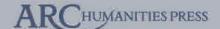# JOHN MILES FOLEY'S WORLD OF ORALITIES

TEXT, TRADITION, AND CONTEMPORARY ORAL THEORY

Edited by

MARK C. AMODIO

JOHN MILES FOLEY'S WORLD OF ORALITIES

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JOHN MILES FOLEY'S WORLD OF ORALITIES

TEXT, TRADITION, AND CONTEMPORARY ORAL THEORY

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ARCHUMANITIES PRESS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABAG	*Amsterdamer Beiträge zur álteren Germanistik*
AI	*American Imago*
ALC	*African Languages and Cultures*
AM	*Asia Major*
ANF	*Arkiv för nordisk filologi*
ANQ	*American Notes and Queries*
APS	*Acta Philologica Scandinavica*
ASE	*Anglo-Saxon England*
ASPR	*Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library*
BS	*Balkan Studies*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
CA	*Cultural Anthropology*
CAJ	*Central Asiatic Journal*
CFQ	*California Folklore Quarterly*
CL	*Comparative Literature*
CMCS	*Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*
CSAE	Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
DOML	Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library
EA	*Etudes Anglaises*
EE	*Ethnologia Europaea*
EI	*Encyclopaedia Iranica*
EJA	*European Journal of Archaeology*
ES	*English Studies*
ESA	*English Studies in Africa*
FEJ	*Folklore, An Electronic Journal*
FFC	Folklore Fellows Communications
G-RM	*Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IJHSS	*International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*
JAF	*Journal of American Folklore*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JDTC	*Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*
JEGP	*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
JSAS	*Journal of Southern African Studies*

LS	*Language and Style*
MA	*Medieval Archaeology*
MED	*Middle English Dictionary*
MGS	*Michigan Germanic Studies*
MLR	*Modern Language Review*
MP	*Modern Philology*
MS	*Mediaeval Scandinavia*
NEJM	*New England Journal of Medicine*
NM	*Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NQ	*Notes and Queries*
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
OL	*Orientalistische Literaturzeitun*
OT	*Oral Tradition*
PAPS	*Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*
PT	*Poetics Today*
RES	*Review of English Studies*
SAJFS	*Southern African Journal of Folklore Studies*
SB	*Studies in Bibliography*
SCF	*Studia Celtica Fennica*
SHM	*Social History of Medicine*
SLI	*Studies in the Literary Imagination*
SLSF	*Svenska landsmål ock svenskt folkliv*
SMC	*Studies in Medieval Culture*
SN	*Studia Neophilologica*
SP	*Studies in Philology*
SS	*Scandinavian Studies*
TAPA	*Transactions of the American Philological Association*
TPS	*Transactions of the Philological Society*
TS	*Tijdschrift voor Skandinavistiek*
TSLL	*Texas Studies in Literature and Language*
UF	*Ugarit Forschungen*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VSNR	Viking Society for Northern Research
WF	*Western Folklore*
WS	*Die Welt der Slawen*
ZVV	*Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde*

INTRODUCTION: THE PATHWAY(S) FROM ORAL-FORMULAIC THEORY TO CONTEMPORARY ORAL THEORY

MARK C. AMODIO

THE COMMENTS ALBERT Bates Lord offers on the back cover of John Miles Foley's *The Theory of Oral Composition: History and Methodology*—that it "is a remarkable and important book, and [that] its publication will be a landmark in the study of oral traditional literature"—remain as true today as when the book appeared in 1988. Foley, whose knowledge of the field was unsurpassed even at what was then still a relatively early stage of his remarkable and unfortunately truncated career,[1] was uniquely positioned to write the definitive history of the field, one that was—despite the more general term Foley, with his characteristic prescience, opted for in his title—at the time still largely defined by the theory of oral-formulaic composition, or as it was and is still known, the Parry–Lord theory, although it is more accurate, and certainly less dogmatic, to describe it as "the Parry–Lord approach to oral poetics."[2] First set forth by Milman Parry in his two 1928 French theses,[3] this approach was most fully articulated by Albert B. Lord, who had been Parry's student and collaborator at Harvard, in *Singer of Tales*. Truly ground-breaking, the Parry–Lord approach proved to be extremely polarizing as well because it posited a view of how literature was composed (and, by extension, received) that was radically at odds with not just decades but several centuries of received thought predicated upon the practices and habits of mind that accompany, mark—and limit—literate culture.[4]

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1 Foley's first contribution to the field appeared in print in 1976, two years after he completed his 1974 dissertation, "Ritual Nature." See R. Garner's valuable and comprehensive annotated bibliography for a full list of Foley's published work.

2 The phrase is M. Lord's in the preface, xii, to her husband's posthumously published *Singer Resumes*. See also G. Nagy, this volume.

3 See Parry, "*L'Épithète Traditionnelle*" and "*Les Formules*."

4 Cf. Hoffman, "Exploring the Literate Blindspot," and Amodio, *Writing the Oral Tradition*, 1–32. By way of illustrating just how radical the theory of oral-formulaic composition was when it was first introduced, Alain Renoir on occasion would tell how Lord's 1949 dissertation defence, which was open to interested members of the Harvard community, lasted nearly eight hours because so many people wanted to question him about his findings. While an effective tale, especially as told by Renoir, a short time before her death in August 2009 Lord's wife, Professor Mary Louise Lord, confirmed, personal communication, that while Lord's dissertation defence was at times spirited, it did not last much longer than a typical one.

Although the Parry–Lord theory was (and in some quarters remains) extremely influential,[5] and although it stands as one of the first truly multidisciplinary theories,[6] it was also unintentionally hamstrung from the outset by its structuralist focus, by its conceiving of oral tradition as a single, monolithic, universal entity, and, perhaps most importantly, by its insistence that the oral and literate modes of composition (and, indeed, their underlying modes of thought) were "contradictory and mutually exclusive."[7] It was on precisely this point—the putatively fundamental incompatibility of the oral and literate expressive economies—that the theory's adherents and detractors found perhaps their only point of agreement: for the former, the presence of such things as, for example, repeated verbal formulas and typical scenes unquestionably established the orality of a given work of verbal art, while for the latter that same verbal art's survival only in writing pointed just as unquestionably to its situation in the literate world. As a result, during the hey-day of the Parry–Lord theory,[8] the mutual exclusivity of the oral and literate expressive economies hardened into a largely unexamined first principle, and scholars positioned themselves on one side or the other of what Ruth Finnegan aptly described (and just as aptly criticized) as the "Great Divide" between the oral and the literate.[9] Because each side held firmly to its own polemically articulated articles of faith, the theory of oral-formulaic composition did not benefit from the ideational cross-fertilization that is the necessary by-product of sustained and productive, if at times painful, critical debate.[10]

The widespread adoption of the Parry–Lord theory by scholars in many fields, and its productive application to the verbal art produced over the course of many centuries

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5 Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality*, 88, notes that the Parry–Lord theory "can be said to be the currently ruling theory about the nature of oral composition," a comment that continues to ring true today in certain quarters. That *Singer of Tales* has not been out of print since it first appeared in 1960 and went into a third edition fifty-nine years after it was first published are but two indicators of its continuing importance. While its influence in North America has largely waned, the theory of oral-formulaic composition remains influential among European scholars. See further, Amodio, review of Reichl, *Medieval Oral Literature*, and Amodio, review of Helldén and others, *Inclinate Aurem*.

6 Oral-formulaic theory encompasses, among other areas, literary studies in many languages and across many centuries, cultural and linguistic anthropology, folklore, performance studies, and diachronic and synchronic linguistics, although there has not been as much cross-fertilization among these fields as one would hope for, or expect. See Amodio, review of Goody, *Myth, Ritual and the Oral*.

7 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 129.

8 Although what would come to be known as the Parry–Lord theory became part of the critical discourse of classicists from the time of Parry's initial publications in the late 1920s, and although Lord had begun developing the theory in a series of publications beginning with his "Homer and Huso I" in 1936, it was, Foley notes, *Oral-Formulaic Theory*, 3, not until after Magoun extended it to Old English literature in his "Oral-Formulaic Character" in 1953 that oral-formulaic theory gained a wider audience among practitioners of "literary studies, folklore, comparative literature, linguistics, history, and anthropology."

9 See Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality*, 12–14, 86–109, and 139–74. Cf. Stock, *Implications*, 71, who observes that "literacy's rise did not automatically spell the demise of traditional attitudes and tastes."

10 Foley, *Theory of Oral Composition*, 57–111, succinctly sketches the contours of the positions staked out by adherents to and detractors of oral-formulaic theory.

by cultures spread throughout the world testify eloquently to the theory's foundational role in shaping the way we understand the creation and dissemination of traditional oral verbal art.[11] By the 1980s, however, the theory was on the verge of stagnating because its practitioners continued to focus almost exclusively on applying, not developing, it.[12] The reasons for this are too complex to be addressed here, but it is important to note that this situation was not the result of any conscious effort to keep the theory "pure"; rather, its failure to evolve can be traced in large part to its radicalness, to, that is, the degree to which the theory unsettled the accepted orthodoxies of how works of verbal art were composed and disseminated, to its mapping what had been terra incognita, and to the failure of its adherents "to concur even on general definitions."[13]

That those scholars who embraced and applied the theory of oral-formulaic composition did so largely unreflectively is not surprising, especially given that the results of their investigations continually validated the theory and so reinforced its orthodoxies, including the tacit, a priori assumption that the oral and literate expressive economies were discrete cultural components that could neither coexist nor intersect. And while many scholars questioned or simply rejected out of hand the idea that cultures lacking the technology of writing could produce and disseminate verbal art of any complexity, length, or aesthetic value,[14] a few, chief among them Finnegan, challenged the stark binarism upon which so much of the discourse surrounding the theory of oral-formulaic composition rested by positing that the relationships between the oral and the literate and between their respective expressive economies were *not* mutually exclusive but were rather intertwined and interdependent. Finnegan and others also questioned the aptness of the Parry–Lord theory's one-size-fits-all approach, which flattened out, elided, or simply ignored the many unique features of the traditional verbal art produced by different cultures (and sometimes even within different genres produced within the same culture) at different times and in different places. Despite the inherent limitations of its structuralist focus,[15] and despite the development of compelling alternative ways of thinking about the production and dissemination of traditional verbal art,[16] the theory of oral-formulaic composition continued to dominate the critical landscape of oral studies throughout the 1970s and well into the 1980s. By the middle

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11 As Foley remarks, *Oral-Formulaic Theory*, 4, his annotated bibliography catalogues "more than 1800 books and articles from more than ninety language areas," the great majority of which belong to the Parry–Lord school of thought.

12 See further Foley, *Immanent Art*, 2–5, and Renoir, *Key to Old Poems*, 49–63.

13 Foley, *Immanent Art*, 14.

14 On writing as a technology and on what he labelled "the technologizing of the word," see Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, especially 5–15.

15 As Lord, 17, notes, *Singer of Tales* "is concerned with the special technique of composition which makes rapid composing in performance possible." See Parry, "Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making," 314–22, for a succinct explanation of the theory of oral-formulaic composition's structural focus. For Parry, 317, and many who adopted his (and Lord's) theory over the following decades, the presence of formulas was the strongest indicator possible of "the necessity of making verses by the spoken word."

16 See Foley, *Theory of Oral Composition*, 94–111.

of the latter decade, however, some issues that had been consciously or unconsciously ignored, including the unique features of individual traditions and the equally unique expressive economies through which they are articulated, the reception of traditional verbal art (by its intended and other audiences), and the aesthetics of traditional verbal art, began to receive more scholarly attention. As a result of these and other issues coming to the fore, the field of oral studies, which for so long had been so closely aligned with the Parry–Lord theory as to be largely synonymous with it, underwent a tectonic shift. While all oralists remain indebted to the Parry–Lord theory, which continues to be applied in some quarters as unreflectively as it was during its hey-day (with predictably similar results), it now figures far less prominently in the broad, rich, complex, and complicated landscape of contemporary oral studies than it for too long had.

Tracing in detail the process by which contemporary oral theory grew out of and eventually supplanted the theory of oral-formulaic composition is beyond the remit of this brief and selective overview. Therefore, rather than attempting to map this process and the attendant development of contemporary oral theory in detail, the focus here will be on the pivotal role the work of John Miles Foley, Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, and Alain Renoir played in moving the field of oral studies beyond the limitations that the Parry–Lord theory had unintentionally imposed upon it. Working independently, these three scholars produced in a three-year span four books—Renoir's *A Key to Old Poems: The Oral-Formulaic Approach to the Interpretation of West-Germanic Verse* (1988); Foley's *Traditional Oral Epic: The Odyssey, Beowulf, and the Serbo-Croatian Return Song* (1990); O'Brien O'Keeffe's *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (1990); and Foley's *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (1991)—that reinvigorated and redefined the field of oral studies, not by rejecting the then still-dominant theory of oral-formulaic composition (or, for the most part, even overtly addressing its flaws and limitations[17]), but by grappling with and ultimately reconfiguring some of its most closely held orthodoxies. There are other scholars, including several of this volume's contributors, whose work was also instrumental in changing the trajectory of the field, but, especially when considered as a group, the above cited works by Foley, O'Brien O'Keeffe, and Renoir—all of which are based on what were at the time the still very much contested assumptions that orality and literacy are not the competing, mutually exclusive cultural forces they had been thought to be and that the surviving material records witness the persistence of non-performative oral poetics[18]—arguably deserve the greatest credit for setting the course contemporary oral theory would follow.

Given its announced focus on the tectonics, or in Foley's words, "'the gross anatomy' of the […] texts" it examines,[19] his *Traditional Oral Epic* may seem an odd choice for

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17 This is especially true of Renoir's *Key to Old Poems*, a work in which Renoir, in a remarkable display of his characteristic savoir faire, deftly redefines and redirects many of Lord's foundational principles without ever directly challenging or criticizing them.

18 On the notion of persistence, see Foley, *Singer of Tales in Performance,* especially 60–98. On non-performative oral poetics, see Amodio, "Re(si)sting the Singer" and *Writing the Oral Tradition*, 39–44.

19 Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic*, 20.

inclusion in this survey since it was at the time of its publication—and remains to this day—the most thorough articulation of Parry and Lord's structuralist theory and the most detailed accounting of the mechanics of the traditions to which it applies. But even though it should rightly be seen as the most compelling and convincing application of the Parry–Lord theory yet (or likely) to be produced, and even though its analyses and critical approach fit comfortably within that theory's strictly structuralist parameters, *Traditional Oral Epic* also stands as one of the cornerstones upon which the contemporary oral theory that would shortly come to supplant it rests.[20] Understanding that the Parry–Lord theory was not the complete, closed, or singular system for understanding the verbal art produced in oral cultures that it had long been taken to be, Foley posits that the Parry–Lord theory was instead an essential, integral, and, most importantly, *partial* component of the theoretical approach that would come to be known simply as Oral Theory.

The formula is an important constituent of many (and perhaps most) of the expressive economies of cultures that produced or continue to produce verbal art orally. However, there is no *ur*-form against which all instantiations of it can be measured, for the formula in each culture emanates from and must conform to each culture's unique prosodic and metrical features, and, further, it must, and can only, be articulated through each culture's unique lexicon and through each culture's equally unique expressive economy.[21] Although he is addressing only the constellation of problems inherent in comparing texts from ancient Greece and Anglo-Saxon England, Foley's contention that the "documents cannot be forced into a single category, any more than the languages or prosodies involved can be forced into absolute comparability" is broadly applicable,[22] and were we to change his "cannot be forced" to "should not be forced" and his "can be forced" to "should be forced," this statement would rise to the level of an axiom, for, as he was succinctly to remind us years later, "[o]rality isn't simple or monolithic."[23]

In *Traditional Oral Epic*, Foley neither elides nor ignores these problems—as so many before him had done (and as some contemporary oral-formulaicists continue to do)—but rather considers them directly and, in the process, refines and recalibrates their underlying premises. As Foley notes in the coda to *Traditional Oral Epic*'s third chapter, while "Parry's theory of the formula was [. . .] based firmly on determining 'the same metrical conditions' that made possible the recurrence of elements of diction," in

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20 Cf. Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic*, 1n1, where he alludes to the then "tentatively titled *Immanent Art*," a work he considered to be the necessary complement to *Traditional Oral Epic* and alerts the reader that "the present volume will concentrate on the various levels of structure in comparative oral epic" because "the reading program" that will be articulated in *Immanent Art* "can proceed only after a firm foundation in the comparative philology of oral epic poetry exists." Developing and expanding this "reading program" would occupy his attention almost exclusively from the publication of *Immanent Art* onward.

21 See Foley, "Tradition-dependent" for an early, concise, and important articulation of thinking that would find full expression in *Traditional Oral Epic*.

22 Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic*, 38.

23 Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 65.

actuality "each epic tradition has an idiosyncratic, tradition-dependent *prosody* that we may expect to exist in symbiosis with a correspondingly idiosyncratic and tradition-dependent *phraseology*."[24]

Even though *Traditional Oral Epic* is not chronologically the earliest of the four works on which we are here focusing, its status as the culminating articulation of the theory of oral-formulaic composition makes it both a monument (and thorough guide) to that theory and a convenient and fitting point of departure for understanding the development of the oral theory that would grow out of and come to supplant the Parry–Lord approach. As Foley himself argues by way of justifying *Traditional Oral Epic*'s structural focus, creating the sorts of "philologically sound profile[s]" it does provides "a foundation for aesthetic inquiry that is firm because it is faithful to the language and poetics" of the traditions being investigated.[25]

Trumpeting as it does its embrace of oral-formulaic theory, not only in its title but in a foreword in which Lord attests (perhaps overly so) to its oral-formulaic bona fides, Renoir's *Key to Old Poems* may also seem to be an unlikely candidate for inclusion among the works most responsible for reinvigorating and redirecting the field of oral studies. Yet while its title announces its fealty to the Parry–Lord approach, the word "interpretation" subtly signals that this study will most decidedly *not* fit comfortably within the school of oral-formulaic criticism. Rather than challenging the structuralist principles of oral-formulaic theory, Renoir simply and deftly offers answers to questions the field had not yet posed and that, indeed, oral-formulaic theory would prove unable to formulate, let alone answer. Other scholars had touched on issues related to the ones that occupy Renoir's attention in *Key to Old Poems*,[26] but his is the first full-length study to explore the reception aesthetics, or to use his phrase, the "affective dynamics" of traditional verbal art as he focuses on neither its modes of production nor dissemination, but on *how* it conveys meaning and on *how* that meaning was received by its intended and subsequent audiences. Arguing "that certain poems of the past which exhibit all kinds of oral-formulaic features could actually have been composed in writing within the context of a society in which preliterate and literate culture could still interact with each other,"[27] Renoir shifts attention from the formal, mechanical aspects of traditional verbal art to its reception aesthetics, a strategy that allows him to avoid becoming entangled in the one issue that more than any other was responsible for bringing the field to a near impasse by the early 1980s: the belief in the mutual exclusivity of orality and literacy foundational to the theory of oral-formulaic composition.[28] However, by exploring the

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24 Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic*, 120; emphasis his.

25 Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic,* 200.

26 Cf., Foley, "Literary Art"; "Tradition and the Collective Talent"; and "Reading the Oral Traditional Text"; and Finnegan, *Oral Poetry* and *Literacy and Orality*.

27 Renoir, *Key to Old Poems*, 63. His reliance here on "preliterate" rather than the broader and more applicable "oral" is another sign of his working—with limited success—to stay within the theoretical paradigm Lord initially established.

28 Lord, in what would prove to be an extremely—and unfortunately—influential assertion, argues, *Singer of Tales*, 137, that the arrival of literate habits of mind, especially the notion of the "set, 'correct' text," sounded "the death knell of the oral process."

affective dynamics of traditional oral poetics in medieval West-Germanic verse, he convincingly demonstrates that orality and literacy, far from being situated on either side of the cultural fissure that is the so-called Great Divide, were rather intertwined components existing on a cultural continuum, the same continuum on which they continue to exist—as ineluctably and as complicatedly intertwined as ever—today.[29]

Although he does not explicitly address the specifics of how traditional oral poetics survives the transition from being articulated exclusively through the mouth to being articulated chiefly (and perhaps solely) through the pen,[30] Renoir nonetheless demonstrates that the traditional oral expressive economy that survives in written records dating as far back as to when English as verse was first committed to the page is not vestigial, but dynamic.[31] By carefully mapping the specialized, dedicated register of traditional oral poetics, a register that preserves the most concrete evidence we are likely ever to have regarding that expressive economy's existence, oral-formulaic theory developed a clear picture of the architectonics of traditional verbal art, but in concentrating solely upon that art's formal, structural components, oral-formulaicists mistook what is just a component, albeit an important one, of traditional verbal art for that art's totality. We can perhaps best understand the approach oral-formulaicists adopted and the limits the theory imposed upon the developing field of oral studies by comparing them to palaeontologists who, after discovering the fossilized bones of dinosaurs, remain focused only on those remains and never attempt to flesh out (or realize that they need to flesh out) the entirety of the complex organism of which the bones are but partial, if the most concrete, evidence.[32]

Not long after the appearance of *Key to Old Poems*, O'Brien O'Keeffe published *Visible Song*, a volume that, like *Key to Old Poems*, grapples directly with matters with which oral-formulaicists had proved unwilling or unable to engage, including, most notably, that all the evidence we have of ancient and medieval oral poetics is undeniably *textual* and, as such, is unequivocally situated in and a product of the literate world. O'Brien O'Keeffe neither ignores nor attempts to explain away the textuality of verbal art that oral-formulaicists confidently, if paradoxically, labelled "oral," a label that others just as confidently, and based upon the same evidence, rejected. At a time when textuality thus continued to be routinely cast in absolutist, and chiefly abstract, terms, O'Brien O'Keeffe adopts a significantly different approach. Far from seeing textuality as demarcating the

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29 See further Foley's posthumous *Oral Tradition and the Internet*, and Donoghue, *How the Anglo-Saxons Read*.

30 Cf. Foley, *Singer of Tales in Performance*, especially 1–98, and Amodio, *Writing the Oral Tradition*.

31 The expressive economy of oral poetics is thoroughly attested in the version of *Cædmon's Hymn* preserved in the margins of folio 107ʳ of St Petersburg, M. E. Saltykov-Schedrin Public Library, lat. Q.v.I.18. This version of the *Hymn* is one of the earliest specimens of the written vernacular to survive, in a manuscript Ker, *Catalogue*, 158, dates to "s. viii."

32 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 4, was well aware that those features of the traditional oral expressive economy upon which he concentrates, namely the "formula," "formulaic expression," and "theme" are "but the bare bones of the living organism which is oral epic," but he never articulated a theory of the entire "organism" or, as Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 188, puts it, of the "ecology of verbal art" that "oral poems inhabit."

division between the oral and the literate worlds, she rather looks to entexted verbal art and asks critical—and crucial—questions that had hitherto gone largely unasked, among which are what does the materiality of the manuscripts in which the extant Old English poetic corpus survives tell us about the oral-literate nexus in Anglo-Saxon England and what does it tell us about the situation within that nexus of those who entexted the verbal art contained in the manuscript records? Her interrogation, from multiple perspectives, of the ways in which the physical materiality of entexted verbal art witnesses the complex intersections of orality and literacy in the period demonstrates that far from being an uncomfortable, or perhaps even disqualifying, impediment to our understanding of medieval English oral poetics, textuality (in both the abstract and concrete senses of the term) is central to understanding that poetics, since it is only the mute, static surfaces of manuscript pages that witness the expressive economy oral theory is devoted to exploring.[33]

O'Brien O'Keeffe's argument that the "higher the degree of conventional spatialization in the manuscripts, the less oral and more literate" an individual or group is likely to be not only establishes that the graphic practices witnessed in the manuscripts constitute the most compelling evidence we have, and are likely to have, of an individual's (or group's) situation along the oral-literate continuum,[34] but it also addresses—and in the process, obviates—one of oral-formulaic theory's major weaknesses: its failure to account for the physicality of the written records that preserve the evidence upon which the theory necessarily had to rest.[35] Texts figured in oral-formulaic theory only as abstractions in part because the technology of writing was long viewed as being antithetical to the verbal art the theory explored. Composed and received in the crucible of performance, the traditional oral verbal art hypothesized by the Parry–Lord approach existed in the world only as long as it took for the reverberations of the words the poet was articulating in any given moment to die, and it existed only in the minds of those present when it was performed and only for as long as they retained a recollection of it. But in so imaging texts, or, following O'Brien O'Keeffe, what we should perhaps more properly designate "texts" to signify their abstractness,[36] oral-formulaicists neglected to see that understanding verbal art "in its fullest historical dimensions requires not only study of the circumstances of its composition but study as well of those means by which it acts in the world, its realized texts."[37]

The final work in this brief overview, Foley's *Immanent Art*, was published in 1991 and stands, arguably, as the single-most important volume in oral studies since the publication of Parry's French PhD theses in 1928 and the publication in 1960 of Lord's *Singer*

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33 It is important, however, to keep in mind that the poetics entexted on the manuscript page is not the strictly performative poetics central to oral-formulaic theory, but is rather non-performative. See Amodio, "Res(is)ting the Singer" and *Writing the Oral Tradition*, 39–44.

34 O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, 25.

35 But see Donoghue, *How the Anglo-Saxons Read*, 83, who argues against adopting "certain march-of-progress assumptions about the historical development of reading and writing."

36 Cf. O'Brien O'Keeffe's discussion of this point, *Visible Song*, 150.

37 O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, 95.

of Tales, a revision of his similarly titled 1949 dissertation. Foley modestly describes *Immanent Art* as the "companion" to *Traditional Oral Epic*.[38] While this description is certainly apt, it also—and this will not surprise anyone who knew Foley—understates the aims of a volume that was to revolutionize our understanding of how oral traditions function by uncovering and exploring the specialized channels through which traditional oral verbal art was received and the equally specialized channels through which its meaning was transmitted. As its subtitle, *From Structure **to** Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic*,[39] announces, the impulse driving *Immanent Art* is transitive; while built upon insights derived from the Parry–Lord theory's structuralist approach, *Immanent Art* also acknowledges that that approach led ultimately only to an imperfect, because partial, understanding of traditional oral verbal art. While Renoir and O'Brien O'Keeffe explore territory that lay beyond oral-formulaic theory's self-imposed borders, they do so by taking metaphorical leaps over those borders. It was Foley who discovered and unlocked the "wealldor" (gateway) to that territory, and it was he who began charting the pathway(s)—to use the metaphor that came to dominate his conception of oral tradition in the later years of his life—connecting the mechanics of traditional oral verbal art to its aesthetics.[40] In doing so, Foley was to provide us, more than sixty years after the publication of Parry's ground-breaking theses, with the first full exploration of oral aesthetics, a long neglected but essential component of the architectonics of traditional oral verbal art. Foley was to spend the remainder of his career refining and expanding our understanding of the full complexity of oral tradition by concentrating, in a series of articles and books, on how traditional oral verbal art *means*, both in its originally performative context and in the non-performative one in which it is preserved. These investigations led him to explore the even larger issues he was to make the subject of his final, most ambitious project, one that traces the ways in which the structure and functioning of the internet mimic that of oral tradition.

As we saw above, one of the Parry–Lord approach's most important and enduring findings is that the literate expressive economy that has dominated the ways in which verbal art has been articulated and disseminated in the West for at least the last millennium is not the only means through which such art can be produced and circulated. While this view has informed the critical discourse of oral studies from its earliest days, its equally important corollary, namely that the same holds for the interpretive strategies brought to bear upon verbal art, did not receive much, if any, concerted attention, until Renoir and O'Brien O'Keeffe indirectly took it up and until Foley made it central to *Immanent Art*.

The array of critical interpretive strategies that have evolved over the past millennium have proved to be apt and useful tools for investigating verbal art produced by the culture in which those strategies developed, one that is dominated by the rich, complex constellation of literate practices and habits of mind that remain culturally central today. However, when applied to verbal art produced within a different cultural framework,

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38 Foley, *Immanent Art*, xi.

39 Emphasis mine.

40 See Foley, *Oral Tradition and the Internet*.

one in which the traditional oral expressive economy continued to play a role in the composition and reception of verbal art, these interpretive strategies proved largely inapt, and their (mis)application to texts grounded in traditional oral poetics resulted in inquiries that were based on inappropriate—and so faulty—sets of assumptions that, consequently, led to unproductive, and often impertinent, conclusions.[41] While Renoir's and O'Brien O'Keeffe's works illustrate the value and utility of not imposing solely literate-based interpretive strategies on texts composed under the ambit of performative or non-performative oral poetics and while they both explore the ways in which traditional oral verbal art means,[42] Foley offers the most detailed and important examination of this issue. Perhaps more than any other scholar, Foley was aware that without a pertinent interpretive strategy, one that enables us to gain a clear sense of *how* traditional oral verb art means, investigations into *what* it means would be severely handicapped.

Of the many contributions to our understanding of the expressive economy of oral poetics Foley made prior to the publication of *Immanent Art* and that he was to make in the remaining twenty-five or so years of his life following its publication,[43] the most important may well be the one central to *Immanent Art*: "*traditional referentiality*."[44] As he explains, in traditional oral verbal art, the meaning of structures, "whether phraseological or narrative, [. . .] derive[s] not from the kind of denotation or conferred connotation with which we are familiar in literary texts but [. . .] from the natural and

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41 The tendency to assume myopically that current practices, be they interpretive, cultural, etc., are universally applicable is a characteristic not just of the present moment, where it runs fairly rampant, but of most and perhaps all cultures, all of which are, in the moment, modern. Cf. Swift's send-up in *Tale of a Tub*, 329, of critics who, to cite but one example, criticise Homer for being ignorant of modern material culture: "[Homer's] Failings are not less prominent in several Parts of the *Mechanicks*. For, having read his Writings with the utmost Application usual among *Modern Wits*, I could never yet discover the least Direction about the Structure of that useful Instrument a *Save-all*." See also Swift's scathing "A Digression Concerning Criticks," 311–17.

42 For Renoir, this entails focusing on, *Key to Old Poems*, 18, the "five categories of context which [. . .] most often interact supportively or contrastively with the oral-formulaic context." Of these, the most pertinent to the current discussion are the "*intrinsic context*" and the "*extrinsic context*" (emphasis his). He defines the former as "the context provided by the text proper" and the latter as "the context drawn from outside" it. For O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, 6, it entails arguing "that the manuscript records of Old English poetry witness a particular mode of literacy" and that the "significant variants" and "developing graphic cues for presentation" discovered within them "provide strong evidence of persisting residual orality in the reading and copying of poetry in Old English." Cf. Parkes, *Pause and Effect*, 20–29, on the "grammar of legibility."

43 Although his major contributions are far too numerous to be listed here, a brief and highly selective list of them would include the notion of the *sêmata* developed in *Homer's Traditional Art*, especially 13–34; that, "Individual Poet", 152, the traditional register draws from "both the singular talent of an individual *aoidos* and the collective bequest of tradition"; that, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 188–218, oral and literate culture exist within an "ecology" whose borders are permeable; and, *Oral Tradition and the Internet*, that oral tradition and the internet mirror each other.

44 Foley, *Immanent Art*, xiv; emphasis his. For a useful and concise introduction to this concept, see Bradbury, "Traditional Referentiality."

inherent associations encoded in them and accessible to the informed audience."[45] Via "a mode of signification wherein the part stands for the whole," a process Foley "call[s] *metonymy*," the constituent elements of traditional expressive economies "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."[46] Although the pathways through which the meaning of traditional verbal art is transmitted and received differ, sometimes significantly, from those utilized by literary texts, there is nonetheless considerable overlap among them. Just as orality and literacy are not mutually exclusive cultural components but are inextricably interconnected ones, so, too, is the specialized way of speaking that is oral poetics fundamentally inseparable from a given culture's quotidian, non-specialized ways of speaking because both are intertwined elements of a culture's broad and idiosyncratic communicative landscape.

It is on the idiosyncratic nature of cultures' communicative landscapes that this brief survey will close because while it is taken up most fully by Foley in *Immanent Art*, this pivotal notion is woven as well into the fabric of the other three works considered above. Beyond serving as a convenient through-line connecting these works, this notion speaks to the heart of what distinguishes contemporary oral theory from the theory of oral-formulaic composition. Parry and Lord's working in what was then Yugoslavia with a living oral tradition that supported in so many ways what Parry had theorized regarding ancient Greek oral epic was fortuitous in that they were able to test, refine, and develop many of their hypotheses within what they considered (and what in many ways was) a living laboratory, but it was also crippling in that it reinforced their contention that orality was a pure, isolated state. In contrast, contemporary oral theory sees orality as being a deeply interconnected component of all cultures, one that exists in productive symbiosis with literacy in those cultures possessing the technology of writing. And where the Parry–Lord theory sees oral tradition as a singular, monolithic entity that functions similarly in all cultures, contemporary oral theory understands that it is not universal, but is rather contingent and tradition-dependent. To put matters telegraphically, where the Parry–Lord theory sees an Oral Tradition writ large, one that conformed to and was defined and characterized by a *singular*, invariable mode of expression, composition, and reception, contemporary oral theory sees instead a world of oralities transmitted through a multitude of expressive economies (some oral, some written) that, on the surface, frequently have little or nothing in common. Certain mechanical, formal features may be shared between or among some oral traditions, as is the case with the ancient Greek and South Slavic ones upon which Parry and Lord concentrated, but such instances are rare because oral traditions are articulated through expressive economies that are culture-specific and, as a result, exhibit few, if any, correspondences with the expressive economies of other cultures. Only when we shift our gaze from traditions' concrete, lexical realizations to their more abstract features do significant correspondences between and

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45 Foley, *Immanent Art*, 39.

46 Foley, *Immanent Art*, 7; emphasis his.

among them begin to emerge with any consistency, with the similarities becoming steadily more pronounced the higher the level of abstraction becomes.[47]

Along with illustrating the richness, breadth, and vitality of contemporary oral theory, the essays and performances gathered here also honour the memory of the late John Miles Foley, a prolific scholar to whom oral theorists of all persuasions owe a lasting debt of gratitude for his many and varied contributions. Of the many scholars who have helped shape the field of oral studies over the past ninety or so years, few have been as influential as Foley. As the author of "nearly 200 essays, books, and other types of scholarly contributions,"[48] and as the founding editor of the field's central journal, *Oral Tradition*, he left an indelible mark upon the field, where his thinking continues to be a central component of its vibrant and continually evolving critical discourse. John also, and perhaps more importantly, left an indelible mark not only upon those fortunate enough to have been numbered among his friends and associates, but also upon all those who had the good fortune to cross paths with such a gentle, generous, kind, humble, and brilliant man.

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47 For example, the ancient Greek epic formula shares little with the Anglo-Saxon formula, but at the higher level of thematics, we discover a number of correspondences, and it is at the even higher level of the story-pattern that we find correspondences between and among not only a wide variety of Indo-European oral traditions but those from other cultures as well.

48 R. Garner, "Annotated Bibliography," 677.

INTRODUCTION TO THE INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

MIRANDA VILLESVIK

THE COLLECTION OPENS with essays by Gregory Nagy and Susan Niditch focusing, respectively, on the ancient Greek and biblical traditions. Nagy, in "Orality and Literacy Revisited," turns to examples drawn from the ancient Greek, classical Persian, and medieval Irish traditions to demonstrate the compatibility of orality and literacy. After citing instances within these oral traditions that refer directly or indirectly to the presence of texts, he points to the still unresolved question of how observations derived from living oral traditions can best be applied to oral-traditional texts. In "Preserving Traditions of 'Them' and the Creation of 'Us': Formulaic Language, Historiography, Mythology, and Self-Definition," Niditch examines the interwoven relationship between the two fields of oral literature and biblical studies and interrogates the ways in which misconceptions have shaped biblicists' approaches to oral literature. Considering the bible as a "transitional work" straddling the line between oral and written texts, Niditch asks how do these formulas, as remnants of the oral tradition of the bible, interact with its written and translated versions? Shedding light on the use of formulas in the bible, Niditch demonstrates how the perception of the Israelites and Ishmaelites has led to misconceptions of the bible in translation and rewrites our understanding of the formulas as employed by Israelite authors with a vested interest in furthering Israelite history.

The collection then turns, in essays by Andy Orchard, Mark C. Amodio, and Nancy Mason Bradbury and in a conversation with and performances by Benjamin Bagby, to medieval England. Orchard, in "Beyond Books: The Confluence of Influence and the Old English *Judith*," examines the intertextuality of *Judith*, concentrating on the poet's idiosyncratic handling of his biblical source material and on his unusual vocabulary and creative use of Anglo-Saxon metrics. Looking both back to the oral tradition out of which *Judith* emerged and forward to the ways in which later poets remember and repurpose elements of the poem, Orchard argues that the poem witnesses the lively interaction of a living (textual) and inherited (oral) tradition. In "Embodying the Oral Tradition: Performance and Performative Poetics in and of *Beowulf*," Amodio draws a contrast between the *mediated* artistic productions of text, film, and/or sound recording and the *embodied* artistic productions of cultures without access to the technology of writing. After identifying and exploring the dynamics of several "embedded" performances within *Beowulf*, he turns to consider contemporary performances of the poem and argues that they, too, have much to reveal about the poem's traditional expressive economy. In "Performing Anglo-Saxon Elegies: A Conversation," Amodio and Bagby discuss the strategies Bagby has developed (and is continuing to develop) when performing Anglo-Saxon elegies. The topics they touch on include: Bagby's use of a special six-stringed harp which was often used by Anglo-Saxon performers for both heroic and monastic texts and which he employs to accentuate the mood of a scene's performance; musicology; the performative poetics of Anglo-Saxon texts; and the degree to which modern-day performances of

texts rooted in oral tradition can reveal elements, but not the whole, of the original performative process. The performances Amodio and Bagby discuss are freely available to all readers of this volume.[1] Bagby's "Notes on the Recordings of Three Anglo-Saxon Elegies" provides context for the performances he recorded for this volume, and includes information on the specialized harps that he uses. In the final essay focusing exclusively on the medieval English oral tradition, Bradbury, in "Healing Charms in the Lincoln Thornton Manuscript," acknowledges that while the performance settings for the medieval charms she explores are largely unrecoverable, the charms and their manuscript contexts nonetheless provide valuable keys to their performance. Bradbury focuses on Robert Thornton's fifteenth-century English household book in an attempt to uncover what it can teach us about its compiler's involvement with charming and about the performance and perceived efficacy of the many charms recorded within its pages.

In the two essays that follow, Edward R. Haymes and Yuri Kleiner turn their attention to the formula, an essential and still not fully understood—or easily or universally—defined feature of oral traditions. Haymes's "Is the 'Formula' the Key to Oral Composition?" questions the foundational position the school of oral-formulaic composition ascribed to the formula. He challenges the notion that formulaic density reliably indexes a text's orality by offering a metrical analysis of the *Nibelungenlied* that reveals that it is not very formulaic and by arguing that German medieval epics are largely "imitation oral" and that their authors consciously used the oral style because it had some significance to the poet. In "The Formula: Morphology and Syntax," Kleiner traces the divergent sources informing our modern idea of the "formula" and examines how interpretations of the formula challenge our understanding of texts and their incorporations of the formula. Along with charting the history of the word "formula" and touching on the ways in which varying definitions across disciplines inform our understanding of what a formula is and how it works, Kleiner also argues that substitutions are not mechanical, but have aesthetics and hierarchies and can uncover the role of the poet in creating the lines.

The three following essays, Stephen Mitchell's, "Old Norse Riddles and Other Verbal Contests in Performance," Terry Gunnell's, "Performance Archaeology, *Eiríksmál*, *Hákonarmál*, and the Study of Old Nordic Religions," and Thomas A. DuBois's, "'To Surf through the Shared Riches of the Story Hoard': The oAgora of the Sigurðr Story," focus on various aspects of the oral traditions of the Northern Germanic world. By re-contextualizing the Old Norse riddles within their performative contexts, Mitchell argues that the Norse riddling contests are not the clean, dignified events that we perceive them to be in the texts. Rather, they are loud, aggressive, and overtly confrontational moments, similar in many ways to the contemporary verbal competitions Mitchell turns to as comparands. In an essay informed by performance studies, Gunnell, too, calls attention to the performative contexts of medieval texts, particularly those of *Eiríksmál* and *Hákonarmál*. Resituating these texts in their original performative contexts, he argues, brings into sharp focus the ways in which the texts bring the past to life and signal to the audience that a new phase of life is beginning, one in which the hall is transformed

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1 These performances can be change to; found in the folder Bagby at https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B__DdIKm_nVgTkpzZUVsbWV6a1U.

into a religious space in which men momentarily become gods or heroes. DuBois traces the appearances of the Sigurðr story in Norse and Anglo-Saxon texts and argues that the separate references to the story can best be seen as pathways connecting its different versions and performances. Following the approach Foley takes in *Oral Tradition and the Internet*, DuBois catalogues the numerous appearances of the Sigurðr story in texts such as *Beowulf*, *Grípisspá*, and *Sturlunga Saga* under headings to which the reader can refer back in a manner similar to clicking on a weblink. Presenting these materials in this way, DuBois argues, aligns them with the way in which a contemporary audience, who would have seen the Sigurðr story as points of reference threaded through other familiar stories and not as a unified, linear narrative, would have received it.

In "When a Hero Lies," Joseph Falaky Nagy discusses heroic lies within a narrative and how they relate to instances of multiformity in the texts of *Táin Bó Fróech*. Nagy argues that the author was aware of the multiformity witnessed in different versions of the text and made use of it, as seen most clearly when Fróech tells lies or when narrative contradictions arise. Unlike other scholars who attribute narrative variations among versions to scribal error, Nagy sees these moments as witnessing the storyteller's unwillingness to choose between versions of the narrative, even at the cost of confusing the reader. In "'The True Nature of the *aoidos*': The Kirghiz Singer of Tales and the Epic of *Manas*," Karl Reichl examines the formulaic qualities of *Manas* as a means of explicating the similarities between the art of the ancient Greek aoidos and the Kirghiz oral poet. In looking at the distribution and diction of formulas, he demonstrates that while Kirghiz epics have many traits common to oral epics they also have traits, like rhyme-strings, that set them apart from other oral epics.

The collection closes with Ruth Finnegan's graceful, insightful, and touching, "John Miles Foley: Open Mind, Open Access, Open Tradition, Open Foley," in which she chronicles her decades-long friendship with Foley, candidly documenting everything from their early scholarly disagreements to their mutual and lasting influence on one another's work. Unlike Foley, who early in his career was a vocal (and from her perspective at times strident) advocate of the Parry–Lord approach, Finnegan remained sceptical of it because, as her own fieldwork in Africa revealed, there were many oral traditions for which the theory of oral-formulaic composition simply could not account. She aptly highlights, in a way that few others could, the generosity of spirit with which Foley was infused as well as the extraordinary range and capaciousness of his mind. Her elegant final words will resonate with all who knew Foley.

Author Biography Miranda Villesvik currently works as an archivist at WGBH in Boston, where she is also studying for her master's degree in Library and Information Science at Simmons University. She added her contributions during her time as a student at Vassar College, where she was a double major in Medieval and Renaissance Studies and Greek and Roman Studies. Under the auspices of Vassar's Ford Scholars program, she spent a summer helping to copy-edit drafts of articles in the volume and writing the introduction to the individual contributions therein. Her senior thesis, supervised by Mark Amodio, explores the relationships between the riddles of Symphosius's *Aenigmata* and those found in the Exeter Book.

ORALITY AND LITERACY REVISITED

GREGORY NAGY

I AM SURPRISED that I have never been asked the question: since Albert Lord was your mentor, and since you count yourself among those who claim to be his followers, how come you think that orality and literacy are not incompatible? I have asked myself that question many times, and I thought I had answered it, at least for myself, in "Orality and Literacy," an article I published in 2001. In that article, I thought I answered the question adequately by saying, in effect, that Lord did not think that orality and literacy were universally incompatible. Lord recognized that there were indeed some incompatibilities between oral and literate aspects of verbal expression in some societies, but he resisted, especially in his later publications, any kind of universalizing formulation about some grand incompatibility between orality and literacy.[1] I already said all this—and more—in "Orality and Literacy," but I now sense, so many years later, that still more needs to be said about the general question of orality and literacy. That is the reason for my revisiting the question here, though I am fully aware that whatever I say now is a far cry from the last word.[2]

The occasion for my renewed visit is my current reading of a 2016 book by Peter Grossardt about the Life of Homer traditions, *Praeconia Maeonidae magni: Studien zur Entwicklung der Homer-Vita in archaischer und klassischer Zeit*. The book offers a useful review of relevant facts about those traditions. Of particular interest to me are his remarks about Aeolian populations in the general region of ancient Troy (especially with reference to the island of Tenedos and to mainland cities like Sigeion on the south side of the Hellespont as well as Sestos and Ainos on the north side).[3] But I focus here on something else. It is what Grossardt has to say about a myth, transmitted in Vita 6 of Homer—the so-called Vita Romana.[4] This myth is about the blinding of Homer by Helen, who appears to him in an epiphany and demands that he destroy what he has said about the love story of Helen and Paris=Alexandros (Vita 6, lines 51–57). Grossardt draws attention to a detail in the story as told here: in the context of her epiphany, Helen demands that Homer burn his *poiēseis* (poetic creations). Accordingly, the story presupposes the existence of a text, and it is the refusal of Homer to burn this text that leads to his blinding by an angry Helen. Grossardt argues that such a prototypical text of Homer was the possession of a guild of singers in the Ionian island state of Chios, the *Homēridai*, who claimed genealogical or at least notional descent from *Homēros* (Homer), and it was

1 See, for example, Lord, "Merging of Two Worlds" and *Singer Resumes the Tale*, 212–37.

2 The present essay, as published in this volume honouring John Miles Foley, derives from an earlier online version, G. Nagy, 2017.02.03.

3 Grossardt, *Praeconia Maeonidae magni*, 133–34.

4 I cite Vita 6 throughout from Allen, *Homeri Opera V*, 250–53.

these *Homēridai* who supposedly mythologized such a text as the original possession of an original Homer.[5]

This myth, which Grossardt traces back to the Ionian island of Chios, was in competition with another myth about the blinding of Homer. In this case, Grossardt traces the competing myth back to the Aeolian island of Lesbos.[6] Again, the source of the myth is Vita 6 of Homer. According to this competing myth (Vita 6, lines 45–51), Homer is a herdsman who visits the tomb of Achilles, where he prays that he may see a vision of Achilles armed with the second set of armour made for the hero by Hephaistos. Homer's prayerful wish is granted, but he is struck blind by the mere sight of Achilles, who makes his epiphany by appearing in all his martial glory, enveloped in the blinding radiance of his armour. As compensation for Homer's blindness, Thetis and the Muses bestow upon Homer the gift of poetry. This myth about Homer's validation as poet—his *Dichter-weihe*—is then compared by Grossardt with various examples of Irish and other north-European myths about *Dichterweihe*. In these myths as well, poets or would-be poets visit the tombs of heroes and, in some versions, the dead heroes respond by coming alive and directly narrating to their visitors the content of the poetry that will thereafter be mediated by the poets.[7]

Grossardt refers to such myths about a poet's validation at the tomb of a hero by using the more specific term *charter myth*,[8] developed by anthropologists in describing a kind of myth that aetiologizes the overall identity of whatever social group transmits such a myth.[9] Grossardt also uses the same term in referring to the story about the blinding of Homer at the tomb of Achilles, since this blinding becomes a validation of his identity as poet.[10]

I suggest that we can go one step further and apply the same term *charter myth* to the story about the blinding of Homer by Helen. In that story, the detail about the refusal of Homer to destroy a prototypical *text* of his poetry corresponds to similar details found in Irish myths. A most striking example, analyzed by Joseph Nagy, is a myth about a book of heroic deeds, named the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (Cattle-Raid of Cooley),[11] the prototype of which had supposedly disintegrated but was then reintegrated when a visitor at the tomb of a hero experienced an apparition by that hero, who then retold for him the entire narrative content of the disintegrated book: this way, the formerly disintegrated book was reintegrated. The retelling of the story by the hero is evidently represented here as an oral tradition that is foundational for the ultimate existence of the book, the textual reality of which is, of course, a given. What

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5 Grossardt, *Praeconia Maeonidae magni*, 157.

6 Grossardt, *Praeconia Maeonidae magni*, 165–66, 175–86.

7 On the subject of narrations as performed by dead heroes in Irish traditions, I cite especially J. Nagy, "How the *Táin* was Lost."

8 Grossardt, *Praeconia Maeonidae magni*, 156.

9 For more on working definitions of the same term *charter myth*, see G. Nagy, *Poetry as Performance*, 202, and G. Nagy, *Homeric Questions*, 132.

10 Grossardt, *Praeconia Maeonidae magni*, 206–8.

11 J. Nagy, "How the *Táin* was Lost."

makes the story a *charter myth*, however, is the fact that the existing text, which is considered to be integral, is a metaphor for the integrative power of oral traditions, which are considered to be the source of the text. In other words, the text that tells about the *charter myth* becomes a *charter text*, and the reality of that text becomes a metaphor for the reality of the myth. So the text of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* is not only a reality, it is also a metaphor for the oral traditions from which that reality evolved. Without the integrative power of oral tradition, the myth is saying, there cannot exist an integral book.

This Irish myth is duly mentioned by Grossardt,[12] citing some of the relevant work of J. Nagy,[13] who shows clearly the compatibility of oral and written traditions in medieval Ireland, but Grossardt does not cite the related work of the same Nagy, "How the *Táin* was Lost," already mentioned above, which explores further the metaphorization of oral traditions as an integral text.

In my own work,[14] I highlighted this Irish example as analyzed by J. Nagy in his "Orality and Medieval Irish Narrative," together with an analogous Iranian example. I turn now to that Iranian example, attested in the classical Persian epic known as the *Shāhnāma* or Book of Kings, composed by the poet Ferdowsi in the late tenth and early eleventh century CE. This epic features a myth about the making of the Book of Kings in the classical Persian epic tradition. I will quote here a summary of the myth—a summary that I had put together in *Homeric Questions* based on work done by Olga M. Davidson in *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings*.[15] Here, then, is my summary:[16]

> According to Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāma* I 21.126–136, a noble vizier assembles *mōbad*-s, wise men who are experts in the Law of Zoroaster, from all over the Empire, and each of these *mōbad*-s brings with him a "fragment" of a long-lost book of Book of Kings that had been scattered to the winds; each of the experts is called upon to recite, in turn, his respective "fragment," and the vizier composes a book out of these recitations […] The vizier reassembles the old book that had been disassembled, which in turn becomes the model for the *Shāhnāma* "Book of Kings" of Ferdowsi (*Shāhnāma* I 21.156–61). We see here paradoxically a myth about the synthesis of oral traditions that is articulated in terms of written traditions.

In this Iranian example, as in the Irish example, the text is not only a reality: it is also a metaphor for the oral traditions from which that reality evolved. Once again the formulation applies: without the integrative power of oral tradition, the myth is saying, there cannot exist an integral book.

Grossardt makes reference to this myth about a disintegrated and then reintegrated Book of Kings,[17] but he does not refer to the relevant work of O. Davidson, who has argued in *Poet and Hero* that

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12 Grossardt, *Praeconia Maeonidae magni*, 200.

13 J. Nagy, "Orality in Medieval Irish Narrative."

14 See G. Nagy, *Homeric Questions*, 70.

15 G. Nagy, Homeric Questions, 70. See O. Davidson, *Poet and Hero*, 29–53.

16 This is also quoted in G. Nagy, 2017.01.26.

17 Grossardt, *Praeconia Maeonidae magni*, 200.

1.   this myth shows the compatibility of oral and written traditions in classical Persian poetry

and

2.   classical Persian poetry is in fact an ideal example of a situation where oral and written traditions are compatible—and coexist smoothly with each other.[18]

By contrast with O. Davidson, Grossardt assumes that the oral and the written traditions of Persian poetry were incompatible with each other, and he questions whether it can even be said that oral poetry was a source for the text of the Book of Kings. If oral poetry was not a source, then written poetry would have to be the only source.

I see here a missed opportunity for Grossardt. If he had not assumed that oral and written traditions were incompatible, he could have easily argued that the Persian idea of a prototypical Book of Kings was parallel to the Greek idea of a prototypical text of Homer as we see it mentioned in the myth about the blinding of Homer by Helen. Further, Grossardt could also have argued that the myth about the blinding of Homer by Helen was a *charter myth*, just like the myth about the blinding of Homer by the gleam emanating from the armour of Achilles.[19] But why is Grossardt reluctant to think in terms of a *charter myth* when he considers the story about the text that Homer refused to burn? It has to do with what he thinks about another story that features a text of Homer. Grossardt thinks that the Homeric text of the so-called "Peisistratean recension" was primarily that, a text,[20] and he doubts my argument that such a text was primarily a metaphor (as I infer from his remark at 201n319). Although I allow for the existence of a Homeric text in the era of Peisistratos, my central argument is that the mythologized prototype of such a text could be seen as a metaphor for the collecting of oral traditions—just like the mythologized prototypes of the Irish *Táin Bó Cúailnge* and of the Persian *Shāhnāma*.

To summarize as briefly as possible my own views on the so-called Peisistratean recension, I quote what I published in Classical Inquiries 2017.01.26, Part 9:

> [The quotation starts with a reference to an epigram in *Greek Anthology* 11.442.] This epigram is attributed to Peisistratos, who ruled Athens during the sixth century BCE. This ruler was later demonized as a tyrant after his dynasty (known as the Peisistratidai) was replaced by the prototypically democratic régime installed in Athens by Cleisthenes toward the end of the sixth century. Back in his glory days, however, as we see in the wording of this epigram, Peisistratos was boasting that he had reassembled what are described as fragments of a body of poetry that had once been composed by Homer—and that we know today as the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. And this body of poetry is imagined here as a corpus that had disintegrated, fallen to pieces, which were then scattered all over the region of Asia Minor. In terms of the myth propagated by Peisistratos, however, he as ruler of Athens took the initiative of reassembling the pieces and thus bringing the body of Homer back to life, as it were, every time the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were performed "live" at the festival of the goddess Athena in Athens.

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18 On this point about compatibility, I recommend especially O. Davidson, "Written Text as a Metaphor."

19 In this connection, I take note of two essays I have published in *Classical Inquiries* about the two separate stories about the blinding of Homer. See G. Nagy 2016.02.18 and 2016.02.25.

20 Grossardt, *Praeconia Maeonidae magni*, 199–201.

This formulation as I quoted it here goes further back to my book *Homer the Preclassic*,[21] which in turn goes even further back to an argument I was already developing in my book *Homeric Questions*.[22] In work that is forthcoming, I hope to elaborate on my formulation as quoted here, linking it with the following further argument: if the written word can be used to metaphorize oral poetry in the history of Homeric reception, then it follows that the oral tradition of Homeric poetry was basically not incompatible with the written tradition designed to record it.

Such an argument is relevant to the title of my book *Homeric Questions*, published in 1996, where I already challenged the tired old use of the singular in the course of countless tedious references to "the Homeric Question." I also have to address a related matter: it has to do with the tired old use of the word "theory" with reference to the findings of Parry and Lord about living oral traditions. How to apply those findings to the textual traditions of, say, Homer is a question of theory, yes, but the findings themselves are a matter of fact. The distinction I am making here eludes, I think, some users of such terms as "the Parry–Lord theory" or "the oral-formulaic theory."[23] For further background, I recommend especially O. Davidson, "On the Sources of the *Shāhnāma*."[24]

For me, in any case, the unifying question is simply this: how to apply empirical descriptions of living oral traditions to written texts that may have originated from such oral traditions?

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21 See, G. Nagy, *Homer the Preclassic*, 314–16.

22 See, G. Nagy, *Homeric Questions*, chap. 3, "Homer and the Evolution of a Homeric Text," 65–112.

23 G. Nagy, *Homeric Questions*, 19–20.

24 Additionally, see O. Davidson, *Comparative Literature and Classical Persian Poetics*; O. Davidson, "Haft K̲ᵛān"; O. Davidson, "Some Iranian poetic tropes"; O. Davidson, "Parallel Heroic Themes"; O. Davidson, "Persian/Iranian Epic"; O. Davidson, *Poet and Hero*; O. Davidson, review of Yamamoto; O. Davidson, *Oral Background*; O. Davidson, "Testing of the *Shāhnāma*"; O. Davidson, "Text of Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāma*"; O. Davidson, "Written Text as a Metaphor"; Davis, "Problem of Ferdowsi's Sources"; Foley, *Oral-Formulaic Theory*; Lord, "Perspectives on Recent Work"; Lord, *Epic Singers*; G. Nagy, *Homer the Preclassic*; Reichl, *Medieval Oral Literature*; and Reichl, "Memory and Textuality."

Author Biography Gregory Nagy is the author of *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (1979), which won the Goodwin Award of Merit, American Philological Association, in 1982. Other books include *Pindar's Homer: The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past* (1990), *Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond* (1996), *Homeric Questions* (1996), *Homeric Responses* (2003), *Homer's Text and Language* (2004), *Homer the Classic* (online 2008, print 2009), *Homer the Preclassic* (2010), and *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours* (2013). He co-edited with Stephen Mitchell the 40th anniversary second edition of Albert Lord's *The Singer of Tales* (2000), co-authoring with Mitchell a new Introduction. Recent articles include: "Ancient Greek Elegy." There are also weekly articles published by Nagy in *Classical Inquiries*, see http://classical-inquiries.chs.harvard.edu; to date, there are over two hundred such articles. Since 2000, Nagy has been the Director of the Harvard Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington DC, while continuing to teach at the Harvard campus in Cambridge as the Francis Jones Professor of Classical Greek Literature and Professor of Comparative Literature.

PRESERVING TRADITIONS OF "THEM" AND THE CREATION OF "US": FORMULAIC LANGUAGE, HISTORIOGRAPHY, MYTHOLOGY, AND SELF-DEFINITION[*]

SUSAN NIDITCH

IN MANY WAYS, the course of John Miles Foley's scholarly interests parallels developments in the field of biblical studies concerning the relationship of ancient Israelite writings to oral-traditional literature. As his earliest published work closely analyzed the formulaic qualities of *Beowulf*,[1] grappling with questions about modes of composition, earlier work in biblical studies explored the possibility of formulaic composition in biblical texts. At the heart of Foley's larger career, however, are deeper questions about meaning, message, and worldview, an engagement with matters of reception, and thoughtful explorations of the nature of cultural traditions.[2] This essay briefly explores the way in which the field of oral literature has interwoven with the field of biblical studies in the past and some of the misconceptions and misapplications that have shaped biblicists' approaches to and attitudes towards oral literature and oral literary studies. We then turn to a set of case studies that point to the continued relevance of oral-traditional studies to an appreciation and interpretation of the culture and literature of ancient Israel.

The traditional biblical texts explored below describe ancestor heroes of one of Israel's neighbouring peoples and key events in their history. These texts curiously claim not to preserve a thread in the history of ancient Israel itself but a piece of tradition pertaining to an adversary. Some of these peoples are said to be related to Israel in ancient genealogical traditions, and all of them are said to be encountered by Israel in its own earliest history, a part of its foundation myth. I hope to show how and why modern translations sometimes misrepresent or obscure the surprisingly positive nuances of the texts' representations of enemies. I will examine the relationship between formulicity, historiography, and mythology and explore how attention to the qualities of formulaic language and the matters of genre and context that engaged Foley enriches our understanding of the literature as a source and reflection of certain aspects of ancient Israelite worldview and identity.

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[*] A shorter version of this essay was presented at conference at Harvard University, held in December 2010 in honour of the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Lord's *Singer of Tales*. The last time I saw my friend John Miles Foley was at this event. As always, I learned much from him and dedicate this article to his memory.

1 Foley, "Scansion of *Beowulf*."

2 Foley, *Immanent Art*; *Singer of Tales in Performance*; *How to Read an Oral Poem*; and *Oral Tradition and the Internet*.

Albert Bates Lord, one of Foley's mentors and his most influential precursor, grappled with the style, content, and contexts of traditional literatures in nuanced and complex ways. He noted that the formula is not a mechanical device used to create lines of proper length and rhythm but a formative component of characterization, tone, and message, a means of thematic emphasis and a reflection of aesthetics. Repetition is richness if one understands the register, as Foley has also emphasized,[3] nor is there just one oral register. Switches of register create and reflect content and meaning. The choices made in the use of these flexible compositional devices matter. Lord pointed to formula patterns that could be filled in various ways. He was attuned to the artistry of composers, some of whom were more aesthetically gifted than others. Variations matter and what is not repeated is as important as what is. Lord's work has often been misrepresented by his critics and inflexibly applied to various works of traditional literature by his fans.

In *Homeric Questions*, classicist Gregory Nagy provides a list of the ten most misunderstood things about Lord's theory of oral composition, some of which we have alluded to above. Nagy notes that oral works can become quite fixed and written works can be quite open to variation, while scribes engage in performance-like activity in the very act of writing—what Paul Zumthor calls "composition-in-performance"—as a work, quoting Nagy, "is regenerated in each act of copying."[4]

Lord's work has led to a host of searches for "oral roots" of biblical works. The authors, however, express disappointment with their results, for the degree of formulicity is not high enough to "prove" oral composition. The contributions of all these excellent scholars, including Robert Culley, John Kselman, and David Gunn, are nevertheless very valuable in revealing the traditional style textures of Israelite literature.[5] The aesthetic to which these colleagues point is integrally related to matters of worldview and cultural context. It turns out that questions about provable oral composition may not be the most useful questions. Lord himself later wrote of "transitional works" somewhat refining the notion of a "Great Divide" between oral worlds and literate worlds, oral composition and works created in writing.[6]

Biblicists have offered their own view of the "Great Divide," insisting upon an evolution of written from oral works. The form-critical approach is grounded in the notion that early, oral, simpler works are eventually written down and complicated by more sophisticated, literate writers. In fact, orally composed works can be long or short, created by people who can read and write or by those who can read but not write. Written traditional-style literature can be meant to be read aloud while orally composed works are set in writing by means of dictation or recreated in writing through memory. Writers can imitate oral style. Once writing and reading are available to some, even if

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3 Foley, *Singer of Tales in Performance*, 15–17, 49–53.

4 G. Nagy, *Homeric Questions*, 69.

5 See Culley, "*Oral-Formulaic Language*"; Kselman, "Recovery of Poetic Fragments"; Gunn, "'Battle Report'"; Gunn, "Narrative Patterns"; and Gunn, "Threading the Labyrinth."

6 Lord, *Singer Resumes the Tale*, 105, 212–37; see also the comments, 113–16, 183–86, of Mary Louise Lord, the skilful and scholarly editor of this posthumous volume.

only practised by elites, the two ways of imagining and creating literature influence one another and belong on a sliding scale or continuum as Ruth Finnegan has shown.[7] Oral style, moreover, is not an unequivocal indicator of relative chronology. Oral works and oral-style works are created and re-created even when writing is common. It is, in fact, no easy matter to distinguish between orally composed works and written works that imitate orally composed works. Indeed, in the Hebrew Bible it is impossible to do so. The Hebrew Bible is now written, and yet the compositions therein partake of varying traditional-style registers.

If one reads Foley's many works or the essays published in the last decade in the journal *Oral Tradition*, one finds scholarly attention to the interplay between oral and written. Increasingly, one also finds an emphasis on the role of memory in the oral-literate interplay as it affects the composition, preservation, and reception of traditional-style literatures, topics explored by biblicist David Carr. A number of excellent recent works wrestle in various original and complex ways with the relationship between the oral and the written in the genesis of the biblical tradition. Books by Carr, Raymond Person, William Schniedewind, and Martin Jaffee, and essays in volume 18 of *Oral Tradition* all point to this complex interplay.[8]

Emphasizing the ways in which traditional-style works create meaning, Foley points to the "metonymic" quality of certain recurring phrases or images. These parts invoke a whole. That is, a simple recurring phrase or motif has the capacity to bring to bear on a scene or characterization a full range of associations invoked by it. Such traditional elements have this capacity because the composers and receivers of the narrative, scene, or description are familiar with the wider range of associations invoked by the epithet or formula, the colour, or the image.[9] They share the wider tradition of which it is a constituent part. An Israelite example of such an "aesthetic of traditional referentiality,"[10] to use a phrase of Foley's, is provided by the epithet for Yahweh, "the bull of Jacob."[11] It brings to bear on a Psalm or a legal text the full range of notions of Yahweh as virile, macho, fecund creator. The victory-enthronement pattern is implicit in the phrase with all that it implies. Traditional-style literatures in this sense are quintessentially economical and telegraphic in communication. Thus Foley entitles one of his books *Immanent Art*.

Having explored the theoretical approaches of Lord and Foley, older ideas about orality and the Bible and new approaches that emphasize the interplay between oral and written and concepts of metonymy and register, we come to applications. In translating and interpreting biblical texts—their textures, content, and contexts—do we notice, appreciate, and emphasize certain features because we are sensitive to the oral-

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7 Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality*.

8 Carr, *Writing on the Tablet*; Person, *Deuteronomic School*; Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book*; Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*. See also Horsley, "Oral Tradition"; Jaffe, "Oral Tradition"; Kelber, "Oral Tradition"; and Niditch, "Oral Tradition."

9 Foley, *Immanent Art*, 11, 13, 33.

10 To use a phrase of Foley's from *Immanent Art*, 95.

11 See also Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word,* 15–17, for a further discussion on the bull of Jacob.

traditional qualities of these written works? How do we interpret and what do we see that we might have otherwise missed were we unaware of oral-literary studies?

Judges 5, a victory song, clearly displays qualities of an Israelite oral-traditional register. Lord's studies of formula patterns and compositional technique and Foley's emphasis on metonymy provide a theoretical framework in which to assess the recurring vocabulary in this beautiful ancient piece, the role of refrains, and more specifically to re-assess the catalogue in 5:16–17 which has been misunderstood. Judges 5 has a chiastic structure of content that juxtaposes the activities of the divine warrior and his heavenly host with the conduct of human heroes. At the centre of the piece is a catalogue of Israelite warriors somewhat reminiscent of *Iliad* 3:160–244 where Helen describes to Priam the Achaian warriors on the field of battle.[12] Translators have tended to offer forced translations of Judges 5:16–17 that do not take into account the traditional qualities of the material.

The opening phrase of 5:16 begins with a word of three letters, *lamed, mem, heh* that is usually translated "why," the typical meaning of this term in the Hebrew Bible. This usual understanding of the word, however, leads most translators to render the verbs that follow in awkward and forced ways, describing some tribes as cowardly, unwilling to fight. The New Revised Standard Version (henceforth NRSV) translation pictures the singer asking Reuben, the tribe mentioned in v. 15, "Why did you tarry among the sheepfolds to hear the piping for flocks?" (Judg. 5:16 [NRSV]). The translator continues at v. 17, "Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan, and Dan, why did he abide with the ships. Asher sat still at the coast of the sea, settling down by the landings" (Judg. 5:17 [NRSV]). The verbs in vv. 16 and 17, however, most commonly do not convey delaying or tarrying or sitting still but rather residing, dwelling, and literally "plying one's tent." The NRSV translation suits the final entry in the description of warriors poorly at v. 18 in which Zebulon's and Naphtali's bravery is described and upsets the structure of the surrounding song in which a condemnatory cursing of those who do not participate in the battle appears at v. 23, a later point in the passage.

The seminal biblical scholar Frank Moore Cross suggested, however, that *lmh* is best read in this context not as "why," albeit a common meaning in biblical Hebrew, but as an example of the "emphatic *lamed* extended by *-ma* known from Ugaritic,"[13] and so translates it as "verily." Cross's innovative idea was followed by biblicist Baruch Halpern,[14] and was further developed by Cross himself.[15] The many scholarly discussions explaining why Reuben, Gilead, Dan, and Asher supposedly hold back from the fighting[16] and the forced translations that accompany them become unnecessary.[17] Cross's elegant solution to this translation issue is informed by sensitivity to traditional-style media.

The catalogue in Judges 5 partakes of a traditional form found several times in ancient Hebrew literature in genealogies, testaments, and other settings. Brief, for-

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12 Fitzgerald, *Iliad*.

13 Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 235n74.

14 Baruch Halpern, "Resourceful Israelite Historian," 383.

15 Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, 54–55n7.

16 Stager, "Song of Deborah."

17 Cf. Zobel, *Stammesspruch und Geschichte*, 62–63.

mulaic notices about heroes or groups make critical assertions about cultural identity, essentially declaring how we are constituted and who our ancestor heroes are. The material functions as a "charter,"[18] a self-defining slice of shared group history. In Judges 5, various tribal entities are described, where they live, what their occupations are, and how courageous they are:

> Verily you dwell between the settlements
> to hear the whistling for the flocks.
> Concerning the divisions in Reuben,
> great are the stout of heart.[19]
> Gilead in the Transjordan plies his tent,
> and Dan, verily, he resides in ships.
> Asher dwells on the shore of the sea
> and on its promontories, he plies his tent.
> Zebulon is a people whose soul taunts Death
> and Naphtali on the heights of the open country.[20]
>   (Judg. 5:16–18)

Comparisons can be drawn between Judges 5:16–17 and Genesis 49:13 and 16:12. A traditional formula pattern "tribe + location + tenting/residing" characterizes heroes in Genesis as it does Gilead, Dan, and Asher in Judges 5:17. These descriptive formulas function as building blocks of tradition.

This formula leads to a set of case studies concerning portrayals of "the Other." The first involves Ishmael, the brother of Isaac, son of Abraham, and ancestor hero of the Ishmaelites. Hagar, Ishmael's mother-to-be, has fled from her abusive mistress Sarah. The latter resents the concubine who has gained new status by conceiving Abraham's child in an ancient version of surrogate motherhood. The deity speaks to Hagar, who is marginalized and alone, and declares in traditional-style language that her son will be a hero. As listeners to this story know, such tales about unusual conception or infancy are typical in the biographies of heroes:

> He will be a wild ass of a man,
> his hand will be in everything
> and everyone's hand will be in his,[21]
> and next to his kin he will ply his tent.
>   (Gen. 16:12)

Once again, Genesis 16:12 has generally been translated to create a forced and negative portrait of Ishmael, but the verse simply refers to his whereabouts and occupation, as is usual in this formula pattern. NRSV is typical of such translations: "He shall be a wild ass

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18 Michalowski, "History as Charter," 237–48.

19 MT (Masoretic Text) Judg. 5:16 reads the root ḥqr, "searchings of heart" (so Vatican, Codex Vaticanus 1209, and Old Latin). Given the refraining style of the poem, it seems likely that the same phrase appears here as in v. 15.

20 All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

21 When "hand" is used with a verb of motion, for example "to send a hand," the preposition "in" means "against" as in Gen. 37:22 and 1 Sam. 24:11. Minus the verb of motion, the neutral and literal translation is appropriate.

of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him; and he shall live at odds with his kin" (Gen. 16:12 [NRSV]). Implied is that being like a "wild ass" is bad, that Ishmael and his kin are violent, anti-social aggressors and troublemakers. The modern translators expect the ancient Israelite writers to frame Ishmaelites in negative ways in order to draw differences between themselves as good citizens and their neighbours as marauding wildmen, the dangerous "Other." Biblical heroes, however, are regularly compared to fecund, wild animals such as bulls, strong donkeys,[22] and ravenous wolves.[23] Such metaphors are meant to be positive.

The word "wild ass" connotes fertility and sexual liveliness. In an admittedly negative context, the prophet Jeremiah uses the female wild ass to develop the metaphor of Israel as a loose woman who deserts her husband Yahweh to seek lovers, that is, other gods. She never tires.[24] In the message to Hagar about her son, however, such sexual connotations imply machismo, a positive trait from the composer and the culture's perspectives. The deity himself is known by the epithet "the bull of Jacob," frequently translated "the Mighty One of Jacob" (Gen. 49:24 [NRSV]). As Patrick D. Miller has shown, however, Yahweh as divine warrior, like his Canaanite counterpart Baal, is iconically pictured as a horned, virile bull.[25] In Deuteronomy 33:17, Joseph is also positively compared to a first-born bull/a horned wild ox in images of warrior prowess. Similarly, in the Blessing of Jacob, the tribe/hero Issachar is described as a strong or bony donkey.[26] The catalogue concerning Issachar is similar in content and structure to Genesis 16:12, describing his manly quality via an animal metaphor, the location where he dwells, and the kind of work he does.

The manly Ishmael and hence future Ishmaelites are traders and make their dwelling place nearby Israel. In biblical material, the Ishmaelites are portrayed as traders par excellence; hence their role in the tale of Joseph. The imagery of Genesis 16:12 thus belongs to a wider tradition about Ishmaelites and comports with the descriptions of the heroes/tribes in Judges 5:15–17 that contain expected constituent components: the hero's name/ethnic identity, location, and occupation. Variations upon this formula may be a part of a catalogue of heroes as in Judges 5, serve as an annunciation of a hero to be born as in Genesis 16, or belong to a prophetic testament. In his testament scene, the patriarch Jacob is said to bless his sons before his death and thereby predict and describe the future roles of the groups descended from them. Such works have significance for political outlook and worldview. Those who deploy these formula patterns reveal views of Israelite identity and share conventions of pan-Israelite traditional literature. In short, the founding hero of the Ishmaelites is presented positively. Here and in Genesis 21, another scene of divine rescue for the future hero and his mother, it appears that the national literature of Israel preserves another group's foundation myth. Before offering some suggestions as to why this material was included in the Hebrew Scrip-

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22 Gen. 49:14.

23 Gen. 49:27.

24 Jer. 2:24.

25 P. Miller, "Animal Names."

26 Gen. 49:14–15.

tures, we look at another example of the positive biblical portrayal of people neighbouring and competing with ancient Israel.

This piece of tradition in Numbers 21:27–29 is introduced by the biblical writer as a "mashal": "For this reason *mashal*-makers say" (Num. 21:27). This ethnic genre sometimes translated as "proverb" or "parable" actually has both meanings in Hebrew Scriptures and can also be a person who serves as an exemplar, an oracle, a fable, an icon, a symbolic action, or another form. The key is that a comparison is drawn, an analogy made between an item, event, or image and a real-life setting. In this case, the "mashal" is associated with the Amorite Sihon's successful capture of the land of Moab in which his inheritance was established, an inheritance which, in the framing main narrative of Numbers, has now been conquered by Israel. It is not certain whether the "mashal" is the first line of this piece and the rest a commentary by the biblical author or if the entire little section might be considered part of the "mashal." In either event, it is all positive concerning the victory and heroic prowess of Israel's enemy.

This material begins, "Come to Heshbon, let it be built; let the city of Sihon be established" (Num. 21:27). The saying about this city relies on the audience's knowledge about the history, characteristics, and traditions surrounding a place, perhaps like the sayings "Rome wasn't built in a day" or "Don't bring coals to Newcastle." Of course, the saying can become detached from the backstory too. At the heart of the biblical saying about Heshbon seems to be a model of action in high gear. From a formal perspective, the saying is made from parallel items, the verbs "come/build/establish" and the objects "Heshbon/city of Sihon." These and other terms of foundation used in parallelism are found in a variety of formulaic patterns throughout Hebrew Scriptures[27] to suggest rulership, power, capacity to shape a world, found a nation, build a city: an important part of the repertoire of the hero. The "mashal" in Numbers continues with a description of the hero King Sihon: "For a fire has gone forth from Heshbon / A flame from the city of Sihon / It has devoured the city of Moab / Swallowed up the heights of Arnon" (Num. 21:28). The conqueror, god-like, is associated with fire; like Death itself in ancient Near Eastern mythological tradition, he swallows his enemy or its territory. Subsequent lines continue with parallelistic poetry to describe the defeat of Moab, the routing of its people.

There is an intended irony here to be sure as those who were so victorious in their own epic history and foundation tales are now taken over and defeated by Israel. This is the larger context of the "mashal." Such is the typical pattern of epic histories in which the former winner becomes the current loser. The contextualization is thus a powerful and self-promoting statement for the people of Yahweh. Nevertheless, the writer does preserve a very positive comment on Sihon's prowess and his people's victory over Moab. The allusion to Sihon's former greatness need not have been preserved this way. This piece, which exemplifies traditional forms and formulaic patterning, ultimately is a slice of Amorite tradition and again raises questions about the preservation of others' traditions within the foundation stories of ancient Israel.

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27 Hab. 2:12; 2 Sam. 7:13; and Ps. 24:2.

The same could be said for our third case, the lengthy collection of material about the Edomites in Genesis 36 that traces the genealogy of Jacob's brother Esau, ancestor hero of one of Israel's neighbouring peoples, concluding with a lengthy list of Edomite kings. The framework of this material is thoroughly formulaic, including introductory language, "these are the descendants of […]." This phrase commences many biblical genealogies of Israelites[28] and is usually attributed by scholars to priestly writers and considered one of their signature identifying markers of authorship.[29] The language of "bearing," "taking wives," and "naming" is familiar from the genealogies in Genesis 4, 5, and 11, as is the type of content found in Genesis 36 describing a leader's activities, characteristics, place of origin or settling, and reference to his demise. In this respect, genealogical material overlaps with the sort of annals of heroes found in Judges and 1 and 2 Samuel, and with the formulas discussed above concerning the heroes Ishmael and the various sons of Jacob.

A few excerpts from this lengthy genealogical collection are instructive in exploring questions about the inclusion, presence, function, and qualities of non-Israelite peoples' lore in the midst of Israel's national history. Some of this information provided in formulaic frames might be described as historical data, simple chronicles, or entries. Within a list of Edomite kings, for example, is the following entry:

> And reign in Edom did Bela son of Beor,
> and the name of his city was Dinhabah,
> and die did Belah,
> and reign after him did Jobab son of Zerah of Bozrah.
> (Gen. 36:32–33)

Other entries are a bit more detailed, for example Genesis 36:39, which includes a notice of one king's death, the name of his successor, the name of his city, his wife's name, and her genealogy, listing her mother and her mother's genealogy. The matrilineal interest in this material is fascinating in and of itself, but such details about the queen and her forbears also emphasize the peculiarity of having such information about Edomite kings so carefully preserved in the anthology of Israelite literature.

One more example at v. 24 provides an especially exquisite little vignette that might be compared with 2 Samuel 23:20 or Judges 3:31. In these cases the hero is described with reference to a deed for which he is known:

> These are the sons of Zibeon
> Aiah and Anah.
> It was Anah who found the water in the wilderness
> while pasturing the donkeys of Zibeon, his father.
> (Gen. 36:24)

As Beniah is known for striking down a lion in a pit on the day of the snow,[30] and Shamgar is known for killing six hundred Philistines with an ox goad,[31] Anah is known

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28 For example Gen. 11:10.

29 Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 301–4.

30 2 Sam. 23:20.

31 Judg. 3:31.

for finding water in a wilderness at a particular time, but Anah is not an Israelite hero, a judge, or one of David's mighty men. He is a descendent of Seir, a Horite. What is this seemingly non-Israelite material doing in the Hebrew Scriptures and what is its larger cultural context?

John W. Wright, who studies the Persian period Judaism reflected in late biblical literature, has explored the ways in which the genealogies of 1 Chronicles present Yehud or Judah as a "familial/patronage system [...] an ethnos, with power distributed by real or fictitious familial/kinship ties."[32] Wright approaches the role of genealogies with the important awareness that traditional polities are not to be confused with modern states, demarcated by clear geographic boundaries. Among such "traditional states, borders per se did not demarcate, or create, a sole sovereign state; territoriality instead was bounded by the much more porous concept of frontiers [...] in which multiple powers [...] make various claims over particular bodies in different situations."[33] The fictional links created by genealogies, reinforced by traditional catalogues or predictions about future heroes and by the inclusion of praise-songs to neighbouring peoples' victories, help to map an Israelite sense of its own ethnicity, a view of Israelites' place within a geographic setting, their historical location, and their identity. Catalogues of heroes in Genesis, Deuteronomy, and Judges, the annunciation concerning Ishmael, the king list of the Edomites,[34] and the epic reference to Sihon[35] define Israel by incorporating neighbouring peoples into its own family or history.

The case studies explored above testify to the vibrancy, persistence, and continuity of particular formula patterns in the librettos of ancient Israelite tradition and underscore the ongoing interest of biblical composers in preserving epic-style content pertaining to their neighbours. On the one hand, these threads in the Hebrew Bible suggest respect for neighbouring peoples, an acknowledgement of historical relationships between them and between them and ancient Israel. The framing of these pieces of tradition also, however, speaks to an ancient reception history that allows Israelites to control their competitors' image and to treat other groups' successes as a feature of the past. In this way, the inclusion of this material in Israelite tradition not only portrays and preserves the "Other," but in the process creates and reinforces Israel's own positive identity.

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32 Wright, "Remapping Yehud," 73.

33 Wright, "Remapping Yehud," 72.

34 Gen. 36.

35 Num. 21:27–31.

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BEYOND BOOKS:
THE CONFLUENCE OF INFLUENCE AND
THE OLD ENGLISH *JUDITH**

ANDY ORCHARD

OLD ENGLISH POETS, having inherited an extensive and venerable oral tradition, composed verse above all for the ear, and even at the end of the period were evidently still employing ancient techniques of emulation and innovation that harked back to an oral past.[1] One such Old English poet, likely working in the tenth century and perhaps in West Saxon,[2] offers a highly idiosyncratic verse version of the key dramatic parts of the story of the biblical Judith and manages to make creative use of alliterative ornament and unusual vocabulary while very consciously and deliberately recalling the specific words of previous poets for artistic effects, coining phrases that were then reused elsewhere to link sections of the poem. In turn, it seems that parts of the Old English *Judith* were echoed in other, later verses, by poets equally adept at interpreting, adopting, and adapting for their own purposes (and sometimes for ironic effect) aspects of what was evidently a lively combination of a living and an inherited poetic tradition. *Judith*, in other words, like all Old English poems, looks both forward and back.

Perhaps fittingly in this context, *Judith* notoriously lacks both a well-defined beginning and a clear end, since the manuscript is evidently damaged at the opening, and the closing six lines have been copied into the bottom margin of the final leaf by an unidentified early modern hand of about 1600 imitating Insular script. Both the original place of the poem in the *Beowulf*-manuscript (London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius A.xv) and the extent of the evident loss have been the subject of much discussion, given that the poem as it stands draws on only a part on the biblical Judith (Jth. 12:10–16:1).[3] The twin questions of whether the poet had access to a "pure" form of the Latin Vulgate or one that had been influenced by the Vetus Latina (Old Latin) version, and indeed whether the poet was working with a written text at all, are complex, the more so given the general looseness of the vernacular verse rendering. Here the equivalent passages from the Vulgate (with occasional Vetus Latina variants) are cited in the relevant footnotes for comparison.[4] The story of Judith was also retold around

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* The conference from which this paper derives was held in St Andrews, and was a happy meeting in many ways, not least for the fine times spent with Mark Amodio, the editor of this volume, and John Miles Foley, to whom the present paper is dedicated: it is, after all, as John taught us so brilliantly in so many ways, always important to look beyond books.

1 See further Orchard, "Word Made Flesh."

2 See further Griffith, *Judith*, 18–25 and 44–47. For an earlier approach, see Wenisch, "*Judith* — eine westsächsische Dichtung?"

3 See, for example, Lucas, "Place of *Judith*"; Chamberlain, "*Judith*: A Fragmentary and Political Poem"; and Thomson, *Communal Creativity*, 39–44 and 88–95.

4 Griffith, *Judith*, 177–85, handily offers both versions, highlighting phrasing that appears closer

the year 1000 by Ælfric in 452 lines of alliterative Old English prose that explicitly link the tale of Judith's heroic resistance with the less heroic behaviour of Ælfric's contemporaries in the face of Viking depredations. In this light, it is intriguing to note that, as we shall see, the poetic account of the Battle of Maldon, fought against Viking raiders in Essex on 11 August 991, seems to draw on the earlier Old English verse *Judith*.[5]

The basic structure of the surviving 349 lines of *Judith* can be summarized as follows:[6]

Table 1: The Structure of *Judith*

	A. The Slaying of Holofernes	
§1	Judith has divine help	1–7a
§2	The feasting of Holofernes	7b–34a
§3	Judith is brought to Holofernes's tent	34b–57a
§4	Holofernes, drunk, goes to his tent	57b–73a
§5	Judith cuts off the head of Holofernes	73b–121
	Judith's speech (83–94a)	
	B. The Triumph of Judith	
§6	Judith returns to Bethulia with her grisly booty	122–44a
§7	Judith's welcome at Bethulia	144b–70
	Judith's speech (152b–58)	
§8	Judith describes the slaying and exhorts the warriors	171–200a
	Judith's speech (177–98)	
	C. The Triumph of the Hebrews	
§9	The Hebrew army sets out at dawn to battle the Assyrians	200b–35
§10	The Assyrians, surprised, discover Holofernes headless	236–91a
	The speech of the Assyrian warrior (285–89a)	
§11	Battle and defeat of the Assyrians	289b–313a
§12	The Hebrew army returns to Bethulia with much booty	313b–23a
§13	The Hebrews gather the booty	323b–34a
§14	Judith is rewarded	334b–41a
§15	Judith gives praise	341b–46a
§16	The poet gives praise	346b–49

to the poem in the Vetus Latina. See too in general the systematic account of Brigatti, "Old English *Judith*," as well as Fee, "*Judith* and the Rhetoric of Heroism."

5 Pringle, "*Judith*: The Homily and the Poem."

6 Here, I rely mainly on the excellent edition by Griffith, as well as the text and translation by Fulk, *Beowulf Manuscript*, 299–323. While the earlier edition by Timmer is largely superseded, in what follows I have also made much use of Cook's edition, which has a wealth of ancillary information. Likewise, my main source for the structure of the poem is Huppé, *Web of Words*, 136–89, especially 189. All other Old English poems are cited from Krapp and Dobbie, *ASPR,* unless otherwise noted.

Such a complex analysis, however, has the advantage of emphasizing just how commonly the *Judith*-poet favours beginning scenes and speeches on the b-line (as in twelve of the sixteen sections identified here), a feature that distinguishes *Judith* from (for example) *Beowulf* elsewhere in the same manuscript.[7] Further indications of the *Judith*-poet's idiosyncratic outlook and cold eye for structured patterning can be deduced from a ruthless pruning of characters, as several commentators have observed,[8] and a similarly reductive attitude towards speeches, where twenty in the corresponding Latin (Table 2) become just four in the Old English (Table 3). In reducing dramatically (as it were) the number of both speeches and speakers, the speaking Assyrians are anonymized and the Israelites speak only through Judith, whose own speeches are savagely truncated and amalgamated to coincide with climaxes to key moments in the restructured narrative.

    So much is clear from a comparison of the speeches in *Judith* with those in the relevant sections of its biblical source, where eight different individuals and groups speak on twenty separate occasions, as follows:

Table 2: Speeches in the Biblical Book of Judith

V1	Holofernes addresses Bagao (12:10)
V2	Bagao addresses Judith (12:12)
V3	Judith addresses Bagao (12:13–14)
V4	Holofernes addresses Judith (12:17)
V5	Judith addresses Holofernes (12:18)
V6	Judith prays (13:7)
V7	Judith prays (13:9)
V8	Judith addresses the Israelite watchmen (13:13)
V9	Judith addresses the Israelites (13:17)
V10	Judith to the Israelites (13:19–21)
V11	The Israelites praise Judith (13:22)
V12	Ozias, prince of Israel, praises Judith (13:23–25)
V13	The Israelites assent (13:26)
V14	Judith to Achior, general of the Ammonites (13:27–28)
V15	Achior praises Judith (13:31)
V16	Judith exhorts the Israelites to fight (14:1–5)
V17	The Assyrian chiefs ask the chamberlains to rouse Holofernes (14:12)
V18	Bagao to the Assyrians (14:16)
V19	Joachim the high priest comes from Jerusalem to Bethulia and praises Judith (15:10–11)
V20	The Israelites assent (15:12)

It is clear that the carefully choreographed alternate exchanges between Holofernes, Bagao, and Judith in V1–5 (12:10–18) give way to a sequence of five speeches by Judith

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7 See, for example, Orchard, *Critical Companion to Beowulf*, 205–8.

8 See further Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament*, 127–28; and Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies*, 7–8.

(V6–10 [13:7–21]), with two prayers to God immediately preceding the beheading of Holofernes, a brief address to the watchmen on the walls, and two speeches to the Israelites before and after she presents them with the severed head. Judith is then richly praised, first by the Israelites in general and then by Ozias their prince in particular (V11–12 [13:22–25]); the Israelites endorse his praise, saying "Fiat, Fiat" (V13 [13:26]) (so be it, so be it).[9] Judith then addresses the gentile Achior and shows him the severed head, at which point Achior too praises Judith (V14–15 [13:27–28 and 31]), whereupon she rouses the Israelites and instructs them to hang the severed head on the city walls (V16 [14:1–5]). At this point, Achior converts to Judaism and is circumcized. Attention then turns to the Assyrians, who hear the sound of the approaching Israelite army and crowd round outside the tent of Holofernes, hoping to wake him. Their leaders ask the chamberlains to go in (V17 [14:12]), and Bagao does so and attempts to wake Holofernes by clapping his hands before discovering the blood-drenched trunk of Holofernes, whereupon he cries out to the others (V18 [14:16]). The Assyrians immediately lose heart and flee before the approaching Israelites can engage them. The Israelites give chase and eventually pursue them out of the land, plundering the abandoned Assyrian camp and collecting much booty, which they bring back to Bethulia. After the victory, achieved without a formal fight, Joachim the high priest comes from Jerusalem to Bethulia and offers his own praise of Judith (V19 [15:10–11]); the Israelites again endorse his praise, saying "Fiat, Fiat" (V20 [15:12]) (so be it, so be it). There is a certain elegance in the evident patterning of these twenty speeches, nine of them spoken by Judith herself, who is the object of praise by Ozias, Achior, and Joachim, as well as by the Israelites in general, who endorse the words of Ozias and Joachim in identical terms.

In sharp contrast, the *Judith*-poet drastically reduces the number of speeches and speakers of whom only Judith is named, taking on the majority of speeches and speaking lines, as follows:

Table 3: Speeches in the Old English *Judith*

J1	Judith prays (83–94a [loosely based on Jth. 13:7 and 13:9])
J2	Judith addresses the Israelite watchmen (152b–58 [loosely based on Jth. 13:13])
J3	Judith addresses the Israelites (177–98 [loosely based on Jth. 14:2])
J4	An unnamed Assyrian addresses the rest (285–89a [loosely based on Jth. 14:16])

Whereas the speeches in the biblical sources come in clearly delineated sequences, often involving spoken responses, those in the Old English are all unanswered, with significant gaps between them. Before the first speech, there is a spirited account of feasting, followed by Judith being taken into the tent of Holofernes, while the speech itself is a prelude to the beheading. On her return to Bethulia, Judith speaks first to the Israelite watchmen before producing the severed head of Holofernes and exhorting the Israelites who have thronged around her. Immediately, the Israelites assemble for a pitched battle that differs significantly from the pursuit of the fleeing Assyrians in the biblical account.

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9 Unless otherwise noted, the Vulgate translations are from the Douay-Rheims version.

There, the flight is prompted by panic after Bagao's desperate clapping of his hands and his grim discovery of the headless Holofernes, while in the Old English there has already been a lengthy account of fighting before the Assyrians try to wake Holofernes, here rather comically coughing and clearing their throats outside his tent before an unnamed man enters.[10] It is his speech, the last in *Judith*, that causes the flight that is biblically sanctioned, which is rendered in Old English as a clear echo of the early and more elaborately phrased battle. In the analysis of *Judith* that follows, there is a particular focus on the speeches (which occur in §§5, 7, 8, and 10), alongside the accounts of feasting, decapitation, and fighting that they punctuate.

Judith is notable for its extensive use of hypermetric lines, which evidently come in artfully arranged clusters,[11] but there is also evident metrical and syntactical artistry in the disposition of "normal" lines, such as in the exuberant description of the feasting-scene, which comes to a rousing crescendo in ways that owe little to the Latin biblical source:[12]

> Ða wearð Holofernus,
> gold-wine gumena,   on gyte-salum,
> hloh ond hlydde,   hlynede ond dynede,
> þæt mihten fira bearn   feorran gehyran
> hu se stið-moda   styrmde ond gylede,
> modig ond medu-gal,   manode geneahhe
> benc-sittende   þæt hi gebærdon wel.
>
> (21b–27)

(Then Holofernes, the gold-friend of the men, was gleeful for pouring, laughed and bellowed, roared and revelled, so that the sons of men could hear from far off how that stout-hearted one stormed and yelled, spirited and mead-flushed, repeatedly egged on those sitting on the bench to enjoy themselves well.)

This is perhaps the most celebrated and sustained description of drunkenness in all Old English literature, a busy and skittish vignette containing an extraordinary concatenation in lines 23–26 of no fewer than seven finite verbs focusing on the giddy actions of Holofernes, the first five of which are emphasized through alliteration and end-rhyme ("**hl**oh [...] **hl**ydde **hl**ynede [...] dynede [...] styrmde [...] gylede [...] manode"); the contrast with the rather sombre, indeed in stylistic terms somewhat counter-intuitively sober, Latin source is striking indeed.[13] Six of the finite verbs appear in three doublets, in one case emphasized through rhyme (a feature that the *Judith*-poet employs twenty

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10 On the precise sense of the verb *cohettan*, found uniquely here in Old English, see Robinson, "Five Textual Notes," 49–50.

11 Raffel, "*Judith*: Hypermetricity and Rhetoric"; Hieatt, "*Judith* and the Literary Function"; and Hartman, "A Drawn-Out Beheading."

12 Herbison, "Heroism and Comic Subversion," 15–16; and Chickering, "Poetic Exuberance," 132–33. The passage is also remarkable both in terms of its metre and its metrical grammar, as highlighted by Griffith, *Judith*, 37–39. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

13 The Vulgate, Jth. 12:20, says simply: "et iucundus factus est Holofernis ad illam bibitque uinum nimis multum quantum numquam biberat in uita sua" (And Holofernes was made merry on her occasion, and drank exceeding much wine, so much as he had never drunk in his life).

further times in his text), and the appearance in the same passage of a fourth adjectival doublet ("modig ond medu-gal") surely only underscores the point. Moreover, the key line describing the outlandish actions of Holofernes ("hloh ond hlydde, hlynede ond dynede" [23] ([Holofernes] laughed and roared, shouted and revelled) is the only one in all extant Old English verse where both half-lines are comprised of paired finite verbs linked by a conjunction.

A similar clustering of doublets is also found in the description of the Hebrews gathering to greet the triumphantly returning heroine:[14]

> Þa wurdon bliðe   burh-sittende,
> syððan hi gehyrdon   hu seo halige spræc
> ofer heanne weall.   Here wæs on lustum;
> wið þæs fæsten-geates   folc onette,
> weras wif somod,   wornum ond heapum,
> ðreatum ond ðrymmum   þrungon ond urnon
> ongean ða þeodnes mægð   þusend-mælum,
> ealde ge geonge.   Æghwylcum wearð
> men on ðære medo-byrig   mod areted,
> syððan hie ongeaton   þæt wæs Iudith cumen
> eft to eðle,   ond ða ofostlice
> hie mid eað-medum   in forleton.
>
> (159–70)

(Then those sitting in the city were happy, once they heard how that saintly one spoke over the high wall. The army was in high spirits; people hurried toward the fortress-gate, men and women together, in crowds and groups, bands and hosts, old and young thronged and ran in their thousands to meet the handmaid of the Lord. The heart of everyone in that mead-stronghold was gladdened as soon as they understood that Judith had come back to her homeland, and then straightaway they let her in with humility.)

The difference is that here there is only one doublet consisting of finite verbs ("þrungon ond urnon" [164b] [pressed forward and ran]); that doublet is immediately preceded by three other noun-pairs ("weras wif somod, wornum ond heapum, / ðreatum ond ðrymmum" [159–60a] [men and women together, in crowds and groups]), and followed by an adjectival doublet ("ealde ge geonge" [166a] [old and young]). A further difference between the passages lies in the use of compounds: here, there are two, "fæsten-geates" (162b) (fortress-gate) and "þusend-mælum" (165b) (by thousands), the first of which is unattested elsewhere, while the second is relatively commonplace.[15] By contrast, the description of Holofernes's boozing contains five compounds, one of which ("gyte-salum" [22b] [joy at pouring]) is unattested elsewhere, two more ("medu-gal" [26a] [mead-flushed] and "benc-sittende" [27a] [bench-sitters]) are only found in one or two

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14 See further Griffith, *Judith*, 84–85. The simple language of the Vulgate, Jth. 13:15, has provided only the barest basis for this passage: "et concurrerunt ad eam omnes a minimo usque ad maximum quoniam speraverunt eam iam non esse venturam" (And all ran to meet her from the least to the greatest: for they now had no hopes that she would come).

15 The compound appears six further times in verse, in *Exodus* (196a), *Andreas* (872b), and *Christ and Satan* (234a, 507a, 568a, and 630a), once in a doomsday passage in homiletic prose, and in a gloss, glossing "melena" (presumably for "millena" [thousands]).

other poems;[16] while the other two ("gold-wine" [22a] [gold-friend] and "stið-moda" [25a] [stout-hearted]) are rather more widely attested, they too bear witness to specific aspects of the *Judith*-poet's style. The compound "gold-wine" (gold-friend) appears outside *Judith* only in *Beowulf* (five times), *Elene* (once), and *The Wanderer* (twice),[17] while the complete half-line "gold-wine gumena" (gold-friend of men) is found once in *Elene* (201a) and three times in *Beowulf* (1171a, 1476a, and 1602a). Beyond *Judith*, the adjective "stið-mod" is found five times in verse, once each in *Genesis A*, *Beowulf*, *Fates of the Apostles*, *Dream of the Rood*, and *Christ and Satan*, and five times in prose, mainly in works written by or associated with Wulfstan.[18]

Other critics have highlighted the idiosyncratic fondness of the *Judith*-poet for compound nouns and adjectives formed from present participles in –*end(e)*; there are fifteen examples in the poem as a whole, comprising eleven different compounds, but it is particularly striking that six of those examples, involving four separate compounds, all appear within the passage describing the feast (7b–34a [§2]), with another introducing the description of the thronging Israelites, here "burh-sittende" (those sitting in the city), which is linked back to the feasting-scene in other ways.[19] As if to emphasize the consistency of the selection, all seven are based on just two suffixes, namely *wig(g)ende* (fighting) and -*sittende* (sitting).[20] Such clustering of forms is echoed further in the usage here of an adjectival form as a substantive ("se stið-moda" [25a] [the stout-hearted one]), another aspect of the idiolect of the *Judith*-poet that has been remarked upon previously. Such a usage forms an envelope-pattern for the surviving poem as a whole: God is mentioned as the recipient of prayers "to ðam ælmihtigan" (to the almighty) at lines 7a and 345a, and nowhere else in the poem in such a way.[21] This feature is particularly noticeable in the prelude to the slaying of Holofernes, who is himself referred to by such substantive

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16 Outside of *Judith*, both "benc-sittende" and "medu-gal" (twice) are found in the *Fortunes of Men* (52a, 57b, and 78a), while "medu-gal" also appears in *Daniel* (702a).

17 *Beo* 1171a, 1476a, 1602a, 2419a, and 2584a; *El* 201a; and *Wan* 22b and 35b.

18 *Gen A* 2425a; *Beo* 2566a; *Dream* 48a; *Fates* 72b; *XSt* 246a; also five times in prose, generally in Wulfstan or Wulfstan-related material.

19 The full list of such compounds in *Judith* (and their distribution elsewhere) is as follows: "benc-sittende" (27a [also *Fort* 78a]) (bench-sitters); "burh-sittende" (159b [also *Gen A* 1089a, 2328b, 2816a, and 2839a; *Dan* 298b [*Az* 19b], 659b, 723b, and 729b; *Christ A* 337b; *El* 276b; *Ridd 25* 3a; *And* 1201b; *Met 27* 17b; once in prose, in the Old English *Luke*]) (townspeople); "byrn-wigende" (17a [also *El* 224a and 235b; *Descent* 38a]) (mailed warriors); "eald-hettende" (320b) (ancient enemies); "flett-sittende" (19a, 33a [also *Beo* 1788a and 2022b]) (hall-sitters); "her-buende" (96a [also *Gen A* 1079a; *Met 29* 60b]) (those dwelling here); "land-buende" (226a and 314a [also *Beo* 95b and 1345a; *Wid* 132b; *Ridd 95* 11a; *Gifts* 29b; *OrW* 80b; *XSt* 683b; and fourteen times in prose and glosses]) (land-dwellers); "lind-wigende" (42a [also *El* 270a; *Met 1* 13a]) (shield-warriors); "nið-hycgende" (233a [also *Christ C* 1109b]) (evil plotters); "and-wigende" (11a, 20a, and 188a [also *Ex* 436a]) (shield-warriors); and "woruld-buende" (82a [also *Met 8* 35b, *Met 27* 27b, and *Met 29* 81b]) (dwellers on earth). Note that in the passage describing the thronging Israelites, Bethulia is described as a "medo-byrig" (mead-stronghold), a term found only in *Judith* (167a) and in the *Husband's Message* (17b).

20 See Momma, "Epanalepsis," 61–66; and Tyler, "Style and Meaning." For a useful analysis of how posture is depicted in the poem, see Arthur, "Postural Representations."

21 See Griffith, *Judith*, 92–93, for further links connecting the relevant passages here.

adjectival means no fewer than eleven times in the space of fewer than sixty lines, with nine different epithets, as he appears in turn as "se rica" (20b, 44a, and 68a) (the powerful one); "se stið-moda" (25a) (the stout-hearted one); "se inwidda" (28a) (the wicked one); "se bealo-fulla" (48a) (the evil one); "se modiga" (52b) (the proud one); "se brema" (57b) (the (in)famous one); "se deofol-cunda" (61b) (the diabolical one); "þone atolan" (75a) (the dread one); and "se unsyfra" (76b) (the unclean one). Given the *Judith*-poet's practice of deliberately varying the substantive adjectival usages describing Holofernes, it is striking that a similar strategy seems to apply to the poet's characterization of Judith herself. In extant Old English verse, there are eighteen examples of the form "mægð" in the sense "woman" (the same form also functions as the nominative plural), fully ten of which are in *Judith*, all applying to the eponymous heroine, once in conjunction with her maid. What is most evident is that the *Judith*-poet seems to have taken extraordinary care to employ different adjectives or qualifying genitives in every single one of those ten cases: Judith is variously "blessed," "radiant," "the creator's," "wise," "shrewd," "the lord's," "bright," "holy," "brave," and (together with her maid) "triumphant."[22]

The differing designations for the two main protagonists become notably more polarized as Holofernes draws towards his shameful death, which is linguistically lingered over in a lengthy passage of almost fifty lines (73b–121 [§5]). In the first description of how Judith tackled Holofernes, the action concludes with the first of her speeches, an invocation to God in the anachronistic form of the Trinity that perhaps unsurprisingly owes little to the biblical source:[23]

> Genam ða wunden-locc
> scyppendes mægð   scearpne mece,
> scurum heardne,   ond of sceaðe abræd
> swiðran folme;   ongan ða swegles weard
> be naman nemnan,   nergend ealra
> woruld-buendra,   ond þæt word acwæð:
> "Ic ðe, frymða god   ond frofre gæst,
> bearn alwaldan,   biddan wylle
> miltse þinre   me þearfendre,
> ðrynesse ðrym.   Þearle ys me nu ða
> heorte onhæted   ond hige geomor,
> swyðe mid sorgum gedrefed.   Forgif me, swegles ealdor,
> sigor ond soðne geleafan,   þæt ic mid þys sweorde mote
> geheawan þysne morðres bryttan;   geunne me minra gesynta,
> þearl-mod þeoden gumena.   Nahte ic þinre næfre
> miltse þon maran þearfe.   Gewrec nu, mihtig dryhten,
> torht-mod tires brytta,   þæt me ys þus torne on mode,
> hate on hreðre minum."
>
>   (77b–94a)

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22 The relevant forms are: "eadigan mægð" (35a) (blessed); "torhtan mægð" (43a) (radiant); "scyppendes mægð" (78a) (the creator's); "snotere mægð" (125a) (wise); the plural form "eadhreðige mægð" (135a) (triumphant); "searo-ðoncol mægð" (145a) (shrewd); "þeodnes mægð" (165a) (the lord's); "beorhte mægð" (254b) (bright); "halgan mægð" (260a) (holy); and "mægð modigre" (334a) (brave).

23 Chickering, "Poetic Exuberance," 131–32.

(Then the curly-haired one, the creator's handmaid, seized a sharp blade hardened in war-storms, and drew it from its sheath with her right hand; she then began to name by name the guardian of heaven, the saviour of all those dwelling in the world, and spoke these words: "I want to ask you, God of created things and spirit of comfort, son of the almighty, the power of the Trinity, for your mercy on me in my need. My heart is now sorely inflamed and my spirit sorrowful, greatly weighted down with cares. Grant me, lord of heaven, victory and true belief, so that with this sword I may cut down this dealer in slaughter. Grant me my deliverance, stern-minded lord of men. I never had greater need of your mercy. Avenge now, mighty lord, bright-minded dealer of glory, what is for me so bitter in my breast, so hot in my heart.")

The continuous alliteration on *sc-* of lines 78–79 throws emphasis on both Judith and the instrument of her vengeance: "scyppendes mægð scearpne mece, / scurum heardne, ond of sceaðe abræd" (the creator's handmaid, seized a sharp blade hardened in war-storms, and drew it from its sheath). In this context, it is useful to note that there is a particularly close parallel in *Andreas*, one of a dozen identified so far as part of a sustained pattern of that poem's echoes and borrowing:[24]

> Sceolde sweordes ecg,
> ***scerp*** ond ***scur***-heard,   of ***sceaðan*** folme,
> fyr-mælum fag,   feorh acsigan.
> > (1132b–34; emphasis mine)

(The sword's edge, sharp and storm-hardened, from the sheath, in the fist, decorated with fire-patterning, has to search out a life.)

The climax of the first phase of the poem comes with the slaying of Holofernes, which the *Judith*-poet depicts in ways that are largely without parallel in the biblical source and again emphasize the originality of the Old English and its debt to a broader tradition. The Latin is by no means without artistry of its own, notably a repeated invocation to the God of Israel (Jth. 13:7 and 9).[25] The *Judith*-poet, as befits one who has routinely inserted Christian language and imagery into this Old Testament tale, elsewhere describing Holofernes and Judith as "nergende lað" (45b) (hateful to the saviour) and

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24 See further Orchard, "Originality of *Andreas*," especially 352–70. Note that the compound adjective "scur-heard" here is uniquely matched in *Beowulf* 1033a in the half-line "scur-heard sceþðan," from which it may indeed be derived; the compound "fyr-mæl" is unique to *Andreas*.

25 Compare the Vulgate, Jth. 13:6–9: "stetitque Iudith ante lectum orans cum lacrimis et labiorum motu in silentio [7] dicens confirma me Domine Deus Israhel et respice in hac hora ad opera manuum mearum ut sicut promisisti Hierusalem civitatem tuam erigas et hoc quod credens per te posse fieri cogitavi perficiam [8] et haec cum dixisset accessit ad columnam quae erat ad caput lectuli eius et pugionem eius qui in ea ligatus pendebat exsolvit [9] cumque evaginasset illud adprehendit comam capitis eius et ait confirma me Domine Deus Israhel in hac hora" (And Judith stood before the bed praying with tears, and the motion of her lips in silence, [7] Saying: Strengthen me, O Lord God of Israel, and in this hour look on the works of my hands, that as thou hast promised, thou mayst raise up Jerusalem thy city: and that I may bring to pass that which I have purposed, having a belief that it might be done by thee. [8] And when she had said this, she went to the pillar that was at his bed's head, and loosed his sword that hung tied upon it. [9] And when she had drawn it out, she took him by the hair of his head, and said: Strengthen me, O Lord God of Israel, at this hour).

"nergendes þeowen" (73b–74a) (the saviour's handmaid) respectively, here plays down the references to the God of Israel, speaking instead in the voice of the poet of the "swegles weard" (80b) (guardian of the sky) and the "nergend ealra / woruld-buendra" (81b–82a) (the guardian of heaven, the saviour of all those dwelling in the world), and putting first in Judith's mouth what looks like a clear invocation of the Trinity.[26] There are other echoes that structure this passage, notably the sequences "miltse [...] þearfende [...] heorte onhæted ond hige geomor, swyðe mid sorgum gedrefed and miltse [...] þearfe [...] torne on mode, hate on hreðre minum." Note the pervasive use of ornamental alliteration in this passage, beginning with three lines in the speech that all exhibit cross-alliteration, followed by nine lines, eight of which demonstrate double alliteration. The invocation of the Trinity ("ðrynesse ðrym" [85a] [the power of the Trinity]) continues the alliteration of the preceding line, and summarizes the previous careful listing of the three persons of the Trinity as "God of origins and consoling spirit, son of the Almighty" (83–84a) (frymða god ond frofre gæst, / bearn alwaldan), the essential unity of which is highlighted by the singular "ðe." It is also intriguing that the four subsequent invocations of God ("swegles ealdor [...] þearl-mod þeoden gumena [...] mihtig dryhten, torht-mod tires brytta") are all echoed elsewhere in *Judith*, each appearing in just one other place. The two simpler phrases, "swegles ealdor" (89b) (lord of heaven) (which recalls the earlier "swegles weard" [80b] [guardian of heaven]) and "mihtig dryhten" (92b) (mighty lord) both recur later in the poem (at lines 124a and 198a) in passages celebrating Judith's triumph, while the alternating longer phrases "þearl-mod þeoden gumena" (91a) (stern-minded lord of men) and "torht-mod tires brytta" (93a) (bright-minded dealer of glory) both echo earlier designations of Holofernes himself as "þearl-mod ðeoden gumena" (66a) and "swið-mod sinces brytta" (30a) (strong-minded dealer of treasure). Note too that even within this passage, a contrast is made between Holofernes as "morðres bryttan" (90a) (dealer in slaughter) and God as "tires brytta" (93a) (dealer of glory). Beyond this passage, the phrases "tires brytta" and "morþres brytta" appear once each elsewhere in *Christ B* (462b) and *Andreas* (1170b); "swegles ealdor" appears four times in *Genesis A* (862b, 2542a, 2808a, and 2879a, each time as "swegles aldor"), while various forms of "mihtig dryhten" are commonplace, appearing around fifty times elsewhere (including here at 92b and 198b).

After the calm elegance of Judith's invocation of the Trinity, the slaughter itself comes with striking abruptness:[27]

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26 See further Momma, "Epanalepsis," 68–69; also Hill, "Invocation of the Trinity," who highlights no fewer than eight separate passages in Old English poetry where characters invoke the Trinity in particular instances of peril, so suggesting that here too Judith's anachronistic response is a part of a widespread vernacular poetic convention, albeit one ultimately derived from St Patrick's *Lorica*.

27 On the beheading of Holofernes, see in general Herbison, "Heroism and Comic Subversion," 20–21; Chickering, "Poetic Exuberance," 132–35, at 134–35; L. Garner, "Art of Translation," 176–77; Astell, "Holofernes's Head," 126–31; and A. Olsen, "Inversion and Political Purpose." The Vulgate, Jth. 13:10, is much simpler: "et percussit bis in ceruicem eius et abscidit caput eius et abstulit conopeum eius a columnis et euoluit corpus eius truncum" (And she struck twice upon his neck, and cut off his head, and took off his canopy from the pillars, and rolled away his headless body).

> Sloh ða wunden-locc
> þone feond-sceaðan   fagum mece,
> hete-þoncolne,   þæt heo healfne forcearf
> þone sweoran him,   þæt he on swiman læg,
> druncen ond dolh-wund.   Næs ða dead þa gyt,
> ealles orsawle;   sloh ða eornoste
> ides ellen-rof   oðre siðe
> þone hæðenan hund,   þæt him þæt heafod wand
> forð on ða flore.   Læg se fula leap
> gesne beæftan,   gæst ellor hwearf
> under neowelne næs   ond ðær genyðerad wæs,
> susle gesæled   syððan æfre,
> wyrmum bewunden,   witum gebunden,
> hearde gehæfted   in helle-bryne
> efter hin-siðe.   Ne ðearf he hopian no,
> þystrum forðylmed,   þæt he ðonan mote
> of ðam wyrm-sele,   ac ðær wunian sceal
> awa to aldre   butan ende forð
> in ðam heolstran ham,   hyht-wynna leas.
> (103b–21)

(The curly-haired one then struck the ravaging enemy, the one with evil intent, with a decorated sword, so that she sliced through half his neck, so that he lay in a daze, drunk and greatly maimed. He was not yet dead, not quite devoid of his soul; the courageous-minded lady then struck the heathen dog in earnest a second time, so that his head flew off onto the floor. The foul trunk lay, bereft, behind, after the spirit disappeared elsewhere, under a steep cliff, and was sunk there, moored in misery ever after, wound round with serpents, bound round in torments, cruelly made captive in hell-fire after his going hence. Wrapped in darkness, he need never hope that he might ever come away from that serpent-hall, but there he had to stay for ever and ever on without end in that dim home, deprived of any happy hopes.)

The whole passage is simply dripping with double alliteration, as well as both half- and full-rhyme ("hund [...] wand"; "bewunden [...] gebunden): of the last fifteen lines of this passage (107–21), only three do not exhibit the feature (112, 117, and 119). The description of the actual slaying of Holofernes echoes in its opening the previous passage, with "Sloh ða wunden-locc [...] fagum mece" (103b) (The curly-haired one then struck [...] with a decorated sword)[28] providing a close parallel to the earlier "Genam ða wunden-locc [...] scearpne mece" (77b–78) (Then the curly-haired one [...] seized a sharp blade), a parallel only emphasized by the fact that, while the compound "wunden-locc" also appears later in the poem (325a) as a description of the Hebrew people,[29] these are the only occurrences of the word *mece* in the poem. The purely aural echo of "feond-sceaðan" and "of sceaðe" also highlights the connection,

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28 The description of the weapon as "fagum" (decorated) is echoed three further times in the poem (194b, 264b, and 301b: all "fagum sweordum" or "fagum swyrdum"); the phrase echoes *Beowulf* 586a, "fagum sweordum."

29 The compound "wunden-locc" only appears outside its triple appearance in *Judith* in *Riddle 25*, a so-called "onion riddle," at 11a; for a suggestion that the two texts are related, see Shaw, "Hair and Heathens."

and throws further focus on Judith's prayer to God and its favourable reception as the static centrepiece between Judith's seizing and drawing of the sword and her employment of it, effectively retarding the action.

Judith's final speech in the poem is equally artistically arranged:[30]

> Spræc ða seo æðele   to eallum þam folce:
> "Her ge magon sweotole   sige-rofe hæleð,
> leoda ræswan,   on ðæs laðestan
> hæðenes heaðo-rinces   heafod starian,
> Holofernus   unlyfigendes,
> þe us monna mæst   morðra gefremede,
> sarra sorga,   ond þæt swyðor gyt
> ycan wolde,   ac him ne uðe god
> lengran lifes,   þæt he mid læððum us
> eglan moste;   ic him ealdor oðþrong
> þurh godes fultum.   Nu ic gumena gehwæne
> þyssa burg-leoda   biddan wylle,
> rand-wiggendra,   þæt ge recene eow
> fysan to gefeohte.   Syððan frymða god,
> ar-fæst cyning,   eastan sende
> leohtne leoman,   be"að linde forð,
> bord for breostum   ond byrn-homas,
> scire helmas   in sceaðena gemong,
> fyllan folc-togan   fagum sweordum,
> fæge frum-garas.   Fynd syndon eowere
> gedemed to deaðe,   ond ge dom agon,
> tir æt tohtan,   swa eow gatacnod hafað
> mihtig dryhten   þurh mine hand."
>   (176–98)

(The noble lady then spoke to all of that people: "Here, you victory-bold warriors, leaders of men, you can clearly gaze on the head of that most hateful heathen battle-warrior, Holofernes, lifeless, the one who of all men has brought about for us the most slaughters, painful sorrows, and would have increased them still more, but God did not grant him a longer life, for him to harm us with afflictions. I drove the life from him with God's help. Now I want to ask every man among the people of this town, every shield-bearer, that you swiftly hasten to prepare for battle after the God of created things, the benevolent

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30 See Astell, "Holofernes's Head," 130–31; and Chickering, "Poetic Exuberance," 129–30. The Vulgate, Jth. 14:1–5, reads as follows: "dixit autem Iudith ad omnem populum audite me fratres suspendite caput hoc super muros nostros [2] et erit cum exierit sol accipiat unusquisque arma sua et exite cum impetu non ut descendatis deorsum sed quasi impetum facientes [3] tunc exploratores necesse erit ut fugiant ad principem suum excitandum ad pugnam [4] cumque duces eorum cucurrerint ad tabernaculum Holofernis et invenerint eum truncum in suo sanguine volutatum decidet super eos timor [5] cumque cognoveritis fugere illos ite post illos securi quoniam Dominus conteret eos sub pedibus vestris" (And Judith said to all the people: Hear me, my brethren, hang ye up this head upon our walls. [2] And as soon as the sun shall rise, let every man take his arms, and rush ye out, not as going down beneath, but as making an assault. [3] Then the watchmen must need run to awake their prince for the battle. [4] And when the captains of them shall run to the tent of Holofernes, and shall find him without his head wallowing in his blood, fear shall fall upon them. [5] And when you shall know that they are fleeing, go after them securely, for the Lord will destroy them under your feet).

king, sends from the east his shining light. Carry forth your linden-protection before your breasts, also mail-coats, gleaming helmets, into the enemy fray; cut down their war-leaders, their doomed chieftains, with decorated swords. Your enemies are condemned to death, and you have the glory, the honour in the conflict, as the mighty Lord has revealed to you through my hand.")

Judith's speech concludes with another aural flourish: seven of the final ten lines (189–98) contain double alliteration, including a pair of lines with continued alliteration on *f* (194–95) that introduce successive examples of paronomasia ("fæge [...] fagum [...] gedemed [...] dom"). The reference to "frymða god" (189b) (God of created things) echoes Judith's own earlier invocation quoted above, "Ic ðe, frymða god" (83a),[31] while her exhortation to the Israelites to go and gain "tir æt tohtan" (197a) (honour in the conflict) has a close and unique echo in the *Battle of Maldon*, where just before the English side enter the battle against the Vikings, reference is again made to "tir æt getohte" (104a) (honour in the conflict). Elsewhere in this passage, the close and unique echo in Judith's description of the dead Holofernes as "the one who of all men has brought about for us the most slaughters" (181) (þe us monna mæst morðra gefremede) of Wiglaf's praise of the dead Beowulf as "the one who of all men has brought about the most glorious deeds" (2645) (forðam he manna mæst mærða gefremede) is ear-catching indeed, and is one of a number of parallels which suggest that the *Judith*-poet may have borrowed directly (and ironically) from the longer poem with which it now shares a manuscript-context.[32]

Elsewhere, I have indicated the extraordinary sequence of parallels that links an extended version of the first and longest battle-scene in *Judith* (which has no warrant in the biblical warrant) very specifically to a similarly extended battle-scene in *Elene* (where, though the poet Cynewulf elaborates massively on his source, he does at least have a battle on which to base his brilliant set-piece).[33] Indeed, this passage contains just three out of a total of thirty-three parallels linking *Judith* and *Elene* overall.[34] There are more than 140 distinct compounds in *Judith* (roughly one every two-and-a-half lines), of which thirty-eight are unique in extant Old English (roughly one every nine lines), and a further five only paralleled in prose (bringing the strike-rate up to roughly one every nine lines). On these figures, one might expect the central thirty-line battle-scene (220b–50a) to contain around a dozen compounds, of which three or four might be expected to be unique in Old English verse. In fact, there are twenty-seven compounds in these thirty lines, of which just under half (thirteen) are unique to *Judith*, comprising ten distinct compounds.[35] Put another way, this one passage, representing 8.6 percent

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31 There is a parallel in *Elene* (again), "syðða him frymða god" (502b), as well as in *Guthlac B*, "þætte frymþa god" (820b); there is also a similar reference early on in *Judith*: "gefriðode, frymða waldend" (5a).

32 I explore this connection further in my edition of *Beowulf*.

33 See Orchard, "Computing Cynewulf."

34 The thirty-three parallels in question are listed in Orchard, "Computing Cynewulf," 77–80.

35 The compounds unique to *Judith* are as follows: "bur-geteld" (57a, 248b, and 276b) (tented chamber); "cumbol-wiga" (243b and 259b) (banner warrior); "ecg-plega" (246a) (sword-play);

of the total lines in the poem, contains 26 percent of its uniquely attested compounds, a strike-rate more than three times what one would expect. Yet despite the verbal pyrotechnics and strikingly original diction in this battle-scene, it seems that *Elene* is not the only earlier poem that the *Judith*-poet has laid under contribution, as is suggested by the description of the Israelites unsheathing their swords:

> mundum brugdon
> scealcas of sceaðum scir-mæled swyrd,
> ecgum gecoste
>
> (229b–31a)

> (warriors drew with their fists from their sheaths their bright-decorated swords, trusty in edges.)

These lines echo closely a passage in *Genesis A*, describing strikingly similar martial endeavour in the so-called "battle of the kings":

> Handum **brugdon**
> hæleð **of scæðum** hring-**mæled sweord**,
> ecgum dihtig
>
> (1991b–93a; emphasis mine)

> (with their hands warriors drew from their sheaths their ring-decorated swords, doughty in edges.)

It seems worth noting that the adjectives "hring-mæled" (ring-decorated) and "scir-mæled" (bright-decorated) are both unique in the extant corpus, where they are indeed the only compounds formed from -*mæled*, although "hring-mæl" appears both as a noun "ring-patterned sword," "ring-adorned sword" (*Beo* 1521b and 1564b) and as an adjec-

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"here-folc" (234a and 239a) (battle-army); "medo-werig" (229a and 245a) (mead-weary); "morgen-colla" (245b) (morning-slaughter); "scir-mæled" (230b) (brightly decorated); "slege-fæge" (247a) (slaughter-doomed); "stede-heard" (223a) (firmly fixed); "styrn-mod" (227a) (stern-hearted); and "swyrd-geswing" (240a) (sword-stroke); note that four of them occur more than once in the poem, two in this very passage. Of the remaining fourteen compounds in the passage, nine are purely poetic, and five are also attested in prose, as follows: "eald-geniðla" (228b) (ancient enemy) (also *And* 1048b and 1341b); "ealdor-þegn" (242b) (chief thegn) (also *Beo* 1308a; *XSt* 66a; *Men* 130a; as well as twice in prose, in two Vercelli Homilies); "fær-spell" (244b) (sudden bad news) (also *Ex* 135b; *Jul* 267b and 277b; *Guth B* 1050b; *And* 1086a); "guð-freca" (224a) (battle-warrior) (also *Beo* 2414a; *Phoen* 353a; *And* 1333a); "heafod-weard" (239b) (chief guard; head guard) (also *PPs 77:19* 3a; as well as twice in two glosses, glossing "excubitores" and "tribunus"); "hilde-nædre" (222a) (battle-adder; arrow) (also *El* 119b and 141a); "horn-boga" (222b) (horn-bow) (also *Beo* 2437b; *PPs 75:3* 1a); "land-buende" (226a and 314a) (land-dwellers) (also *Beo* 95b and 1345a; *Wid* 132b; *Ridd 95* 11a; *Gifts* 29b; *OrW* 80b; *XSt* 683b; as well as fourteen times in prose and glosses); "mago-þegn" (236a) (retainer) (also *Beo* 293a, 408a, 1405b, 1480b, 2079a, and 2757a; *And* 94b, 366a, 1140a, 1207b, and 1515a; *Wan* 62a; *Men* 82a); "morgen-tid" (236b) (morning-time) (also *Beo* 484b and 518b; *Brun* 14a; as well as thirteen times in prose and glosses, mainly psalm-glosses, glossing "matutinum"); "nið-hycgende" (233a) (evil-plotters) (also *Christ C* 1109b); "oret-mæcg" (232b) (warrior) (also *Beo* 332a, 363b, and 481b; *And* 664b; *DEdw* 11b; as well as twice in glossaries, glossing "agonista" and "anthleta"); "sterced-ferhð" (55b and 227b) (stout-hearted) (also *El* 38a; *And* 1233b); and "werig-ferhð" (249a and 290b) (weary-hearted) (also *And* 1400a; *Whale* 19b).

tive "ring-patterned"; "ring-adorned" (*Beo* 2037a).[36] This apparent echo of *Genesis A* in *Judith* is one of twenty-six so far detected, including the use of the uniquely shared compound adjective "ælf-scyne" (1827a and 2731a; *Jud* 14a) (having elven beauty; dangerously beautiful; seductively beautiful), used to describe Sarah and Judith as women whose beauty proves fatal to those whose intentions towards them are less than honourable.[37]

After the extensive battle-passage, the final speech in *Judith*, at least in the form in which it survives, is given to an anonymous Assyrian:[38]

> He þa lungre gefeoll
> freorig to foldan,   ongan his feax teran,
> hreoh on mode,   ond his hrægl somod,
> ond þæt word acwæð   to ðam wiggendum
> þe ðær unrote   ute wæron:
> "Her ys geswutelod   ure sylfra forwyrd,
> toweard getacnod   þæt þære tide ys
> mid niðum neah geðrungen,   þe we sculon nu losian,
> somod æt sæcce forweorðan.   Her lið sweorde geheawen,
> beheafdod healdend ure."

> (280b–89a)

(Then he at once fell trembling to the ground, began to tear his hair, perplexed of mind, and also his garment, and delivered this message to the warriors who, disturbed, were there outside: "Here is revealed our own imminent destruction, signified with violence that it is drawn near the time when we shall now be lost, perish together in conflict. Here lies our protector slashed by a sword, beheaded.")

Once again, the biblical source is characteristically plain, albeit that there the speech of Bagao introduces a poignant element of panic that immediately sends the other Assyrians into headlong flight.[39] In the Old English, by contrast, one might note again

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36 One might also note here that the final half-line in *Genesis A*, "ecgum dihtig" (1993a) has a close parallel twice in *Beowulf*: "ecgum dyhttig" (1287a) and "ecgum þyhtig" (1558b). Likewise, the noun "mundum" appears only here in the parallel passage from *Judith* (229a); elsewhere in *Judith* the form "hand" appears (130b and 198b).

37 See further Orchard, "Multiplication, Intoxication, and Fornication," especially 348–54. Note that Griffith, *Judith*, 62–70, uses precisely the same pair of passages quoted here to argue for a broader shared tradition, although the narrow nature of the echoes and their sheer number argues otherwise.

38 See further Astell, "Holofernes's Head," 131–33. Here, I adopt the reading of Griffith, "nu" (287b), rather than that of Fulk and earlier editors ("nyde"); for the choice, see further Griffith, *Judith*, 140. Note that the half-line "sweorde geheawen" (288b) is repeated almost immediately, in the form "sweordum geheawen" (294b).

39 See the Vulgate, Jth. 14:14–16: [14] "sed cum nullum motum iacentis sensu aurium caperet accessit proximans ad cortinam et eleuans eam uidens iacens cadauer absque capite Holofernis in suo sanguine tabefactum iacere super terram et clamauit uoce magna cum fletu et scidit uestimenta sua [15] et ingressus tabernaculum Iudith non inuenit eam et exiliuit foras ad populum [16] et dixit una mulier hebraea fecit confusionem in domo regis Nabuchodonosor ecce enim Holofernis iacet in terra et caput ipsius non est in illo" ([14] But when with hearkening, he perceived no motion of one lying, he came near to the curtain, and lifting it up, and seeing the body of Holofernes, lying

the emphatic double alliteration of 286–89 that concludes this speech, just as there is a rash of double alliteration at the conclusion of Judith's final speech when she shows the severed head of Holofernes to the Israelites; in this speech by the unnamed Assyrian, the anaphora of "her [...] her" (here [...] here) is perhaps prompted by the Latin "ecce," but the passage as a whole more readily recalls Judith's final speech again, with opening words ("Her ge magon sweotole" [177a]) matched in here ("Her ys geswutolod" [285a]), especially when it is considered that the two speeches contain the only three occurrences of the word *her* in the whole of *Judith*. More intriguing still is the further striking parallel with perhaps the most quoted lines of the *Battle of Maldon*, which must have been composed after the date of the battle itself, which took place in 991, long after any suggestion of the date of the composition of *Judith*. There, the old retainer Byrhtwold makes his grim observation on the heroic code:

> "Hige sceal þe heardra,   heorte þe cenre,
> mod sceal þe mare,   þe **ure** mægen lytlað.
> **Her lið ure** ealdor   eall for**heawen**,
> god on greote.   A mæg gnornian
> se ðe nu fram þis wig-plegan wendan þenceð."
>   (*Mald* 312–16; emphasis mine)

("Courage must be the harder, heart the keener, spirits the greater, as our strength wanes. Here lies our lord entirely cut to pieces, a good man in the dirt. Ever may he mourn who thinks now to turn from this battle-play.")

Earlier in the *Battle of Maldon*, the term "forheawen" has appeared three times, each time associated either with Byrhtnoth directly or with those most closely associated with him.[40] The proposed parallel between *Judith* and the *Battle of Maldon* is all the more poignant and ironic when it is recalled that, according to the twelfth-century *Liber Eliensis* (*Book of Ely*), Byrhtnoth too had been beheaded in battle by his Viking foes; certainly when his skeleton was examined at Ely Cathedral in 1769, there was no skull. Just as the *Judith*-poet relies heavily on parallel phrasing to structure the narrative and seems to have borrowed from earlier poems, notably *Elene*, *Genesis A*, and *Beowulf*, in *Maldon* we may find an indication of how *Judith* was remembered and repurposed some time after 991.

While the biblical Book of Judith has been more recently considered deuterocanonical, it was in England during the early period viewed very much as an integral part of the bible, and was discussed by such learned Anglo-Saxons as Aldhelm and Ælfric towards the beginning and end of the written record, in Latin and Old English respectively. But the Old English poem now known as *Judith* seems regularly overshadowed in

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upon the ground, without the head, weltering in his blood, he cried out with a loud voice, with weeping, and rent his garments. [15] And he went into the tent of Judith, and not finding her, he ran out to the people, [16] And said: One Hebrew woman hath made confusion in the house of king Nabuchodonosor: for behold Holofernes lieth upon the ground, and his head is not upon him).

40 The three other occurrences appear in *Maldon* at the death of Wulfmær, Byrhtnoth's sister-son, "swiðe forheawen" (115b), in a description of how Byrhtnoth died, given by Ælfwine, Byrhtnoth's loyal retainer, "forheawen æt hilde" (223a), and at the death of Offa, Byrhtnoth's loyal retainer, "Offa forheawen" (288b).

modern discussions, rarely anthologized, and evidently undervalued when compared with other company, often in negative terms: *Judith* is deemed somehow less successful than the other Old Testament poems in Old English verse, less effective than Ælfric's account of the same story, and somehow less compelling than that other poem in the so-called *Beowulf*-manuscript. If the undoubted skill of the *Judith*-poet has perhaps been undervalued, and if the text itself has seemed somehow secondary in discussions of Old English literature, the importance of the poet and the poem in assessing how verse was read and heard, created, recreated, and conveyed throughout the period seems primary indeed.

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EMBODYING THE ORAL TRADITION: PERFORMANCE AND PERFORMATIVE POETICS IN AND OF *BEOWULF**

MARK C. AMODIO

ON THE EVENING of April 19, 1979, a rather improbable play, *The Elephant Man*, opened at the Booth Theatre on Broadway in New York City.[1] Written by Bernard Pomerance, directed by Jack Hofsiss, and starring Philip Anglim in a role David Bowie would later take over from September 1980 through early January 1981, *The Elephant Man* dramatizes the life of Joseph Merrick, who lived from 1862 to 1890 and who suffered from a rare disease, most probably Proteus Syndrome, that causes massive, often crippling tissue deformities. The play became something of a hit, was nominated for numerous Tony awards (winning for best play, best actress, and best direction), and had a run of 916 performances. Merrick's life was also the subject of a successful and well-received film by David Lynch that was released in early October of 1980.[2]

It is not the trajectory of Merrick's life, moving as it does from the onset of his debilitating disease in his youth, through his employment as an attraction in sideshows, to his being embraced by high society in the last years of his short life that makes a Broadway play with him as a central character improbable; rather, the play's improbability lies in the decision to bring Merrick's character to life on stage without the use of extensive make-up and prosthetic devices but rather by having the able-bodied actor who played Merrick represent him and his physical disabilities through vocal and gestural means only.[3] Adopting a similar presentational strategy was not an option for the filmmaker Lynch because of his medium's nature and the very different transactional demands it places on the artists who work within it. Even though the dimming of the house lights before the beginning of a play and before the beginning of a movie signal to their respective audiences that they should prepare, in Coleridge's famous phrase, collectively to

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1 https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/the-elephant-man-3938, accessed 5 November 2018. The play had two Broadway revivals, one, starring Billy Crudup, ran for 57 performances in 2012 (https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/the-elephant-man-13289) and one, starring Bradley Cooper, ran for 83 performances from November 2014 to February 2015 (https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/the-elephant-man-497261, accessed 5 November 2018).

2 https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0080678/, accessed 5 November 2018.

3 Video and audio clips and photographs of Bowie's performance can be found on YouTube. S. Garner, who comes at the issue from the perspective of Disability Studies aptly notes, "In Search of Merrick," 83, that "the culturally familiar phenomenon of able-bodied performers who enact disability for predominantly able-bodied spectators" has not been given much "attention by critics and scholars."

engage "that willing suspension of disbelief [...] which constitutes poetic faith"[4]—a suspension which, we might add, is the enabling channel for *all* artistic reception—there is a subtle, yet significant difference between the reception dynamics of an artistic event involving live performance and one in which the performance is captured, and necessarily bounded and limited, by audio and/or video media. Although the very medium that preserves it disrupts the producer's and receiver's communicative transaction,[5] *mediated* artistic production can be and frequently is quite powerful: one need only think of the last time one was moved by a piece of recorded music, by a film watched in a theatre, at home, or on one's tablet or smart phone, or by a recording of a poet reading her, his, or their work.[6]

In contrast to mediated artistic productions of text, film, and/or sound recording, in *embodied* artistic production the communicative transaction is direct, immediate, intimate, ephemeral, and collective. In the not-too-distant past, and throughout the many centuries in which verbal art was produced before technological developments made possible the recording of sound and moving images, embodied art was not a type of artistic production, it was the only type. Before the development of the technology underlying electronic sound amplification, embodied artistic production was also necessarily intimate since one had to be within earshot of the artist to experience the performance.

The decision to bring Merrick's character to life on the stage without prosthetic devices or other types of "special effects" highlights in an important way a fundamental aspect of embodied artistic production that is often taken for granted, namely that something unique and special occurs during its production and reception. The phrase "something special," while admittedly trite, imprecise, and overworked, nonetheless manages to capture the ineffable and deeply intertwined constellation of processes that immediately and necessarily coalesce when performer and audience inhabit the same physically bounded space, be it an intimate venue such the Susan Stein Shiva Theater on the Vassar College campus (capacity about 100) or one as spacious as "The Big House," as the University of Michigan's 107,601-seat football stadium is familiarly known. That participants in performances held in small or large spaces nonetheless experience a visceral connectedness to the performance (be it an artistic or athletic one) witnesses the power of the transactional bond that is a fundamental and unique component of embodied artistic production. That this bond persists despite contemporary culture's ever-increasing heterogeneity and despite its being one in which disembodiment, not embodiment, has become the norm (with an attendant, and unsurprising, preference for disembodied over embodied artistic production[7]), bespeaks just how deeply rooted

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4 Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, XIV, 208.

5 Ethnographic fieldworkers have long been aware that their very presence irrevocably changes the dynamics of rituals they are observing or of traditional verbal art they are recording. See Niles, *Homo Narrans*, 103–4.

6 See, for example, Willard, "Questions My Son Asked Me, Answers I Never Gave Him." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVMtru1dOZo. YouTube video, 2:40, Open Road Media, 6 April 2015.

7 The number of movie tickets sold dwarfs the number of tickets sold to live artistic productions. In 2017, more than 1.2 billion movie tickets were purchased domestically (https://m.the-numbers.

within our cultural DNA—and perhaps within our physical DNA—is the "something special" we today experience during embodied artistic productions. We can only surmise how much stronger this bond must have been in more homogeneous cultures in which the primary conduits for the production and reception of art, especially verbal art, are somatic and oral.

Despite its readily acknowledged infelicity, the phrase "embodied artistic production" has the advantage of being capacious enough to allow many types of art to fit under its umbrella, including that to which we now turn, the verbal and entexted art preserved in the vernacular manuscripts extant from Anglo-Saxon England. We will concentrate on both the performative nature of the tradition within which this poetry was produced and disseminated and the different types of embodied performances contained within a particular piece of Anglo-Saxon verbal art: *Beowulf*. These performances fall roughly into two categories: those that are overtly marked as such—among which are the *Beowulf*-poet's own performance, the one that takes place in Heorot after its creation, and the one that takes place the morning after Beowulf dispatches Grendel—and those that are not clearly distinguished as performances but are rather embedded within the narrative and that have to date received little scrutiny. Before considering these performances, however, the cultural matrix within which vernacular verse was produced and disseminated in Anglo-Saxon England needs to be sketched out.

The most important, if slender and problematic, evidence we have regarding this cultural matrix is found in the Venerable Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* (*The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*), a work that dates to the early eighth century and that was translated into Old English at some point in the Anglo-Saxon period, perhaps as part of King Alfred the Great's (d. 899) programme of having important Latin texts translated into the vernacular. In the twenty-fourth book of this monumental work, Bede recounts the story of Cædmon, a non-literate cowherd who late in life becomes an oral poet, or scop.[8] Generally translated as "poet," scop derives from the Old English strong verb *scippan* (to shape),[9] and the sense of "shaper" is still very much present in the term's contemporary usage, where it often refers to figures who engage in praxes that look to be very similar to what oral poets do: namely compose vernacular verse in the moment of performance.[10] Bede's story of Cædmon is especially important because it is one of the only accounts of scopic activity to have come down to us from Anglo-Saxon England. Even though, as has long been acknowledged, the story of Cædmon cannot be taken as a "case-history" of an Anglo-Saxon oral poet, as Francis Peabody Magoun,

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com/market/, accessed 10 April 2018) while some 240 million were purchased for domestic performing arts events that same year (https://www.statista.com/statistics/926434/performing-arts-attendance-in-the-us-by-performance-type/, accessed 10 April 2018).

8 The Anglo-Saxon scop has long been an elusive figure. See Frank, "Search for the Anglo-Saxon Scop"; Opland, *Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry*, 230–36; and, most recently, Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, 19–26.

9 Bosworth and Toller, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, *s.v.*

10 But see Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet,* 23–25, who argues that the term's semantic field encompassed poets who composed in writing as well.

Jr. enthusiastically contended more than sixty years ago,[11] it does have much to tell us about the broader cultural context—however hazy its presentation—within which Bede situates his story of the cowherd who becomes a scop, a context that is, as Bede takes considerable care to detail, highly, and perhaps even exclusively, performative.

While at a "gebeorscipe" (drinking party) one night in which Bede tells us it is expected "þaet heo ealle scolde þurh endebyrdnesse be hearpan singan" (that they all must, in the proper sequence, sing to the harp), Cædmon slips away as he eyes "þa hearpan him nealecan" (342) (the harp approach him) and returns to the cows he has been charged with watching that night.[12] By leaving the "gebeorscipe," Cædmon removes himself physically from what John Miles Foley has labelled the "performance arena,"[13] a locus common to many, and perhaps all, oral cultures and one that remains part of our cultural landscape since we, too, enter a performance arena every time we encounter embodied verbal art. While for us the performance arena is solely a physical locus in which we are able to experience the performing arts and one whose unique characteristics we oftentimes overlook, in oral cultures it is a more centralized and more highly specialized locus in which, as Foley explains, "some specialized form of communication is uniquely licensed to take place" during the "enabling event" that is embodied performance.[14] Whether one accepts the inherently non-performative nature of medieval English oral poetics or views it is as wholly and inextricably performative despite its surviving only in writing, it is clear that for poor Cædmon, and perhaps even Bede, vernacular poetry can only come into being when it is articulated, quite literally when it is given voice, *embodied*, within the specialized locus of the performance arena during the moment of performance.[15]

Performance has been and continues to be an integral part of traditions that are wholly or partially oral, among which is the South Slavic tradition, for which we have extensive audio and even some photographic evidence that witnesses the tradition's performative foundations.[16] But since the last of the Anglo-Saxon scops died well before the advent of sound-recording technology and well before the appearance of the first field-worker, medievalists simply do not have access to the resources that those who work on other, more contemporary oral traditions have, including audio and/or video recordings, interviews (on tape or from written notes) with those who produce traditional verbal art, still or video photography of traditional artists in performance, etc.

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11 See Magoun, "Bede's Story of Cædmon."

12 I cite Bede from T. Miller, *Old English Version*; unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

13 Foley, *Singer of Tales in Performance*, 8.

14 Foley, *Singer of Tales in Performance*, 8.

15 While the nature of the performance arena varies from culture (and tradition) to culture (and tradition), in Anglo-Saxon England, the specialized form of communication that it enables is the expressive economy of traditional oral poetics, a dedicated register grounded in specialized lexical, metrical, and narrative collocations and patterns. It is, further, the register through which all poetry in the period was articulated. See further, Amodio, *Writing the Oral Tradition*, 33–78.

16 These materials are housed at Harvard University and are available on the website of The Milman Parry Collection: https://chs.harvard.edu/mpc.

Rather, we must instead rely solely on the manuscripts that have survived from the Anglo-Saxon period. Because the evidence contained in those manuscripts is entexted, it is necessarily silent and static in ways that traditional oral verbal art never is, or could be. Given the nature of the available evidence, it is fair to ask what light these fixed, silent witness to a once vital—and oral—tradition can shed on the performative nature of Anglo-Saxon oral poetics and the Anglo-Saxon performance arena. The answer, not surprisingly, is "not much" because in the mediated state that they have come down to us, they have necessarily been stripped of all the meta-textual features that are critical components of embodied verbal art.[17]

I have argued elsewhere that the evidence offered by Anglo-Saxon oral poetics opens an important and significant window onto the oral tradition of which it is such an integral part,[18] but our understanding of that tradition can at best be partial for so long as oral poetics remains solely entexted, and not also embodied, it can afford only a limited understanding of the larger tradition of which it is part, no matter how broad and deep we believe our understanding of its entexted poetics might be. Although, as noted above, there is no way directly to explore the somatics of Anglo-Saxon oral poetics, we are able to do so indirectly by examining performance both *within* and *of* the extant poetry. Both types of evidence must be handled with care, especially the latter, and we must accept that the interpretive yield such evidence offers may ultimately prove modest, but both types of evidence are valuable since they offer us what words on the manuscript page cannot: bodies that inhabit fictional and real-world spaces.

We begin by considering narrative moments in which literate poets depict their fictional counterparts at work. Distant though they might be from whatever the enacted reality of performance in Anglo-Saxon England was, these fictionalized scops nonetheless occupy a position immeasurably closer to it than we can get via the pathways contemporary oral theory provides. Such narrative moments are relatively rare in the corpus of Old English poetry, with the majority of them concentrated, for reasons we cannot consider here, in *Beowulf*. Not only are these moments rare, but they are frequently not quite so clear-cut as we would expect—or might wish—them to be.

The scopic activity in *Beowulf* falls into several categories. In the first of these, the scop is explicitly mentioned but his performance is reported second-hand as happens, for example, during the initial celebration following Grendel's death, when we are sim-

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17 Some scholars have attempted to rectify the flatness that necessarily attends textually encoded works of embodied traditional art through the very medium of print and have, in the words of Fine, *Folklore Text*, 1, sought to "translate [...] performance [...] to print." Performances can be atomized easily enough, and the performers' gestures, tone, inflection, posture, volume, as well as all the other constituent elements of their performances can be richly detailed in print, but since written language is a necessarily linear, time-bounded mode of communication, it is not particularly well suited to, and perhaps simply cannot, adequately represent any real-world physical action, let alone one with as many complexly interwoven strands as the performance of traditional oral verbal art. Given the decidedly mixed nature of Fine's—and others'—results, it may well be that nothing short of a somatic re-enactment or a video recording (both of which have certain inescapable drawbacks) can ever approximate, however inadequately, the dynamics of a lived event.

18 See Amodio, *Writing the Oral Tradition*, 1–78.

ply told that "Hwilum" (867b) (at times), a scop "sið Beowulfes snyttrum styrian / ond on sped wrecan spel gerade" (872–73) (the venture of Beowulf wisely told and he skilfully recited an apt tale).[19] There is no direct representation, or for that matter, even a detailed account of what the scop sang at this celebration, just the report that it incorporated Beowulf's deed of the preceding night and that it also contained all that the scop knew about Sigemund, to whose heroic exploits Beowulf's are favourably compared. Seamus Heaney is one of the only ones who sees in this section—and here "see" is an important term—evidence of something more than periphrasis, and so he does what he does throughout his translation when he wishes to represent the voice of a scop in the poem: he italicizes lines 884b–915 and so visually marks this section as an instance of scopic activity.[20] Because the poem does not physically distinguish these lines in any way from the those that surround them, many students of the poem understandably read them as simply being the *Beowulf*-poet's report of the song's substance and not a performance of the song itself.

The next category of entexted scopic activity is the even rarer one in which the scop's song *is* reported by the poet, as it is in the so-called Finn episode, which details a visit that starts out amicably but which is twice marred by much bloodshed and death. Once again, a scop is part of the narrative present, and in this instance the *Beowulf*-poet situates the scop's performance within one of the most fully marked performative social contexts in the extant vernacular poetry:

> Þær wæs sang and sweg   samod ætgædere
> fore Healfdenes   hildewisan,
> gomenwudu greted,   gid oft wrecen,
> ðonne [h]ealgamen,   Hroþgares scop
> æfter medobence   mænan sceolde [...].
> (1063–68a)[21]

(There was song and noise mingled together before Half-Dane's battle leaders, the lyre touched, a song often recited, when during the hall entertainment Hrothgar's scop should perform among the mead benches [...].)

The completion of this lengthy episode—it runs to nearly 100 lines—is clearly marked for us with the phrase "Leoð wæs asungen" (1159b) (the song was sung) and that this is the only time in the poem that the word "leoð" appears as a simplex marks the preceding section as special discourse,[22] as something other than the periphrasis the *Beowulf*-poet elsewhere—and more routinely—offers in connection with scopic activity. But while the conclusion of the Finn episode reveals it to be the performance of a scop, the beginning of it curiously does not. In fact, the beginning of the "leoð" of Finn is so completely

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19 I cite *Beowulf* from Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf*.

20 See Heaney, *Beowulf*. Whether he is correct in so doing is an issue that lies outside the bounds of the present discussion.

21 In this instance I do not follow Fulk, Bjork, and Niles in taking the compound "healgamen" as the name of Hrothgar's scop. See further their note to lines 1066–70.

22 The other four times it occurs, at 786a ("gryreleoð"), 1424a (in the conjectural "[fyrd]leoð"), 1522a ("guðleoð"), and 2460b ("sorhleoð"), it does so only as the second element of compounds.

unmarked that editors still do not fully agree on where it commences. Additionally, translating "mænan" as "perform," despite being in line with the practice of many translators, remains rather problematic because as the editors of *Klaeber's Beowulf* point out, "mǣnan is nowhere else attested in the sense 'recite, perform,' only 'tell of.'"[23] Finally, and most complicatedly, in the Finn episode the *Beowulf*-poet may himself adopt the voice of a scop, or even step into the persona of a fictional scop within the confines of the meta-narrative he is articulating.

In addition to those narrative moments in which a scop figures either directly or indirectly or which otherwise invoke the performance arena—as, for example, at the poem's conclusion when both a nameless Geatish woman and twelve riders enter performance arenas, the former when she keens at Beowulf's pyre and the latter when they ride around his tomb reciting "wordgyd" (an elegiac song or songs)—there are others that shed light both on the performative nature of Anglo-Saxon oral poetics and on the nature of embodied performance in the period. Among these are the coast-guard's speech to the Geatish troop that has just landed in Denmark unannounced and uninvited (236–57); Beowulf's response to Unferth's accusation that he behaved foolishly and irresponsibly by entering into a swimming match (or some sort of aquatic contest) with Breca (530–606); and Hrothgar's so-called sermon (1700–84), which he delivers during the feast celebrating Beowulf's victory over Grendel's mother. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather illustrative, for there are certainly other, perhaps many, moments in the poem that would fit comfortably within the scope of this discussion.[24]

Of these speeches, the first three are delivered at particularly freighted narrative moments. The episodes in which the first two occur have the potential to end in violence and in the third one, the aged king Hrothgar urges the still young, powerful warrior Beowulf not to trust overly much in his youthful strength since it will soon be diminished by, in Hrothgar's words, "atol yldo" (1766a) (horrible old age). All three speeches contain performative markers and a powerfully metonymic lexeme that help distinguish them as being other-than-normal discourse, and in two of them the speaker employs objects that function as dramatic props:[25] the coast-guard rides up to the recently disembarked Geats and shakes his spear— perhaps ritually, perhaps just threateningly, but most certainly performatively—before he launches into his speech, one that is further marked off from quotidian discourse by the use of the compound "meþelwordum" (236b) (formal words), a term that is itself additionally marked as other-than-normal by virtue of its being a hapax legomenon.[26] Hrothgar uses an interjection to mark the commencement of his so-called sermon, "Þæt, la, mæg secgan" (1700a) (that, lo, one

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23 Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, 180.

24 These include, among others, Wealhtheo's speech in Heorot prior to Beowulf's fight with Grendel and the "beot" (formal vow) Beowulf utters on several occasions.

25 On the central role metonymy plays in the expressive economies of oral traditions, see Foley, *Immanent Art*, especially 7–8.

26 The closely related "mæþelcwide" (discourse; converse) is found elsewhere in the poetry, three times in *Guthlac* (1007a; 1015b; and 1219a) and once in the metrical *Saturn and Solomon* (434a). See Bjork, "Speech as Gift."

may say), and he gives the speech after looking upon, and perhaps even holding, the hilt of the "eald sweord eotenisc" (1558a) (old sword made by giants) which Beowulf used to kill Grendel's mother and defile Grendel's corpse.[27] And finally, Beowulf marks the beginning of his reply to Unferth by using a common and important performative marker, the same interjection, "hwæt," with which the poem opens and which has been demonstrated by Ward Parks to be an integral part of the metonymic, highly associative way of speaking that is traditional Anglo-Saxon oral poetics.[28]

The poem offers little evidence about the nature and dynamics of these embedded performances and, as we might expect, it does not offer much regarding the way in which the moments of scopic activity it presents are received. What it does offer reveals, not surprisingly, that scops encountered a range of audiences: some may have been quiet, as seems to have been the case with those who heard the Finn episode related in Heorot (following the episode's completion we are told that "Gamen *eft* astah, / beorhtode bencsweg" [1160b–61a; emphasis mine] [joy *again* arose, the bench-noise sounded clearly]), while others were anything but, as apparently is the case at the outdoor celebration following Beowulf's dispatching of Grendel.[29] Of the three speeches with which we are currently concerned, one of them—Hrothgar's—is received by a silent, attentive audience (the *Beowulf*-poet is careful to point out that when the king begins to speak, "swigedon ealle" [1699b] [all fell silent]) and it does not seem too much of a stretch

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27 Lerer, *Literacy and Power*, 158–94 and, most recently, Donoghue, *How the Anglo-Saxons Read*, 22–23, accept that Hrothgar reads with comprehension the "runstafas" (1695a) (runic letters) inscribed on this hilt, but the matter remains less settled than they contend.

28 See Parks, "Traditional Narrator."

29 In other instances, in contrast, scops, including the one who performs at the celebration following the defeat of Grendel, may well have had to compete for the attention of their audiences against other events and they may have had to step into the performance arena at irregular or undetermined intervals, whenever, that is, an opportunity arose to seize, however momentarily, the group's attention. Because we know so little about actual performances in Anglo-Saxon England, any discussion of performance as an actual, lived event and certainly any attempt at representing one of them must fall firmly within the realm of speculation, but with this caveat in mind, let us consider briefly one recent attempt at depicting an Anglo-Saxon scop performing, one that, perhaps surprisingly, gets much right about the performance arena, even though it derives from a rather unlikely source, Robert Zemeckis's 2007 film adaptation of *Beowulf*. The film does get a great deal wrong—for example, the scop speaks rhyming, quantitative verse, not the alliterative, qualitative verse that all Anglo-Saxon poets employed—but if we are able to overlook its many errors (some of which are howlers), the film offers an intriguing glimpse of what an Anglo-Saxon performance arena *might* have been like. Although it was a locus that licensed a richly associative way of speaking, the physical space of the performance arena was not necessarily so sharply or strictly defined as it has become for us. In the film's first scene, Zemeckis's scop is neither set apart from the audience in any fashion nor is he the focus of the audience's attention. The scop, rather, struggles to make himself heard above the din in the hall and performs standing on one of the hall's tables, perhaps in an effort to attract the attention of the others at the feast, apparently to little effect. In the context of the poem, one can imagine the scop who performs the morning after Beowulf tears off Grendel's arm and shoulder behaving similarly: the focus of the celebration is not the scop's performance, but the horse racing and any other activities that might be going on, and the scop must either compete for the attention of those present during the racing or wait until there is a lull in the action before stepping forward to begin, or resume, his activity. See Amodio, "Res(is)ting the Singer," 198–99.

to imagine that the other two speeches are similarly received by "audiences" that are equally silent and attentive given the tense, rather fraught contexts in which they take place and given how much is riding on each of them.

Of the two different models of embedded performances discussed above, the first, involving as it does a character who overtly engages the traditional expressive economy of oral poetics within that tradition's performance arena, is familiar. The individuals who do so are frequently, but not always (as in the case of Cædmon) identified as scops and they "wrecan" (speak, relate) "gid" (songs, tales) that grow out of secular and Christian subject matter. But the poem also contains instances in which characters not identified as scops step forth and engage in performances (that are similarly not identified as "gid") at a number of (mostly) important narrative moments. The distinction between these two types of performative moments is, on the one hand, quite clear: scops engage in a specialized, culturally sanctioned type of activity, one that is further clearly indicated as such while the performances (if we can label them such) of the coast guard, Beowulf, and Hrothgar are not. On the other hand, the distinction is not so clear because the specialized register and the equally specialized channels of meaning that the scops utilize within the performance arena are also employed by the coast guard, Beowulf, and Hrothgar since the entire poem is composed within the stable, deterministic, homeostatic tradition within which Old English poetry was articulated. The uniformity of the vernacular poetic register is one reason why Heaney, as noted above, sets in italics what he hears as the voice of a fictionalized scop: he must mark it visually because the fictional scop's language is in not in any way distinguished from the rest of the narrative on the flat, static, silent, and disembodied surface of the manuscript page.[30]

As even the brief comments offered above reveal, there is much to be gained from an analysis of these entexted performances, but, as we will see below, when they become embodied, something rather simple—but nonetheless startling and significant—happens once the performer reinvests them with the affective performative strategies, including voice, intonation, stress, gestures, and facial expressiveness, that the entexted, mediated performances lack. To illustrate, and perhaps clarify, this point, we turn now from bodies and performances that exist only on the page to actual ones. Doing so requires that we leave the world of early medieval England and turn to the present day, and it requires as well a caveat: given that the actual nature of performance in Anglo-Saxon England has so far remained shrouded in the mists of history, and given that it is likely to remain hidden from us, the question of any contemporary performance's authenticity is moot.[31] Since they are situated far from the specialized performance arena that existed during the Anglo-Saxon period, all contemporary performances of the extant texts are equally inauthentic, although in admittedly different ways. This does not, however, mean that contemporary performances cannot reveal something of value because, as Lauri Honko reminds us, even within traditional cultures, "[a]ny perfor-

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30 That there are no lexical or metrical differences distinguishing the Finn episode's register and that of the larger narrative in which it is embedded is one of the reasons it is so difficult to determine with absolute precision the episode's starting point.

31 See Amodio and Babgy, "Performing Anglo-Saxon Elegies," this volume.

mance is a compromise, an [...] adaptation."[32] With this in mind, let us briefly explore some of what happens when *Beowulf* becomes embodied.

The first contemporary performance we will consider is an audio recording of portions of the poem made in late 1997—just a few months before his death in early 1998—by Edward B. Irving, Jr., one of the most distinguished Anglo-Saxonists of his generation. The other is a video recording made on the campus of Vassar College in March 2018 of Benjamin Bagby, a renowned performer and early musicologist, performing the poem's first 1062 lines. Both Irving's and Bagby's performances have great merit, but as they approach the poem from sharply different perspectives and employ very different performance strategies, they accordingly produce very different versions of *Beowulf*. Irving's is one of the best representatives of the way the poem is perhaps most frequently performed: a single reader produces a text-centred voicing of the poem, one dominated by the steadiness of the poem's metrics and the regularity and precision of the reader's enunciation, as can be heard in Irving's performance of the poem's first fifty-two lines. This recording, labelled item 1, can be found in the folder Amodio at the url cited in n. 33.[33]

As is true for any number of text-centred performances,[34] Irving's is a lovely rendition of the words on the page, but text-centred performances have a certain, perhaps inescapable, flatness to them. While they give voice to the surface of the text, they do not breathe much life into it because they fail to unlock the extra-textual, embodied tradition that lies beyond the static surface of the manuscript page and that necessarily gets elided when embodied oral traditional verbal art becomes entexted or, to a lesser extent, when it is simply voiced. This is especially true of more extreme versions of text-centred performances, including one by Robert P. Creed that grew out of his work on Beowulfian prosody in *Reconstructing the Rhythm of Beowulf*. When performing the poem, Creed would recite, almost chant, the poem with virtually no variation in tone. Further, the so-called caesuras in the middle of each line and the end of each line were punctuated by Creed sounding a single, unvarying note with his hand, a practice that imbued his performance with a droning regularity.[35]

While it may not seem to be, especially for those experiencing it for the first time, Bagby's performance of the same lines Irving performed is as faithful to the language encoded on the pages of London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius A.xv as Irving's. This recording, labelled item 2, can be found in the folder Amodio at the url cited in

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32 Honko, *Textualization of Oral Epics*, 13.

33 Irving, *Favorite Passages from Beowulf*. Used with the kind permission of Paul R. Thomas and the Chaucer Studio. https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B__DdIKm_nVgTkpzZUVsbWV6a1U.

34 A great many recordings, some made by specialists and many more by non-specialists, can be found on YouTube. The performances of the latter must, of course, be approached with due caution. For an excellent reading of the entire poem, see the recording Malone made for the aptly named Caedmon Records in 1967.

35 Creed's approach, private correspondence, was modelled in part on that of the Serbo-Croatian guslari recorded by Parry and Lord on the field trips to then-Yugoslavia in the 1930s. Their recordings are housed in the Milman Parry Collection at Harvard University. See n. 16 above.

n. 36.[36] But despite working from the same "libretto," to again borrow a term from Foley,[37] even the short passages under consideration here reveal, unsurprisingly, how different are Bagby's and Irving's performances: Irving came to the poem from an academic background, and throughout his performance he remains wholly faithful to that background. One can very profitably illustrate Eduard Sievers's metrical taxonomy for Old English using Irving's recording, which remains a valuable resource for teaching Old English pronunciation.[38] Bagby, in contrast, comes to the poem as a conservatory trained musicologist, as someone well versed in contemporary oral theory, and as a highly regarded theorist and professional performer of early music. What distinguishes Bagby's performance from text-centred, academic ones such as Irving's is the degree to which he does not simply give voice to the language on the page but rather fully embodies its oral poetics and resituates that poetics within the performative context in which it initially developed and in which for so long it could only be articulated and received. The traditional expressive economy of oral poetics is much more than the sum of its repeated metrical, lexical, and narrative collocations, that is, of the entexted, non-performative, and by now quite familiar features through which we are able to know it; it also encompasses the entirety of the far less familiar—because still largely ignored—range of linguistic and paralinguistic features that are essential communicative components of all expressive economies. Bagby's rendition of lines 126–34a is but one of many moments that well illustrate the range and power of his performative strategy and of the performative features (and possibilities) latent within entexted oral poetics. This recording, labelled item 3, can be found in the folder Amodio at the url cited in n. 39.[39]

What Bagby does so clearly in contrast to text-centred performances is tap productively into a foundational component of the text's and the tradition's oral poetics—its affective dynamics—in the way that few other performers do, and that text-centred performers may simply be unable to do.[40] As a case in point, I turn to one final portion of Bagby's performance, the poet's introduction to the speech in which Unferth, Hrothgar's "þyle,"[41] questions—or verbally attacks—Beowulf following the Geatish warrior's arrival at Heorot and the speech itself (499–528). This recording, labelled item 4, can be

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36 https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B_DdIKm_nVgTkpzZUVsbWV6a1U. Items 2, 3, and 4 in this folder are from a performance Bagby gave at Vassar College, March 8, 2018. I am very grateful to Brandon Deichler, media specialist in the office of Computing and Information Services, for all his help in recording this performance and preparing these video files and Irving's audio file for inclusion here.

37 Foley, "From Oral Performance," 233.

38 See Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik*.

39 https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B_DdIKm_nVgTkpzZUVsbWV6a1U. As Irving did not record these lines, we cannot, unfortunately, compare his treatment of them to Bagby's, but a good comparand can be found in Malone, *Beowulf*, disc 1, 9:22 to 9:44.

40 On traditional oral affective dynamics, see Renoir, *Key to Old Poems*, 1–46.

41 As the editors of *Klaeber's Beowulf* judiciously note, "[w]hat the title þyle applied to Ūnferð (1165, 1456) means cannot be determined with certainty" (150). In their glossary, s.v., they offer "*orator, spokesman, official entertainer*" (emphasis theirs).

found in the folder Amodio at the url cited in n. 42.[42] Whatever one's response to Bagby's rendition of this narratively fraught moment in the poem might be,[43] Unferth's being embodied in the manner that Bagby does opens up an intriguing window onto not just Unferth's character, and the cultural, social, and poetic matrix which he inhabits, but also onto the affective dynamics inherent in Anglo-Saxon oral poetics. One need not agree with every (or any) decision Bagby makes in bringing Unferth to life, and in this light it is important to note that Bagby himself remains acutely aware that what he is offering is not *the* way an Anglo-Saxon scop would have performed Unferth, but rather *a* way to perform him. We will never know if any scops slurred their words, as Bagby habitually does, when performing this speech, but while knowing if they did would further both our understanding of the traditional performance arena they inhabited and shed light on the poem's reception aesthetics, even if we had evidence of their performative prac-tices, these practices would in a fundamental regard be equivalent to Bagby's in that both rest upon choices that the performer makes when embodying not just the text, but the characters that populate it. A great many of these choices are, further, not prescribed but are rather made in the lived moment of performance.

In Bagby's performances of the passages containing the embedded performances briefly considered above, he employs three decidedly different voices, the exact nature of which changes from performance to performance. On certain nights the coast guard is full of bluster, on others he's more subdued; Beowulf is sometimes more, sometimes less tolerant of Unferth, who is more intoxicated on some nights than others (interestingly, when he's really loaded, Unferth frequently gets a bigger laugh from the audience than when he is only moderately in his cups); and finally, although Hrothgar's sermon is not a part of the poem Bagby has yet performed, in those of Hrother's speeches Bagby does perform, the king sometimes sounds quite frail and almost overcome by a bone-deep weariness, and sometimes he sounds more accepting and reflective. There is nothing unusual about these sorts of variations as they are fundamental and expected compo-nents of all live performances; but while we fully expect that no two actors will inhabit the role of Shakespeare's Iago the same way and while we are not in the least surprised that the character's portrayal by any actor varies, sometimes subtly, sometimes overtly from performance to performance, the characters in *Beowulf* and other Anglo-Saxon poems tend to be seen as two-dimensional, fixed representations. While not all will agree with the interpretive decisions Bagby makes in embodying the poem's characters, and while there are certainly good reasons to fault many of the oftentimes rather unfor-tunate choices Neil Gaiman and Roger Avary make in the screenplay for the Zemeckis film, we need to bear in mind that there is always something to be gained when charac-ters on the page are brought to life, especially when they are brought to life within the

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42 https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B_DdIKm_nVgTkpzZUVsbWV6a1U. Clover's "Germanic Context" remains an indispensable guide to this scene and its broader narrative and traditional contexts.

43 From having discussed this scene on numerous occasions both with scholarly audiences as well as with the students in my annual *Beowulf* seminar, I can attest that it elicits a wide range of oftentimes sharply divided opinions.

context of a live performance because the dynamics of the performance arena and the unique and powerful affective channels essential to it have remained relatively constant for over a thousand years. The specifics of these channels and of the specialized pathways through which they are transmitted and received have changed significantly, but the fundamental nature of the special transaction that takes place within any performance arena between performer and audience has not.

As Foley reminds us, "[a]t its very best a textual reproduction [of traditional verbal art]—with the palpable reality of the performance flattened onto a page and reduced to an artifact—[...] is a script for reperformance, a libretto to be enacted and re-enacted, a prompt for an emergent reality."[44] Foley is correct in this assessment, but in addition to being a "prompt for an emergent reality," a text composed within the ambit of traditional oral poetics is also a prompt for an embodied reality. For many years, performers of *Beowulf*, many of whom are first and foremost scholars, have sought to align the poem with what we know, or think we know, of its language and metrics, something which has put them in the middle of a hermeneutic circle because what we know of the language and metrics of the poem comes not from either lived experience or from the Anglo-Saxons themselves, but rather from the efforts of scholars, the first of whom took up the matter beginning in the late nineteenth century. As a result, many performers of *Beowulf* create the poem they have come to expect to hear. In contrast, Bagby does not approach the poem from an exterior, textualist perspective but rather from the inside, from its performative, affective foundations in a tradition that was once necessarily voiced *and* necessarily embodied. While the unique text of *Beowulf* found in Cotton Vitellius A.xv is the product of a literate author or scribe, the story of Beowulf the manuscript preserves is rooted in an oral tradition that was, at some point in its history, solely performative. What Bagby does when he performs the poem using the wide range of visual and aural affective strategies he employs may not resonate with every student of the poem and may well strike some as heretical, but there's a vitality to his presentation that few, if any, others match. Bagby's approach, which is expressive, affective, dynamic—in short *embodied*—reminds us, in a way and to a degree that other approaches cannot, that the mute, static artefact we know as *Beowulf* is the product of what at one time was very much a vibrant tradition expressed through a living language dynamically received by a living audience.

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44 Foley, "From Oral Performance," 233.

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PERFORMING ANGLO-SAXON ELEGIES:
A CONVERSATION*

MARK C. AMODIO and BENJAMIN BAGBY

Mark Amodio: Great to see you again, Ben. There's much to talk about, but the first thing I'd like to ask is what differences you perceive between performing some of the elegiac passages in *Beowulf* and some of the elegies and the other parts of *Beowulf* that you've performed?

Benjamin Bagby: I've always treated the elegies and also the laments within the story of Beowulf as pieces that have been inserted. They're pieces for me which have a beginning and an end, and the narrative just stops while we comment on something or we listen to someone else comment on it. So, for me, narrative time stops, just freezes during the elegiac passages, and then there's a moment of reflection, or some kind of emotion is expressed, and it requires a different sense of time musically. Also, since it has a beginning and an end, it's a different use of the instrument and a different musical structure. Generally for these laments, something gets going which remains fluid throughout the text so that the harp is not following the text, but is rather creating a texture or a repetitive figure or some kind of a carpet onto which the text can be laid quickly—or not quickly. It doesn't dictate a rhythm, but it provides a kind of, maybe I should call it a macro-rhythmic structure, something big that's moving very slowly, but allows the singer, within the context of that slow-moving rhythm, to shape the text as he wants, while still respecting the metrics.

MA: Is the music different for these passages? Do you see it as connected solely to these passages, or as situated within your more organic, totalizing performance of *Beowulf*?

BB: They are a bit isolated. For instance, in the Lone Survivor passage (2231b–2270a),[1] I made a conscious decision to have a beginning and an ending, and so it is a piece that exists along a continuum which has a repetitive figure which is always the same. It can be simple or decorated, but the structure is always the same. It's a series of three intervals; without getting too technical, it's three perfect fourths descending.

[1] *Beowulf* is quoted and cited throughout from Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf*. All translations are Amodio's unless otherwise noted.

This sets up for me a kind of space in which this lamentation can take place, or the story can be told, because it's not solely a lament, but is a lament within a story, a microstory within another story. It's a monologue, basically, and I wanted to create a kind of space where that would be possible. There is something kind of ritualistic about it, because what the Lone Survivor is doing is quite ritualistic—a burial for his people—and I decided to give it a ritualistic accompaniment. Once that's going, once that's moving, my options are limited.

That's what's always so interesting about working with this instrument; it's an instrument that seems quite limited because it only has six strings. Any real harp player picking up that instrument would say, "you can't make music with this," there are not enough givens, so there are not enough strings, not enough notes. But I love the constraints, I love the limitations imposed by the instrument and its tuning, because it forces me into very, very tight corners, and in those tight corners, with the text, you can really create little miniature moments of, in this case, lamentation, and work in a very detailed way, and be forced to find creative ways to solve that problem.

It's never anything outrageous, it's always something within the context of the mode of the entire performance, because the entire performance of *Beowulf* must take place, and probably did take place, within a performance tradition; if an instrument was used, it was tuned in one musical mode all the time. When I say mode I mean here those six tones and their relation to one another, not in the sense of a scale or, like church music, but mode in the sense of, there are six tones and they're tuned in a certain way, so they gravitate towards a final note, which is the centre of the mode, and all of the melodic material that you're going to create is coming out of that tiny, tiny cell.

MA: In the performances tonight, there really wasn't as much of a difference between the narratorial voice and the speaker's voice in the Lone Survivor passage. In other sections of the poem that you've performed, there's a sharper aural distinction between voices. In the Unferth passage, his voice is clearly distinguished—especially on those nights when he seems to be more rather than less drunk—but Beowulf's voice is always distinctly Beowulf's and Hrothgar's voice is always distinctly Hrothgar's. They have different musical signatures attached to them, but I didn't hear that much of a difference between the narrator's and the survivor's voices earlier this evening.

BB: That was a conscious decision, and I could do it differently. I could, for instance, as you say, begin the piece in the narrator's voice followed by the actual guy speaking, and then after he finishes his speech, have the narrator wrap up the story. Maybe in a few years I'll change that; these things, they're not written down anywhere, they're just performance traditions that are in my head.

MA: There's evidence of that in the Scyld passage (26–51).[2] When that passage is integrated into the larger context of your performance of *Beowulf*, it has a very different

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[2] A recording of the version of this passage discussed here, one performed with a kind of ostinato harp pattern, is not the version that was recorded in Cologne at the same time the other pieces for

character than it did when you performed it this evening because when it's a part of your *Beowulf* performance, it doesn't stand out as a particularly elegiac moment, but seems more narrative.

BB: I think on the DVD[3] the musical realization was more like the Lone Survivor, but I grew dissatisfied with that for the ship burial and I changed it in performance; now, I do it differently.

MA: Do you emphasize the passage's elegiac aspects more now?

BB: I use an accompaniment that allows me to go from speech to song and back to speech more easily. It's not anything with a fixed rhythm; it has a very loose rhythmic shape, it's very responsive to the text, whereas the other one is fixed.

MA: The sort of rhythmic drive that you were talking about, is that because you have to power the epic, the whole narrative, and yet still somehow have to focus in on the lamentations, or what are frequently called the elegiac passages in the poem? Does the rhythmic drive liberate you from that?

BB: It's liberating in that when I get to a passage that has a beginning and an end, I kind of leave the epic for a while and go into another space. So, that's liberating because I get a time out, basically, and then when it's over I go back into the epic, and there are lots of passages like that. The biggest one is probably Beowulf's swimming contest with Breca, which also has a rhythmically fixed accompaniment, which is extremely active, and very aggressive. It's about as strong as you can get on that instrument, and I purposefully made it as athletic as possible, so that he could be as big a show-off as he needed to be, and to turn that then into anger at Unferth, as a lead-in to mentioning all of the nasty stuff at the end.

MA: But that moment you're talking about, in the Unferth episode, Beowulf does begin in a very aggressive manner. What stands out in the DVD performance is not just the musical change signalling "Beowulf maþelode bearn Ecgþeowes" (1383) (Beowulf spoke, the son of Ecgþeow), but also the change in vocalization at that point.

BB: I do it on purpose. In my mind he's responding to Unferth from a position of incredible self-assurance, and then he says, "and Breca and I, we were kids, and you know how kids are, we decided to dare each other, and so on." But then he says, "ond þæt geæfndon swa" (538b) (and that we so performed). In my mind, he takes the harp from the scop— he says you know, "give me your harp," and he takes it, and says, "okay people, listen to this." He's said "hwæt" already, but it's basically his turn to sing a song within the epic.

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this project were recorded. The version with the tuning discussed here can be found on the CD made for and included in Schulman and Szarmach, *Beowulf at Kalamazoo*. Because the version recorded in Cologne represents the way Bagby now performs that section, it is included in the url cited in the unnumbered footnote above, along with the other pieces recorded at that time as a useful comparand.

3 Bagby, *Beowulf*, DVD.

MA: Yes, it's what I call an embedded, embodied performance.[4]

BB: Yes, and then when he finishes the story, "Ða mec sæ oþbær, / [...] on Finna land" (578b-80) (then the sea bore me, [...] to Finland), I really play out the accompaniment, and then there's silence. And then he looks at Unferth and says, "I never heard of *you* doing anything like that." That always gets a huge laugh; it's the biggest laugh moment, aside from Unferth being drunk. But just as a line, it's an incredibly well-crafted turn; it's friendly, at first, and then it turns not so friendly very quickly. That's, for me, really a set piece, and from the moment he says "swa" to the moment he lands on "Finna land," it's one thing, all the time.

MA: But now in the passages that you are recording for this volume in memory of our mutual friend John Miles Foley, we don't have that sort of narrative drive. There was a plaintive, haunting quality to the beginning of the Lone Survivor's speech: is it the product of the emotional nature of those passages supplementing or taking the place of that narrative drive?

BB: These pieces are very powerful. They're unrelenting and very strong, and that provides a musician with a huge amount of musical energy. The elegies have this kind of psychological reality that's being explored from different sides and anyone listening can associate moments like that with their own life.

MA: That's one of the strengths and one of the beauties of the Anglo-Saxon elegies. We know so little about the details of the situation these speakers are in, but the emotional nature of their plights manages to resonate powerfully across all these centuries.

BB: The genesis of how I perform these passages goes back a number of years, when John told me he was going to write a book about the elegies and I offered to make some recordings to accompany the book. After looking at the elegies and elegiac passages, I began performing one of them, The Lone Survivor, in the context of the program of my ensemble, for a program called "Fragments for the End of Time," which is about the apocalypse, as viewed in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries.[5] We recorded the program but I didn't record The Lone Survivor, because I still at the time was thinking, "I'm not going to record this, I'm going to record it for John."

MA: Which is what, in a way, you are doing now. Tomorrow we'll be recording *Deor* and *The Wanderer*, two non-Beowulfian pieces. The language is going to be different because it's not the *Beowulf*-poet's, and I'm very curious to hear how you're going to voice those pieces.

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4 See Amodio, "Embodying the Oral Tradition," this volume.

5 Bagby, *Endzeitfragmente*.

BB: One thing that's really clear is that for *Beowulf* I have the harp tuned in a certain way, and it never changes. For other pieces I use other tunings. For the *Wanderer* I have a tuning which is basically the same, but one note is different. For *Deor* I have a tuning which is radically different. So the whole sound is quite, for me, radically different. I don't know, for a listener, though, if it will be.

MA: What determines the tuning? Does the text determine it, does the music speak to the text, or do they both somehow come together?

BB: It's a kind of synergy. I sit down with a text and begin just singing it in tuning "x." And then if I find something's not comfortable, or that something seems awkward, I'll try another tuning. There are seven or eight tunings I could use. There's a tuning in fourths, there's a tuning in fifths, there's what I call my "epic open tuning," there's what I call "epic-centred tuning," and there's a tuning which is found in a tenth-century treatise, an actual, historical medieval tuning.

MA: What treatise is that?

BB: It's from a treatise by a monk named Hucbald of St-Amand, who died in the early tenth century, but the manuscript is later, and the manuscript shows strings of a harp horizontally, six strings, with the pitches very clearly delineated, and he's using it like a primitive form of staff notation to notate Gregorian chant and is letting the image of the harp help his students visualize where notes are by writing the syllables of the chant on the harp strings. So you just sing the syllable on the string that you see. It looks like staff notation or tablature, but it's really a harp turned on its side, because there are no notes in the spaces. The notes are the lines; it's just the strings.

That's what I think of as the "monastic co-opting" of that instrument. We know for a fact from people like Otfrid von Weißenburg that Christian monks were having trouble with some of the brothers, perhaps ex-warriors who had entered monastic life, or the novices who had poor or non-existent Latin. But they had to learn the gospels, so this had to be in the Germanic language of their life, and Otfrid wrote this whole retelling of the gospels in German. Since it's in manuscripts from the eleventh century with musical notation, we know it was sung. And Otfrid in his preface says that while the young men, the novices, liked to listen to stories of heroes and deeds of valour and so on, they should be listening instead to the stories of Christ. The subtext of that is that he co-opted the epic poetry that they wanted to hear in German, and he just said, "Okay, I'll write these gospel stories in their language." And it's easy for me to imagine also that the instrument par excellence that one associates with epic, the harp, just moved over into the monastic world very easily.

The tuning, for instance, that Hucbald gives, that's the tuning that is related more to the world of monastic chant, singing chant. It's a tuning we call diatonic, which means it's like a scale of notes, six notes in a row. The other tunings I use have gaps, they're maybe, like a gapped octave, without getting too musically specific. That's what gives it that pentatonic sound. So I use the Hucbald tuning, or at least have been, so far, for *Deor*. Now don't ask me why, it just worked out that way. Maybe it's because *Deor* has a refrain.

MA: Yes, it's one of the only Old English poems to have anything like a refrain.

BB: And *the Wanderer* is yet another tuning. It's close to the *Beowulf* tuning but not exactly the same. It's not what I would call an open tuning. In other words, you have to think about the notes you're playing. In the open tuning every note is correct, all the time. And this tuning, there are traps you can fall into, so you're having to strategize while you play. But it's a very strong, modal tuning; it has a very strong orientation to two different poles, one note, and a different note, and moving back and forth between them all the time.

MA: So here we are again, Ben, after a second night recording on the Vassar campus. I want to start this evening by picking up a thread from last night's discussion and asking if, when you step outside of the borders of *Beowulf*, you think about your performance differently, and do the texts present themselves to you differently? Is there some sort of performative baseline for your performances of Old English texts, perhaps because of their consistent metrics, or do the non-Beowulfian pieces somehow seem like parts of a wholly different performance tradition?

BB: Metrically not; that's still the same for me. But when I'm dealing with a poem which has a beginning and an end and it's not an epic, and it's not telling a story necessarily, I do have a different approach generally, in that I try to find one musical idea which will encompass the whole structure of the poem, the whole thing I want to say. Within an epic, the main task is to encompass the variety and still keep the thing coherent.

MA: So for a piece like *Deor*, which is fairly short—you were able to run through it in single takes earlier tonight—there seemed to be a consistency to the music, to that presentation. But your performance of the *Wanderer*, as I told you after your first run through earlier this evening, was not at all what I expected. I was surprised by the dynamic range that you gave it; at times it's very plaintive, and then all of a sudden it becomes more explosive.

BB: When I see an expression like "eala" (alas), I take it seriously. When the speaker three times uses an expletive like that, it's like *heu* in Latin, or *ah*, or any time you hear *ach* in German, it's one of those words that signifies its user's terrible distress. That it comes three times is for me a clue that this is not a laid back, philosophical reflection but, rather, that it's a sign of emotional turmoil, of extreme unhappiness, and of being cut off from his people—there are all of these images of the wall and the snow and hail, and there's all this imagery of desolation, physical desolation, cold.

MA: And that sense of the cold and the desolation gets picked up in his physical isolation, since we discover at the end of the poem that he's off by himself, and is not even within the small community mentioned in the poem.

BB: He's muttering by himself in the corner.

MA: Yes, but muttering loudly, and muttering with real emotion, something you fore-grounded in your interpretation this evening of the *ubi sunt* passage (92ff.) as well, by stretching out that "hwær" (where).[6] Was your approach shaped somewhat by the genre into which these poems have been placed, especially in terms of the beautifully plaintive music you created?

BB: Yes probably. I'm going to have to work on a song that's happy once, you know, just to see what it's like.

MA: What would that be in Old English poetry?

BB: The swimming contest with Breca is kind of a happy thing. It's just a pure physi-cal action, and, "aren't I great?" In the way I perform it, as I mentioned last night, it has a steady musical thing that's going on, and it's rhythmic. And I layer the metrics onto that rhythm that's created by the instrument. In *Deor*, I'm using a really simple musical device, which is moving from one tonal centre to another one. Back and forth, it has a kind of inevitable feeling, that's always going from the one to the other, and then there's that refrain, which breaks it a little bit. So the accompaniment provides this extremely calm structure, and I can kind of put the text in there as I would like. And I bend it and I stretch it, a little bit, depending, but it's not the kind of rhythmic thing like you have with the Breca episode in *Beowulf*. The *Wanderer*, as you noticed, starts and stops a lot, because that's the way he's thinking. It starts with a very long meditation, which kind of is like whenever anybody is obsessing about something; it's going around and around in the head, more and more and more, and then he's imagining this scene with the lord greeting him, kissing him, and holding him, and then, "bang!" He wakes up out of this reverie and he's on what is probably a boat, and like the speaker of the *Seafarer*, he's facing horrible seagulls and bad weather, and then he's kind of in a delirium. That segues into a completely different section, which is this kind of typical thing you'd find in the *Edda*, or the Old English wisdom poems, "a wise man must do this," "wise men should know that," and so all of a sudden he's preaching to us.

Plus, there's a storyteller who's commenting, so it's all going in and out of focus. In a not-so-logical way, I see it as very cinematographic; you're getting shots of things that are segueing, or cutting to other scenes, and it's not necessarily chronological, and it's not necessarily logical. And then near the end we get the lamenting part, the *ubi sunt* passage, and the "eala" (95) (alas). So I view it as a kind of psychological portrait of loneliness and disconnectedness. As a long-time expatriate, I can identify with that, because I've had moments like that myself. Not quite so drastic, but anyone who's lived away from home knows that any kind of dislocation can give you the feeling that nothing makes sense anymore.

MA: We get very much that same feeling running through *Deor*, but in a very differ-ent context. *Deor* has never seemed particularly elegiac to me, especially when placed

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6 All citations to the *Wanderer* and *Deor* are from Krapp and Dobbie, *ASPR* 3.

alongside the other Old English elegies. There's the so-called refrain, the lovely "þaes ofereode, þisses swa maeg" (7) (that passed over, so may this) but it just doesn't seem to have the same sort of emotional charge that the other Old English elegies do.

BB: No.

MA: *Deor* is a professional performer, and he's lamenting the loss of professional opportunities, and it's unfortunate for him, certainly, that he's been displaced by Heorrenda, but it doesn't seem to be a situation equivalent to what we encounter in all the other elegies. I didn't hear in your performance of *Deor* the emotional range that is central to your *Wanderer*, which, again, took me very much by surprise. Let's talk further about the music for *Deor*. As you mentioned earlier, you had to do a special tuning for it, which is something of a departure from what you've done with the other Old English texts that you've put to music.

BB: It's part of an ongoing project of mine, which is to discover what the tunings of this instrument may have been. I do not believe there was one tuning, but rather that there were many, many tunings in different cultures that used such an instrument. I also want to discover if they all had certain things in common, such as certain kinds of relationships between strings, certain musical intervals, which would have to be there, either the octave or the perfect fifth or the perfect fourth, and everything after those intervals is conjecture.

For *Deor*, I'm using a tuning—we talked about it a bit yesterday—found in a treatise from a monastic context, and it's just a series of six tones in a scale. So on the piano, it's not those notes, but on the piano you would just play C, D, E, F, G, A. Those six tones provide you with some interesting intervals if you're a harpist and you like to play two strings at once, so it provides me with a series of three perfect fourths, or two perfect fifths. There's nothing fancy, nothing composed, nothing polyphonic; it's all really basic stuff that I'm playing. I think when you're trying to tell a story or sing, and you're using such an instrument, the last thing anybody wants to hear is something complicated, because what can you play on six strings that's so complicated? You can play patterns, and stuff like that, which I do. So, the musical realization of *Deor* is really fairly straightforward, but it's static, and it's very unlike *Beowulf*, or the *Wanderer*, in that it's a static moving between two tonal centres. Everything else gets put on top of that.

MA: Do you see the music for *Deor* being extended elsewhere in the Old English corpus? Or, I guess I should ask you a different question, do you see yourself extending elsewhere into the Old English poetic corpus?

BB: Yes, I do. I'd like to move on to *Widsith* and the *Seafarer*. That's already a huge amount of material. I'd like to do *the Husband's Message*, *the Wife's Lament*, *Wulf and Eadwacer*.

MA: To date, the poems that you've worked on are all within the secular Germanic tradition. They're all ones that don't have Christian sources.

BB: But I have several Christian ones, too, that I want to do, including *Judith*, and I have done some of the Old English *Boethius*.

MA: You have?

BB: Yes, in fact I was almost going do it here, the first metrum, but there just wasn't time and I didn't have it prepared enough to record. It's the introduction to it, and then the actual lament of Boethius at the beginning of the *Consolation*. I'm very interested in the metra of the *Consolation*, and I'm actually working with Sam Barrett, a musicologist at Cambridge University who's looked at all of the manuscripts between the ninth and the eleventh centuries that contain any Boethian metra with any hint of a musical notation. He's working on a book about the metra, and I'm hoping to do a concert program in the future about Boethius.[7]

MA: I hope you do get to explore some of the Christian texts because it would be interesting to hear if you discover that a different sort of performance tradition informs them. Since you first started working on *Beowulf* a number of years back, you've always been a remarkably responsible interpreter of these old texts, which John Foley called "voices from the past."[8] While you wisely steer clear of trying to recreate what might have been, you still breathe life into these poems in a way that John greatly admired, as do I and so many others.

BB: I never try to recreate how something sounded in place X. It could very well have sounded like that in place X, but that's not my first and foremost priority. I also don't do anything, however, where I would say, "well, I *know* that it didn't sound like this, but I like that anyway, so that's what I'm going to do," because that's opening a door to another room, and then you might as well have other instruments. Why limit yourself to the tuning of six strings, why, dadada? You can get a keyboard, and then you're into, really, a composition *based* on an ancient text and not a performance of that text.

But I'm trying to scrape away all that stuff and to really go back to basics as much as I can and try to see what were the musical elements that really would have been known at the time of that text. So, in other words, there's a little bit of musicology involved, in knowing about what music was like then, whether Christian or not. We know very little about any of it, but most of what we know is Christian, so that there's some kind of integrity between the music and the text, and it's not one musical language with another text language, but they're in the same world. I would never say that this is an authentic whatever.

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7 See Bagby, *Boethius: Songs of Consolation*.

8 Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 39.

MA: The much-to-be-avoided "a-word."

BB: "The a-word," yes; if somebody thinks, "oh, this takes me back to the good old days," I mean, how do they know that? That's the comment you get sometimes, "Oh, I could see them, I can imagine," and I say, "Well that is all taking place in your head; I can't create that for you." I'm trying really to keep the musical language as close to the textual language as I can, so that they really can live together in harmony, and that allows me then to introduce the aspect of feeling. I find these poems are full of deep feelings. Another kind of inheritance from the nineteenth century that we have is that medieval music is very distanced, it's very noble, it doesn't in any way show emotion, or that it's all happening on the level of number. There is even a school of musicology which says that medieval music is an oral manifestation of the medieval idea of number, and nothing more. And so when we then try to make it mean something emotional, we're doing it a disservice by making it modern.

MA: I first saw you perform *Beowulf* in the mid-90s and I've lost count of how many times I've seen you perform it since, but from the first what struck me is that your sense of the affective dynamics central to all of these works is finely honed, and as Alain Renoir stressed in his *Key to Old Poems*, the affective dynamics of earlier literature should not be overlooked, because that's what makes it come alive, and it's what allows these texts to still speak to us. When you add the music to it, the affective dynamics become an even more powerful element in the reception of these texts. Despite the enormous gulf that separates Anglo-Saxon England from the contemporary world, Old English poetry still manages to touch us, especially those haunting voices we find in the elegies. Even on the page, those voices have the power to reach out and stir us, and when you perform those voices, you really bring them to life in a way that engages your audience and remains faithful to the poem because you're such a responsible interpreter.

BB: I try to be. The other part, the emotional part, I can't help it; that's the way it is. If somebody were to hand me a text, and say, "here's a room full of people, and this text is from their culture, and it relates to their lives, can you read it to them?," I'm not going to read it like the phonebook, and I'm not going to read it like a scientific paper or just recite it. I'm going to enter into the voice of whoever wrote it.

MA: Even when they exist only on the mute surface of the manuscript page, or on the equally mute surface of the book's pages, texts are full of voices. They're always speaking to us, and you're giving voice to them in an effective way. One of the intriguing aspects of hearing you working through some of the pieces we recorded today was hearing all the changes you made in different takes.

BB: Especially the *Wanderer*, and *Deor* also, like the *Deor* refrain; that's a fixed thing, but for the verses, I had a plan that some of them were in a lower register, and some of them were in a higher register. And that's one of the only choices I have.

MA: As we talked about briefly tonight during the recording sessions, your performances are not set, but are always different. Because you don't work from a set score, and you don't work from a set plan in your mind that you're going to inflect this line this way, it all just sort of happens in performance, and you know yourself when you're on a roll, or when you're not on a roll or when you get sort of lost for a minute.

BB: Yes, you can lose concentration.

MA: But one thing that doesn't vary is the text, which is always fixed for us, because it has to be fixed. But imagine how much more flexibility the whole performative moment, what Foley has called the "performance arena,"[9] had in a culture where the poet had no fixed text, no fixed score, no fixed performance, and perhaps no fixed performance style either.

BB: He would have had the performance style he inherited from his teachers, and if he grew up in an oral tradition, he would have probably been rather conservative, and he would have said, you know "this is the way it has to be." When asked "why," he'd say, "well, that's because it's always been that way."

MA: I see your point, but I'm not so sure that they thought in the terms you suggest. For the oral poet, it's always the present moment that is most important. For example, *Beowulf* is widely considered to be a very traditional text, and it certainly is, in all sorts of ways, yet all you have to do is poke at it, in any number of places, and you'll discover that the poet is doing something that no other Anglo-Saxon poet has done, so in addition to being perhaps the most traditional Old English poem, it is arguably—and paradoxically—perhaps the most non-traditional. But, to return to your point about "that's the way it has to be," that's the way that we would say it now, but I'm not sure that they would articulate it in similar terms.

BB: I'm talking here about music. The scop maybe didn't have a performative style, if he was trained to perform these things with his voice, and if he used the harp, then he had some training, he had something that made him different from everybody else. Generally, in traditional music societies, performers are very conservative. They maybe introduce a few new things along the way, but they're very much adhering to what they learned.

MA: But do they adhere to that because they fear breaking out of it? Or do they adhere to it because that's what they know, and what their audience expects?

BB: Yes, that's what they know; I don't think they realize that they're even in a tradition.

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9 Foley, *Singer of Tales in Performance*, 8; emphasis deleted.

MA: Because the moment you're conscious of being in a tradition, you're no longer in that tradition, you've stepped outside of it, and you're now [...]

BB: Observing yourself.

MA: You're now engaging in what Brian Stock calls "traditionalistic action."[10] Traditions just *are*: they live, they breathe, they're not self-reflective, they're not worried about self-preservation; they're just doing what they do because that is what is done.

BB: I agree. My only thought is about the music. I know when I'm thinking about how, if you have an instrument with six strings, once you have decided on a tuning for those six strings, even before you've played one note, a huge amount of performance material has been decided. And then it's just a question of filling in the blanks, actually, but it's mostly going to be questions of rhythm, and pattern, and density, speed, and the favour-ing of certain strings that go with other strings. When I say intervals, that's what I mean; I don't say chords because we don't have chords in that time. I think that whatever a young man or boy learned from an uncle or a father or brother, or whomever, about that instrument, if he had that function in society, to tell these stories, to play this instrument, I think that he probably learned the musical thing by rote from an older, more experi-enced player, and just was required to master any number of ways of playing—maybe also different ways of tuning—and he didn't think of it as something he was creating: it's just, that's what we play. Which is what you were saying. But I'm really only competent to speak about the music.

MA: And I'm really only competent to talk about the text, so we make a good pair. Well, Ben, I think we'll close on that note and go raise a glass to John's memory.

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10 Stock, *Listening for the Text*, 164.

NOTES ON THE RECORDINGS OF THREE ANGLO-SAXON ELEGIES

BENJAMIN BAGBY

IN 2003 JOHN Miles Foley and I began discussing the possibility of recording some of the Anglo-Saxon elegies which he hoped to discuss in a book he was planning. Unfortunately, that project was never realized. My own work with these texts has continued over the years, and for this collection I have recorded three of the pieces which have meant the most to me as a performer, remembering that friendly pact sealed long ago with John:[1]

1. *Beowulf* lines 26–52,[2] Scyld Scefing's funeral (4:27)

2. *Deor* (6:25)

3. *The Wanderer* (13:56)

Scyld Scefing's funeral is excerpted from *Beowulf*, which I have been performing since 1990 and for which John served as an important mentor and guiding spirit. *Deor* is a text which any professional "singer of tales" can relate to, expressing the nature of our craft and how insecure we performers can be in the real world. And finally, the *Wanderer* beckons as a summit of the art of elegy, in which the singer with his harp explores multiple shades of vulnerability, regret, and loneliness embodied by the image of an unidentified, uprooted soul. It is a masterwork which cries out for performance.

These recordings were made in late January, 2016, in Cologne, Germany. The producer was Norbert Rodenkirchen and the sound engineer Reinhard Kobialka (Audio Studio Topaz). The making of the recordings was supported by a grant from the Vassar College Research Committee, and the recordings are housed in The Frederick Ferris Thompson Memorial Library at Vassar College. They are freely available in the folder Bagby at the url cited in n. 1.

The two harps used in my performances were made by Rainer Thurau (Wiesbaden, Germany) in 1991 and 1997. They are precise reconstructions based on the fragments of instruments dating from the seventh century, found in a burial site near Oberflacht, near Stuttgart (Germany). One of these fragmentary harps is exhibited in the Baden-Württembergisches Landesmuseum Stuttgart. The remains of the second harp were destroyed in Berlin in 1945. The tunings of these instruments remain a mystery to us, although one documented tuning does survive from an early tenth-century monastic source.[3] I have used this tuning for *Deor*, as well as two other tunings which I discuss in

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1 These recordings can be found at https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B__DdIKm_nVgTkpzZUVsbWV6a1U.

2 I cite *Beowulf* from Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf*.

3 Bagby, "*Beowulf*, the *Edda*, and the Performance of Medieval Epic."

my conversation with Mark Amodio in this volume. Additional information can be found on my website: www.BagbyBeowulf.com.

My work on the Anglo-Saxon elegies will certainly continue, with the addition of other musicians, to eventually produce an entire program. I am indebted to John Foley for that initial push from thought into deed, and to Mark Amodio for making it possible.

Author Biography Vocalist, harper, and medievalist Benjamin Bagby has been an important figure in the field of medieval musical performance for over 35 years. Since 1977, when he and the late Barbara Thornton co-founded the medieval music ensemble Sequentia, his time has been almost entirely devoted to the research, performance, and recording work of the ensemble. Apart from this, he is deeply involved with the solo performance of Anglo-Saxon and Germanic oral poetry: his acclaimed performance of *Beowulf* has been heard worldwide and was released as a DVD in 2007. He has received the Howard Mayer Brown Lifetime Achievement Award from Early Music America, as well as the Artist of the Year Award by REMA, the European Early Music Network. In addition to researching and creating over seventy-five programs for Sequentia, he has published widely, writing about medieval performance practice. As a guest lecturer and professor, he has taught courses and workshops all over Europe and North America. Between 2005 and 2018 he taught medieval music performance practice at the Sorbonne, University of Paris. He currently teaches medieval music performance at the Folkwang University of the Arts in Essen, Germany.

HEALING CHARMS IN THE LINCOLN THORNTON MANUSCRIPT

NANCY MASON BRADBURY

HEALING CHARMS NUMBER among the many traditions studied to lasting effect by this volume's honouree, so sadly missed by so many. John Miles Foley's work on charms began in the 1970s with fieldwork conducted with anthropologist Barbara Kerewsky-Halpern in what is now Serbia. Foley returned to South Slavic "bajanje," or magical charms, in the 1990s, in a series of publications that culminated in a chapter of *Singer of Tales in Performance* in 1995.[1] By 1998, Stephen A. Mitchell was able to speak of "a new consensus" in the study of charms developing around "what John Foley has astutely called 'Word-Power, Performance, and Tradition.'"[2] Despite the obvious advantages of working with a living oral tradition, Foley nevertheless describes the charm as a particularly difficult genre for outsiders to interpret: "the problem of entering the performance arena—and specifically of construing the register—can prove extremely challenging."[3] Scholars of medieval charms will never enter a charm's "performance arena" with the confidence of researchers who have witnessed charming rituals, recorded their words of power, and spoken with their practitioners. The performance settings for the medieval charms I focus on here are largely irrecoverable, "[b]ut," as Foley was unfailingly ready to point out, "here is the crucial point—we have not lost *all* of the keys to performance."[4] In this essay I examine a famous fifteenth-century English household book for what it can teach us about its compiler's involvement with charming and about the performance and perceived efficacy of the many charms recorded within its pages.

Identifiable compilers of medieval healing charms are rare, and relatively well-known compilers invaluable.[5] Thus I focus here on a single but unusually well-documented individual, Robert Thornton of Ryedale, North Yorkshire, and on one of two miscellanies he compiled for his own use and that of his household, the Lincoln Thornton Manuscript (Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91), ca. 1420–1470, henceforth Lincoln.[6]

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1 See Barbara Halpern and Foley, "Power of the Word"; Foley, "Word-Power" and *Singer of Tales in Performance*, 99–135.

2 Mitchell, "Anaphrodisiac Charms," 31.

3 Foley, *Singer of Tales in Performance*, 111. In this same book, Foley, 47, defines the "performance arena" as "the locus where the event of performance takes place, where words are invested with their special power."

4 Foley, *Singer of Tales in Performance*, 64.

5 An exception is the named medical practitioners who include charms in their treatises; see Olsan, "Charms and Prayers."

6 For current, detailed studies of Robert Thornton's two household books and full bibliography, see Fein and Johnston, eds., *Robert Thornton and his Books*. A facsimile of Lincoln was published by Brewer and Owen, *Thornton Manuscript*.

Thornton's primary biographer, George Keiser, describes him as "a prosperous member of the minor gentry, who [...] must have been known as a man of probity and strength of character, as well as a man of bookish piety."[7] In addition to Thornton's probity, literacy skills, and piety, his household books also testify to the importance he accorded to his family, whose activities included praying together in the private chapel established in 1397 by his father, also Robert Thornton.[8] If, as seems most likely, Thornton's charms were intended primarily for use by himself and his family members at home, they would have been performed in East Newton Hall, the rural Yorkshire manor house he inherited from his father. The building still stands, though renovated so extensively that much of what remains dates to the seventeenth century.[9]

The Place of Healing Charms in the Lincoln Thornton Manuscript

That Thornton would copy healing charms into a book intended for use by the members of a devout Christian household tells us, first of all, that he cannot have regarded charming as necromantic, sinful, or even clandestine. His was a period in which issues of religious orthodoxy were constantly and consequentially negotiated, but his open acceptance of charming is consistent with the perspective expressed in Chaucer's late fourteenth-century Parson's Tale, adapted by Chaucer from two penitential treatises authored by clerics. The fictional Parson objects vehemently to attempts to conjure evil spirits or harm people through necromantic rites and other "swich filthe,"[10] but he takes a more permissive view of healing charms: "Charmes for woundes or maladie of men or of beestes, if they taken any effect, it may be peraventure that God suffreth it, for folk sholden yeve the moore feith and reverence to his name."[11] In this view, if charms succeed in healing, it is simply because God allows it; the "peraventure" (perhaps) presumably applies to the speculation about God's motive: perhaps he permits charms to heal in order to increase the devotion of his followers. Just as Foley's researchers were surprised to find South Slavic healing charms openly performed in family settings by Christian believers, "perfectly pleasant, grandmotherly people who not seldom intone the spells with grandchildren sitting nearby or in their laps,"[12] so Eamon Duffy remarks that "even Robert Thornton, whose learning and devotion are everywhere evident in his manuscript collections," copied healing charms into a compilation intended for his Christian household, including its youth.[13]

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7 Keiser, "Robert Thornton," 71. Keiser's earlier studies of Thornton's life are cited in this essay.

8 Keiser, "Robert Thornton," 67–69; Boffey and Thompson, "Anthologies and Miscellanies," also stress the importance of "family readership" in shaping compilations of this sort. For their use in teaching children, see P. Hardman, "Domestic Learning."

9 Field with Smith, "Afterword," 262–63.

10 Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, X.606, cited by fragment and line number from Benson, *Riverside Chaucer.* For Chaucer's clerical sources, see 956–57.

11 Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, X.607.

12 Foley, *Singer of Tales in Performance*, 109.

13 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 275. For family members, including children, as the audience for

Not only are healing charms and other talismanic materials openly present in Lincoln, but they also hold a fairly substantial place among its contents, mingling with examples of their two closest relatives in formal terms: prayers (in the final pages of its second booklet) and medical recipes (in the fourth and last booklet, as part of a remedy collection known as the *Liber de Diversis Medicinis*).[14] The best-known healing charm in Lincoln is the Middle English verse remedy for toothache that Thornton copied on folio 176[r], near the end of the second booklet. I examine this intriguing text, an unusual version of the widely distributed "Three Good Brothers" charm, in detail in the latter part of this essay. Thornton copied it, "rather sloppily" in the words of Linda Olson, into the space left when the ending of the Middle English romance *Sir Perceval* filled only the first of two columns allotted to it.[15] The charm's sloppiness, its opportunistic use of space originally intended for something else, and its utter irrelevance to *Perceval*—a tale without mention of dental problems—creates the appearance of an impromptu and miscellaneous addition to the book's major contents. But Thornton's inclusion of charms in Lincoln begins to look more intentional when one notes that the fresh page on the verso begins with another toothache charm, this one, in Latin, evoking St "Edlana," a form of "Apollonia," a third-century deaconess from Alexandria whose tormenters "beat out all her teeth" in the course of her martyrdom.[16] Other talismanic materials follow, including a preface to the famous "Heavenly Letter" to Charlemagne from Pope Leo thought to possess healing and protective powers;[17] a Latin prose charm called "Crux Christi";[18] and a long English and Latin plea for protection from various perils with instructions for wearing as a written talisman or "textual amulet," to which Thornton twice added his name, Robertus.[19]

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household books such as Thornton's, see the references in n. 8 above. Smallwood, "Conformity and Originality," 87, also notes that "[i]n England in particular, in the fourteenth, fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, charms were not the arcane material of personal performance, but rather something to be shared, often in writing."

14 Lincoln's booklet structure as described by Fein, "Robert Thornton's Manuscripts," 13–65. Booklet 2 consists of quires D–K, fols. 53–178 and booklet 4 of quires Q–R, fols. 280–321. The *Liber* ends with some fragments from another work of practical medicine, *A Tretise of Diverse Herbis*. For the relation of charms to prayers, see Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 266–98; and Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 41–43, 61, and 177–211.

15 Olson, "Romancing the Book," 119, caption to a reproduction of Lincoln fol. 176[r] with Thornton's toothache charm.

16 Forbes, "Verbal Charms," 310, cites a version of this toothache charm from Northumberland (ca. 1373) that gives the saint's name as "Edelina." For the life of Apollonia, see de Voragine, *Golden Legend*. A letter from Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria from 247 to 265, preserved in Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, I.vi.41, reports that Apollonia's teeth were beaten out, but many medieval artists show them being pulled out with pincers.

17 Lincoln, fol. 176[v].

18 Lincoln, fol. 176[v].

19 Lincoln, fols. 176[v]–177[r]. These materials are described by Fein, "Robert Thornton's Manuscripts," 30–31, and edited by Horstmann, *Yorkshire Writers*, I:375–76. Horstmann describes the text with Thornton's name as a prayer; I call it "talismanic" or charm-like because its instructions call for protective and medical applications such as wearing it into battle as a textual amulet and speaking

Into Lincoln's fourth and final booklet, Thornton copied at least twelve more healing charms as part of a large collection of medical remedies known as the *Liber de Diversis Medicinis* (Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS A.5.2) henceforth the *Liber*, fols. 280–314.[20] As well as prescribing treatment for life-threatening illness and injury, the remedies in the *Liber* address the everyday ailments of a large family, such as bodily aches and pains, burns, blisters, disturbed sleep, coughs, hiccups, and sore throats. They also include instructions for cosmetic procedures such as changing one's hair colour, re-growing thinning hair, removing unwanted body hair, sweetening the breath, and banishing freckles. Professional healers were scarce in fifteenth-century England, and such practical collections could help to fill the gap. Even land-owning families like the Thorntons, whose manor was only about sixteen miles from medieval England's second city of York, would have been unlikely to receive regular treatment from the small number of university-trained physicians who practiced in England in the fifteenth century.[21] They might at different times have sought help from apothecaries, barber surgeons, lay healers without formal education, midwives, tooth-drawers, and parish priests such as the rector of the neighbouring parish of Oswaldkirk, who is cited as the authority for about a dozen of the medical recipes in Thornton's text of the *Liber*.[22] In addition to whatever health care was available from such local practitioners, the *Liber* offered the members of Thornton's household instruction in self and family care.

The twelve healing charms from the *Liber* (five of them explicitly identified with the word "charme") amount to only a small fraction of the remedies on offer, but they address a variety of ailments from minor to life-threatening: one each for toothache, hiccups, nosebleed, epilepsy, and cramp, two for fever, and five charms for childbirth.[23] Just as charms are found among prayers at the end of Lincoln's second booklet, they alternate casually in booklet four with physical procedures and recipes for herbal preparations. Several are flagged in the margin as "a charme," but only in the same way that other remedies are identified as "a syrop," "ane oyntement," or "a drynke." As an example of how freely verbal charms alternate with physical remedies, the *Liber* offers a series of physical treatments for nosebleed, including blowing a dried powder called "sange

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it over a well and giving its water to a labouring woman who will then hastily be delivered. See also Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 272–79, for the use of these materials in popular or folk religion. For the "Heavenly Letter," and the use and prevalence of textual amulets in this period, see Skemer, *Binding Words*, 96–105.

20 Ogden, "*Liber de Diversis Medicinis.*" Two useful studies are Keiser, "Robert Thornton's *Liber*" and Orlemanski, "Thornton's Remedies." The charms are listed in n. 23 below.

21 Orlemanski, "Thornton's Remedies," 238.

22 Orlemanski, "Thornton's Remedies," 238. As Keiser, "More Light," 114, has shown, these mentions of the rector of nearby Oswaldkirk were already present in the exemplar from which Thornton copied the *Liber*; the exemplar seems likely to have belonged to a prominent local family, the Pickerings of Oswaldkirk.

23 I cite Ogden's edition of the *Liber* parenthetically by page and line number: thorn (þ) transcribed as *th*. The twelve charms are as follows: for toothache (18:13–30); hiccups (20:12); nosebleed (49:7–8); epilepsy ("falling sickness") (42:9–15); cramp (42:34–43:4); two for fever (63:11–15 and 63:16–21); and five for childbirth (56:29–38; 57:5–7; 57:8–15; 57:16–17; and 57:23–25).

dragon" (dragon's blood) into the nostrils through a pipe or placing a man's "ballokes" in vinegar or cold water (48–49). To us, the following remedy might seem to derive from an entirely different thought world: "Or tak the blode of hym that bledis & wryte in his fronte [forehead] ✠ a ✠ g ✠ l ✠ a ✠ & he sal sone stanche" (49.7–8). (Inscribed crosses and the "AGLA" tetragrammaton or four-letter acronym for the name of God are common in written charms.[24]) While so apparently distinctive to modern readers, this charm is marked only with the marginal designation "An oth[er]," used throughout the work to indicate alternative treatments for the same ailment.

The charms that Thornton copied as part of the *Liber* do not carry the same weight as those at the end of the second booklet in indicating Thornton's personal involvement with charming, but the inclusion of charms among the *diversae medicinae* of the *Liber* and the many practical collections like it establishes charming as a minor but viable therapeutic option in the lay medical practice of the day.[25] One might ask at this point what evidence indicates that Thornton copied his charms in order to *perform* them, rather than preserving them for other reasons, as curiosities of antiquarian or literary interest, for example. Linne R. Mooney has asked the same question about fifteenth-century medical remedy books in general: is there evidence that they were copied, not as antiquarian curiosities, but for frequent practical use? In addition to well-thumbed pages, damage from spilled liquids, and other signs of heavy wear, in her sampling Mooney found a page containing instructions for bloodletting marked by what appear to be bloody fingerprints, and in the spines and gutters of pages containing herbal remedies she found leaves, seeds, and other botanical detritus. Thus she judges the evidence "quite conclusive" that such unpretentious collections of scientific and utilitarian materials were indeed "working books" in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[26] A remedy book thought to be copied from the same exemplar as the *Liber* was put to use by a Yorkshire medical practitioner named John Reed (or Rede), who annotated it with details of the healing he performed on the upper gentry and nobility of his region.[27] Though verbal charming does not leave the same material trail as many physical remedies, the evidence suggests that the copy Thornton made of the *Liber* extended its practical remedies, charms and all, beyond the local elites to minor gentry families like his own.

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24 Frequently found interspersed with crosses in textual amulets, AGLA is, Skemer, *Binding Words*, 112, "a formula based on the initials of a Hebrew benediction 'Atta gibbor leolam adonai,' meaning 'Thou art mighty forever Lord.'"

25 See Olsan, "Charms and Prayers," for the acceptance of charming by four English medical writers with academic training. Although it is sometimes asserted that university-trained physicians were scornful of charming, Olsan shows that this was not the case with the writers she examines. See also her study of charms in a related series of fifteenth-century English medical remedy books distinct from the *Liber* tradition, "Corpus of Charms."

26 Mooney, "Manuscript Evidence," 199. See especially 193–99 for material evidence; fig. 3 on p. 195 illustrates what appear to be bloody fingerprints in London, British Library, MS Sloane 100, fol. 34ʳ.

27 Reed's book is now Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson A.393. See Mooney, "Manuscript Evidence," 188; and Keiser, "Robert Thornton's *Liber*," 33.

A more direct indication of Thornton's personal investment in charming is his abovementioned addition of his own name to the text of the talismanic prayer or charm he copied into the second booklet: "Da michi N[omen] Roberto ffamulo tuo victoriam contra omnes Inimicos meos [...] libera me Robertum, famulum tuum ab omni dolore, tribulacione, et angustia" (Give me, N[ame] Robert, your servant, victory over all my enemies [...] Free me, your servant Robert, from all pain, tribulation, and anguish).[28] In Lincoln, charms rub shoulders with prayers one assumes were meant to be prayed and with physical remedies that were indeed put to practical use in personal and family health care in this period. Thus it seems reasonable to assume that, in a book meant to offer spiritual guidance, protection, and practical help to his family, Thornton recorded charm texts for his and his family's use in charming.

Mixed Media: Writing and Speaking Words of Power

The charms that Foley and other researchers studied in a rural village in the former Yugoslavia in the 1970s were part of an oral tradition, and the spoken word was doubtless the original medium for performing charms in Western European culture. In the *Odyssey*, the hero's kinsmen chant a blood-staunching charm over his leg wound.[29] In early medieval England, oral performance was likely to have been the norm for charming in Old English and Latin, even when the charm texts circulated in writing, and the Middle English word "charme" derives, by means of the same word in Old French, from Latin "carmen," a song or chant, used also in Latin for a charm.[30] By the later Middle Ages, however, charms to be performed in writing were very common, and the charms in Lincoln represent a thoroughly mixed tradition in which speaking a charm and enacting it in writing could provide equally viable forms of healing or protection. Lincoln provides a particularly instructive example: Thornton copied two versions of the Latin toothache charm invoking the harrowing story of St Edlana/Apollonia, one designed for wearing as a textual amulet and the other, from the *Liber*, meant to be spoken over the sufferer.[31] The version from an unknown source that Thornton recorded near the end of the second booklet is much shorter, it gives the saint's name as "Edlana," and it appears to provide her with a similarly martyred saintly sister unmentioned in the life of Apollonia in the *Golden Legend*. Thornton's text is incomplete because a piece is missing from the top of the sheet:

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28 Fol. 177ʳ, as transcribed by Horstmann, *Yorkshire Writers:* 1:376–77; unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

29 Homer, *Odyssey*, 19:457–59.

30 *MED*, s.v. "charme." Foley, "*Læcdom* and *Bajanje*," compared oral charming in Old English and South Slavic. For orality and Latin charms in England roughly 1000–1500, see Olsan, "Latin Charms."

31 For other versions of the Apollonia charm in England, see Keiser, ed., *Works of Science*, 3867–68. Olsan, "Latin Charms," 119, cites a fourteenth-century English example from London, British Library, MS Royal 12.B.XXV, fol. 61ʳ, intended as a textual amulet to be tied to the patient's head, and Forbes, "Verbal Charms," 310, prints an example from Northumberland ca. 1373.

In dei nomine Amen. ✠ Sancta Edlana et S……e sorores quarum dentes earum fuerunt abstracte pro amore Ihesu Christi,…..vt quicunque nomina earum super se portauerint, a dolore dencium liberentur. ✠ O d…… ✠ discedat te pater ✠ discedat te ffilius ✠ discedat te spiritus sanctus ✠ ab hac …..ffamulis dei Amen. ✠ In nomine patris ✠ Et ffilii ✠ Et spiritus sancti ✠ Amen. Pater noster & III Aue Maria. ✠ Amen. ✠

(In the name of God, Amen. St Edlana and S……e sisters whose teeth were drawn on account of their love of Jesus Christ, ……so that whoever carries (or wears) their names is freed from pain in the teeth. O d…. [dolour (pain)?] let the Father send you away, let the Son send you away, let the Holy Spirit send you away, from this one […] servants of God. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen. Paternoster and three Aves. Amen.)[32]

The phrasing of the instruction to wear or carry the saints' names on the body ("super se portauerint") is characteristic language for a textual amulet.[33] But the mention, with no further instructions, of "Pater noster & III Aue Maria" directs that these prayers, standard in medieval charming and known by heart by most medieval Christians, were to be spoken aloud by the practitioner or by the patient or both together, perhaps as the amulet is attached "super se," which could mean around the neck, over the heart, or near the site of the pain.[34] Thus even this charm to be enacted in writing very likely had a significant spoken element to its performance.

Thornton's second Apollonia toothache charm, copied as part of the *Liber* (18:13–30),[35] records the script for an oral performance, with clear instructions for speaking its words of power "dices isti," "in-iunges dicere [...]," "Et dicat [...]." It sits amid a series of physical toothache remedies, such as pressing the dung of a badger into the tooth cavity, smearing it with horse fat, or pouring liquid extracted from a plant called ground ivy into the ear on the appropriate side of the head. The *Liber*'s St Apollonia toothache charm instructs the healer to address the malign source of the patient's pain directly, "dices isti," banishing it from the sufferer's body, and then to invoke the saint, her name given this time as "Appollonia," asking her to pray for an end to the patient's pain. The charm then directs that the patient and healer recite together three Paternosters and three Aves: "in-iunges dicere iii Pater noster & iij Aue Maria." Speaking the patient's name, the healer further petitions the saint to pray on the patient's behalf: "vt Deus dolorem a dentibus ab hoc famulo Dei : N[omen] : expellat" (that God expel the pain from the teeth of this servant of God, N(ame)) (18:23–25). As Duffy points out, healing rituals such as

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32 Horstmann, *Yorkshire Writers*, 1:375–76.

33 Skemer, *Binding Words*, 136n27 and 163, cites two fifteenth-century examples of the Apollonia charm used as a textual amulet, one from England and one from France.

34 Skemer, *Binding Words*, 133–38.

35 This version of the charm occurs second in the current configuration of the book, but not necessarily in the order of Thornton's copying. The evidence is ambiguous as to the sequence in which Thornton's works were copied. On the basis of its paper's watermarks, Hanna, "Growth of Robert Thornton's Books," has suggested that the *Liber* might have been among the earliest surviving pieces copied by Thornton. Arguing from change over time in Thornton's handwriting, Keiser, "Robert Thornton," 92, thinks rather that the *Liber* was copied late in Thornton's compiling efforts. Orlemanski, "Thornton's Remedies," 242, leans towards placing the copying of the *Liber* early in Thornton's work on his household books.

this one borrow quite directly from the Christian liturgy,[36] in this case including the use of "N" for "Nomen," and the directive that follows, "Oremus" (let us pray). At this word, the practitioner and patient very likely knelt and then spoke the next set of prescribed words, this time directly to a third addressee, God, who answered Apollonia's prayers by delivering her from the hands of her enemies. The climax of the charm—its central act of healing—comes at this point when the practitioner asks that God do for the present sufferer what he did for Apollonia, thus making a bridge between Apollonia's world and the sufferer's, *uniting* the two situations across time. In her insightful work on European charming, Edina Bozóky stresses that a charm's healing is not simply a matter of citing a precedent: what takes place is "a true transposition" of the healing act "from the actual to the mythic level."[37] David Frankfurter gets at the same point when he stresses that by the power of a charm's *historiola*, or brief narrative, an event from the mythic past is, in the words of Gerardus van der Leeuw, "rendered present in the literal sense and made actual and fruitful."[38] Whether the charm's words of power are written out and worn as a textual amulet, as in Thornton's "Edlana" charm, or spoken aloud over the patient as in the *Liber*'s "Appollonia" charm, the same fusion between two worlds effects the same healing.

As compiled by Thornton in Lincoln, late medieval charms thus represent a thoroughly mixed tradition, written and oral, and, as we have seen, even the enactment of written charms such as "St Edlana" often involved the oral recitation of Paternosters and Aves. Of the twelve charms Thornton copied as part of the *Liber*, four are to be spoken and eight enacted in writing, though rarely by means of the ordinary inscription by pen and ink on parchment or paper that we might envision. The *Liber* prescribes spoken charms for toothache (18:13–30), hiccups (20:12), and two of the five childbirth charms on offer (56:29–38, 57:8–15). The eight charms to be performed in writing include the remaining three childbirth charms, one of them to be bound to the labouring woman's knee (57:5–7), one to her belly (57:23–25), and one written on butter or cheese and given to her to eat (57:16–17). Written charms are also prescribed for epilepsy and cramp: the former to be written on the forehead of the sufferer in blood from his or her little finger (42:9–15), the latter involving inscription on a ring (42:34–43:4). Also written in the patient's blood is a charm for nosebleed (49:7–8). Two written charms serve as remedies for fever, one to be inscribed on "obles" or mass wafers (63:11–15) and one on both mass wafers and parchment (63:16–21).[39]

Keys to the Oral Performance of Thornton's "Three Good Brothers" Charm

The best known and most intriguing charm recorded in Lincoln, and the one that offers most keys to its vanished performances, is a Middle English version of "The Three Good

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36 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 279–83.

37 Bozóky, "Mythic Mediation," 85.

38 Frankfurter, "Narrating Power," 463, citing van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, 424.

39 Mass wafers used in charming were "presumably unconsecrated," as Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 275, remarks.

Brothers" (Tres Boni Fratres) intended for speaking aloud. Versions of this charm circulated widely in late medieval Europe, and it was still being collected in the twentieth century; from medieval England it survives in Latin, Anglo-French, and Middle English prose texts, in addition to Thornton's Middle English verse text.[40] On Lincoln's fol. 176[r], Thornton completed his copy of the romance of *Perceval* at the bottom of the first column; at the top of the second, he wrote the medical indication, "A charme for the tethe-werke," and the utterance instructions, "Say the charme thris to it be sayd ix ty[mes] and ay thris at a charemynge" (Speak the charm three times, until it be said nine times, and always three times at each charm ritual).[41] The envisioned performance presumably took place over the course of three days, as in this unusually explicit set of utterance instructions attached to a multipurpose charm in London, British Library, MS Sloane 521, ca. 1400:

> Neme þe sekys name; þanne say þou and þe seke also a paternoster and aue. Say þis charme thryes on thre sundry dayis ouyr hym and here þat sufferyth ony of þeise ma[la] dies; and ley þi ryth hond upon þe seke place, qwyl þou seyst þis charm.

> (Name the sick person's name; then you and the sick person together say a Paternoster and an Ave. Say this charm three times on three different days over him and her that suffers any of these maladies, and lay your right hand upon the sick place while you say this charm.)[42]

Under the medical indication and the instructions for speaking the charm, Thornton copied fourteen lines of verse beginning, "I conjoure thee, laythely beste" (I conjure you, loathly beast). After these verses he left a blank space the width of two or three lines, and then, beginning with a modestly enlarged initial "T," he copied twenty-eight lines of verse beginning "Thre gude brether."

Whether we take these two units as two separate charms or one single charm is not highly consequential: charms in this tradition are often radically segmented with parts that can circulate independently as well as together in long composite charms.[43]

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40 For a recent comprehensive account of this charm from papyrus fragments of the fifth or sixth century to eastern Europe in the twentieth century, with full references to previous scholarship, see Olsan, "Three Good Brothers Charm." Olsan, 61, sees Thornton's version as something of a side line to the tradition because it has been adapted for banishing the "worme" that causes toothache instead of healing wounds or staunching blood. A Latin prose text appears in John of Gaddesden's *Rosa medicinae*, composed ca. 1305–17, printed from London, British Library, MS Sloane 1067 by Hunt, *Popular Medicine,* 26, 29. Hunt, 68, 72, also prints a thirteenth-century Anglo-French prose version of the charm found in Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.1.20 and, 93, 95, a fifteenth-century Latin text from British Library, MS Sloane 962. Sheldon, "Middle English and Latin Charms," 166–67, includes a Middle English prose text, a rough contemporary of Thornton's charm, from London, British Library, MS Sloane 3160 (third quarter of the fifteenth century). Bozóky, "Mythic Mediation," 87, cites a thirteenth-century Latin text from Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 73, fol. 142[v].

41 I adopt the useful term "utterance instructions" from Stuart, "Utterance Instructions."

42 Fol. 272[r]. These instructions follow a Middle English charm said to have been brought to St William by the Angel Gabriel; it is printed by Henslow, *Medical Works*, 145.

43 For example, in his proposed typology, Roper, *English Verbal Charms*, indexes as separate charms "Tres boni fratres," "Longinus," and "Neque doluit neque tumuit" (the latter two discussed below), yet all three combine in the Middle English verse charm (or charms) that Thornton copied in Lincoln.

Favouring the one-charm hypothesis is the fact that Thornton gives only one indication, in the singular, "A charme for the tethe-werke," and the one set of utterance instructions quoted above. As we will see, the unusually poetic final four lines of each unit are nearly identical, forming an evocative refrain if what we have is one verse charm. Thornton crowded the utterance instructions into the page's upper right margin after some words that are crossed out, and to make his text more legible, he drew a line to separate the instructions from the verses beginning "I conjoure thee." These verses may constitute a separate charm, or they may be the first section of a long charm whose second part is the twenty-eight verses beginning, "Thre gude brether." Or, if the untidiness is the result of confusion about the text he was copying, "I conjoure thee" may even represent the displaced final fourteen lines of "Thre gude brether," since in many charms the "conjuring" clauses follow the *historiola* or miniature narrative, in this case, the story of the three brothers. Whatever the intended relationship between the two sets of verses, I will begin with some observations about performance and efficacy in "I conjoure thee," and then offer a close look at these issues in the distinctive version of "Thre gude brether" recorded by Thornton in Lincoln.

"Within the larger world of speech acts," Mitchell writes, "few types of utterances can outstrip the charm for being performative in character."[44] As in J. L. Austin's famous formulation, in charming, "the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action."[45] All charms are performatives, but Frankfurter distinguishes narrative charms, which he classes as "descriptive utterances," from "directive utterances," in which the speaker requires a certain outcome in response to his words of power.[46] The first set of verses on Lincoln's folio 176ʳ, the fourteen lines beginning "I conjoure thee," constitute a directive utterance, in which the force emanates from the "I," the speaker:

I conjoure thee, laythely beste, with that ilke spere	(I conjure you, loathly beast, with that same spear
That Longyous in his hande gane bere,	That Longinus bore in his hand
And also with ane hatte of thorne	And also with a hat of thorn
That one my lordis hede was borne,	That on my lord's head was borne,
With alle the wordis mare and lesse, 5	With all the words greater and lesser,
With the Office of the Messe,	With the office of the Mass
With my Lorde & his XII postills,	With my Lord and his twelve apostles
With oure Lady & hir X maydenys,	With our Lady and her ten maidens
Saynt Margrete the haly quene,	Saint Margaret, the holy queen,
Saynt Katerin the haly virgyne, 10	Saint Katherine, the holy virgin,
IX tymes Goddis forbott, thou wikkyde worme,	Nine times God's prohibition, you wicked worm,
That euer thou make any rystynge,	That ever you stay at rest [where you are]
Bot awaye mote thou wende	But away you must go
To the erde & the stane.	To the earth and the stone.)

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44 Mitchell, "Anaphrodisiac Charms," 31.

45 Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 6.

46 Frankfurter, "Narrating Power," 466.

The speaker directly and definitively banishes the cause of the sufferer's pain, enlisting God's prohibition against any attempt by the "laythely beste" or "wikkyde worme" to linger. This unit's form is that of an imposing list, enumerating the sacred objects, words, and persons by the power of which the speaker banishes the "wikkyde worme" that played a role in the medieval theory of tooth decay, presumably because new cavities resemble wormholes in the teeth. A toothache therapy in the *Liber* that involves steaming the teeth over hot water promises the patient that "thu sall see the wormes in the water, some schortere & some lengare" (19:29–30).

While the authority in a declarative utterance such as "I conjoure thee" emanates from the speaker, in a descriptive utterance like the narrative charm "Thre gude brether," it emanates from the sacred events recounted in its *historiola*. A fascinating instance of a charm within a charm, "Thre gude brether" begins by narrating briefly an encounter between the brothers and Christ, who then teaches them a new narrative charm with its own tiny *historiola*:

Thre gude brether are ye,		(Three good brothers are you,
Gud gatis gange ye,		You travel on good paths,
Haly thynges seke ye.		You seek holy things.
He says, "Will ye telle me?"		He says, "Will you tell me?"
He sais, "Blissede, Lorde, mot ye be,	5	He says, "Blessed, Lord, may you be,
It may neuer getyne be,		It may never be gotten,
Lorde, bot your willis be."		Lord, unless it is your will."
"Settis doune appone your knee,		"Set yourself down upon your knee
Gretly athe suere ye me		Great oath you shall swear to me
By Mary Modir mylke so fre;	10	By the milk of Mother Mary so generous;
There es no mane that euer hase nede,		There is no man who ever has need
Ye schall hym charme & aske no mede.		That you shall [not] charm & ask no reward
And here sall I lere it thee.		And here I shall teach it to you.
As the Jewis wondide me,		As the Jews wounded me,
Thay wende to wonde me fra the grounde:	15	They wounded me from the ground up:
helyd my-selfe bathe hale & sounde.		I healed myself both whole and sound.
Ga to the cragge of Olyvete,		Go to the crag of Olyvet [Mount of Olives],
Take oyle de bayes, that es so swete,		Take oil of bay that is so sweet,
And thris abowte this worme ye strayke.		And thrice around this worm you shall stroke.
…………………………………		[Line omitted that introduced quoted charm text?]
'This bethe the worme that schotte noghte,	20	'This is the worm that didn't cause pain,
Ne kankire noghte, ne falowe noghte;		Nor ulcerate, nor turn yellow;
And als clere hale fra the grounde,		And as cleanly healed from the ground up
Als Ihesu dide with his faire wondis.		As did Jesus with his fair wounds.
The Fadir & the Sone & the Haly Gaste.'"		The Father & the Son & the Holy Spirit.'"
And Goddis forbott, thou wikkyde worme	25	And God's prohibition, you wicked worm,
That euer thou make any ristynge or any sugorne,		That ever you rest where you are or sojourn,
Bot awaye mote thou wende		But away you must go
To the erthe & the stane.		To the earth and the stone.)

This unit opens dramatically with direct address to the three brothers, introduced mid-journey. Narrative charms in this tradition rarely give any backstory, but rely heavily on direct dialogue such as we see here, and roads and travel are common images, figuring the journey from illness to wellness. The goodness of the brothers is established by the idiom "gud gatis gange ye" (you travel on good paths) and by the statement that they seek holy things (2, 3). The speaker of the first three lines could be the healer, or it could be Jesus, the first "he" mentioned in line 4, as we deduce because he is addressed as "Lord" by one of the brothers, the second "he" who begins to speak in line 5. The brother tells Jesus in line 7 that what they seek cannot be found unless he wills it.

In lines 8–13, Jesus agrees to teach the brothers a charm if they will swear by the Virgin's milk to heal those in need without asking for reward. His request that they kneel corresponds to the position likely to be taken by the healer and patient when they pray as part of the charming ritual. Jesus then relates the new charm, embedded within the first, with its own tiny new *historiola* in lines 14–16: at the crucifixion, Jesus was sorely wounded, but he healed himself. He instructs the brothers to rub an ointment three times around the area afflicted by the "worme" mentioned in line 19. As its emphasis on Jesus's wounds suggests, the "Three Good Brothers" is ordinarily a charm for wounds or blood staunching, and this "worme" is an unusual departure. The worms thought to afflict teeth tend to be spoken of in the plural, and a roughly contemporary English prose analogue in MS Sloane 3160, fols. 133–34, mentions a "wonde," not a "worme," at this point.[47] However, since the only medical indication Thornton provides is "A charme for the teeth werke," and the two sets of verses that follow are closely related or parts of the same charm, it appears that the usual wound charm has been adapted for toothache. The healer would presumably suit his actions to Jesus's words, rubbing or stroking three times around the tooth and gum thought to contain the pain-inducing worm. Such gentle and reassuring human contact must have contributed significantly to the efficacy of charming: in the New Testament, Jesus heals by the laying on of hands, and the detailed utterance instructions quoted above from MS Sloane 521 direct the practitioner to "ley thi ryth hond upon the seke place" while speaking the charm's words of power.

Jesus sends the three brothers up to the "cragge of Olyvete" (17) (Mount of Olives) to find a healing substance. Mountains serve as potent settings within charms because they are intermediate between earth and heaven,[48] and indeed it was from the Mount of Olives that Jesus ascended from one to the other (Acts 1:9–12). In many versions of the charm, Jesus sends the three brothers for "black" or unwashed wool and for olive oil, appropriately sought on the Mount of Olives. Thornton's charm, however, offers a different prescription: "Tak oyle de bayes, that es so swete / And thris abowte this worme ye strayke" (18–19). "Tak" is the formulaic word with which medical recipes begin in the *Liber* and other English remedy books, and "oil of bay" is an ointment made from laurel berries, recommended by the *Liber* for pain (47:8–9, "oil of lorell"). The charm's crucial healing moment occurs when Jesus, quoted directly, instructs the mythic brothers to

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47 Printed by Sheldon, "Middle English and Latin Charms," 66–67; Roper, *English Verbal Charms*, 127; and Olsan, "Three Good Brothers Charm," 66–67.

48 Bozóky, "Mythic Mediation," 90.

stroke "thris abowte *this* worme," the one causing pain in the present patient. As we saw in the Saint Apollonia charm, by means of a temporal overlay between an act of healing in the distant Christian past and the desired recovery of the toothache sufferer in the "now" of the charm's performance, the patient's pain is eased.

As indicated in my rendering of Thornton's "Thre gude brether" above, a line appears to be missing after line 19, as the charm's form is rhymed couplets, yet there is no rhyme word for "strayke."[49] In the English prose analogue for our charm in Sloane 3160, the speaker changes at exactly this point from Jesus's own first-person speech to his recitation of the charm he has offered to teach the brothers, which is about his wounds, and refers to him in the third person.[50] In the analogue, Jesus instructs the brother to "say þ[i]s charme" over the wound and then recites a charm often called the "Uncorrupted Wounds of Christ" or "Neque doluit neque tumuit" (It neither hurt nor swelled).[51] If a line to rhyme with "strayke" is missing from Thornton's version, and that missing line signalled the shift to direct quotation of the new charm, as with the analogue's "say þ[i]s charme," it would clarify the third-person reference to "Ihesu" and "his faire wondis" in line 23 of Thornton's version, where, in the absence of an indication to the contrary, Jesus appears still to be the speaker. Thus in punctuating the charm, I place double quotation marks around Jesus's direct speech (8–24) and single around the charm he recites in lines 20–24, beginning "'This bethe the worme that schotte noghte.'"

The "Neque doluit" (Uncorrupted Wounds) charm that Jesus teaches the brothers heals by the same curative logic we have seen in our other narrative charms: just as Jesus's wounds didn't cause pain or fester, so may the present patient's affliction cease to give pain and heal cleanly. Both as embedded in the "Three Good Brothers" and in circulation on its own, this charm shows intriguing variation in the list of pathologies that did *not* happen to Jesus's wounds. In the Sloane 3160 analogue, "þat wonde ne blede not longe, ne rotide, not ne oke, noȝt ne swelled, ne fesstarde nouȝt" (that wound neither bled long, nor rotted, nor ached, nor swelled, nor festered).[52] In Thornton, where "Three Good Brothers" has been adapted to treating toothache, the "wonde" that doesn't hurt or swell becomes the "worme" that "schotte noghte, / Ne kankire noghte, ne falowe noghte"; that is, it doesn't inflict pain or cause the tooth to ulcerate or turn yellow. Then follows, in most charms of this type, the mention of the wound in Jesus's side inflicted by the Roman centurion Longinus. In Lincoln, however, Jesus places the responsibility upon "the Jewis."[53]

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49 The other exception is the extrametrical and possibly misplaced line 24, "The Fadir & the Sone & the Haly Gaste." Charm text adapted from Horstmann, *Yorkshire Writers*, 1:375–77; thorn (þ) transcribed as *th*.

50 In the version found in Sloane 3160, immediately after the instruction to apply oil, Jesus says, "& say þ[i]s charme þer-ouer," that is, over the wound. See Sheldon, "Middle English and Latin Charms," 166–67.

51 "Neque doluit neque tumuit" is the name Roper, *English Verbal Charms*, 113–15, gives this widespread European charm in his index. See also Keiser, *Works of Science*, 3672, who calls it the "Uncorrupted Wounds of Christ" and lists (3871) seven occurrences in English manuscripts.

52 Roper, *English Verbal Charms*, 114–15, gives examples of this variation, and Olsan, "Three Good Brothers Charm," 52–54, gives further examples.

53 For the suggestion that the Thornton books may show a special antipathy towards the Jews, see

The *historiola* of the embedded "Neque doluit" charm is particularly striking in Thornton's version because Jesus narrates the story of his wounding and healing, recalling that his enemies wounded him "fra the grounde" (22) (from the ground up; extensively). In the Thornton version, repeated language reinforces the key connection between the two temporalities, early Christian history, and the present of the healing act: just as Jesus was wounded "fra the grounde" and healed himself "hale & sounde," so in this situation the patient is described as "als clere hale fra the grounde, / Als Ihesu did with his faire wondis." Nearly identical to the final four lines of "I conjure thee," the evocative final four lines of the unit beginning "Thre gude brether" share some of the poetic quality of charms that survive in Old English: "And Goddis forbott, thou wikkyde worme, / That euer thou make any ristyinge or any sugorne, / Bot awaye mote thou wende / To the erthe & the stane." "Stane" can mean "gravestone"; thus to consign the cause of pain to "the erthe & the stane" could simply mean to cause its "death" or cessation. But if the "wikkyde worme" here is a malign spirit to be cast out of the patient and into "the erthe & the stane," this final segment becomes an act of exorcism. Very likely both possibilities operate: in commenting briefly on our charm, Douglas Gray suggests that the "wikkyd worme," also called a "laythely beste" in "I conjure thee," "is probably both a spiritual and a physical creature—a demon of disease and also the worm which for centuries was thought to cause decay."[54]

To press just a little harder on the sources of this narrative charm's efficacy, I have argued following Bozóky and Frankfurter that what matters most is its closing of a temporal gap so that the early Christian event is "rendered present" and the words of the sacred healer (in our charm, Jesus himself) and the words of the performer of the charm merge into one voice. The body of the sufferer in the charm (again, Jesus) merges with that of the patient on whom the practitioner's hand rests. When Jesus speaks of "*this* worme," the worm thought to lurk in the late medieval sufferer's painful tooth, the actual and particular locus of pain that the practitioner rubs with "oyle de bayes," it is the linking across *time* that heals. Many other narrative charms function by means of this link between past and present: Saint Anne's successful delivery of Mary fuses with the struggles of the present labouring woman; the falling to the ground, but then rising again, of the three Magi merges with the temporality of a patient afflicted with the "falling sickness," epilepsy.[55] I suggest that in this simultaneity we see an instance of what Carolyn Dinshaw has described as "different time frames or temporal systems colliding

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Keiser "Robert Thornton," 94–104. But Olsan, "Three Good Brothers Charm," 64–65 no. 3, 67 no. 13, prints a thirteenth-century Latin charm that attributes the wounding of Christ to "Longius ebreus" (Longius the Hebrew) and an Anglo-French charm from the same century that names "Longius l'ebreu." Thornton also gives the name as "Longyous" in "I conjure thee," and his version may be informed by this alternate tradition.

54 Gray, "Some Middle English Charms," 64.

55 Keiser, *Works of Science*, 3673, gives a wealth of examples of childbirth charms evoking the Virgin, Saint Anne, and other holy births. As noted above, a Magi charm for epilepsy occurs in the *Liber*, 42:9–15. Keiser, 3671–72, observes that Magi charms in verse and prose are found "in a large number of learned treatises and in remedy books."

in a single moment of *now*."[56] In premodern thought, Dinshaw argues in *How Soon is Now?*, "desire can reveal a temporally multiple world in the *now*."[57] Few desires can be more intense than relieving the pain or staunching the bleeding of a suffering family member. These "collisions" or "fusions" in time happen in the brief but intense moment of charming—the "now" in which the operative words of power are conveyed to the patient. When the temporal fusion is over, the spoken charm dissolves in air and the written one has been consumed or is to be discarded.[58] As well as helping us think about the efficacy of charms and the keys to their performance that still lie embedded in words recorded over half a millennium ago, the study of charms thus also helps us towards what Dinshaw calls "a temporally complex sense of the past."[59]

To this point I have tried to view the performance and efficacy of charms from the perspective of a medieval user such as Robert Thornton, to the limited degree possible, but I would like to end with a view from the present. With its strange collisions in time, its loathly beasts and wicked worms as agents of pain and disease, to us charming can sound extremely remote, a relic of a thought world utterly discredited by modernity. In 1971, a Yale professor of anatomy, Thomas R. Forbes, summed up modern science's view of charming as "the product of superstition, hearsay, ignorance, and, at best, crude empiricism."[60] But in the absence of cures, medieval medicine sought to relieve suffering, and Bozóky rightly observes that in a Christian universe, "the assimilation of the patient to the collective mythology and the integration of the individual in a cosmic order must certainly give a feeling of protection and security, providing genuine solace that favours the patient's actual bodily healing."[61] The power of such "placebo effects" to relieve pain and other symptoms is now well documented, carefully measured by the pharmaceutical industry. A 2015 article published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* notes that placebo effects work through the same neurotransmitters (such as endorphins) and activate the same areas of the brain as many common medications. Its authors call for more research into the demonstrated efficacy of "attention, gaze, touch, trust, openness, confidence, thoughtful words, and manner of speaking,"[62] all or most of which must also have figured significantly in charming. In this sense, Robert Thornton was not acting out of superstition, hearsay, and ignorance when he copied charms, but was justified in hoping that when they were enacted by speaking or inscription, the healer's "attention," "touch," "thoughtful words," and prescribed "manner of speaking" would alleviate suffering and promote the well-being of the household for whom he compiled his book.

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56 Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?*, 5; emphasis hers.

57 Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?*, 5; emphasis hers.

58 Even when written, the enactment of a charm was powerful but temporary: words eaten, drunk or inscribed on perishables soon vanished, and a written charm from the *Liber*, 57:7, for childbirth instructs, "alsone als scho es delyuered, tak it a-waye." Another (63:21) to be inscribed on mass wafers, instructs that as soon as the patient is healed, the charm should be cast into the fire.

59 Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?*, 38.

60 Forbes, "Verbal Charms," 293.

61 Bozóky, "Mythic Mediation," 91.

62 Kaptchuk and Miller, "Placebo Effects in Medicine," 8–9.

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IS THE "FORMULA" THE KEY TO ORAL COMPOSITION?

EDWARD R. HAYMES

IN A VOLUME dedicated to the memory of John Miles Foley, it may seem inappropriate to question one of the foundations of oral theory, but Foley taught us that we should always question our sources of knowledge. In fact, the last volume to carry his name explored the use of new media to our understanding of oral theory.[1] In the volume before that, he exhorted us to *read* oral poetry.[2] On the cover was a singer "reading" a slip of paper on which the song could never be written (we are told that the singer is illiterate in any case).[3] In the following, I would like to add what a medievalist has learned about oral theory in a lifetime devoted to it.

> "Oral poetry, it may be safely said, consists entirely of formulas, large and small, while written poetry is never formulaic, although writing poets may occasionally repeat themselves or cite other poets to achieve a certain rhetorical or literary effect."[4]

With these words, Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr. drove the comparative study of tradition-based epic into a dead end, one from which it has yet to escape. The result has been a general loss of interest in the comparative method in general and oral theory in particular, at least among medievalists. In many circles, the expression "oral-formulaic" or the names Milman Parry and Albert Bates Lord bring only a tired smile of indulgence. While this may not be the case in the areas addressed by this collection, it is certainly a serious problem for the medievalist comparatist who wants to make use of oral theory in an attempt to understand the forces shaping early medieval literature. It seemed to me worthwhile to raise a question among friends of the theory that has dogged me for almost fifty years: is the formula really the key to oral form?

Parry based his work on a long tradition of formula studies of the Homeric epics and it was nothing new when he observed a "diction formulaire" in the Homeric language.[5] His methods, however, were new, a direct result of the more scientific approach that had entered philology through the work of the new grammarians. Parry's observation of the thrift and extension of the noun–epithet formula in Homer led him to a new explanation for the frequency of formulas in tradition-based epic poetry. The epithets were useful to the poet in producing Homeric lines. He observed that for each metrical position in the hexameter line there was only one epithet for each noun, that is, the metrical situation determined the choice of epithet. He applied the Darwinian theory of natural selec-

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1 Foley, *Oral Tradition and the Internet.*

2 Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*.

3 Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 2.

4 Magoun, "Oral-Formulaic Character," 447.

5 Parry, *L'Épithète Traditionnelle dans Homère,* 27.

tion to explain how such an extensive system could come into existence. He backed it up with a reductio ad absurdum; he imagined a writing poet culling the most suitable epithet in each case out of hundreds of manuscripts of hexameter poetry. He reasoned that only an oral tradition could produce such a system, because only the pressure of constant oral composition would provide the proving ground for the formulaic language through which less suitable epithets would fall out of use and only the best, the "fittest," would survive. The formula was thus something other than an ornamental epithet; it was the tool of a generations-old school of oral epic composition. Parry's proof was logically complete before he turned to a living oral tradition to show that such a thing was possible in the real world. Influenced by Matija Murko, he sought confirmation of his Homeric hypothesis in South Slavic oral epic.

By linking this new observation with the old term "formula,"[6] Parry established a new meaning for the word, one which, like Lord's use of the term "theme," has led to much misunderstanding. It is clear from Lord's use of the term in his 1986 review of recent work on the formula that he (like Parry) had reversed the common use of the term so that formula could apply only to a phrase used in oral poetry while repetition was used to refer to rhetorical or expressive passages repeated for effect in written poetry.[7] There are thus two levels of confusion. On the one hand, the term "formula" has a usage in literary studies that is not the same as that demanded by oral theory; on the other hand, the emphasis on fixed formulas and exactly repeated phrases has led, in my opinion, to serious distortions of the actual functioning of oral composition. This will become clear as we sketch the fate of the term "formula" through the history of oral-formulaic studies.

Parry turned to the South Slavic epic in order to find a living confirmation of his theory in actual oral performance. As we have seen, his theory explained the noun–epithet combinations as the product of an oral tradition. The hypothesis he derived from this assumed that the entire Homeric epic was made up of systems of formulas comparable in extension and thrift to the noun–epithet system with which he had begun. He defined the formula as "*a group of words, which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea.*"[8] This definition poses a number of problems, both philological and psychological, but it remains the "official" formula definition of the comparative branch of the oral poetry school.[9] Its application was even more damaging to the validity of oral studies than the problematic definition itself. Parry and others set out to demonstrate that the poetry in question was totally formulaic.

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6 De Boor, "Formel," in *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*, 367–68, offered a definition that can stand for the world outside the Parry–Lord interests: "Wir erkennen in der Formel die von der Allgemeinheit anerkannte und übernommene und dadurch traditionell gewordene Prägung eines Gedankens oder Begriffes, die in derselben oder annähernd der gleichen Fassung in verschiedenen Zusammenhängen jederzeit wiederkehren kann" (We recognize in the formula the minting of a thought or concept that has become recognized and appropriated by a general public, that has thereby become traditional, and that can recur in different contexts in the same [or nearly the same] form). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

7 Lord, "Perspectives on Recent Work," 491–93.

8 Parry, "Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making," 272; emphasis his.

9 Rogers, "Crypto-Psychological Character."

In order to do this, they had to find proof in the remaining corpus of comparable poetry. Parry was willing to let a single repetition of a group of words within the Homeric corpus stand as proof that a given phrase was formulaic, as long as it was in the same metrical position. With the expansion of the theory to Old English poetry through Magoun and his students, the definition was generally limited to phrases a half-line in length, but the practice remained the same. Magoun made the following claim for his formulaic practice: "A word-group of any size or importance which occurs elsewhere in *Béowulf* or other Anglo-Saxon poems unchanged or virtually unchanged is [...] a formula according to Parry's definition."[10] The claim is totally wrong, both in its appropriation of Parry's definition and in its use of a single repetition to prove that a phrase was "formulaic." Magoun and Lord, along with many others, built demonstrations of "oral composition" on text samples analyzed for formulaic content based on this criterion of a single repetition. We were assured by the authors of these studies that we would find that the entire passage was formulaic if only we had a large enough sample of the poetry in question.

Not even this extremely lax formula definition allowed scholars to show the completely formulaic nature of the texts under study. The "formulaic system" came to the rescue. Parry had noticed that certain groups of formulas seemed to form systems, that is, groups of formulas in which one element remained the same while another changed to match the requirements of the verse or of the "essential idea." We find such systems in the common "inquit" formulas in which a speaker is introduced, or in Old English verses in which one word is exchanged to provide the alliteration. Homerists argued early for "flexibility" in the Homeric formula. Strict Parryists and their just-as-strict opponents cried foul. They saw in the formulaic system only a deceptive method of improving the disappointing formula statistics of traditional analyses. If one could not find an exact match, then this was a way of letting an approximate match do the job. This objection still rested on the concept of the formula as a verse or verse-part that could be found elsewhere in the corpus.

Donald K. Fry, however, suggested in 1967 that the formulaic system itself might be a more accurate description of the operation of the oral language in Old English poetry than the fixed formula. He concluded his discussion by defining the formula in his corpus as a "*group of words, one half-line in length, which shows evidence of being the direct product of a formulaic system*."[11] A formula does not exist unless it is a member of a larger system. Fry did insist on retaining at least one stressed word of the formula as an anchor for the development of the system.

Somewhat isolated from the mainstream of Parry–Lord studies, the Munich Slavist Alois Schmaus published an article in 1960 that deserves far more attention than it has received. He suggested that the real key was what he called the "metrisch–syntaktisches Modell" (metrical–syntactical model).[12] The language of oral poetry is thus a collection of metrically fixed syntactical structures that can be filled with any words available to

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10 Magoun, "Oral-Formulaic Character," 449.

11 Fry, "Old English Formulas," 204; emphasis his.

12 Schmaus, "Formel und metrisch-syntaktisches Modell," 395.

the singer, as long as they are the right length. The epic formula (that is, the repeated phrase) is seen here only as a by-product of the operation of the metrical–syntactical model. A formula, in the sense used by oral-formulaicists, is going to be either an accidental product of the metrical–syntactical model at work with the special vocabulary that is used in telling heroic stories from the past, or, but rarely, a citation of the tradition. Oral poetry can make as much use of these phrases cited "to produce a specific rhetorical or literary effect,"[13] to use Magoun's words, as literary poets. Schmaus failed to extend his observations beyond the South Slavic epic that he was analyzing, but his concept of the metrical–syntactical model has implications for most oral epic.

A somewhat similar concept was developed in the two dissertations summarized by Frederic Cassidy in his 1965 article, "How Free was the Anglo-Saxon Scop?" There, the entire language of two bodies of Old English verse was analyzed syntactically; the study found that there were only about twenty-five different syntactical patterns in the verse and that the majority of all verses were generated using the ten most common patterns. Here the metrical–syntactical model is at work, not the fixed formula.

Over the next two decades, there were sporadic attempts to come to terms with the epic language. In 1972, Patrick Conner suggested a linguistic analysis of Old English verse based on generative grammar, but he failed to follow up on the ideas expressed there.[14] In 1974, there was a conference on the formula at the University of Michigan that was edited for publication by Benjamin Stolz and Richard Shannon in 1976.[15] The conference ended up being more of a discussion on oral theory itself than on repetitions, but several scholars were very close to the syntactical description of the formula.

Two scholars concentrated their attention on Middle High German epic. Norbert Voorwinden summed up the difference between the traditional formula and the epic language of oral poetry in a brief article in 1983 (in which he also came close to the idea of the metrical–syntactical model),[16] and Hermann Reichert attempted in 1990 to use the syntactical patterns established in the concordance by Franz Bäuml and Eva-Maria Fallone to show how the Nibelungen-poet worked.[17] Both Voorwinden and Reichert realized that the oral formula was syntactical. Unfortunately, Bäuml and Fallone failed to tie their syntactical patterns to the metrical shape, greatly reducing the usefulness of their list. They did, however, realize that one had to grasp the whole language and order it syntactically in order to isolate the metrical–syntactical models at work.

Just as Parry developed his notion of the formula from Homeric studies, the idea of a radical new approach also came from studies of Homeric language. Egbert J. Bakker finds that "[w]e are concerned, then, not with oral as the special case of poetry, but with poetry as the special case of oral, in other words, with poetry in speech."[18] His research relates Homeric phrase building to recent work in discourse analysis. His book tries to

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13 Magoun, "Oral-Formulaic Character," 447.

14 Conner, "Schematization of Oral-Formulaic Processes."

15 Stolz and Shannon, *Oral Literature*.

16 Voorwinden, "Begriff der epischen Formel."

17 Reichert, "Autor und Erzähler."

18 Bakker, *Poetry in Speech*, 17.

establish that oral form arose from the attempt to give form to stories from the past. He analyzed Greek hexameter and found that it could be derived from ordinary speech. Much of his analysis is too thoroughly tied to Greek hexameter to be useful here, but his observation that oral epic derived from ordinary speech is very important. Scholars working in the field of Old English made the observation quite early that the verse form was derived from the spoken language.[19] They did not, however, tie this observation to the oral theory nor to the oral origins of poetry.

It is important in this connection to say that the oral theory as founded by Parry and Lord is only valid for long epic poetry, something which does not always emerge from works on orality. There are many types of oral poetry that are built on relatively short forms and thus do not follow the rules given by the theory. We do not know exactly when the theory stops working, but it is certainly when other constraints become more powerful than the metrical–syntactical model and the verse is memorized rather than improvised. We find this in skaldic verse in Old Norse,[20] in Somali poetry,[21] and anywhere that the form is not long enough to require that the poet draw on the special register of language only available to oral epic poets.

Parry had felt himself forced to the conclusion that the language of Homer was traditional and oral by the fact that the Darwinian selection of formulaic phrases tied to specific metrical locations could only have taken place in a situation that allowed for thousands, probably millions of iterations of the Homeric line with varying content that would select the fittest formulaic phrases. The fact that the remainder of Homeric language did not fall into the neatly constructed patterns observed in the noun–epithet system should have alerted Parry to the fact that the literally repeated phrase was only the surface feature of a pattern that actually lies deeper. Schmaus and others saw that Parry's work needed to be expanded to include syntactical units rather than "formulae." Parry made an important breakthrough, one that allowed real oral poets to make their contribution, but it was too constricted, and allowed his followers to get the wrong idea, namely that "formulaic" composition meant orality and orality meant formulaic composition.

Even Parry and Lord could not free themselves from the idea that oral poets thought of their works as "poetry" and worked to make the patterns of traditional language fit an established idea of metrics. Bakker and others have suggested that the process was actually the reverse, that is, that poetry arose from natural language and that the linguistic structures observable in various oral poetries are the result of the working of the process of producing poetically "elevated speech" from the structures of ordinary language.[22] It follows that the "metrical" form of the oral poetic languages arises from the special use of the language, not that it is a template applied from outside to an existing language. The resulting poetry looks a bit like the totally formulaic poetry described by Parry, Lord, and Magoun, but it does not look enough like it to satisfy critics of the theory. I propose that the formulaic theory looks at oral epic poetry from the wrong end.

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19 Daunt, "Old English Verse"; and Bliss, "Appreciation of Old English Metre."

20 Haymes, "Germanic *Heldenlied*."

21 Andrzejewski and Lewis, *Somali Poetry*.

22 Bakker, *Poetry in Speech*, 2.

It sees the product as the tool and still works from an impossible notion of poetry put together out of traditional formulaic expressions.

Two points must be conceded. First, oral-derived epic poetry *does* have more repeated phrases in metrically fixed positions than poetry written without such a model. Second, all tradition-based poetry includes fixed phrases that belong to the tradition as a whole and are not the product of the moment. Neither concession affects my main point, that all "oral-formulaic" epic is composed using metrically determined syntactic structures that are the unconscious building blocks of the special kind of "elevated speech" we recognize as oral epic. This patterning of speech through metrical–syntactical models is the unique part of the special register of the poet/singer's language that generates epic poetry. The rhythmic shaping of the special language of heroic poetry produced the special register we would recognize today as oral epic. This is true whatever language is used as the basis, but it differs according to the special characteristics of the language involved. In ancient Greek, we have a verse built on the length of syllables and the number of such lengths in a line. In Old English, we find a verse built on rhythmic units we would today call a half-line, held together by alliteration. In Middle High German, we find that the emphasis has shifted to end-rhyme and the alliteration has all but disappeared, but the lines are bound together in strophes.

I had reached a similar conclusion in my study of Middle High German epic several decades ago. Much of what I have to say in the following was already developed in my dissertation in the late sixties, but it has not become a part of the "oral theory" as practiced by comparatists.[23]

Like many scholars of the second generation of oral studies, I was irritated by the fact that the poetries I studied would not conform to the theory as put together by Parry and Lord. No poetry "is composed entirely of formulas, large and small," as Magoun had put it.[24] I was particularly irritated by the large number of phrases that were repeated once or twice in a relatively large corpus. This did not sound like "regularly employed" to me. Under the influence of Fry and Schmaus, I explored the "formulaic systems" in Middle High German epic and discovered that they were extensive, far more extensive than the relatively few half-line "straight formulas" the theory had led me to expect in great numbers. I even discovered that there were morphological elements of the language around which similar expressions seemed to cluster. Adjectives and adverbs ending in -*lîche*[25] determined the shape of many half-lines. This observation brought together hundreds of otherwise unrelated verses. I devoted many pages of my dissertation to demonstrating this.[26] Curschmann and Voorwinden came to essentially the same conclusion without citing the extensive evidence collected there.[27]

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23 Haymes, *Mündliches Epos*.

24 Magoun, "Oral-Formulaic Character," 447.

25 The etymological equivalent of English -*ly*, but metrically much heavier.

26 I presented a version in English of my work on the syntactic basis of the oral language in Middle High German at the MLA convention in 1972, but unfortunately I did not publish it, relying on the German publication of the dissertation which appeared in 1975.

27 Curschmann, "'Nibelungenlied'"; and Voorwinden, "Zum Begriff."

Unfortunately, I was additionally seduced into an incautious conclusion, also based indirectly on Magoun's either/or statement cited at the beginning of this paper: that the *Nibelungenlied* was an oral poem whether it was penned by the author or not. This stirred up a hornets' nest of opposition and no one saw the methodological points I had tried to make. My attempts to rephrase the point have fallen on deaf ears and the camps are still divided between those who see the theory as an indication that the presence of formulas (of any kind!) indicates some kind of proximity to orality and those who reject this notion entirely, who declare the oral-formulaic theory to be an "entbehrliches Konzept"[28] (dispensable concept) for medieval German and Germanic literature. Despite my numerous attempts to state the contrary,[29] some German colleagues still think I am a proponent of a purely oral *Nibelungenlied.*

It is not the purpose of this article to raise again the question of whether a specific or indeed any repetition density can "prove" an ancient poetry to be oral, that is, composed by an illiterate poet using traditional materials. I have addressed this question elsewhere and came to the conclusion that the means proposed by Magoun and approved by Lord cannot distinguish between an oral poetry and its imitation, although I insisted then, as I do now, that there can be no imitation without an original.[30] Formulaic (that is, repetition) density does point in the direction of a traditional oral epic, but it does not prove "oral" provenance, that is, that it is an "oral-dictated text," for a specific written poem out of the past. It can only be used together with other clues to show that the poet drew on the *means* of composition, on the poetic language of the traditional poetry, either because it was the only form of poetry known to him in the vernacular (for example virtually all Old English narrative) or because he wanted to identify his poem with traditional values and contents (the *Nibelungenlied*). An examination of the language used in such works can tell us what the oral poetry of that period and place was probably like, but does not identify the works showing these characteristics specifically as part of that tradition, that is, as oral-dictated texts, as Larry Benson triumphantly showed fifty years ago.[31]

The concept of the oral formula from Parry via Lord and Magoun to the "oral-formulaic school" has led to the picture of oral poetry as a kind of mosaic in which the poet arranged the pieces during performance to produce a finished epic. This model led, on the one hand, to the exaggerated claims of the sort quoted from Magoun at the beginning of this paper. On the other hand, Richard M. Meyer already maintained in his monumental study of formulaic language in the Germanic poetries that the language of oral epic was a kind of "dialect" of the spoken language.[32] It had to be close enough to the spoken language to be understandable, but it could have special expressions that were reserved for it. I have chosen the term "register" rather than dialect because it

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28 Andersson, "Oral-Formulaic Poetry," 12.

29 Haymes, *Mündliche Epos*; Haymes, "Chevalerie und alte maeren"; Haymes, *Nibelungenlied*; and Haymes, *Das Nibelungenlied.*

30 Haymes, "Formulaic Density."

31 Benson, "Literary Character."

32 Meyer, *Die altergermanische Poesie*, 483ff.

seems to indicate more accurately the relationship between ordinary speech and epic poetry. Registers are the complexes of usage and vocabulary that we choose when we are in specific speech situations. We choose a different register when we are talking to the UPS delivery man than when we are discussing fine wines with our friends or epic poetry with our colleagues. We often judge a person's social graces by his or her ability to choose and use the proper register in a given social situation. Social comedy is often based on the inability of a character to adapt to the register of those around him or her. The more I work with this area, the more I am convinced that the technique of oral poetry is more like a register of a natural language than a box of linguistic Legos that can be assembled into an epic.

The rhetoric of public speaking is an example of a controlled register that is perhaps only mastered by a few within the society. In pre-teleprompter days (actually since antiquity), politicians and others needing to address large groups actually learned to express themselves in a special rhetoric that was designed to make the speech effective. This rhetoric included rhythmical elements as well as organizational and grammatical ones. Bruce Rosenberg analyzed a special usage of this kind of register under the influence of the oral-formulaic theory in his book on the American folk preacher.[33] There he found that the rhythmical and verbal patterns used by the folk preachers (all of whom, by the way, were literate and used written material such as the Bible) were very similar to the means used in the structuring of oral poetry.

Bakker's above-mentioned study of Homer's language as "poetry in speech" is a welcome shift of focus from the idea of oral poetry as a mosaic of formulas to the idea of oral poetry as a kind of elevated speech, speech made poetic by a special use of rhythm and poetic language. This sounds very much like the description of a special register comparable to the rhetoric of public speaking described above, a combination of lexical, rhythmical, and other items that make up a way of expressing heroic stories in elevated speech. This register is learned the same way we learn other registers. Lord's description of the training of the young guslar describes this process, although I believe he overstates the role of the fixed formula there.[34] His description would have had more power to convince if he had provided examples of "apprentice" epics making too much use of fixed formulas. Lord did correctly observe that there was something of a "grammar" of oral poetry, but he never really developed the notion.[35]

Ideally this discussion should proceed with the analysis of several known oral poetries and their translation into writing, but I am not in a position to do this. The best I can do is to show how the system seems to work in a literate tradition that is (I think) clearly based on an oral model. I am speaking here of the Middle High German epic in strophes that includes the *Nibelungenlied*, the Ortnît/Wolfdietrich poems, and several other works. These poems deal with matters that had been in oral tradition for centuries and, although they are themselves literary works, they make use of what appears to be an oral style. In any case, it is a linguistic register very different from that employed in

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33 Rosenberg, *American Folk Preacher*.

34 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 31ff.

35 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 65.

the composition of courtly romances based on French models. The argumentation here is admittedly circular, but it is based on an observation of the oral models put forward by Lord, Ruth Finnegan, and others. If this poetry is not based on an oral model, then the poet did a very good job of coming up with a style that is highly suggestive of one. I have trouble imagining a poet who would be able to invent such a style without the help of *Singer of Tales* and then be able to circulate it to numerous other poets, some of whom do not seem to have known the original on which they are supposed to have based their style. The manuscript variations in the various poems using this metre suggest that it was a well-established pattern,[36] because the scribes sometimes replace one half-line with another having approximately the same meaning, but one which was well-established in other poems throughout the tradition. In other words, the varying fillings of the half-line were easily interchangeable, even in the mind of a scribe transferring the text from one parchment to another.[37]

The first three lines of the Nibelungen strophe (and all four lines of most of the remaining works) consist of two half-lines each, consisting of four stresses in the on-verse and three in the off-verse. The penultimate lift in the on-verse is usually a long syllable, leaving the final lift on a lightly accented syllable (that is, a feminine cadence). There are many variations on this pattern, but they are all readable with seven beats to the long line:

Do **stvon**den **in** den **venstern** div **min**nech**lich**en **chint** (377, 1)[38]

(There stood in the windows the love-inspiring girls.)

The fourth off-verse of each strophe has an extra lift so that it has a total of eight. The pattern is far less complex in practice than it sounds in description.[39] The metrical variation that is allowed seems to be that which is possible in a sung strophic melody, rather than a metric imposed from without.[40] The special ending of the strophe in the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Kudrun*, and elsewhere may have been a mark that the melody used for that particular strophe was the property of the author of that work. There is much we still do not know about the composition and performance of epic and lyric poetry in the Middle Ages.

Repeated phrases in the *Nibelungenlied* belong to two general types. The first is the traditional phrase, of which there are relatively few, if my judgment is correct. The opening of the first strophe of Manuscript B, kept at the Monastery Library in St Gall (Codex Sangallensis 857), is shown to be a traditional song opening by its use in several other places, including a second beginning within the *Nibelungenlied* itself:

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36 For the *Nibelungenlied*, see Batts, *Das Nibelungenlied*.

37 For a discussion of scribal recomposition, see O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, especially 47–76.

38 Emphasis mine. All citations from the *Nibelungenlied* are from Bartsch and de Boor, *Das Nibelungenlied*.

39 Wakefield, *Nibelungen Prosody*, 184.

40 Haymes, "From Alliteration to Rhyme," 184.

> Ez wuohs in Burgonden ein vil edel magedîn (2, 1)
> (There grew in Burgundenland a most noble girl)
>
> Do wuohs in Niderlanden eins edelen küniges kint (20, 1)
> (There grew in the Netherlands a noble king's child.)

The phrase is not only a traditional song opening; it is part of a large metrical–syntactical system that consists of a monosyllabic verb in the first lift followed by an adverbial expression that fills the rest of the verse:

> Dô gie an diu venster (243, 2a)
> (Then went to the window)
>
> Dô sprach vil minneclîche (3 times 242, 1a; 556, 2a; 561, 1a)
> (Then spoke so lovingly.)

The traditional formulaic phrase fulfils the functions of a formula, that is, it marks the genre, communicates to the listener a certain attitude, establishes an epic community, but it is still part of a larger metrical–syntactical system that generates the verse.

The traditional (non-oral theory) approach to formulaic analysis is often likely to ignore the metrical if the formulaic nature is clear enough. Take, for example, the expression "lant unde liute" (land and people), a formula that is very common in the feudal poetry of the high Middle Ages in Germany. In his *Tristan*, Gottfried von Strassburg makes extensive use of the formula. Here are some samples:

463	er bevalch sin liut unt sin lant
1591	über sin liut und über sin lant
1766	liute unde lande waere
1891	und nerten ir liut unde ir lant

It should be clear from what has gone before that these are formulas of tradition, but something quite different from the repetition as it appears in the *Nibelungenlied*:

109, 3b	liute unde lant
384, 2b	liut unde lant
1147, 2b	liute unde lant
1518, 2b	liute unde lant
2139, 1b	liut unde lant
25, 4b	beidiu liut unde lant
55, 4b	beidiu liut unde lant
2222, 3b	ir liute und ouch ir lant
114, 3b	die liute und ouch diu lant

The expression appears only in the descending half-line, and the word "lant" is always in the rhyme. The first five examples clearly show the metrically bound use of the traditional expression. The next two show the expanded version needed to fit the longer fourth descending half-line. The last two show the pair in a metrically fixed system for word-pairs of this sort.[41] The pages of examples in my dissertation show the use of this metrically formed language *in extenso*. Gottfried uses the phrase twenty-four times

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41 Cf. 130, 1b: "die künege und ouch ir man" (the kings and also their men).

while the Nibelungen-poet, with approximately the same number of verses to cover, uses the term only in the nine verses quoted above. Traditional formulaic analysis would rate the very literary romance as more than twice as formulaic as the tradition-bound heroic epic. We can see by looking at the instances from Gottfried's *Tristan* cited above that the expression is not metrically bound so as to be useful in the rapid composition of verses. The use in the *Nibelungenlied* shows that the pair appears here not only as a citation of a well-known concept in medieval German feudal society, but as a pair of words that could appear in a number of different metrical–syntactical patterns; in other words, the pair made up a metrical–syntactical model.

I should make it clear here that I do not think any of the surviving epics in "formulaic" style are oral, that is, "oral-dictated texts." The poet of the *Nibelungenlied* included quite a number of elements that would have been completely out of place in a traditional epic.[42] Some of the other epics included in this category also chose elements that would have been out of place in traditional epics, but they drew on their stories in order to make a thirteenth-century (or later) point. I think the authors of "heroic epic" in German in the thirteenth century and later chose these stories because they could be told with emphasis on the points the poets wished to emphasize, or simply because these stories were popular with the hearers. The written versions of these texts became canonical, just as the poems from other sources had, and later writers saw nothing wrong with adding to them or subtracting from them when they saw fit. I do not think any of these texts were oral, but they make use of oral language and form conventions in their composition. Among the form conventions was the use of the metrical–syntactical model.

All the texts surviving from the ancient world or the Middle Ages are written and thus belong to Foley's tAgora.[43] There has recently been a flood of books and articles about how oral forms found their way into writing.[44] Some of the solutions to ancient poetries in particular are ingenious, but do not have any comparable information about oral poetics in the Middle Ages. I have spent my scholarly life with German and Germanic poetries and have designated all the German medieval epic texts as "imitation oral" (except those that clearly were derived from [imitated] something else such as the romances from France in Germany in the high Middle Ages) and imagined their authors making use of the oral style because it was one register that was available to them and because the choice of register meant something to the poet. The use of the oral register was thus a conscious choice. In the case of the *Nibelungenlied,* the use of the oral register and a story that was transmitted orally is more or less a citation of traditional poetry to show the conservative nature of the poem. I feel that if we knew as well as we do in the case of the *Nibelungenlied* when (around 1200) and where (between Passau and Vienna) they come from, then we would have less of a problem in determining why the poet chose the oral style.

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42 Haymes, *Nibelungenlied*; and Haymes, *Das Nibelungenlied*.

43 Foley*, Oral Tradition and the Internet,* 238–52.

44 Two of which are Honko, *Textualization of Oral Epics*, and Mundal and Wellendorf, *Oral Art Forms*.

I imagine the oral epic style coming into being as a species of regular speech. The speaker/singer probably found melody to be a powerful ally in keeping the "metre" straight. The singers in the South Slavic tradition use a monotonous melody so that every line would have ten syllables. Gradually the oral style formed itself into a metrical–syntactical unit that was passed on from father to son, very much as Lord described it. We have no real information about the formation of the oral style, as modern collisions of writing and orality are quite different from those which took place in antiquity or the Middle Ages. Then writing was slow and difficult, and oral composition was quick and easy. Writers who imitated the oral style did so because they wanted to make use of orality in a new way, or because they wanted to add an oral song to their repertoire of written works. We can only guess at the reasons for each text, but the tools provided by oral theory can only tell us that the authors chose the register for oral epic, not why.

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THE FORMULA: MORPHOLOGY AND SYNTAX

YURI KLEINER

[T]he formula is the offspring of the marriage of thought and sung verse[1]

The most important task of the singer in the process of reproducing an epic text is to arrange a song, line after line, in order to convey the contents of the song in its own language[2]

IN TODAY'S USAGE, the term "formula" describes several "essential ideas." One, "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions," is central to the Parry–Lord theory, not coincidentally called "formulaic."[3] It would seem that the emphasis on metrical conditions must restrict the term to poetic texts. In practice, however, it is employed widely enough outside the realm of poetry, as in "fairy-tale formulas," "Indo-European formulas," etc.

The most popular dictionaries of different languages define the word "formula" either as (1) "a rule or principle expressed in (algebraic) symbols" (mathematics) or (2) "an expression of the constituents of a compound by means of symbols and figures"[4] (chemistry) or else (3) "an established form of words or symbols for use in a ceremony or procedure."[5] Clearly, (1) and (2) are variants of one and the same statement corre-

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1 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 31.

2 Putilov, "O zvukovoj oranizacii epičeskogo stixa." The quotation is from the posthumously published book *Ekskursy v teoriju istoriju slavjanskogo* (*Essays on the Theory and History of the Slavic Epos*) by the eminent Russian folklorist Boris Putilov. In 1993, Putilov started a series of Albert Bates Lord memorial conferences, which he co-chaired with John Miles Foley (Ronelle Alexander and Yuri Kleiner as secretaries). It was at this conference in St Petersburg that I met John Foley. The last time I saw him was in 2000 at the conference Les Enjeux théorique des débats sur la formule homérique in Lille. I was fortunate to be among the audience of his paper, "La Formule et ses implications," and I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to discuss with him my "Formula: Ambiguities and Possibilities" during and after the conference. For many years, the paper has remained "forthcoming"; revising it for the present volume, I have done my best to reflect John's comments as much as possible.

3 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 30.

4 *OED Online*, s.v. "Formula," accessed June 27, 2016.

5 *Free Dictionary Online*, s.v. "Formula," accessed June 27, 2016. So in *Oxford English Dictionary*, *Collins English Dictionary,* etc. s.v. Cf. "Formule," in *Grand Larousse*, 1977, 1.2: "Forme precise et invariable de paroles destinées à être présentées en certaines occasions"; (1.3) "*formule de politesse [...]*"; and (2) "Expression concise, généralement symbolique, exprimant soit la relation qui unit des entités mathématique, logiques, etc., soit la composition d'un corps au point de vue physique, chimique, biologique [...]. *Une formule algébraique. La formule chimique de l'eau est H_2O*" ("Precise and invariable form of words intended to be presented on certain occasions"; [1.3] "*Form of courtesy [...]*"; and [2] "Concise expression, generally symbolic, expressing either the relation that unites mathematical, logical entities, etc., or the composition of a body from the physical, chemical, biological point of view [...]. *An algebraic formula. The chemical formula of water is H_2O*"). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

sponding to the terms that denote (1) a rigid scheme (principle), an abstract invariant, and (2) its variable material content. Both are opposed to (3), which is a stereotyped expression used in a certain situation.

Coexistence of two homonymic terms inevitably leads to contradictions in methodology and evaluation criteria when applied to different types of texts. The above notions obviously belong to non-overlapping spheres and are mutually exclusive. Yet, the "everyday" usage of the term did not fail to influence both the humanities generally and, in particular, the oral-formulaic theory, leading to the confusion of epic formulas and clichés. Hence, criticism of the theory for reducing traditional (oral) singers' art to the ability to use a kit of memorized set expressions exaggerates the difference between oral and written literature by, among other things, identifying "formula-density" with orality. It should be remarked that much of this criticism dates from the time prior to the publication of *Singer of Tales*, when the oral-formulaic theory was known (to the Germanists in particular) in the version articulated by Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr., or results from the inertia of that period, as exemplified by Adrien Bonjour, H. L. Rogers, and especially Larry Benson.[6] As Alexandra Hennessey Olsen has noted in connection with Rogers's work, he "attacks Magoun's definition of the formula [...] as a way *to attack the oral-formulaic theory itself.*"[7] To her exhaustive analysis of the revolutionary period in epic scholarship and its controversies, one can add only that at least some of the blame for the confusion of the two terms (and notions) lies with the authors of the oral-formulaic theory.

The confusion manifests itself, among other things, in the opposition of "formula" and "formulaic expression," the latter being "a line or half line constructed *on the pattern of the formulas.*"[8] The difference is not clear-cut.[9] Roughly, it can be (and was, in fact) understood as verbatim vs. non-verbatim repetition. On the other hand, analyzing a passage from *Beowulf*, Lord marks "Beowulf maðelode, bearn Ecgþeowes" (1473) (Beowulf said, the son of Ecgtheow) as an undoubted formula (indicated by an unbroken line), the supporting evidence including "Hroðgar maþelode, helm Scyldinga" (371) (Hrothgar said, protection of the Scildings), "Unferð maþelode, Ecglafes bearn" (499) (Unferth said, the son of Ecglaf), and "Wiglaf maðelode, Weohstanes/ Wihstanes sunu" (2863; 3076) (Wiglaf said, the son of Wihstan).[10] Here proper names constitute a variable part of the "formula," the expression of this variation being "X said, Y's son," which is applicable to all such structures in the corpus of Old English poetry. This representation meets definition (2) above of the formula ("an expression of the constituents of a compound by means of symbols and figures").

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6 Magoun, "Oral-Formulaic Character"; Bonjour, "*Beowulf*"; Rogers, "Crypto-Psychological Character"; and Benson, "Literary Character."

7 A. Olsen, "Oral-Formulaic Research II," 143–44; emphasis mine.

8 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 4; emphasis mine.

9 This has been demonstrated by Sale's analysis, "In Defense," 380–82, of the seven meanings of the term "formula" in Parry; cf. 380–81: "Set a. The most general definition: a repetition of some sort—whether of one word or more than one" and "Set c. Formulaic expressions: word-groups with common meter and similar syntax and one shared word, but not necessarily more than one."

10 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 199. *Beowulf* is cited throughout from Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf.*

Lord discusses a similar variation in connection with "davur đogo" (a grey horse) from *The Song of Baghdad.* One way to change the status of "davur đogo" is to go "beyond 12,000 lines"[11] or even include "material from other singers."[12] As if having doubts that the expansion of the corpus will inevitably yield "repeated phrases that without any hesitation can be called 'formulas,'" Lord suggests another method to achieve the same result: "[a] number of the formulaic expressions could very easily have been classified as formulas, had we relaxed our established principles and standards. For example, *davur đogo* […] misses being a formula because the evidence lists only *davur šturan* [a lean horse] and *davur doro* [a bay horse]. But *đogo*, *šturan*, and *doro* are all terms for horses. We could thus have easily increased the number of formulas."[13]

In reality, this approach does not imply any relaxing of "principles and standards," but, on the contrary, it relies on stricter criteria for selecting phrases from the corpus by taking into account the three aspects of the definition of the formula, viz. *syntactic structure* (a formula is "a group of words"), *metrical structure* (a formula is "regularly employed under the same metrical conditions"), and *meaning* (a formula is used "to express a given essential idea"). Since "davur đogo" is identical to "davur šturan" and "davur doro" in its meaning [a horse], as well as its syntactic and metrical structure, the three phrases can be described by one and the same formula:

> [horse[two-syllable epithet]epithet ["horse" = two syllables]horse] horse.[14]

It should be noted that "to be described by a formula" is not synonymous with "to be a formula," the former corresponding to the textual implementation of a certain scheme and the latter to the scheme itself.

Another notion allowing for different interpretations is a "system," either a "substitution system" as

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\text{au} \begin{cases} \text{kuli} \\ \text{dvoru [in the tower/castle/house]} \\ \text{kući}^{15} \end{cases}
$$

or the "system of formulas."[16] The idea itself goes back to Milman Parry, who has defined the system as "a group of phrases which have the same metrical value and which are enough alike in thought and words to leave no doubt that the poet who used them knew them not only as single formulas, but also as formulas of a certain type."[17] This defini-

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11 The corpus of Lord's supporting evidence.

12 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 47.

13 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 47.

14 Here the method of "labelled brackets" is used, the indices signifying the boundaries and meaning of the formula and its constituents, while the brackets reflect its inner structure.

15 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 35.

16 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 144.

17 Parry, "Epic Technique," 275.

tion almost coincides with that of the formula; the difference is but one word ("a group of *phrases*" instead of "a group of *words*"). Magoun quotes this definition, describing Old English traditional formulas, which are "sometimes more than mere repeats and form part of larger formulaic systems used to express the same, or *almost the same*, idea or used to fit some larger rhythmical-grammatical pattern."[18] One of Magoun's examples is Old English "on x-dagum" formulas, where *x* can be "gear" (year), "eald" (old), or "fyrn" (ancient). As in the case of "davur đogo," "davur šturan," and "davur doro," all these groups of words represent one and the same formula that describes all possible *substitutions* (as does the formula), should the term be used in a "less relaxed manner," that is, as in chemistry, H_2O signifying the ratio, "two parts hydrogen to one part oxygen," rather than a certain quantity of both (for example 2 and 1 litres in a concrete volume of water).[19]

In connection with the system in (3), Lord remarks that "such a substitution system expresses graphically the usefulness and the relationship of a group of formulas."[20] The word "group" is unnecessary, for each formula determines all possible substitutions, and conversely, the substitutions, collectively, represent a formula. The phrases of the "au kuli/dvoru/kući" type represent a certain scheme (a monosyllabic particle + a monosyllabic preposition + a disyllabic noun/adverbial modifier), meaning "at a certain place." Another scheme is that of "davur šturan," "davur doro"; in principle it could be used for creating "davur đogo," which will thus become part of a singer's repertoire, or, vice versa, "davur đogo" could become the pattern for creating similar phrases (for example "davur šturan" or "davur šturan") by other singers. (This does not indicate borrowing from or into singers' repertoires; synchronically, they all are a "common property.")

Lord stresses that "the formulas themselves are perhaps less important in understanding this oral technique than the various underlying patterns of formulas and the ability to make phrases according to those patterns."[21] The opposition of "formulas" and "patterns" is somewhat misleading, as well as that of "abstract patterns" and "fixed formulas."[22] Patterns are fixed, as patterns should generally be. The same is true of formulas. In other words, "patterns *are* formulas," while phrases based on them are textual manifestations of formulas rather than formulas themselves.

This is concordant with the main idea of *Singer of Tales*: the principal incompatibility of orality and fixity. Fixity is excluded because the number of possible substitutions on the basis of each formula is unlimited, at least theoretically. It should be stressed that coinciding textual stretches of any length in several performances ("verbatim repeats") do not violate the non-fixity principle. Since a singer does not memorize a song but composes it each time anew when he performs it, verbatim repetitions are also reproduced,

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18 Magoun, "Oral-Formulaic Character," 450; emphasis mine.

19 I am grateful to Vladimir Belyakov, Doctor of Science at St Petersburg State University, for confirming that this understanding of the term and notion does not run counter to that accepted in chemistry and the sciences generally.

20 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 35.

21 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 44.

22 See Kellogg, "South Germanic Oral Tradition," 67.

as it were, each time on the bases of the respective formulas (rather than produced, readymade, from a toolkit). The same applies to entire texts: a singer may repeat a song verbatim in several performances,[23] but at any moment (any performance) he can make a substitution, which will change the text without affecting the pattern. To quote Lord, the singer "employs a set phrase because it is useful and answers his need, but it is not sacrosanct. What stability it has comes from its utility, not from a feeling on the part of the singer that it cannot or must not be changed."[24] In other words, it is up to the singer whether to use the possibility that tradition offers or not.

Most important in this connection is Lord's comparison of substitutions in oral poetry with the processes that take place in natural language.[25] Grammatical substitutions comply with rules of combining certain elementary units. Nobody would call the resulting combinations "formulas," but the rules that underlie them definitely are. To quote Lord again, "in studying the patterns and systems of oral narrative verse we are in reality observing the 'grammar' of the poetry, a grammar superimposed, as it were, on the grammar of the language concerned."[26] Lord, in fact, postulates the existence, within a given natural language, of a special poetic language with its grammar and lexicon, distinct from those of the natural language used by the tradition in question. In this context, the word "grammar" can be used without inverted commas and it can (and must) be described and analyzed in terms of linguistics.

If "poetic language" is not simply a metaphor, it must have its own functional units, as well as some sort of morphology that determines their structure, plus syntax for combining these units into a text and segmenting the text into them. According to Lord, "the formulas are the phrases and clauses and sentences of this specialized poetic grammar."[27] This would imply that formulas belong to the realm of syntax; in this case, they, in turn, must consist of smaller units, presumably words. The same follows from the definition of the formula as "*a group of words*."[28]

But let us turn to another substitution system:

> a. *U Prilipu* (first half-line)
> b. *U Prilipu gradu* (second half-line)
> c. *U Prilipu gradu bijelome* (entire line)
>
> (In {the white [town of]} Prilip.)[29]

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23 Lord's goal, *Singer of Tales*, 9, in criticizing those scholars who "call in to their help the 'fantastic memories' so 'well attested' in illiterate people" is to stress that the belief that "a text could remain from one generation to another unaltered" is a myth and that the singer relies on a "special technique of composition." But it does not mean that it has to be altered and, *Singer of Tales*, 17, that a bard who "can sing at the rate of from ten to twenty ten-syllable lines a minute" is not a "virtuoso" or does not have memory much better than that of average individuals, illiterate or literate.

24 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 53–54.

25 See Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 35–36.

26 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 35–36.

27 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 36.

28 Parry, "Epic Technique," 272; emphasis his.

29 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 35; emphasis mine.

In all these modifications, the meaning conforms to one basic principle: "the formula means its essential idea; that is to say, a noun-epithet formula has the essential idea of its noun. The 'drunken tavern' means 'tavern.'"[30] It follows that "Prilip" is "grad" or "grad bijeli," either explicitly ("Prilip grad bijeli") or implicitly ("Prilip {grad [bijeli]}"); Kiev, too, is invariably "stol'nyj grad" (the capital city) in Russian bylinas; and any hero is X's "beorn" ([son]) in Old English epic. Syntagmatic additions, such as the appositional "gradu" in b above, and the apposition + epithet, "gradu bijelome," in c, do not change the essential idea of the whole phrase ([[being at a certain town]]). The meaning of such "phrases" is not equal to the sum of the meanings of their constituents which, strictly speaking, cannot be regarded as full-fledged words, at least from the point of view of natural language. The semantic deficiency of the traditional epithet had been paid attention to even before it became an argument in favour of orality of a certain poem or poetry. It is only natural, since this phenomenon is present, in various degrees, in most traditions, if not all.

In the bylina about Ilya of Murom and Tsar Kalin,[31] for example, the tsar's insulting appellative, "sobaka" (a dog), is used not only by the narrator, as in

> I vospylal-to tut sobaka Kalin-car' na Kiev-grad:
> I xotit on rozorit' da stol'nyj Kiev-grad (25–26)
>
> (And then blazed the Dog Kalin-Tsar against Kiev-town,
> And he wants to devastate Kiev the capital town),

Prince Vladimir speaking to Ilya,

> Obošel sobaka Kalin-car' naš Kiev-grad (143)
>
> (The Dog Kalin-Tsar has encircled our Kiev-town),

and Ilya speaking to the *bogatyrs*,

> Kak pod našim-to pod gorodom pod Kievom
> A stoit sobaka Kalin-car' (266–67)
>
> (Near our town Kiev
> Stands the Dog Kalin-Tsar)
>
> Kak sobaka Kalin-car' on razorit da Kiev-grad (297)
>
> (And the Dog Kalin-Tsar, he will devastate the town of Kiev),

but also in Prince Vladimir's humble letter to the pagan czar,

> A sadils'ja-to Vladimir-kn'jaz' da na červlenyj stul,
> Da pisal-to ved' on gramotu povinnuju:
> Aj že ty, sobaka da i Kalin-car'! (77–79)
>
> (And prince Vladimir sat on a dark-red chair
> And wrote a humble letter:
> Hey, you, Dog Tsar Kalin),

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30 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 65.

31 Propp and Putilov, *Byliny*, 150–65, cited by line numbers.

by the Tatars when addressing Tsar Kalin,

> Aj že ty, sobaka da naš Kalin-car'! (457)

> (Hey, you, dog, our Tsar Kalin!),

and even Tsar Kalin, about himself, in his letter to Prince Vladimir, ordering to prepare the space in Kiev,

> Čtoby bylo u čego stojat' sobake car'ju Kalinu
> Co svoimi-to vojskami so velikima (61–62)

> (So that the Dog Tsar Kalin had a place to stand
> With his great army),

and in a direct speech to Ilya,

> Ne služi-tko ty kn'jaz'ju Vladimiru,
> a služi-tko ty sobake carju Kalinu (478–79)

> (Don't serve to Prince Vladimir,
> But serve to me, the Dog Kalin Tsar.)

In this connection, Alexander Veselovskij speaks about "oblivion of the real meaning of an epithet" which occurs, for example,

> when a French *trouvère* does not hesitate to call one and the same horse arabi, aragon, and gascon [...]. We could call this phenomenon *petrification*, when in Russian, Greek and Old French epics it grows beyond the epithet per se, when a certain evaluation is used for different phenomena, hostile or opposite in meaning, for instance, when Tsar Kalin is called "a dog" not only by enemies, but also by his own ambassador or when Helena calls herself κυνῶπις [...]. The habitual definition of a hand, "white" in a Serbian song is applied to a Blackamoor.[32]

Such examples are too numerous and obviously systemic to be explained by *lapsus linguae* of some "nodding Homer"[33] or outweighed by more logical combinations, such as "swift-footed" (ποδ-ώκης) Achilles, "resourceful" (πολύ-τροπος) and "cunning" (πολύ-μητις) Odysseus, or "Sige-Scyldingas" (victorious Danes) in *Beowulf*. The later epithet ("Sige-") is used in a somewhat ambiguous situation, when Beowulf reproaches the Danes for their inability to defend themselves, saying that Grendel

> fæhþe ne þearf
> atole ecgþræce   eower leode
> swiðe onsittan,   Sige-Scyldinga (595b–97b)

> (does not have to dread the terrible sword storm
> of your people, of the glorious Danes.)

In the notes to the third edition of his *Beowulf*, Klaeber explains this as "a mechanical use of *sige-* as a general commendatory word without regard to the specific situation," adding "Or was irony intended?" with a reference to William F. Bryan.[34]

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32 Veselovskij, "Iz istorii epiteta," 81; emphasis his.

33 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 10.

34 Klaeber, *Beowulf*, 151. The commentary by Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf*, 154, is

The German translator of *Beowulf*, Martin Lehnert, resolves the ambiguity in favour of irony by adding the epithet "weak," to "people," cf. "er nicht fürchten muß euer *schwachen* Leute, // Der *Schildinge*" (he does not have to fear your *weak* people, the *Scyldings*).[35] At the same time, "Sige-" is omitted both here and in the translation by Kevin Crossley-Holland, who has "the Danish people."[36] Lehnert has rendered "Gar-Denum" as "Gerdänen" in the same episode, "secce ne weneþ / to Gar-Denum" (600b–601a) ([Grendel] does not expect battle with [Spear-] Danes), as "Gar-Dene" in lines 1856a and 2494b,[37] and "Gar-Dena" as "Dänen" (Gar-Danes) in line 1a, while Crossley-Holland opts for "Danish kings."[38] It may seem natural to translate compounds of the "Gar-Dene" type literally, as "Speerdänen" or "Spear-Danes," as Seamus Heaney does.[39] On the other hand, comparing this method of rendering with respective Russian equivalents, M. I. Steblin-Kamenskij[40] remarks that they "demonstrate the inadequacy of such translations, since it is clear that relative adjectives (which substantive attributes are in Modern English and German) are not adorning epithets, but logical attributes, restricting or specifying, in some way, the meaning of the second element."[41] Indeed, unlike German "Goldring" (a ring made of gold), and similar English compounds, "Spear-Danes" are not those "Danes who fight with spears," but simply Danes. Nor are "Guþ-Geatas" those Geats who fight (OE "guþ" [war]), since war is a normal occupation of an epic people, victorious by definition. Therefore "here" (army) in combination with "sped" (success) does not mean "success in battle," because no other success (for example financial) is possible in epic.

In translation, qualitative adjectives can be used, for example "valorous (Danes)" for "Gar-(Dene)," "glorious (Geats)" for "Guþ-(Geatas)," "victorious (Scyldings)" for

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more categorical in their 4th edition: "Although arguably there is here no more than a mechanical use of *sige-* (victory) as a general commendatory word without regard to the specific situation [...] irony may well be intended seeing how helpless the Danes have been." This probably reflects the opinion of Klaeber's opponent more than his own point of view, cf. Klaeber, *Beowulf*, lxiv, n1, "one of the two elements [of a compound] may be more or less devoid of a distinct meaning." For a discussion of the problem in a historical perspective and a somewhat different interpretation of this passage and irony in *Beowulf* generally, see DeGregorio, "Theorizing Irony," 173–74.

35 Lehnert, *Beowulf*, 43; emphasis mine.

36 Crossley-Holland, *Beowulf*, 89.

37 Lehnert, *Beowulf*, 86, 107.

38 Lehnert, *Beowulf*, 23; cf. Crossley-Holland, *Beowulf*, 71.

39 Heaney, *Beowulf*, 1.

40 Steblin-Kamenskij (1903–1982) was the founder of the Department of Scandinavian Studies, the first in the USSR, at St Petersburg (then Leningrad) State University. He was the author of the "theory of unconscious authorship" (see Steblin-Kamenskij, *Saga Mind*; and Steblin-Kamenskij, "Some Considerations"), very close in many respects to the Parry–Lord theory, but based mainly on Scandinavian material. Steblin-Kamenskij was the first to support the publication of the Russian translation of *Singer of Tales* (see Lord, *Skazitel'*). The article quoted, "Substantive Epithet in Old English Poetry," is a chapter from his PhD ("Candidate of Sciences") dissertation, "Formation of Old English Poetic Style," written during World War II in besieged Leningrad and defended in absentia at the session of the USSR Academy of Sciences evacuated to Tashkent.

41 Steblin-Kamenskij, *Trudy po filologii*, 501.

"Þeod-(Scyldingas)," etc.[42] Collectively, such first elements of compounds are regarded as having positive connotations, while "beadu-" (battle), "hilde-" (war, battle), "gryre-" (terror), "gealga-" (gallows), etc. add the idea of hostility and evil to the meaning of the second component; hence, "beaducwealm" (*Andreas*, 1702a) is understood as "violent death," rather than "death in battle."[43] To this group, Steblin-Kamenskij adds "mægen" (might) ("mægen-byrden" [heavy load]), "þryð-" (force) ("þryð-weorc" [glorious deed], "þryð-ærn" [beautiful dwelling]), etc.[44] However, in traditional poetry, epithets do not add meaning to the kernel, but are implied by it (cf. "Kiev" above).

As in the case of "swift-footed" Achilles (above), in some such compounds first elements may seem absolutely logical, for example "beado-grima" (battle-mask, helmet), "beado-hrægl" (war-dress, coat of mail), "beado-mece" (battle-sword), "beadu-folm" (battle-hand), or at least, metaphorically logical, for example "beadu-lac" (battle-play = battle, war), "beado-leoma" (battle-ray = sword). At the same time, in other compounds, such as "beado-rinc" (battle-warrior), they make the combinations tautological, inviting questions about the function and linguistic status of these elements.

In natural language, both are deduced from the oppositions, in which the element in question participates, hence *a black board* (= "a board that can be brown or green") versus *a blackboard* ("what colour is this blackboard?"), belonging to syntax and morphology respectively. From the point of view of the (natural) language a singer uses, "a drunken tavern" is a "group of words," but this is not the case in the language of traditional poetry, where it cannot become "sober" (for example ironically). In it, such "structures" should be regarded as elementary units, similar to words (rather than sentences, clauses, etc.). Discussing "'larger words' composed of smaller, individual words" in Homeric phraseology, Foley remarks, "[o]nce admitted as larger groupings, such *amalgams* function as unitary word-types."[45] The term "amalgam" seems to be the most appropriate designation of such units, reflecting both aspects of the formula, viz. its structure from the point of view of natural language and its functioning in traditional poetry.[46]

Paradigmatic oppositions in which different poetic constructions participate show to what degree poetic grammar depends on that of natural language. For example,

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42 Steblin-Kamenskij, *Trudy po filologii*, 502.

43 Kock, "Old West Germanic and Old Norse." *Andreas* is cited from Krapp and Dobbie, *ASPR* 2.

44 Steblin-Kamenskij, *Trudy po filologii*, 510.

45 Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic*, 144; emphasis his. See also 135, 145. Cf. Steblin-Kamenskij, *Trudy po filologii*, 505, on the meaning of traditional epithets: "such an epithet is incorporated into a compound, rather than expressed by an independent adjective as in Modern Russian." At the same time, 505, he regards such compounds as syntactic combinations rather than real words with a whole lexical content. Very important in this context is the singer's concept of the "word": see Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 25, who notes that "[m]an without writing thinks in terms of sound groups and not in words, and the two do not necessarily coincide." See further, Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic*, 44 and 219n42.

46 Similarly, Niles, "Formula and Formulaic System," 399, views the formula in Anglo-Saxon poetry as "a *rhythmic/syntactic/semantic complex*" (his emphasis). One should bear in mind, however, that rhythm and syntax belong to two different spheres, viz. poetic language and language generally, which in turn makes the formula both poetic- and (natural) language-specific.

Beorht- : *Gar-* : *Hring- Dene* or *Guþ-* : *Sæ-* : *Weder- Geatas*, on the one hand, and *secga* : *eorla* : *hæleða* : *æþelinga gedryht* ([a troop] of [noble]men), on the other represent a compound and a phrase, and different types of boundaries (morphological and syntactic, respectively). From the point of view of poetic grammar, however, both are integral entities, but described by different formulas. The integrity of Xgen.pl. "gedryht" manifests itself, among other things, in the role the variable component plays in the verse. As John D. Niles has observed, "the poet speaks of *secgas* rather than of *eorlas* or of *hæleþas* not because of a desire to fit the precise connotation of a word to a particular context, of course, but in order to satisfy the alliteration of the line."[47] Connotations will appear in translation only. Likewise, the "Dene" epithets can be translated as "terrible" for "Gar-" or "bright" for "Beorht."[48] There are other examples, however, convincing enough to support Niles's conclusion above, such as "East-" (*Beowulf* 392a, 616a, 828b), "West-" (383a, 1578b), "Norð-" (783b), and "Suð-" (463b, 1996a) "Dene" [East/West/North/South Danes], which leave no doubt as to the function of epithets either in compounds or within phrases.

Again, comparison with natural language may not be out of place, in particular with two types of meaning: lexical and grammatical. The analogue of the latter in poetic language can be found in those properties of an element which determine its belonging to a certain "class" and, in this way, its function in poetry, on the one hand, and dependence on natural language, on the other. Like grammatical meaning, these properties are abstract and obligatory, forming the basis of categorization of the elements in question in poetic language. In different types of versification, they may include, for example, the number of syllables in a word (syllabic verse), its accentuation (syllabo-tonic verse), syllable structure (quantitative verse), etc. Alliteration, too, belongs to such "categorical properties": the alliterating syllable (syllabic complex) can be either within a simple word form—"eorla" (431b: alliterates with "ana"), "hæleða" (662b: alliterates with "Hroðgar"), "secga" (1672b: alliterates with "sorhleas swefan"), which is similar to an inflectional paradigm—or within the first element of a compound; it has a lexical meaning of its own in natural language, but from the point of view of poetic language it is closer to "semi-bound morphemes" (for example auxiliaries) in analytical forms.

The formulas that such substitutions follow can be complex. For instance, "sæmanna searo" (329a) (sailors' wargear) is a combination similar to "secga gedryht" (above), but its first element, too, admits substitutions, like "fyrdsearo" (232a, 2618a).[49] This implies a more complex formula that would take account of both paradigms within one "amalgam" or two separate formulas, that is, the choice between (poetic) morphology and syntax. A similar problem arises in connection with "U Prilipu gradu bijelome" (see above) or "stol'nyj grad Kiev," where the meaning is identical to the essential idea

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47 Niles, "Formula and Formulaic System," 396. Cf. Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic*, 219, regarding "manna cynnes" (of mankind): this phrase—perhaps best understood as a single word—offers the poet a metrical element that is highly adaptable contextually and therefore useful in any number of compositional situations.

48 Cf. Steblin-Kamenskij, *Trudy po filologii*, 501, on Schemann's "literal" approach to epithets.

49 Cf. "guðsearo gumena" (328a).

expressed in the kernel element ("Prilip," "Kiev"), but the metrical conditions are different. If the formula can be understood as "exact repetition," "grad Kiev" and "stol'nyj grad Kiev" represent two different formulas. But it can be one and the same formula if "Prilip"/"Kiev" alone can be regarded as the core element with a vacant position at left, with the possibility of unfolding.[50]

The situation is even more complicated in the following from, respectively, *Cædmon's Hymn* (West Saxon version) and *Genesis*:[51]

> **Nu sculon** herigean heofonrices weard (1)
>
> (**Now** we **should** praise the guardian of the heavenly kingdom);
>
> **Us** is riht micel ðæt **we** rodera weard,
> [...] wordum herigen (1–2)
>
> (To **us** (it) is a great right that we the guardian [acc.] of heaven
> . . . with words praise.)

The meaning is "praising" in both cases expressed by "herian" (infinitive and optative), plus "imperative" created by "is riht" and "sculon." Whether the two different metrical patterns conveying the same essential idea represent one or two formulas (and, again, whether we are dealing with *poetic* morphology or syntax) remains arguable.

The problem is further complicated by the "metrical conditions" aspect. In alliterative poetry it has a certain specificity, although the difference between it and other types of poetic diction is not so great. As, invariably, one of the ictuses, that is, possessing a certain structure[52] and carrying metrical stress, the alliterating syllable is connected with verse organization and, in this way, also belongs to "metrical conditions," which, in this context, can be understood in a broader sense. Alliteration, in turn, is most closely linked to variation. Steblin-Kamenskij very appropriately calls the latter "semantic alliteration,"[53] consisting

> in the repetition, at the beginning of the line, of what was said at the end or in the middle of it; variation connects individual lines, as does alliteration connecting two half-lines into one long line, although less consistently. [A] variant, as a rule, a noun, carries the first metrical stress of the following line, being its first alliterating word, determining, as it were, another alliteration and becoming the point of departure of a new line. In short, in alliterative poetry variation is the simplest method to keep up with the meter, when developing the theme.[54]

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50 As in natural language, where nouns and verbs, for example, presuppose a determiner (*city = a/the/this city*) and an auxiliary respectively, with potential left unfolding.

51 *Cædmon's Hymn* and *Genesis* cited, respectively, from Krapp and Dobbie, *ASPR* 1 and *ASPR* 6; emphasis mine.

52 An alliterating syllable is always long, either by nature, /cv̄ / "fus" ("ofer fægum fela reordian," *Beo* 3025), or by position /cv̄cc / "wundenstefna" ("gewaden hæfde," *Beo* 220a) or else being represented by a /cv̄cv̆-/ sequence, "fela."

53 Steblin-Kamenskij, *Trudy po filologii*, 499.

54 Steblin-Kamenskij, *Trudy po filologii*, 494–95.

This description takes account of both aspects of formulaic diction, viz. semantics and metrical conditions (as defined above).

Natalia Gvozdetskaya illustrates "the semantic role of variation in the metrical and syntactic organization of the text" by the following passage in *Beowulf*,

> Byrnan hringdon,
> guðsearo gumena;   garas stodon,
> sæmanna searo   samod ætgædere,
> æscholt ufan græg (327b–30a)

> (Coats of mail rang,
> Armour of men, spears stood,
> The sailor's equipment, all together,
> Ash-tree grey at top),

suggesting that the first variation element normally occupies the b-line, while the a-line is occupied by the second element. In this way, "[t]he two half-lines perform different functions in the narrative: the new and more important part of information being concentrated in the second half-line, the first half-line normally containing an additional or even optional portion of it."[55]

In this scheme, which is fairly intricate, the choice of epithets does not have to be dictated by the alliteration of the line alone. One cannot exclude that it is not by chance that Beowulf's men anticipating a battle are "guðmod" (306a) (of warlike mind) or that Heremod is "bolgenmod" (1713a) (swollen-minded) when killing his own comrades. It is less likely, however, that the connection with Gothic "airzeis" (in error) was still present in "yrre" (rage), both Grendel's own (768b) and the rage that he "bore" as God's punishment, "Godes yrre bær" (711b). Rather, the originally negative connotations of the adjective are applicable to Grendel because everything associated with the monster is perceived as "wrong by definition." The association may be intuitive, but so is the alliteration that the *Beowulf*-poet keeps to faithfully, cf. "**g**uðmod **g**rimmon. **G**uman" (306), "**b**reat **b**olgenmod **b**eodgeneatas" (1713), "**eo**de **y**rremod [...] **ea**gum" (726), even to the detriment of the sense (but not to the essential idea, as in "East/West/North/South Danes"). The different strategies that take place within traditional poetic grammar demonstrate that substitutions are in no way "mechanical"[56] (although they can be,

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55 Gvozdetskaya, *Jazyk i stil' drevneanglijskoj poezii*, 39–40.

56 As follows from Magoun's comparison, "Recurring First Elements," 78, of the diction of *Beowulf* and the *Edda* and his somewhat unexpected conclusion that the *Beowulf*-poet "repeats, I believe, his stock-in-trade of first elements only because he is less skilful, less resourceful in this regard, than his Scandinavian fellows. Therefore, although his audience, probably knowing nothing better in the way of alliterative verse, may have been uncritical on this point, let us not fail to recognize that, in respect to the use of the very prominent feature of recurring first elements of different nominal compounds, the style of *Beowulf* is inferior to, or at any rate quite different from, that of the Eddic lays." Cf. Steblin-Kamenskij's comment, *Trudy po filologii*, 494–95, that "from Magoun's conclusion it will follow that Old English poets who relied on the themes of oral heroic songs and undoubtedly knew oral heroic poetry better than imitators of Christian models and translators from Latin, were inferior to the latter in the use of alliterative diction and that the *Beowulf*-poet, for example, whose creative individuality can hardly be doubted, was less skilful a poet than the author of the cumbersome first part of *Christ*, translators of psalms or authors of imitative didactic poems."

in the same way as hackneyed rhymes in modern poetry), giving an idea of traditional aesthetics' priorities and their hierarchy, as well as the role of "an accomplished poet who brought an inherited form to a fine stage of fulfillment."[57]

Variation reflects various degrees of desemantization, hence, Grendel's mother is "galgmod" (1277a) (gallows-minded), rather than "giomormod" (2267a) (sad of mind, mourning), as in:

> eald æscwiga, se ðe eall ge(ma*n*),
> garcwealm gumena   —him bið grim (se)fa—
> onginneð geomormod   geong(um) cempan
> . . . higes cunnian (2042–45b)
>
> (the old warrior, the one who remembered all,
> spear-death of people—grim is his soul—
> begins, sad of mind [...] to test the spirit of a young warrior.)

The latter example recalls the scene of the funeral of Scyld Scefing: "him wæs geomor sefa, / murnende mod" (49b–50a) (Sad was their soul, mourning [was] the mind). Here the variation, "grim sefa" ~ "geomor sefa," "geomormod" ~ "murnende mod," is combined with the mutual attraction of the kernel words, "sefa" and "mod," conveying the essential idea of loss and sorrow. In terms of the oral-formulaic theory, the two passages represent one and the same theme, that is "a structural unit that has a semantic essence but can never be divorced from its form, even if its form be constantly *variable and multiform*."[58] The stress of variability and multiformity is necessary, because they are inseparable from the formulaic style (and vice versa).[59] Earlier Lord defined the theme as a "subject unit [...] regularly employed by a singer, not merely in any given poem, but in the poetry as a whole."[60] But various "subject units" may recur in any tradition, not necessarily oral. As a unit of oral narrative, a theme must be recognizable. The traditional tools used to discern them from other similar units can, first of all, be markers of their boundaries, for example the end of a theme:

> þæt wæs god cyning!
> (that was a good king!)—(characteristic of Scyld Scefing)
>
> oð þæt
> (until)—(voyage).

To quote Jeffrey Alan Mazo, "[i]n traditional poetry the significance of a particular element would not be a function of its immediate context, but of the theme, the type-scene, the entire poem, or the tradition itself."[61] Indeed, the function of each element of traditional poetry can be regarded as part of its (grammatical) semantics, themes being its context, both minimal and necessary.

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57 Niles, *Beowulf*, 151.

58 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 198; emphasis mine. Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 68, also observes of themes that they are "groups of ideas regularly used in telling a tale in the formulaic style of traditional song."

59 As Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic*, 137, notes, "[t]he phraseology [in the *Odyssey*] does not merely present the possibility of multiformity; it actively is multiform."

60 Lord, "Homer and Huso II," 440.

61 Mazo, "Compound Diction," 86.

The context can include an entire text. For example, Old English "hwæt" (lo, behold) is interpreted as an interjection. This is correct, of course, but only from the point of view of (natural) grammar and vocabulary, which do not take into account its poetic function as an introductory element, first of all, of an entire poem, for example *Beowulf*, *Exodus*, and *Andreas*. The last, although placed under the heading "Religious poetry" in Old English anthologies, together with *Caedmon's Hymn* and *Genesis*, is closer in many respects to heroic epic.[62] In this context, "hwæt" acts as a genre marker. But "hwæt" can also introduce a theme ("speech") within a larger text (*Beowulf*, 530a, 1652a) or be used for making an emphasis within a speech (*Beowulf*, 942b, 1774a, and possibly 2248b).

Similarly, the adverb "þa"/ "ða" (then, thereupon), is regularly used as a marker of a new episode, for example:

> Him ða Scyld gewat   to gescæphwile (26)
>
> (Scyld then departed at the fated time)—(after his life as king)
>
> Gewiton him ða feran;   flota stille bad (301, etc.)
>
> (They started then to go. The ship lay still)—(after the voyage.)

The function can be minimal, for example reduced to syllable filling, as that of "-da" and "-to" in bylinas (see above), homonymous with the particle "yes" and the demonstrative pronoun. From the point of view of metrical conditions, however, the role of connecting elements in making rapid composing in performance possible is significant enough. Their proportion in traditional texts is also considerable. This may help in resolving the paradox resulting from Magoun's analysis of *Cædmon's Hymn*, where "[e]ighty-three plus per cent of the language [...] is demonstrably traditional," that is consisting of formulas and formulaic expressions.[63] The question must arise in this connection, "What constitutes the remaining seventeen per cent?" In terms of "fixed formulas and nearly fixed formulaic expressions" the answer will be "non-formulaic elements," which implies a mixture of two languages (and traditions). But within the system of "traditional rules," all the elements conform to one basic principle once formulated by Lord: "*[t]here is nothing in the poem that is not formulaic*."[64]

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62 Foley, *Singer of Tales in Performance*, 183, calls *Andreas* "heroic hagiography."

63 Magoun, "Bede's Story of Cædmon," 54.

64 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 47; emphasis mine.

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OLD NORSE RIDDLES AND OTHER VERBAL CONTESTS IN PERFORMANCE[*]

STEPHEN MITCHELL

Prelude

I met John Miles Foley for the first time shortly after arriving at Harvard. John had been invited by Albert Bates Lord, Arthur Kingsley Porter Professor of Slavic and Comparative Literature, to speak to the students and faculty affiliates of the Committee on Degrees in Folklore and Mythology. By that time, "ABL" and John knew each other well, especially as John had spent time at Harvard as a fellow at the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature. Both men were, of course, steeped in the older Germanic vernaculars, and, as it happened, one of John's first published articles some years earlier had dealt with the first of the so-called "Storm Riddles," Old English Riddle 1.[1] By coincidence, or fate, one of my own earliest, and then-in-press, forays into scholarship also treated this text,[2] so the table-talk at dinner following John's presentation was in my memory even more animated and footnote-rich than the usual high standard set by those two learned gentlemen.

It is then with fond memories of the relationship that grew from that evening, in its fourth decade at the time of John's deeply regrettable and all-too-early death, that I here return to the genre of the Germanic riddle, the topic that played an early, if minor, role in my friendship with John Foley. But unlike my previous, philologically oriented attempt to compare Old English and Old Norse metaphoric tropes and their complex relationship to the riddle genre, I examine the topic now from a significantly different perspective, one largely inspired by John's bold and creative thinking about traditional oral literature and its relationship to contemporary oral forms.

As will become apparent, my comments are mainly concerned with re-contextualizing possible performance contexts for riddles and other verbal, often question-and-answer, confrontations represented in Old Norse literature as part of a large group of games and competitive confrontations whose enactments are broadly recoverable;[3] thus, what I have to say is less concerned with the literary and intellectual conception of the genres than are, for example, the descriptions we usually encounter in literary histories, tomes understandably concerned with tracing hermeneutic genealogies, especially

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[*] An earlier version of this essay was presented to the "Questions and Wit" workshop held at Aarhus University, May 2014. I take this opportunity to thank the organizers and participants for their helpful observations and encouragements.

1 Foley, "'Riddle I'"; cf. Foley, "Riddles 53, 54, and 55."

2 Mitchell, "Ambiguity and Germanic Imagery."

3 On possible oral enactments of Eddic poetry, cf. the arguments in Gunnell, "Skírnisleikur"; and Gunnell, *Origins of Drama*. Of course, there exists a substantial body of literature that touches on the comparison of the Old Norse to modern traditions, including Harris, "The *senna*"; Bax and Padmos, "Two Types of Verbal Dueling"; H. Davidson, "Insults and Riddles"; Swenson, *Performing Definitions*; and Pakis, "Honor, Verbal Duels, and the New Testament."

the relationship between the literary riddle and the folk riddle.[4] Or, put another way, the thumb on the scale in this brief essay favours "who" and "how" over "what," but it also attempts not to lose sight of the inter-connectedness of those three interrogatives in the best tradition of John's intellectual legacy.

Introduction

The riddle, of course, is a special sort of conundrum or enigma, although it is much more than just that. One early specialist of the genre was largely satisfied to say that it "compares an object to another entirely different object," although, importantly, he does add that it consists of a positive and a negative descriptive element, the latter being what is generally called a "blocking element."[5] In recent decades, there has been a substantial recognition of the subtleties with which riddles are constructed and deployed, and proposed answers judged;[6] moreover, scholars have come to recognize that riddles are not subject to rigid and exclusive single-answers, but rather that their solutions often correspond to a range of potentially correct answers.[7] This last point is of no small consequence when it comes to the question of riddles in a competitive setting, since it allows the riddler the opportunity to deny the acceptability of the proposed answer and put an alternative in its place as the "correct" answer being looked for.

　　One recent scholar captures the essence of the riddle when he writes, in part, that it "can be generally characterized as a verbal game consisting of a question and answer."[8] The important characterization of the riddle as a type of "verbal game" stresses the necessarily competitive element of the genre, for as most of us will recognize, the question and answer aspect, although important, is only part of what makes a riddle a riddle. If one asks, "When does the next train arrive?" for example, and is told, "At 10:00," that is obviously *not* a riddle. Andrew Welsh goes on to refine this initial description, and amplifies this point by noting the presence of "confusing or contradictory" elements in the question and further that these elements "may be implicit in the description itself or explicitly expressed in a 'block element.'"[9] These points are all crucial to understanding what happens when riddles are encountered in situ, as Petsch already observed in the nineteenth century when he distinguished between "Kernelement" (core element) and "Rahmenelement" (frame element) of the riddle, and carefully placed the riddle in the context of listeners and audiences.[10]

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4 Cf. the applicability of the comment in Burns, "Riddling," 141, that his "study focuses not on the riddle as a generic form but on riddling as a genre of traditional behavior."

5 Taylor, "Riddle," 129. On this and other early scholarship on the riddle, see especially Georges and Dundes, "Toward a Structural Definition"; and Green and Pepicello, "Riddle Process." For the Nordic riddle in particular, see Bødker and others, *Nordic Riddle*.

6 For example Lieber, "Riddles, Cultural Categories."

7 Cf. Ben-Amos, "Solutions to Riddles," 249.

8 Welsh, "Riddle," 824.

9 Welsh, "Riddle," 824.

10 Petsch, *Neue Beiträge*, 49. Petsch was, to the best of my knowledge, the first to note this point

To Welsh's estimable characterization, one would want to add, importantly, that a riddle is asked, or performed, *within a tradition of customary knowledge*; outsiders are unlikely to possess adequate familiarity with the range of possibly correct answers, so there is also an a priori insider quality to solving riddles correctly, as many scholars have pointed out. As another standard reference work on folklore puts it, "The 'true riddle' [...] relies on concrete, familiar objects *in the culture,* and it equates two things through the use of a metaphor."[11] Understood thus, a riddle is a description or comparison, posed by one interlocutor to another, in which an intentionally ambiguous element has been inserted with the result that the description as a whole corresponds to a wide range of potentially acceptable answers but prevents the "correct" answer from being obvious.[12] The object of the game is, of course, to provide sufficient correct information styled in a sufficiently veiled form so as to trick the opponent and suggest to observers, even to demonstrate, the questioner's superior mental faculty.

Old Norse Riddles and other Genres

Once a fairly lonely area of research, and subject largely to sporadic forays into the topic,[13] the early Nordic riddle seems to have come into its own in recent years. Especially important has been the publication of two books touching on the genre in northern Europe, Frauke Rademann-Veith's 2010 exploration of the early modern Nordic riddle book in relation to various German models, and Jeffrey Love's 2013 *The Reception of Hervarar Saga ok Heiðreks from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century*.[14]

Not surprisingly, the enigmatic nature of the riddle and the equally enigmatic nature of the Old Norse convention of the skaldic kenning make comparisons of the two types of puzzling-out forms inevitable. And, indeed, the similarity of riddles to kennings has long been noted in modern scholarship, an observation stretching back at least a century to Finnur Jónsson,[15] who notes in his literary history that kennings, like riddles, build on the interplay between the simultaneous similarity and disjunction of the several items involved: "I enhver omskrivning ligger der en sammenligning og tillige en adskillelse, aldeles som tilfælde er med gåder" (In every paraphrase there is a comparison and also

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when he refers to the "hemmendes Element," that is, an element that frustrates or inhibits finding the answer.

11 Noyes, "Riddle," 728; emphasis mine.

12 A point noted by most modern students of the genre, for example Abrahams and Dundes, who write, "Riddles," 130, that riddles are "framed with the purpose of confusing or testing the wits of those who do not know the answer."

13 For example Finnur Jónsson, "Um þulur og gátur"; Heusler, "Die altnordischen Rätsel"; and H. Davidson, "Insults and Riddles."

14 Rademann-Veith, *Die skandinavischen Rätselbücher*; Love, *Reception of Hervarar Saga ok Heiðreks.* Of course, the vast glossary of terms developed for this folklore type and its sub-divisions in the various Nordic languages (cf. Bødker and others, *Nordic Riddle*) is itself testimony to the vitality of its study in modern contexts.

15 Finnur Jónsson, *Den Islandske Litteraturs*; cf. Finnur Jónsson, "Um þulur og gátur."

a distinction, just as is the case with riddles).[16] The overlapping character of the two genres has, since that time, been commented on by no less than Andreas Heusler, Jan de Vries, and Jón Helgason;[17] however, it is especially with John Lindow's 1975 article treating the broader, and in part extra-linguistic, relationship between these two genres that scholarship embarked on a more precise sense for the social function of these two special kinds of puzzles.[18]

That the Old Norse poetic convention of the kenning is frequently likened to the riddle is based on the fact that the correct referents of these extended metaphors must, like the answers to riddles, be carefully worked out among the broad range of possible answers due to the frequently inherent, and sometimes manufactured, ambiguities contained in the imagery. There have, of course, been many attempts to capture the essence of the kenning but, to take two notable English-language suggestions, Jess B. Bessinger describes the kenning as "an implied simile in circumlocution for a noun not named,"[19] while Lindow offers a more subtle characterization, calling the kenning, "a traditional, verbal, poetic figure composed of one or more nominal descriptive elements (a pair of) which may be in opposition."[20] Yet unlike the riddle, there is presumably no specific "blocking element" that looks to obscure the meaning of the kenning; however, as any modern student of Old Norse will know, that is a function which, it could be argued, is carried out by the often astronomically high levels of esoteric information used in formulating these metaphors.

Seemingly of a different sort are Old Norse wisdom confrontations, which likewise appear to be part of a game in our extant texts, and in our textual sources a deadly game.[21] The most obvious instance of such a confrontation in Old Norse literature, where the text builds on a wisdom contest between two actors, is the Eddic poem *Vafþrúðnismál*, where one easily envisions the two interlocutors exchanging questions and answers; at the same time, however, this interesting exchange of questions does not directly involve what most scholars today would regard as "true riddles." Yet it is obvious that this wisdom contest would fit Welsh's view that riddles "can be generally characterized as a verbal game consisting of a question and answer."[22]

With these broad characterizations and similarities in mind, one quickly sees that a number of medieval texts, and even many medieval genres, might properly fit such parameters. Thus, for example, eleven fourteenth-century Latin riddles are recorded in one of the manuscripts of the laws of the Swedish province of Västergötland, Stock-

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16 As quoted in Lindow, "Riddles, Kennings," 311. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

17 Heusler, "Die altnordischen Rätsel"; Heusler, *Die altgermanische Dichtung*, 131–32; de Vries, "Om Eddaens Visdomsdigtning"; and Jón Helgason, "Norges og Islands Digtning," 23.

18 Lindow, "Riddles, Kennings."

19 Bessinger, "Kenning," 434.

20 Lindow, "Riddles, Kennings," 315.

21 On which see Larrington, *Store of Common Sense*, and the literature cited there, as well as the bibliography in Poole, *Old English Wisdom Poetry*.

22 Welsh, "Riddle," 824.

holm, Royal Library (HSS), Holm. B 59.[23] Here, formulaically developed queries are posed, where the line between the sort of religious question-and-answer texts common in the Middle Ages (for example, *Lucidarius, Viðræða lærisveins ok meistara*) and religious riddles can be seen to be quite thin. Given the fact that, as Erik Wahlgren notes, in all but one of the cases, the answer being looked for in these eleven riddles is a famous biblical person, not an object or a tale, the answers may at first appear to be easy and straightforward, yet the questions themselves clearly bear the characteristics we would associate with riddling, especially the so-called "blocking element," that dissembling data point that looks to conceal the obvious answer. So, for example, among these Latin texts, one finds,

> Quis f[uit natus et non] mortuus. helyas. et Enoc.
> Quis fuit mortu*us* [et non natus.] Adam.[24]

> (Who was born but did not die? Elijah and Enoch.
> Who died but was not born? Adam.)

Enigmas of this sort, which test the individual's knowledge of the Bible or church teaching, were part of the European-wide learned Latin clerical culture. Their purpose must have been as much to teach as to test knowledge, and, indeed, pedagogical riddles represent a recognized functional category of riddling.[25]

In fact, such forms are part of a long and widespread tradition of knowledge testing, and it is not difficult to find modern counterparts, such as nineteenth- and twentieth-century American traditions of "scripture cake" and other implicit tests of an individual's knowledge of the Bible (for example, "mix half a cup of 1 Samuel 14:25 into a cup of Proverbs 10:26," that is, mix half a cup of honey into a cup of vinegar).[26] Yet there is much more to these medieval examples than we see in "scripture cake" recipes: these modern-day contests are straightforward as regards knowledge. The "blocking element" represents a paramount difference, pushing these simple questions into the area of the riddle. In contrast to "Who died but was not born?" a question like "Who did God create as the first man?" would, for a medieval Christian, be more or less the equivalent of "When does the train arrive?" The quandary created by combining someone dying without having been born provides the riddle-like or blocking element.

As to why these riddles have been recorded on an Old Swedish legal document, Wahlgren offers the picture of a dramatically stenographic moment and suggests that these enigmas may have been "noted down at the spur of the moment upon the first convenient parchment by some fourteenth-century cleric fresh from a journey or from a glad round

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23 Wahlgren, "A Swedish–Latin Parallel."

24 Wahlgren, "A Swedish–Latin Parallel", 244.

25 For example, Gachanja and Kebaya, "Pedagogical aspects of Riddles."

26 In my experience, these recipes qua contests are created and executed exclusively by women belonging to small fundamentalist churches, and are always treated as being of a good-humoured, even jocular, nature, if with a mildly competitive character, part of which derives from the fact that performance, whether bleak or brilliant, is entirely a matter of self-reporting at, for example, Ladies' Bible Study classes.

of story-telling with his brother-monks."[27] Some centuries later, the fifteenth-century Old Swedish *Lilla rimkrönikan*, several manuscripts of which belonged to aristocratic families, display what appears to have been a basically competitive structure, which I have suggested might have been used in the fashion of the *Joca Monachorum* as a pedagogical tool, in this instance, for the purpose of creating an historical narrative for Sweden.[28]

The parallel between these *Joca Monachorum*-type questions,[29] and the sort of question typical in Nordic wisdom contests raises interesting issues. Against questions of the type, "Who died but was not born?" the Eddic materials place similar questions about named figures from Norse mythology but lacking the "blocking element." Thus, for example, *Vafþrúðnismál* 11, "Segðu mér, Gagnráðr [...] / hvé sá hestr heitir, er hverian dregr / dag of dróttmǫgo" (41) (Tell me, Gagnrad [...] what the horse is called who draws every / day to mankind), to which the answer is Scinfaxi.[30] *Alvíssmál* offers a more pointed comparison to the extent that it demands knowledge in the form of Þórr's repeated, "Segðu mér þat, Alvíss" (109) (Tell me this, All-wise); however, although the god may challenge the dwarf's knowledge, he never poses a question in such a way as to challenge his wit, simply giving the dwarf an opportunity to list a vast array of synonyms used among the various races of beings.

To be clear, I am *not* suggesting that the tradition we see in the Eddic materials necessarily derives from the Christian religious practice—it could have, after all being clever and knowledgeable in word and thought must have had its advantages in many cultural traditions—but after the Conversion, the existence both in the native vernacular tradition *and* in elite Latin culture of such mystery-oriented genres must have served to support the value of these traits in *both* traditions.

Old Norse Riddles in Context

Typically, medieval riddle traditions reflect to a high degree the writing of Symphosius, a late Classical author whose fifth-century collection of 100 riddles was deeply influential throughout the Middle Ages and formed the backdrop against which many of the so-called "literary riddles" in both Latin and the vernaculars were created. But Old Norse, as distinct from, say, Old English with which it so often otherwise shares literary characteristics, lacks any known large collection of "literary riddles."[31] Curiously, the only

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27 Wahlgren, "Swedish–Latin Parallel," 244.

28 Mitchell, "Literature in Medieval Sweden," 44–45.

29 Bjork, *Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, s.v.: "Written in the form of short questions and answers, these texts often play on biblical curiosities, and were meant to stimulate reflection and meditation via their relatively humorous presentation." For Icelandic parallels, see Marchand, "Old Icelandic *Joca Monachorum*."

30 In citing Eddic poems, all references to the original text are to Neckel and Kuhn, *Edda*, vol. 1, and all translations are from Larrington, *Poetic Edda*.

31 Cf. the fourteenth-century Latin riddles noted above in Holm. B 59, on which see also Geijer and Campbell, *Gåtor*, and Wahlgren, "Swedish–Latin Parallel." In addition, sporadic riddles appear, or have been detected, in a variety of contexts, including such disparate sources as runic inscriptions (for example, Eggja, Rök), Ragnarr's challenge to Kraka that she should come neither clothed

significant repository of "true riddles" in all of Old Norse poetry comes from *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, a "fornaldarsaga" generally thought to have been composed in the thirteenth century, and preserved in a variety of fourteenth-, fifteenth-, and seventeenth-century manuscripts, but also a text with occasionally very ancient roots.[32] Some differences among the so-called H-, R- and U-traditions notwithstanding, the saga's riddle contest is placed in all versions in a judicial-like context, namely that in the kingdom over which Heiðrekr rules, trials may be decided either by the king's judges or by the accused tendering riddles to King Heiðrekr. If the king cannot solve the riddles, then the accused is to go free.

We are next told of the king's foe ("mikill óvinr Heiðreks konungs" [32]),[33] Gestumblindi, who is called to the king's court. Because he does not consider himself wise, Gestumblindi does not want to "skipta orðum við konunginn" (32) (exchange words with the king) and sacrifices to Óðinn, asking for help and making great promises.[34] A stranger subsequently arrives at his door, a stranger who says of himself that he too is named Gestumblindi. The two exchange clothes, and the new, recently arrived Gestumblindi makes his way to Heiðrekr, where the king and his guest engage in a wisdom contest consisting of riddles. And it is precisely in this context, that is when Gestumblindi, the disguised Óðinn, responds to Heiðrekr's query as to whether he would rather ask riddles or leave it to the judges, that the god sets himself up to be in a position that guarantees his win: "'Þat kýs ek,' segir hann, 'at bera fyrr upp gáturnar'"(32) ("I choose rather to propound riddles").

Understandably, much of the attention given to this episode has focused on the nature of the roughly three-dozen riddles themselves, some of which appear to belong to the native tradition; in any event, at least six multiforms were later recorded from living oral tradition in Scandinavia.[35] For the most part, these riddles are as far from the *Joca Monachorum*-types as one could imagine, although there are variations in the texts (for example, the H-text is considerably chattier than the R-text and contains an additional seven riddles).[36]

For our purposes here, I am not so concerned with the nature and origins of the riddles themselves as much as with the frame narrative, although it should also be noted that part of the frame concerns the manner in which the contest moves from

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nor unclothed and so on in *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, and the King Frothi section of Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*. Cf. Heusler, "Die altnordischen Rätsel"; Alver, "Norrøne gåter fra mellomalderen"; Alver, "Gåter;" Mitchell, "Skírnir's Other Journey"; and Rademann-Veith, *Die skandinavischen Rätselbücher.*

32 On this late medieval Icelandic genre and its relationship to Nordic traditions, see Mitchell, *Heroic Sagas*. The riddle contest in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* has been at the centre of scholarly debate on "literary riddles" and their function since at least Caillois's *Art Poétique*, in response to which, see Abrahams, "Literary Study of the Riddle."

33 Unless otherwise noted, translations of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* are from Tolkien, *Saga Heiðreks Konungs ins vitra*, as are references to the text.

34 Tolkien, *Saga Heiðreks Konungs ins vitra*, 32; my translation.

35 Alver, "Gåter," 649.

36 See Tolkien, *Saga Heiðreks Konungs ins vitra*, xviii–xxi; and, especially, Love, *Reception of Hervarar Saga ok Heiðreks*, 41–80, 190–238, and his extensive review of secondary literature.

ordinary-sounding riddles, albeit mostly *not* drawn from the stock of international folk and learned riddles, to the two final questions in the riddle session,[37] which deserve special attention as they presumably serve to bring the story back to local pre-Christian traditions:

> Þá mælti Gestumblindi:
>
> > "Hverir eru þeir tveir,
> > er tíu hafa fœtr,
> > augu þrjú
> > ok einn hala?
> > Heiðrekr konungr,
> > hyggðu at gátu!"
>
> "Þat er þá, er Óðinn ríðr Sleipni."
>
> Þá mælti Gestumblindi: "Segðu þat þá hinzt, ef þú ert hverjum konungi vitrari":
>
> > Hvat mælti Óðinn
> > í eyra Baldri,
> > áðr hann væri á bál hafðr?'
>
> Heiðrekr konungr segir, "Þat veiztu einn, rǫg vættr!"(44)
>
> (Then said Gestumblindi:
>
> > "Who are those twain
> > that on ten feet run,
> > three their eyes are
> > but only one tail?
> > This riddle ponder,
> > O prince Heidrek!"
>
> "Thus it is," said the king, "when Óðinn rides upon Sleipnir."
>
> Then said Gestumblindi, "Tell me this then last of all, if you are wiser than any other king":
>
> > "What said Óðinn
> > in the ear of Balder,
> > before he was borne
> > to the fire?"
>
> "You alone know that, vile creature!" cried King Heidrek.)

The riddle section of the saga is its most frequently duplicated and best-documented portion, and at the same time, it is also the most diverse portion with respect to treatment, with the order and even the substance of the riddles themselves differing dramatically in different manuscripts. Some aspects of *Gátur Gestumblinda* do not change, however, specifically the presence of these two riddles built entirely on various elements of Óðinn's career which serve to direct the contest towards the personality of Óðinn; neither their essential nature nor their positions among the riddles changes in any of the manuscripts of the saga, always representing the penultimate and *ultima* riddles. The function of these enigmas, as Love notes, is to underscore that Heiðrekr's demise

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37 The distinction is often made between "incidental riddling" and "session riddling," on which, see, for example, Goldstein, "Riddling Traditions"; and Burns, "Riddling."

requires supernatural intervention.[38] And, of course, as all observers have noted, the last query is only riddle-like insofar as it poses a quintessentially occult, or secret, question amidst many true riddles;[39] moreover, it asks for exactly the same answer as the same contestant, Óðinn, poses as the *ultima* question in the wisdom contest between himself and Vafþrúðnir in *Vafþrúðnismál*, a query which by its nature is unfair, and by definition, not a normal riddle, since only Óðinn himself can possibly know the answer.[40]

In the case of *Vafþrúðnismál,* this trick question appears to trump the knowledge-able disgorging of information that has preceded it, and the giant concedes, "þú ert æ vísastr vera" (49) (you'll always be the wisest of beings). Earlier in the poem (v. 7), Vafþrúðnir suggests that his guest will not leave alive unless he proves himself to be wiser ("snotari") than his host, and Vafþrúðnir's last utterance uses the phrase "feigom munni mælta ec" (with doomed mouth I've spoken); given those comments, as well as the theme of the poem, most scholars assume that the unseen conclusion to the poem is the death of the giant.[41]

In *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, the outcome is more certain, if not as immediate: on being faced with the same question, albeit packaged differently, and reaching the same conclusion, Heiðrekr attempts to kill Óðinn with his sword but fails, after which, Óðinn remarks that because Heiðrekr has tried to kill him without cause ("saklausan"), Heiðrekr will die at the hands of "inir verstu þrælar" (44) (the worst thralls). And so, some time later, King Heiðrekr is indeed killed by escaping slaves whom he had earlier captured.

Wit, Wisdom, and Winning: Old Norse Verbal Duals Writ Large

It is, of course, the way in which the wisdom confrontations function in *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks* that excites our interest here. In one of the more interest-ing essays to take up the social function of kennings, Lindow draws an analogy between skaldic poetry and what linguists refer to as a "secret language" within the "drótt," or chieftain's retinue, showing as he writes, that, "in folkloristic terms, skalds were active tradition bearers, other members of the *drótt* passive tradition bearers, and the tradi-tion itself was limited to the *drótt*: non-members were outside the tradition."[42] In other words, the peculiar diction of skaldic poetry functioned at one level as a method for communicating meaning in an aesthetic form, but it also functioned, and perhaps even

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38 Love, *Reception of Hervarar Saga ok Heiðreks*.

39 Two opposing views on riddle function have developed of which the following may be considered representative: Abrahams, "Literary Study of the Riddle," 196, "[t]hus, at the heart of riddling is the contest motive, and this means in most cases that the *agon* occurs in the area of wits rather than knowledge," and Haring, "On Knowing the Answer," 197, "African riddling is more like a catechism than a creative inquiry. Usually in African riddles the connection between question and answer is fixed by tradition and popular acceptance."

40 This type of riddle is often referred to as a Samson riddle, as it relies on knowledge known only to that individual, or a neck riddle, since the speaker frequently "saves his neck" through its use.

41 See, for example, Ármann Jakobsson, "Contest of Cosmic Fathers."

42 Lindow, "Riddles, Kennings," 353.

primarily functioned, as a method for communicating and reifying social hierarchies and social rules, that is who belonged and who did not, at first to the "drótt" and later to the "hirð" (court).[43]

Lindow's interesting observations about the extra-linguistic and specifically social dimensions of the practice of skaldic poetry—performances that are, for us as modern observers in any event, defined by their linguistic properties, their stylized declamations, and by such additional goals as poetic competition, and performances that are at the same time highly sociological in their purpose—encourage me to think about this situation elsewhere with regard to the Nordic riddle and its nearest kindred among Nordic literary genres.[44] As we have seen, for a century that relationship has generally been assumed to be the province of skaldic poetry; however, we should consider the possibility that there may be Old Norse genres in addition to skaldic poetry which perhaps deserve closer scrutiny *vis-à-vis* the riddle, the *Joca Monachorum*, and its Eddic equivalent, the wisdom contest, genres that also use "coded languages" in performances where challenges based on verbal exchanges posed serially by turns test the opponent's wits and, thus, likewise establish social hierarchies and reaffirm social rules.[45]

Although of a very different character than the riddle, two Old Norse genres, the "senna" and the "mannajafnaðr," are, I believe, their differences notwithstanding, apt genres for comparison.[46] These ritualized forms of verbal aggression are typified by their competitive use of language in specific marked social contexts, and are Nordic manifestations of a widely known form of competitive speech act where language can play a central role in escalating and de-escalating social conflict in structured public display venues. They offer a window on how, to whom, and under what circumstances Old Norse sub-cultures gave individuals permission to exchange powerful invectives. Parallel examples, as is well-known, come from a variety of traditions, for example medieval Italian, Middle English, Scottish, Turkish, Anlo-Ewe and other sub-Saharan African, and modern American traditions.[47]

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43 Both "drótt" and "hirð" refer to a chieftain's retinue or troops, but with an increasingly institutionalized sense over time; see Lindow, *Comitatus*.

44 Cf. Mitchell, "Performance and Norse Poetry," 187–91.

45 Cf. Goldstein's description, "Riddling Traditions," 331, of the contest and performance aspects of a "riddling session" in the Aberdeen area of Scotland in the late 1950s: "in riddling sessions the riddler poses his riddle and usually sits back while his audience puzzles over the enigma. One or more members of the audience will make attempts at guessing the solution and, usually failing to come up with the correct answer, will turn to the riddler for the solution. The audience will then comment on the qualities of the riddle—how good, bad, or indifferent it was."

46 For an orientation to these forms, see especially Harris, "The *senna*"; Swenson, *Performing Definitions*; Bax and Padmos, "Two Types of Verbal Dueling"; and Bax and Padmos, "Senna and mannajafnaðr." On the application of performance and other ethnographically informed approaches to the study of Old Norse literature, see the review in Hermann, "Methodological Challenges." I take this opportunity to thank the members of a folklore seminar at Harvard in the spring 2014 semester entitled, *Maledicta: Ritualized Verbal Abuse*, for their lively and thought-provoking discussions which helped formulate my thinking here.

47 Much has been written on these topics, to say the least. Regarded today as essentially canonical

These competitive verbal exchanges go far back in written records: in Europe that means such famous texts as the Old Icelandic *Lokasenna*, the Middle English *Owl and the Niȝtengale*, and Montgomerie's early modern Scottish flyting;[48] from Africa, there are nineteenth-century reports of such traditions, as well as strong and famous living traditions of ritualized invectives among, for example, the Anlo-Ewe; and with the European slave trade of the colonial period, the tradition was apparently introduced into the New World, where it lives on under a variety of names, for example, the dozens, soundings, snaps, cuts. [49] In his seminal article on "senna," Joseph Harris suggested that we consider the genre as something of an "applied sounding."[50]

Under the influence of Foley's ground-breaking use of new media in the web-based corollary to his *How to Read an Oral Poem*,[51] I note that in the modern globalized media environment it is very likely that the African-American sounding or dozens will be best known to readers from its commercial successes on niche cable programming where the genre has been exploited and popularized (for example *In Living Color* or *Yo Mama*).[52] Watching these commercially produced sketches, one readily perceives the relative lack of spontaneity in the exchanges, and what these "snaps" gain in relative clarity is, I would suggest, lost by their unnatural and staged character. By contrast, watching performances in less media-staged environments is highly enlightening: thus, a short video of two young boys,[53] perhaps five years old or so, learning and embracing the tradition ("doing the dozens"), and being encouraged, egged on even, by the crowd listening eagerly to the formalized insults exchanged by turn, is, in my view, an excellent way to envision the type of performance contexts on which are founded all the different wit-

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are Abrahams, "Playing the Dozens"; Dundes, Leach, and Özkök, "Strategy of Turkish Boys' Verbal Dueling Rhymes"; and Labov, *Language in the Inner City*, 287–353; among the very best treatments are Parks, "Flyting, Sounding, Debate"; and Parks, *Verbal Dueling*, while comprehensive considerations are provided in Neu, *Sticks and Stones*, and Wald, *Dozens*.

48 M. Olsen, *Lokasenna*; Stanley, *Owl and the Nightingale*; Parkinson, *Montgomerie's Poems*.

49 Dollard, "Dozens"; Abrahams, "Playing the Dozens"; Wald, *Dozens*.

50 Harris, "The *senna*."

51 http://www.oraltradition.org/hrop/, accessed July 8, 2016: "The site has been designed to offer examples and additional information that are best presented via the web, the kinds of materials that don't fit comfortably between the covers of a conventional book. In this sense we're trying to take advantage of both media—book and web—and to underline the kinship between oral poetry and the Internet (a subject discussed in *How to Read an Oral Poem*)." [Editor's note: while the journal *OT* is now housed at Harvard University, the online materials from the University of Missouri's Center for Studies in Oral Tradition, including the url cited above, will remain at the University of Missouri where they are in the process of being migrated to the MOSpace Institutional Repository. MOSpace is available to the public at https://mospace.umsystem.edu/xmlui/. As of January 31, 2020, only a portion of the materials contained in the CSOT site have yet been made available.]

52 A sense of these commercial ventures can be had from, for example, the early 1990s television show, Fox's "In Living Color," of which the following, accessed July 8, 2016, would be typical: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-t02cFpOUo. "The Best on MTV's 'Yo Momma,'" YouTube Video, 2:31. May 22, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKTVLeUpnTw.

53 "doing the dozens," YouTube Video, 2:39. Accessed July 3, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEZA50XB9aE&list=PL5_RvGLQ7fbhWWtaA68DMfN3FXkSsLCLY.

based, enacted, formal oral competition genres we know in the North: "mannajafnaðr," "senna," riddle contests, *Joca Monachorum*, and so on.

These playfully charged and spontaneous exchanges, if at the same time also staged and learned in a different sense, replete with shouted encouragements from the crowd ("work his ass," and so on), may seem out of place to those who want to preserve the perception of a grave dignity surrounding the performance of Eddic poetry and other Norse literary forms; however, I think that the spirit of this ribald video ("doing the dozens") may be of equal significance for our understanding of competitive verbal art as are, say, the fifth-century riddles of Symphosius. In many social contexts today, riddling is a largely cerebral activity, but as has been observed of children employing riddling to test social competence and reify hierarchies in contemporary settings, what has been called "contentious riddling" can involve highly aggressive behaviour.[54] Among other things, such real-life performances underscore that the goal of competitive events of these sorts is winning, claiming victory in a competitive speech act, and a key ingredient of such triumph is the defeat, humiliation even, of the opponent, and to that extent, judgments and declarations of victory depend on audiences, onlookers, whether the gods feasting in Ægir's hall in *Lokasenna*, the members of the "drótt" envisioned as listening to a complex use of kennings in a skaldic poem, the listeners of a riddle contest between the king and Gestumblindi in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, or even young men gleefully shouting "work his ass."

Postlude

None of the suggestions above about riddling and verbal aggression in Old Norse can, as far as I can make out, be subjected to empirical testing. If, on the one hand, readers are willing to accept "argument by analogy" as a useful tool in humanistic discussions, then I believe the perspectives offered here open new avenues for understanding both the value and the operational aspects of verbal confrontations in Viking-Age and early-medieval Scandinavia, a matter reflected in the heavily stylized surviving textual materials. If, on the other hand, some readers find it possible *only* to believe what can with absolute certainty be identified in the existing written words of the medieval texts rather than inferred from them, then we are left with little more to consider as regards the riddle in the medieval Nordic world than a handful of modestly interesting codicological observations on the history of the few Nordic texts that take up riddles and other relevant matters.

The price paid for that sort of absolute fidelity to the existing texts strikes me as being very, very high, and as the scholar to whom the works in this volume are dedicated made abundantly clear in his own research,[55] "argument by analogy" can be an extremely valuable and productive method. In contrast to a deadening intellectual minimalism, Foley's approach was one that could be characterized, as he himself once remarked in a different context, as "much less predetermined and far more interactive, emergent, and

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54 McDowell, *Children's Riddling*.

55 For example Foley, *Oral Tradition and the Internet*.

performative."[56] Certainly, it offers a productive pathway for considering verbal aggression in the medieval Nordic world, one of which I suspect John himself would approve.

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56 Quoted in Roth, "Between OT and IT."

PERFORMANCE ARCHAEOLOGY, *EIRÍKSMÁL*, *HÁKONARMÁL*, AND THE STUDY OF OLD NORDIC RELIGIONS*

TERRY GUNNELL

THIS VOLUME IS dedicated to the memory of the late, sadly-missed John Miles Foley, and it is fitting that this article should begin with a quotation from Foley's *How to Read an Oral Poem*. As with so much of what Foley wrote, the quotation is highly astute. I have regularly used it because it sums up almost everything I have ever wanted to stress about the key differences between oral and written poetry and the ways in which they function and are received:

> Any oral poem, like any utterance, is profoundly contingent on its context. To assume that it is detachable—that we can comfortably speak of "an oral poem" as a freestanding item—is necessarily to take it out of context. And what is the lost context? It is the performance, the audience, the poet, the music, the specialized way of speaking, the gestures, the costuming, the visual aids, the occasion, the ritual, and myriad other aspects of the given poem's reality [...]. And when we pry an oral poem out of one language and insert it into another, things will inevitably change. We'll pay a price.[1]

What Foley is referring to when he discusses "the lost context" is the element of *performance*, something that many of us, be we scholars of literature or scholars dealing with history, religion, or archaeology, often forget when we are engaged with our studies focusing on ancient texts and objects. After all, many of us first encountered these once-living sources as static pieces viewed out of context in libraries and museums, pinned down for examination like butterflies in a biology exhibition. While we might give a brief passing salute to the idea that this material might have had roots in the oral tradition, living ritual, or entertainment, and to the idea that it led a long and meaningful life before it reached its present situation, we rarely give much detailed thought to exactly *how* the texts and objects in question might have originally functioned—or performed—in a wider context. Such considerations are commonly dismissed as belonging to the realm of light speculation, and what we are supposed to deal with as scholars are *facts*. The problem, nonetheless, is that when it comes down to it, many of the "facts" in question are a little like the remains of the party one encounters the morning after: the dirty dishes and glasses, or the Christmas tree rolling down the road on 7 January. These are certainly facts, but we might remember that what was most important for those involved was not the dirty dishes, the dead tree, or even the old wrapping paper, but the

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1 Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*, 60.

party itself, in other words, the happening that gave them meaning. We might bear in mind that it is the "happening" that we are tending to ignore when we concentrate on the dirty glasses and the bones of the turkey: in short, while we may well be concentrating on facts, these are facts which have been taken out of their key functional context as part of a performative life. And even though the performance has disappeared, it still needs to be borne in mind if we are ever to make any real sense of what has been left behind.

The Performance Studies approach that I have tended to take over the years with regard to the Eddic poems preserved in early medieval Iceland has underlined that consideration of the *shared experience* that preceded the remaining "facts" matters a great deal for the way in which the facts in question are understood.[2] This applies especially when dealing with poems like the Eddic and skaldic poems which once lived within the oral tradition, and not least if we wish to understand the nature of the phenomenon that the "original" work might have been and how it *functioned* in society. Rather than merely concentrating on the structure and colours of the dead butterfly, there is good reason to consider its flight and the effects it had on those who observed it.

The Performance Studies approach under discussion here is one that has been effectively advocated by scholars like Richard Schechner, and emphasizes, among other things, that we should consider the nature of our *own* living experiences when analyzing the nature of earlier oral work that has been performed and later recorded.[3] The approach certainly seems to demonstrate that with a little application of thought drawn from the multiplicity of our own experiences, some of the valuable missing context surrounding ancient oral remains can be resurrected. As a folklore colleague from Sweden, Owe Ronström, informed my students recently, such an approach prioritizes "how," "why," or "what for" over "what."[4] Equally important, by prioritizing *experience* over remains, this approach helps to focus the spotlight on a number of new important questions that we often forget when poring over those dead butterflies in the silent air-conditioned museum (or library), where food, drink, dance, music, battle, ritual, masks, and blood sacrifice tend to be frowned on.

There is too little space here to give a detailed overview of the Performance Studies approach to oral texts. Suffice to say it has grown out of an amalgamation of various interdisciplinary approaches relating to performance and drama, starting with the somewhat obvious realization that in any dramatic performance, the written text is only a small part of the wider "text" received by audiences which, as Foley notes (see above), will naturally include the stage setting and lighting, the positioning of actors, their appearances, their movement, gesture and expression, as well as tonal and rhyth-

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2 Gunnell, *Origins of Drama*; Gunnell, "*Hof*, Halls"; Gunnell, "'Til holts ek gekk'"; Gunnell, "Narratives, Space, and Drama"; Gunnell, "Performance of the Poetic Edda"; Gunnell, "Drama of the Poetic Edda"; Gunnell, "Völuspá in Performance"; Gunnell, "Masks and Performance"; Gunnell, "Eddic Performance"; Gunnell, "Ritual"; Gunnell, "Performance Studies"; and Gunnell, "Ritual."

3 Schechner, *Environmental Theater*; Schechner, *Essays on Performance Theory*; Schechner, *Between Theory and Anthropology*; Schechner, *Performance Theory*; Schechner, *The Future of Ritual*; Schechner, "Fundamentals of Performance Studies"; Schechner, *Over, Under, and Around*; and Schechner, *Performance Studies*.

4 See further Gunnell and Ronström, "Folklore och Performance Studies," 34.

mic aspects and other sensual signals including smell, touch, and even taste in some cases.[5] Over and above this, we have the wider framework of the theatre space itself, the social situation at the time, and the audience's own background knowledge and expectations, as well as the degree to which the performance was safely separated from the day-to-day life of the audience. This experiential approach was then applied to Erving Goffman's argument that all encounters between people in everyday life can be analyzed from such a viewpoint "as" performance.[6] Further application came from J. L. Austin's ideas of performativity;[7] Johan Huizinga's work on the nature of play;[8] the key work of the Lord–Parry–Foley school analyzing the ways in which oral poetry was composed and performed;[9] the arguments put forward by Victor Turner and others about the nature of ritual performance;[10] and the considerations of the social-linguistic Labov–Hymes–Bauman school of performance, which focused on careful discourse analysis of oral narrative events.[11] Placed alongside each other on a shelf, these works provide a range of very useful tools for analyzing "what's going on" in any given oral performance over and above the text—in short, a range of different ways to examine not only living performance, but also the "lost" original "context" that would have accompanied the early oral performance of works that are now only extant in writing.

As the quotation by Foley cited above underlines, there are numerous reasons for considering oral poems or oral narratives in the same way that we consider dramatic performances. Both work on their audiences in a very similar way. Indeed, the dividing line between the two forms as types of performance is very unclear, as one can see in modern stand-up routines or many types of slam poetry.[12] Furthermore, as Schechner points out, in functional terms, all performances will position themselves somewhere on a dyad between ritual and play, in other words, between long-term efficacy and pure entertainment.[13] They are similarly both types of "restored behaviour" in different degrees, employing a range of cultural building-blocks known and understood by the audience.[14] Both centre on a performer, an audience, and something that is performed; and quite naturally both involve not only the performance itself, but a period of prepa-

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5 See further Gunnell, "Narratives, Space, and Drama"; Gunnell, "Introduction"; and Pfister, *Theory and Analysis of Drama,* 8.

6 Goffman, *Presentation of Self*; and Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 38–45.

7 Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*.

8 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*.

9 Lord, *Singer of Tales*; Foley, *Oral-Formulaic Theory*; Foley, *Theory of Oral Composition*; Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic*; Foley, *Immanent Art*; Foley, *Singer of Tales In Performance*; Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem*; and Foley, *Wedding*.

10 See, for example, Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*.

11 See, for example, Labov, *Language in the Inner City*; Hymes, *Foundations in Sociolinguistics*; Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance*; Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event*; Bauman, "Contextualization, Tradition"; and Bauman and Braid, "Ethnography of Performance."

12 See further, Millward, "Skaldic Slam."

13 Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 49, 79–80.

14 Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 28–29.

ration beforehand (which might include training, rehearsal, and/or composition), and then a period afterwards which will range from performance "cool-down" to long-term influences on the society at large.[15] These are approaches that Foley was already beginning to apply to his own considerations of how oral poetry functions in time and space.

A natural reaction might be to question the degree to which such an approach can be applied to early medieval poetry. In the case of medieval drama, there are numerous additional documents and even illustrations informing later researchers about the nature of the performances of these early plays. Information concerning the performance of early poetry is much more fragmentary, especially in the north.[16] Outside the brief descriptions in the sagas (recorded some two or three hundred years after the event), in most cases all that remains are the manuscripts containing the poems in which sound has been transposed into ink on pergament. Nonetheless, with its emphasis on the experience and activity that lies behind texts and objects, Performance Studies opens some valuable doors as a means of approaching this material. Most important, it underlines the need to consider early texts like archaeological remains, in other words, as something that originally gained meaning from the ways in which they interacted with people and space. The Performance Studies approach reminds us that before they came to be recorded, these texts, like dramas, were originally conceived, performed, and received in the form of sound (rather than writing), and that for their audiences they were associated with a range of senses and memories, and existed as part of a process in time and space, like everything that we hear and touch in our own lives. The approach suggests that with a little application of knowledge gained from personal experience, these poems (like other archaeological objects) *can* be brought back to life, and indeed, that they *should* be analyzed by researchers in the context of the live performances with which they were originally associated (rather than merely as a form of written literature).

This is an approach I have referred to earlier as "performance archaeology."[17] It can obviously be effectively applied to unambiguous performances of pagan ritual described in the sagas and other external accounts, such as the account of the seeress Þorbjörg lítilvölva's magical "varðlokkr" ritual described in *Eiríks saga rauða*;[18] Ibn Fadlān's account of the Rus boat funeral on the Volga;[19] Constantine Porphyrogenitus's account of the masked Gothikon presented by Nordic warriors at the Byzantine court

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15 Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 225–49.

16 On Anglo-Saxon Poetry, see further Opland, *Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry*; on skaldic poetry, see Gade, "Recitation of Old Norse Skaldic Poetry"; on Eddic poetry see Lönnroth, "Hjálmar's Death Song"; Harris, "Eddic Poetry as Oral Poetry"; Harris, "Performance of Old Norse Eddic Poetry"; Harris, "'Ethnopaleography'"; Heimer Pálsson, "Performance of the Eddic Poems"; and Gunnell, "Performance of the Poetic Edda"; for one of the most detailed accounts see Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Unger, *Norna Gests þáttr*.

17 See, for example, Gunnell, "Masks and Performance," 189; and Gunnell and Ronström, "Folklore och Performance Studies," 54–55.

18 Einar Ólafur Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson, *Eiriks saga rauða*, 206–9; and Gunnell, *Origins of Drama*, 335–38.

19 Ibn Fadlān, *Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness*, 49–54; and Price, "Passing into Poetry."

in Constantinople;[20] Adam of Bremen's account of the annual pagan festival that used to take place at Gamla Uppsala in Sweden;[21] Tacitus's account of the procession of the goddess Nerthus;[22] or that of the fertility ritual described in *Völsa þáttr*.[23] Each of these accounts describes ritual performances of some kind, and each deserves to be examined first and foremost from the viewpoint of performance and *experience*. They are also given new dimensions if placed in association with visual depictions such as those showing what seem to be ritual activities on the Torslunda helmet dies or the Oseberg tapestries;[24] or with archaeological remains such as those of the Oseberg ship burial; or if they are examined in the context of the work of place-name scholars such as Stefan Brink, who has demonstrated how the Nordic landscape "performed" as part of inter-action with people;[25] or archaeologists like Neil Price and Paul Mortimer, who have recently illustrated how a helmet can be viewed as a mask which created its own perfor-mance wherever it went.[26]

Accounts of ritual and archaeological objects directly associated with ritual or depicting ritualistic performances are comparatively easy to approach from a perfor-mance viewpoint, not least because they are shown to *be* performances (each has an obvious audience, an obvious set of performers, and an obvious performance space). What then can be done with "archaeological texts" like the two skaldic poems I mean to consider below, namely *Eiríksmál* and *Hákonarmál*, both of which were supposedly composed before the advent of Christianity in Scandinavia, and were later preserved in manuscripts written in the early thirteenth century?[27] Whether we believe these works were actually "pagan" or not, the first thing to remember is that, as noted above, those who composed the earliest versions of the Eddic and skaldic poems, and those who passed them on in one form or another for centuries until they were eventually recorded, never conceived of these works as *written* texts. They were viewed as enti-ties meant to be received through the medium of rhythmic meaningful *sound* in a given space and before a recognized audience that brought shared knowledge with them to the performance in question. To deny that they should therefore also be examined in that form is the equivalent of continuing to examine the dead Christmas tree mentioned above without considering its connections to Christmas. Such an approach might well be speculative, but when it comes down to it, most of our work with ancient materials tends to involve a great deal of speculation. In the very least, considering how these works might have worked as performances means attempting to examine the materials in the form and context in which they were intended. Indeed, given the fact that archae-

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20 Gunnell, *Origins of Drama*, 72–76.

21 Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis*, 259–60; Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops*, 207–8; and Gunnell, *Origins of Drama*, 78–80.

22 Tacitus, *Germania*, 146–47.

23 Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Unger, *Völsa þáttr.*

24 See Gunnell, *Origins of Drama*, 60–71.

25 Brink, "Mythologizing Landscape."

26 Price and Mortimer, "An Eye for Odin?"; see also Gunnell, "Masks and Performance."

27 See Jón Helgason, *Skjaldevers*, 8–9, 21, 24; Fulk, *Eiríksmál*, 1003; and Fulk, *Háskonamál*, 171–72.

ology is annually providing ever more contextual knowledge about the surroundings in which poetic performances would have taken place in the Nordic world, it is always getting easier to place these works in some form of living context, and consider exactly how they might have functioned in the society within which they were presented.

I have earlier used the performance approach with some of the Eddic poems, such as *Skírnismál*, *Fáfnismál*, *Hárbarðsljóð, Lokasenna*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Grímnismál,* and *Þrymskviða*, many of which take the form of monologues and dialogues.[28] I have also recently used it with *Völuspá*, arguing that the approach in question suggests the poem was designed to invoke a musical audio-visual mythical experience for an audience that inhabited a very un-Icelandic, military, Óðinnic space.[29] In this present article I mean to venture somewhat tentatively into the field of skaldic poetry. My belief is that a performance-related examination of *Eiríksmál* (most particularly) and *Hákonarmál* has a great deal to tell us about why these poems were created, why they have their extant form, and how they might have "worked" (and been intended to "work") in performance.

Of course, in their present form, both works take the eternally silent form of ink signs on paper. These are updated versions of the earlier ink signs that were traced across two main skin manuscripts from the thirteenth century (*Fagrskinna* and *Kringla*), works which were later transposed onto the seventeenth-century paper copies which form the basis of the editions most of us know today.[30] There is little question that the extant

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28 See Gunnell, *Origins of Drama*; Gunnell, "'Til holts ek gekk'"; Gunnell, "Drama of the Poetic Edda"; Gunnell, "Eddic Performance"; and Gunnell, "Performance Studies."

29 See further Gunnell, "Vǫluspá in Performance."

30 On the manuscripts, see Jón Helgason, *Skjaldevers,* 8–9, 21, and 24; Fulk, *Eiríksmál*, 1003–5; and Fulk, *Hákonarmál*, 171–75. The *Fagrskinna* manuscript was written ca. 1220, and destroyed in the fire of Copenhagen in 1728. It now only exists in paper copies from the late seventeenth century: see Finnur Jónsson, *Fagrskinna*, i; Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, 36. *Eiríksmál* (which is not named in the manuscript) is contained as a whole in this manuscript (Finnur Jónsson, *Fagrskinna*, 27–30; Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, 58–59 [ch. 7]). Two sections of what is now called *Hákónarmál* (also unnamed in *Fagrskinna*) are given in two parts in this manuscript, strophes 1–4 (strophes that are directly attributed to a poem by Eyvindr "skáldaspillir" Finnsson about Hákon's death, describing how the valkyjur Göndul and Skögul visited the battlefield) appearing in chap. 11 (Finnur Jónsson, *Fagrskinna,* 38–39; Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, 66–68), while strophes 5–7 (unattributed to any poet, and giving further description of the battle) and strophes 19–21 (the eulogy to Hákon which ends the extant poem, here again attributed to Eyvindr "skáldaspillir" Finnsson, but nothing being stated about their association to the previously quoted strophes) follow separately in chap. 12 (Finnur Jónsson, *Fagrskinna,* 41–42, 48; Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, 66–68 and 72–73). The *Kringla* manuscript which contained Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* (written ca. 1220–1235) was also from the mid-thirteenth century, and was similarly lost in the fire (except for one leaf [Reykjavík, National and University Library of Iceland, Lbs fragm 82]). The extant manuscripts are paper copies from the seventeenth century. *Hákonarmál* (now named) appears as a whole in *Hákonar saga góða* in *Heimskringla* (which makes no mention of *Eiríksmál*), strophes 2–4 and 5–6 appearing first separately in chap. 30 (now attributed to Eyvindr). The whole (named) poem (with abbreviations for strophes already quoted and directly attributed to Eyvindr) is then given in chap. 32 (see Snorri Sturlson, *Heimskringla*, 1:186–88 and 1:193–97; and Snorri Sturlson, *Heimskringla, or the Lives of the Norse Kings*, 97 and 99–101. Strophe 1 of *Eiríksmál* (now named as a poem but with no mention of an author) is quoted in Snorri Sturlson's *Prose Edda* (*Skáldskaparmál*) from the early thirteenth century (see Snorri Sturlson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, 10). Strophes 1, 14 and part of strophe 4 of

strophes of these poems are probably fragments of longer works. These fragments have also been edited by a number of different scholars over time (including Snorri Sturluson), most of whom had some form of educated Christian background.[31] There is, however, equally little question that the fragments in question must be the recorded remains of oral texts which probably changed in some degree as they were passed on between people over time. The prose introductions given to the poems in the saga texts in which they have been preserved certainly shows that thirteenth-century oral tradition accredited both works to early tenth-century Norwegian poets,[32] suggesting that those who recorded the poems believed that they had an ancient history. Their comments imply that the original composition of these works—however much they may have changed over time after that—was beyond personal memory and already part of legend.[33] None-

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Hákonarmál (unnamed) appear in the same work (Snorri Sturlson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, 8 and 102), once again attributed directly to Eyvindr. On both poems, see further Sahlgren, *Eddica et Skaldica*; Hollander, "Is the *Lay of Eric* a Fragment?"; Harris, "Eiríksmál and Hákonarmál"; Nordberg, *Krigarna i Odins sal*, 48–56; and Nygaard, "Poetry as Ritual," 147–226. In this article, quotations from the two poems are taken from Jón Helgason, *Skjaldevers*. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted. For more recent editions of the poems, along with other translations, see Fulk, *Eiríksmál* and Fulk, *Hákonarmál*.

31 This would seem to apply particularly to Snorri Sturlson's edition of *Hákonarmál* which in *Fagrskinna* is presented in fragments not all of which are all said to come from the same (unnamed) poem; see above, n. 30. As noted below in n. 34, unlike most of *Eiríksmál*, the extant *Hákonarmál* uses a variety of forms of verse and both scenes of direct speech (not quoted in *Fagrskinna*) and third-person descriptions. There would thus seem to be some reason to question whether all of these strophes originated in the same poem. See further Sahlgren, *Eddica et Skaldica*.

32 *Fagrskinna*, chap. 7, states that "Eptir fall Eiriks let Gunnilldr yrkia kvæðe um hann. sva sem Oðinn fagnaðe hanum i Valholl oc hæfr sva" (After [King] Eiríkr's death, [his mother] Gunnhildr had a poem composed for him, [which was] as if Óðinn was receiving him in Valhöll, and starts like this) (Finnur Jónsson, *Fagrskinna*, 27; see also Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, 58). The "as if" element is worth bearing in mind, and recurs four chapters later (chap. 11), when strophes 1–4 of the *Hákonarmál* are preceded by the following introduction: "sem Oyvindr sægir i kvæðe þui er hann orte æftir fall Haconar. oc sætti hann þat æftir þui sem Gunnilldr hafðe latet yrkia um Æirik sun sinn sem Oðen byði hanum hæim til Valhallar. oc sægir hann marga atburði i kvæðeno fra orrastunni. oc hæfr sva" (as Eyvindr says in the poem he composed after the death of Hákon. He built it on the model of that which Gunnhildr had composed about Eiríkr her son, as [if] Óðinn invited him home to Valhöll, and he tells in the poem about many events from the battle, and starts like this) (Finnur Jónsson, *Fagrskinna*, 38; see also Finlay, *Fagrskinna*, 66). In *Heimskringla*, 1:193, before quoting the whole poem, Snorri Sturlson writes: "Mæltu þeir svá fyrir grepti hans sem heiðinna manna siðr var til, vísuðu honum til Valhallar. Eyvindr skáldaspillir orti kvæði eitt um fall Hákonar konungs ok svá þat, hversu honum var fagnat. Þat eru kǫlluð Hákonarmál, ok er þetta upphaf" (They then spoke at his burial in accordance with pagan custom, and showed him the way to Valhöll. Eyvindr "skáldspillir" composed a poem after the death of King Hákon and on how he was praised. It is called *Hákonarmál*, and this is the start of it).

33 It should be stressed that when the word "original" is used in this article, it refers to the work of the poet (working in an oral tradition) who composed the first version of those works later referred to as *Eiríksmál* and *Hákonarmál*, bearing in mind the fact that over the course of what may well be centuries of oral transmission (if we can trust the earlier-noted legends about them), the works will have altered to some extent, with some strophes dropped or added and others changed. The extant written versions may naturally also involve some degree of editorial emendation, as has been noted elsewhere.

theless, on the basis of what remains, it seems that the largely dialogic form of *Eiríksmál* (and much of *Hákonarmál*) must have been a deliberate decision on the part of the original composers. The same applies to the use of first-person direct speech in general (rather than reported words or descriptions), and the choice to use the *ljóðaháttr* metre, which in the Eddic poems (outside strophe 5 of *Vafþrúðnismál*) is restricted to mythological dialogues and monologues, most of which seem to be pre-Christian.[34] The choice of setting and subject matter of both poems (which, as the saga introductions of both poems notes, were meant to focus on the glorious admittance of two pagan Norwegian kings to Valhöll[35]) was obviously another central theme of these works from the start. All of these features make it unlikely that the original works were Christian creations.

The above considerations raise the question of the original functions of these works: were they designed merely as a form of entertainment? It should always be borne in mind that poems are kept alive in the oral tradition because they have a function and value. This function, however, may be very different from the original function that the poems had, which will have defined both form and subject matter. In the case of the poems noted above, they have been preserved in *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* for their value as historical sources. Individual strophes are then quoted (out of context) in Snorri's *Poetic Edda* for their poetic merit. Nonetheless, it should never be forgotten

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34 In *Eiríksmál*, strophes 3–6 and 8–9 are clearly in *ljóðaháttr* metre (suggesting that this was the original metre of the poem), the poem taking the form of pure first-person dialogue (except for the speaker indications like those noted in n. 41 below, which would appear to be additional even though they are in the main body of the text). *Hakonarmál* in its extant form is composed of a mixture of *málaháttr* and *ljóðaháttr* metre. Strophe 1 (describing how Óðinn sends Göndul and Skögul to the battlefield) is in *ljóðaháttr*, as is the conversation between Hákon and the *valkyrjur* that have come to collect him on the battlefield (strophes 10–13), and the scenes describing Hákon's arrival in Valhöll (strophes 14–21), half of which (strophes 14–17) largely take the form of first-person speech. Elsewhere, however, the normal rules of *ljóðaháttr* appear to be broken, since the metre is also used for past tense, third-person narrative, both full strophes (as in strophes 1, 11, and 18–21), and individual lines or verse-halves indicating speakers (strophes 10, 12–15, and 16 [although there is good reason to believe some of the speaker indications are additional to the poem]). The fact that none of the direct speech strophes are quoted in *Fagrskinna* gives further reason to consider whether the extant version of the poem deviates from that which was originally composed, which, as noted in n. 32, was apparently meant to take a similar form to E*iríksmál* (which, as noted, is wholly dialogic and describes an arrival in Valhöll), whether it involved a mixture of metres and both dialogue and third-person narrative from the start, or whether the extant poem is actually a mixture of two poems. As should be apparent from the above, the argument that the poet uses *ljóðaháttr* for speech and *málaháttr* for third-person narrative (see, for example, Snorri Sturlson, *Heimskringla*, 1:193n2) does not hold. As Heusler, "Altnordische Dichtung" and Andersson, *Legend of Brynhild*, 92–93, have shown with regard to *Reginsmál* and *Fáfnismál*, the blending of two poems of different metres also seems to have taken place in some parts of the extant Eddic collection. See further Gunnell, *Origins of Drama*, 185–96.

35 See n. 32 on how Eyvindr "skáldaspillir" apparently intended to follow the model of *Eiríksmál*. As noted above, while *Eiríksmál* takes place solely in Valhöll, *Hákonarmál* starts by telling in third-person how Óðinn sent two *valkyrjur* to fetch Hákon from the battlefield, and then effectively describes the battle that they observe. It then moves into dialogue for a conversation between Hákon and the *valkyrjur* (strophes 10–13), and a brief exchange between Óðinn, Bragi, and Hákon as the dead king arrives at his final destination (strophes 14–17). The poem then ends with a *ljóðaháttr* eulogy to the king (strophes 18–21).

that neither the *ljóðaháttr* metre nor the subject matter of these poems are obviously Christian. This adds further support to the idea that these poems must have lived in the oral tradition for some time before they came to be recorded, and that they must have been performed orally for others (since the art of writing did not come to Iceland until after the Conversion). Considering the high degree of dialogue and direct speech in the poems, this will have meant that whoever composed and performed the poems (Eyvindr "skáldaspillir" Finnsson[36] in the case of *Hákonarmál*, and most probably another male poet in the case of *Eiríksmál*) will have had to place himself in the roles of the pagan god Óðinn as well as various female *valkyrjur* (along with other characters) as part of the performance.[37] Considering the hazy line between performance and reality in this period, one can imagine that such a choice, in other words, deciding to "take on" such roles in public, would not have been a good move for any Christian who was hoping to be allowed into heaven.[38] It might thus be said that the chosen form of the poems (especially *Eiríksmál*) adds further weight to the argument that the two poems are of pre-Christian age and pagan provenance.

As can be seen from the above, consideration of these poems from the viewpoint of performance immediately raises some very useful questions, the most important being *why* direct speech should have been chosen as a medium, and *why* the original poet should have chosen to have pagan gods (Óðinn and Bragi in both poems[39]), female *valkyrjur* (Göndr and Skögul), and the dead kings (Eiríkr and Hákon) speak in first person in the present tense, rather than safely recounting the stories in the shape of third-person past-tense narratives.

As has been noted above, both poems centre upon the dramatic arrival of the two dead kings, Eiríkr Haraldsson "blóðöx" (blood-axe) and Hákon Haraldsson "aðalsteins-fóstri" (foster-son of Aðalsteinn) in Valhöll after their deaths in battle. As Andreas Nordberg has underlined, it is immediately worth noting that the chosen setting of *Eiríksmál* (and the climax of *Hákonarmál*) is shown to be very similar to the probable performance space in which both poems would have been presented: a military hall with warriors, benches, wine, straw, and ale cups.[40] *Eiríksmál*, strophe 1, begins by stressing this similarity to listeners:

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36 See further Holm-Olsen, "Øyvind Skaldspillir," on this poet.

37 It is noteworthy that most of those poems that have a title ending with -*mál* (*Grímnismál*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Skírnismál*, *Alvíssmál*, *Reginsmál*, *Fáfnismál*, *Sigrdrífumál*, and *Atlamál*) tend to be mythological Eddic poems and take the form of direct speech, many using *ljóðaháttr* for this purpose (*Atlamál* being the exception here). It would appear that whoever chose to name *Eiríksmál* and *Hákonarmál* saw the poems as belonging to the same genre.

38 On legends telling of how people who take on the role of the devil—or other horned figures—attract Satan's attention, see further Tydeman, *Theatre in the Middle Ages*, 215; af Klintberg, *Types of the Swedish Legend*, 220; and Bregenhøj and Larsen, "Masks and Mumming Traditions," 228.

39 Admittedly there is some suggestion that Bragi, the Nordic god of poetry, was originally a human court poet (Bragi Broddason) who was taken into the ranks of the gods, something which adds to the idea noted below that there was some blurring between the world of the court and the world of Valhöll.

40 Nordberg, *Krigarna i Odins sal*, 178.

Hvat er þat drauma?—kvað Óðinn[41]—	(What dream is it?—said Óðinn—
er ek hugðumk fyr dag litluI	sensed a little before day-break
Valhǫll ryðja	Valhöll was being cleared
fyr vegnu fólki,	For slain people;
vakða einherja,	I roused the einheriar,
baðk ek upp rísa,	Bade them rise
bekki at strá	Strew benches,
bjórker at leyðra,	And wash beer-flagons;
valkyrjur vín bera,	[Bade] valkyrjur bear in wine,
sem vísi komi.	As when a prince is coming.)

As in *Vafþrúðnismál* (also set in a hall), this hall setting is stressed repeatedly in both poems, *Eiríksmál*, strophes 3–4 talking of Baldr's potential return and Eiríkr's imminent arrival "í Óðins sali" (into Óðinn's hall), and strophe 8 showing Óðinn inviting Eiríkr to "gakk í hǫll" (come into the hall). In *Hákonarmál,* strophe 14, Óðinn says that "konungr ferr […] till hallar hinig" (a king comes […] here to a hall). Both poems also take the potential connection between the mythological and the performance setting further when speakers use the words "hér" and "hinig" (here) when referring to the hall in question, as in *Eiríksmál,* strophe 4 "*hér* mun inn koma / iǫfurr í Óðins sali" (in here will be coming / a prince into Óðinn's hall; emphasis mine here and in the following) and strophe 8 "vel skalt þú *hér* kominn" (you are welcome here), and in *Hákonarmál,* strophe 14 (see above) and strophe 16 "þú átt *inni hér* / átta brœðr" (you have in here / eight brothers;), in several instances adding the preposition "inn/inni" (in), thereby stressing the idea that *this* (the setting/imaginary site of performance) is a present "in" space, which has been reached from an outside. This idea is stressed in *Eiríksmál*, strophe 4 (noted above) and 5 "*inn* þú bíóð" (invite inside), used when Óðinn orders the heroes Sigmundr and Sinfjötli to bring in King Eiríkr, and is implied again in strophe 8 "vel skalt þú hér kominn / ok gakk *í hǫll* horskr" (you are welcome here / come wisely into the hall). The same idea occurs in *Hákonarmál*, strophe 14 "konungr ferr / sá er kappi þykkir / til hallar *hinig* […]" (a king comes / who is believed to be a champion / here to a hall) and strophe 16 (see above); and in the use of the verb "koma" (come/arrive) used with Hákon in strophe 18 "er Hákon báðo / heilan *koma* / ráð ǫll ok regin" (when Hákon was / welcomed / by all the gods and decision-makers). Clearly, the world in which the poems are set is meant to be a world very much like the one that the audience sees around them, albeit one in which battles have recently taken place.[42]

As has been stressed above, the *ljóðaháttr* metre seems to have been used almost solely for poems in direct speech (dialogues and monologues) in present tense and

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41 As Fulk notes, *Eiríksmál*, 1004, the words "kvað Óðinn" (Óðinn said) are additional to the poetic metre. As with the marginal speaker markings in the manuscripts of Eddic poetry dialogues stating who speaks which strophes (also using the same form ["NN kvað"]), there would seem to be good reason to believe that these words were not part of the original poem, and for the performance of the poem to be examined without them. See further Gunnell, *Origins of Drama*, 206–12. On *Hákonarmál*, see further Fulk, *Hákonarmál*, 187.

42 See *Eiríksmál*, strophe 2, and *Hákonarmál*, strophes 2–10.

mainly for mythological materials (associated with the "other" world). This has important ramifications when the poems are considered from the viewpoint of performance. Among other things, it means that unlike most other skaldic poems and those Eddic poems composed in *fornyrðislag* (the other main Eddic metre), the performer is not informing an audience in the present about events that took place in the past. Instead, the narrative as a whole is presented in the form of living speech in which events are taking place "now," in the present. In other words, as the performer speaks the words of others (mythological beings or heroes from the past) and takes on their roles (speaking in present tense), they subtly bring the mythological world and/or the past *directly into* the present. As in a play, this blend of two apparently living worlds is bound to create a kind of liminal sacred time, especially when the entire poem takes the form of speech (as is the case in *Eiríksmál* and the dialogic and monologic Eddic poems in *ljóðaháttr* such as *Vafþruðnísmál*, *Lokasenna*, and *Grímnismál*).[43] As in the Eddic poems in question, this would mean that the audience listening to the poem would have almost unconsciously found themselves partaking in the parallel world of the poem, and even taking on roles (something made even easier when there is not a raised stage or proscenium arch, and when the performance takes place on the same level as the audience, and even amongst them, as would have probably been the case here).[44]

In *Eiríksmál* in particular, there is evidence that the same sort of transportation would have been expected to take place.[45] If in the performance, Valhöll, the hall of the dead, is said to be "here," "inside," "now," then the listening audience in the hall where the performance is taking place would not only have started to feel that they were *like* the *einherjar* (the dead heroes living in Valhöll), but also would have sensed that the speaker (in the role of Óðinn) is referring to them (those Óðinn is talking to) *as the einherjar*. Furthermore, as both poems stress, "this" is a time in which Ragnarök (the end of the world and the final battle) is about to start. Both poems refer to signs of the imminent ending: *Eiríksmál*, strophe 3 talks of Baldr's absence, strophe 7 mentions the ever-present danger of the wolf, Fenrir, destined to break loose at the end of the world; *Hákonarmál*, strophe 17 mentions the need for the *einherjar* to be ever-ready, and strophe 20 also refers to the danger of the wolf. Speaking in the role of Óðinn in *Eiríksmál* (logically from the "high seat" where the chieftain would normally sit, or in some other central place of prominence where he can be easily seen and heard), the performer converses with (and can apparently see in front of him) not only the *einherjar* and *valkyrjur* of Valhöll (strophe 1), but also Bragi, the god of poetry (strophes 2–4), and the mythical heroes Sigmundr and Sinfjötli (strophes 5–8). In *Hákonarmál*, Bragi is joined by Óðinn's son, Hermóðr (strophe 14), and, as noted above, the *valkyrjur* Skögul and Göndul (strophes 1 and 10–13). Furthermore, as the poems reach their climax, the performer also seems to see coming in through the door (somewhat like the disguised arriving Óðinn and Loki in *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Lokasenna*) visually shocking, bloody, but well-equipped

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43 Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, 388–408.

44 On *Grímnismál*, see Gunnell, "Eddic Performance."

45 See Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 72–74 on "transportation" and "transformation" of audiences in drama and rituals.

dead kings, who are coming directly from the battle (*Eiríksmál*, strophe 8; see also the description of Hákon in *Hákonarmál*, strophe 15 "dreyra drifinn" [covered in blood]; and strophe 17 [on Hákon's helmet and chain mail]). They are preceded by a loud noise which is echoed in the choice of alliterative sounds in the strophe in question, which are indicated in boldface:

Hvat **þr**ymr **þar**—kvað Bragi[46]—	(What is that thunder,—said Bragi—,
sem **þú**sund **bi**fisk	as if thousands are tramping
eða **m**engi til **m**ikit?	or a great hoard of men?
Braka ǫll **bekk**þili,	All the bench walls creak,
sem muni **B**aldr koma	as if Baldr were returning
eptir í Óðins sali.[47]	back to Óðinn's hall.)
	(*Eiríksmál*, strophe 3)

One senses that the arrival of the kings (after the careful buildup that preceded them) in the performance might have had a similar effect on the audience to the appearance of Banquo's ghost in *Macbeth*,[48] not least if the performer was the only one who could see them.

The stylistic features noted above, which appear to have been deliberately chosen by the poem's original creator and then passed on within the oral tradition, certainly raise the obvious question as to whether *Eiríksmál* (and even *Hákonarmál*) was meant to be acted by several performers, or whether a solo poet-performer took on various roles (using his head, body, positioning, and voice to differentiate between them), thereby creating apparently living ghosts in the performance space that only he can see?[49] To these effects, one can add the strong likelihood that the performances would have taken place in the evening, that the room (like all medieval Nordic halls) would have been dark and smoky, that the long fire running down the centre of the hall would have thrown flickering shadows on the faces of those present, and that a certain amount of comparatively strong, impure alcohol would have been imbibed by most of those present. One can add to this the sense that those present in a Nordic warrior hall (like that suggested by the poem) would have been the equivalent of U.S. Marines on their way to (or from) Vietnam, Iraq, or Afghanistan (with all the associations that this comparison suggests).

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46 As noted in n. 41, the speaker indication here would seem to have been added, and not be part of the original poem.

47 It might be noted that similar thundering sound effects greet the arrival of Skírnir in the hall of Gymir in *Skírnismál*, strophe 14 and the arrivals of Óðinn and Hermóðr in Hel (when Óðinn goes to find out the meaning of Baldr's bad dreams and Hermóðr is later sent by Óðinn to try and gain Baldr's release from the world of death). See *Baldrs draumar*, strophe 3, and Snorri Sturlson, *Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning*, 47. All references to the Eddic poems here refer to the versions of the poems in Jón Helgason, *Eddadigte* I–III. For more recent editions of the Eddic poems, see Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, *Eddukvæði*.

48 *Macbeth*, 3.iv.

49 See the discussion of *Þrymskviða* in Gunnell, "Eddic Performance."

There is no question that the argument made above about how *Eiríksmál* worked (and possibly also *Hákonarmál*) is supposition, but it also involves a strong degree of probability, and, of course, as noted above, is backed up by information provided by the poems themselves. Indeed, *Eiríksmál* begins by raising the question of whether what is happening in the performance space is a dream or part of reality (see above).

What then seems to be happening in these poems when they are performed? If we start with the oral performance of *Eiríksmál*, which is more straightforward,[50] it is evident that direct speech is deliberately used to create a very liminal situation, which not only gives the pagan martial audience an image of the next world that awaits them, but also underlines that they themselves are nearly there. As noted above, for the duration of the performance, they would have found themselves being placed in another role, when they are referred to as Óðinn's *einherjar* by the performer. This situation might have been aided and abetted by the fact that many rulers of the time (with the help of their poets) went out of their way to stress their genealogical relationship to the gods (and especially Óðinn and Freyr).[51] This may well have also applied to the chieftain/earl/king sitting in the high seat at the time of the performance. In a sense, Óðinn was already in the building.

Also worth noting as part of this discussion is the formal entrance of Eiríkr shown in *Eiríksmál*, which has certain interesting ritualistic aspects. Indeed, it seems to echo deliberately what appears to have been a stock scene in *ljóðaháttr* poetry.[52] An obvious parallel is found in the dramatic Eddic poem *Vafþrúðnismál*, in the scene depicting Óðinn's own formal arrival in Vafþrúðnir's hall prior to the initiation-like knowledge contest the god subsequently engages in with the "jötunn" (giant/etin) (direct parallels in wording are given in boldface):

Heill þú nú Eirikr, —kvað Sigmundr	(Hail Eiríkr, —said Sigmundr—
vel skalt þú hér **kominn**	You are welcome here;
ok gakk **í hǫll** horskr.	Come into the hall, brave one.
Hins vilk þik fregna,	But I want to ask
hvat fylgir þér	who follows you,
jǫfra frá eggþrimu?	which lords, from the clash of blades?)
	(*Eiríksmál*, strophe 8)

Heill þú nú Vafþrúðnir!	(Hail, Vafþrúðnir!
nú em ek **í hǫll kominn**,	Now I have come into the hall,
á þik siáfan siá;	and can see you in person.
hitt vil ek fyrst víta,	But the first thing I want to know
ef þú fróðr sér	is whether you are knowledgeable,
eða alsviðr, iǫtunn.	or omniscient, jötunn.)
	(*Vafþrúðnismál*, strophe 6)

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50 See n. 34 above.

51 See, for example, *Ynglinga saga* in Snorri Sturlson, *Heimskringla*, 1:9–83; and the various Anglo-Saxon royal genealogies.

52 See also n. 47 above on the accompanying sound effects preceding the arrival.

Further parallels can be found between the way Óðinn sends Sigmundr and Sinfjötli out of the room to greet Eiríkr in strophe 5, and the way in which the *jötunn* daughter Gerðr orders her servant to receive Freyr's representative, Skírnir, in *Skírnismál*, strophe 16:[53]

Sigmundr ok Sinfjǫtli,	(Sigmundr and Sinfjötli,
rísið snarleg a	get up quickly
ok gangið í gǫgn grami,	and go to meet the prince,
inn þú bióð,	invite him in,
ef Eiríkr sé,	if it is Eiríkr,
hans er mér nú vón.	I've been expecting him.)

<div align="right">(Eiríksmál, strophe 5)</div>

Inn bið þú hann ganga	(Invite him to come
í okkarn sal	into our hall
ok **drekka inn mæra miǫð** [...];	and drink the shining mead [...].)

<div align="right">(Skírnismál, strophe 16)</div>

Other echoes can be heard in the welcome given by Óðinn to Hákon in *Hákónarmál*, strophe 16:

Einheria grið	(The peace of the einherjar
þú skalt allra hafa,	you will be given,
þigg þú at ásom ǫl [...].	receive ale from the æsir [...].)

<div align="right">(Hákonarmál, strophe 16)</div>

This formal offering of ale or mead (often accompanied by formal, ritualistic, respectful "Hail" greetings like those quoted from *Eiríksmál* and *Vafþrúðnismál* above) are also found in *Skírnismál* and *Sigrdrífumál* (in both cases in close association with strophes dealing with runic magic) when Gerðr bows to Skírnir's threats, agreeing to sleep with Freyr, and when the *valkyrja* Sigrdrífa greets the hero Sigurðr after he has woken her from her sleep:

Heill ver þú nú heldur, sveinn,	(Hail to you rather, lad!
ok **tak við hrímkálki**,	Take this frosted goblet,
fullom forns miaðar!	Full of ancient mead!)

<div align="right">(Skírnismál, strophe 37)</div>

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53 Another parallel can be found in *Lokasenna*, strophe 10, where Óðinn orders his son Víðarr to give up his seat to the visitor Loki.

Heill dagr!	(Hail to the day!
Heilir dags synir!	Hail to the sons of the day!
Heil nótt ok nipt! . . .	Hail night and her kinswoman! . . .
Heil æsir!	Hail æsir gods!
Heilar ásynior!	Hail æsir goddesses!
Heil sá in fiölnýta fold! . . .	Hail beneficent earth! . . .
Biór fær ek þér,	I bring you ale,
brynþings apaldr,	apple tree of battle,
magni blandinn	full of power
ok megintíri [...].	and glory [...].)

(*Sigrdrífumál*, strophes 3–5)

It might be noted that in both *Sigrdrífumál* and *Skírnismál*, the formal greeting and offer-ing of drink are ritualistic turning points. In addition to constituting a formal welcome to the space, they also seem to represent the final step of what seems to be a kind of initiation into manhood (in both cases the figures in question have received weapons and killed an adversary prior to their being offered drink by a female figure who inhabits the outside, at the end of the night).[54] One is drawn to consider whether something similar is going on in *Eiríksmál* and *Hákonarmál*, and whether they, too, had some ritualistic purpose related to the funeral activities of the two kings. Arnold van Gennep talks of rites of passage having three stages: those involving "separation," "transition," and "reincor-poration," funerals essentially being acts of separation.[55] Considering the circumstances which apparently surrounded their construction,[56] one wonders whether the poems might have been a means of offering a sense of closure to followers, as the dead are symbolically shown to be reincorporated with the heroic ancestors on the "other side." Indeed, considering the performances of these poems in which the dead kings are shown entering the hall, one notes an interesting statement from *Eyrbyggja saga* (in the context of a ghost story), that "hǫfðu menn þat fyrir satt, at þá væri mǫnnum vel fagnat at Ránar, ef sædauðir menn vitjuðu erfis síns" (people believed that those who had been drowned had been well received by the sea-goddess Rán if they attended their own funeral feast).[57] In a sense, one could argue that in their use of first-person direct speech in the present, these two poems depict the kings simultaneously visiting their own funeral feasts *and* being received into Valhöll.

In short, considering the poems from a performance viewpoint, one wonders whether they were meant to form part of a kind of enacted Irish wake, marking a form of closure but simultaneously underlining for all those present that death is not just the end, but a new beginning on another level of existence (that echoed and some-times blended with the world of the present)? One might bear in mind that all of those in the warrior comitatus associated with the royal hall would have previously under-

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54 See further Gunnell, "Til holts ek gekk."

55 Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, 44.

56 See n. 32 above.

57 Einar Ólafur Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson, *Eyrbyggja saga*, 148.

gone some kind of initiation involving, among other things, an oath of allegiance which implied they were ready to give up their lives for their leader.[58] There is thus reason to question whether, in a ritual sense, the poems in question were not just acts of parting, but provided also a form of initiation into the world of the dead, an initiation that was perhaps envisaged as being similar to those undergone by all of the warriors as they became new members of the comitatus, which would have had faint parallels to a group of Hells Angels or Marines. In short, do these poems, considered in the necessary sense of performance, sound, and movement, perhaps also provide us with some insight not only into such initiatory religious activities, but also the ways in which poetic performance played a key role in transforming the hall into a religious space in which men momentarily (and sometimes permanently) became gods or heroes, and in which the alcohol they were drinking became something more ritually potent (like wine at a Christian communion)?[59]

As has been noted above, in their extant state after having been passed on in the oral tradition for several hundred years, *Eiríksmál* and *Hákonarmál* are probably fragmentary, and possibly even (in the case of *Hákonarmál* in particular) amalgamations of more than one poem. As stated earlier, much of the above is naturally supposition, but it hopefully provides some sense of what the Performance Studies approach has to offer for the analysis of Old Norse (and Old English) poetry, and the ways in which, with the help of both archaeology and living fieldwork, this approach can be used as a pathway to gaining some sense of the experience of the Old Norse world in which the world view that surrounded daily life seems to have been permeated by a sense of the religious. In the very least, the examination given here should provide some insight into the ways in which these ancient poems might have originally worked and been intended to function, as a form of combined sound, music, vision, and movement in space, and not least as performances which had the potential of transforming space and those in it momentarily or permanently. As such, they were a very different phenomenon to the fossilized records we now encounter in the silent library.

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58 See further Schjødt, *Initiation Between Two Worlds*.

59 See further Gunnell, "*Hof*, Halls"; Gunnell, "Narratives, Space, and Drama"; and Gunnell, "Drama of the Poetic Edda."

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"TO SURF THROUGH THE SHARED RICHES OF THE STORY HOARD": THE oAGORA OF THE SIGURÐR STORY

THOMAS A. DUBOIS

IN THE CONTEXT of medieval epic literature, in which so many of the works that have occupied or edified scholars are represented by a single manuscript and/or a few fragments, the epic accounts of the hero Sigurðr present an embarrassment of riches. Not only do we find substantial poetic and prose versions of his story—or stories— from Snorri Sturluson's *Skaldskaparmál* précis (c. 1240) to the rich array of interrelated poetic and prose accounts in the *Poetic Edda* (Codex Regius [Reykjavík, Árni Magnússon Institute, GKS 2365 4to]; ca. 1270), to the masterful thirteenth-century *Vǫlsunga saga* and *Ragnars saga*, to the curious, antiquarian prose and poetic account of *Norna Gests þáttr*, which appears in the leaves of the late fourteenth-century *Flateyjarbók* (Reykjavík, Árni Magnússon Institute, GKS 1005 fol.), but we also find important and detailed visual depictions from as early as the eleventh century and genealogies that tie the hero Sigurðr to the royal lines of both Denmark and Norway.[1]

In the manner of book culture—that system of communicative rules and norms that John Miles Foley called the "textual Agora" or "tAgora"[2]—we can use these works to (re-) construct a single unified epic, of which each extant version is a more or a less faithful reflection. This allows us to imagine the situation lying behind these versions as a concrete array of circulating manuscripts composed, copied, recopied, and recombined in the hands and halls of learned scribes. Tracing the circulation and interrelation of such texts has been the work of scholars over the past two centuries and is chronicled and tabulated in the "Heldenlieder" volumes (4–7) of the monumental series of reference works *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, edited by Klaus von See and others.

Alternatively, we can choose to see these extant visual and textual renderings of Sigurðr and his supposed contemporaries as records of a once vibrant *oral* Agora ("oAgora"), a multiplicity of "pathways" in and about the life and times of the hero Sigurðr and his actual or putative kin that "reveal the oAgora communication as a kinetic, emergent, in-the-making process."[3] In the following discussion, I draw on Foley's *Oral Tradition and the Internet: Pathways of the Mind* to interpret the Sigurðr materials as instances of a willingness—inherent in the very nature of oral tradition—"to surf the shared riches of the story-hoard and shape a performance that is intelligible to and enjoyable for performer and audience alike."[4]

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1 Blindheim, *Sigurds saga*; Edlund, "Drakdödare"; and Nordanskog, *Föreställd Hedendom*. For a discussion of British Isles images of the epic, see McKinnell, "Sigmundr/Sigurðr Story," 59–66.

2 See Foley, *Oral Tradition and the Internet*, 255–62, on the "eAgora," "oAgora," and "tAgora."

3 Foley, *Oral Tradition and the Internet*, 182.

4 Foley, *Oral Tradition and the Internet*, 181.

To see oral tradition lurking behind the details of the Sigurðr materials is, of course, nothing new. Alexander Richey used these materials to discuss the Homeric Question already in 1875,[5] and many other scholars have followed suit, examining the stories of Sigurðr as well as the cognate accounts of Siegfried in the *Nibelungenlied*. Matthias Teichert's *Von der Heldensage zum Heroenmythos* looks at the "mythologizing" of the Sigurðr story both in medieval and post-medieval works into the present day,[6] and the annotated bibliography by Florian Kragl and others, *Nibelungenlied und Nibelungensage: Kommentierte Bibliographie 1945–2012*, provides an excellent introduction to the vast scholarship extant to date. In the area of Old Norse studies, the above-mentioned volumes edited by von See represent an excellent foundation for any examination.

Nor is it novel to examine the workings of oral tradition as a distinctive mode of communication unlike that of literate book making, reading, and exchange. Such, of course, is central to the rich scholarly enterprise that has occupied many of the contributors to this volume and which is associated particularly with the names of Milman Parry, Albert Bates Lord, Walter J. Ong, and John Miles Foley. In *Oral Tradition and the Internet*, however, Foley invites us to use the technological and cognitive revolution of the internet as a new vantage point for examining the specific effects of communicative technologies on the materials we study and on our perceptions of them. If, Foley argues, we see all communication with the normative expectations of book culture—the tAgora—then oral or oral-derived epic texts will inevitably appear defective, disordered, or derelict since they differ in fundamental ways from works produced more fully and more authentically within the tAgora. If, on the other hand, we come to see communication with the default assumptions of the internet—the electronic Agora (eAgora)—then we may view the relative fluidity and multiplicity of pathways within oral traditions—the oAgora—not as aberrant, but as somehow familiar, as instances of what Foley terms homologies between the oAgora and the eAgora.[7] With that new set of communicative norms in mind, the fixity of the book text—its totalizing, singular control of the reader's experience, its inability to accommodate the shifting interests or meandering (surfing) tendencies of its audience, and its illusory assertion of completeness—becomes perceived as aberrant and impoverished, despite the heightened status that the tAgora has enjoyed in Western societies.

For the reader unfamiliar with the findings of oral tradition scholarship to date, Foley's study prods and pries, aiming at defamiliarizing the book in order to valorize the oral performance. For the reader already familiar with this extensive body of scholarship, however, the study's key accomplishment is to underscore how we are shaped by our technological norms. Even if the reader chooses (as I did) to read *Oral Tradition and the Internet* in hard copy rather than in the online form in which Foley originally conceived it and which became available soon after his untimely death,[8] the study thwarts expectations of book order, allowing its argument to emerge not in a fixed sequence

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5 Richey, "Homeric Question."

6 Teichert, *Heldensage*.

7 Foley, *Oral Tradition and the Internet*, 7–8.

8 www.muse.jhu.edu/book/21552.

dictated by the author, but rather in a series of kernel points, arranged in arbitrary (specifically, alphabetical) order and interlinked through parenthetical cross-references that mimic the links found in the online version and that invite the reader to "surf" through the study in whatever order, partial or complete, that the reader may choose. The tacit goal of Foley's physical text is to make the reader feel it would have been better to experience the study online—that is, to see, perhaps for the first time since being indoctrinated into the totalizing ways of the tAgora, the limitations of the communicative framework built on the book. Only when those limitations are clear to us, Foley suggests, can we come to appreciate the norms of the oAgora or the eAgora.

In order to explore the implications of Foley's study on our understandings of the materials surrounding the figure of Sigurðr, I follow Foley's lead in presenting a catalogue of Sigurðr narratives and depictions in alphabetical rather than purportedly chronological order. My catalogue is not exhaustive, but it will supply a good basis for the discussion that follows, in which I suggest some of the webs of association (think of them as user link paths) that criss-cross the Sigurðr story, linking it to other themes of interest to the story's tellers and audiences, like the roles of heroic men and women, the duties of kinship, the pain of betrayal, the fellowship of Óðinn, the fellowship of Christ, the lineages of kings, the geography of the world, and the work and functions of poets and poems.

By adopting this format I do not mean to present the versions below as wholly independent works produced without knowledge of or reference to each other. Nor do I mean to deny the possibility that a copy of one text in manuscript form may have served as the direct or indirect source of another text. Instead, by displacing and setting aside these questions, I hope to simulate, albeit faintly, the synchronic ways in which a medieval audience may have experienced various renderings or recountings of the Sigurðr story.

Catalogue[9]

Beowulf

The epic *Beowulf* portrays the world of heroic pre-Christian Scandinavians from an Anglo-Saxon and Christian perspective.[10] The epic survives in a single manuscript, London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius A.xv, dated by many to the early eleventh century, but theories abound regarding the age of the epic itself, with suggested dates of origin from the ninth to the early eleventh centuries.[11]

In the first part of the poem, the narrator describes the Geatish hero Beowulf's successful wrestling with and defeat of a monstrous night-prowler named Grendel who had long terrorized the court of the Danish king Hrothgar. Beowulf grapples with the monster in the deep of the night and manages to wrench off Grendel's arm and shoulder,

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9 Boldface has been used to indicate texts/ideas that have their own catalogue entry in this essay.

10 Fulk, Bjork, and Niles, *Klaeber's Beowulf*. For a reading of the *Beowulf* passage in relation to the Sigurðr story, see McKinnell, "Sigmundr/Sigurðr Story," 50–57.

11 See the articles collected in Chase, *Dating of Beowulf*.

leading the monster to retreat and die. In the aftermath of this remarkable triumph, men loudly celebrate the hero's mettle and the narrator describes a singer of Hrothgar's court who begins to praise Beowulf in poetry. The poetic recitation soon, however, turns to the hero Sigemund's feats. Sigemund is the son of Wæls (a name similar to the Norse Vǫlsung) and is accompanied by a faithful retainer, a nephew named Fitela, reminiscent of the Norse Sinfjǫtli.

In this version, it is Sigemund who kills the dragon, not Sigurðr. The epic events parallel those that will befall the hero Beowulf in his old age, when he is compelled to fight a dragon that is terrorizing his kingdom without help from any of his men but for his young kinsman Wiglaf. Although the exact details of the *Beowulf* account are unclear, it is evident that the singer in the narrative uses a song of Sigemund both to entertain the king's retainers and to draw an explicit parallel between the brave deeds of Beowulf and those of the dragon-slayer of the past. The fact that Beowulf's Geatland and the Gautland of other versions of the Sigurðr story are essentially the same must have added further resonance and logic to the poet's choice of song.

Eiríksmál

The praise poem/dramatized conversation composed in honour of the death of Eiríkr Bloodaxe (d. 954) depicts Eiríkr, the sometime king of Norway and of Northumbria, arriving at **Óðinn's** Valhalla, where the delighted god bids the warriors Sigmundr and Sinfjǫtli to leave their seats and greet the new arrival.[12] No mention is made of Sigurðr. The poem appears in the history of Norwegian kings, *Nóregs konunga tal*, as it appears in the Icelandic manuscript *Fagrskinna*, dated to ca. 1220 and surviving today only in copies.

The poem plays a punctuating role in the account of the transfer of Norway from the warlike King Eiríkr Bloodaxe to his kinder, younger brother King Hákon. The young (Christian) prince Hákon returns to Norway at the urging of his foster father King Æthelstan of England. There he is elected king, ousting his older brother Eiríkr, who eventually emigrates to England with his disagreeable wife Gunnhildr. Æthelstan makes Eiríkr his vassal king of Northumbria and causes him to be baptized. Dissatisfied with the size of his new kingdom, Eiríkr begins to raid neighbouring realms and is eventually killed by another vassal king. It is in response to his death that Gunnhildr commissions the poem, which depicts Eiríkr as enjoying a pagan rather than a Christian afterlife. Gunnhildr is often depicted in the sagas as a conniving and headstrong queen, associated with magic, Sámi, and pagan ways.[13]

Gesta Danorum

The Danish cleric Saxo Grammaticus wrote his *Gesta Danorum* in the early thirteenth century.[14] Book 9 of the Latin text contains the story of Regner, a rendering of the

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12 Guðni Jónsson, *Eiríksmál*.

13 See DuBois, "Ethnomemory."

14 H. Davidson and Fisher, *Saxo Grammaticus*.

Ragnarr Loðbrók of ***Ragnars saga*** and ***Þáttr af Ragnars sonum***. In the narrative, Regner becomes king of Sjælland while still a boy, marries the valkyrie Lathgertha, then divorces her for Princess Thora, daughter of King Heroth of Sweden. He kills the menacing serpents protecting Thora and laying waste to the countryside, as in ***Ragnars saga***. His son Sivard makes a deal with a mysterious tall man (**Óðinn**) who requests the souls of the men Sivard defeats in battle. In exchange, the man cures Sivard's grievous wound and blows dust into his eyes, giving him irises like snakes, a detail related to the story of Sigurðr ormr í auga (who has sharp or snake-like eyes) as recounted in both ***Ragnars saga*** and ***Þáttr af Ragnars sonum***. Saxo's book details the military exploits of Regner and his sons in various kingdoms surrounding Denmark. After Regner resists and reverses the efforts of Christianisers, God punishes him by letting him be captured by King Ælla and dying in a snake pit. The text makes no mention of Áslaugr and thus does not tie the illustrious line of Regner and his sons to the wider Sigurðr story.

Grípisspá

The poem *Grípisspá* appears in the Codex Regius or ***Poetic Edda***, where it is the first poem in the compilation to detail the adventures of Sigurðr.[15] In it, a young and promising Sigurðr, already equipped with his horse Grani, comes to visit his uncle Grípir to hear tell of his future. Grípir assures Sigurðr that he will have a glorious life, predicting that Sigurðr will kill the dragon Fafnir and his brother Regin, and that he will bring the treasure to the hall of the Gjukingar and then awaken a sleeping valkyrie by cutting her armour. At the hall of Heimir, Sigurðr will meet Brynhildr (who is apparently distinct from the awakened valkyrie), whose charms will completely overpower Sigurðr. Nonetheless, through the trickery of Queen Grimhildr of the Gjukingar, Sigurðr will marry Guðrún and eventually woo Brynhildr for Gunnar. After a double wedding, Sigurðr will remember his earlier vows to Brynhildr but will be unable to change the situation. Brynhildr will plot revenge, making false claims against Sigurðr and leading Gunnar and his brother to murder Sigurðr. Sigurðr himself recoils at his future deeds, but Grípir reassures Sigurðr that he will be remembered for his acts of valour, not his fated indiscretions.

Háttatal

Snorri mentions in his *Háttatal* a verse form invented by the late-tenth-century Icelandic skald "Veili" (Þorvaldr veili) while stranded on a skerry after a shipwreck. Quoting a verse depicting a warrior sailing from the western seas to Vagsbrú (a bridge in Trondheim), the narrator states that Veili composed a lay without a refrain based on the "saga of Sigurðr."[16] If the verse quoted relates to Sigurðr (and it may not), it is one of the few depictions of the hero traveling by ship and perhaps reflects a particularly Icelandic way of seeing a hero who is usually depicted traveling over land by horseback. Significantly, the poet is said to have composed his poem by musing on the Sigurðr story dwelling in his mind.

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15 Guðni Jónsson, *Grípisspá.*

16 Snorri Sturlson, *Háttatal*, 18.

Hylestad Portal

Figure 1. Sigurðr licks his thumb while roasting the heart of Fafnir in the presence of the sleeping Regin. Hylestad Portal. Photo by Thomas A. DuBois.

The stave church of the village of Hylestad in the Norwegian district of Setesdal possessed a grand portal that survived even after the demolition of the church in 1664. That portal, dated to ca. 1200, is today on display at the Oslo Historical Museum. Although the crown of the portal is missing, the rest remains intact, and is an important rendering of the Sigurðr story in a specifically Christian context.

The portal divides the Sigurðr story into two halves: a right-hand side, depicting moments of triumph and hope, and a left-hand, sinister side, depicting the betrayals and dangers of the world. The right-hand side depicts, from bottom to top, the smith Regin forging the sword Gram, assisted by Sigurðr, the conferral of the sword to Sigurðr, and the battle of Sigurðr with the dragon Fafnir. The left-hand side depicts more ominous events: the roasting of the dragon's heart and Sigurðr's tasting of the dragon's blood (which conferred knowledge of the language of birds), the horse Grani carrying the cursed treasure, Sigurðr's murder of his conniving foster father Regin, and Gunnar playing a harp with his toes in the snake pit. We do not know what figure(s) existed on the crown of the portal or whether other depictions of the Sigurðr story existed on other portals or artwork in the church.

Kilmorie Cross slab

A tenth-century cross slab in the village of Kilmorie, Wigtownshire, Scotland, located on the north coast of Stranraer, depicts a resolute crucified Christ standing atop another figure interpreted as possibly Sigurðr.[17] The lower figure is depicted frontally, with his hands clasped in front of him, with two birds to his right side and a set of tongs to his left. The tongs are reminiscent of those depicted in the **Ramsund slab**, where Sigurðr is depicted using them to roast Fafnir's heart, turning away to suck his thumb, an act that equips him with the ability to understand the speech of birds, as recounted in the ***Prose Edda***, ***Poetic Edda***, and ***Vǫlsunga saga*** accounts, and depicted as well in the **Hylestad portal** and **Manx Andreas cross**. The reverse side of the slab is also decorated, depicting an incised Latin cross above interlacing serpentine scrolls. The slab was housed in

17 Graham-Campbell and Batey, *Vikings in Scotland*, 108, 251–52.

the Kilmorie chapel until the early eighteenth century, when it was moved to the Kilcolm church, where it was used as the lintel over the church's west door. When that church was demolished in 1821, the slab was removed to the gardens of Corsewall House, where it stands today as a valued exemplar of local medieval art.[18]

Krákumál

Like **Vǫlsunga saga** and **Ragnars saga**, the skaldic poem *Krákumál* is contained in a single vellum manuscript (Copenhagen, Royal Library, Ny kgl. Saml. 1824b 4to.) dating from around 1400.[19] It follows immediately after **Ragnars saga** in the manuscript and retells some of the events of Ragnarr's life in some twenty-nine stanzas of verse, each beginning with the line "Hjoggum vér með hjörvi" (We hewed with sword).

The poem is told in first-person narration as Ragnarr recounts his adventures from his first winning of Þóra, naming enemies and recounting battles in a wide range of places including some mentioned in **Ragnars saga**, but elsewhere as well, including Ireland and Scotland. The speaker closes with images of his impending arrival in Valhalla, where he will enjoy eternal feasting on the bench in the hall of Baldr's father (that is, **Óðinn**), while his sons by Áslaugr avenge his death. The poem underscores the Óðinnic nature of Ragnarr and his sons, emphasizing their intent to spend the afterlife in Valhalla, a notion paralleled by **Eiríksmál** and details of **Vǫlsunga saga** and **Ragnars saga**.

Leiðarvísir

Sometime between 1149 and 1154, the Icelandic abbot Nikulás made a pilgrimage from Iceland to the Holy Land. On his return, he prepared a detailed itinerarium, noting the sites he visited and the distances (in terms of days travelled) between them. Alongside various cathedrals and churches visited en route to Rome, Nikulás notes several places associated with the Sigurðr story. Near the village of Kiliandr (Killianstädten?), on the route between Padeborn and Mainz, he notes the existence of a site called "Gnitaheiðr, er Sigurðr var at Fabni" (Gnitaheiðr, where Sigurðr went up against Fafnir).[20] Proceeding southward to Switzerland, he comes to the village of "Fivizuborg" (Vévey), which, he notes, the sons of Ragnarr Loðbrók once attacked and which is therefore smaller now than it once was.[21] Crossing the Alps into Italy, he comes to a cave near Santo Stefano di Magra and Luni which is the site "kallar sumir menn ormgard er Gunnar var i settr" (which some men call the snake pit where Gunnar was placed).[22]

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18 Canmore, "Kirkholm, Corse Wall House, Cross-Slab."

19 Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, *Krákumál*.

20 Werlauff, *Leiðarvísir*, 16.

21 Werlauff, *Leiðarvísir*, 18.

22 Werlauff, *Leiðarvísir*, 20.

Manx cross depictions

Figure 2. Andreas cross. Image by Gavin Archer and Louise Archer.

A number of tenth-century inscribed crosses on the Isle of Man have been interpreted to depict scenes associated with the Sigurðr story.[23] The stones prominently display Latin crosses with interlacing serpentine scroll decoration and figures reminiscent of **Óðinn**, Þórr, boars, deer, and valkyries. They bear Norse runic inscriptions that indicate the Norse or occasionally Celtic names of persons (mostly men) who erected the stones in honour of kin or companions. A cross erected in Jurby depicts a man slaying a dragon, and also sucking his thumb, possibly to be identified with Sigurðr. Similar is a cross at Melew. A cross at Andreas (figure 2 above) contains several scenes almost indisputably associated with Sigurðr, including his roasting of Fafnir's heart and sucking his thumb, with a horse (Grani) and bird behind, clearly parallel to depictions on the **Hylestad portal** and **Ramsund slab**. Another cross erected by Mal-lomchon for his foster mother Malworrey in Michael depicts a man playing a large harp, flanked by a smaller figure, reminiscent of Heimir and Áslaugr in ***Ragnars saga***.[24]

Norna Gests þáttr

The story of Norna Gestr appears in the expanded *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* of the *Flateyjarbók* manuscript (GKS 1005 fol.), completed sometime before 1387.[25] In the tale, King Ólafr Tryggvason, the late-tenth-century Norwegian king who worked to Christianize Norway as well as Iceland, is visited by a mysterious elderly man, "Gestr." The visitor reveals his incredible age, a product of a dispute between the Norns at the time of his birth. He is accomplished at playing the harp and reciting epic poems, and entertains the court one evening with renditions of two (unquoted) poems, *Gunnarsslagr* and *Guðrúnarbrögð*, apparently pertaining to the Sigurðr story.

A wager with other men in the court leads Gestr to recount his past, in which he tells how he became a retainer of Sigurðr in his youth. He describes Sigurðr, his heroic brothers, his dealings with Regin, the defeat of Fafnir, and Sigurðr's marriage to Guðrún. He

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23 Cumming, *Runic and Other Monumental Remains*; and Kermode, *Traces of the Norse Mythology*. For some photographic depictions, see **Manx Crosses** and Picture Stones at www.vikingage.org/wiki/index.php?title=Picture_stones_from_the_Isle_of_Man.

24 Kermode, *Traces of the Norse Mythology*, Plate V.

25 G. Hardman, *Norna Gests þáttr*.

tells of how Sigurðr was befriended by a mysterious poetic stranger Hnikarr, apparently **Óðinn**, and recounts Sigurðr's triumph over the legendary warrior Starkaðr Stórverks-son, dislodging two of his teeth, which are now on display at a Danish church. Gestr identifies a ring in the king's possession as once having belonged to Sigurðr and displays some remarkably long hairs taken from Grani's tail. Ólafr asks Gestr how Sigurðr died, and Gestr notes the existence of conflicting German and Norse accounts of the murder. Ólafr also asks about Brynhildr's reaction to the death, and Gestr relates her suicide and burning on the pyre, quoting verse from the ***Poetic Edda***'s *Helreið Brynhildar*. Gestr also mentions accompanying the sons of Ragnarr Loðbrók on their plundering of Vífilsborg (Vévey, Switzerland). Throughout the narrative, Olafr and his court display familiarity with the recounted events, but are edified by hearing Gestr's eyewitness accounts. Gestr eventually receives baptism and dies peacefully.

Näs baptismal font

Figure 3. Näs baptismal font.
Photo by Thomas A. DuBois

Stockholm's Historical Museum preserves the baptismal font of Näs Church, Jämtland, dated to around 1200. The font is carved from a single large tree stump, its outer surface decorated with lavish and sophisticated carvings. Inhabited vine scroll is populated with serpents, winged dragons, and beings that appear half human/half dragon. Most striking, however, is the inclusion of a bound figure, beset with serpents and playing a harp with his toes. The figure has generally been interpreted as a depiction of Gunnar at the end of his life, cast into a snake pit by his enemies and charming all but one deadly snake with his playing.[26]

Poetic Edda account

The *Poetic Edda* refers to a compendium of poems preserved in the Codex Regius, an Icelandic manuscript dated to around 1270.[27] Beginning with mythological poems, the compendium eventually turns to poetry about great warriors and, often, about their queens, valkyrie consorts, and daughters. Poems are introduced or interrupted by prose sections, in which the compiler gives details regarding the figures mentioned and offers

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26 Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, "Gunnarr and the Snake Pit."

27 Guðni Jónsson, *Eddukvaeði;* Snorri Sturluson, *Poetic Edda.*

comments on the events described. Two of the poems in the compilation are discussed separately in this catalogue: *Grípisspá* and *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*.

The collection's prodigious array of poems related to the Sigurðr story contain first heroic poems about heroes named Helgi (one of whom is Sigurðr's brother), then poems about Sigurðr and his dealings with Regin, Fafnir, Guðrún, Sigrdrífa/Brynhildr, Gunnar, and the Gjukingar. After Sigurðr's death, the poems follow the life of Guðrún into her next marriage with Atli and subsequent marriage with Jonakr. The fates of all Guðrún's children by each of these husbands are detailed, including Svanhildr's murder by King Jormunrekkr and Guðrún's efforts to make sure that the murder is avenged, an act that takes the lives of her final three sons. Taken as a whole, the *Poetic Edda* compilation emphasizes the genealogical ties of the various characters, accounting for the fates of all the Gjukingar, Budlingar, and Vǫlsungar, except for Áslaugr, who is not mentioned.

Óðinn recurs in several of the initial poems, helping link these heroic poems to the mythological material earlier in the compilation in which he plays a central role. Women's roles are examined in considerable detail.

Prose Edda Account

Snorri's account of the Sigurðr story appears in *Skáldskaparmál*, a manual for poets compiled as part of the *Prose Edda*.[28] It is dated to ca. 1220; Snorri is known to have died in 1241. Some scholars suggest that references to the Sigurðr story may be later interpolations,[29] written in the aftermath of the **Poetic Edda** and the **Vǫlsunga saga**. The text contains a frame story in which a certain Ægir or Hlér comes to visit the Æsir. He is placed beside the poet Bragi during the evening's feast and Bragi spends the night detailing for the guest the different metaphors used in poetry and their relation to key events in the history of the gods. The story of Sigurðr arises when Bragi is explaining why gold is also called "Otrgjǫld" (ottar payment).[30] That term launches Bragi into the tale of Loki's acquisition of the cursed treasure while travelling with **Óðinn**, followed by Sigurðr's dealings with Regin, Fafnir, Guðrún, Gunnar, and Brynhildr. Sigurðr's murder is detailed, as is Guðrún's subsequent marriages and the deaths of her brothers and children. Only one offspring survives: a daughter of Sigurðr named Áslaugr, whose mother is unspecified but who is said to have been raised in the home of Heimir of Hlymdales, becoming the ancestress of illustrious family lines. Finally, Snorri's narrator notes that most poets have made use of these materials and furnishes an example composed by Bragi the Old, an ekphrastic rendering of the scenes of the death of Jormunrekkr and the sons of Jonakr appearing on a shield that Bragi has received from Ragnarr Loðbrók, the heroic husband of Áslaugr.[31] Snorri's narrator recounts his tale entirely in prose, making no quotation of any poems until the very end of the account.

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28 Snorri Sturlson, *The Prose Edda*.

29 Snorri Sturlson, *Háttatal*, xi.

30 Snorri Sturlson, *The Prose Edda*, 45.

31 Snorri Sturlson, *The Prose Edda*, 50.

Ragnars saga Loðbrókar

Ragnars saga Loðbrókar appears in a manuscript, Ny kgl. Saml. 1824b 4to, dating from around 1400, with myriad imitations and echoes in medieval sources from Iceland, England, Denmark, and France.[32] The saga follows immediately after **Vǫlsunga saga**, picking up with the aftermath of the death of Guðrún's last sons.

Brynhildr's foster father Heimir fears for the life of Áslaugr, Sigurðr and Brynhildr's daughter. He has a large harp constructed, in which he hides the girl and a quantity of treasure and clothes. An elderly farmer and his wife murder him for his money, discover the hidden child, and determine to raise her as their own. They shave her head and rub her with tar, naming her Kráka (crow). Meanwhile, Ragnarr, heroic son of King Sigurðr Hring of Denmark, wins the hand of the noble Þóra by killing the serpent that guards her. She bears him valiant sons. After her death, Ragnarr marries Kráka, whose royal parentage becomes revealed only later. She, too, bears Ragnarr noble sons, and under the title Randalín, fights alongside them in Sweden, where they avenge the death of Ragnarr's previous sons. The sons then travel to the continent and raid in various places, including Vífilsborg (Vévey, Switzerland).

Ragnarr raids in England, where he is captured by King Ælla. Like Gunnar, he dies in a snake pit. His sons come to avenge him, using a ruse to gain a grant of land, identified with London. His son Ívarr becomes ruler of Northumbria, while Hvítserkr becomes a famous raider in the east. Sigurðr ormr í auga establishes himself in Norway, where his daughter Ragnhildr becomes the mother of King Haraldr Fairhair.[33] Ragnarr's sons thus tie royal Norse lines to Sigurðr and Brynhildr.

Ramsund slab

Figure 4. Ramsund slab engraving, originally in Montelius, *Sveriges hednatid*: dramatic image of Sigurd stabbing a text. Photo by Thomas A. DuBois.

The runic inscription at Ramsund, in Södermanland, Sweden, dated to the early eleventh century, represents the best known of a number of memorial stones connected with the Sigurðr story. It is closely paralleled by the Gök stone (not included in this catalogue), also located in Södermanland. The inscription and depiction of scenes, sponsored by a woman named

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32 Van Dyke, *Ragnars saga Loðbrókar*; McTurk, *Studies in Ragnars saga Loðbrókar*; Rowe, *Development of Flateyjarbók*; and Rowe, *Vikings in the West.*

33 Finlay, "Chronology, Genealogy, and Conversion," 49.

Sigriðr, is executed on a large granite slab rising from the landscape near the site of a medieval bridge dated to around 1040, on a road that connected Lake Mälaren with the town of Eskilstuna, some ten kilometres to the southeast.[34] It was there that the English-born St Eskil, a companion of St Sigfriðr, set up his first missionary outpost in the region in the early eleventh century. St Eskil, as well as his supporters and detractors, are likely to have crossed this bridge at times, perhaps on the way to Eskilstuna and Strängnäs, the eventual bishop's seat.[35] Sigriðr and her kinsmen must have been among the region's first and most prominent Christians. The stone's inscription identifies Sigriðr as the sponsor of the bridge and mentions her male kin, one of whom is named Sigröðr. The images depict Sigurðr in the act of slaying the serpent, a tree with birds and a horse (Grani), Sigurðr roasting the dragon's heart and sucking his thumb, a beheaded Regin, and an animal interpreted as Otr.

Sigurðarkviða in skamma

Sigurðarkviða in skamma, the *Short Lay of Sigurðr*, appears midway through the various poems collected and united in the **Poetic Edda**.[36] The poem tells the story of Sigurðr's life from the time immediately after killing the dragon Fafnir onward to his death. Sigurðr becomes friends with Gunnar and Högni, who offer him the hand of their sister Guðrún. Sigurðr accompanies his new allies on their wooing expedition to Brynhildr. Brynhildr, once married to Gunnar, pines for Sigurðr and eventually incites Gunnar to murder him. Guðrún awakens amid a pool of her husband's blood. Sigurðr comforts his distraught wife with his dying words, while Brynhildr laughs in triumph. Gunnar and Brynhildr argue, and Brynhildr recounts her brother Atli's pressuring her to marry against her will. Gunnar tries to comfort her so as to prevent her suicide, but his brother Högni welcomes her death as fitting. Brynhildr has a long speech as she dies, in which she predicts the subsequent lives of Gunnar, Guðrún, Oddrún (Brynhildr's sister, whom Gunnar will seek to marry), Atli, Jonakr, Svanhildr, and Jormunrekkr. She then requests to have her funeral pyre alongside Sigurðr's, with the same sword placed between them as in the courting bed long before.

Sturlunga saga

The Sigurðr story surfaces in the later Icelandic *Sturlunga saga* through the dreams of a young priest's wife, Jóreiðr, living at Miðjumdál. In unsettling dreams, Guðrún Gjukadóttir repeatedly appears to Jóreiðr to communicate prophecies concerning the fall of Eyjólfr Þorsteinsson (d. 1255). When Jóreiðr expresses anxiety at being visited by a pagan apparition, Guðrún retorts: "Engu skal þik þat skipta [...] hvárt ek em kristin eða heiðin, en vinr em ek vinar míns" (It should not be of concern to you [...] whether I am Christian or heathen, but that I am a friend to my friends).[37]

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34 Jägerbrand, "Sigurdsristningen."

35 Delaney, *Dictionary of Saints*, 201.

36 Guðni Jónsson, *Sigurðarkviða in skamma.*

37 Jón Jóhannesson, Magnús Finnbogason, and Kristján Eldjárn, *Sturlunga Saga*, 1:521.

Þáttr af Ragnars sonum

The *Þáttr af Ragnars sonum* survives in a single manuscript, Hauksbók, now pre-
served in three parts (Reykjavík, Árni Magnússon Institute, AM 371 4to, Copenhagen,
Arnamagnæan Institute, AM 544 4to, and Reykjavík, Árni Magnússon Institute, AM 675
4to), a compilation of geographic treatises, biblical commentary, sermons, mythological
poetry, continental histories (of Troy and of Britain), and Norse sagas and *þættir* written
by the Icelandic lawsayer Haukr Erlendsson (d. 1334) in the early fourteenth century.[38]
The portion of the manuscript containing this tale is preserved in AM 544 4to.

The text recounts the adventures of Ragnarr Loðbrók and his sons, paralleling the
details of **Ragnars saga Loðbrókar**. Ragnarr, prince of Denmark and Sweden, wins the
hand of Þóra by killing her protective serpent. She bears him his first two sons. After the
death of Þóra, Ragnarr marries Áslaugr/Randalín, identified as the daughter of Sigurðr
and Brynhildr. Their sons Ívarr, Björn, Hvítserkr, and Sigurðr ormr í auga avenge the
death of Ragnarr's previous sons in Sweden alongside their mother. Ragnarr raids in
England, where he is captured by King Ælla and put to death in a snake pit. His sons
acquire land in England (the city of York) through a ruse, and avenge their father.
Ívarr's illegitimate sons Yngvarr and Hústó attack and torture the ninth-century King
St Edmund the martyr of East Anglia, taking his kingdom, a detail paralleled in many
English sources.

Thidreks saga

The text of *Thidreks saga* reflects Norse knowledge of continental German traditions
concerning the Sigurðr story and serves here not only as a text in itself but also as an
illustration of the Sigurðr story as it exists in the *Nibelungenlied*, not covered in this
catalogue. *Thidreks saga* has been generally dated to the mid-thirteenth century. A
Norwegian parchment manuscript survives from the second half of the thirteenth cen-
tury and is supplemented by two paper manuscripts from the seventeenth century.[39]

The saga's Sigurðr materials begin with the story of a King Sigmund of Tarlungaland
(apparently the Frankish realm of the Carolingians).[40] He marries a Spanish princess
Sisibe who eventually bears him a son called Sigfred. Due to court intrigues, Sisibe is
killed and the son lost. He is raised by a deer and then found by the smith Mimir and his
dragon brother Regin.[41] The boy eventually kills the brothers, gaining invincibility from
rubbing himself with the dragon's blood. In the kingdom of Niflungaland, he befriends
Gunnar and eventually marries Gunnar's sister Grimhildr. He helps win Brynhildr for
Gunnar. Rivalry between Grimhildr and Brynhildr leads to his death: he is murdered
by his in-laws during a boar hunt. Attila eventually marries Grimhildr, and Gunnar is
eventually killed by Attila in the snake pit. His brothers Högni and Gernoz survive for
a time but are eventually killed as well, as Grimhildr seeks revenge for her husband's

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38 Tunstall, *Þáttr af Ragnars Sonum*.

39 Haymes, *Saga of Thidrek*, xx–xxi.

40 Haymes, *Saga of Thidrek*, chap. 152–62, pp. 100–105.

41 Haymes, *Saga of Thidrek*, chap. 163–68, pp. 105–9.

death. King Thidrek kills Grimhildr with Attila's blessings. Högni's son Aldrian avenges his father's death by entrapping Attila in a mountain filled with the treasures of Högni, Gunnar, and Sigurðr/Sigfred. Aldrian journeys to Niflungaland, where he informs Brynhildr of his deeds and receives praise and authority over the kingdom from her.

Vǫlsunga rímur

The sixteenth-century manuscript Copenhagen, Arnamagnæan, AM 604 4to recounts many of the same details as the opening chapters of **Vǫlsunga saga** in Icelandic *rímur* verse. The six poems of the collection recount the Trojan origins of the Æsir (a detail found in Snorri's Prologue to the **Prose Edda**) and the relation of **Óðinn** to the family line that becomes known as the Vǫlsungar. The poems tell of Sigi's career and his murder of Breði. It continues into the life of Sigi's son Rerir, the latter's difficulties in begetting a son, and the assistance granted by Frigg and **Óðinn**. The life of Vǫlsungr is detailed, along with his marriage to Hljóð, sent to him by **Óðinn**. The ill-fated marriage of Siggeirr and Signý is recounted, along with the arrival of a mysterious guest who leaves the sword that causes the enmity between Siggeirr and the Vǫlsungar. The poems describe Sigmundr's survival of Siggeirr's treachery, the sex between Signý and Sigmundr, and the birth of Sinfjǫtli. They close with the return of Sigmundr to Húnaland and the birth and early life of his sons Helgi and Hrómundr.

Vǫlsunga saga

The prose and poetic *Vǫlsunga saga* is dated to between 1200 and 1270 although it exists today primarily in a single vellum manuscript (Ny kgl. Saml. 1824b 4to) from around 1400 which also contains **Ragnars saga** and **Krákumál**.[42] Numerous paper manuscripts exist as well.

The saga begins with a genealogical tale that links the Vǫlsung family directly to **Óðinn**, following his line through Sigi, Rerir, and Vǫlsungr. Vǫlsungr's son Sigmundr comes into conflict with his future brother-in-law Siggeirr of Gautland over a sword brought to Sigmundr's court by a mysterious visitor (**Óðinn**). Siggeir attempts to destroy the Vǫlsungr line in revenge, but is foiled by his wife Signý, who sleeps with her brother Sigmundr to produce Sinfjǫtli and who assists her brother and son in their work of avenging the family's deaths. Sinfjǫtli is poisoned by Sigmundr's wife Borghildr, who has borne Sigmundr two sons, the elder of which is the heroic Helgi. Sigmundr's subsequent wife, Hjordís, posthumously bears him the son Sigurðr, who grows up in the court of King Hjalprekr, where he is fostered by Regin. **Óðinn** helps Sigurðr acquire the horse Grani, a descendent of **Óðinn**'s horse Sleipnir. Regin urges Sigurðr to kill the dragon Fafnir, recounting the downfall of the family of Hreiðmarr and reforging Sigmundr's sword into Gram. While roasting the heart of Fafnir and licking his thumb, Sigurðr becomes aware of Regin's treachery and kills him. He discovers and awakens Brynhildr and the two produce a child, Áslaugr. Sigurðr befriends Gunnar, is tricked into forgetting Brynhildr through a magic potion given to him by Guðrún's mother Grimhildr, and marries

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42 Guðni Jónsson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson, *Völsunga saga*; and Byock, *Saga of the Volsungs*.

Guðrún. Rivalry between Guðrún and Brynhildr leads Sigurðr's brothers-in-law to murder him. Brynhildr dies alongside Sigurðr, while Guðrún goes on to marry Atli, who eventually causes the death of her brothers Gunnar and Högni. Guðrún avenges her brothers through murdering and cooking her sons by Atli and subsequently marries Jonakr, with whom she has further sons. When Svanhildr, daughter of Guðrún and Sigurðr, becomes the source of conflict between King Jormunrekkr and his son Randver, she is trampled to death by horses. Guðrún urges her sons Hamdir, Sọrli, and Erp to avenge their half-sister, and their deaths are recounted at the close of the saga.

Analysis

In addressing the kinds of questions literate scholars tend to ask of the works they study, Foley writes

> the presupposition that the work under discussion is static is the operating assumption, the ultimate tAgora bottom line. Someone constructed the thing, felt it had reached final form, and then made it available (under applicable rules, of course) as a fixed, immutable object for us to own (Owning versus Sharing) and then to interpret as we wish. Our interpretations will always vary, perhaps radically, but artifacts supported in the tAgora will not and cannot. And since we understand the work as contained wholly in the artifact, the work seems just as static as the object. Nothing curious or suspicious here; just business as usual in the tAgora. Now for the other side of the coin.[43]

Foley uses internet experience to help problematize the assumptions of stasis that, he argues, dominate the mind of a person trained in a culture that relies predominantly on texts. Medievalists have been more sympathetic than many modernists to approaches that would explore "the other side of the coin" alluded to by Foley above, since often the works medievalists study are ones that exist in a series of manuscript realizations that together can suggest a series of iterations. Often, medievalists have tended to view such evidence as a sequence of static texts rather than as contour lines in an emerging topographical map of the reception, repossessing, and repurposing of ideas occurring in what was essentially an oAgora managed or supplemented by writing. Working from the homology of the eAgora, the scholar following Foley is invited to see these variations in a rich and mutually contradictory array of extant works as various "pathways" through an imaginative topography, differing realizations of the potential of the story, shaped by the purposes and background knowledge of the people who wrote them down. Some trails through the "story hoard" will be direct and well-trodden, some circuitous and obscure. Foley's use of the oAgora/eAgora homology decentres the notion of a "correct version" implicit in tAgora thinking.

As Foley shows, textual thinking involves notions of completeness and stability, and in that mindset scholars have sought to find out what is *the* Sigurðr story. The **Poetic Edda** has tended to fare the best in such exercises, although scholars have also examined each of its poems in isolation and posited which are "earlier," "later," "jumbled," etc. The **Prose Edda** account and the **Vọlsunga saga** have been seen as

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43 Foley, *Oral Tradition and the Internet*, 128.

somewhat less satisfactory, perhaps because they seem dependent on the seemingly most ancient poems of the *Poetic Edda*. Other works, like *Norna Gests þáttr* or *Ragnars saga Loðbrókar*, have been discounted as "late" and therefore of less intrinsic interest. Material manifestations of the story have been left mostly to art historians to discuss. Briefer uses of the Sigurðr story—like those of the *Sturlunga saga*, *Háttatal*, and *Leiðarvísir* accounts discussed above—have been labelled "stray references," and accorded little importance.

In the oAgora/eAgora homology, in contrast, the point of interest of the catalogue above becomes not so much which work or details came first and when, but rather what *pathways* users have taken over time through the array of details encompassed by the overarching Sigurðr story. Website analytics permit a manager to see which pages on a site have been visited most, and for precisely how long. They also let the manager see the web addresses for the sites each user visited immediately before coming to the website and immediately after leaving. This data affords a sense of the traffic through the site. Thinking of the eAgora/oAgora homology, we can explore the pathways "through" the Sigurðr story, as we can surmise these from the ways the story is incorporated into broader texts or manuscripts or deployed artistically. In so doing, we can notice that certain pathways, eight of which I describe below, arise as particularly prominent. In this case, I exercise my tAgora option of ordering these in a way I see best in terms of my argument, but I invite readers to proceed through them in any order.

1. *Male Heroes*

Figure 5. Sigurðr slaying Fafnir. Hylestad portal. Photo by Thomas A. DuBois.

Of Sigurðr, the compiler of *Vǫlsunga saga* writes:

> Ok þa er talðir eru allir inir stœrstu kappar ok inir ágæztu hǫfðingjar, þá mun hann jafnan fremstr talðr, ok hans nafn gengr í ǫllum tungum fyrir norðan Grikklands haf, ok svá mun vera meðan verölden stendr.[44]

> (When tallying up all the greatest champions and most famous noblemen, he will be counted the foremost, and his name is familiar in all the languages north of the Mediterranean and shall remain so for as long as the world stands.)

Similar pronouncements are included in *Grípisspá, Norna Gests þáttr*, and various poems of the *Poetic Edda*. Sigurðr, and by extension, his family, his friends, and his ene-

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44 Finch, *Saga of the Volsungs*, 41.

mies are all superlative, larger than life, and they share a fame that was unrivalled in the Norse world and that endured for many, many centuries—indeed, down to today. Part of this fame has to do with details of battle and invincibility, but part also seems to derive from Sigurðr's (or Sigemund's or Ragnarr's) killing of a fierce dragon/serpent. The figure of the dragon may intertwine with associations of either **Óðinn** or **Christ** (see below), but it was also in and of itself an exciting and memorable narrative detail that an audience could enjoy: it moved the narrative into the realm of the marvellous, mighty, and memorable, a place where great men performed great deeds.

A product of this unrivalled fame is the remarkable way in which Sigurðr and his wider family and interactants become associated with other greats of medieval history. Gundaharius of the Burgundians (d. 437), Attila the Hun (d. 453), Ermenrichus of the Goths (d. 375), Theoderic the Great (d. 526), the legendary Ragnarr Loðbrokkr and Starkaðr, the English kings Athelstan, Ælla, Edmund, and Knud (Canute), and the Norwegian kings Haraldr Fairhair, Eiríkr Bloodaxe, and Hákon the Good are all drawn into the narrative, as contemporaries, predecessors, or successors of Sigurðr. Where in the eAgora association becomes expressed invisibly through surfer pathways or more visibly through user comments, blog posts, or embedded links, in the oAgora, association becomes expressed often through narrative inclusion and asserted lines of **kinship**. It is not surprising that numerous men of later times—including many kings—bore the name of Sigurðr, or that the name of Guðrún enjoyed similar popularity among women.

2. *Female Heroes: Daughters, Lovers, Mothers, Sisters, Wives, and Woman Warriors*

If the Sigurðr story is a narration of male heroic prowess, it also displays a striking degree of attention to its female characters, their feelings and experiences. The catalogue above hardly does justice to characters like Guðrún, Brynhildr, Signý, Oddrún, Áslaugr, and others. It is noteworthy that, in the ***Poetic Edda***, for instance, Sigurðr disappears entirely from the "Sigurðr story" part-way through the compilation, while Guðrún figures as the character who links the various poems of the last portion of the collection together, tying them into the parallel explorations of **male heroism**, **betrayal**, and **lineage**. Female characters play central roles in many of the collection's poems as they do in narratives of many of the texts included in the above catalogue, enacting devotion, carrying out or inciting vengeance, and vying with each other in grimness, honour, and determination.

3. *Betrayal*

While men and women differ in their actions in the Sigurðr story, they are united in their frequent experience of betrayal, a theme that Torfi Tulinius views as central to ***Vǫlsunga saga***, if not of the broader Sigurðr story.[45] Sigi is murdered by his envious brothers-in-law. Signý watches her husband capture and torture her brothers soon after their wedding. Hreiðmarr receives treasure and a ring infected with a deadly curse in compensation for his son's death. Sigurðr learns that his foster father is

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45 Tulinius, *Matter of the North*.

Figure 6. Sigurðr slays Regin. Hylestad Portal. Photo by Thomas A. DuBois.

planning to murder him and beheads him himself. Brynhildr witnesses her true love forget her very existence. Guðrún watches her brothers plot and carry out the murder of her husband. Atli eats the flesh of his murdered sons, served to him by his wife. Jǫrmunrekkr watches his son steal his girlfriend and murders them both in revenge. Áslaugr/Kráka watches her adoptive parents murder her protector and disguise her as ugly. Ælla gives land as a peace offering that becomes the beachhead for an invasion. There is little kindness in the harsh world of the Sigurðr story, though there is great heroism and much tragedy and sorrow.

4. Óðinn

In his introduction to his edition and translation of **Vǫlsunga saga**, R. G. Finch writes: "Odin is clearly extraneous."[46] His point may be correct if we are referring to some posited original text composed by a single mind in a single place. But it would be absurd to posit that Óðinn is not essential in the **Vǫlsunga saga** version of the Sigurðr story, where Óðinn shows up time and time again as a mysterious, meddling, and managing presence. Nor does it make sense to discount Óðinn in the **Poetic Edda**, where poems of Óðinn and the other gods gradually give way to the heroic poems of the final part of the collection.[47] Over and over again Óðinn appears in the various works catalogued above, collecting men for his Valhalla and overseeing the fortunes of his spiritual or even genetic followers.

5. Christ

If, of course, seeking an afterlife with **Óðinn** was viewed as popular among pagans, the Christian of later centuries sought with equal fervour an afterlife with Christ. Christian imagery or ideas recur in many items of the Sigurðr story catalogue included above, just as surely as do imagery and ideas of **Óðinn**. Many of the visual images left to us appear on Christian monuments, particularly ones from the British Isles, but also ones in Norway and Sweden. Gestr ends his long and storied life with a peaceful baptism. For the Icelandic Nikulás, visiting sites associated with the Sigurðr story appeared fully appropriate for a man on pilgrimage to Rome.

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46 Finch, *Saga of the Volsungs*, xxx.

47 Kaplan, *Thou Fearful Guest*.

Figure 7. Gunnar plays the harp in the snake pit. Hylestad Portal. Photo by Thomas A. DuBois.

6. *Kinship, Kingship, and Lineage*

In a world in which kinship was the basis of society, where reciting one's parentage was a precondition of speaking at assemblies, the Sigurðr story explores with endless fascination the question of lineages, of family lines, and of fates that carry on from generation to generation. The notion of a Vǫlsungr genealogy organizes and motivates both the collection of poems in the **Poetic Edda** and their prose rendering in **Vǫlsunga saga**. The ranks of the Vǫlsungar swell through a proliferation of the sons of Sigmundr, with the relatively distinct stories of Helgi, Sinfjǫtli, and Sigurðr each anchored to the broader Sigurðr story through details of kinship. Rival or intersecting lineages—that of the sons and daughters of Hreiðmarr, as well as the sons and daughters of Gjúki and of Buðli—are followed across generations as families rise in fortune and fall. Through the figure of Áslaugr, the Sigurðr lineage continues into later generations, as detailed in **Ragnars saga Loðbrókar** and the **Þáttr af Ragnars sonum**. **Ragnars saga Loðbrókar** and Snorri's **Prose Edda** account make it plain that the Vǫlsungar descended directly from **Óðinn** and that the greatest of the Vǫlsungar—Sigurðr the dragon slayer—became, through his daughter Áslaugr, the great-great-grandfather of Haraldr Fairhair and, thereby, ancestor of the great dynasty of Norwegian kings.[48] In other Norse texts, the Danish king Hǫrða-Knútr is also said to be the grandson of Ragnar's son Sigurðr ormr í auga, and thereby the great-great-great-grandson of Sigurðr.[49] Icelanders, too, participated in such lineage-finding: the Icelandic author of the *Íslendingabók*, Ari Þorgilsson, also claimed to be related to the Ragnarr lineage. His royal Swedish ancestor Ingjaldr was purportedly the son of the daughter of Sigurðr ormr í auga, making Ingjaldr also the great-great-great-grandson of Sigurðr.[50]

7. *Geography*

In a world where places were visited mostly through storytelling and only occasionally through actual physical experience, the Sigurðr story abounds in far-off settings, great kingdoms, and foreign courts. In some accounts, travel by water is described. Mostly, however, the abundant travel of heroes and heroines unfolds over land, across continental Europe, with locations specified in the Rhineland, Swedish Gautland, Norway,

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48 Finlay, "Chronology, Genealogy, and Conversion," 49.

49 Rowe, *Development of Flateyjarbók*, 2.

50 Finlay, "Chronology, Genealogy, and Conversion," 48.

Denmark, England, Switzerland, and occasionally Italy. In the more German-focused ***Thidreks saga***, too, continental realms are specified, including various parts of modern-day Germany, Spain, Poland, and the kingdom of the Carolingian Franks. The ***Þáttr af Ragnars sonum*** appears in *Hauksbók*, where it accompanies continental geographic treatises. As in the Prologue to Snorri's ***Prose Edda***, the *Vǫlsunga rímur* verses link the Sigurðr story and the coming of the Æsir to the history of Troy and the migration of that city's aristocrats to the north of Europe. For the Icelandic pilgrim Nikulás of ***Leiðarvísir***, part of the interest in travelling across Europe en route to Rome and the Holy Land was to glimpse places of importance in the Sigurðr story.

8. *Poets and Poems*

The texts catalogued above frequently call attention to the provenance of poems or accounts. The ***Beowulf***-narrator assures the audience that no one can have known the deeds of Sigemund other than his nephew Fitela and that the songs performed must therefore derive directly from that source. In ***Norna Gests þáttr***, Norna Gestr performs old poems of the Sigurðr story unknown by others and presumably deriving from the very court of Sigurðr, where Gestr lived and worked long in the past. Both ***Krákumál*** and ***Eiríksmál*** adopt a first-person narrator to tie the words of the poems unambiguously with the heroic figures described in their lines. Snorri's ***Háttatal*** tells of a poet "Veili" (Þorvaldr veili) who composes a Sigurðr poem while stranded on a skerry,[51] and his ***Prose Edda*** account of the Sigurðr story notes that "flest skáld" (most poets) of note have composed works based on the story.[52] He closes his account by quoting a piece of a poem composed by Bragi the Old, recounting the deaths of Guðrún's last sons, based on a shield which Bragi is said to have received from Ragnarr Loðbrók, son-in-law of Sigurðr. Such references draw poets and poetry into the heroic ***lineage*** and associations of the Sigurðr story, increasing its Óðinnic qualities while reminding audiences that poetry represents a powerful link between the heroic past and the present, a notion abundantly exploited by Christian skaldic poets and Icelandic literati of later times, as Guðrún Nordal has noted.[53]

Conclusions

The power of looking at the narratives and images above as pathways through a story-hoard is that it avoids the impulse to flatten and unite these varied materials into a single narrative in the manner characteristic of the tAgora. In the worldview of the tAgora, a text is composed and completed. In contrast, by imagining the relationship between these works as independent visits of varying duration to a Sigurðr website, we can allow ourselves to take more interest in the "user agendas" of the visits. Snorri's *Skaldskaparmál* reflects a writer who wants to catalogue useful poetic terms for gold

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51 Snorri Sturlson, *Háttatal,* chap. 35.

52 Snorri Sturlson, *Skáldskaparmál 1*, 50.

53 Nordal, *Tools of Literacy*.

and school would-be poets on the rich mythological backgrounds of many epithets and kennings. Since Sigurðr and his contemporaries are referenced in many such terms, it makes sense for him to retell a version of the Sigurðr story. On the other hand, the abbot Nikulás wants to explain to his readers the paths and sites of interest awaiting the intrepid pilgrim. These two writers' user agendas differ and entail visits of differing length to the Sigurðr site, but neither is more "right" than the other—they make use of the site as they see fit.

In the intellectual system of the eAgora, we accept that some sites, such as the Sigurðr site, prove more popular than others. Part of that prominence means that the site becomes linked to other sites in the medieval mind: the site for stave churches, the site for male and female heroic actions, the sites for conflicts of duty and honour and betrayal, the site for the Norwegian nobility, the site for **Óðinn** and for **Christ**, and so on. At the same time, its *lack* of links to other sites can prove telling: few, if any, links seem to connect the site to the god Thor, or to other animals of importance outside of the aristocratic/Óðinnic sphere, for example dogs, cattle, sheep, sea mammals.[54] Female characters are important in the story, but few links tie these in any way to the female saints or the Virgin Mary, despite the Christian links described above. Foley's eAgora/oAgora homology lets us notice both linkages and disconnections, and appreciate the Sigurðr story not as a single narrative but as a narrative space, traversed and explored in different ways over the course of many centuries, down to the present.

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54 DuBois, "Diet and Deities."

WHEN A HERO LIES

JOSEPH FALAKY NAGY

THE STORY TOLD in the early medieval Irish prose text at the centre of this contribution, the *Táin Bó Fraich* (Cattle Raid of Fróech) (hereafter *TBF*), contains several story elements that would have been very familiar to John Miles Foley from the other heroic narrative traditions on which he worked and wrote.[1] There is, for example, the conspicuous arrival of the protagonist-hero, described by the storyteller with special attention to the impressive details of the appearance and equipment of the hero (Fróech) and his retinue. The purpose of their trip is to woo a high-born maiden, a process involving negotiation with hostile parents, and a series of tests for the hero-suitor that he must pass in order to win a princess who proves to be as brave, defiant, and loyal as the hero himself. These tests include a fight with a monster in a pool and the recovery of a lost precious item.[2]

In a way that (as we shall see) makes a shambles of the story's internal consistency as preserved in this text, the plot elements listed above are followed by an abduction and the hero's subsequent search in foreign lands for his abducted wife and stolen cattle, a quest predicated on his joining forces with another hero, who just as easily could have been his enemy. This "part two" of the text/story, where the heroes for guidance rely on the advice given by sympathetic women whom they meet on the way, climaxes with a confrontation with yet another monster and the subsequent recovery of the hero's family and herd. At the end, the author-storyteller embeds the story into the larger cycle of heroic tales told in early medieval Irish literature known as the Ulster cycle, and reveals his tale to be a "prequel" to the central story of the cycle, told in the famous text known as the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (Cattle Raid of Cúailnge).[3] Hence, while capable of standing on its own as a story about a hero of the province of Connacht, this account of Fróech's *táin* (cattle raid) (which strictly speaking isn't really a "raid," in that he is recovering his own cattle) is converted into an explanation for why Fróech becomes involved (fatally, it turns out) in the "greater" *Táin*. The latter is an expedition led by the queen of Connacht accompanied by her (in that story sheepish) royal spouse: the notoriously promiscuous Medb and the cuckolded Ailill, the parents of the girl whom Fróech successfully woos in part by promising his support for the royal pair's future plans.

The esteemed Irish scholar James Carney argued influentially in the last century that the *TBF* was a literary pastiche, hardly indebted at all to native traditional story-

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1 I am using and citing (by lines and page numbers) the English-language edition and translation of *TBF* by Meid and others, *Romance of Froech and Findabair.*

2 I note here in passing that many of these story elements would be at home in the realm of the folktale as well as in the domain of oral-traditional epic.

3 The scenic area featured in the title is known today in English as the Cooley Peninsula, in northern County Louth, which historically has alternated between belonging to the province of Ulster to the north and Leinster to the south.

lore, and that the author borrowed freely and sometimes clumsily from existing texts, including hagiography.[4] Other commentators, however, have adumbrated elements of oral tradition in both the story and the prose style of the text, which is witnessed in four manuscripts, including the famous *Book of Leinster*, Dublin, Trinity College, MS H 2.18 (twelfth century). For example, the comparatist Vincent A. Dunn, once a participant in one of John's fabled National Endowment for the Humanities summer seminars, has written insightfully about how *TBF* combines two closely related traditional narrative genres of Indo-European pedigree that are represented in medieval Irish literature, the *taín* (cattle raid) and the *tochmarc* (wooing).[5] Already in the late nineteenth century, *The Celtic Dragon Myth*, a book by the great Scottish folklorist James Francis Campbell, completed by George Henderson, featured, as an example of the kind of story advertised in the title, a translation of most of *TBF*. Also included were the text and a translation of a song telling the story of Fróech from the sixteenth-century *Book of the Dean of Lismore*, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS 72.137, a Scottish manuscript that contains Gaelic poetry recorded in spellings that suggest an oral source for the materials included. This song, concerning Fróech's encounter with the water-monster already mentioned, survived in the repertoire of traditional Scottish singers down to the last century.[6]

Hence, uniquely among Irish saga texts that have survived from the first millennium CE, *TBF* tells a story, a crucial portion of which, along with its protagonist Fróech, enjoyed a healthy shelf-life in oral tradition. That the story survived and even thrived in poetic form (albeit crucially different in its outcome from the story as told in *TBF*) is ironic, given that, unlike the typical early Irish saga, *TBF* has nothing prosimetric about it and adheres strictly to stylish prose—although, unusually, there exists in Irish manuscript literature a later medieval rendering of the *TBF* story into verse form, a composition that seems independent of (and is much longer than) the Scottish Gaelic song text. In sum, the protean history of Fróech and his adventures, as lucidly traced by Donald Meek, presents an irresistible invitation to those of us committed to a better understanding of the interweaving of literary and oral tradition evident in the written materi-

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4 Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature*, 1–76. For a critique of Carney's analysis, see Evans, "Learned Borrowings."

5 Dunn, *Cattle-Raids,* 82–91. The discrepancy in the title, mentioned above, was first noted by Dunn, 89: "[t]o return to the *taín-bó* formula, the second part of *Táin Bó Fraích* fails to conform to the standard. In no case is the construction used as a subjective genitive: thus 'X's cattle-raid', i.e., 'the Cattle-raid conducted by X' must be ruled out, according to the available evidence. It is only by the most roundabout of technicalities that both the formula and the pattern may be satisfied in the second story. Quite plainly, I think, the story follows the *taín* pattern, but only defectively. According to the formula, the title ought to refer to the man—or woman—to whom the cattle belong, but in this story the character filling that function is not developed, nor is any name given. Yet inasmuch as the story is told as a retrieval of cows rather than as a cattle-raid proper, it may technically qualify as a *taín bó Froech*: it is his own cows that Froech and Conall are stealing back."

6 Campbell, *Celtic Dragon Myth,* 1–31. The Scottish Gaelic poem was later edited and translated in Ross, *Heroic Poetry*, 198–207. Versions of the *Laoidh Fhraoich* recorded from 1954 to 1963 are available on the website *Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches,* http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/, accessed 18 August 2016.

als from early medieval to early modern times in Ireland and Scotland, and in Gaelic oral storytelling recorded over the last two hundred years.[7]

In a way that points to a prescient textual awareness of that invitation to scholarly posterity, *TBF*, I would argue, teases us—the readers (or audience)—with the hint that the author was keenly aware of the multiformity characterizing the oral-traditional background to the story, and which no doubt was already a feature of the narrative(s) centred on Fróech as they were known to the author of the text. Key to my argument is a reading of what is perhaps the climactic scene in the saga—not, as might be expected, the fight with the "dragon" in the water, or the attack on the fort of the marauders who had abducted Fróech's wife and children (a family whose existence the text early on had famously, and confusingly, denied). Rather, the pivotal moment in the plot, when Fróech finally wins the bride he is seeking from her parents Ailill and Medb, after which Fróech can go home and, upon learning about what has happened to them, sets out on his quest to recover the family we previously did not know he had, is a test of the hero's ability to be a persuasive public speaker and a credible liar.[8]

When Fróech arrives at the court in Crúachain on his mission to woo Findabair he does not announce his purpose, seeking first to meet with the girl in private to sound out her feelings after hearing that Findabair had fallen in love with him on the basis of what she had heard about him. When they have their tête-à-tête, it is in the morning by the pond at the royal residence, where Findabair had come to perform her ablutions. In a typical early Irish mélange of sentiment and expediency, infused with an equally characteristic keen awareness of status, the young man and woman express their attraction towards each other, but she refuses his suggestion that they elope, pointing out that girls of high standing do not do that sort of thing, and insisting that, as an aristocratic suitor of high repute, surely he has the resources to obtain her as his bride from her parents openly and honourably. While not encouraging drastic action, Findabair does give Fróech a thumb-ring as a token of their mutual affection and her expectation that he will pursue the negotiations with her parents to a successful outcome. It turns out, however, that the ring is not exactly hers to give away freely. Her father entrusted her with the precious object, Findabair explains to Fróech, and, if she is asked to return it, she will say that she has lost it.

After the private exchange has taken place between the lovers, Ailill, Findabair's father, who is dead-set against giving his daughter in marriage to Fróech for reasons that are not altogether clear, intuitively makes a bee-line for Fróech's clothes that he leaves on the bank when he goes for a dip in the pool after Ailill invites him to demonstrate his reputation as an adept swimmer. Finding the ring, and planning to make trouble for the young pair (especially for his own daughter), Ailill casts it into the water. Fróech, however, having noticed what Ailill did, and seeing that a salmon leaps up and catches the ring in its mouth, proceeds to seize the fish and hide his catch, with the ring inside it, on the bank. Later in the story, Ailill demands of his daughter that she produce the thumb-ring, which he claims he wants to display along with his other treasures to his

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7 Meek, "*Táin Bó Fraích*."

8 Different instances of mendacity are discussed in O'Leary, "Verbal Deceit."

assembled court. Defiant but concerned, Findabair is reassured by Fróech and, following his instructions, has the salmon cooked and presented to her father, with the ring on top of it. Fróech, pretending that he does not know, demands that Ailill tell him how the ring had been taken from Fróech. Ailill, after confessing to his pilfering and his spiteful attempt to have the ring lost forever (the first time in the story, perhaps the only time, that the devious Ailill "comes clean" with Fróech), in turn demands of the young hero that he give an explanation for how the ring was recovered (and, by implication, how the ring came into Fróech's possession in the first place).

This is where the story takes a curious twist. Fróech does tell Ailill (and the assembled court) about his having noticed Ailill's taking of the ring, and of his having caught the salmon that swallowed it. But he tells a different story from that told by the narrator about how the hero came to have the ring in the first place. Fróech claims that he found the ring on the ground where it had been accidentally dropped by Findabair, and recognized it as something valuable. When he came upon Findabair near the pond looking for it, he asked her what she would give in exchange for the ring. She offered a year of her love, claims Fróech, an offer he implies that he accepted. Before he could find the private moment in which to return the ring to Findabair, Ailill took it out of Fróech's man-bag. The hero's explanation is met, the text tells us, with praise and admiration from the assembled household, which had been listening to the exchange between their king and the suitor.

What, though, are the witnesses to Fróech's verbal performance said to be praising and admiring? What he tells Ailill is only partly true: he did indeed recover the ring from the pond, but he did not "just happen" to find it originally, nor did the girl pledge her love to him merely as a way to recover the ring and thus protect her honour as the designated guardian of her father's valuable possession. Do the members of the household, as is often the case in these situations, perhaps know more about what has happened than they are letting on? And if so, are they admiring Fróech's alertness in regard to the fate of the ring, his catching a salmon with his bare hands, the succinctness with which he recalls (and reshapes) the past, his deft diverting of attention away from what Findabair had done (namely, out of love for Fróech, giving away a precious object that was not yet hers to give), or all of the above?

As gallant and redolent with discretion as Fróech's mendacious gesture might seem (though it hardly goes so far as to absolve the girl of any complicity in their relationship), it is a peculiar move for an Irish saga-hero to make. Indeed, his lie, which wins the commendation of his audience, would not befit the behaviour of most oral-traditional heroes, with the exception of heroes-in-disguise as featured in "return songs," such as Odysseus in the *Odyssey*. These, however, lie about their own identities, with the intention of hiding them from their enemies and facilitating their revenge. Fróech, on the other hand, is bending the truth about what both *he* and *she* have done in an attempt to keep what was said and transacted on the bank of the pond private—but all this is taking place in a narrative world where heroes typically say what they mean, and mean what they say. A villainous antagonist, such as Ailill, is far more likely to be caught lying, as he is in this story. Before Fróech enters the water, he asks, "Cindas na linde se?" (line 164) (What kind of pool is this? [p. 69]) Ailill, eager to search through Fróech's posses-

sions for something incriminating that he seems already to know he will find, and also scheming to expose Fróech to a monster that lives in the pond and that (later in the episode) actually attacks the hero, slyly responds, "'Ni-fetammar nach ndodaing indi' ol Ailill, 'ocus is comtig fothrucud indi'" (line 165) ("We do not know of anything dangerous in it," said Ailill, "and it is customary to bathe in it" [p.69]).

In contrast to this lie (revealed to be such once the monster attacks Fróech), on the occasion when Ailill demands the ring back from his daughter, he says something to her that he clearly thinks is true, that adds up to a surprisingly frank admission of his spiteful intent, but that turns out to be acutely ironic:

> "Tongu día tonges mo thúath, at-bélat do béoil mani-aisce úait," ol Ailill. "Is airi con-degar cucut, úair is decmaing, ar ro-fetar-sa co-tísat inna doíni at-bathatar ó thossuch domuin cossindíu, ni-tic assin magin in ro-lád." (lines 252–54)

> ("I swear to the god by whom my tribe swears, your lips shall die unless you restore it [the ring]," said Ailill. "It is demanded of you just because it is impossible [to fulfil Ailill's request], for I know, until [all] the men who have died from the beginning of the world to this day come back, it [the ring] will not come out of the place into which it was cast.")
>
> (p. 71)

Ailill's statement reflects the meta-narrative playfulness that also underlies Fróech's deceptive speech discussed above. In fact, the person who rescued the ring and thereby Findabair's reputation, Fróech, *did return from the dead*. Nearly killed by the monster in the pool (though triumphant in the end), Fróech emerges grievously wounded, according to our text. He is given special therapeutic treatment by his royal hosts, but we are given no indication that he is subsequently any closer to recovery. Then, *deae ex machina* appear on the scene: an approaching band of women from the nearby *síd* (the Irish otherworld), engaged in lamenting the (near-)dead[9] and announcing their presence with a *gol*(*gaire*) (lines 213, 218, 225, 226) (lament), which they say (when asked) is for the badly hurt Fróech. Hearing it, he knows right away that the women are a delegation sent by his supernatural relations to take him away. Fróech asks to be handed over to the lamenting visitors, who whisk him away to the *síd*. They bring him back the next day as good as new, rapidly cured and miraculously restored by otherworldly means.

Fróech's escape from the near-death experience with the monster and his return to the mortal world should have been a cause for celebration, but, oddly, the women who fetched and now return him, are still lamenting: "Ad-agat a ngol oc dul úad co-corastar na doíni bátar issind liss tar cenn. Is de atá golgaire mban síde la háes cíuil Érenn" (lines 225–27) (They let forth their cry [*gol*] as they go from him so that it threw the people who were inside the enclosure into confusion. From this is "The Lament of the Fairy-Women" with the musicians of Ireland [p. 71]). We too are "confused" (the Irish says literally "knocked over") by this strange comment of the supernatural women on the situation, until we realize that they are following a different script: a *multiform* of the story, attested in the Fróech ballad already in the sixteenth century, according to which he *did*

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9 The finite verbal form in the text is *rocháinset* (line 215) (they keened [him]). (English *keen* "to lament" comes from the Irish verb used in this passage, "caínid.")

die in the fight in the pond, which, according to this way of telling the story, resulted in the death of both monster and hero:[10]

> Do thuiteadar bonn ar bonn
> ar tráigh na gclach gcorr so theas,
> Fraoch mac Fiodhaigh is an phéisd
> truagh, a Dhé, mar tug an treas.
>
> (202)

(Together they fell upon this southern strand of jagged stones, Fraoch [the Scottish Gaelic spelling of Fróech] son of Fiodagh and the monster; sad, alas the story of the fray.) (203)

> Truagh nach i gcomhrag ré laoch
> do thuit Fraoch do bhronnadh ór;
> dursan a thuitim lé péisd:
> truagh, a Dhé, nach maireann fós.
>
> (206)

(Sad that not in combat with a hero did Fraoch fall who lavished gold; pitiable that he should fall by a monster; sad, alas, that he lives not still.) (207)

It is as if, in allowing the supernatural keeners to continue or to repeat their performance of lament, the author of *TBF* were acknowledging that there is more than one way to tell the story, or even that this storyteller's way diverges from the more usual way. More subtle than Fróech's lie to Ailill about how he came to have the ring but equally unsettling to any sense of certainty we may have about what really happened, *TBF*'s account of the incident in the water and its aftermath gestures towards an alternative, tragic version of the story. The audible hint of this other telling, however, cannot be sustained, since the tale as told here takes the hero, once again alive and well, on a further adventure.[11]

   The mendacity, moreover, mounts. It is in this continuation of *TBF*, the part actually featuring the *táin* promised in the title, that the author turns out to be an even greater deceiver than Fróech. The first part of *TBF*, the wooing tale, states as an opening premise concerning its protagonist: "Boí trebad occo co cenn ocht mblíadnae cen tabairt mná cucai" (lines 4–5) (He kept house with them [that is, the special cattle given to him by his supernatural mother] till the end of eight years without taking a wife [p. 65]). In the latter section of *TBF*, after the trials and tribulations Fróech encounters while wooing Findabair, this erstwhile eligible bachelor (now confident in his possession of a princess for a wife) returns home, where he and we receive shocking news from his mother:

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10 Cited from Ross, *Heroic Poetry*, by page number.

11 The text also hints at an alternative outcome to Fróech's encounter in the water when it introduces him as "láech as áildem ro-boí di feraib Érenn ocus Alban, acht nibo suthain" (lines 2–3) (the most beautiful warrior of the men of Ireland and Scotland, but he was not long-lived [p. 65]). This ominous note, like the women's renewed lament, might also be anticipating what awaits Fróech in the text to which *TBF* presents itself as a prequel: O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (*The Cattle-Raid of Cúailnge*), 26–27, 148–49, in which Fróech meets a watery end at the hands of the hero of that *Táin*, Cú Chulaind, who in his distorting battle-rage is arguably "monstrous." In this text as well, women from the *síd* appear, but this time, instead of removing a badly wounded Fróech, they take the hero's corpse away, never to be returned.

"Ni béodae do fechtas," olsi, "do-choas. Fo-fírfe mór n-imnid duit. Ro-gatta do baí ocus do ben ocus do thri maicc conda-fil oc Sléib Alpae. Ataat teora baí díb i nAlbain túascirt la Cruithnechu." (lines 293–95)

("Not fortunate is your journey," said she, "that has been made. It shall cause you great trouble. Your cows and your wife and your three sons have been abducted, so that they are at the mountain range of the Alps. Three cows of them are in northern Scotland with the Picts.") (p. 72)

Some have argued that what we see here in *TBF* is the clumsy splicing of two different stories about Fróech, evidence of the *TBF*'s author's indifference to narrative consistency, or scribal error resulting in the earlier statement seemingly stating that Fróech was unmarried. It is also possible to assume, if one were straining for consistency, that in the chronology of the story, this stolen "Mrs. Fróech" came into the picture eight or more years ago, before Fróech received the special cattle to which he tended, according to the text, without acquiring a (*second*) wife—polygamy hardly being unknown in early medieval Ireland, let alone pre-Christian Ireland, the explicit setting of this and the other tales of the Ulster Cycle. The easiest explanation, however, gives the benefit of the doubt to the author, assumes that he knew what he was doing, and lets us avoid the dangers of rewriting the story by ourselves. Fróech's pivotal speech act, I argue, *prepares us for lying by the narrator/narrative*, and alerts us to the weaving-together of alternating and contrasting (multiform, so to speak) strands of the plot. The death or survival of Fróech, the winning of a bride, and the recovery of a stolen wife—these story elements brought together in uneasy concert by a storyteller who is unwilling to eliminate any one element completely, even if it creates egregious contradictions and misleading impressions. To put it another way, *TBF* rehearses the lesson that scholars of oral-traditional literature already learned from the *Odyssey*: when a hero lies, it is but the calling card of the ultimate "fabricator" who knows of more than one way to tell a tale—the storyteller himself, whether he be an oral performer or a literary author.[12]

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12 There is more on *TBF* in J. Nagy, "Pride of Heroes," 142–45 and J. Nagy "Celtic Dragon Myth," 33–34 and 37–38.

"THE TRUE NATURE OF THE *AOIDOS*": THE KIRGHIZ SINGER OF TALES AND THE EPIC OF *MANAS*

KARL REICHL

IN 1885, THE fifth part of Wilhelm Radloff's *Proben der Volkslitteratur der nördlichen türkischen Stämme* (*Samples of the Folk Literature of the Northern Turkic Tribes*) was published in St Petersburg. The fifth part, like the preceding parts, was published in two volumes: a volume of texts in the original language and a volume of translations into German. German was Radloff's mother-tongue—he was born in Berlin in 1837 and studied at the universities of Berlin and Jena—but German was also a widely used language of scholarship in Imperial Russia. The fifth part is devoted to the oral poetry of the Kirghiz, who at that time were called Kara-Kirghiz (or Qara-Qïrghïz [Black Kirghiz]), to distinguish them from the Kazakhs, who were erroneously named Kirghiz by the Russians.[1] Radloff came to St Petersburg in 1858 and spent the rest of his life in Russia, where he was known as Vasily Vasilyevich Radlov and where he died in 1918.[2] Both the text volume and the translation volume of his fifth part have a preface; the two prefaces, in Russian (text volume) and in German (translation volume), are identical in content.

Radloff's preface poses a number of fundamental questions about the creation, transmission, and performance of oral epic poetry, and Radloff explicitly links the observations he had made among the Kirghiz with the Homeric Question. He boldly states:

> I believe that the controversy about the "Homeric Question" has led to unsolvable opposing positions mainly because none of the parties has understood, and indeed was able to understand, the true nature of the *aoidos*. The *aoidos* as the songs of Homer describe him is completely identical to the singer of the Kirghiz songs.[3]

Radloff pleads for comparative epic studies, directing his remarks especially to Homerists. A few years earlier, the literary historian Aleksander Nikolaevich Veselovsky

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1 After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has become customary to replace "Kirghiz" by "Kyrgyz" in English, in (partial) accordance to native pronunciation. I have retained the more familiar "Kirghiz," but write "Kyrgyzstan" for the post-Soviet republic. My transcription/transliteration of Kirghiz follows in the main Turkological conventions. The spellings [ö] and [ü] represent vowel sounds similar to the sounds denoted by [ö] and [ü] in German or [eu] and [u] in French; [a], [e], [i], [o], [u] are pronounced as in Italian; [ï] represents an unrounded [i] (as in Russian [ы]); [q] symbolizes a velar [k], [gh] a velar fricative (resembling Parisian [r]); [kh] is pronounced like [ch] in German *ach* or Scottish *loch*; all the other consonants are pronounced as in English ([j], [ch], [z], etc.).

2 For a detailed account (in German) of Radloff's life and works, see Temir, "Leben und Schaffen."

3 Radloff, *Proben der Volkslitteratur* (translation volume), xx; unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine. For an English translation of Radloff's preface, see Böttcher Sherman and Davis, "Samples of Folk Literature." Radloff's preface is discussed (and partially translated) in Chadwick and Chadwick, *Growth of Literature*, 178–85.

had criticized Western medievalists and classicists in a similar vein for their neglect of living oral poetry:

> When Western scholars who have very little familiarity with living epic poetry discuss problems of the folk poetry of past times, they do this as a matter of course along the lines of purely written textual criticism. This is the flaw of the entire scholarship on the *Nibelungenlied* and partly also of that on the Homeric epics.[4]

Although Radloff's remarks did not remain unheard outside Russia, the material that his translations provided was seriously studied only over half a century later, in the third volume of H. M. and Nora K. Chadwick's *Growth of Literature*.[5] Radloff's theoretical challenge, likening the art of the Kirghiz singer to that of the Greek aoidos, was taken up somewhat earlier by Milman Parry. Parry was familiar with Radloff's Kirghiz volume, from which he quotes repeatedly, but turned to the South Slavic epic tradition instead. With Parry's extensive field-work, a new level of comparative epic studies was reached and insights into the making of oral epics were sharpened within the framework of a powerful theoretical model. Parry and his one-time assistant Albert Bates Lord have exerted a major influence on classical and medieval studies. John Miles Foley has written the success story of the theory of oral composition, and he was himself a leading exponent of comparative epic studies and oral theory.[6] It seems fitting to contribute a study of the Kirghiz epic singer's art to a volume dedicated to John Foley's memory since its description by Radloff is often considered an early formulation of the oral theory.

Some Introductory Remarks about Manas

Manas is the main oral epic of the Kirghiz, both in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and in China's Xinjiang region, where about 190,000 Kirghiz live, mostly in the Qïzïlsu Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture. The Kirghiz epic singers also perform other epics, which are generically lumped together under the title of "kenje epos" (little epic). One of these "little epics," *Er Töshtük*, has in one version ca. 12,000 lines, making it about the length of the *Odyssey*.[7] The "big epic" *Manas* is actually a cycle of epics, of which only the first part is devoted to the main hero, Manas. In its "canonical" form, the cycle consists of three parts: *Manas*, *Semetey* (Manas's son), and *Seytek* (Manas's grandson). The cycle as performed by Jüsüp Mamay, a singer from Xinjiang (1918–2014), comprises eight parts that treat Manas and seven generations of heroes descending from him. As can

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4 Text from Veselovsky's lectures on the history of the epic at the University of St Petersburg in 1881; Veselovsky, *Istoricheskaya poètika*, 622.

5 See above, n. 3; N. Chadwick's discussion of Turkic oral poetry in *Oral Epics of Central Asia*, was re-edited with a supplementary chapter by Victor Zhirmunsky.

6 Foley's *Theory of Oral Composition* is still unsurpassed. There is, however, no need to list Foley's seminal works in this volume; I would like to draw attention only to Foley's fairly recent survey of oral theory and its importance for medieval studies, "Oral Theory and Medieval Literature," which he wrote together with Peter Ramey.

7 This is the singer Sayaqbay Qaralaev's version; it is translated (together with the version published by Radloff) in Boratav, *Aventures merveilleuses*.

be inferred from the fact that a "little epic" is anything but little as far as its length is concerned, *Manas* must be a voluminous epic poem. Sayaqbay Qaralaev's (1894–1971) version of the cycle extends to almost half a million verse-lines; Saghïmbay Orozbaqov's (1867–1930) *Manas*—only the first part of the cycle was written down—comprises over 180,000 lines; Jüsüp Mamay's eight-generation cycle is about 220,000 lines in length. The earliest text from the *Manas* cycle, "The Funeral Feast for Kökötöy Khan," was put down in writing by Choqan Valikhanov, a Kazakh traveller and scholar, in 1856. This epic (of ca. 3,200 lines) describes the feast that Boqmorun, the son of Manas's old companion Kökötöy, held in memory of his dead father.[8] Radloff printed seven episodes from the cycle, of which five come from *Manas* and two from *Semetey*. These epics (comprising a total of 12,454 lines) have been extensively discussed by Arthur Hatto and re-edited by him with an English translation.[9] In addition, Radloff published and translated an epic on Joloy, one of Manas's enemies, the "little epic" of *Er Töshtük*, comprising 2,146 lines, and four short songs.

Given the truly epic length of the *Manas* cycle, there is no way to adequately summarize the contents of its constituent epics here. I will, therefore, only give the sketchiest of outlines, confining my remarks to *Manas* proper, the first part of the cycle. All the versions that have been written down share a number of similarities and are recognizably versions of the same epic. Nevertheless, even a superficial survey of their contents reveals marked differences. The epic begins with the motif of a childless couple who as a rule are given a child in old age through divine intervention. Manas is the son of old Jaqïp, generally called "khan," and his wife Chïyïrdï. He grows up to become a formidable hero. Main episodes in the hero's life are fights against various enemies, typically from the camps of the Kalmucks and the "Qïtay" (Chinese); his election as khan; the bridal quest for Qanïkey, the mother of his son Semetey; his friendship and companionship with Almambet, a Kalmuck who converted to Islam; the funeral feast for Kökötöy, where Manas plays a major role in the funeral games; the fight against internal enemies (in particular Közqaman and his sons); and the "chong qazat" (Great Campaign), the military expedition to "Beijing," which, despite the Kirghiz victory, leads to Manas's death.[10]

The "Great Campaign" is directed against Qongurbay and has as its destination "Beijing." It should be pointed out that Beijing is usually called "Beejin" or "Beyjin" in the epic and that it is historically unlikely that Peking (Beijing) is meant. It is conceived as the capital of the enemies of the Kirghiz, whom scholars have attempted to localize historically, both in place and in time. Most support the opinion that by Beijing the town

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8 Edited and translated in Hatto, *Memorial Feast for Kökötöy-Khan*.

9 Hatto, *Manas of Wilhelm Radloff*; for Hatto's discussion of these episodes, see "Birth of Manas"; Hatto, "*Kukotay* and *Bok Murun*"; Hatto, "Almambet, Er Kökčö and Ak-Erkeč"; Hatto, "Köz-Kaman"; and Hatto, "Marriage, Death, and Return to Life of Manas."

10 For a summary analysis (in Russian) of the versions of the great singers Saghïmbay Orozbaqov and Sayaqbay Qaralaev, see Mirbadaleva and others, *Manas*, 1:444–67; other Kirghiz versions are summarized on pp. 467–89. The second volume of a new history of Kirghiz literature provides a survey of the epic cycle and the epic singers (in Kirghiz); see Akmataliev and others, *Qïrghïz*. On the names "Chinese" and "Beijing," see below.

Bey-tin is to be understood, a locality that was later known under the name Beshbalïq (ca. 120 km east of Urumqi in Xinjiang). It was the ancient capital of the Uighurs and was conquered by the Kirghiz in the ninth century.

There is a similar discrepancy between the meaning of the ethnonym "Chinese" today and as it is to be understood historically in the epic. The term *Qïtay* (*Kitay*) in Kirghiz (and other Turkic languages, as well as in Russian) designates the Chinese. This word goes back to the ethnonym Qara Khitay, a people of Mongolian origin, who in the twelfth century dominated Central Asia from the Amu-Darya (Oxus) to the Altay, with their capital Balasaghun in the Chu valley in present-day Kyrgyzstan. In 907, their predecessors, known as Kitan, had conquered Mongolia and parts of northern China and founded the Liao Dynasty. The Qara Khitays' rule ended with Genghis Khan's conquests in the early thirteenth century. In the *Manas* epic, the Qïtay are historically the Qara Khitay rather than the Chinese.

The Kalmucks are a clearer case. They are called Qalmaq in Kirghiz and denote a Mongolian people, belonging to the Western Mongols or Oirat (Oyrot). The Kalmucks began to invade the area of the Kirghiz and Kazakhs in Central Asia at the end of the sixteenth century, which led to much bloodshed through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[11] The discussion about the localization in space and time of Beijing (Beejin) in the "Great Campaign" is closely connected to the question of the epic's age and development. In 1995, the young Republic of Kyrgyzstan celebrated "Manas 1000," the thousandth birthday of their major epic *Manas*. This would link the core events of the epic to the tenth century. In the ninth and tenth centuries, the Kirghiz, who had their centre of power on the upper course of the Yenisei, built up what V. Barthold has called the "Kirgizskoe velikoderzhavie" (Kirghiz empire), stretching westward into Central Asia and southward into the Tarim basin.[12] After their victory over the Uighurs in 840, the Kirghiz were a major political force in that area. Their power was broken by Genghis Khan at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

While it is possible to speculate about a historical nucleus of the epic in the tenth or even the ninth century, the name of the main hero cannot be identified in historical sources, nor can any early epic texts be found. The latter is understandable in view of the oral composition and transmission of Kirghiz epic poetry, which was first written down only in the nineteenth century. There is, however, one piece of earlier textual evidence. A historiographical work, written in Persian by an unknown author with the title *Majmu' at-tawarix* (*The Collection of Histories*), which dates to the end of the fifteenth or beginning of the sixteenth century, devotes much space to Manas, his clan, companions, and enemies, and quotes six lines from the epic in Persian translation.[13] Clearly, the epic tradition goes back for at least five hundred years, but might indeed be older.

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11 The historical background to the epic is discussed (in Russian) in Zhirmunsky, "Vvedenie v izuchenie èposa 'Manas,'" 68–92; Moldobaev, *Manas*, 43–87; and Kydyrbaeva, *Manas*. On the Kara Khitay, see Spuler, "Geschichte Mittelasiens," 188–95; and Bregel, *Historical Atlas of Central Asia*, 30.

12 Bartol'd, *Kirgizy*, 17–26. On the complicated early history of the Kirghiz, see also Golden, *Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples*, 176–83.

13 See Tagidzhanov, "*Sobranie istoriy*," 22.

The Metre of *Manas*

Ever since Parry defined the formula as "*a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea*,"[14] it has been accepted as a basic tenet of oral studies that metre and formula are closely connected. This implies that any discussion of the formulaic nature of *Manas* has to take the metre of Kirghiz oral epic poetry into account.

Kirghiz metre is syllabic, that is, the poetic line is defined by the number of syllables. The epic metre is a verse-line of seven or eight syllables. There is a caesura generally after the fourth syllable, sometimes also after the fifth or the third syllable. In Kirghiz epic poetry, lines are linked by verse-initial alliteration and rhyme. Neither alliteration nor rhyme is regularly employed, nor do they have to occur simultaneously. Some passages have the same line-initial sound for up to a dozen lines, while alliteration might be virtually absent in other passages.

Rhyme in Kirghiz is somewhat more complicated. In metrical theory, a distinction is made between rhyme and assonance. If two lines are to rhyme, their last stressed vowel plus the following consonants and unstressed vowels (if there are any) must be identical (in sound). In English, the pairs, for instance: *go* : *low*, *ghosts* : *boasts*, *going* : *showing*, *parameter* : *hexameter*, all rhyme. Two lines have the same assonance if their last stressed vowel is identical (in sound), even when the following consonants differ. Examples of assonances in English include: *late* : *make*, *cap* : *hat*, *sniper* : *fighter*, *votive* : *notice*. In Kirghiz epic verse, we find both rhyme and assonance, but with a "twist" that is due to the morphological structure of Kirghiz (a structure also characteristic of other Turkic languages). Kirghiz is an agglutinative language, which means that grammatical categories such as tense, mood, person, number, case, possession, and others are encoded as affixes that are suffixed to the nominal or verbal stem.

Due to vowel harmony, suffixes can take on fairly different shapes. Vowel harmony means that the various affixes which are added to a stem will "harmonize" with the stem vowel. As an example, one of the past endings (third-person singular) will serve; it consists of two affixes: -V*p* + *t*V*r* (V stands for a vowel). This ending can take four forms: *-iptir*, *-iptïr*, *-uptur*, and *-üptür*. The basic rule of vowel harmony underlying these forms is that a high vowel is followed by a high vowel, a low vowel by a low vowel, and a rounded vowel by a rounded vowel.[15]

Given the agglutinative morphology, the syntactic structure, and the laws of vowel-harmony of the Turkic languages, syntactic parallelism can easily lead to rhyme. Victor Zhirmunsky has argued that rhyme in Turkic oral poetry originated in just this way, as a further development of syntactic parallelism.[16] As will be seen below, strings of rhyming words (mostly complex verbal forms) are an important means of structuring passages in *Manas*.

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14 Parry, *Making of Homeric Verse*, 272; emphasis his.

15 My discussion here is somewhat simplified; for a linguistic description of the structure of the Turkic languages (including vowel harmony), see Johanson, "Structure of Turkic."

16 See Zhirmunsky, "Rhythmico–Syntactic Parallelism."

How formulaic is *Manas*?

Given the length of *Manas*, anybody familiar with oral epic poetry would expect a highly formulaic style. In his discussion of formulas and formulaic style in South Slavic oral epics, Lord has stressed the necessity of a poetic language for enabling the singer to perform fluently and confidently:

> The singer's mode of composition is dictated by the demands of performance at high speed, and he depends upon inculcated habit and association of sounds, words, phrases, and lines. He does not shrink from the habitual; nor does he either require the fixed for memorization or seek the unusual for its own sake. His oft-used phrases and lines lose something in sharpness, yet many of them must resound with overtones from the dim past whence they came.[17]

This is also true of the Kirghiz manaschï, the singer of Manas. When, however, comparing the formulaic style of *Manas* with that of the South Slavic heroic songs, the lack of formulaic density is striking. Formulas do exist, but they are distributed differently. Moreover, the Kirghiz singer has other means of composing in performance, one of the most important being the use of what might be called "rhyme-strings" (see below).

The clear caesura in Kirghiz verse suggests the half-line as the metrical unit of a formula. As will be seen, both half-line and whole-line formulas occur. There are verbatim repetitions, which are often found with fixed epithets, there are repetitions with variations in the inflectional elements (formulas), and there are repetitions with variations in individual words. Lord and others speak of "formulaic systems" when the varying words belong to the same word-class and are semantically related (synonyms or words of the same lexical field). My aim here is not to go into a theoretical discussion of the formula in Kirghiz epic, but rather to give some idea of formulaic diction by presenting examples from my corpus. These examples will, hopefully, clarify the concept of the formula in the case of Kirghiz.[18]

My examples come from three major versions of *Manas* (the first part of the cycle), those of Saghïmbay, Sayaqbay, and Mamay. I am using the four-volume edition of Saghïmbay's version, comprising ca. 51,000 lines;[19] the complete edition of Sayaqbay's version, comprising ca. 74,500 lines; and the 1995 revised edition of Mamay's version, comprising ca. 54,500 lines.[20]

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17 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 65.

18 For an in-depth study of "traditional phraseology" in the *Odyssey*, *Beowulf,* and South-Slavic return songs, see Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic*, 121–239.

19 This edition, Musaev, Abdyldaev, and others, *Manas*, is available in digital form from the Kirghiz website, www.bizdin.kg., accessed July 8, 2016. This edition is not complete; a complete print edition, Musaev, Akmataliev, and others, *Manas*, comprising ca. 180,000 lines, is now available.

20 Both Sayaqbay's version and Jüsüp Mamay's version are available digitally from www.bizdin. kg. For the published versions, see Zhaynakova and Akmataliev, *Manas* (Sayaqbay), and Sïdïq and others, *Manas* (Mamay). Of my translation of Jüsüp Mamay's version into English (together with the Kirghiz text) two volumes have been published to date (Reichl, *Manas*).

Epithet formulas

Like the heroes of the Homeric epics and of other heroic poetry, the main protagonist of *Manas* is referred to with a number of adjectival and noun epithets.[21] Some of these, such as "ayköl," are uniquely used for Manas. Literally meaning "moon-lake," "ayköl" is used as a metaphor, evoking the surface of a moonlit lake as an image of generosity, magnanimity, and nobility of heart. Other epithets such as "arstan" (lion) tend to refer predominantly to Manas, but can also be used for other heroes. The word "arstan" occurs 414 times in Mamay's *Manas*. "Arstan" refers to Manas and is coupled with his name in a half-line eighty-nine times; it is coupled with the names of some of his companions fifty-seven times. These 146 half-lines are clearly epithet-formulas, generally comprising the first half-line (see below). As to the other 268 occurrences of "arstan" in Mamay's text, well over 200 refer to Manas. None of these lines are formulaic, with one possible exception, the collocation "qïrq arstan" (the forty lions)(Manas's retinue), which occurs seventeen times as the second half-line.

Looking more closely at the eighty-nine cases of the combination of "arstan" with "Manas," we find that in fifty-five cases, the phrase "arstan Manas" occurs as a unit and forms the first half of the line, followed by the caesura and the three or four syllables of the second half-line:

Arstan Manas   x x x (x).

The half-lines completing "arstan Manas" can be variously grouped. No group, however, is of a clearly formulaic nature. By far the most common "filler" of the second half-line is "baatïr" (hero) with an inflectional ending (genitive, etc.); this occurs sixteen times:

Arstan Manas   baatïr-dïn (-gha, -dï, etc.)

There is a seventeenth case, where "arstan" is preceded by "jash" (young):

Jash arstan Manas   baatïrdïn.

The three words "arstan," "Manas," and "baatïr" can also be switched. Three times we find:

Arstan baatïr   Manas-tïn (-qa)

and once:

Baatïr Mana   sarstan-dïn.

When we compare the use of these epithet-formulas with the versions of *Manas* by Saghïmbay Ororzbaqov and Sayaqbay Qaralaev, we find that in their texts all occurrences of "arstan Manas" are in the first half-line. In Saghïmbay's version there are 131 instances of this collocation, and in Sayaqbay's version seventy-nine. In Saghïmbay's text, "arstan Manas" is followed by "baatïr" plus an inflectional suffix in sixty-five cases:

Arstan Manasbaatïr-dïn (-ï, -dï, etc.)

In other words, half of the lines of Saghïmbay's *Manas* with "arstan Manas" are clearly formulaic. In Sayaqbay's text, in contrast, there are only four cases with "baatïr" in the

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21 For a study of epithets in Kirghiz epic poetry, see Hatto, "Epithets in Kirghiz Epic Poetry."

second half-line. On the other hand, in seventeen lines "arstan Manas" is followed by "kökjal" plus inflectional suffix:

Arstan Manaskökjal-dï (-ïm, etc.)

"Kökjal" (blue mane) designates the wolf or, metaphorically, the hero. It is a common epithet of Manas, but is found in combination with "arstan Manas" only in Sayaqbay's version.

Although the Kirghiz verse is short, whole-line formulas are comparatively rare. For instance, the verb *a(y)qïr-* (to shout) in the forms "a(y)qïrdï" (shouted), "a(y)qïrïp" (shouting), "a(y)qïrghan" (having shouted), and "a(y)qïrat" (shouts) fills the second half-line seven times in Mamay's text, three times with "arstan Manas" in the first half-line. In Saghïmbay's text we find one other instance of this line, and none in Sayaqbay's version. Given the length of the texts, one wonders whether these few occurrences of this line can really be classified as formulas. While the collocation "arstan Manas" is formulaic, the verb forms following in the second half-line seem to be dependent on semantics—what is the lion Manas doing?—rather than on formulaic patterning.

Rhyme-strings

As mentioned above, strings of rhyming words (mostly complex verbal forms) are an important means of structuring passages. In his study of heroic motifs in *Manas*, A. Sykykov (Sïdïqov) draws attention to such a string from Saghïmbay's version of the epic.[22] The passage is the following (the rhyming words are italicized):

> Zambirek ünü *kürküröp*,
> Qoqus nayza tiygendin
> Qoynuna qanï *bürküröp*,
> Qalqandar sïndï *bïrqïrap*,
> 5   Qan tögüldü *shïrqïrap*.
> Jebenin oghu *qïrqïrap*,
> Mïltïqtïn oghu *chïrqïrap*,
> Jer titirep *künggüröp*,
> Qulaq tundu *dünggüröp*.[23]

> (The voice of the musket was *thundering*,
> He who was unexpectedly wounded by a spear,
> His blood was *splashing* from his arm-pit,
> The shields were splitting and *splintering*,
> 5   The blood was spilt in *rushing* flows.
> The bows' arrows were flying and *whizzing*,
> The guns' bullets were flying and *buzzing*,
> The ground was trembling and *groaning*,
> The ears were deafened by the *booming* noise.)

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22 Sydykov, *Geroicheskie motivy v èpose*, 26–27.

23 Musaev, Abdyldaev, and others, *Manas*, 2:85–86. In the following SQ stands for Sayaqbay Qaralaev, SO for Saghïmbay Orozbaqov, and JM for Jüsüp Mamay.

The rhyme-string consists of verbs in a gerundival form (suffix -*p*). Gerunds of this type can be variously translated; for our text, the present participle is a fairly close rendering in English: "The voice of the musket, thundering, [...] the shields were splitting, splintering [...]." With the exception of "bïrqïrap," all the verbs designate sound.[24] They are all characterized by a formans, varying according to vowel harmony (-*ürö*- / -*ïra*-), which is preceded by the syllable -*ïrq*- / -*ürk*- in the first six cases and -*üng* in the last two cases. According to their sound-pattern, these are considered onomatopoeic verbs in Kirghiz.

There are a number of rhyme-strings of this kind in Kirghiz epic poetry (and not only in Kirghiz, but also in other Turkic oral traditions);[25] for reasons of space, however, I will limit my analysis to this string in the three versions of *Manas* considered here. A further limitation concerns the members of this string. I have only followed the combinations of the verb *kürkürö*- (to thunder) with other verbs of similar sound-structure. The net could have been cast wider by following the combinations also of the other verbs in the quotation above, somewhat in the manner of the analysis of compounds in *Beowulf* and other older Germanic poetry.[26] The rhyme-string of the quotation above consists of the following eight verb forms: "kürküröp," "bürküröp," "bïrqïrap," "shïrqïrap," "qïrqïrap," "chïrqïrap," "künggüröp," and "dünggüröp." The verb *kürkürö*- is found in the versions of Saghïmbay, Sayaqbay, and Mamay in combinations of two, three, four, five, six, and eight rhyme-words. Saghïmbay has thirty-nine, Sayaqbay twenty-eight, and Mamay twenty-one instances of this rhyme-string. All in all, nineteen verb forms occur:

"kürküröp" (thundering)	"dünggür(l)öp" (booming)	"ïrqïrap" (growling)
"bürküröp" (splashing)	"küngküldöp" (talking through the nose)	"burqurap" (crying bitterly)
"bïrqïrap" (splintering)	"düngküldöp" (droning)	"churqurap" (yelling)
"shïrqïrap" (rushing)	"dürküröp" (clamouring)	"qïngghïrap" (jingling)
"qïrqïrap" (whizzing)	"büjüröp" (romping)	"shïngghïra" (ringing)
"chïrqïrap" (buzzing)	"zirkirep" (streaming)	
"künggür(l)öp" (groaning)	"zïrqïrap" (speeding along)	

When studying the different realizations of the various possibilities of combining the nineteen verbs of the string, it emerges that the string as such is available to the singers as a pattern to be used, but apart from the "couplet" "kürküröp" : "dürküröp" is

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24 The verb *bïrqïra*- can also denote sound; in Kirghiz, *bïrq* is an imitative word: *bïrq-bïrq etip* (with a gurgling sound).

25 See Reichl, "Uzbek Epic Poetry."

26 See Brodeur, *Art of Beowulf*, 254–71; see also the discussion of words for treasure in Old English verse in Tyler, *Old English Poetics*.

employed as a flexible structuring device, rather than as a fixed rhyme-string. The sing-ers combine the elements of the rhyme-string differently. Six different combinations of four-element strings, for instance, are found, of which none appear in more than one text. Looking at the eighty-eight passages that provide an instance of this rhyme-string, the general impression is that the majority of the lines are not formulaic. Given the meaning of the verbs, their subjects are, of course, in many cases semantically similar. Verbs expressing sounds like yelling, shouting, and growling are construed with subjects that can emit these sounds; but even here variety is possible. Only occasionally are lines actually repeated (or repeated with only slight variations). I will illustrate this with the "kürküröp"-lines. The following groups of related lines can be established:

1   A weapon, in particular a gun, is thundering:
     Töö mïltïq ünü kürküröp (SO) (The voice of the big gun [was] thundering)
     Töö mïltïq atïp kürküröp (SO) (Shooting the gun, with thundering)
     Aqkelte mïltïq kürküröp (SO twice) (The gun Aqkelte[27] [was] thundering)
     Almabash mïltïq kürküröp (SO) (The blunderbuss [was] thundering)
     Sïr nayza qoldo kürküröp (SQ) (The spear Sïrnayza[28] in the hand [was] thundering)
     Ayza sunup kürküröp (SQ) (The spear thrust forward [was] thundering)
     Nayzanïn küüsü kürküröp (JM) (The spear's song [was] thundering)

2   Wild animal (also metaphoric):
     Jolborsum turdu kürküröp (SO) (My tiger got up, growling)
     Qïshïnda buura kürküröp (SO) (The male camel crying in winter)
     Mas bolghon pildey kürküröp (SO) (Shouting like a drunken elephant)
     Arstan sherdey kürküröp (SO) (Shouting like a lion)
     Jolborsu otuz kürküröp (SO) (His thirty tigers roaring)
     Mas buuraday kürküröp (JM) (Shouting like a drunken male camel)
     Ach arstanday kürküröp (JM) (Growling like a hungry lion)
     Sherdin ünü kürküröp (JM) (The lion's voice was growling)
     Kirgen narday kürküröp (JM) (Shouting like a raging camel)

3   A particular person:
     Qïrghïl chalï kürküröp (SO three times) (The old man Qïrghïl [was] shouting)
     Qïrghïl baatïr kürküröp (SO) (Hero Qïrghïl [was] shouting)

4   The wind (rain) is making a roaring noise:
     Shamal tiydi kürküröp (SO) (The wind came roaring)
     Qara shamal kürküröp (SO twice) (The black wind [was] roaring)
     Qara jamghïr kürküröp (SQ) (The black rain [was] roaring)

5   Thunder:
     Jasghï kündöy kürküröp (SO) (Like spring thunder)
     Jashïlduu kündöy kürküröp (SO) (Like spring [lit. covered in green] thunder)
     Ünü kündöy kürküröp (SO; JM three times) (His voice [was] like thunder)
     Kündöy bolup kürküröp (SQ six times) (Being like thunder)
     Chaghïlghan kündöy kürküröp (JM) (Like lightning and thunder)
     Jayqï kündöy kürküröp (JM) (Like summer thunder.)

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27 The name of Manas's gun.

28 Manas's spear. In this and the following two lines, *kürkürö-* denotes the sound of a flying or shaking spear.

As one can see, five groups of formulaic lines, both formulas and formulaic systems, can be established. Clearly the rhyme-string is connected to semantic content, and this content is partially expressed in formulaic first half-lines, with their "formulaicness" ranging from repetition to formulaic system. In over half of the lines with "kürküröp," however, the first half-lines cannot be grouped into such formulaic clusters.

Radloff's "Vortragsteile"

In his preface, Radloff stresses that a Kirghiz singer does not improvise according to the inspiration of the moment and create a new poem every time he performs, but that he rather relies on certain "Vortragsteile" (or "Vortragstheile," in the spelling of Radloff's German) (elements of recitation):

> [o]n the basis of extensive experience in performing, he [the singer] has a whole series of elements of recitation, if I may say so, in readiness, which he combines in a way suitable to the plot of the narrative.[29]

Radloff gives examples of these elements, including: the birth of the hero, his growth, the praise of weapons, the preparations for battle, the mêlée and battle din, the heroes' speeches before battle, the description of a feast, the death of a hero, and the lament for a dead hero. He continues:

> [t]he art of the singer consists only in stringing together all these ready-made narrative units as the course of the narrative demands and to link them with newly composed verse-lines.[30]

Radloff calls the "Vortragstheile" here "Bildtheile" (literally "picture elements") or, in diminutive form, "Bildtheilchen." He points out that these narrative units can be fleshed out quite differently, depending on the singer and the occasion. Clearly, these "Vortragsteile" correspond to what has been generally called the "typical scene" (also "type-scene") or, in the oral theory, "theme." Although Radloff's discussion acknowledges the individual skill of singers, he stresses the dominant role that these ready-made narrative units play in performance. Note that he says that the art of the singer consists *only* in stringing these elements together and linking them with newly composed verse-lines. This suggests two things: one, that Kirghiz epics consist in their entirety of themes, and two, that the singer is basically a juggler of themes, however variously he may elaborate the different themes. This picture suggests a certain mechanistic character of both Kirghiz epics and underestimates the creativity of the Kirghiz singer of tales. In the following, I want to discuss a scene in three versions of *Manas* to illustrate the creativity of the Kirghiz bard.[31]

When larger narrative units are analyzed, the first impression is one of great diversity. Given the length of the epic, I will only look at one episode and discuss one short pas-

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29 Radloff, *Proben der Volkslitteratur*, xvi.

30 Radloff, *Proben der Volkslitteratur*, xvii.

31 On variation and stability in a mini-scene in different versions of *Manas*, see Reichl, *Turkic Oral Epic Poetry*, 223–35; and Reichl, "Variation and Stability."

sage within it. I have chosen Manas's expedition against Shooruq. Shooruq is the father of one of Manas's wives, Aqïlay (called Naqïlay in Mamay's text). Although Saghïmbay's, Sayaqbay's, and Mamay's versions have the same topic, they differ so significantly from one another that they can hardly be seen as variants. They are three episodes that share some common elements, but seem otherwise to be independent tales.

Saghïmbay's version comprises 915 lines in the four-volume Kirghiz edition of 1978–1982, where it is entitled: "How Shooruq Khan, who had come to attack the Kirghiz, was defeated by them." Sayaqbay's version comprises 2316 lines and is entitled: "How Hero Manas defeated Shooruq Khan and took Aqïlay as his wife." In the definitive edition of Mamay's *Manas*, this episode is part of a larger section of the epic, entitled: "How Manas mounted his horse and defeated Köngtöy and Shooruq." The Shooruq episode comprises 1727 lines.[32] This episode is also found in the versions taken down from other manaschïs, as, for instance, from Moldobasan Musulmanqulov, Shapaq Ïrïsmendiev, and Ibraim Abdïrakhmanov.

The Shooruq Episode

Saghïmbay's version begins by specifying the ethnic and geographical setting: Shooruq belongs to the people of the Maymun and lives in the Alay mountain range. The Kirghiz move from the Altay in the direction of the Alay. Their use of Shooruq's pasture land for their animals provokes his anger. He decides to attack them and to test their strength by stealing their horses. He collects an army of 280,000 men, among them the heroes Chechender and Kültüqan. His warriors set off, but Shooruq decides to join them only on the following day. He has three sons and two daughters; the oldest daughter is Aqïlay, a beautiful girl of sixteen. Aqïlay has a portentous dream and begs her father to stay at home. Shooruq interprets the dream positively and leaves home.

When Shooruq wreaks havoc among the Kirghiz, in particular the Noyghut tribe, Manas is informed of Shooruq's raids by Aqbalta and gathers his army. Aqbalta upbraids Manas for having brought the Kirghiz from the Altay into danger and describes the enemy. Manas and his warriors hasten to the Alay region. When they encounter Shooruq's host, it is growing dark and Manas decides to begin the battle on the following day.

On the next morning, Manas and his men pray, put on their armour, and mount their horses. On the opposing side there are the warrior Dögöshö with four thousand men, the hero Chechender with two thousand men, and Kültüqan, who swings his cudgel and sits on an elephant. Manas fires his musket Aqkelte, and thirty to forty men from the enemy camp fall, among them Kültüqan. Chechender pushes his heavy spear at Manas, but Manas wards the stroke off with his sword and cuts Chechender in two. When the Kirghiz attack, Shooruq's soldiers are defeated and flee, along with Khan Shooruq, pursued by Manas. Shooruq decides to prevent his ruin by presenting gifts to Manas. He sends thirty girls to the Kirghiz, at their head his daughter Aqïlay. When they reach the

32 The texts are edited in the editions specified in nn. 10, 19, and 20 above. A Russian translation of Saghïmbay's version is found in Mirbadaleva and others, *Manas*, 2:485–505; an English translation of Mamay's version is found in Reichl, *Manas*, 1:231–79.

Kirghiz, Manas takes Aqïlay as wife and the thirty girls are allowed to choose Kirghiz husbands for themselves. The campaign against Shooruq ends to everybody's content with a feast. Sayaqbay's version is considerably longer, but has actually less action; long stretches of the episode consist of speeches and descriptions, which give the text a somewhat static character. The driving force behind the action is Baqay. He advises Manas to attack Shooruq, who has subjugated many tribes, among them the Noyghut of the Alay, and has many beautiful women and girls in his country. Manas agrees, gets ready for the campaign, and departs together with Baqay and his forty companions. When they near Shooruq's abode, Baqay exhorts his warriors and begins the attack. The enemies lose many lives, and their soldiers take flight. Shooruq's warrior Jööjeldet sends a message to his khan to inform him of their desperate situation. Baqay proposes to send Ajïbay as a messenger to Shooruq and ask him to capitulate, accept Islam, and give his daughter in marriage to Manas. Ajïbay delivers his message. When Shooruq looks at Manas from the tower of his fortress, he realizes how magnificent and dazzling a hero Manas is. He descends from his throne and announces that he will submit to Manas, accept Islam, and wed Aqïlay to the Kirghiz hero. Eighty girls, led by Aqïlay, go to Manas's camp, where a feast is celebrated. Manas marries Aqïlay, and his forty companions also find wives. Then the Kirghiz begin their return journey.

Quite different is this episode in Mamay's *Manas*. Manas is still a child (eleven to twelve years old!) and he is still known under the name of Chongjindi (the great madcap); it is only in the course of this episode that he is called by his real name. The campaign against Shooruq follows an expedition against the Kalmuck Köngtöy, who is killed and whose soldiers have fled to other Kalmuck khans and potentates, among them Shooruq. At the end of the Kirghiz's victory over Köngtöy, a feast is organized and Manas is elected khan. When Shooruq is informed of Köngtöy's death, he is of the opinion that the Kirghiz have to be annihilated. In the plain of Sarï-Arqa, the Kalmucks build up their military camp. Then the Kirghiz arrive, with Baqay carrying the flag and Aqbalta and Jamghïrchï in the vanguard. The two armies take their position opposite each other. There follows a series of single combats. Only then Shooruq enters the battlefield and Jamghïrchï rides out to fight him, pulling out a poplar on his way and using it as a weapon. Shooruq does the same and injures Jamghïrchï. After more fighting, Manas enters the combat and kills Shooruq. A general mêlée begins, leading to the defeat of the Kalmucks. After the battle, Chubaq enters Shooruq's palace in Sarï-Arqa. In the garden, he sees Aqïlay (Naqïlay) and her forty maidens. Chubaq claims the girls as war-booty and takes them to Manas. After their arrival, the girls are paraded, but Baqay forbids the Kirghiz to call them "booty-girls." The girls are allowed to choose a husband for themselves; Aqïlay becomes Manas's wife.

Analysis

While all three versions agree in the basic orientation of the plot, the differences are numerous and significant. Shooruq is killed in Mamay's version, but survives in the others; in Sayaqbay's text, Shooruq does not even take part in the battle. Shooruq's conversion to Islam plays a role only in Sayaqbay's version; it is not mentioned in the others. The geographical and ethnic details vary also; Saghïmbay gives a number of ethnic and

geographical names that are not found in the other versions. Furthermore, the age of the main protagonist, Manas, is different. In Saghïmbay's version, this episode comes in the fourth cycle of "adventures," long after Manas's first heroic deeds as a youngster, similar to Sayaqbay's version. In Mamay's version, in contrast, the fight with Shooruq is one of the early exploits of the hero and he is accordingly still very young. Apart from Shooruq, none of the other Kalmuck warriors overlap.

The most noticeable difference between the three versions is their respective style and emphasis. Sayaqbay's text is heavily biased towards speeches; about 40 percent of the text consists of speeches, one of them extending to more than 300 lines. Much information is repeated (not as a rule in formulaic lines), which gives this episode a somewhat long-winded flavour. Mamay's version is focused on action, with a wealth of details in the description of the various combats. Saghïmbay's version has more battle scenes than Sayaqbay's, but they are shorter than Mamay's; in addition, he has some motifs not found in the others, especially Aqïlay's portentous dream. He also explicitly links the confrontation of the Kirghiz with Shooruq and his troops to the Kirghiz migration from the Altay.

In order to assess the relative quality of these versions properly, both their similarities and their differences, an extensive discussion of the texts would be necessary. Here one sample will have to suffice to illustrate the way in which these versions vary and agree with one another. I have chosen Chechender's fight with Manas in Saghïmbay's epic, Baqay's attack in Sayaqbay's *Manas*, and a portion of the fight between Manas and Shooruq in Mamay's version. As will be seen, although all three passages express similar ideas connected to fighting and to the warriors involved in the battle, their differences are striking.[33]

(1)   Saghïmbay

Jana Shooruq jiberdi
Chechender attuu balbandï,
On eki ming qol menen
Manastï közdöy japïrdï.
5   Kültüqan attuu balbanï
Kürküröp kürsü alghanï,
Jeke özü bir minip —
Jetimish qulach pil minip,
Kürsüsü bar molodoy,
10   *Qarasa közü qapïrdïn*
Qayqangha qazghan oroodoy,
Közündögü chïlpaghï
Qaynatghan batman shorodoy.
On eki ming jabïlïp,
15   Aqkelte mïltïq bir attï
Arstan Manas qamïnïp.
Aqkeltenin dabïshï
Altï kündü ughuldu,
Oghu tiyip qapïrdan
20   Otuz-qïrqï jïghïldï.

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33 I am focusing only on some points in these passages; the words and lines in question are italicized.

Tütünü bastï tumanday,
Qulap tüshtü Kültüqan
Jer silkingen dubalday.
Nayza saldï Chechender,
25   Anday nayza salghandan
Alek bolghon nechender.
Nayzasïn baatïr qaghïptïr,
Arstan er qïlïch salïptïr.
Nayzasï tiybey ketkeni,
30   Nayza salghan Chechender
Ajalïnïn jetkeni.
Jetpekende netkeni,
Törö chapqan bu qïlïch
Töbösünö jetkeni,
35   At-matï menen bölünüp
Jarday qulap ketkeni.

(Furthermore Shooruq sent into battle
A warrior by the name of Chechender.
With an army of twelve thousand men
He rushed towards Manas.
5   The warrior by the name of Kültüqan
Was roaring, with a cudgel in his hand.
Alone by himself he was riding,
He was riding an elephant of seventy fathoms.
His cudgel was like a megalith.
10   *One could see that the heathen's eyes*
Were deep-set like storage caves,
The puss in his eyes
Was like a batman[34] *of clay from an evaporated salt marsh.*
When the twelve thousand attacked,
15   *The lion Manas* took his precautions
And fired his gun Aqkelte once.
The sound of Aqkelte
Was heard at a distance of a six days' journey.
Hit by the bullet of the heathens
20   Thirty to forty broke down.
Its smoke rose like fog.
Kültüqan toppled over,
Like a wall shaken by an earthquake.
Chechender pointed the spear;
25   To point such a spear
Was quite bothersome.
The hero (Manas) warded off his spear,
The lion warrior (Manas) swung his sword.
His (Chechender's) spear went past without touching,
30   And Chechender, who had thrust the spear,
Had come to the point of death.
How could he not?

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34 A *batman* is a measure of weight with differing values according to region; in the Talas valley in Kyrgyzstan it equals 12 Russian *pud* (= 12 x 16.36 kg, that is, 196 kg).

> This sword that the noble hero had swung
> Went through (him) from his top:
> 35   Split into two, together with his horse,
> He collapsed, straight down like a precipice.)

In this extract from Saghïmbay's version, the various moves in the combat between Manas and the two Kalmuck fighters are described in comparatively simple sentences, with common words like "nayza" (spear), "qïlïch" (sword), "kürsü" (cudgel), "mïltïq" (gun, musket) for the weapons and corresponding verbs like "al-" (take), "at-" (throw, shoot), "sal-" (place, throw), "tiy-" (touch) for handling the weapons. All these words occur repeatedly in any version of *Manas*, unsurprisingly, given the genre of the work. We find also the formulaic half-line "Arstan Manas" (15) (the lion Manas) and the variation "the lion hero" (28). The verb-form "kürküröp" (16) (roaring) is also familiar from the earlier discussion of the "bürküröp" rhyme-string. While a number of lines seem to be unspectacular, that is they express a certain idea plainly, without unusual syntax or lexicon (as, for example, 1–2), others are more specific and, one feels, might be poetic expansions of an idea that occurs also in other parts of the epic. This concerns Manas's gun Aqkelte: its sound is heard far and wide (17–18) and smoke rises like fog from the barrel after a shot (21). Also, the comparisons of Chechender's cudgel with a megalith and the hero's puss in his eyes with clay from an evaporated salt marsh (9–13) give the impression of being part of a traditional set of poetic similes.

The descriptive lines about the cudgel and Chechender's eyes incorporate a rhyme-string: "molodoy" (like a megalith), "oroodoy" (like a storage cave), and "shorodoy" (like a salt-marsh). None of these rhyme-words occurs in Mamay's *Manas*. Sayaqbay has one instance of this string, with only "oroodoy" and "shorodoy"; the lines in his text are different and describe a face: Qongurbay's nostrils are like storage caves and his eye-brows like a salt-marsh. Saghïmbay has one more passage, also describing Qongurbay, the Kalmuck–Chinese khan and main foe of Manas and the Kirghiz: "His nose is huge (borodoy), / the sockets of his two eyes / are like dug-out storage caves (oroodoy), / the puss of his eye-lashes / is like the clay (shorodoy) in the gunpowder of marksmen." Although this rhyme-string can be considered a traditional pattern, its occurrence is extremely rare, quite unlike what one would expect of formulaic diction.

(2)   Sayaqbay

> Kögala qalqan qolgho alïp
> Kök *ayzanï bulghalap*,
> Qara jaaq chong qamchï
> Qabïlan Baqay abakeng
> 5   Qarmay qalïp imerip,
> Qang dedire Kök Tulpar,
> Taqïmgha tartïp jiberip,
> Qaardanïp baqïrïp,
> Qaraan qalghan sultanï
> 10   "Manastap!"—uraan chaqïrïp,
> Baqay chabuul qoydu emi,
> Art jaghïnan qïrq choro
> Qatar ayza sundu emi.
> Qaardanïp eköölöp,

15   Oyron bolghon qula atïn
        Onjongdotup bosh qoshtop,
        On eki choro jetelep,
        Aq asaba tuu bolup,
        Ayghaydaghan *chuu bolup,*
20   Ach ayqïrïq *chuu bolup*,
        Arbïnïraaq *duu bolup*,
        Qasaba jelek qalqïldap,
        Tashtï buzup jol salïp,
        Töö mingen mingche askerge
25   Törö Baqay qol salïp,
        Arqasïnan qïrq choro
        Qatar qaptap etti ele,
        Ataqtuu kökjal qabïlan
        Aqqula menen *barbaqtap*,
30   Oyron töröng *dardaqtap*,
        Oynop-oynop ketti ele.

(Taking the bluish shield in his hands,
Shaking the blue [iron] spear,
Holding the black-sided massive whip,
The tiger Baqay, our older brother,
5   Swinging the whip round
With a flick, pressing the flanks
Of the racer, his horse Kök,
Shouting furiously,
Manas's noble-born support,
10   Shouting the war-cry "Manas!,"
Baqay began to attack.
Behind him the forty companions
Pointed their lances in a row.
Both of them [rider and horse] seized by fury,
15   He let his dun horse, tested by adversity,
Step out heavily, giving it the reins,
Took twelve companions with him,
The white flag serving as a standard,
A noise rising of *shrill screams,*
20   A noise rising of *piercing yells*,
The *clamour* increasing in intensity,
The *war flag* flying in the wind,
Crushing stones into dust on his way,
The noble lord Baqay attacked
25   A thousand soldiers, riding their camels.
Behind him the forty companions
Came up in a row.
The famous, mighty tiger (= Manas),
Riding on Aqqula *in high spirits*,
30   Our noble lord, tested in adversity, *riding with bravado*,
Rode along on his prancing horse.)

This scene describes the onset of battle, with Baqay storming at the enemy, Manas
and his forty companions following. It begins with the theme of the arming of the hero
in miniature: Baqay takes the shield, shakes the spear, swings the whip, presses the

horse's flanks, shouts the war-cry "Manas!," and attacks. This part of the passage is a compressed typical scene, with elements that reappear in the narrative. They reappear, but not always in predictable form, that is, in formulaic lines. To take only the shaking of the spear, such a typical movement in heroic poetry, we find that neither the verb *bulghala-* nor a synonym occurs in Saghïmbay's text. The spear is mentioned often in his version, but it is never shaken. Five instances of "bulghalap" are found in Sayqbay's text, including the present passage. Normally the spear is taken ("nayzanï qolgho alïp"), but occasionally it is shaken. In three out of five cases, a spear is shaken, and in two, a flag. In Mamay's text, "bulghalap" is used seven times in rhyme-position (and a further three times in other positions). In three out of seven instances, "bulghalap" is used with a spear, but the line is phrased differently each time.

There is no question about the formulaic nature of epithets like "Ataqtuu kökjal qabïlan" (28); for "qabïlan" (tiger) the remarks made about "arstan" (lion) above are also true. Less obvious are the rhyme-words of the next two lines, "barbaqtap" (riding in high spirits) and "darbaqtap" (riding with bravado). The verbs are fairly specific and show the onomatopoeic ring dear to the singers of *Manas*. The verbs *barbaqta-* and *darbaqta-*, also in their variant forms *barbangda-* and *dardangda-*, are not found in Saghïmbay's version. Sayaqbay was rather fond of these rhymes; the pair occurs ten times, but, apart from the rhyme, none of the lines shows any verbal similarity to any of the others. In Mamay's text, "barbaqtap" is found in two passages, once rhyming with "qaldaqtap" (bustling) and "salbaqtap" (dangling), and once with "dalbaqtap" (moving heavily). Again we note that this passage, while treating a typical situation and incorporating some formulaic diction, shows a number of traits that mark its singular and individual character.

(3)   Mamay

> Ketüüchüdöy türü bar,
> Bashtï kesip baylanïp,
> Qarap turat qabïlan,
> *Aqqula menen shangdanïp.*
> 5   Daghï kelgen Shooruqtun
> Nayzasïn qaqtï saydïrbay,
> Qïyïrïnan mushtap öttü ele,
> Qïztalaq itke tuydurbay.
> Büktölüp belden sïnbaghan,
> 10   Sayghanïn teshpey qalbaghan,
> *Tökör usta jasaghan,*
> *Ungghusu bolot uchu qurch,*
> Ötközö sonun Sïrnayza,
> Qabïrghanï aralap,
> 15   Balïq etin jaralap,
> Ortosunan dalïnïn,
> Uchu chïghïp jïltïrap,
> Qaapïrdï sayïp salïptïr,
> Nayzani tartïp alghanda,
> 20   *Qol arïqtai shïrqïrap,*
> *Shooruqtun qanï aghïptïr.*

> (Pretending to ride away,
> Ready to cut off his opponent's head,
> The tiger kept watch,
> *Sitting gloriously on Aqqula.*
> 5 He warded off Shooruq's spear, that was approaching again,
> So that it did not touch him.
> He approached Shooruq from the side, gave him a blow with the fist,
> But could not cause the cursed dog any pain.
> He bowed, almost breaking his back,
> 10 And his stab was not for nothing: he pierced him through.
> *The magnificent lance Sïrnayza, made by master Bölökbay,*
> *With the back of its blade of steel, its point a sharp sword,*
> Penetrated the body,
> Cut through the ribs,
> 15 Wounded the muscles,
> So that its tip came out shining
> Through the middle of his shoulder.
> He pierced the heathen through.
> When he pulled out the spear,
> 20 *Gurgling like a small irrigation canal,*
> *Shooruq's blood flowed out.*)

Mamay's description is very precise and colourful; he is focused on the action and visualizes the various moves of the combatants vividly. In this he differs from the other treatments of the Shooruq–Aqïlay episode. I will take up only a few of his expressions. Manas sits on his horse, Aqqula, "shangdanïp." The verb *shangdan-* means "to take on a majestic posture, to look splendid," and is derived from *shang* (grandeur, majesty). This verb occurs once in Saghïmbay's *Manas*, describing Qongurbay in a splendid passage with three ornate rhyme-strings following one another.[35]

Finally, a brief comment on the two last lines of the extract. As is to be expected, much blood flows in *Manas*, where battles and single combats form the majority of episodes. There are many lines expressing the same idea, also in similar words. A specific detail here is the comparison of blood gushing from a wound with the gurgling water of a small irrigation canal ("arïq"). While this detail is unique, the verb employed (*shïrqïra-*) frequently occurs. This verb is found in various contexts, of which only two are formulaic. One is the line "qan tögül-üp/sö/dü shïrqïrap" (the blood flowing/flowed/if it flows gurgling), which occurs twice in Saghïmbay's text and six times in Sayaqbay's (one with slight variations). The second repeated occurrence of "shïrqïrap" is in the line "közdön jalïn shïrqïrap" (a flame flashing from the eye); it is found (with variations) six times in Saghïmbay's text, twice in Sayaqbay's text (plus a further case with "ooz" [mouth] instead of "köz" [eye]), and twice in Mamay's text.

The passage from Mamay's *Manas* tallies with the observations made with regard to similar passages in Saghïmbay's and Sayaqbay's versions of the epic. Diction is traditional, with fixed epithets, formulaic lines, and rhyme-strings. Nevertheless, the verses cannot be analyzed as simple concatenations of formulas, nor can the scenes be broken down

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35 Musaev, Abdyldaev, and others, *Manas*, 3:236–37; Mirbadaleva and others, *Manas*, 3:439 (Russian translation).

into formulaic themes. There is much fluidity and creative variability in Kirghiz verse, both on the level of the verse-line and of narrative units like themes or typical scenes.

The True Nature of the aoidos?

Radloff's purpose in comparing the Kirghiz manaschï to the aoidos was to draw attention to the fact that a living tradition of oral epics can give insights into the workings of oral poetry and can therefore throw light on the Homeric Question. Radloff refers in his preface to a study by Benedictus Niese, entitled *Die Entwickelung der homerischen Poesie* (*The Development of Homeric Poetry*), published in 1882. Radloff criticises Niese's interpretation of some lines from the *Odyssey*, which lead him, according to Radloff, to the wrong conclusions. The lines in question are, as a matter of course, quoted in Greek and translated neither by Niese nor by Radloff. They come from Book 8 and refer to the singer Demodocus at Alcinous's court; they read in Robert Fagles's translation:

> In came the herald now,
> leading along the faithful bard the Muse adored
> above all others, true, but her gifts were mixed
> with good and evil both: she stripped him of sight
> but gave the man the power of stirring, rapturous song.[36]

Niese refers to these lines at the end of a sentence in which he asserts that "the singer practices his art professionally: he has learned it and he is under the power of the Muse, who inspires his song."[37] The verses from the *Odyssey* attest to the power of the Muse. Radloff thought that Niese concluded from these lines also that the singer has learned his art. This is probably a misunderstanding, but Radloff's emphatic denial of any learning process with regard to the Kirghiz epic singers is noteworthy. He writes:

> The singer learns only passively by hearing. He does not perform known songs, because songs do not exist in the period of authentic epic poetry; there are only subject matters that can be put into verse, in the way the Muse, i.e., the inner singing-power of the singer, inspires the singer.[38]

There is no doubt that in a truly oral situation there are no texts that can be learned or memorized, as Lord and others have pointed out. But Kirghiz singers—and the same is true of some other Turkic oral traditions—do learn both the technique of performance and the epics themselves from other singers, in particular a master singer, who might be the father or a relative of the apprentice singer. The learning process implies attendance at the master's performances and imitation and trial performances under the master's guidance. In some traditions, there is a formal performance that marks the end of apprenticeship, when the teacher's blessing is given.[39] Among the Kirghiz, various regional "singer schools" can be distinguished. This means that singers perform in a

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36 Homer, *Odyssey*, 8.71–75; Fagles translates Greek "aoidos" as "bard."

37 Niese, *Entwickelung*, 9.

38 Radloff, *Proben der Volkslitteratur*, xx.

39 See Reichl, *Turkic Oral Epic Poetry*, 62–87.

particular style, specialize in particular parts of the *Manas* cycle, and trace their art back to the models of singers whose performances they have attended and who acted as their masters in the early stages of their formation.[40] This is, of course, the traditional situation, which was still prevalent in the first half of the twentieth century, before singers could use printed texts for memorization.

Even modern singers, however, if they want to become part of the Kirghiz oral epic tradition, will have to have more skills than a good memory. What Radloff called "die innere Gesang-Kraft" (the inner power for song) is an important element in a singer's vocation.[41] It is a widespread custom among Kirghiz manaschïs to have an initiation dream or vision. Manas himself or some other hero of his retinue appears to the singer and urges him to become a manaschï. A present-day manaschï, Talantaaly Baqchiev (b. 1971), who is well known for his performances of a number of episodes from the *Manas* cycle, traces his art through his teacher and his teacher's teacher back to Sayaqbay Qaralaev, whose grandson he is on his father's side. Baqchiev reports that he had a number of dreams in which Manas, but also Qanïkey and others, appeared and told him to become a singer. When I asked him in 2010 in Bishkek whether he had memorized any texts, he answered, "If had memorized a text I could perform for a maximum of only twenty minutes." He went on to tell me about his dreams and about his relationship to Sayaqbay, from the point of view of both biological and artistic descent.[42]

Although Radloff repeatedly stresses the word-power of the Kirghiz singers and underlines their creative poetic skills, his remarks about "Vortragsteile" and "Bildteile" suggest a mechanistic art, highly formulaic and perhaps, in its repetitiousness, monotonous. This, however, is not the case. No doubt, Kirghiz epics show many traits of oral epic poetry worldwide, including formulaic diction and composition by themes, and *Manas* is by rights well represented in general works such as the Chadwicks' *Growth of Literature* or Maurice Bowra's *Heroic Poetry*.[43] But as I have tried to show, Kirghiz epics also have their individual physiognomy (with rhyme-strings, for instance, as a powerful poetic device) that sets them apart from other, better-known epic traditions, and they surprise the student of oral poetry by the creative energy of singers like Saghïmbay Orozbaqov, Sayaqbay Qaralaev, and Jüsüp Mamay. Whether the singer of *Manas* shows us the true nature of the aoidos is another matter. It is for the Homerist to decide whether the Kirghiz singer of tales is a useful complement to the South Slavic singer of tales to further a better understanding of the art of the aoidos. Radloff's comments, both about the Kirghiz singer and the aoidos, have to be viewed critically; but the fact remains that Radloff's volume of Kirghiz oral poetry is a pioneering contribution to oral epic studies.

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40 Kydyrbaeva, *Manas*, 289–341.

41 Radloff, *Proben der Volkslitteratur*, xx.

42 On the present-day situation of the performance of *Manas*, see Reichl, "Oral Epics."

43 Bowra's knowledge of *Manas* was, like N. Chadwick's, based on Radloff's edition and translation. Bowra, who refers to *Manas* frequently, also used Lipkin's Russian translation of the epic.

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JOHN MILES FOLEY: OPEN MIND, OPEN ACCESS, OPEN TRADITION, OPEN FOLEY

RUTH FINNEGAN

I FIRST MET John in 1974. How long ago it seems, and in the trite phrase how recent it feels. The occasion: an interdisciplinary conference, my first ever, at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. The subject: the formula, then the focus of a veritable academic industry. The participants: its practitioners from across the disciplines. Prominent among them was that gentle man, the guru, Albert Bates Lord, with his followers and acolytes, among them John Miles Foley.

The naive rebel, my good self, was present too, youthful and enthusiastic. I found I was to be well attacked then and later (not that I minded—a compliment I thought it) by the Lord disciples, not least by John himself who was then (necessary no doubt at that stage of his career) a pushy and opinionated graduate student—how unlike the John we came to know later. He was out, naturally, to praise and agree with his mentor, Lord, then the power behind all grants and appointments in his (far-reaching) domain. This was to John's benefit, of course, but it was no self-serving ploy on his part—the results of his own researches, primarily at that stage in Anglo-Saxon but also increasingly supported by comparative knowledge of the classics and of the then-Yugoslavia, seemed wholly to support the accepted position on oral tradition and its formulaic composition-in-performance defining features. At that stage I in no way disliked him. But I was not particularly impressed.

From this unpromising beginning arose a firm friendship and, to my pride, a mutual influence on each other's work, not just, of course, he on mine, but equally—I do not flinch from saying it—me on his: a wonder! He always was one to learn: he becoming less universalist (he needed to!), I more aware, as I had to be, of the characteristics of specific texts as well as performance. Equally to my wonder, I have more than once stood in for him as speaker when he was unable from afflictions like over-commitment or, latterly, death, to attend as planned. Exceedingly proud I have been to do so.

Let me add that a third member of this firm triad of friendship was the distinguished South African scholar Jeff Opland. Then a young scholar, like us at the start of his career, he, too, pushed to give a paper at the conference. It was well worth the effort. He told us about early English scops (bards)—no surprise to some there—but as well about their parallelism with imbongi, Xhosa praise poets.[1] We were privileged thus to hear the start of his magnificent work on these topics, not least his now ongoing series of Xhosa texts—how John would have, and did, approve! We were also readied to meet Jeff again when he convened a fine conference on orality some years later at which we all three appreciated the increasing convergence of our ideas. We have both benefited, and how greatly, from Jeff's piercing insights, too little known, on epic and on comparative lit-

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1 Opland, "'Scop' and 'Imbongi.'"

erature and oral texts more generally. The interlocking influences of his knowledge and insight have benefited our work, all three, through our scholarly lives. Long may—and will—this continue to be enlarged and taken yet further by those who follow. Such is the path of the scholarship. To this John, great scholar, but in his own eyes merely humble practitioner and apprentice, was devoted.

So let me use the privilege of my slot in this volume to illustrate something of his worth and wisdom by illustrating the main lines of my own interaction with John over those forty or so years, a generation and more. My contribution here, as is natural, given that background, will be personal; as is also natural, given my own background and training, many of my examples will be taken from Africa. Above all, however, I hope that this approach will be fit not to amplify my part on our joint path of scholarship, but to throw some light on John's generosity as a scholar, even to someone whom another person might have regarded as an antagonist or even a competitor, and, equally, his lovely personality: humane, overwhelmingly generous, and, above all, humble.

John the Human Being

In that connection and before going any further, for it helps to explain John's lifelong commitment, and, in a way, humility before the world and in his search for truth and openness to all, let me mention something that, perhaps, rather few people know. This is the reason for his insistence that his name was John Miles Foley, on the face of it an unnecessary amplification and, no doubt, the bane of editors and bibliographers alike. It was because of his grandfather. He was a self-taught scholar of humble origins, John's great inspiration, and one whom he wished throughout his life to emulate and commemorate. John adored his family too: so proud of his (second) wife Anne-Marie and of the children of whom he always spoke so warmly—when asked, that is, for he was not one to thrust them at you.

I am proud to count him among my friends, open in every sense. He will always be that, on this earth and in heaven, where no doubt his insight is still guiding us (as well, no doubt, as in his modest and charming way enlightening the denizens there too—can we not envisage it?). Much more could, and no doubt will, be said by his friends. But, leaving words, it is enough to look deep into his last portrait, it is all there: look there at gentleness and wisdom.

Ann Arbor 1974

That first Ann Arbor conference on "Oral Tradition and the Formula," appropriately hosted by the university's Coördination of Ancient and Modern Studies unit, was the start of many things. At that time the accepted position, following Lord, in his turn following Milman Parry, was that the presence of a "formula" or "formulaic style" was an unerring sign of a work being an example of "oral literature" and necessarily, as such, composed in the classic improvisatory-through-formulae "composition-in-performance" mode enunciated in Lord's already classic study, *Singer of Tales*. I had read and been inspired by this work, specifically in my then-recent *Oral Literature in Africa* and, Oxford-wise and Oxford-trained, assumed that the best compliment was to challenge it. So—naïve—I did.

Here is something of what I said, later when, as with all stimulating conferences, it became part of a book. Essentially, I used (mainly) African material to challenge the notion that formula-based "composition-in-performance" was the only way for a piece of oral literature to arise, even, indeed, to exist at all.[2] I was sympathetic to this notion, a hugely illuminating one, it seemed to me, for some instances. But not, I knew from the cases I had encountered in Africa or read about elsewhere, for all.

As is by now well known, this ran exactly counter to Lord's position. "Oral," he writes, excluding by definition all contrary cases, "does not mean merely oral presentation [...]. What is important is not the oral performance but rather the composition *during* oral performance."[3] What Lord meant was of course elaborated in his illuminating study of oral narrative poetry in Yugoslavia in the 1930s: it is the type of oral composition that in some sense takes place simultaneously with performance, and in which the poet is able to produce lengthy narrative poetry without the use of writing and without interrupting the flow of his narration. For Lord, composition and performance were not just simultaneous acts, they were merely two different aspects of the same act in which the poet produces his own unique composition/performance. Lord's work has marked such a step forward in the analysis of oral literature, and been so (rightly) admired, that it is often not realized how restrictive a definition of oral composition this was. It excluded any oral compositions which are handed on word-for-word, like certain religious texts.[4] And while it is true that this kind of immutability will be rather uncommon in oral literature, it still seems unreasonable to exclude such cases as not truly oral just because they do not fit the Yugoslav or Russian model.[5]

More serious was the exclusion of long-considered and deliberate oral composition prior to performance, as in the case of certain oral lyrics. There is clear evidence that this at least sometimes happens, and even if in such cases there is also something of the kind of variation in performance that Lord stresses, clearly we find here an extra dimension not covered in his definition of oral works.[6] It seemed perverse to exclude the composition of poems by Inuit (Eskimo) poets, where "a man who wants to compose a song may long walk to and fro in some solitary place, arranging his words while humming a melody which he also has to make up,"[7] the poetic process in the Pacific Gilbert Islands where the poet spends several days alone, polishing and repolishing the poem with which he is "in travail,"[8] the long-drawn-out processes of composition of Tonga and Ila lyrics, or Chopi choral compositions in central Africa.[9]

There seemed to be an underlying assumption by Lord and his school that the test for a medieval or classical work being "oral" was an "oral-formulaic" style. Lord was con-

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2 Finnegan, *Oral Poetry*, especially 155–57.

3 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 5; emphasis his.

4 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 280.

5 See Reichl's contribution to this volume.

6 Lord, "Oral Poetry," 592.

7 Rasmussen, *Netsilik Eskimos*, 320.

8 Grimble, *Return to the Islands*, 200, 204–5.

9 Jones, *African Music*, 11ff.

fident about his definition: "we now know exactly what is meant by these terms ["oral poet" and "oral poems"], at least insofar as manner of composition is concerned."[10] But as had already been pointed out forcefully, formulaic styles also occur in written texts.[11] It seemed fair, therefore, to take such works as instances of oral composition. But if so, what about an apparently exactly similar process of composition by a poet (say, in a literate culture) who works out the words of his poem in his head, perhaps using certain formulaic expressions as he goes, and only later writes them down—would this too be oral composition? And, if not, what about a similar process of composition followed by oral dictation to a local scribe or foreign collector? It seemed that there were bound to be problems about exact application and interpretation if one pressed oral composition as a criterion even if one tried to widen the restrictive definition of the oral-formulaic approach and tone down some of its over-confident assertions.

In fine, I argued, the apparent mode of composition and a "formulaic style" clearly tells us something. But they are neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for calling something "oral": they were relevant features, but were neither self-evident nor absolute. When this argument appeared in my *Oral Poetry* a few years later, John wrote a scathing review.[12] I have to say, too, that it was the only unfair one I have ever had in my long life as a scholar. It was not that it was critical—to be taken seriously is always a tribute—but it was perturbing to have opinions attributed to me that were the exact opposite of those I held and that I was in fact arguing against. Also, apparently I—or rather the exigencies of the then typesetting process—had apparently omitted a diacritical mark in a particular Serbian name. I was taken aback, but, never having encountered such a thing, did not know how to react. Opland, who liked us both, sympathized with my view about its injustice but was very wise—"Leave it," he said, "ignore it: it will go over."

He was right, and in the best possible way. When I spent an (inspiring) semester at Austin in 1989, John invited me to lecture to his students in Missouri, and to stay with him and his lovely wife. As she made muffins for our breakfast (so quick—I was filled with admiration) he said, rather quietly, "Sometimes loyalty leads us too far." It was understood and we needed say no more—just enjoy our rich time together.

The Aftermath

Over the years, John was always generous in inviting me to speak, even on topics which might have seemed to challenge his own preconceptions at the time. He was always willing to open and extend his ideas, a mark of the true scholar (I imagine him doing the same in heaven to the benefit of us all). One was inviting me to give what was at that time the "Milman Parry Lecture on Oral Tradition" (what an unlooked-for honour) at the University of Missouri, to which he so long made a notable contribution in his loving teaching, editing, and research. The talk I gave was a critique—what else, from me?—of the very concept nearest to his heart: oral tradition.

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10 Lord, *Singer of Tales*, 141.

11 For example, Curschmann, "Oral Poetry," 44–52.

12 Foley, Review of *Oral Poetry*.

Since this is easily available on the web, I need not go into details here, but it is relevant to sketch the main lines since, as a mark of John's open-mindedness (he surely knew what, from me, was coming) it would seem, on a superficial reading, to run counter to his own position, even, worse, to undermine the presuppositions of his brainchild, *Oral Tradition* (*OT*), the journal then starting to make an international mark for itself. Basically, my lecture, later generously published in *OT*, argued the case for a more critical and self-aware approach to this familiar, ambiguous, and often misused term.[13] "Tradition" and "traditional" were then common terms among anthropologists, folklorists, and oral historians, sometimes, indeed, regarded as defining features of these disciplines. They carried confusing meanings, however. "Tradition" had meant, variously: "culture" as a whole; all the inherited elements in a society; conventionally recognized customs whether or not of any antiquity; the process of handing down practices, ideas, or values, particularly inter-generationally; the products so handed down, sometimes with the further connotation of being "old" or having arisen in some "natural" and non-contentious way. These ambiguities were problem enough, but there were often additional overtones too. Something labelled a "tradition" had so often been taken as unquestionably belonging, neutrally, to the whole of the "community," rather than to specific individuals or interest groups; or somehow to be "natural" and close to the soil rather than, as with written forms, "artificially" constructed.

Many of these associations can be challenged on both theoretical and ethnographic grounds. Far from claimed "traditions" always being old, common to all, or non-polemical, anthropologists, historians, and others have pointed, for example, to the interest of investigating multiple voices, disputed meanings, or the relation between local political structures and the social manipulation of (apparently) established traditions from the past; and few anthropologists would now accept the older model of traditions coming down unchanged through the generations. But the popular assumptions associated with the term, then strong, are long-lasting, and can still sometimes affect even academic usages of it.

Qualifying "tradition" by the term "oral" might seem to make it clearer and more specific, but in practice added yet more ambiguity. It was often unclear, for example, whether the "oral tradition" was oral merely in the sense of being unwritten; whether it was assumed to belong to the group as a whole, and/or to have been transmitted by word of mouth over many generations, perhaps by the community or "folk," rather than conscious individual action, and/or to be accepted as of fundamental value to the community—all common, if unspoken, connotations of the term.

Further, some scholars had fallen into the habit of calling any verbalization captured in research by the label of "oral tradition" and had proceeded to assume a series of consequential—but sometimes false—properties. For example, the highly personal and individually composed Somali love poetry had been called "oral tradition." But these poems emphatically did not date far back in time (even the genre itself was a new one), nor were they ever produced communally. Equally, I continued, it was unwise to accept all claims about "tradition" at face value, the more so because the term had been widely

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13 Finnegan, "Tradition, But What Tradition?"

used to represent "just about anything to which anyone wishes to give legitimacy or added luster."[14] Most important of all, since statements about "oral tradition" tended to be buttressed by a series of politically and personally entrenched values, often intertwined with issues of national or group identity, it could be difficult—even threatening—to unwrap such claims critically, or investigate how far these various connotations (often unconscious) were really supported by the evidence. The alternative would be—and much more in keeping with the scholarly ethic—to retain the term but subject it to critical examination and investigation rather than just assume its varied applications and associations.[15]

The Journal Oral Tradition

John also from time to time invited me—though knowing I was always likely to be something of a maverick—to contribute to the great journal he founded, at much cost to his time and, I would guess, resources—the marvellously interdisciplinary (then highly unusual and disapproved by the pundits) and pioneeringly open *Oral Tradition*. What a commitment this manifested, and how typical of him. It was not for himself or his career that he began *OT*, but for forwarding the subject and for outreach to others, yet another of his wonderful contributions to us all (now online at www.journal.oraltradition.org). One feature was the wonderful collection of articles in two special issues of the journal on the work on oral tradition in the various countries of the world: and an amazing and still essential collection it turned out to be. What a network of international scholars he had developed! My own small note, typically I suppose, again critiqued the central term. This time I focused mainly on the concept and ambiguities of "oral" with, among other things, its double meanings of 1) unwritten and 2) spoken, "with the mouth" (from the Latin *os*, *oris*): the two are not the same (a story told in pictures, for instance, is oral in the first sense, not the second, and many confusions have arisen from not appreciating the difference). Even more potentially confusing is the very title of the journal, but John, typically, was happy for me to say so. These special issues gather together work, from Homeric epics to medieval lays, contemporary African storytelling, modern Basque poetry or American "slam" contests that under any other term would merely disappear as not a subject that could be studied by scholars, something "non-existent" in the focus on single disciplinary work. All this was something which John was able to see beyond, and help others do so too.

One other thing is worth saying in connection with the journal. This was his help to the graduate students he chose not so much to (be paid to) assist him, and so finance their studies (the overt purpose), but rather for them to learn a skill that would be of help in their future careers. But there was more to it. Characteristically, John said little about this, but it came out in one of our conversations. True to his principles, he had refused to serve in Vietnam, at what cost to himself or his loved ones, I do not know.

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14 Henige, *Chronology of Oral Tradition*, 2—a wonderfully wise and pertinent book.

15 Finnegan, "Problems in the Processing of 'Oral Texts'"; Finnegan, *Oral Traditions*, 5ff; Henige, *Chronology of Oral Tradition*; and Vansina, *Oral Tradition*.

But then John, he the peace-lover, saw the sufferings of the returning veterans. They had given themselves, seen their comrades suffer and die, been imprisoned, wounded, only to return—to what? Not a grateful country, but reviling. He of all people saw it. And not just saw, but made sure they had support and a valued role, and—what else can I call it—love, as they worked with him on the journal. I seldom saw him more moved as when, quietly, he spoke of this.

Advances in Oral Literature Research

Then there was the conference in Belgrade, the Lord and Foley stamping ground. The keynote speaker was to have been John but, characteristically, much though I imagine he would have liked to have been present, he would not let down his promised contribution to the Folklore Fellows workshops in Scandinavia. I was asked—an honour—to speak instead. Naturally, I referred to him and my memories of him as a graduate student—to the delight of the younger members of the audience who had not imagined that he could possibly have started out as just like one of them!—a useful lesson (maybe some of them are, in turn, inspired by him, touching the frontiers of knowledge).

The subject of the conference, a demanding one with many challenging and informative expert papers, was "Advances in Oral Literature Research." My contribution, invoking John's presence, then, as now, so much with us, was first to extend the term to remind the participants of the many cultural processes and products which, though handed down over time, are not written: myths, genealogies, shared images within a particular community about their history, family traditions, local folk beliefs, oral narratives, indeed, any established custom or repeated routine that exhibits some continuity from the past (or is believed to do so) and is transmitted, not through writing, but by word of mouth.[16] Then there are the more restricted meanings, as found in anthropology and other humanistic disciplines (especially folklore), in the specific sense of unwritten literary forms and verbal arts, extensively collected and analyzed in its many formats from short proverbs or riddles to major genres, such as panegyrics or epic. What has misled many, however, is thankfully already being challenged by such knowledgeable scholars as Mark Amodio (see among his other works, his edited volume *New Directions in Oral Theory*, which focuses in particular on medieval texts and their setting) but of much wider relevance is the assumption that "oral" tradition is somehow mutually exclusive with written forms, as if in a separate and self-contained channel. But, as Amodio has repeatedly pointed out and proved through a plethora of highly pertinent medieval cases—and by then John would have whole-heartedly agreed—in both classical and medieval times, not to speak of now, the two (if indeed they can be regarded as two, except in the sense of points along a connected continuum) continually flow into and out of each other—a new concept to some of the participants at that conference and elsewhere.

The further point was that "oral" sung and spoken forms (did not the Greek and the medieval *musica* mean "sung words" with no divide between them?) are continu-

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16 Finnegan, "'Oral Literature.'"

ally being created and absorbed into the literary tradition, most notably, the wonderful Spanish decima ten-line rhyming verse with a sting in the tail form, that is now found in all Hispanic areas of the world and, at the conference, was so dramatically illustrated in exciting live events in the beautiful old buildings of Belgrade. This was an impromptu series of verses delivered without writing and prior notice in a stirring series of contests full of literary, political, and personal allusion (individuals in the audience might squirm!) adorned with beauty and wit, to be judged—an essential part of the proceeding—by the enthusiastic and knowledgeable audience.

These points were, for me, as, indirectly, for John, finely illustrated in the oral literatures of Africa. When I myself first encountered African oral texts just after the mid-twentieth-century, they were basically envisaged as something old, to be explained in terms of "tradition" and the heritage from the past: the established backward-looking approach that has cast so long a shadow on the conceptualization and study of oral forms. I vividly recall being chided both orally and in writing by the influential American folklorist Richard Dorson for allowing my study of "oral literature" to stray beyond its apparently proper field of "folk traditions":[17] "Composed topical songs, connected, say, with internal politics, as in the examples [...] she gives of the bickering in Guinea between the French administration party of Barry Diawadou and the R.D.A. [...] party of Sekou Touré, hinge on passing personalities and do not sink into tradition."[18] He concludes by arguing that in focusing on the tribal inheritance, the folklorist will be looking at "traditional cultures hidden under and penetrating into modern ways."[19] Even now, there are traces of this perspective. But overall, the field looks very different. Oral texts are no longer automatically assumed to belong to the past with deep roots in traditional culture, fit objects to be scripturalized into written text. Scholars now look for their examples to young people as well as the old, to the educated and not just the non-literate, to towns as well as the countryside, to industrial workers and broadcast performers, and to disruptive or innovative forms, not just the old guard. Change and contemporaneity are now part of the picture, and "tradition" is rightly seen as a malleable concept or practice that people play on and manipulate.

All this has contributed to an altered vision of oral texts, no longer automatically assigned to some uniform "tradition" of the past, but also as creatures of the present. Recent studies take in their stride such examples as a child praise-singer on South African television, poetry on video or the web, pop groups in urban settings, Hausa market-place burlesque, life stories, love songs, community theatre, a rap band, trade union songs, praises for the Namibian Otjiherero radio service, for Nelson Mandela, or for the South African football team, and the intersection of writing, voice, and broadcast media in a plethora of contexts. Poetry, song, and story turned to political purposes or ideological struggle now come unquestionably within the scholarly purview. There are studies of Ethiopian peasants using poems to comment on the 1975 land reforms or 1990s regime change, of the poetry of civil war or independence struggle, of "electric griots,"

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17 Dorson, "Africa and the Folklorist," 10.

18 Dorson, "Africa and the Folklorist," 17.

19 Dorson, "Africa and the Folklorist," 67.

of oral performances relating to AIDS, of praises for graduation ceremonies, and of "performing the nation" through song, music, and dance in contemporary Tanzania.

And it is no longer "collective" tradition, but the ways that individuals—now often named—manipulate the repertory. Thus, another study documents how the poet-singer Micah Ichegbeh builds on an Igede tradition called adiyah which incorporates "proverbs, masquerades, dialogue, riddle, mimicry, spectacle and song [...] drawing its great resonance from its direct response to Igede experience."[20] He is shown turning his talents on the 1979 elections when Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria became the first elected civilian President of Nigeria, defeating the Unity Party of Nigeria leader Awolowo. His electrifying performance celebrated political victory and mocked political defeat:

> Awolowo did dare to touch Shagari
> A duel is in the making
> A duel is in the making, surely!
> A duel is in the making
> Just like Omakwu did dare to touch Ogo Okpabi
> A duel is in the making
> A duel is in the making, surely!
> A duel is in the making
> (Between) NPN, UPN
> A duel is in the making
> A duel is in the making, surely!
> A duel is in the making.[21]

The performance by Ichegbeh's ensemble on July 27, 1981 held its audience rapt by its captivating melody, and his group was victorious: "the audience yelled in jubilation and rose in unison to roar out a thunder of applause so loud that it was heard many kilometres from the site."[22] Far from conceptualizing oral texts as something of the past, such studies now increasingly present them as part of the ongoing concerns, great and small, of modern life. In Ichegbeh's performance, furthermore, the audience's participation and their "thunder of applause" were central to his art: it is hard "to recreate a live sense of Ichegbeh's Adiyah performance in cold print because Ichegbeh is a volatile performer whose voice, stage body movement, gestures and rapport with the audience are better heard than seen."[23] And besides the diverse relations between performer and audiences, there is now interest in the potentially changing dynamics during performance, and the spectrum of roles, more, or less, sustained in differing situations, which can extend well beyond the immediate moment into the complexities of publics, counter-publics, and pathways of circulation.

This has reinforced the recognition that multiple actors can be involved in any given performance, and hence, in at least some senses in (various stages of) the "oral text" that may eventuate. Scholars are now looking not just to performers, audiences, and fans, but also to organizers and publishers, transcribers, and translators (creative roles too, as

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20 Ogede, "Role of the Igede Poet," 53.

21 Ogede, "Role of the Igede Poet," 54.

22 Ogede, "Role of the Igede Poet," 54.

23 Ogede, "Role of the Igede Poet," 53.

we saw in the previous section). And this can also mean going beyond the participants' overt actions as performers or audiences to consider that they, too, are interpreters and analysts—interpretive voices that in the past regularly went unheard, given the long presumption that outsiders were the knowledgeable analysts. Once again, the apparently simple object, "the oral text," has become re-conceived into something more complex and multi-layered.

All this has promoted a new look at activities in the past, too, no longer automatically assigning them to some supposedly unchanging "oral tradition" of earlier times, or by-passing cases held to be "non-indigenous." There is, thus, a renewed interest in historical accounts of earlier genres or events like, for example, the "concert parties" that flourished in the Gold Coast from the early twentieth century, Islamic literary forms,[24] the Xhosa poet using his panegyric craft to praise the Christian God rather than his chief in 1827,[25] or the annual Snow White show produced since 1935 in a Zaire mission school run by Bavarian sisters with its mix of "Lomongo songs, tunes from German folklore, Tyrolian costumes, and the young Zairean girls' sense of acting."[26] So, too, with other documented forms which might once have been bypassed as "imported" or "foreign"—the kinds of examples to which many of us paid too little attention in past years.

Newly emergent genres or forms drawing on a mix of languages or media are no longer automatically brushed aside as somehow hybrid or "untraditional" (and so somehow not counting), but as part of the whole picture, consonant with the more recent approaches which bring out both the "normality" and the rhetorical effectiveness of what would once have been dismissed as "mixed" genres. This goes with the (belated) recognition that adaptive and changing genres are nothing new in Africa—or anywhere, presumably. They have been an accepted part of Hausa culture for generations, for example,[27] and there are notable studies, too, of newly developing genres such as the Somali heello,[28] or the hymns of the Zulu Nazarite church.[29] Or take the bandiri form in Sokoto, where solo male-voice performances accompanied by drums and a chorus of girls or young men draw together standard Islamic vocabulary with a delivery style reminiscent of both praise singers and Indian film song;[30] a successful female pop singer in Mali, or the many film representations of the mythic Sunjata tale and other narratives;[31] Zulu radio drama;[32] or the 1998 release of a CD by a Xhosa praise poet set

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24 See among many others Orwin and Topan, "Islamic Religious Poetry"; and Gérard's well titled *Afrique Plurielle*.

25 Kaschula, "'Imbongi to Slam,'" 431.

26 Peek and Yankah, *African Folklore*, 254.

27 See Furniss, *Poetry, Prose, and Popular Culture*.

28 Johnson, *Heellooy Heelleellooy*.

29 See also the many cases in Andrzejewski, Pilaszewicz, and Tyloch, *Literatures in African Languages*; Finnegan, *Oral and Beyond*; and Kaschula, "'Imbongi to Slam.'"

30 Buba and Furniss, "Youth Culture," 30.

31 Jørholt, "Africa's Modern Cinematic Griots."

32 Gunner, "Wrestling with the Present."

to contemporary hip-hop music in a mixture of Xhosa and English[33]—all these, nowadays, seem as appropriate for study as the poetry and stories documented by the nineteenth and early twentieth-century scholars. By now, partly due to John's work with the journal, *Oral Tradition*, such cases no longer seem strange or odd. Modern popular culture is a scene of metamorphoses and mutations, in which written texts are performed, performed texts can be given a written recension, and a network of allusions and cross-references enables audiences in whatever state of literacy to access texts in one way or another.

The study of broadcast and recorded media has similarly taken on new vitality. Richard Fardon and Graham Furniss's study of African broadcast cultures ranges from local radio stations in African languages in Benin or advertising on Hausa radio to the multiple voices of Sudanese airspace and much more.[34] Admittedly, scholars still sometimes patronize or marginalize commercial or broadcast media, or forms popular among urban workers or youth fans; but they are certainly now more often taken as serious subjects for study, challenging the earlier backward-looking perspective on oral texts. The rapid spread and establishment of this wide field has been one of the striking developments over recent years.

And then there is also—to return, as still seems necessary for me as for John, once more to this key theme—the interest in the complex interweaving of oral with written forms, which brings oral texts into conjunction with the study of written literatures, including in "postcolonial" studies. It is true that (as will be discussed later) the terms of such analyses can be controversial. The point here, however, is that what was once envisaged as a distinctive and separate field—the products of "traditional Africa"—now comes squarely within what many would regard as the "mainstream," relevant for debates about contemporary written literatures.

Oral texts are, in consequence, no longer automatically conceived as something rooted in one language, linguistic unit, or "tribal" culture, but as potential players in a cosmopolitan arena. This should actually be nothing new. After all, there have been global connections for centuries in and beyond Africa (to take just one, much misunderstood and underestimated continent)—international trade in goods and people, movements and settlements, missionary proselytizing in Christianity or Islam, colonial encounters, cultural and political links. Diasporic practitioners and commentators have entered the picture too, together with the intercontinental distribution of African-related popular forms like rap music, hip-hop, or dub poetry. Certain genres and performances will, of course, continue to have local flavour, or play creatively with themes and images which resonate in particular ways among specific groups. But scholars now also accept the existence of far-flung forms and trends, especially in music and film, which interact within and across Africa, interwoven into the complex spectrum of multi-media arts and activities across the globe.

The importance of performance is by now well recognized across a wide range of disciplines today (certainly not confined to studies of Africa) and explored in a variety of

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33 Kaschula, "'Imbongi and Griot,'" 62; and Kaschula, "'Imbongi to Slam.'"

34 Fardon and Furniss, *African Broadcast Cultures*.

ways too extensive to elaborate further here. But there is also a further twist in the long dialectic of "text" and "performance," for the focus on performance is now being balanced by a revival of interest in "text"—or at any rate in the "something" by virtue of which performance itself is more than just the performing moment. To quote Lauri Honko,

> "The performance is king" paradigm relativized text, the next paradigm will probably relativize performance. Any performance is a compromise, an intelligent adaptation of tradition within unique situations structured by a confluence of several factors. It can be understood only against a broader spectrum of performances of the same integer in similar and different contexts.[35]

Taken together with the concept of "entextualizing" as process, this has meant a new look at the relations between textuality and performing, seeing them not as counterpoised but as essentially co-dependent and co-present. From this perspective, all literary forms are, in a way, double-sided. They are indeed created in the magic moment of experienced performance, but also enlarged into, rooted in, or reverberating with something more abstracted, detachable from the flow, imbued with memories and connotations for its participants, which go beyond the immediate moment. The continuing focus on performance is thus now being complemented by a renewed interest in the ways that performance does not, after all, exist solely in the vanishing moment. It is not just a single event, a situated outburst of sound and movement, but a performance of *something*. There is a sense in which, beyond its evanescent performance, it also exists as an object for reference and exegesis.

Current conceptualizations of oral texts, then, have moved us towards more complex and problematic issues than the simplex uniform one-line text that was once the influential framework for outside scholars' analysis and reflection. The established—and still valuable—awareness of "context" and "performance" has been enlarged by new perspectives on entextualization and the integral, if riddling, interrelation of performance and text. To understand what have in the past been regarded as "oral texts," we have to go beyond just the "words" and just the evanescent moment, into a host of multiplexities.

That brings me to John's *How to Read an Oral Poem*, published in 2002. It is rightly regarded as a classic work, the one book of all others that I would urge all beginning students—specialists too—to read. Rather than try to summarize it—it must be read (and fortunate I was, being asked to review it for the press, as no doubt he was for some of mine, to read it early: thus have our ways been entwined). Let me merely recommend it to all who have not yet encountered it for its perspicacity, openness, insight, and beautifully flexible presentation as well as its marvellously pertinent illustrations (the brilliant cover alone, found of course by John himself, starts us on its complex story). Having started somewhat (in my terms) narrow in both methodology and subject matter in his loyalty to Lord's (at the time revolutionary) approach, he had now flung wide the gates.

This widening of vision in many circles has been crucial for modern approaches to what was once commonly ring-fenced as "oral tradition." Oral texts, insofar as they can be envisaged as having some kind of distinctive existence at all, are now conceived not as essentially belonging to some old and somehow autochthonous shared tradition, but

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35 Honko, *Textualization of Oral Epics*, 13.

as created, changed, and manipulated for many purposes and through many media by active participants in the world, in the present no less than past.

The Religions, John, and Electronic Media

My memory of John leads me on to a further occasion which became, for me, one of revelation, a wonderful conference led by Werner Kelber and Paula Sanders at Rice University on orality and literacy in the three great world religions. As the proceedings are reproduced in *OT*,[36] let me merely say that my own contribution, printed there, was to draw a parallel between the recent concept of "multi-literacies," introduced, rightly, to break up the over-generalized and a-temporal notion of "literacy" by the new term "multi-oralities,"[37] for there are many ways in which a text can be "oral" in its lineage (performance, transmission, setting, and functions). It is only too easy to conflate these and so be misled, and fall over again into the trap of overgeneralization, as so many first-generation oral-formulaicists did.

The new advance towards openness in the conference was, of course, both John's always genial presence among us and his keynote lecture. This was not included in the published version of the conference proceedings in *OT* for, modest as ever, as general editor he omitted his own voice! Generously, he responded to my request to have a copy of the text; otherwise, apart from the adapted version in his final wonderful book *Oral Tradition and the Internet: Pathways of the Mind*, posthumously published by the University of Illinois Press, it could have been lost to us, but is now, thankfully, available in the printed version edited by the original conference convenors.[38] In his "John" fashion, he began with some deprecating remarks, characteristically making us smile at him and at his "conceits" (one of John's nice double-meaninged terms) then going on, in his usual fashion, in rather formal, slightly stiff lecture-delivery-mode. But what content! To our amazement and edification, will those of us there ever forget? It was one of those "eureka" moments when, for the first time, we suddenly saw what we had always known, or should have, but never noticed before—well summed up in the paper's title, "Ancient and Modern Democracies: Orality, Texts, and Electronic Media" (was not John ever concerned for democratizing) where the new age saw oral and electronic texts converging with the same characteristics of mutability, accessibility, and openness.

Opening to the World

It was then, or soon after, that John extended *OT*'s reach to the world. I imagine that this had always been part of his (perhaps hidden) mission, so well aided by Anne-Marie. It was not just on the international campus of the University of Missouri that he reached out, or at workshops at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, but in Scandinavian folk schools, and in visits throughout the world where

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36 See *OT* 25 (2010).

37 Finnegan, "Response," 14.

38 Foley, "Ancient and Modern Democracies."

"contacts" quickly became both friends and colleagues (not, perhaps I should add—who is perfect?—that he was exactly good at replying to emails!). He brought his long expertise to bear in the recognition and recording of Chinese epics, transmitted Basque poetic contexts, and directed attention to music and slam contests. His contribution was eventually, and rightly, recognized by an international award from the University of Missouri a few years before his death.

And then came what some will justifiably call his greatest contribution: pioneering not so much the concept as the practice of open access, a term that many years later has now become internationally accepted by all, except what I call the dinosaur scholars (and publishers). *OT*, in other words, became a journal that could be read by all who had access to the internet, and thus throughout the world, by people at whatever level, from whatever background—and, this was important to him, for free.[39] He was one of the first, if not the very first, to accomplish this in the humanities.

There was more—and highly contentious it was too. *OT* had started as a conventional academic journal, if an unusually imaginative one in its interdisciplinary span, mode of dissemination, and openness to new ideas. But now for the revolution! It was henceforward to be open to contributors throughout the world, whoever they were and whatever their background, academic or (horror to some!) "amateur" and "local" in background and approach, though still, of course—his principles and standards held good—refereed as fit for publication.

Though I have long regarded myself as forward-looking, even revolutionary, this took me a little time to digest. By now I am thoroughly in accord. To his editors and editorial board, however, it was at first anathema. "Standards!" "Scholarship!" "Responsibility to our academic peers!" He persevered. "What about our responsibility to the world?" And "if we treat oral tradition as our bailiwick are we to refuse the voices of those who carry it?" Of course he had his way—for all his gentleness, who could withstand his wisdom? And look what benefits we are seeing.

And by now? Now we see that "peer review," so close to the conventional academic heart can take place after publication as well as, even sometimes instead of, beforehand. The gateways have opened. And afterwards is where critique and feedback can most fruitfully be taken account of and changes made as John himself modelled by responding to critiques raised by those who read *Oral Tradition and the Internet* for the University of Illinois Press.[40] *OT*, furthermore, is now being read as never before. In its electronic incarnation, as it is rightly claimed on the *OT* webpage, it reaches more than 20,000 readers in 216 countries and territories of the world. A pioneer indeed.

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39 Foley, "Editor's Column." Following its move to a fully digital format, all the print-only volumes of the journal were scanned so that the complete run of the journal is now electronically searchable and freely accessible to all.

40 See Foley, *Oral Tradition and the Internet*, 23–27.

Farewell—but not

And then I recall that last, deeply moving, conference in Finland, home of folklore scholarship—an inspiring international conference in Helsinki on "Register." The keynote lecture was advertised to be by the leading world scholar, John Miles Foley. Alas, it was not to be: a few months before the conference, he moved further along his way to, as they say, a better place.

They had to make do with me. As the audience wished, I stood up to speak first, a little, about him and his work, and invoked his presence, modest and wise as ever. We felt it there, around us. Then, as he would, I believe, have wished, I spoke not only as a scholar but from the heart (and that was hard) as a person. First came my academic views on the subject. Then I moved away from the podium and finally sat, as if reporting an anthropological case observed in the field (difficult, indeed, somewhat threatening even for an experienced speaker like myself—but John was there, supporting me) of "her" (my) experience. This time it was of my dreaming, a subject that anthropologists have certainly written of, though not yet enough. I spoke in words, not till then told, but ones that, though as yet unknown to him, John somehow inhabited, of how poems came to me in dreams, ready-made in their rhythms, rhymes, verbal assonances, and meaning—that Shakespeare-like twist in the tale. I might have added—but the time had not yet come—how later a novel downloaded itself in the same way to me, a chapter a night, written down the next day as if from a taped African tale, one where I might indeed play with the best formatting and punctuation (neither set in oral texts but, as John knew well, a matter of discretion for the scribal transcriber), but never the meaning.

That oral-to-writing process (how John would have rejoiced in its inception and study, and how sad that I cannot show it to and have him dissect it) was like the "writing" of "Kubla Khan," but infinitely longer. Would that the parallels—there must be some, Milton perhaps, or Homer, if we but knew (by now I imagine that John does)—were written about. The process has been, in a sense, validated as it was published in 2015 by a reputed New York press as *The Black-Inked Pearl*, a title based on a lovely Shakespeare sonnet and, rich as ever, a quotation from a Rumi poem. It has been written, somehow, not really by me, and every time I read it, having in the meantime, like a possessed medium, forgotten it, it seems the story of my still unfolding life. I think John would have loved it (perhaps already does), as an ultimately oral text: the literature to which, as to opening out to the world, John devoted his psyche, his soul, and breath.

John, we thank and honour you for your opening of minds: ours and the world's, as well, mark of the great scholar, as your own; for opening access and tradition to all; open as a person to his family, his friends, his world; whether in heaven (or whatever metaphor you prefer: he was never narrow-minded in his terminology or his ideas) or on earth a pioneer, a friend to us all.

Opener of hearts, long will your sweet memory live.

Author Bibliography Ruth Finnegan, an anthropologist and multi-award winning writer (fiction, nonfiction, screen), is Emeritus Professor, the Open University, holder of the Royal Anthropological Institute's Rivers Memorial Medal, Fellow of the British Academy and the American Folklore Society, and Honorary Fellow of Somerville College Oxford. Her publications mainly focus on literary issues, communication (including paranormal) and musical practices, and include, notably, *Oral Literature in Africa* (1970), *Oral Poetry* (1992), *The Hidden Musicians* (2013), *Communicating* (2014), *Why do we quote?* (2011), and (edited) *Entrancement: The Consciousness of Dreaming, Music and the World* (2017) plus several (dream-inspired) novels. Her most recent projects are as joint editor of Hearing Others' Voices, a new/transcultural and transdisciplinary series for young adults (www.balestier.com/category/hearing-others-voices), and intensive preproduction work on a screenplay to be filmed in 2020.

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