Odyssey*.

Shelmerdine 1969 acutely notes that in four guest-welcome scenes early in the *Odyssey* the guest arrives as the tables are being set out and the meat cut up (Athena with Telemachus in Book 1), as the cooked food is being set out (Athena and Telemachus with Nestor, Book 3), when the banquet is in progress, with singing and dancing (Telemachus with Menelaus, Book 4), and as the banquet is ending and the final libations are

being poured (Odysseus with Alcinous, Book 7). She offers the opinion that the controlled variation shows the skill of the poet. Lang 1969 suggests that some elements of Odysseus' stay among the Phaeacians may best be explained if items of the elaboration in that episode are modeled on his return to Ithaca and visit to the palace there, including the testing of the hero at the Phaeacian games and the Ithacan contest of the bow. She also notes that Odysseus prays for a safe arrival when he reaches the spring and shrine outside the city of the Phaeacians, and Eumaeus prays for his master's safe arrival home when they reach the spring and shrine outside the city of Ithaca, suggesting this might well be an element in the arrival-pattern (162).

Gunn 1970:198-99 examines the visit of Hermes to Calypso and that of Thetis to Hephaestus, suggesting that the minor inconsistencies in each are the result of the dictation of the text by an oral poet who is unable to correct a slip he has made. Edwards 1975:61-67 suggests that the problem results partly from the overlapping of messenger, arrival, and visit scenes, partly from the conversion of the "description of bystanders" element into an explanation of the absence of Odysseus. In the same article Edwards discusses similar minor problems arising from the adaptation and mingling of these type-scenes in the visits of Thetis to Hephaestus, the envoys to Achilles, Odysseus to Circe, and Priam to Achilles (see also Edwards 1980a:16-17). Tsagarakis 1982:49-73 takes up the theme again, discussing to what extent the audience would be expecting particular type-scene elements to occur in these scenes.

The first part of Fenik's study of the *Odyssey* (Fenik 1974:5-130) is devoted to exploration of the associations and implications of the elements appearing in the scene of Odysseus' arrival and reception in Phaeacia, and is very rich in its listing of patterns of all kinds occurring in the poem. N. Richardson 1974:207-9, 211-17 considers Demeter's epiphany in the *Hymn to Demeter* as a visit type-scene adapted to model Eleusinian ritual. Williams 1986 discusses guest-receptions by royal figures in the *Odyssey*, suggesting the type-scene is parodied in Odysseus's reception in 14.1-190 (it is not easy, however, to distinguish parody from the normal adaptation of a type-scene to its context; cf. Eumaeus' dressing scene, 3.8 below). Bailey 1987 studies the ritual of handwashing as a part of guest-reception, suggesting it is a ritual signalling the guest's inclusion in the host's household and also purification after some flaw in the initial reception. Edwards 1991:187 and N. Richardson 1992:338 note the adaptation of a visitor's washing for the washing of the corpses of Patroclus and Hector. Hainsworth 1993:305 notes a first-person narrative of arrival. See also



Heubeck 1988:90-91, 260, 263-64, 321; Heubeck 1989:63; Edwards 1991:189-91; and N. Richardson 1992:320-21.

For messenger scenes see 3.2, for divine visits 3.4, and for travel 4.1 and 4.2.

### 3.1.2 Bathing

Arend devoted a short chapter to bathing (1933:124-26), which includes washing, anointing and donning clean clothing. He points out that the washing of a corpse follows the same pattern (cf. Edwards 1991:187; N. Richardson 1992:338). Elaborations often include the heating of the water (e.g., *Il.* 18.346-48, *Od.* 10.357-59), and there are adaptations when Odysseus washes in the river at Nausicaa's behest (*Odyssey* 6). Gutglueck 1988 lists the bath-scenes, emphasizing the nudity, exposure of genitals, and castration anxiety. Fränkel 1968, however, has more plausibly stressed the importance of the bath as a sign of guest-friendship.

In a comprehensive work on three national traditions of oral poetry, Foley 1990, the author examines three *Odyssey* type-scenes: bath, greeting, and feast. He includes the amount of verbal repetition ("the actual verbal expression of this [bath] theme consists not of a completely fossilized run of hexameters but rather of a fluid collection of diction that can take on numerous different forms" (252). The bath type-scene is embedded in the hospitality theme, usually preceding a feast. See also Heubeck 1988:189; Heubeck 1989:63; Kirk 1990:154; and Hainsworth 1993:208.

### 3.1.3 Meals

Arend 1933 handles the meal-preparation type-scene in the same chapter as that of sacrifice, with which it is generally associated. After the beast has been sacrificed (see 5.1 below), in the *Iliad* the meat is usually eaten in a few lines (e.g., *Il.* 2.430-31; Arend 1933:68). Or a meal may be prepared and eaten without a formal sacrifice, as when Achilles entertains the envoys (*Il.* 9.201-17). In the *Odyssey* there are more examples of meal-preparation without sacrifice, including the elements of hand-washing and placing of tables (e.g., *Od.* 17.91-98); he points out that the suitors' meal extends over nearly two books (*Od.* 17.180-18.428; Arend 1933:74). As he says, "Nicht Freude am Essen, Freude an Gastlichkeit spricht aus den Mahlszenen Homers; 'Bewirtungsszenen' wäre die rechte Bezeichnung" (70). He also considers the feasts of the gods (75-77); cf. Edwards 1980a:26-27.

Gunn also examines feasting at some length (1971:22-31), including the sacrifice, comparing the various examples and their adaptations to the context, and noting the verbal parallels. He finds the same regular structure

and repetition of substantial blocks of formulas, especially in the preparation of the meat. Scott 1971 discusses the two successive meal type-scenes in *Odyssey* 1, where first Telemachus and the disguised Athena eat, then the suitors. He shows that in the first scene, the elaboration emphasizes the absence of Odysseus and the hospitality of Telemachus, whereas the suitors' scene is essentially formulaic, with little explicit elaboration. In his comprehensive work on three traditions of oral poetry, Foley examines the feast type-scene in the *Odyssey*, with a diagram showing the verbal repetition and a careful comparison of the elements in the various occurrences (1990:265-76).

See also Thornton 1970:41-42; Tsagarakis 1982:80-86; Heubeck 1988:94-95; Heubeck 1989:63, 225 (change in the sense of a formula); Kirk 1990:275-76; Edwards 1991:253; Foley 1991:174-78 (on the meal shared by Priam and Achilles); N. Richardson 1992:341 (adaptation); and Hainsworth 1993:91 (on the meal Achilles prepares for the envoys).

#### 3.1.4 Recognition and Entertainment

If the visitor is unknown, a recognition must take place during the hospitality; and recognitions, especially in the case of Odysseus, also take place independently. The long-delayed admission of his identity by Odysseus in Phaeacia is the main topic in Fenik 1974:5-130, in which many type-scenes and motifs are identified and compared. The same issue has recently been addressed by Webber 1989. The recognitions of Odysseus, mainly outside the hospitality framework, were also treated in Lord 1960:169-85. Han 1981 briefly categorizes some of these scenes. N. Richardson 1983 discusses the many examples of deception, disguise, and recognition in the *Odyssey* against the background of Aristotle's *Poetics* and the views of other critics in antiquity. Koliass 1984 aims "to show how the major instances of recognition function in a reading of the poem." Murnaghan 1987 is a book-length study of all types of recognition in the *Odyssey*. See also Russo 1992:34, 94, 184, 384, 396-97. For the entertainment (usually conversation) that follows the meal, see 3.5 below.

#### 3.1.5 Retiring for the night

The type-scene of retiring and sleep is dealt with in Arend 1933:99-105, who lists the occurrences and their connection with other scenes. Often the host's wife is said to accompany him to bed; Telemachus' bedroom and his undressing are described; the preparation of a bed for a guest on the porch may be added, most elaborately (and memorably) for Priam (*Il.* 24.643-74). The type-scene may form part of the sequence "all the others

slept...but not...,” which links *Iliad* 1-2, 9-10 and 23-24. Gunn 1971:17-22 also treats “guests for the night,” comparing the two type-scenes in the *Iliad* and the three in the *Odyssey*. He concludes that “the poet has sought to adapt the particular within a highly useful framework; hence the marked changes of particular context.” Often the elements of the type-scene are given considerable significance, as when Achilles is said to retire with Diomedes (and Patroclus with Iphigeneia) in *Iliad* 9 but with the restored Briseis in *Iliad* 24, after Patroclus’ death. Minchin 1985 shows what the sleeplessness motif comprises: the community activity concludes; the others eat and sleep; one alone remains awake; the cause of his sleeplessness; his behavior; and the resolution. There is a good summary of the elements and adaptations in N. Richardson 1992:343-44. See also Edwards 1980a:22, 27; Vagnone 1987; and Hainsworth 1993:144.

### 3.1.6 Departure and Gift-giving

This type-scene is not covered by Arend. Gunn 1970:194-97 examines Telemachus’ departure from Menelaus’ palace and Priam’s for the Greek camp, identifying a few other examples, and points to a problem in the timing of the libation in the *Odyssey* instance, attributing it to the difficulties of oral composition and dictation. Rose 1971 and Edwards 1975 discuss the same passage, the former attributing the problem to “an amusing tension that has developed between Telemachus’ impetuous eagerness to return home and Menelaus’ persistent failure to incorporate this in his mind” (510), the latter to a somewhat awkward joining of departure, libation and greeting scenes—the last not elsewhere found at a departure (57-61). In this article Edwards also identifies the type-scenes of gift-giving (see also Thornton 1970:45-46) and chariot-departure (see also 4.2 below). The handing-over of a gift in circumstances other than departure is discussed by Edwards 1980a:20 and 1991:263. See also Tsagarakis 1979; 1982:47-64; and (from the textual viewpoint) Apthorp 1980:197-216. J. Elmiger, *Begrüßung und Abschied bei Homer* (diss. Freiburg 1935) I have not seen.

### 3.2 Messengers

Arend 1933:54-61 and Schema 7 considered messenger-scenes as a part of his chapter on the arrival type-scene. The message is committed to the messenger (human or divine), who then prepares for departure, departs, journeys, arrives, finds his quarry, approaches him, and delivers the message. Arend discusses some of the adaptations, such as the striking failure of the heralds sent to retrieve Briseis from Achilles in *Iliad* 1 to

deliver any message to him. N. Richardson 1974:261-62 gives the usual elements of the type-scene, pointing out that in the *Hymn to Demeter* Zeus, exceptionally, does not give his message in direct speech. Edwards 1975:62-67 discusses some problems that arise when there is some ambiguity over whether the person arriving is a messenger, who should approach and deliver his message, or a guest, who should be welcomed, invited in, and fed before the conversation begins; the problem can be seen when the envoys of Agamemnon, Achilles' friends, reach his dwelling in *Iliad* 9, and when Zeus's messenger Hermes arrives on Calypso's island (*Odyssey* 5). In Edwards 1980a:16-17 the similar problem when the heralds face Achilles in *Iliad* 1 is discussed. Tsagarakis 1982:74-79 shows that the number and elaboration of the elements in messenger-scenes depends upon the context. Létoublon 1987 studies the role of the repetition of messages in the construction of the poems from a narratological point of view, particularly the messages of Zeus at the end of the *Iliad* and those to Demeter in the *Hymn to Demeter*. Crane 1988:167-74 presents in parallel the dispatch and reception of Zeus' messenger Hermes in *Odyssey* 5.29-213 and *Hymn to Demeter* 334-74. See also Hainsworth 1993:84-85, 89, and (on a messenger's verbatim report) 98. On divine messengers see 3.4 below.

### 3.3 Dreams

Arend 1933:61-63 treated dream-scenes after messenger-scenes, with which the former have much in common. Thus in *Iliad* 2 Zeus dispatches the Dream to Agamemnon with a message, the Dream sets off, arrives, finds his quarry, draws near, and delivers his message; only his assumption of the form of Nestor is different from a normal messenger type-scene. Athena's visit to Nausicaa at the beginning of *Odyssey* 6 is very similar in structure. Gunn 1971:15-17 provides a similar analysis of a "supernatural visitant," and compares the various examples, finding no distinctions in usage between the two poems. Morris 1983 revises the analyses of the above authors, and studies more closely the relationship of each of seven scenes to its context, providing a diagram of the disposition of elements in the type-scene. See also Heubeck 1988:242-43.

### 3.4 Divine Visit

A visit to a mortal by a deity is different from a normal visit type-scene, as no hospitality on the mortal's part is usually required. They are more like messenger-scenes (so Arend 1933:56-61). Often the deity's journey is much elaborated, for example that of Hermes to Calypso (though she is not, of course, mortal: *Od.* 5.44-58); Fenik 1968:73-75 and 115 notes the care the

gods take of their chariots and horses. Edwards 1980a:9-11, 13-15, 17-19 examines the three divine visits in *Iliad* 1 (by Apollo, Athena, and Thetis), showing the distinctive features of each. Coventry 1987 examines the three excursions of Iris as messenger in *Iliad* 23-24, suggesting the scenes give an impression of “divine distance from men combined with compassion” (179). Létoublon 1987 studies the role of the repetition of messages in the construction of the poems from a narratological point of view, particularly the messages of Zeus at the end of the *Iliad* and those to Demeter in the *Hymn to Demeter*. See also Edwards 1987a:307 (adaptation); Edwards 1991:233, 239; Janko 1992:43, 46, 186-87, 251-52; N. Richardson 1992:310. On divine journeys over land and sea, see N. Richardson 1974:278-81, and on the distinction between the “likeness” that a divinity assumes, and that divinity’s “true” appearance and nature, Smith 1988.

### 3.5 Conference, Conversation, and Greeting

The entertainment after a meal usually consists of conversation, and of course it also occurs on many other occasions. Hansen 1972 examines several conference (conversation, consultation) sequences in the *Odyssey*: Odysseus and Teiresias; Menelaus and Proteus; Helios and Zeus; the divine assemblies in *Odyssey* 1 and 5 and the following messenger-actions; the Telemachy, which he divides into three successive conference sequences; and Odysseus’ conversations with the Phaeacians. In each case he analyzes the course of the action and shows the similarities, concluding that the occasional narrative inconsistencies are best explained not as the work of different poets but as the result of the force of traditional structures upon the poet. Nagler 1974:68-72 analyzes two scenes, *Od.* 1.328-36 and *Il.* 3.418-47, where a woman is identified by the narrator, advances accompanied by her handmaids, takes up a position, veiling her face (or averting her eyes), and speaks to a man, emphasizing the connotations of chastity invoked by such a scene (Van Nortwick 1979 expands on this sequence with special reference to the appearances of Nausicaa and Penelope). Nagler also studies scenes where a person awakes from sleep, dresses, and convenes an assembly of some kind, showing carefully the connotations of the various elements of the scenes (1974:112-30). N. Richardson 1974:179-80 outlines the type-scene of meeting a deity in disguise, and (339-43) diagrams a number of such scenes. Edwards 1980a:15, 26 discusses two conference scenes in *Iliad* 1 where a mediator appears. See also Russo 1992:361 on the meeting of the souls in Hades (*Odyssey* 24).

Greeting or toast scenes, in which a character hands a cup of wine to

another with words of welcome, honor or farewell (often with “*chaire!*”) are identified in Edwards 1975:55 and 1980a:26 and treated fully in Foley 1990:257-65.

### 3.6 Assembly and Dismissal

Arend 1933:116-21 studied and diagrammed (plate 9) assembly-scenes, showing the elements begin with the summoning; the men sit down; the leader speaks and sits down, and others speak in turn; and there is a one-verse dismissal. He mentions the adaptations and the assemblies of the gods and the Trojans, and notes the parallels in the funeral games of *Iliad* 23. Bassett 1930 had previously shown that the ending of an assembly does not record the formal adjournment but pictures the end of the meeting; to preserve continuity, the one who dismisses it is either the last speaker or the last person(s) mentioned. Lord 1960:146-47, Edwards 1980a: 11-12, 15-16, 26 (divine assembly), and Thornton 1984:83-86 give a brief accounts of some *Iliad* assemblies. Tsagarakis 1982:100-3, however, declares that “the composition of the assembly theme cannot be reduced to a formulaic ‘Schema’.” Bannert 1987b remarks that assemblies, through the give-and-take of opinions and instructions, provide preparation for future events of the plot, and studies the four Greek assemblies in the *Iliad* and the assemblies of the Ithacans and the Phaeacians in the *Odyssey*, showing that they occur at critical points in the action of the poems. The significance of the prophecies that appeared at the assemblies in *Iliad* 2 and *Odyssey* 2 is discussed in Haft 1992. See also Heubeck 1988:253-54, 346, and Hainsworth 1993:59-60.

### 3.7 Supplication

Scenes of supplication are frequent in Homer, both in battle structures and in non-military interactions such as Thetis’ supplication to Zeus at the beginning of the *Iliad* and Priam’s to Achilles at its end. The most substantial work is Gould 1973, who makes an intensive study of the 35 Homeric examples as well as those in later literature. He also covers (90-94) the parallel treatment of *xenoi*, suppliant strangers. Pedrick 1982 criticizes some aspects of Gould’s work, and compares supplication scenes in the *Iliad* with those in the *Odyssey*, finding more respect for divine sanctions on the suppliant’s behalf in the latter poem and examining the ways in which the scenes are manipulated for poetic effect. Edwards 1980a:5-8, 17-19, and 25-26 examines the three supplication scenes in *Iliad* 1, analyzing them into four elements (the approach of the suppliant; a gesture of supplication; the suppliant’s speech, including a vocative, a request, and an offer; and the

response of the person supplicated). There is a briefer account and comparison in Edwards 1987a:74-75 and 91. The type-scene is also considered in Thornton 1984:113-24, with an analysis of the elements of the supplication by the priest Chryses, the embassy to Achilles (including the Prayers/Atê passage), Thetis and Zeus, and Priam and Achilles. Supplication-scenes in battle (especially those with Agamemnon) are examined by Fenik 1968:83-84 and 1986:6-8, 22-27; the suppliant in such *Iliad* scenes is always unsuccessful. Apthorp 1980:96-97 lists and compares the eleven passages in Homer where a man who has killed another flees from his country to escape vengeance. Rabel 1988 studies Chryses' supplication in *Iliad* 1. See also Heubeck 1988:166, 290, 300; Kirk 1990:160; Russo 1992:99; Hainsworth 1993:191, 197. Schlunk 1976 deals with the story pattern (not the type-scene) of the suppliant-exile in the *Iliad*.

### 3.8 Dressing and Adornment

As a part of his study of arming scenes, Arend considers those of putting on clothing (1933:97-98). In his plate 7 he schematizes the male dressing-scenes of *Iliad* 2 and 10 and three similar scenes from the *Odyssey*, showing that the sequence roughly resembles that of an arming scene (cf. also Patzer 1972:30-31). Arend remarks that Eumaeus has a cross between a dressing and an arming scene (*Od.* 14.526-33), transferring a scene from the world of heroes to that of ordinary mortals (this should probably not be called parody, but cf. Williams 1986 on Eumaeus' reception of Odysseus and Kadletz 1984 on his pig-sacrifice). Danek 1988:203-29 compares the dressing scenes in *Iliad* 10 to others of the same nature. See also Hainsworth 1993:158-59.

The type-scene of female dressing and adornment (there are a number of examples) is most fully studied in Janko 1992:173-79, a propos Hera's seduction of Zeus. The scenes are closely associated with allurements and seduction scenes (see 3.9 below).

### 3.9 Allurement and Seduction

These scenes are closely associated with the type-scene of a female dressing and adorning herself. Forsyth 1979 defines the pattern; a female adorns herself, appears before a male (or males) who expresses desire for her, and either goes to bed with him or does not. He schematizes three instances in the *Iliad* (Helen with the old Trojans and with Paris, Hera with Zeus), four in the *Odyssey* (Penelope in Books 1, 18, and 21, and Nausicaa in Book 6), Aphrodite and Aeneas in the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, and Pandora in Hesiod's *Works and Days*. Van Nortwick 1980 compares these scenes with Apollo's

approach to Hermes' mother Maia in the *Hymn to Hermes*. Sowa 1984:39-144 gives a very full treatment of all marriage, seduction, and abduction scenes in Homer and the *Hymns*. Suter 1987 analyzes a number of abduction scenes in Greek poetry, including Homer, Hesiod, and the *Hymn to Aphrodite*. N. Richardson 1974:152-55 comments on abduction-scenes. See also Janko 1992:170-79.

## 4. TRAVEL

### 4.1 *Travel by Sea*

#### 4.1.1 Putting to Sea

Arend 1933:81-85 notes that departures by ship vary considerably, with elements sometimes omitted, sometimes much elaborated. Elements may include the choosing of the crew, their move to the ship, its launching, the preparation of mast, sails, and oars, the loading, embarkation, casting-off of the moorings, and the sending of a favorable wind by a deity. Tsagarakis 1982:87-88 discusses the instances, showing how the elements can be rearranged or ignored as the poet wishes. See also Edwards 1980a:22-3 and Heubeck 1988:153.

#### 4.1.2 Journey by Sea

Arend 1933:86 devotes a separate section to this topic, though except for Telemachus' return journey (*Od.* 15.295-300) an uneventful voyage is usually covered in a single verse. See also Edwards 1980a:22-23.

#### 4.1.3 Arrival after Sea-journey

Arend 1933:79-81 analyzes the scenes and diagrams seven *Odyssey* examples in his plate 5. The fullest instance is Odysseus' landing at Chryse (*Il.* 1.430-39), which includes entering the harbor, dropping the sail, rowing to the anchorage, lowering the anchor-stones, tying the stern mooring-ropes, disembarkation, and unloading of the hecatomb and Chryseis. For long stays the ship is drawn up on land. See also Edwards 1980a:19-20. Heubeck 1988:161 lists parallel scenes.

### 4.2 *Travel by Land*

Arend 1933:86-91 lists the elements, including harnessing the horses, mounting the chariot, taking up the reins and sometimes the whip, and whipping up the horses. Arrival may include halting the horses, stepping



down from the chariot, and unharnessing and feeding the animals. Gods' journeys are more elaborate. The journeys of Priam in *Iliad* 24 and Nausicaa in *Odyssey* 6 are described with special detail. Tsagarakis 1982:88-94 shows the flexibility of the type-scene pattern. See also N. Richardson 1974:205, Edwards 1975:55 (chariot-departure).

## 5. RITUAL

### 5.1 Sacrifice

The fullest treatment of this most obvious example of the Homeric type-scene is Kirk 1980:62-68. Kirk tabulates the action of sacrifice in six Homeric scenes, listing no less than 35 possible elements, discussing the similarities and adaptations in the scenes and noting some known real-life Greek sacrificial rites which are *not* included in the type-scene structure. Arend 1933:64-78 grouped sacrifice and meal-preparation together. He made the sound point that repetition in both the form and the wording of the type-scene is very strong here because of the ritual nature of the actions. In his Plate 4 he diagrammed seven instances, dividing the scene into a possible 21 elements and marking the repeated verses. Within the type-scene he included: preliminaries and prayer; killing and preparation of the sacrificial meat; preparation of the meat for the meal; the meal-description; and the entertainment. Sacrifice and meal are often joined, but occur separately, especially in the *Odyssey*. (The meal is treated in this survey in 3.1.3 above.)

Nagler 1974:205-7 points out the irony showing through the sacrifice by Odysseus' men to Helios in *Odyssey* 12. Kadletz 1984 studies the pig sacrifice offered by Eumaeus (see 3.8 above). Stallings 1985 studies the poetic effects of formulaic diction in scenes of an eaten sacrifice. The sacrifice at Chryse (*Il.* 1.447-68) is studied, and the adaptations noted, by Edwards 1980a:20-22 and Kirk 1985:100-2. A brief account of the type-scene and its variations is given in Edwards 1987a:71-72. Vagnone 1987 examines scenes of sacrifice, meal, and retiring to sleep, providing a diagram showing repeated verses in the main sacrifice scenes and listings of repeated verses in the others, including the "But X could not sleep" motif that often follows. The numerous sacrifices in the *Odyssey*, and their adaptations, are commented upon by Heubeck 1988:160-61, 185-89, and Heubeck 1989:138. On the general significance of sacrifice in Homer and Greek tragedy, see Seaford 1989.

### 5.2 Prayer

The fullest treatment is Muellner 1976, especially 26-31 where the type-scene is analyzed into three elements: the invocation of the deity; the claim to favor; and a specific request. These elements may be preceded by the scene-setting and a gesture by the person praying, and followed by a narrator's remark about the deity's response. Lang 1975 divides prayers that include a request into simple and complex, the latter including a reason why the prayer should be granted and/or the purpose that such a grant would serve. Edwards 1980a:8-9 and 17-19 compares the elements and adaptations of a number of prayer scenes; there is a brief summary in Edwards 1987a:90-91. Rabel 1988 studies Chryses' supplication and Achilles' prayer to Thetis in *Iliad* 1. Morrison 1991 deals particularly with Theano's prayer in *Iliad* 6, showing the typical pattern and examining its narrative function in the context. He also considers other prayer scenes, especially as vehicles for anticipation of later events. There are good comments on prayer type-scenes in Janko 1992:188 (a parody), 268, 346-52, and 382-83. See also Heubeck 1989:40-41, N. Richardson 1992:303, and Hainsworth 1993:83, 181-82. The specific case of invocations to the Muses is given a careful study in Minton 1960.

### 5.3 Funeral Rites

Edwards 1986 compares the funerals of Patroclus and Hector in the *Iliad* and Achilles in the *Odyssey*, showing the adaptations made for each occasion. The poet sometimes changes the sequence of the elements, and the elements themselves are used with enhanced emotional significance. Petropoulou 1988 discusses Patroclus' tomb and tumulus. Pedaros 1988 relates the stages of a funeral to cult rather than to the type-scene. See also Heubeck 1988:105 and 1989:82, N. Richardson 1992:166-67 and 337-38.

### 5.4 Omens

Podlecki 1967 studies the characteristics and uses of omen scenes in the *Odyssey*, though without specifically regarding them as type-scenes. Thornton 1970:52-57 provides a less detailed account. Edwards 1975:56 and 59 briefly analyzes the type-scene, and notes the example at Telemachus' departure from Sparta (*Od.* 15.160-81). See also the indexes to Russo 1992 and Janko 1992 *s.v.* "omens."

### 5.5 Libation

Arend 1933:76-78 lists a number of libation-offerings, which usually cover

only one to three verses; hand-washing often precedes the pouring of the offering. Edwards 1975:55-56 notes that in fact there are two varieties of the type-scene, one for an individual and one for a group libation. See also Heubeck 1988:162, 182; Russo 1992:57, 177; and N. Richardson 1992:303-5.

### 5.6 Oath-taking

Arend 1933:122-23 briefly discusses the type-scene of swearing an oath, of which there are two extended and highly important examples in the *Iliad* (3.245-313 before the truce, and 19.249-68 when Agamemnon returns Briseis) and many shorter instances. Normally one party demands that the oath be sworn, and states its content; the other agrees; the oath is taken, and the narrative resumes. The form is noted in Edwards 1975:67; see also Kirk 1985:302-7, Heubeck 1988:152-53, Heubeck 1989:60, and Edwards 1991:264-65.

### 5.7 Purification

These scenes occur infrequently. The purification of the army in *Iliad* 1 is discussed by Edwards 1980a:16 and Kirk 1985:84-85. A different kind of purification of an individual, perhaps modeled on an Eleusinian ritual, is studied in N. Richardson 1974:211-17.

## **6. SPEECHES AND DELIBERATION**

### 6.1 General

About 45% of the *Iliad* and 67% of the *Odyssey* are in direct speech (Griffin 1986:37). Though speeches follow regular patterns, it is questionable whether they may properly be considered a form of type-scene. Deliberation monologues, however, are close to the concept of a type-scene, and for convenience the other major types of speech are included here. Speeches occurring in battle are treated in 2.6, prayers in 5.2, supplication-speeches in 3.7, and messenger-speeches in 3.2.

The composition of speeches in the *Iliad* was well studied by Lohmann 1970, who illustrated the predominance of ring composition. He did not group speeches according to their purpose. Edwards 1987a:88-89 mentions the main categories of speeches: hortatory speeches (persuading to a course of action), prayers and supplications, laments, messages, and battle speeches (2.6), suggesting that comparison of speeches of the same genre can give clues to the poet's methods and intentions. A significant

contribution has recently been made by Martin 1989, in which the author discusses a number of issues related to the speech act and in particular examines divine commands (47-59), heroic commands (59-65), the “contested word,” i.e., the agonistic context (65-77), feats of memory (77-88), and others listed below. He includes a detailed analysis of Achilles’ response to Odysseus’ solicitation (*Il.* 9.307-429; 1989:166-96). Kirk 1990:28-35 discusses the use of speeches for characterization, without identifying the different types; he also gives a detailed analysis of Hector’s first speech to Andromache (*Il.* 6.441-65; 1990:18-21). Dane 1982 makes interesting comparisons between the Meleager tale in *Iliad* 9 and the mediaeval “Hero on the Beach” theme.

### 6.2 *Deliberation and Monologue*

Arend 1933:106-15 studied deliberation scenes (under the rubric MEPMHPIZEIN). He identified two types of narrative scenes, one where a character considers how to achieve an aim (“how he might...,” 106-8), the other where he debates a choice between two possibilities (“whether... or...,” 108-13). In the latter type, usually the second alternative is chosen. Arend also dealt briefly with a third type, cases where the character presents the dilemma in direct speech (1933:113-15), often introduced by *ochthêsas d’ ara eipe pros hon megalêtora thumon* and with the decision prefaced by *alla tiê moi tauta philos dielexato thumos?* About the same time a more detailed study of all three types appeared, Voigt 1934. Basing his work on Voigt, Russo 1968:288-94 indicated some differences between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and examined in detail the adaptations occurring in Odysseus’ monologue at the beginning of *Odyssey* 20.

The four deliberation monologues in the *Iliad* are noted in Fenik 1968:96-98, and intensively analyzed and compared by Fenik 1978:68-90, with a full bibliography on choice in Homer. Fenik finds the same sequence of thought in all scenes, but “Each articulates the dilemma in his own terms—so much so that each of the scenes contributes a portrait” (71), and each scene is closely tailored to its circumstances and context (89). Petersmann 1974 discusses the implications of these scenes for freedom of the will in Homer. Scully 1984 examines the formulas associated with deliberation monologues. Recently a very detailed study of this topic in early Greek poetry, Burnett 1991, includes an analysis of these Homeric monologues. A narrated decision scene is briefly described in Edwards 1980a:12-13, where the deliberation and decision are dramatized by a physical action (*Il.* 1.188-194a), and Edwards 1987a:94-96 gives a brief account of monologues. See also Sharples 1983.

In the Oxford *Odyssey* Commentary, deliberation scenes are noted at Heubeck 1989:30, 35, 45, 53, 67, 92 and Russo 1992:30, 108, 110, 387-88. In the Cambridge *Iliad* Commentary, see Edwards 1991:72, N. Richardson 1992:99-100, and Hainsworth 1993:269.

### 6.3 *Testing of a Stranger*

In an article first published in 1965, A. B. Lord drew parallels between the taunting (or “flyting”) of Beowulf by Unferth and the insult paid to Odysseus by the Phaeacian Euryalus (1991:133-39). Others since have noticed this type-scene of the testing of a stranger (sometimes indexed under the Greek term *peira*). Thornton 1970:47-51 divides the *Odyssey* scenes into seven elements, and Martin 1989:65-77, 81-83, 124 gives a full account (as “the contested word”). Parks 1990 I have not seen. See also Lang 1969:166, Heubeck 1988:291, Heubeck 1989:24, 133, 137, and Russo 1992 index *s.v.* “testing.” On the problems of Agamemnon’s testing of the army in *Iliad* 2, see most recently McGlew 1989.

### 6.4 *Laments*

Petersmann 1973 compares the laments of Achilles, Briseis, Priam, Hecuba, and Andromache. Edwards 1987a:91 gives a brief treatment, and Lohmann 1988 analyzes in detail the structure of the laments of Briseis and Achilles over the body of Patroclus, showing the identical structure and how it can also be detected (in chiasmic order) in Andromache’s speech to Hector (6.407-39) and her lament from the wall (22.477-514). He also discusses the exchanges between Hector and Helen, and Hector and Hecuba. Foley 1991:168-74 studies the laments of Briseis (*Iliad* 19), Hecuba and Andromache (*Iliad* 22), and the three women over Hector’s corpse (*Iliad* 24), showing how women’s laments differ from those of men and how different perspectives are fitted within the same traditional form. See also the comments *ad locc.* in the Cambridge *Iliad* Commentary (esp. Edwards 1991:268-69, N. Richardson 1992:349-52).

### 6.5 *Persuasion*

Edwards 1987a:90 briefly compares the three speeches made by the envoys to Achilles in *Iliad* 9. Hainsworth 1993 gives fuller treatments *ad locc.* Martin 1989:206-8 discusses Achilles’ rejection of the envoys’ attempts at persuasion. For exhortations to one’s followers in battle, see 2.6. For messengers and messages, see Edwards 1987a:91-92 and 3.2 above.

6.6 Consolation

Nagler 1974:167-98 gives a detailed and illuminating study of the consolation scene and speeches between Priam and Achilles in *Iliad* 24. Minchin 1986 gives a careful and perceptive examination of the character of Achilles in the same scene, by turns sympathetic and brusque; she compares the handling and the structure of the scene to that of the Agamemnon/Chryses scene at the beginning of the poem. N. Richardson 1974:174-75 briefly analyzes Helios' speech of consolation to Demeter (*Hymn to Demeter* 82-87) into three elements, which recur in Hades' consolation to Persephone in the same poem (362-69).

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# **Slavic Oral Traditions**

*On the Composition of Women's Songs*

Mary P. Coote

*Repetition as Invention in the Songs of Vuk Karadžić*

Svetozar Koljević

*“Sound Shaping” of East Slavic Zagovory*

Alla Astakhova

## On the Composition of Women's Songs

Mary P. Coote

The patriarch of South Slavic oral tradition studies, Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, thus categorized traditional songs in Serbo-Croatian in his preface to the 1843 (1964) Leipzig edition of *Srpske narodne pesme* (xvi-xvii, translations mine):

All our folksongs are divided into heroic songs on the one hand, which men sing to the *gusle*, and women's songs on the other, which are sung not only by women and girls, but also by men, especially young men, mostly two singing in unison. Women's songs are sung by one or two people simply for their own enjoyment, while heroic songs are sung chiefly for others to listen to; thus in the singing of women's songs more attention is paid to the singing than to the song, while in the singing of heroic songs more attention is paid to the song. Today the heroic song tradition is most alive in Bosnia and Hercegovina, in Montenegro and in the mountainous southern regions of Serbia. In these places even today nearly every house has a *gusle* . . . and it's hard to find a man who doesn't know how to play one, and even many women and girls know how. . . . Also to the west of Srem, the farther you go through Slovenia towards Croatia and Dalmatia, the more commonly you find heroic songs. Women's songs, on the other hand, I believe are most common in the places where the heroic songs are more rare [Srem, Bačka, Banat, northern Serbia] and in the market towns of Bosnia; for just as the men are softer in these places, so also the women in the heroic songs areas (except the townsmen) are harsher and think more of heroics than of love; the distribution may also have something to do with the fact that women in Srem, Bačka, and Banat, as in the Bosnian towns, have more social life outside the home. Indeed, in Srem, Bačka, and Banat people in the towns no longer sing the women's folksongs, but prefer new kinds that learned folk, students, and apprentices make up.

Further on he adds (xxvii):

Women's songs are rarely composed nowadays, except that girls and boys sometimes make up impromptu singing exchanges.

The distinction Vuk is making, based on his intuitive feel for his

native culture, is not between songs strictly for men and songs strictly for women, but rather between a special marked category—heroic—and an unmarked category of everything else—women's. It reflects a pervasive division between the men's sphere and the women's sphere in a traditional society, or between the public and the private domain, in which prestige, authority, and power accrue to the former. Heroic songs are generally restricted both in the circumstances of their performance and in their content to the world of the adult male in a patriarchal and often embattled society.

Women's songs include everything not heroic: ballads and bawdy songs, laments, lullabies, courting and love songs, songs to hive bees by, songs to spite the next village, ritual songs for rainmaking, seasonal festivals, weddings and circumcisions, and so forth. These are any songs sung outside the special circumstances of performing heroic songs, but often restricted to their own peculiar performance conditions (as, for example, ritual songs). Vuk's first publications in fact were mostly of women's songs. Until he came upon good informants (including one blind woman) who could sing the kind of songs he knew he wanted about the history and heroes of his country, he was relying on his own memory of songs he had heard in childhood. In sorting songs for the expanded 1823 edition of the Songbook he found some "borderline" cases that because of their length and narrative style he was inclined to group with the heroic, yet, he says, "it would be hard to find them sung by men to the *gusle* (unless to women)" (Karadžić 1843 [1964]:xviii). These are ballads, to use the general European term, whose tales of women's deeds and domestic tragedy clearly did not fit the heroic mold. The prestige enjoyed by one of these, the "Hasanaginica," in Romantic Europe, however, prompted him to place it in a volume of heroic songs.<sup>1</sup>

For purposes of text analysis, as opposed to ethnography, the useful distinction is between narrative (including both heroic songs and non-heroic ballads and romances) and non-narrative (again, everything else).<sup>2</sup> In narrative texts a narrator tells an audience a story, however brief, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. The intent is to convey information, familiar though it may be, to an audience. Non-narrative songs, which we

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<sup>1</sup> Ballads and heroic songs alike are concerned with marriage and violent death, though from different perspectives. Braun 1963 argues that ballad plots typically deal with either "woman's victory" or marriage and family conflict. See also Čubelić 1958, Coote 1977, and Krnjević 1973.

<sup>2</sup> On the distinction between narrative and non-narrative, see Schmaus 1957, Sertić 1965, and Simić 1963.

may term lyrics, may use narrative style (third-person, past tense) as well as dramatic style (direct speech unmediated by a narrator, dialogue), but they lack story-pattern or narrative structure. Lyrics intend to express an emotion, not necessarily for an audience. They focus on a situation or type-scene, an event that has happened or will happen, and on personal reactions to that event, but do not show it happening.

According to Vuk's observation, heroic songs and women's songs flourished in mutually exclusive areas, except for the villages of Bosnia and Hercegovina. Bosnian towns already were subject to influences that were undermining the heroic way of life. But elsewhere a rich tradition of both kinds persisted long after Vuk's time. Vuk's publications of women's songs drew heavily on material from Bosnia and Hercegovina. Over one hundred years later the Parry Collection of the 1930s, despite an emphasis on heroic songs in its original intent, in its publication, and in the seminal studies based upon it, also fortuitously mined the wealth of Bosnian tradition in both kinds of material. The archive contains approximately eleven thousand dictated and 250 recorded women's songs.<sup>3</sup> Seventy-five of these have been transcribed, edited, and published in Bartók and Lord's *Serbocroatian Folk Songs* (1951), a chiefly musicological study. Altogether, these published and unpublished texts offer a rare opportunity to observe the features of a living oral tradition as exemplified in women's songs.

In Gacko in the spring of 1935, Parry and his assistants were able to hold extensive recording sessions with women singers of the area, among whom three stand out in the quantity (over 600 lines from each) and quality of their repertoires. The oldest of the three, Halima Hrvo, was a peasant in her sixties, visiting the town (*varoš*) from her village near Foča. She sings with an "altogether rural character," as Bartók characterizes her style (1951: 88), and seems diffident about her village songs in the presence of a townswoman, the hostess. She says all her village songs are sung in one style, "u ravan" ("straight"), and that village and town songs differ both in words and melody. She regards the town songs as prettier but has never had time to come to town often enough to learn them. Though she had learned from her father, who was a *guslar*, to sing long heroic narratives (there are two in the collection, 112 and 133 lines long, one sung in the *guslar* style and the other in her usual ballad style), she tends to cut short and summarize her texts.

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<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to the Curator of the Milman Parry Collection at Harvard University for permission to use the materials on which this study is based.

Halima has a standard melody for songs with a basic ten-syllable text line. In performance the ten-syllable line becomes fifteen syllables followed by a quasi-refrain of eight syllables<sup>4</sup> as she repeats each line, introducing the repetition with the syllable “Ej” and pausing markedly after the fourth syllable of the repeated line:

Smilje milje, beru l' te djevojke,  
Ej! Smilje milje,  
Beru l' te djevojke

Sweet immortelles, do maidens pluck you,  
Ej! Sweet immortelles,  
Do maidens pluck you.

From the beginning of a line through the repeat and the pause afterward to the beginning of the next new line takes about twenty-five seconds—a much slower pace that is customary for the *guslar* performing heroic songs.

The most prolific and forthcoming singer in the group was Almasa Zvizdić, forty-five years old, hostess for the recording sessions and wife of a prominent citizen of Gacko, the muezzin of the local mosque. She represents a transition in the tradition between village and town. Thanks to her village background, she and Halima know a great many of the same songs; at least seven of the texts recorded from each singer are shared. In conversation she was eager to illustrate any kind of song mentioned from her wide knowledge of occasional and ritual songs and general lyrics, and she was capable of improvising a new song on the spot. She did not, however, record any songs of great length (the longest is forty lines); her songs are shorter and include fewer narratives (three to Halima's five) than those performed by the others. Her style is described by Bartók as mostly rural except for some sentimental urban texts in 8/5 rhythm. Her singing is more ornate than Halima's, higher pitched and more strained.

A third generation was represented by eighteen-year-old Hajrija Šaković, a member of a family that contributed assistance and many dictated texts to the collecting project. Her style, like Halima's, is still purely rural, though she seems to use a greater variety of melodies and delivers lines with fewer pauses. Her repertoire was more limited than the others', and she shares only three songs with Almasa and none with the older Halima. She seems to have learned mostly classic ballad tales; eight of the nineteen recorded are narratives with familiar plots.

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<sup>4</sup>The similarity to the *bugarštica*, or long line, is striking.

Typically for women's songs, whether ballads or lyrics, these texts deal generally with the problems of getting the right pair of lovers matched up, rather than with the concern for continuation of a family line and triumph over national enemies characteristic of heroic songs. They illuminate the points of stress in the relationships of men and women in the patriarchal family. The characters in them are limited to a woman and a man protagonist and a third party, a threatening authority figure such as a mother (seldom a father), husband, or rival. These characters are caught in unresolved conflict between obedience and desire, social demands and personal satisfaction. The imagery and story-patterns of the songs tend to merge two crucial life passages, marriage and death, into one, so that marriage often becomes the equivalent of death, rather than the triumph over death that it is in heroic songs. Whether or not they present a realistic portrait of family life in Gacko in the 1930s,<sup>5</sup> women's songs articulate the shared feelings of the powerless, that is women generally, and men in situations they cannot control.

By 1823 Vuk had already noted that new women's songs were no longer being composed, whereas he observed heroic songs in the making. The ritual songs in his collection would indeed be old and relatively fixed by regular repetition in the tradition. Other kinds of women's songs would be hard to assign to a particular date because no public events or people are mentioned in them. But they could be just as new as heroic songs, depending on whether one is dating the material and allusions in them or the composition and performance of individual texts. A few texts in the Parry Collection deal with clearly contemporary situations: e.g., Halima's "Ameriko, duga mora" ("America, broad sea") and Almasa's "Ameriko, grka čemerika" ("America, bitter hellebore") on the loss of menfolk emigrating to the United States, and at least two local jokes: one on the burning of some cakes for the professor's refreshment, another on a flashy car new to the village.<sup>6</sup> Though others are less obviously of recent provenance, a survey of this repertoire and comparative songs indicates that composition of women's songs out of traditional material was very much alive fifty years ago.

With this wealth of oral tradition to work on, we can ask a number of questions about composition and transmission that illuminate from a different perspective what has been learned from the model of the heroic

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<sup>5</sup> See Erlich 1966 and Lomax 1968.

<sup>6</sup> Parry texts 6526, 6525, 6464, and 6483.

song. What is a “song” and what is a variant of the “same” song in songs without narrative skeletons on which to hang verbal components? Must we assume implied narrative to understand a text? Are songs fixed and learned, or recomposed by each singer? Are they recomposed each time the singer performs the song?

The brevity of the songs (the average number of lines is 17 for Almasa, 22 for Halima, and 32 for Hajrija) and the frequency and ease with which they may be repeated suggest that the singers would not find it necessary to recompose them in performance as does the singer of heroic songs, who deals in hundreds or even thousands of lines. Each rendition of the song by the same singer would closely resemble all others. The fourteen texts from these singers that were recorded more than once for the Parry Collection bear out this suggestion. Repeated renditions of a single song vary only slightly from one another, much less than orally composed versions of purportedly “the same” heroic song are known to do. As in examples A1 and A2 given below in the Appendix (two recordings of Halima’s “Karanfil se na put sprema” (“Karanfil prepares for a journey”), text 6505a and text 6398), the variation usually consists in leaving out or inserting lines rather than in the rewording of lines. Apparently songs exist as fixed texts for the individual singer insofar as in her mind a given subject is linked to a given set of lines, whether or not all those lines are articulated in any one performance.

Are those lines peculiar to a single discrete song or can they be used to express similar ideas in different contexts? In other words, are they formulas in the sense of the Parry-Lord theory of oral composition? From an analysis of verbal repetition in Halima’s songs,<sup>7</sup> it appears that she may have learned the art of composition by formula in the Parry-Lord sense for singing longer narrative songs of 40 to 100 lines and more. In a test for formulaic density, samples taken from a heroic text and a ballad yielded 43 percent formulas (exact repetitions of metrical units from the singer’s entire repertoire); the heroic sample was 93 percent formulaic (repeated exactly or with variation) and the ballad 78 percent. The percentages might well be

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<sup>7</sup> The classic source on formula analysis is Lord 1960. Cf. Duggan 1973:29, and espec. 220: “When a singer is reproducing a work of a hundred verses or so, it stands to reason that he will, whether he wishes to or not, depend more upon the performance from which he has heard the work than if he is singing a song of over a thousand lines whose telling might even be spread over a period of several evenings.” This observation should be all the more true of songs of ten lines or so, frequently repeated and perhaps sung in chorus. See also Nedić 1969:11-13 on variation and formulas in South Slavic lyrics and Peukert 1961a.



higher if we had more narrative texts from this singer. Nevertheless, the attestation of formulas in these two cases differs from that in heroic song in that most of the formulas are repeated only within the same song. For example, a dream narrated in the heroic sample is reported directly afterwards in the song in the same words. This kind of repetition of passages is typical also of ballads (similar to incremental repetition of the English-Scottish tradition). It affords little evidence of repetition in differing contexts, comparable to the way the singer of heroic songs reuses formulas from story to story. What the test for formulaic repetition does show, however, is that such redundancy is a significant feature of storytelling, whether heroic or ballad, that non-narrative songs lack.

What about stability of texts within the tradition? In example A3 below, we have Almasa's variant of Halima's song. Almasa characteristically has a slightly fuller version that more closely parallels others in the tradition, but the two are indisputably the "same" song. Evidently for these two singers at least the text is relatively fixed. Their agreement on words is confirmed by texts they sang for the records together, though usually even in duets one singer would lead and often the group songs were sung by several individual singers successively.

But if lyric songs (distinct from narrative) are acquired and retained as fixed verbal entities due to ease of memorization, one would expect close variants to be widespread. In fact, comparison of two relatives from Vuk's collection, separated from the Parry Collection in time and probably place (A4 and A5), shows considerable divergence among songs as wholes and illustrates what kinds of elements are shared among them. No. 295, like Parry's two, portrays the situation in an opening narrated scene followed by dialogue that continues on for 27 lines. It shares lines 4-5 and 8-9 with Parry's songs, but does not describe the woman's distaste for the house without the master. No. 336 puts two shared couplets, lines 6-7 and 12-13, the bitter supper and bedchamber/prison ideas, in an entirely different context; the speaker has been smitten by the eyebrows of two handsome figures on a riverbank and no longer sees the world as it was. The first of the Vuk variants is arguably the "same song" in the sense of displaying the same type-scene, the parting of husband and wife, although the wording diverges from the Parry Collection songs after the first lines. In the second a shared formula cluster turns up in an entirely different scene, thus a different song.

Probably all the songs in our sample have parallels in the tradition in one of these senses, through either a shared type-scene or a shared formula

cluster or both.<sup>8</sup> Yet a search through a number of published collections as well as the Parry Collection texts for parallels to Halima's text 6505b, example B, turned up no single song close enough to this text to warrant claiming that it was fixed in the same tradition and learned by rote, unless this is a local song that has eluded other collectors. Could she or someone in her locale have composed the text we have?

Many of the lines in Halima's song recur in other texts in a variety of settings. When this text is compared line by line to a sample of songs<sup>9</sup> with at least partially similar content, it appears that all but the last three lines have identical twins or close relatives in other songs. Five lines are duplicated exactly; eleven are formulaic variations. Moreover, the lines parallel to Halima's rarely occur in isolation. Most of the songs in the comparative sample provide at least two parallel lines, usually consecutive, and the closest variant shares eight of its twenty lines with Halima's song. Lines float from song to song in clusters, like the commonplaces in the English-Scottish ballad tradition,<sup>10</sup> and more like the compositional formulas<sup>11</sup> in Serbo-Croatian heroic songs. The stability of the lyric text as it is transmitted among singers lies in its parts rather than in the whole.

The technique of composition of a lyric seems to consist in the combination of familiar clusters of lines rather than in the recomposition of an entire song line by line in traditional formulaic language.<sup>12</sup> While the essence of a narrative song is a story outline that the singer fleshes out with a choice of type-scenes and formulas, the lyric has no such backbone of narrative structure. Realizing a single type-scene, it plays upon an unstated theme that attracts to itself conglomerations of images embodied in clusters of formulas from the common store of traditional poetry. Each cluster of

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<sup>8</sup> See the notes to the texts in Bartók and Lord 1951:*passim*. See also Davidović 1884.

<sup>9</sup> The songs in the sample are taken from collections dating from the eighteenth century to the present. They are Karadžić 1843 (1964):Nos. 206, 510, 511; Marjanović 1864:No. viii; Andrić 1909-42:Vol. 5, Nos. 47, 48; Vol. 6, No. 78; Vol. 7, Nos. 124, 178, 346; Milošević 1954-64:Vol. 1, No. 102; Vol. 2, Nos. 54, 54a; Vasiljević 1953:Nos. 89, 230a; Gesemann 1925:No. 150; Rubić 1918:232-46, No. 40.

<sup>10</sup> See Jones 1961. Buchan 1972 applies a kind of Parry-Lord formula analysis to Scottish ballads.

<sup>11</sup> See Coote 1980.

<sup>12</sup> Lazutin 1960 analyzes the Russian folk lyric in similar terms.

formulas in the text contributes to the song both the denotation of the lines themselves and a wealth of connotative meaning accrued from their contact with other contexts in the poetry and by association with the society's customs and beliefs.<sup>13</sup>

Halima's text is a peculiar concatenation of such clusters, fixed in her repertoire but presumably her own creation out of traditional materials. Elliptical and illogical as a narrative, it coheres through this kind of associative linking. It deals with a widespread theme in the women's songs, a girl's ambiguous feelings about marriage or sexual initiation. The underlying situation is this: a nubile girl encounters a man and both provokes and repels his advances. The theme could be shaped into a narrative about the outcome, either tragic or humorous, of the encounter.<sup>14</sup> Here, however, Halima ignores the narrative possibilities and chooses rather to illuminate the situation by juxtaposing three motifs:

1. In the greenwood, unpicked flowers and a lonely man
2. In the greenwood, a girl asleep among flowers is discovered by the man
3. Dialogue between the girl and the man

In example B in the Appendix, the three sections are printed separately, with comparative passages in the parallel column.

Most recognizable variants of this song consist only of the third element, the dialogue, or the third introduced by some version of the second.<sup>15</sup> Halima's song elaborates one aspect of the underlying situation, the lonely man, as a prelude to the kernel of the song. In this prelude the question addressed to the immortal flowers in the first line raises the same issue of whether or not marriages are taking place that is the subject of the banter in the third part. The picture of the girls picking immortelles, customary adornments for a wedding party, is a traditional metaphor for marriage. The reply to the opening question indicates that failure to have marriages would result in disorder in nature—the flowers, like the girls, would not be fulfilling their proper function—and in unhappiness for the young man. The formula cluster used here more commonly leads into a lament by the man over the frustration of his hopes to marry. Aware of

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<sup>13</sup> See Lord 1960:97.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Andrić 1909-42:Vol. 5, No. 47.

<sup>15</sup> On the structure of South Slavic lyrics, see Pollok 1964 and Peukert 1961b.

these traditional connections, singer and audience know without being explicitly told what the sorrowful Mujo sitting on his infertile stone is doing in the song.

The second scene, frequent as a song opening on its own but linked here by allusions to *smilje*, immortelles, and again to the name Mujo, presents the second character in the coming dialogue and switches the focus from the man's point of view to the girl's. A girl picking flowers or engaged in some other activity symbolic of her female and nubile status, such as embroidering or washing clothes, falls asleep and from this transitional and vulnerable state is roused, as though to a dream world, by a man. Halima confuses the picture somewhat by using formulas associated with a scene in which the girl, quite wide awake, goes astray on an excursion to the greenwood and stumbles upon a man—he is recumbent, often wounded, not she.<sup>16</sup> The connotations of the traditional lines have led her, as happens more frequently than editors of collections allow us to see, to a severe violation of narrative sense, yet the lyric sense is maintained.

The third motif, the kernel of the song, is developed less fully in Halima's song than in parallel versions. It has a stable form involving a challenge, a journey, questions and answers, then curses and responses, within which the formula content of the speeches varies. A girl appeals to a man, in the name of a ritual brother-sister relationship she attempts to establish with him, to take her on a perilous journey over a mountain. For a marriageable maiden, a journey implies the critical journey she takes on leaving her father's home for a new home as a wife. She wants to make the trip from childhood to adulthood without giving up the secure non-sexual relationship of a sister to a brother in exchange for the threatening relationship with a husband in a strange household. Mount Romanija, the mountain most commonly named in the formula cluster, is reputed to be a hazardous border region infested with outlaws, that is, with predatory males. Once the journey is undertaken, the dialogue discovers the true situation: the questions and answers progressively reveal the inevitability of the impending marriage, and the curses and responses half humorously express her resistance and his insistence on what is to come. (The curse-and-response exchange also occurs in other more lighthearted contexts, as when a girl defies her mother's railing at her chosen lover.) Halima follows the regular form for this scene but cuts both parts short, first by having the man baldly state his intentions in reply to the first question, instead of spinning out the revelation through three or four exchanges, and then by having only

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<sup>16</sup> See Delorko 1971.

one curse and response where other versions have as many as four. Here she makes up her own lines that summarize the intent of the scene rather than continue with the images of the formula cluster; it is precisely these lines that have no parallels in other versions of the scene.

The lyric song, then, represents associations on a theme, or type-scene, usually portraying a relationship in tension. This theme is presented in a selection of narrated scenes, often metaphorical,<sup>17</sup> and monologue or dialogue, for which the words are supplied by clusters of traditional formulas. The formula clusters pervade the tradition, linked into lyrics and entering both heroic songs and ballads as the narrative evokes them. Individual singers may create new songs by recombining traditional elements, not to tell a story but to express a feeling. Less constrained than narrative to make sense or convey information, the combinations of elements are held together by unstated connections that may or may not survive and spread in oral tradition.

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### Appendix: Comparison Texts

#### A1: HALIMA HRVO Text 6398

Karanfil se na put sprema, ej sprema,  
 [E sprema, moj dilbere, moj]  
 Karanfilka konja vada i plače:  
 "Karanfile, ime moje, i tvoje,  
 S kim ti mene ludu mladu ostavljaš?"

"Ostavljam te s tvojom majkom i mojom."  
 "Kad mi nema tebe bega kraj mene  
 Kad ja pođem u ložnicu da spavam  
 Men' se čini ta ložnica tamnica."

Karanfil prepares for a journey, hey prepares,  
 [Hey, prepares, my darling, mine]  
 Karanfilka brings his horse and weeps:  
 "Karanfil, my name and yours,  
 With whom are you leaving me, your  
 innocent young bride?"

"I'm leaving you with your mother and mine"  
 "If I don't have you, my lord, next to me  
 When I go into the bedchamber to sleep  
 That bedchamber seems a prison to me."

#### A2: HALIMA HRVO Text 6505a

Karanfil se na put sprema, ej sprema,  
 Karanfilka konja vada i plače  
 "Karanfile, ime moje i pleme!  
 S kim ti mene ludu mladu ostavljaš?"

"Ostavljam te s mojom majkom i s tvojom."

"Što će meni tvoja majka i moja  
 Da m'ostavljaš jednu mladu žalosnu?  
 Kad mi nejma tebe bega kraj mene  
 Kad ja pođem u ložnicu da spavam  
 Men' se čini ta ložnica tavnica."

A3: ALMASA ZVIZDIĆ Text 6410

Moj se dragi na put sprema, i peva.  
 Ja mu mlada konja sedlam i plačem.  
 "S kim ostavljaš zlato tvoje, dragane?"

"Ostavljam te s mojom majkom i s tvojom."

"A jadna mi moja majko i tvoja,  
 Kad mi tebe mlada nejma kraj mene,

Kad ja pođem na večere večerat,  
 Cin' mi se ta večera čemerna;  
 Kad ja pođem u ležnicu da legnem,  
 Čini mi se ta ležnica tavnica."

A4: KARADŽIĆ 1843 (1964):336

Kolika je Jahorina planina, zlato!  
 [zlato l' moje, planina, planina!]  
 Kroz nju teče tiha voda rijeka,  
 na njoj sjede dva dilbera lijepa.  
 Kakve su im šainove obrve,  
 zanjese moju pamet do mrve!  
 Kad ja sjedem večerati večeru,  
 čini mi se ta večera čemerna.  
 Kad ponesem šimšir-kašu ka grlu,

čini mi se sindžir-gvožđe na grlu.  
 Kad ja pođem preko praga u sobu,

Karanfil prepares for a journey, hey, prepares  
 Karanfilka brings his horse and weeps:

"Karanfil, my name and family!  
 With whom are you leaving me, your  
 innocent young bride?"

"I'm leaving you with my mother and  
 with yours."

"What do I care for your mother and mine  
 If you leave me, a poor miserable bride?  
 If I don't have you, my lord, next to me  
 When I go into the bedchamber to sleep,  
 That bedchamber becomes a prison to me."

My beloved prepares for a journey and sings.  
 I his bride saddle his horse and weep.

"With whom are you leaving your treasure,  
 my dear?"

"I'm leaving you with my mother and with  
 yours."

"A poor thing to me are my mother and yours  
 If I don't have you, my young husband, next  
 to me

When I go to supper  
 That supper is bitter to me;  
 When I go into the bedchamber to lie down  
 That bedchamber seems a prison to me."

How high is Mount Jahorina, o treasure!  
 [my treasure, the mountain, the mountain]  
 Across it flows a quiet stream of water,  
 On it sit two handsome beaus.  
 What falcon brows they have,  
 They blow my mind to pieces!  
 When I sit down to supper,  
 That supper is bitter to me.  
 When I raise the carved wooden spoon  
 toward my throat,  
 It seems an iron chain around my throat.  
 When I cross the threshold into the sitting  
 room,



čini mi se negve su mi na nogu.  
 Kad ja pođem u ložnicu spavati,  
 čini mi se ta ložnicu tavnica.  
 Kad ja pođem u džamiju klanjati,  
 čini mi se džamija se poklanja.

A5: KARADŽIĆ 1843 (1964):295

Oj, sinoć se Duka Leka oženi,  
 a jutros mu sitna knjiga sustiže:  
 “Ajde, Duka, ajde, Leka, na vojsku!”  
 Duka Leka sprema konja da ide,  
 verna ljubica drži konja i plače:  
 “Jao Duka, jao Leka, vojvoda!  
 Ti opremaš dobra konja na vojsku,  
 na kom mene ludu mladu ostavljaš?”  
 “Ostavljam te tvojoj majci i mojoj.”  
 “Jao Duka, jao Leka, vojvoda!  
 Teško mene kod dve majke bez tebe!”

B: HALIMA HRVO Text 6505b

“Smilje milje, beru l’ te djevojke?”  
 “A da mene ne beru djevojke  
 Od mene bi gora mirisala  
 I u gori kamen stanoviti  
 I u njemu Mujo jadoviti.”

Smilje brala zela i’ Emina  
 Smilje brala, u smilju zaspala.

Nagazila na devet pandura  
 Na desetog buljubašu Muja.  
 “Bogom braco buljubaša Mujo!  
 Prevezi me preko Romanije

It seems I have fetters on my legs.  
 When I go into the bedchamber to sleep,  
 That bedchamber seems a prison to me.  
 When I go into the mosque to bow in prayer,  
 The mosque seems to be bowing.

Oh, last night Duka Leka was married,  
 And this morning a message come for him:  
 “Come, Duka, come, Leka, to the army!”  
 Duka Leka prepares his horse to go,  
 His true love holds the horse and weeps:  
 “Alas, Duka, alas commander Leka!  
 You are preparing your good horse to go to  
 the army,  
 To whom are you leaving me, your innocent  
 young bride?”  
 “I’m leaving you to your mother and mine.”  
 “Alas Duka, alas commander Leka!  
 It’s hard for me with two mothers without  
 you!”

KARADŽIĆ 1843 (1964):511

“Čubar-bilje, beru l’ te devojke?  
 “Zašto mene brat’ neće devojke  
 Kad od mene sva gora miriše  
 i po gori stanovno kamenje.  
 Na kamenu mlado momče stoji,  
 Ono stoji te godine broji. . . .”

KARADŽIĆ 1843 (1964):363

Devojčica ružu brala pak je zaspala,  
 Njoj dolazi mlado momče iz Novog Sada. . . .

MARJANOVIĆ 1864:183

Smilje brala kićena divojka  
 I berući i u goru zadje.  
 Kad u gori razbojište nadje  
 Na razboju ranjena junaka . . .

VASILJEVIĆ 1953:197 (Pljevlje, 1949)

Cmilj devojka po gorici brala,  
 Berući ga u goricu zade.  
 U gorici tuđina bratila:  
 O tuđine, moj po Bogu brate!

Brez besjede i brez razgovora  
 I brez onog slatka nasmijanja."  
 Kad su bili u po Romanije  
 "Pobratime, či' su ono dvori?"  
 "Posestrimo, tvoga pobratima.  
 Ja te vodim svom bijelu dvoru."  
 "Šuti, brate, zagrmjelo na te!"  
 "Moja draga, ja leg'o uza te!"

Prevedi me preko Romanije  
 Bez govora i bez dogovora,  
 Bez ljubljenja i bez milovanja,  
 I bez onog muškog pomišljaja."  
 Kad su bili nasred Romanije  
 Posestrima pita pobratima:  
 "Pobratime, či' su ono dvori?"  
 "Posestrimo, tvoga pobratima."  
 "Pobratime, što no kolo kreće?"  
 "Posestrimo, pobro ti se ženi."  
 "Pobratime, oklen je devojk?"  
 "Posestrimo, za ruku je vodim."  
 "Pobratime, voda te odn'jela!"  
 "Posestrimo, ti me izbavila!"  
 "Pobratime, puška te ubila!"  
 "Posestrimo, ti me izlečila!"

B: HALIMA HRVO Text 6505b  
 "Sweet immortelles, do maidens pluck you?"  
 "If maidens did not pluck me  
 The greenwood would fill with my  
 fragrance  
 And the fixed rock in the greenwood  
 and in it the sorrowful Mujo."

KARADŽIĆ 1843 (1964):511  
 "White flowers, do maidens pluck you?"  
 "Why would maidens not pluck me  
 When the whole greenwood is full of my  
 fragrance  
 And the fixed rocks in the forest."  
 On the rock stands a young man  
 He stands and counts the years. . . ."

Emina plucked and gather immortelles A maiden was plucking roses and fell asleep,  
 Plucked immortelles, fell asleep among A young man from Novi Sad came upon  
 them her. . . .

KARADŽIĆ 1843 (1964):363

MARJANOVIĆ 1864:183  
 A lovely maiden was plucking immortelles  
 As she picked she wandered into the  
 greenwood.  
 In the greenwood she found a field of combat  
 On the field a wounded hero . . .

She stumbled on nine rangers  
 And the tenth, their captain Mujo.  
 "Brother-in-God, Captain Mujo!  
 Take me over Mount Romanija  
 Without talk and conversation  
 And without that sweet smiling."  
 When they were halfway over Romanija

VASILJEVIĆ 1953:197 (Pljevlje, 1949)  
 A maiden was picking immortelles in the  
 greenwood,  
 As she picked she wandered into the  
 greenwood.  
 In the woods she appealed to upon a stranger:  
 "O stranger, my brother in God!  
 Take me over Romanija

“Brother, whose is that mansion?”  
“Sister, it is your brother’s.  
I’m taking you to my fine house.”  
“Silence, brother, may lightning strike you!”  
“And lay me beside you, my dear!”

Without talk and without discussion  
Without kissing and without caressing  
And without those intentions men have.”  
When they were in the midst of Romanija  
The sister asked the brother:  
“Brother, whose is that mansion?”  
“Sister, it is your brother’s.”  
“Brother, what’s that dancing?”  
“Sister, your brother is getting married.”  
“Brother, where is the bride?”  
“Sister, I’m leading her by the hand.”  
“Brother, may the waters carry you away!”  
“Sister, may you rescue me!”  
“Brother, may gunshot kill you!”  
“Sister, may you heal me!”

## Repetition as Invention in the Songs of Vuk Karadžić

Svetozar Koljević

The “formula”—we have learned from Milman Parry—is “a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea” (1930:80). And, since “the singer’s mode of composition is dictated by the demands of performance at high speed,” “the poetic grammar of oral epic”—Albert Lord has shown—“is and must be based on the formula,” on “frequently used and useful phrases” (1960:65). And, of course, not only on phrases, or their variants, but also on motifs, themes, tales, and, as the Chadwicks had demonstrated, on common ways of thinking and feeling in the Heroic Age. In this context the tradition of Serbo-Croatian heroic songs is interesting because it offers a diachronic insight into formulaic composition; several centuries of recording, and of continuity and change, by and large confirm the conclusions of Albert Lord. However, there are also some areas in which we can see how new formulas are born, how the old ones are used for unpredictable purposes and how—by the substitution of one or two elements—old formulas, motifs, themes, and tales come to serve new purposes and survive even the change of formal conditions.

There are, to begin with, some formulas that mark the difference between the feudal *bugarštice*, recorded in the Adriatic region from the end of the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, and the peasant decasyllabic songs, recorded in the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century in Dalmatia, Slavonia, and many other regions. On the one hand, for instance, the “fine-dressed hero”<sup>1</sup> or the “good knight”<sup>2</sup> turn up only in

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<sup>1</sup> “Gizdav junak,” Bogišić 1878, nos. 37, l. 1; 52, l. 35; 83, l. 7.

<sup>2</sup> “Dobar vitez” (in fact, invariably in plural form), Bogišić 1878:nos. 63, l. 12; 65, ll. 17, 32, 68, 80, 83, 125, 128; 67, ll. 65, 83.

*bugarštice* and they “bow finely”<sup>3</sup> or “bow” to everyone in their “proper order,”<sup>4</sup> whereas the decasyllabic heroes greet each other by “spreading their arms and kissing one another’s face.”<sup>5</sup> Similarly, treasure is seen in terms of “the small coins” almost exclusively in *bugarštice*,<sup>6</sup> whereas in the decasyllabic poems it is measured by “boots,”<sup>7</sup> “loads,”<sup>8</sup> or even “towers.”<sup>9</sup> The double-epithet formulas are also, for obvious metrical reasons, much more characteristic of the long-winded *bugarštice*, even if the decasyllabic singer can also use them—if they have no more than six syllables and so can fit into the second part of the decasyllabic line.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, in both traditions, as in many others, heroes “drink wine,”<sup>11</sup> “hold a council,”<sup>12</sup> write or receive messages in the form of

<sup>3</sup> “L’jepo se je . . . poklonio,” Bogišić 1878:nos. 1, l. 57; 10, ll. 45, 74; 30, ll. 19, 31, 36, 37.

<sup>4</sup> “Svakome se po redu . . . pokloniše,” Bogišić 1878:no. 30, ll. 15, 26.

<sup>5</sup> “Ruke šire, a lice se ljube,” Karadžić 1976:nos. II, 8, l. 313; 9, l. 56; 40, ll. 101, 172, 232; 89, l. 44; 97, l. 96; 99, l. 80; III, 22, ll. 367, 381; 25, l. 110; 42, ll. 66, 371; 43, ll. 56, 75; 53, l. 72; 54, l. 105; 58, l. 296; 81, l. 89; IV, 1, l. 130; 3, l. 98; 13, l. 23.

<sup>6</sup> “Drobna spenca,” Bogišić 1878:nos. 5, ll. 10, 14; 25, ll. 28, 29; 47, l. 23; 51, l. 13; 63, l. 83.

<sup>7</sup> “Dvije čizme blaga,” Karadžić 1976:II, 56, l. 167. “Tri čizme blaga”, *ibid.*:II, no. 56, l. 254.

<sup>8</sup> “Dva tovara blaga,” Gesemann 1925:no. 98, ll. 25, 31. “Tri tovara blaga,” *ibid.*:nos. 83, l. 15; 123, ll. 72, 83, 89, 113; 127, l. 50; Karadžić 1976:II, 56, ll. 56, 83; 61, ll. 143, 149; 73, ll. 19, 28.

<sup>9</sup> “Sedam kula groša i dukata,” Karadžić 1976:II, no. 23, l. 5.

<sup>10</sup> I have discussed this question in more detail in Koljević 1980.

<sup>11</sup> “Vino piju,” Bogišić 1878:no. 55, l. 1; Gesemann 1925:nos. 6, l. 1; 15, l. 1; 63, l. 1; Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 59, l. 1; 67, l. 1; 73, l. 1.

<sup>12</sup> “Zbor zborahu,” Bogišić 1878:no. 8, l. 1. In l. 3 the same idea is repeated in a different wording: “v’jeće v’ječahu.” In this wording it is also found in Bogišić 1878:nos. 31, l. 1; 80, l. 1. “Zbor zborila” is also found in Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 23, l. 1; 24, l. 1.

“thin”<sup>13</sup> or “small-lettered books,”<sup>14</sup> which usually lead to journeys, battles, or single combats. These require the “good horses,<sup>15</sup> the “white tents,”<sup>16</sup> “cold water,”<sup>17</sup> “cool”<sup>18</sup> or “red wine,”<sup>19</sup> “battle lances,”<sup>20</sup> “naked swords,”<sup>21</sup> “sharp”<sup>22</sup> or “razor-sharp swords,”<sup>23</sup> or, in later times, “small

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<sup>13</sup> “Tanka knjiga,” Bogišić 1878:nos. 15, l. 1; 67, ll. 10, 13; 71, l. 1; Gesemann 1925:nos. 120, ll. 22, 32; 123, l. 76.

<sup>14</sup> “Sitna knjiga,” Gesemann 1925:nos. 143, l. 3; 210, ll. 14, 42; Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 50 (I), ll. 2, 16; 56, l. 95; 59, ll. 25, 38; III, 16, ll. 57, 63; 81, l. 207.

<sup>15</sup> “Konj dobri,” Bogišić 1878:nos. 1, ll. 112, 151, 189, 194, 215; 17, ll. 10, 12, 27, 36, 37, 43; 18, ll. 37, 55, 94; Gesemann 1925:nos. 81, ll. 21, 24, 37; 83, ll. 25, 36; 110, ll. 44, 64, 72, 87, 104, 124; Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 16, ll. 37, 41, 81; 48, ll. 19, 21, 26, 34; 51, l. 124.

<sup>16</sup> “Bijeli šator,” Bogišić 1878:nos. 19, ll. 12, 19, 43; 35, l. 30; 55, ll. 26, 34, 54; Gesemann 1925:nos. 59, ll. 69, 91; 87, ll. 5, 8; 110, ll. 2, 108, 109; Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 29, l. 388; 44, l. 472; 56, ll. 221, 228.

<sup>17</sup> “Hladna voda,” Bogišić 1878:nos. 4, ll. 4, 38, 39, 46, 51; 35, ll. 41, 42, 44, 47, 49, 51, 58, 59, 66; 59, ll. 44, 46, 84, 85; Gesemann 1925:nos. 110, ll. 29, 41; 126, l. 51; 176, ll. 4, 28; Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 51, ll. 8, 15, 27; 55, ll. 8, 15; IV, 33, l. 449.

<sup>18</sup> “Hladno vino,” Bogišić 1878:nos. 12, ll. 49, 57, 69; 18, ll. 28, 33, 45, 70, 87; 19, ll. 22, 57, 64; Gesemann 1925:nos. 63, ll. 5, 18, 33; 78, ll. 81, 145; 117, ll. 51, 127; Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 50 (III), l. 49; III, 7, l. 286.

<sup>19</sup> “Rujno vino,” Bogišić 1878:nos. 14, l. 38; 20, ll. 76, 78; 26, l. 61; Gesemann 1925:nos. 59, l. 73; 117, l. 101; 216, l. 32; Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 25, l. 52; 47, ll. 27, 80, 94; 59, ll. 87, 93, 129.

<sup>20</sup> “Bojno koplje,” Bogišić 1878:nos. 1, ll. 108, 197; 15, ll. 12, 14; 47, ll. 37, 46; Gesemann 1925:nos. 89, ll. 7, 10; 96, ll. 13, 24; 134, ll. 2, 8; Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 44, ll. 602, 617, 627; 49, ll. 46, 47; 51, l. 121.

<sup>21</sup> “Gola sablja,” Bogišić 1878:nos. 46, ll. 40, 52; 26, l. 33 (“gola korda”); 53, l. 31 (“gola korda”); Karadžić 1976:III, nos. 50, l. 61; IV, 26, ll. 167, 192.

<sup>22</sup> “Oštra sablja,” Bogišić 1878:nos. 27, l. 22; 24, ll. 16, 21 (“oštra korda”); 40, l. 86 (“oštra korda”); Gesemann 1925:nos. 70, l. 106; 87, ll. 19, 117, 120, 1212; 89, ll. 9, 14.

guns.”<sup>24</sup> What follows is “the parting from the sinful soul,”<sup>25</sup> sometimes foreshadowed by a “strange dream,”<sup>26</sup> or brought about by “bad luck.”<sup>27</sup> And all this takes place in a world in which a knight, a wife, a friend, or a servant can be either “faithful”<sup>28</sup> or “unfaithful,”<sup>29</sup> but in which “firm faith”<sup>30</sup> or “God’s faith”<sup>31</sup> has to be kept and the “faithless brood”<sup>32</sup> has to

<sup>23</sup> “Britka sablja,” Bogišić 1878:nos. 65, l. 154; 67, l. 48; 78, l. 24; Gesemann 1925:nos. 110, ll. 24, 75, 78, 90; 114, l. 53; 161, ll. 59, 68; Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 25, ll. 71, 182; 44, ll. 478, 564, 583, 646; 50 (V), ll. 2, 3.

<sup>24</sup> “Mala puška,” Bogišić 1878:nos. 63, ll. 59, 60; Gesemann 1925:nos. 135, l. 52; Karadžić 1976:IV, nos. 32, ll. 211, 279.

<sup>25</sup> “S grešnom dušom razd’jelio,” Bogišić 1878:nos. 16, l. 85; 35, l. 93; 52, ll. 30, 33; 78, ll. 54, 57; Gesemann 1925:no. 108, l. 46 (“s dušom delijaše”—“parting from his soul”); 108, l. 54 (“dušicu pusti”—“breathed out his soul”); Karadžić 1976:III, no. 1, l. 69 (“dok sam njega s dušom rastavio”—“before I separated him from his soul”).

<sup>26</sup> “Čudan san,” Bogišić 1878:nos. 28, ll. 10, 17; 50, l. 10; Gesemann 1925:nos. 80, ll. 22, 25; 109, l. 10; 163, ll. 20, 24; Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 25, l. 138; 62, ll. 64, 65; III, 14, l. 28.

<sup>27</sup> “Huda sreća,” Bogišić 1878:nos. 1, ll. 118, 183, 186; 43, ll. 12, 39; 78, ll. 25, 31, 49; Gesemann 1925:nos. 108, l. 39; No. 67, l. 32 (“zla sreća”); Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 51, l. 134; 25, l. 183 (“loša sreća”); IV, 31, l. 294 (“loša sreća”).

<sup>28</sup> “Vjera” (literally “faith”), Bogišić 1878:no. 14, ll. 58, 61, 138; Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 50 (III), ll. 31, 32, 53. Faithfulness of wives or servants is usually denoted by specific formulaic patterns: “vjerna ljuba” (“faithful love”), “vjerna sluga” (“faithful servant”).

<sup>29</sup> “Nevjera” (literally “unfaithfulness”), Bogišić 1878:nos. 14, ll. 58, 61, 138; 61, l. 20; Karadžić 1976:II, no. 50 (III), ll. 31, 32, 44, 48, 53.

<sup>30</sup> “Tvrdá vjera,” Bogišić 1878:nos. 65, ll. 228, 240, 246; Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 29, l. 92; 67, l. 9; IV, 4, l. 8.

<sup>31</sup> “Božja vjera,” in “bugarštice” usually “vjera Boga velikoga” (“the faith of great God”): Bogišić 1878:nos. 17, ll. 21, 25; 40, l. 103; 61, l. 15. In the decasyllabic poems this formula usually figures as “božja vjera tvrda” (“God’s firm faith”): Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 26, l. 91; 44, l. 404.

be tied to the horses' tails.<sup>33</sup> This moral clarity is both a reflection of religious faith and of the pagan light that comes from the "hot sun"<sup>34</sup> in the "clear sky"<sup>35</sup> and shines on man and beast and the "supple fir-tree"<sup>36</sup> alike. Many such and similar formulas are closely connected with particular themes—feasts, messages, traveling, fighting, triumph, death—and they all fit perfectly Parry's definition of the formula as "a group of words regularly employed . . . to express a given essential idea."

However, leaving aside the question of metrical conditions in *bugarštice* and the decasyllabic songs (they are, of course, the same in the segment in which a formula is repeated, even if the lines are different), it is more pertinent to notice that there are various ways in which the same formulas, formulaic phrases, motifs, themes, and tales change their meaning or make us wonder what it is. Sometimes this is merely a matter of semantic and social history: in the gradual social downgrading and the artistic development of heroic singing from the feudal *bugarštice* to the peasant decasyllabic songs, heroes continued to live in "white palaces" (or castles). But the "white palaces" of the Ban of Skradin<sup>37</sup> are certainly much grander edifices than the solid buildings of the border fighters who lived in

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<sup>32</sup> "Nevjerno koljeno," Bogišić 1878:no. 14, l. 122; Gesemann 1925:no. 6, l. 24; Karadžić 1976:III, no. 7, l. 256.

<sup>33</sup> "Konjma za repove," Karadžić 1976:nos. 5, ll. 80, 85; 25, l. 294; 52, l. 65.

<sup>34</sup> "Žarko sunce," Bogišić 1878:nos. 18, ll. 39, 51; 20, l. 19; 23, l. 15; 37, l. 9; Gesemann 1925:nos. 67, l. 55; 71, l. 43; 75, ll. 3, 9, 41; Karadžić 1976:II, no. 10, l. 28. "Jarko sunce": Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 29, l. 565; 44, l. 321; III, 78, ll. 161, 173; IV, 24, l. 446.

<sup>35</sup> "Vedro nebo," Bogišić 1878:nos. 1, ll. 74, 81; 28, ll. 12, 25; 30, ll. 67, 70, 76, 90; Gesemann 1925:nos. 10, l. 2; 47, l. 86; 75, l. 39; 109, l. 18; Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 10, l. 79; 55, l. 34; III, 31, ll. 3, 21; IV, 24, l. 95.

<sup>36</sup> "Vita jela," Bogišić 1878:no. 83, ll. 13, 19; Gesemann 1925:nos. 17, l. 70; 174, ll. 1, 20; Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 74, ll. 46, 58 ("tanka jela"); III, nos. 7, ll. 66, 75, 77; 78, l. 205. This account of the general formulaic framework of Serbo-Croatian epic singing is an abridged version of my discussion of this issue in Koljević 1980:36-49. I have disregarded here some minor variations of the same formula and the question of different numbering of lines in Bogišić's published collections and the original manuscripts.

<sup>37</sup> "Bijeli dvori," Bogišić 1878:no. 78, l. 2.



the small town of Perast on the Montenegrin coast,<sup>38</sup> whereas the “white palaces” of the Montenegrin warrior Tašo Nikolić, where the outlaws get together before they proceed on their mission of vengeance, must have been ordinary peasant houses.<sup>39</sup> This is not to say, of course, that in the decasyllabic songs the “white palaces” did not often refer to feudal palaces and castles,<sup>40</sup> or indeed to something in between the two,<sup>41</sup> if not to something existing only in the Serbo-Croatian epic never-never land in which the village customs had so much pervaded the life in the castles that the grand feudal ladies and Queen Mothers—in “The Building of Skadar” and “Marko Kraljević’s Ploughing”—had to do their own laundry.<sup>42</sup>

On the other hand, there are also common stock formulas that seem to have expressed “the same essential idea” over many centuries of Serbo-Croatian epic singing, even if scholars cannot always agree what the idea was and if sometimes their reading would take any native speaker by surprise. So, for instance, some of the most common formulas in the tradition—such as “grozne suze”<sup>43</sup> (“terrible tears,” which are plentifully shed on many occasions, when receiving threatening or bad news, when suffering a great loss) and “rujno vino”<sup>44</sup> (“red wine,” which is also frequently drunk in quantity on such typical epic occasions as feasts, council-taking, or the eve of the battle)—create confusion if scholarly opinion is consulted. For “grozne suze” are usually defined as being as large or as

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<sup>38</sup> Bogišić 1878:no. 67, ll. 16, 30, 61, 67, 97.

<sup>39</sup> Karadžić 1976:III, no. 69, ll. 45, 66.

<sup>40</sup> Gesemann 1925:no. 92, ll. 47, 57; Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 26, ll. 98, 225, 230; 45, ll. 18, 109; 56, ll. 38, 137, 243.

<sup>41</sup> Gesemann 1925:no. 98, ll. 39, 76.

<sup>42</sup> Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 26, ll. 143, 147; 73, ll. 8-9.

<sup>43</sup> Bogišić 1878:nos. 1, l. 98; 16, ll. 43, 45; 82, ll. 23, 63, 113; Gesemann 1925:nos. 42, l. 132; 213, l. 95; Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 30, l. 213; III, 78, l. 181; IV, 28, ll. 38, 120.

<sup>44</sup> Bogišić 1878:nos. 14, l. 38; 20, ll. 76, 78; 26, l. 61; Gesemann 1925:nos. 59, l. 73; 117, l. 101; 216, l. 32; Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 25, l. 52; 47, ll. 27, 80, 94; 59, ll. 87, 93, 129.

plentiful as grapes,<sup>45</sup> whereas “*rujno vino*,” it has been argued, means “white” and not “red wine” because *rujno* may be etymologically derived from *ruj* (“sumac,” German *Gelbholtz*), which has yellow flowers.<sup>46</sup> It is true, on the other hand, that most people think of *ruj* in connection with its reddish autumn colors, but whatever the ultimate truth of the matter may be, this variance shows that through long usage a formula may outlive its original meaning or at least lead to confusion as regards its “essential idea.”

However, apart from such linguistic curiosities, a formula may change its meaning for what one might call “literary” reasons; and even if this does not happen frequently, it seems significant that it happens in some of the greatest poems in Karadžić’s collections. Sometimes the change is simple and effective: a standard concept embodied in a formula is suddenly turned the other way round at a dramatic moment in a story. So, for instance, the marriage-making in the patriarchal setting is seen as leading to a future relationship not only for the bridegroom and his bride, but also for many other people involved, who may find worthy companions for drinking. Thus in “The Wedding of Prince Lazar” Tsar Stjepan (Dušan the Mighty) tries to explain to his “servant” Lazar that he cannot marry him to a girl who is a swineherd or a cowherd, but has to find a lady whose father can sit “by his knee” and with whom he could “drink cool wine.”<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Marko Kraljević, who could be satisfied even with his horse as a wine companion, is delighted when he comes to think, in one of Old Milija’s songs, of Captain Leka’s beautiful daughter as his future bride—but apparently above all because his prospective father-in-law is a wonderful man and “he would have someone to drink wine with.”<sup>48</sup> This formula—“to have someone to drink wine with”—expresses the essential idea of feasting in honorable company, but it is used by the same singer in a completely different way in “Banović Strahinja,” usually considered the greatest poem in the decasyllabic tradition. This poem describes Strahinić Ban and his in-laws, the grand feudal lords Jugovići who refuse to help him in saving his wife, who had been captured by a Turk. However, it turns out

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<sup>45</sup> See *grozan* in Stevanović et al. 1967:I, 574.

<sup>46</sup> See Maretić 1966:73-74.

<sup>47</sup> “Koji će mi sjesti uz koljeno, / Sa kojim ću ladno piti vino,” Karadžić 1976:II, no. 32, ll. 36-37.

<sup>48</sup> “Imao bi s kime piti vino,” Karadžić 1976:II, no. 40, l. 26.

that she had betrayed her husband and even attempted to kill him in his duel with her new Turkish master. Strahinić Ban triumphs in the duel, and when he brings his treacherous wife back with him, his in-laws want to kill her. He tells them that he could do that himself, but that he had pardoned her—and concludes that he “has no one to drink cool wine with.”<sup>49</sup> Thus the formula which signified feasting in honorable company comes to express contempt and is used as the greatest possible insult, which works because of the drastic inversion of its original “idea.”

Sometimes the singer shows his ingenuity not by dramatic inversion but by the substitution of one of the semantic elements, which takes an established formula into a new and unique semantic adventure. So, for instance, the walking of a beautifully dressed and richly ornamented girl is often described in terms of sounds produced by clinking necklaces and rustling clothes. Thus in “Atlagić’s Hajka and Jovan the Bachelor” (or “Reveler”), a Turkish girl secretly meets a Christian boy in her garden by night, and her appearance is described in this way: “The small necklaces go clinking, / The yellow dresses go rustling, / The leather slippers go clattering.”<sup>50</sup> Similarly, in “The Two Kurtići and Boičić Alil” the beauty of Stojan’s daughter—more impressive than that of a *vila* (“mountain nymph”)—is seen in analogous formulaic terms: “The necklaces go clinking round her neck, / Her trousers go rustling.”<sup>51</sup> And in “Little Radojica,” which deals again with the secret love of a Turkish girl and a Christian boy here imprisoned by her father, the appearance of Hajkuna in a ring dance is described again in terms of clinking necklaces and rustling clothes.<sup>52</sup> However, in the far superior and better-known poem “The Humane Pasha and Mihai the Shepherd,” this formula is moved into a different semantic field. The poem describes a pasha who shows his sympathy and understanding for a Christian shepherd who was turned into an outlaw when Turks drove away thirty lambs from his flock. The shepherd, in short, had to face what he could not bear: “The thirty mother-sheep go bleating, /

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<sup>49</sup> “Nemam s kime ladno piti vino,” Karadžić 1976:II, no. 44, l. 807.

<sup>50</sup> “Stoji zveka drobnijeh djerdana, / Stoji škripa žutijeh kavada, / Stoji klepet mestva i papuča,” Karadžić 1976:III, no. 19, ll. 58-60.

<sup>51</sup> “Stoji zveka na vratu djerdana, / Stoji škripa skuta od sandala,” Karadžić 1976:III, No. 35, ll. 108-9.

<sup>52</sup> “Stoji zveka na vratu djerdana, / Stoji škripa gaća od sandala,” Karadžić 1976:III, No. 51, ll. 86-87.

Each of them goes bleating and looking at Mihat.”<sup>53</sup> Is this the same formula? It certainly does not express “the same essential idea,” and it is formulaic perhaps only in the sense in which everything is “formulaic” in language from the point of view of generative grammar.

However, it is only in “The Battle of Salaš”—one of the outstanding songs by Filip Višnjić, the best-known singer in the tradition—that this new seed of an old formula is found in its full and unique flourish. The description of the cattle and sheep, driven away by the Turks and grieving for their homeland, is one of the highlights of this poem and illustrates the rich growth of a formula:

And the sheep go bleating after their lambs,  
 And the lambs go mewling after their ewes,  
 And the goats go baaing after their kids,  
 And the kids go screaming after their nannies;  
 And the cows bellow after their calves,  
 And the calves bleat after the cows;  
 And the bulls of Mačva keep roaring,  
 Because they do not see their own shepherds—  
 The cattle see the road they will travel  
 And all the cattle sorrow for their home.<sup>54</sup>

Apart from the onomatopoeia and other sound effects that are possible only in this richly developed form of the formula, the subject of the raided cattle grieving for their home is also unique in the Serbo-Croatian epic tradition. Thus a substitution in the formula and its growth help it to carry a burden it has never carried before and to live in a way it has never known before, and it is also significant—both for the singer and for his audience—that it remembers and echoes what has already been heard.

Sometimes, however, a formula can achieve a great change and a dramatic enrichment of its meaning without substitution or development of any of its elements. Thus two dialectal variants of one formula expressing

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<sup>53</sup> “Stade bleka trides podojnicah, / Svaka bleji, gleda na Mihata,” Karadžić 1976: III, No. 62, ll. 64-65.

<sup>54</sup> “Stoji bleka ovac’ za janjcima, / Stoji meka janjac’ za ovcama, / Veka stoji koza za jarići, / A jarića dreka za kozama, / Stoji rika krava za teladma, / A teladi meka za kravama; / Buka stoji mačvanskih volova, / Ne poznaju svojijeh čobana, / Vidi stoka de će putovati, / Pake žali svoga zavičaja,” Karadžić 1976:IV, no. 28, ll. 258-67.

one and the same essential idea—“The dream deceives, God is true,”<sup>55</sup> “The dream is fancy, God is true”<sup>56</sup>—occur in identical forms in several poems, but are used for different purposes. The phrase is in fact a proverb<sup>57</sup> mostly used for the purpose of dispelling fears after a bad dream, and the prosaic wisdom of the proverb seems to imply that bad dreams do not come true. But, of course, in epic poetry they do—or what would be the point of a bad dream? So, for instance, in the well-known poem “Marko Kraljević and Mina of Kostur” the hero is away from home and sees in his dream “a fleece of mist” coming from the town of Kostur and “winding itself round” his own castle;<sup>58</sup> the dream foreshadows the impending devastation. When his servant Goluban tries to console him and dispel his fears—“The dream deceives, God is true”<sup>59</sup>—his words help the narrative interest, but they cannot, of course, stop what is epically inevitable. Similarly, the great disaster in “The Wedding of Maksim Crnojević,” another of Old Milija’s masterpieces, is foreshadowed by a bad dream, followed by the same comment and the inevitable outcome.<sup>60</sup> These two great poems do not depend for their achievement on the dislocation of this formula; they use it in the same standard way in which it is used, for instance, in such a mediocre song as “Hadži of Risan and Limun the Merchant.” In this song a beautiful girl on a wedding journey dreams that wolves have bitten off Durmiš-bey’s arms and torn out her heart and she is duly told that “The dream deceives, God is true,”<sup>61</sup> but, eventually, the outlaws cut off Durmiš-bey’s arms and kill the girl.

However, when Milan-bey is persuaded, or rather blackmailed, by his

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<sup>55</sup> “San je laža, a Bog je istina,” Karadžić 1976:II, nos. 25, l. 153; 62, l. 79; 89, l. 512; III, 68, l. 211; IV, 5, l. 104.

<sup>56</sup> “San je klapnja, sam je Bog istina,” Bogišić 1878:no. 97, l. 47; “San je klapa, a Bog je istina,” Karadžić 1976:II, no. 10, l. 84.

<sup>57</sup> “San je laža, a Bog je istina,” Karadžić 1969:249.

<sup>58</sup> “Dje se pramen magle zapodjede . . . / Pak se savi okolo Prilipa,” Karadžić 1976: II, no. 62, ll. 66, 68.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 79.

<sup>60</sup> Karadžić 1976:II, no. 89, l. 512.

<sup>61</sup> Karadžić 1976:III, no. 68, l. 211.

wife to kill his brother on a hunt, and when his brother tells him next morning that he had dreamed that the lightning had killed him when it struck their “palaces,” Milan-bey—who has already decided to kill him— consoles him with the standard formula: “The dream is fancy, God is true.”<sup>62</sup> In this dramatic context the formula is hardly used to express the same “essential idea”: deprived of its good will and innocence, it has a macabre, cynical undertone. Similarly, in the two versions of “The Wedding of King Vukašin” the different usage of this formula is illuminating and of considerable significance in the overall artistic effect. In the earlier and poorer version, written down in the eighteenth century in Dalmatia, the hero dreams that “grey mist” spread from his enemy’s country and that “a fierce snake” coiled round his heart; he tells his dream to his brothers, who console him in the standard fashion: “The dream is fancy, God is true.”<sup>63</sup> In the later and superior version in Karadžić’s collection the dream is again repeated in terms of “a fleece of mist,” but here the hero does tell it not to his brothers but to his wife, who has already betrayed him to the enemy (by burning the wings of his horse and dipping his sword into salty blood). And when she tells him that “The dream deceives, God is true,”<sup>64</sup> the old, simpleminded epic formula obtains a Shakespearean aura of horror and becomes an ironic expression of tenderness, truth, and deceit. The ironic transformation of meaning is not due to any change in the formula, but to a new dramatic context in which it is used.

This shows a creative possibility in formulaic composition which manifests itself even more clearly and frequently when a standard epic

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<sup>62</sup> Karadžić 1976:II, no. 10, l. 84.

<sup>63</sup> “Sinja magla, ljuta zmija, / San je klapnja, sam je Bog istina,” Bogišić 1878:no. 97, ll. 39, 41, 47.

<sup>64</sup> Karadžić 1976:II, no. 25, l. 153. An analogous if much cruder example of cynical transformation of proverbial wisdom can be found in IV, 25, ll. 252-53. The proverb “Treasure is neither silver or gold, / But what is dear to one’s heart” (“Nije blago ni srebro ni zlato / Već je blago što je kome drago,” Karadžić 1969:203) is sometimes quoted by young girls when faced by the choice of a young (and poor) or an old (and rich) husband (Karadžić 1976:III, no. 82, ll. 65-66). But when a Turkish dignitary refuses ransom for Karadjordje’s sister, pointing out to the future leader of the Serbian uprising that “Treasure is neither silver nor gold, / But what is dear to one’s heart” (“Blago nije ni srebro ni zlato, / No je blago što je srcu drago,” Karadžić 1976:IV, no. 25, ll. 252-53), and adding that he would keep the girl just for one night, what he means is hardly within the standard either of proverbial wisdom or of its normal epic usage.

motif or theme is introduced in to a new context. Thus, for instance, in one of the undistinguished *bugarštice*—which tells the story in which Jerina of Smederevo drinks a toast to Damijan Šajnović, offers him her cousin Mara for a bride, puts him into prison when he refuses the offer on the grounds of the sexual mores of the prospective bride, only to let him out when pressed by her husband, in his turn pressed by Duke Janko (John Hunyadi)—the wording of the toast is an epic reflection of an actual custom: “Health to you, Damijan, this cup of cool wine, / Drink the wine and the cup is your gift!”<sup>65</sup> However, this standard toast begins to take on a new epic and moral life when introduced into the orbit of Prince Lazar’s feast on the eve of the disaster of Kosovo and prospective treason. The feast, which was a part of actual Byzantine military protocol, is described in an early prose version of this story in which Ludovik Crijević (1450-1527), the well-known Dubrovnik historian, implied that Lazar believed that Miloš would betray him and yet showed unearthly generosity in his toast: “This cup of wine is your present, Miloš, although I have been told that you will betray me.”<sup>66</sup> However, it is only in “The Prince’s Supper” that this motif is worked out in the rich epic and ironic terms of a Last Supper scene. In this poem, on the eve of the disaster, Lazar knows—as Christ had before him—that he will be betrayed, but he is deluded into believing that he will be betrayed by his most faithful knight. Hence the ironic pathos of the generosity of his toast:

“Health to Miloš, the faithful traitor,  
 First faithful, then a traitor!  
 At Kosovo you will desert me,  
 You will run to Murad, the Emperor!  
 Health to you, drink this toast,  
 Drink this wine, and this cup is yours!”<sup>67</sup>

And when Miloš thanks him for the wine, but not for the speech, when he

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<sup>65</sup> “Zdrav ti budi, Damijane, ovi pehar hladna vina, / Vino da mi popiješ, pehar da ti na dar bude!” Bogišić 1878:no. 11, ll. 33-34.

<sup>66</sup> “Na poklon ti, Milošu, ovaj pehar s vinom, iako mi je javljeno da ćeš me izdati;” see Samardžić 1978:34.

<sup>67</sup> “Zdrav Milošu, vjero i nevjero! / Prva vjero, potonja nevjero! / Sjutra ćeš me izdat’ na Kosovu, / I odbjeći turskom car-Muratu; / Zdrav mi budi! i zdravicu popij: / Vino popij, a na čast ti pehar!” Karadžić 1976:II, no. 50, ll. 31-36.

promises to kill Murad and tie Vuk Branković, the real traitor, to his battle lance “as a woman ties wool on a distaff,”<sup>68</sup> it is in this mixture of sublime loyalty, tragic delusion, irony, and the comic, homely “wool on a distaff” that the standard theme achieves unexpected tonal range and a rich interplay of epic suggestions. Even the “wool on a distaff”—expressing Miloš’s anger and contempt for the actual traitor—does not seem to be the simple distaff that heroes promised to send to their enemies, as a sign of mockery of their feminine cowardice, when they would not accept a challenge to a duel.<sup>69</sup> The simplicity of this standard comic device seems to be lost in the prevailing tragic pattern, which achieves its significance partly through ironic associations with the Last Supper drama.

Of course, the possibilities of introducing new elements and changing the dramatic context of the whole constellation of the story are even more striking. They could be easily illustrated by the superiority of many of Karadžić’s versions to their earlier variants—such songs as “The Death of Duke Prijezda,” “Sick Dojčin,” “The Wedding of King Vukašin,” and “Old Novak and Deli Radivoje.”<sup>70</sup> The “repetition” of the “same” story offers possibilities of change and invention as diverse as the “repetition” of a formula or a theme. In this respect a comparison of two variants of “The Betrayal of Grujo’s Wife,” recorded in the Erlangen Manuscript and about a century later in Karadžić’s collection, is of considerable interest. The “basic” tales are closely parallel: in both variants the heroic outlaw, Grujo Novaković, puts up his tent in a mountain, drinks wine, and falls asleep. Three young Turks come along and when the son warns the mother to wake up his father, she tells him that they are not Turks. When they come, she talks to them and agrees to tie her husband’s hands; when the Turks get drunk—in the Erlangen version this happens immediately, in Karadžić’s after a journey that brings them to a tavern—the father asks the son to steal the mother’s knives and cut his ropes. While doing so, the son cuts his father’s hand, and is frightened when he sees the blood but is consoled by his father that it is not his hands but the ropes that are bleeding. Grujo kills the Turks and burns his unfaithful wife.

The tale, however, reads almost like a different song in Karadžić’s

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<sup>68</sup> “Kao žena kudjelj uz preslicu,” *ibid.*, ll. 61-62.

<sup>69</sup> See Gesemann 1925:no. 98, l. 39; Karadžić 1976:III, nos. 69, l. 26; 70, l. 15.

<sup>70</sup> Karadžić 1976:II, no. 84, cf. Gesemann 1925:no. 70; Karadžić 1976:II, no. 78, cf. Gesemann 1925:no. 110; Karadžić 1976:II, no. 25, cf. Bogišić 1878:no. 97; Karadžić 1976:III, no. 3, cf. Gesemann 1925:no. 66.



collection: apart from “the ornamentation,” elaboration, “the human touches of character” that distinguish a superior singer,<sup>71</sup> there is also a secondary theme that colors and, indeed, changes the meaning of the tale. It is only in Karadžić’s version that the child’s relationship to his mother and father is developed into a moral drama that gives a different twist to the whole story and, particularly, to its cruel ending. It is only in this version that Stevan runs to wake up his father and that his mother catches him and beats him in a savage way:

She hit her own child on the cheek;  
So lightly, lightly she struck him,  
The child turned over three times on the ground  
And three of the sound teeth jumped out of him.<sup>72</sup>

The motif of the mother’s cruelty is further developed during the journey (that takes place only in Karadžić’s version): when the child cannot keep up with the Turkish horses, the Turks whip him across the eyes—and when the father tells him to ask his mother to put him on her horse, she also beats him with the whip. This contrast between mother’s cruelty and father’s tenderness also came to the foreground when Grujo was tied: he could have gotten away from the Turks, but he stayed because in his absence his child would be islamized:

“And what would happen to my sinful soul?”  
Because of the child he surrenders to the Turks.<sup>73</sup>

The motif of the mother’s cruelty, richly coupled with her beauty, not only provides added justification for the terrible punishment at the end, but also paves the way for the ultimate moral drama in which the child emerges as a hero. For while his mother is burning, the child shows that his pity for his mother transcends her cruelty and his father’s righteousness:

“My mother’s breasts are burning,  
Which nursed me, father,

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<sup>71</sup> Lord 1960:78.

<sup>72</sup> “Udari ga rukom uz obraze, / Kako ga je lako udarila, / Tri puta se dete premetnulo, / Tri mu zdrava iskočila zuba,” Karadžić 1976:III, no. 7, ll. 26-29.

<sup>73</sup> “Pa kuda će moja grešna duša?” / Kroz dete se predaje Turcima,” *ibid.*, ll. 93-94.

Which put me on my feet.”<sup>74</sup>

The introduction of these elements not only adds to the depth of character study and the oral richness of the tale; it changes its meaning, so that the poem does not read anymore like a story about deserved punishment, but rather like a drama of patriarchal loyalties and love and forgiveness beyond the historical realities and their epic interpretation. This example shows that a tale, as well as a theme or a formula, can be in its repetition utterly transformed by the appearance of a new star that changes the outlook of the whole constellation.

In summary, oral composition in Karadžić’s collections is dependent as much on repetition and variation as it is on transformation of what is repeated and varied. A formula can be passed on from one tradition of heroic singing to another, from *bugarštice* to the decasyllabic songs; or it can die out with the modulation in its social framework and its audience. It can be, and often is, “regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea.” The idea itself, however, can also be inverted or utterly changed by being transplanted into a new dramatic and epic context—without any change in the formula. The formula itself can be changed by the introduction of a synonym for one of its elements, sometimes in order to make it more suitable to the local dialectal conditions—and the “idea” may remain “intact.” Finally, the substitution of one element in the formula can take it into a completely different semantic field, so that we are faced with a new formulaic pattern that expresses a completely different idea, even if it leans heavily on the syntactic pattern of the original formula. A frequently used theme can also be put into a new and different dramatic context—like Lazar’s toast in the setting of prospective treason—and we are again faced with repetition that bears the imprint of invention. This kind of transformation in repetition, which can be observed in various formulaic and thematic patterns, is also significantly paralleled in the way in which one and the same tale is repeated. Not only is there no end to the possibilities of ornamentation and elaboration, but the introduction of new motifs, or a sub-plot, as in “The Betrayal of Grujo’s Love,” can transform the obvious story about deserved punishment into a mysterious tale about undeserved forgiveness and generosity. This kind of formulaic, thematic, and narrative transformation may not be, and certainly is not, the rule; it is “only” the artistic fate of the greatest singers and their songs. Statistically, such moments may be

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<sup>74</sup> “Izgoreše mojoj majci dojke, / Koje su me odranile, babo, / Koje su me na noge podigle,” *ibid.*, ll. 314-16.

negligible, almost as negligible as some of the highlights of Serbo-Croatian heroic singing, when a singer has to construct a unique utterance because his dramatic and imaginative instinct for the moral interest and possibilities of a given situation causes him to step out of history and the prevailing social and moral norms. But this, of course, was “in another country”; and, besides, “the wench is dead.”

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## “Sound Shaping” of East Slavic *Zagovory*

Alla Astakhova

Every work of art, including verbal art, presents to us a world in itself with its own standards of behavior, its own space and time, its own system of values. Each work of verbal art has within its structure a number of culturally conventionalized devices that are used to mark the transition from the real world to the world represented. Among these marking devices are traditional techniques based upon an employment of special acoustic features such as tempo, timber, loudness, pitch contour, and temporal length of sounds. The existence of these traditional techniques becomes most essential and significant when we deal with works of verbal art from oral tradition, but they have not as yet received sufficient consideration in the current scholarship.

In this paper, the traditional devices that serve to create the “sound-shaping” of a certain speech genre are examined. In particular, we are concerned with the performance of East Slavic *zagovory*, oral charms that are spoken by the practitioners of folk curing when healing a patient, bewitching water, or undertaking other tasks associated with folk medical practice.

The material analyzed consists of tape recordings made during fieldwork carried out by the author, as well as other recordings either borrowed from Dr. V. Kharitonova or placed on deposit in the Speech Laboratory of the philological faculty of Moscow State University. All these acoustic recordings were encoded between 1964 and 1991 in different regions of Russia (the Arkhangelsk, Kaluga, Kostroma, and Smolensk regions, and in the Khabarovsk territory) and in the Gomel region of Byelorussia. In selecting material for analysis, I have responded to a need for certain restrictions. First, not every text of *zagovor* uttered by a conjurer and fixed on tape by the researcher corresponds to the real (or natural) situation in which charms are used. Thus we excluded from consideration texts or fragments of texts pronounced for dictation as well as

texts intended for a person who was not a patient. Because of the practical analytical difficulties entailed, I also did not consider the texts whispered or spoken *sotto voce*.

Part of the function of a word in the process of a healing charm is to help a conjurer reach a peculiar psychological state. One can agree with the view of S. J. Tambiah, who characterizes such self-stimulation as a progression “from the word to thought, then to the notion of power, and ended with the deed” (1968:175). The immediate target of the word’s influence in the charm is apparently the conjurer, not the patient, as is proved for instance by the fact that the charm—which often happens to constitute zealously guarded secret knowledge—can be articulated, in the presence of a patient, as a whisper or as a half-whispered, half-chanted utterance, with singular vocal emphases. Another proof of this primary influence is the fact that the actual presence of a patient often is not obligatory for the effective performance of *zagovor* (as in the case of bewitching the water and/or other things used in curing). Direct appeals to a patient are usually absent in the incantation of *zagovor*.

In its role as a means of such self-stimulation of a conjurer, the word has several functions, and intonation proves different in each case. First, the word can describe, comment upon, and in general accompany the physical actions of a conjurer in the process of curing:

- |    |                                 |  |
|----|---------------------------------|--|
| a) | Dúyu,<br>plúyu,<br>pómoši dayu. | I am blowing,<br>I’m spitting<br>I’m lending help. |
| b) | Gyrz’ gryzú,<br>vygryzáyu.      | I’m gnawing the rupture,<br>I’m gnawing it out.    |

The role of intonation is in this case minimal.

Second, the word can define the psychological state of a conjurer through some magical evocative actions with respect to mythological objects. Achieving the desired goal is realized in this case by fulfilling such intentions as:

- 1) mild request
- 2) demand
- 3) appeal, invocation
- 4) relevant emotional state

The role of intonation as a means of self-stimulation is in this case

increased.

Thus, *mild request* is expressed by weakening the loudness contrast between the phrase accent and unaccented vowels while pronouncing the imperative construction at a higher tone level than usual. Note that the motive of the mild request usually comes across only in the fragments of *zagovory* texts where there is no opportunity for active, personal influence by a conjurer upon a situation, for example in appeals to God or to God’s Mother:

- |    |                                    |  |
|----|------------------------------------|--|
| a) | Vóspodi,<br>pomoží i poblagosloví. | My Lord,<br>help me and bless me.        |
| b) | Utolí Bože boli Valentiny.         | Allay, my God,<br>the pain of Valentina. |

The *demand* is articulated by augmenting the loudness contrast between the phrase accent and unaccented vowels while pronouncing the imperative construction. One of two motives is customarily involved:

- a) banishment (“go away”) — addressed to illness:

Idý sobe, de voron kósti ne zanose.	Go your own way, there, where the raven does not bring the bones.
--	---

- b) the demand for assistance (“help,” “cover,” “safeguard”) — addressed to superior forces:

Vstán’t’a pristupit’a moy dúkh polubit’a.	Rise up, come here, love my spirit.
--	--

The *appeal or invocation* is expressed by strengthening the loudness contrast between the phrase accent and unaccented vowels, as well as by increasing the length of a phrase accent in vocative and nominative constructions:

- |    |                                       |   |
|----|---------------------------------------|---|
| a) | Dubóčok u boru,<br>ja do tébe govoru. | Oak in the dark forest,<br>I talk to you. |
| b) | Ríčen’ka,<br>vodýca,<br>mátuška.      | You river,<br>you water,<br>you mother.   |

- |    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| c) | Večírni zori,<br>polunóčni zori,<br>svetóvye zori. | You night-summer lightnings,<br>you midnight-summer lightnings,<br>you dawn-summer lightnings. |
|----|--|--|

The appeal or invocation can also be obliquely indicated in *zagovor*, for instance by enumeration of actions and features associated with the invoked disease:

- |    |  |  |
|----|--|--|
| a) | Zenócky,<br>devócky,<br>muščýn'sky,<br>khlópecky,<br>sobáčy,<br>kot'ácy,<br>podúmany,<br>pogadány. | You from women,<br>you from girls,<br>you from men,<br>you from lads,<br>you from dogs,<br>you from cats,<br>you from thought,<br>you from charming. |
| b) | Tady ty stoyál,<br>kolól,<br>poról.  | Then you stood,<br>you pricked,<br>you ripped.   |

Each rhythmic group similar in pronunciation to the vocative constructions shows that such fragments unambiguously signal the invocation. The oblique expression of appeal can be performed as narration:

- |    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| a) | Mísec molody,<br>u tebe ríg zoloty,<br>ty žyveš vysóko,<br>ty bačyš dal'óko.                      | You new moon,<br>you have a golden corn,<br>you live high above,<br>you can see far and wide.                     |
| b) | Na ostrove Buyáne,<br>na sv'atom Okyáne,<br>stoit dúb.<br>Pod etim dúbom<br>ležit zmeyá Kolupeya. | On the island Buyan,<br>on the saint Okyan,<br>there stands an oak.<br>Under this oak<br>lies the snake Kolupeya. |

The rhythmic groups in such textual fragments are also intoned like vocative constructions.

The *emotional state*, involving strongly willed moral pressure, is expressed by partitioning the text in the course of utterance into short, similar rhythmic groups with similar intonation, typical of imperatives:

- |                      |                                |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Zhan'éyu<br>strakhý, | I'm getting away<br>the fears, |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|

ps'áčy,	those from dogs,
kot'áčy,	those from cats,
vatránye,	those from wind,
planítnye.	those from planets.
Ne khodý,	Don't come here,
ne sušý	don't gnaw
senej	the blue
žýly,	vine,
žóltoj	the yellow
kostí,	bone,
červónoj	the red
kroví,	blood,
bílogo	the white
téla.	body.

In the appropriate mood the conjurer can pronounce any fragment of the text of *zagovor* in this a way. Intonation in this case is something like a *cliché mélodique* that is superimposed upon the text.

The word as a means of self-stimulation of the conjurer also manifests itself in the fascinating function of a physical irritant that affects one's sense-organs<sup>1</sup> (in this case a performer's sense-organs). Under favorable conditions, action of a rhythmic, momentary, shocking irritant can provoke a number of psychic states that are considered abnormal. Certain traditional devices used by a conjurer when pronouncing *zagovor* are linked to this peculiar feature. Here intonation is the major means. Significantly, those conjurers who have mastered the art of charming not from the oral tradition but from written sources (such a method of learning *zagovor* is becoming more popular in recent years) do not use these devices in their uttering. This discrepancy proves that such devices are purely cultural, acquired only from oral tradition.

The most widely used device is voice-leading on one tone level with articulation of all vowels at the same pitch, or two-level voice-leading with rhythmic transformation of one tone level into another (and/or of one timber into another). Such intonation often can be accompanied by a characteristic increase of speech tempo. In this case intonation is deprived of its usual speech semantics and in its function becomes more like that of a tune or primitive melody. One can hypothesize the presence of primitive

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<sup>1</sup> On the function of fascination in speech, cf. Knorozov 1973.



musical mode relations here.<sup>2</sup> It is this very type of intoning that is easy to identify for anyone who has ever experienced the living performance of a charm; the distinctive feature is evidently the specific tempo of pronouncing.<sup>3</sup>

This type of utterance is often regarded by a conjurer as a sign of stepping into the specific state corresponding to the performative act of charming. To strengthen the rhythmic effect, the conjurer can add such actions as swaying, rhythmically waving the hands, or rhythmically manipulating appropriate items (a knife, for example). In this connection one cannot ignore the strong influence produced on the patient by rhythmical movements of this kind in combination with vocal sounds and the general ambience. Among the devices acting as a shocking irritant may be included the momentary or rhythmic exclamation, as found in the Kaluga region.

This function is linked to an orientation toward creating the strange, peculiar word, toward the difficulty of its pronunciation. It is impractical to attempt a complete list of devices, as well as to decide whether each such device is the unique product of an individual or acquired from tradition.

It is necessary to mention that intonation in a single, steady tune is artificial and psychologically unnatural.<sup>4</sup> Two-level voice-leading accompanied by a significant rise in speech tempo is also connected with difficulty of pronunciation, which can be increased by periodic “whisper pauses,” that is, pronouncing of one, two, or a whole succession of syllables during breath intake or without the voice.

Another related device used in *zagovor* performance consists of pronunciation with the constant shift of the accent to the beginning of a rhythmic group:

Paydu pad čístoye nebo,  
pad čístye zv’ozdy,  
tám na Mikrone  
stáit belyj kamen’.

I’ll go under the clear sky,  
under the clear stars,  
there on the Mikron  
there stands a white stone.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Knodratyeva 1977.

<sup>3</sup> It would be interesting to verify whether the rhythm of such a rendering is related to the main alpha-rhythm of the human brain. On the influence of similar rhythms on the human psychology in ceremonies with percussion instruments, cf. Sturtevant 1968, Jackson 1968, and Neher 1962.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Alexeev 1986, on using this device in magic rituals.

Na bélom kamne  
stáit Božaya Mat'.  
Ona déržit v rukakh  
žyivotvórnyj Krest.  
Ona im ograždáyet  
zemlu i nebo.

On the white stone  
stands God's Mother  
She has in her hands  
the life-creating Cross.  
She circumscribes with it  
the earth and the skies.

Among other devices of this kind are the obligatory clear and distinctive pronunciation of all consonants (therefore, as the conjurers insist, the performer must possess all of his or her teeth; otherwise the words “fly through”); pronouncing of the whole charm in one breath; and pronouncing the charm with rising speech tempo.

Of the devices connected with the function of estrangement one can distinguish a special group of various kinds of imitations. There are mimings of hen's cackling in charms intended to cure the child from crying at night for example, or of eating sounds when the rupture is conceived of as being “gnawed out” by the conjurer.

One of the most popular of such devices is imitation of liturgical pronunciation. The conjurer can imitate the priest's exclamations from the altar or use a tonal register featuring the clausulae fixed on a single tone level, a style that typifies the recitation of canonical prayers as part of church practice. The popularity of this device can be explained in several ways. First, the canonical prayers always accompany the charms intoned in the process of curing; they are usually recited before the charm. Second, if Christian personae are invoked or if the foundation is spiritual verse, the charm itself often functions under the name of a prayer. Transferring the devices used to intone the prayer onto the recitation of a charm seems quite natural in this context. Third, pronouncing with fixed-tune clausulae has much in common with intoning on one level of accented vowels, this latter feature being, as we have seen, typical for a charm. The only difference is that in the prayer the characteristic melodic movement involves the final 3-4 syllables of a rhythmic group, while in the charm it includes the entire rhythmic group.

The devices of intonation linked to the function of fascination are surely the most highly expressive (and in many cases also the most archaic) means in the performer's repertoire, marking the transition from speech to *zagovor*. As mentioned above, it is the use of these features that designates for many conjurers the onset of the act of charming. Articulation of *zagovor* is, however, rarely accomplished only with the help of “fascination” signals. The conjurer usually strives to employ all of the means at his or her disposal to achieve the charm's goal. The word as a

means of self-stimulation in all its functions also figures prominently in the course of incantation. In any given moment, this or that function may dominate, depending on the conjurer's mood.

The performer usually repeats the *zagovor* text, with variations and resetting of incantations, three, nine, or twelve times in the process of charming. Each of the iterations is a new intonational variant, with disparities arising from the shift of dominant function. In the majority of cases the conjurer begins the utterance using the devices associated with fascination; then he or she turns to the other functions of the word, periodically returning to the opening strategy. Thus the devices associated with fascination mark not only the outer boundaries of a charming act, but also its inner boundaries, its phases. The conjurer usually closes the utterance with the devices of fascination, and in this case the influence of these devices on the patient can manifest itself quite directly. The words addressed to the patient—"Rise up, you healthy one," "God give you happiness, health," and so forth—can serve as a continuation of this influence. But with such addresses we already reach beyond the boundaries of a charm performance.

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## Current State of Studies in Oral Tradition in Japan

Hiroyuki Araki

The present state of studies in oral tradition in Japan has remained almost unknown to non-Japanese during the thirty years since Richard M. Dorson contributed his article “Folklore Research in Japan” to *Folklore Research Around the World* in 1961. Dorson noted that Kunio Yanagita had published a hundred books and a thousand articles, to which he added (117) “—or more properly, he had permitted his name to be listed as author on those works. The disciples of the great scholar, pursuing their research under his sponsorship, were delighted to see his name on their work.”

Dorson’s statement is not quite accurate. It is true that Yanagita’s disciples sought to place his name on their works; but up to the time of Dorson’s arrival in Tokyo in 1956, Yanagita had published 149 books and 2,327 articles of his own (easily confirmed by supplemental vol. no. 5 of *Teihon Yanagita Kunio Shu* [*Complete Works of Kunio Yanagita*]). Of course, this number includes short articles that appeared in newspapers and monthly magazines; but, excluding those, more than one thousand articles can be described as regular treatises.

Dorson also mentioned that the Japanese Folklore Institute was almost literally the lengthened shadow of that one man, Kunio Yanagita; for he not only founded the whole field of folklore science in Japan and established the Institute in the large library of the house he had given his daughter, but he himself lived next door, in a small, newer, shrubbery-surrounded home. Though the Institute has since been moved to the campus of Seijo University, Yanagita’s lengthened shadow is still influencing us.

When folklorists in Japan begin to write a paper, they usually place the *Complete Works of Kunio Yanagita* within arm’s reach for ready reference. *Shinobu Origuchi’s Complete Works* (thirty-one volumes plus one supplemental volume) will probably also be at hand, though Dorson was not informed of Origuchi and his works. These two great folklore scholars tower high over the history of Japanese folklore research. Nevertheless, their works have gone untranslated into foreign languages, because their style and rhetoric—or rather, their way of *cutting out*

(perceiving) the given world—are completely different from those of Western cultures.

Language is deeply related to the personality of its culture, and Japanese is strikingly different from Western languages. The styles of Yanagita and Origuchi are especially emotion-oriented. This quality leads to esotericism, and even native Japanese scholars find them hard to understand. Both are famous poets, and their ways of grasping objects are intuitive; they pay little attention to the logical reconstruction of their inner world. Through their strange, enchanting force as well as their ambiguity, Yanagita and Origuchi are leading us into productive and significant new phases of folklore. Several decades have passed since Yanagita and Origuchi died, and still the status of Japanese folklore research remains unknown to the world, not because folklore studies in Japan are negligible or insignificant, but because the language barrier is still preventing exchange of information with foreign countries. Nevertheless, folklore research in Japan is prospering, in what may be termed a unicellular way.

Such being the case, in an effort to inform the rest of the world of Japanese folklore research since World War II, I am here going to introduce briefly the achievements in folklore in our country. At present, I will not go into theories of folklore or evaluations of folklore research in Japan. All that can be done in the present format is to let the world know about the publications and activities concerning oral tradition in Japan after 1945.

Since World War II there has been prolific folklore publication, including books, journals, and papers. It is impossible to count or list them exhaustively (I have been collecting assiduously, but what I have is only a drop in the bucket), so in this paper I shall list only dictionaries and books published in various series.

### Dictionaries

1. Asakura et al. 1963      Haruhiko Asakura et al., eds. *Shinwa Densetsu Jiten (Dictionary of Myth and Legend)*. Tokyo: Tokyo-do.
2. Inada et al. 1972      Koji Inada et al., eds. *Nihon Mukashibanashi Jiten (Dictionary of Japanese Märchen)*. Tokyo: Kobun-do.
3. Inui et al. 1986      Katsumi Inui et al., eds. *Nihon Denki Densetsu Dai Jiten (Colossal Dictionary of Japanese Romance and Legend)*. Tokyo: Kadokawa-shoten.

4. Minzokugaku Kenkyusho 1951      Minzokugaku Kenkyusho (Folklore Research Institute), ed. *Minzokugaku Jiten (Dictionary of Folklore)*. Tokyo: Tokyo-do.
5. Nagano 1969      Shoichi Nagano, ed. *Setsuwa-Bungaku Jiten (Dictionary of Japanese Folk Literature)*. Tokyo: Tokyo-do.
6. Nomura 1987      Junichi Nomura, ed. *Mukashibanashi-Densetsu Sho Jiten (Little Dictionary of Märchen and Legend)*. Tokyo: Mizumi-shobo.
7. Wakamori et al. 1972      Taro Wakamori et al., eds. *Nihon Minzoku Jiten (Dictionary of Japanese Folklore)*. Tokyo: Kobun-do.

### Books Published in Series

Innumerable folktale collections other than the series listed below are published by individual scholars and aficionados, from prefecture to prefecture and from town to town, but I am unable to count or list them all here. All of the series listed below contain explanatory notes by noted folklorists in each volume.

1. Fukuda et al. 1968-89      Akira Fukuda et al., eds. *Mukashi-banashi Kenkyu Shiryo Soshō (A Series of Märchen Research Materials)*, 23 vols. Tokyo: Miyai-shoten.<sup>1</sup>
2. Fukuda et al. 1983-90      \_\_\_\_\_ et al., eds. *Nanto Mukashibanashi Soshō (A Series of Märchen from Southern Islands)*, 10 vols. Kyoto: Dohosha.
3. Gyosei 1978-79      Gyosei, ed. *Nippon no Minwa (Folktales of Japan)*, 12 vols. Tokyo: Gyosei.
4. Inada 1967-83      Koji Inada, ed. *Nihon no Mukashibanashi (Märchen of*

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<sup>1</sup> In this series tales are presented as they are told by storytellers, thus preserving the various styles and dialects.

*Japan*), 30 vols. Tokyo: Nihon Hoso Shuppan Kyokai.<sup>2</sup>

5. Inada and Ozawa 1975-90 \_\_\_\_\_ and Toshio Ozawa, eds. *Nihon Mukashibanashi Tsu-kan (Complete Survey of Märchen of Japan)*, 29 vols. plus 3 supplementary vols. Kyoto: Doho-sha.<sup>3</sup>
6. Iwasaki Bijutsu-sha 1965-72 Iwasaki Bijutsu-sha, ed. *Minzoku Mingei Sosho (A Series on Folklore and Folk Art)*, 80 vols. Tokyo: Iwasaki Bijutsu-sha.<sup>4</sup>
7. Iwasaki Bijutsu-sha 1974-87 \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Zenkoku Mukashibanashi Shiryo Shusei (All-Japan Compilation of Märchen)*, 40 vols. Tokyo: Iwasaki Bijutsu-sha.<sup>5</sup>
8. Miyamoto 1957-90 Tsuneichi Miyamoto, ed. *Nihon no Minwa (Folktales of*

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<sup>2</sup> This series was issued by the publishing department of the N. H. K. (Japan Broadcasting Association), a semi-governmental broadcasting organization.

<sup>3</sup> This series aims at the synchronic collection of tales in a given area. Japan is divided into twenty-six districts and all the tales published in a given district are comprehensively surveyed. Tales are arranged according to Seki's Type Index (*Nihon Mukashibanashi Taisei*, 1978). For each tale type, one representative is presented as an example, followed by general outlines of all versions in the district. Each volume ranges from 600 to 1,200 pages.

The twenty-fifth volume, for example, includes all the tales in Kagoshima Prefecture published up to 1979, giving 308 types of ordinary tales, 230 types of jests, and 83 types of animal tales—621 tale types altogether, plus résumés of all the versions that have been published. The first tale type given in this volume is "Fate foretold as punishment," AT930. The sample tale is taken from Arima 1975, and seventeen outlined versions are drawn from various publications. The next tale is "The pre-destined wife," from Mizuno 1976, and sixteen outlines from various sources are provided. The volume contains 883 pages of tales and 61 pages of explanatory notes and index. Ninety-nine sources (books, journals, and so on) were used in compiling this volume.

<sup>4</sup> This series contains a collection of folktales not only from Japan, but also from around the world.

<sup>5</sup> In this series, tales are given as told by storytellers.

*Japan*), 65 vols. Tokyo: Mirai-sha.<sup>6</sup>

9. Ofu-sha 1967-76      Ofu-sha, ed. *Mukashibanashi Shirizu (Märchen Series)*, 20 vols. Tokyo: Ofu-sha.

### Other Books

Translations from foreign publications also flourish. Here again I will list only translations published in various series. Besides the following, many translations in book form have been published since 1945. It is impossible to enumerate them here, but the total would certainly extend into the hundreds.

1. Araki et al. 1975-89      Hiroyuki Araki et al., eds. *Sekai Minkan Bungei So-sho (A Series of Folk Narratives of the World)*, 16 vols. Tokyo: Miyai-shoten.<sup>7</sup>
2. Araki et al.  
1982-90      \_\_\_\_\_ et al., eds. *Sekai-no Mukashibanashi (Märchen of the World)*, 28 vols. Tokyo: Komine-shoten.<sup>8</sup>
3. Heibon-sha 1952-90      Heibon-sha, ed. *Toyo Bunko (Library of the Orient)*, 520 vols. Tokyo: Heibon-sha.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Publication of this series began under the leadership of the late Tsuneichi Miyamoto, a leading folklorist succeeding Kunio Yanagita and Shinobu Origuchi. His selected works, in twenty-five volumes, are published by Mirai-sha.

<sup>7</sup> Chinese, Spanish, Thai, Russian, Formosan, Austrian, Mongolian, Argentine, Icelandic, Chinese (other peoples), Korean, Finnish, Indonesian, Hungarian, and Danish-German.

<sup>8</sup> Greek, Spanish-Portuguese, Austrian, Scandinavian, African, Korean, British, Italian, French, African (2), Russian, Chinese, Indian, Turkish, Irish-Scottish, Indonesian, Central and South American, East European, German, Formosan, Swiss, Philippine, Thai, and Australian.

<sup>9</sup> In this series, translations of Oriental tales including *Sukasaptati*, *Textus ornatior*, *Nasreddian Hoca*, and others fill more than twenty volumes.



4. Miyamoto et al.  
1958-63 Tsuneichi Miyamoto et al., eds. *Sekai no Minwa (Folktales of the World)*, 12 vols. Tokyo: Mirai-sha.<sup>10</sup>
5. Ozawa 1976-79 Toshio Ozawa, ed. *Sekai no Minwa (Folktales of the World)*, 25 vols. Tokyo: Gyosei.<sup>11</sup>
6. Seki et al. 1953-55 Keigo Seki et al., eds. *Sekai Minwa Zenshu (Collection of World Folktales)*, 10 vols. Tokyo: Kawate-shobo.
7. Seki, Araki, and Yamashita 1978-80 \_\_\_\_\_, Hiroyuki Araki, and K. Yamashita, eds. *Ajia no Minwa (Folktales from Asia)*, 12 vols. Tokyo: Dai-Nihon Bijutsu.<sup>12</sup>
8. Yamamuro 1976-77 Shizuka Yamamuro, ed. *Sekai Mukashibanashi Shu (Collection of World Märchen)*, 10 vols. Tokyo: Shakai Shiso-sha.<sup>13</sup>

So far, I have discussed the present state of folklore research in Japan. By folklore, I have chiefly meant the study of Märchen. Here, let me shift the focus to legends, again providing a list of collections in various series.

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<sup>10</sup> African, Scandinavian, Indonesian, Russian, Czechoslovakian, Mongolian, Korean, Chinese, etc.

<sup>11</sup> German-Swiss, South European, North European, East European (2 vols.), British, African, Near Eastern, Asian (2 vols.), North American, South American, Mediterranean, Lorraine, Irish, Albanian, Kabir, Israeli, Punjab, Caucasian, Mongolian, Indonesian, Papua-New Guinean, Eskimo.

<sup>12</sup> Burmese, Cheju Island, Northern Tribes (2 vols.), Ceylon, Micronesian, Philippine, Indian, Chinese, Papuan, Vietnamese, Panchatantra. We have already several translations of Panchatantra, but the “Panchatantra” in this series is a direct translation from the “textus simplicior” by the famous Sanskrit scholar, Otoya Tanaka, and his disciple, Katsuhiko Kamimura. “Micronesian Folktales” is a translation from the tales collected by Roger E. Mitchell, University of Wisconsin.

*Sekai no Minwa* and *Ajia no Minwa* were both awarded the Nihon Honyaku Shuppan Bunka-Sho (Prize for Publications Translated into Japanese) in 1979 and in 1981.

<sup>13</sup> British, German-Swiss, Scandinavian, French-South European, East European, Soviet, Indian, Chinese, African, American-Oceanian.

1. Araki et al. 1982-90      Hiroyuki Araki et al., eds. *Nihon Densetsu Taikei (Complete Survey of Japanese Legends)*, 15 vols. plus 2 supplemental vols. Tokyo: Mizuumi-shobo.<sup>14</sup>
2. Daiichi Hoki  
1970-74      Daiichi Hoki, ed. *Densetsu Shiriizu (Series of Legends)*, 10 vols. Tokyo: Daiichi Hoki.
3. Kadokawa-shoten  
1975-77      Kadakowa-shoten, ed. *Nihon-no-Densetsu (Legends of Japan)*, 24 vols. Tokyo: Kadokawa-shoten.
4. Kawade-shobo  
1951-56      Kawade-shobo, ed. *Nihon Minzoku Densetsu Zenshu (A Collection of Ethnic Legends of Japanese)*, 10 vols. Tokyo: Kawade-shobo.
5. Shogakkan 1983-85      Shogakkan, ed. *Furusato Densetsu no Tabi (Trips Seeking*

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<sup>14</sup> I would like to go into detail about this series, because I have been so involved with helping to edit it. In 1979 we had the first editorial meeting in Tokyo. We divided the whole of Japan into fifteen areas, three of which were allotted to each editor, who were then supposed to select authors—usually two to four—who were gathering legends from publications, old and new, of the given area, or sometimes nationwide. These authors were requested to sort out and classify the materials they gathered. The editors were to supervise this classification. Editorial meetings were held once or twice a year.

Each volume gives representative tales for respective tale-types and tries to present all the possible versions that the authors could gather. Versions from old documents and literary materials were widely sought out. The editorial motto was to be “all-inclusive.” Many difficulties lay in wait: the problem of classification, validity of versions, reading the cursive characters written in old documents, and so on. After ten long years we have finally published fifteen main volumes and two supplemental volumes. The second supplemental volume contains the index and a list of collections of legends and other publications (4,118 books, periodicals, and journals) that the compilers of each volume used. Also included is a list of all the publications dealing with legends for which we have searched throughout the whole nation, amounting to 234 publications in book form and 2,101 papers and theses. This collection, together with each of the editors, has been given the Mainichi Prize, one of the most prestigious prizes for publishers and authors.

*Legends of Your Provinces*), 13 vols. Tokyo: Shogakkan.<sup>15</sup>

Next, I will give a listing of folklore societies:

1. Nihon Minzoku Gakkai (Folklore Society of Japan)<sup>16</sup>
2. Nihon Kosho Bungei Gakkai (Society for Folk Narrative Research of Japan)<sup>17</sup>
3. Setsuwa-Densho Gakkai (Society for Folk Narratives and Tradition)<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> In each volume in this series a representative legend from each province is featured, supplemented with color photographs, maps, and authoritative explanatory articles by eminent folklorists.

<sup>16</sup> This is the largest society of folklore in Japan with about 2,300 members; the current president is Junichi Nomura. It was founded by Kunio Yanagita in 1951.

<sup>17</sup> This society was founded in 1977, with Keigo Seki elected as the first president. The members of the executive board at that time were Jingoro Usada, Taryo Obayashi, Koji Naoe, Junichi Nomura, Kinichi Yamashita, Hiroyuki Araki, and others. Current membership is approximately 400. Every year the Society publishes *Kosho Bungei Kenkyu (Journal of Folk Narrative Research)*. In 1987, the journal published a special issue commemorating the decennial of the foundation of the Society. Part of the content is as follows (according to order of appearance): “Folklore and the Modern Society,” by Hiroyuki Araki; “Human-Animal Relationship in the Folktale: The Case of Mosi Tales,” by Junzo Kawada; “A Study of the Songs of Shishi Dance,” by Yasuji Honda; “Swan Maiden and Resurrected Maiden,” by Taryo Obayashi; “‘Nonverbal Communication’ in Folktale,” by Fumito Takagi; and “How to Call to the Mind of a Storyteller,” by Junichi Nomura.

<sup>18</sup> This society was founded in 1982 through the sponsorship of Ristsumeikan University and Doshisha University in Kyoto in order to promote the particular scholarship in Kyoto, as distinguished from that of Tokyo. Current membership is approximately 350. The society annually publishes a two-hundred-plus page research report in book form, as follows: *Setsuwa Densho No Nippon, Asia, Sekai (Folk Narrative and Tradition of Japan, Asia, and the World)* (1983); *Setsuwa-to Rekishi (Folk Narrative and History)* (1984); *Setsuwa-to Girei (Folk Narrative and Ritual)* (1985); *Setsuwa-to Shiso Shakai (Folk Narrative and Thought in Society)* (1986-87); *Setsuwa-no Shigen Henyo (Origin and Transition of Folk Narratives)*.

4. Mukashibanashi Gakkai (Society for Märchen Research)<sup>19</sup>

There are some other societies, such as Setsuwa Bungakkai (Society for Folk Literature) and Densho Bungakkai (Society for Folk Tradition), and local societies exist in various prefectures and cities; I am informed of very few of them.

Lastly, I have the sad duty of reporting the death in 1990 of Dr. Keigo Seki, the father of Märchen research in Japan, at the age of ninety. In 1958 he compiled *Nihon Mukashibanashi Shusei (Type Index of Japanese Märchen)*, 6 vols., which was revised and enlarged into *Nihon Mukashibanashi Taisei (Enlarged Type Index of Japanese Märchen)*, 12 vols. in 1978. His selected works, 9 volumes, were published by Doho-sha in 1980-81. These are entitled *Märchen and Society* (vol. 1); *History of Märchen* (vol. 2); *Methodology of Märchen and Legend* (vol. 3); *Comparative Study of Japanese Märchen* (vol. 4); *Structure of Märchen* (vol. 5); *Prologue to Comparative Research* (vol. 6); *History of Folk Study* (vol. 7); *Methodology of Folklore* (vol. 8); and *Ethnology and Folklore* (vol. 9).

Kita-Kyushu

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| Dorson 1961      | Richard M. Dorson. <i>Folklore Research Around the World</i> . Bloomington: Indiana University Press. pp. 115-26.  |
| Miyamoto 1970-77 | Tsuneichi Miyamoto. <i>Miyamoto Tsuneichi Chosaku-Shu (Selected Works of Tsuneichi Miyamoto)</i> , 25 vols. Tokyo: |

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<sup>19</sup> This society was founded in 1988 as successor to Mukashibanashi Kenkyu Konwakai (Gathering for the Research of Märchen), which had a history of more than twenty years. The current president is Takehiko Ohshima; membership is approximately 200. Every year the society publishes *Mukashibanashi Kenkyu-to Shiryō (Research and Data on Märchen)* in book form, with such subtitles as *Mukashibanashi-to Kyoiku (Märchen and Education)*; *Mukashibanashi-to Yokai (Märchen and Monsters)*; *Mukashibanashi-to Chiiki-sei (Märchen and Regionalism)*; *Mukashibanashi-to Dobutsu (Märchen and Animals)*; and so on.

Mirai-sha.

- Mizuno 1976 Osamu Mizuno. *Tokuno-shima Minwa (Folktales of Tokuno-shima)*. Fukuoka: Nishi-Nihon Shibun-sha.
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- Seki 1980-81 \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Seki Keigo Chosaku Shu (Selected Works of Keigo Seiki)*, 9 vols. Kyoto: Doho-sha.

## About the Authors

Author and editor of numerous publications on Japanese folklore, *Hiroyuki Araki*, now retired and living in Hiroshima, has most recently presided over the edition of *A Series of Folk Narratives of the World* (16 vols, Miyai-shoten, 1975-89) and *Märchen of the World* (28 vols., Komine-shoten, 1982-90).

*Alla Astakhova*, a specialist in Russian folklore, is a member of the Philological Faculty at Moscow State University.

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*Sioned Davies* is a medievalist at the University of Wales in Cardiff. She has written extensively on physical appearance, the formula, and orality-literacy issues in the *Mabinogi* and other works, and recently published *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi—The Four Branches of the Mabinogi* (Gomer, 1992).

Assistant Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the State University of New York at Binghamton, *Marilynn Desmond* specializes in medieval studies. Her *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality, and the Aeneid in the Middle Ages* (Pennsylvania) will be published in 1993.

*Mark W. Edwards*, Professor Emeritus of Classics at Stanford University, has authored a multitude of fundamental studies of the Homeric poems. In addition to articles on traditional structures in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* and *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, he has recently published *Homer: Poet of the Iliad* (Hopkins, 1987) and the fifth volume of the Cambridge *Iliad* commentary.

Equally conversant with modern British and his native South Slavic literature, *Svetozar Koljević* is Professor at the University of Sarajevo. His study *The Epic in the Making* (Oxford, 1980) provides the best English-language guide to the literary history of the South Slavic epic.

*Emmanuel Obiechina* teaches African literature at the University of Pittsburgh-Bradford. Among his numerous publications are *Culture, Tradition, and Society in the West African Novel* (Cambridge, 1978) and *Language and Theme: Essays on African Literature* (Howard, 1990).

