In Defense of Milman Parry:
Renewing the Oral Theory

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John Foley's *Theory of Oral Composition* begins by referring to the "development of the Oral-Formulaic theory from its origins in the writings of Milman Parry and Albert Lord through its contemporary influence on more than one hundred language traditions" (1988:1). But within its discipline of origin, Classics, Parry's work has come under heavy fire recently, and a number of scholars regard it as an outmoded phase in the history of Homeric scholarship. There is also a body of belief that Parry was disappointed by the South Slavic material he uncovered: it is supposed not to embody the ideas he had derived for Homer. If we listen to these voices, we must conclude that a theory now known to be unworkable even for Homer was rejected for other literatures by its own creator; the entire discipline founded on the Oral-Formulaic theory is declared to be undermined at its very base. Homer and oral poetry are to go their separate ways, and Parry has little to tell us about either one.

These voices are frequently supercilious and mocking; their language can readily anger those who have learned from Parry, and can encourage a simple dismissal. For two reasons, dismissal is unwise: Parry's critics have been influential, at least among classicists, and their criticism sometimes springs from genuine and important flaws in Parry's presentation. Let me say, I hope without impudence, that while Parry was a consummate linguist, an excellent scientist, and a man of wide literary culture, he was an imperfect theorist who made a number of broad claims that conceal some deep and important confusions. He was young, and justly excited by the power of his position and the force of his individual genius; he therefore took extreme positions. All or almost all formulae are traditional, he thought; all or almost all of the Homeric text is formulaic; all fixed epithets are ornamental, and to them the audience is always indifferent. In addition, like every other great scholar, he made mistakes. But the true power of his

position lies in the fact that if we correct the mistakes, and state the theory in a less extreme form, we can reach exactly the same result with regard to Homer and oral composition that Parry reached. Despite the vigor with which he has recently been shot down, or at least shot at, Parry's conclusion that Homer was an oral poet can be proved to have been absolutely right. Moreover, the Yugoslavian material is not a disappointment, but a brilliant confirmation. Parry's arguments, reformulated in part and supported by mathematical analysis, can sweep aside the arrogant claims that the hour of orality has "already passed" (Lynn-George 1988:55), that oral theory is a "myth" (Bellamy 1989:307), that we can "put a pen in" Homer's hand (Shive 1987:139).[1]

First, we must see clearly what his conclusions, his results, really were. Though he certainly thought that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were composed orally, he did not even attempt to prove it: "If one wishes to think that Homer composed his poems orally, and then sat down and wrote them out, there is little that can be said in disproof, and little that needs to be said" (322).[2] Indeed, there is little that can be said in disproof; we may think it improbable, but an oral poet could have learned to write. He might

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[1] Much less arrogant and much more valuable is the discussion by Stanley (1993:268-96), who feels that certain features require literate composition (perhaps by a person with training in oral composition). These features are, I believe, within the scope of the illiterate oral poet; but since Parry cannot prove that Homer did not learn to write, the distance between Parry and Stanley is not vast. For a critique of Stanley, see Sale 1996. On Lynn-George and Shive, who appear to be the most cited among recent determined Scripsists, see below. Norman Austin (1975) and Paolo Vivante (1982) criticize Parry vigorously (mostly where I myself think him weak; see below), and Jasper Griffin (1980) rejects the need for an oral poetics, but none of them insists that Homer cannot have been an oral poet. Others, such as A. Parry (1966) and Lloyd-Jones (1992) have been offended by the South Slavic analogy because of their low opinion of the poetry; see further below on their lack of acquaintance with the South Slavic tradition except in English translation. Still others, such as Visser (1988) and Bakker (1988:152-64), seek to alter the conceptual foundations in very interesting ways while retaining the picture of an oral poet, perhaps literate. I do not everywhere agree with Visser's readings of Parry, but I have not offered much criticism in what follows, since as far as I can see most of Parry's arguments could be rephrased or recast to suit Visser's reconceptualization. We can probably say the same of Bakker, even though he elects to *begin* with the hypothesis of orality (1988:153).

[2] All references to Parry's writings are to Parry 1971, the collection of his published and previously unpublished works.

have made important changes thereby; he might have made the poems longer, for instance. In theory he could have obscured his oral training. But he did not; this is what Parry proved.[3] If Homer learned to write, and wrote the poems, he preserved the signature of the oral poet far too clearly for us to speak of a literate poet merely influenced by, or even steeped in, oral poetry, or of a literate poet who was also a rhapsode, a singer of other people's songs. Literate or illiterate, Homer knew how to compose in performance; he had mastered a subtle and difficult art.

This is the conclusion that I have described as "absolutely right," and the one I wish to defend here. More than this Parry's arguments cannot claim, and there are no new arguments that I know of to settle the question of whether the poems were composed orally; there are only new arguments that seek to support or to undermine Parry's position. So our task is twofold. We must extract the arguments for Homer as oral poet from Parry's text, where most of them are very compressed (266-324). And we must restate and add to them so as to secure the conclusion that Homer knew how to sing.

Repeated reading and study of Parry's texts have convinced me that there are no conceptual differences between Parry's thought in 1928 and 1932, that is, between the Paris theses (abbreviated TE and FM in Parry 1971) and the *Harvard Studies* articles (HS and HL). After 1932, after the visits to the former Yugoslavia in 1933 and 1934-35, he may have conceived of a more creative poet, as his coworker Albert Lord does (1960:43), and his faith in audience indifference to the force of the epithets may have weakened somewhat. But the pre-fieldwork material seems all of a piece, and indeed the thought at the very center did not alter from 1928 to the day of his death. This central thought is simple: the diction of Homer is largely, or entirely, *formulaic*, as "my teacher" Meillet (439) had argued in 1923 (see TE, 9), and as Parry himself had implied in his 1923 MA thesis (423); these formulae are largely or entirely *traditional* (FM, 196; HS, 324 *et passim*), again as Meillet and his thesis had argued; traditional formulae can be organized, largely but not entirely, into extensive and economical *systems* (TE, 16-21; HS, 275-79—this is Parry's most original contribution), and these systems existed for the sake of *oral* composition

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[3] This is how Parry's son Adam interpreted his father, and how Adam could be a Scripsist and still feel himself his father's disciple (A. Parry 1966:212-16; Parry 1971:lx-lxii).

(317-19). Parry implies (439) that he needed Meillet to make this last point for him, but the idea is present, if understated, in TE (56, e.g.).

Still, it makes sense to say that in 1928 Parry argued for a traditional Homer, in 1930-32 for an oral Homer. The central thought is the same, but the arguments are independent of each other, and I think it logically important to emphasize the difference. Thus I shall barely touch upon Parry's arguments for Homer as a traditional poet, and must therefore take an arbitrary stance towards the question, much-vexed among those who regard themselves as disciples of Parry, of how much the poems owe to an individual composer and how much to the collective bards of the tradition. Those such as Gregory Nagy who emphasize the tradition and restrict the individual poet to "considerable refinements in the act of recomposition" (1990:79) seem closest in spirit to Parry himself, who maintained that the tradition created the formulae, while Homer merely grouped them (324). True, Parry elsewhere asserts that "the poet" selected from among the traditional store an epithet particular to the context, so that "we can see . . . the conscious choice of a word" (158); but in this passage Parry's "the poet" making such choices is a generic figure, not Homer.   Time after time we find Parry attributing the employment of formulae to metrical convenience alone, leaving no scope for an individual to make a semantic or aesthetic choice. In contrast, those who emphasize the individual poet, and thus conceive of Homer as an inventive, original, and profound user of a wholly traditional style with largely traditional formulae, epithets, verbs, and phrases, tend to associate themselves with the views of Albert Lord; I am among their number. I am persuaded that most, perhaps all, of the epithets (and indeed the rest of the vocabulary) were traditional, but I think "the poet" in question is often Homer himself, and I think him capable of constructing original formulae, mostly (perhaps wholly) out of traditional material, often in the act of composing (Lord 1960:43).   In fact, I think it was traditional to compose this way.

At times I shall be in more clearcut disagreement with Parry. I do not believe, for instance, that the audience was ever indifferent to the force of the epithets, though it may not always have thought very hard about each use of each one; I also think that the meanings of the generic epithets play a more important role than Parry allows. More orthodox Parryans will therefore demur at some of my restatements, though they will presumably welcome the fact that arguments different from their own lead to conclusions that they cherish. Nothing I say will undermine the view that

the elements of Homeric diction—all or almost all the words and a great many of the formulae—were traditional; and everything I say will be aimed at supporting, to the degree that I think it can, the other pillar of Parry's position, namely that Homeric poetry, though not necessarily orally composed, was composed by one or more oral poets.

With the exception of the seventh one, the arguments enumerated and elaborated below come directly from Parry. There are ten in all, falling into four general patterns of thought: *quantity* of formulae and formulaic occurrences (Argument 1), culminating with the quantity of frequently occurring "regular" formulae (Argument 2); the *qualitative* nature of regular and infrequent formulae (Arguments 3-5), and the further relevance of two of these qualities, economy and localization, to oral composition (Arguments 6-7); verses with metrical *irregularities* (Argument 8); and *comparisons* with other epics (Arguments 9-10). As we sift through them, we discover that while some of these arguments prove Parry's stance, others support a more modest claim, and make a point that Parry did not reckon with. They show that while the formulaic style originally came into being for the sake of composition in performance, a person who has learned to use this style may be no more than a good literate imitator of an oral composer. We shall be distinguishing these arguments from the first kind, those showing that while some aspects of the style can be accurately mastered by a wholly literate poet who has read or listened widely and deeply, certain other features are too subtle, and point ineluctably to extensive training (autodidactic or heterodidactic or both) and experience in oral composition. This group of arguments, while they cannot prove that the poems were orally composed, do prove that their composer was an oral poet.[4]

Making this distinction between groups of arguments mandates making comparisons. We lack a model for the oral composer who learned to write, which is why we cannot know whether Homer wrote or not. We do have a model for an excellent literate imitator of the oral style in Quintus of Smyrna, who, in the words of his most eminent modern student,

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[4] It is a fascinating fact that Parry never really argues that "Homer is traditional and *therefore* oral," though he does say that "the traditional style that Homer used was oral" (321). Later scholars have felt that some formulae are traditional, others not (e.g., Sale 1987:34-35; 1993:135-42; and see below), or that epithets, nouns, and verbs are traditional, but formulae not (Visser 1988:26, 34). In what follows I have avoided reference to the tradition whenever possible, and permitted none of the arguments (even #4, from the extension of systems) to depend on it.

"est parvenu à s'assimiler la langue et la style d'Homère" (Vian 1959:250).[5]
Quintus will loom large in the following pages: if we did not have the means
to detect stylistic differences between him and Homer, all the evidence for
orality in Homer would prove only that Homer was a much more talented
and intelligent Quintus. We also have a good model for an oral poet in the
Bosnian Avdo Medjedović: his *Ženidba Smailagina sina* is a first-rate epic
poem, and was certainly composed orally.[6]

Many of the comparisons we shall be making among Avdo, Quintus,
and Homer will be quantitative: "in this poem we have this many formulae,
formulaic occurrences, regular formulae; in that poem, that many." Quintus
has about 8,800 lines, the *Ženidba* 12,300, the *Odyssey* about the same, the
Iliad nearly 16,000. Ideally we would compare all four poems, assigning the
Iliad and *Odyssey* to different Homers for safety's sake. We would find the
argument extremely unwieldy, however, as we "adjusted" the size of
Quintus to each of the Homers and each Homer to the other, and as we
perennially confronted differences between one Homer and the other that,
however minor, could not be blindly disregarded. The *Odyssey* is the length
of the *Ženidba*, and not that much longer than Quintus' *Posthomerica*; so let
us simply decide to demonstrate that the Homer of the *Odyssey* was an oral
poet. We can shape the argument so as to make it independent of such
similarities between the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* as we choose not to ignore
altogether; the differences become irrelevant. On another occasion we can
study the *Iliad*—and after all, if we can prove that the Homer of the *Odyssey*
was an oral poet, few will insist that the Homer of the *Iliad* was not.

The **first two arguments** are quantitative: there are large numbers of
formulae, and some of them are used over and over again.   Or, as Parry
puts it (317), "it must have been for some good reason that the poet . . .
kept to the formulas even when he . . . had to use some of them very
frequently. What was this constraint? . . . The answer is not only the desire

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[5] Quintus lived in the third or fourth century of the common era. No one supposes
him an oral poet; we do not require the differences we shall uncover between his style
and Homer's in order to show that he could read and write. He was too learned for that.

[6] See Medjedović 1974. Parallels between Avdo and Homer may also be found in
Lord 1974:22 and 1995:211, 246, with references to earlier work by Lord; in Foley 1990,
1991, and 1995 *passim*; and in Danek 1991, where there is an especially illuminating
discussion of formulaic similarities and differences.

for an easy way to make verses, but the complete need of it . . . . There is only one need of this sort which can even be suggested—the necessity of making verses by the spoken word . . . The necessity shows its force most clearly . . . in the simple numbers of formulas."

Argument 1. We begin with the last phrase, "simple numbers." The *Odyssey* displays a vast array of different formulae, and their total occurrences are many. Subjectively we feel the anomaly: written texts either lack such abundance, or seem manifestly to be imitating Homer. These huge numbers cannot exist for the sake of refrain or echo; rather we are hearing the constant repetition of syntactically similar phrases falling in identical parts of the verse. Surely such numbers must enable rapid composition; surely we are right to link formulae with orality.

Few scholars reject this intuition entirely. A formulaic style no doubt arose at a time when writing was unavailable to, or at least not used by, the epic poets. But could there not have been a writing poet, or indeed several generations of writing poets, who inherited an oral-formulaic style and continued to use it both because it was effective and because it preserved the sound of antiquity? Are the formulae used in such abundance that an oral poet is required? We cannot *evaluate* the force of simple numbers without additional labor, without hard counting and close comparison.

But first, we must know what to count. What is a formula? And—an equally tricky question—when do we count one formula as different from another? The term "formula" has no fewer than seven meanings in Parry. I give these below in the order of increasing narrowness, as if I were trying to catch an essence by a definition, though in fact I am not: the first definition defines the largest, the all-encompassing set **a**; **b** is a subset of **a**, **c** is a subset of **b**, and so on. In the process, I shall occasionally supplement Parry's words with some ideas from more recent scholarship.

Set **a**. The most general definition: a repetition of some sort—whether of one word or more than one, and whether verbal, syntactical, or metrical—that is a feature of the compositional technique, not a deliberate echo, a refrain, or a simple record of repetition (as when an order is given and carried out). This sense of the term is implied when Parry speaks of the text as all, or almost all, formulaic (196, e.g.).

Set **b**. Structural formulae: word-groups possessing a common meter and similar syntax, but not necessarily any words in common (317).

Set **c**. Formulaic expressions: word-groups with common meter and similar syntax and one shared word, but not necessarily any more than one (317). [7]

Set **d**. Phrasal formulae: noun-phrases (noun-epithets[8] and noun-verbs) or verb-phrases that are repeated either exactly, or inexactly within precise parameters, and some of which are regularly employed. Inexact repetitions include generic formulae, Hainsworth-alterations, and proper nouns with patronymics, defined as follows. If an adjective or verb is repeated in the same position with two or more nouns, we classify it as generic and call the whole phrase a generic formula: e.g., in "great-souled Odysseus" and "great-souled Achilles," each used just once in the genitive, the phrases themselves repeat the adjective, and each noun is found in exactly the same form in other lines. If a phrase is exactly repeated except for changing its position in the verse, or except for being inverted, or separated by an intervening word, or inflected, it is a Hainsworth-alteration (cf. Hainsworth 1968:*passim*): e.g., the phrase "gleaming wine" is used in two different lines in different parts of the verse. Even if a patronymic does not recur in a given poem, we assume that it was repeated in the tradition.[9]

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[7] To these, other scholars have added exact repetitions of certain single words, what I call "minimal formulae."

[8] Noun-epithets are any combination of noun and noun-modifier (adjective, or noun, or adjective plus adverb, or—with vocatives—the interjection ὦ). Thus we shall call such phrases as ὄρχαμος ἀνδρῶν ("leader of men") noun-epithets, with ἀνδρῶν ("of men") counting as the epithet (see Parry 1971:20n.).

[9] See Parry 1971:*passim*, especially all discussions of formulae created by analogy. I do not count repetitions found only in the *Hymns*, Hesiod, or other early epic verse, since I think the statistics should be kept free of the decisions as to which of these may be deliberate citations or echoes of Homer, and which are instances of the technique of composition by formula. If, however, a phrase is repeated only in the other Homeric poem, and offers no indication of being a deliberate echo, I usually count it as formulaic for each poem. This is methodologically unsound for making comparisons between the *Odyssey* and poems that have no companion poem, but it is psychologically very difficult to declare that a phrase is not a formula when you are convinced that in fact it is one. There are so many formulae in Homer that this procedure raises his formularity by no more than 1%, and has no effect on the logic of our comparisons. The assertion that a formula occurs only once means "only once in a given poem," just as the assertion that it occurs 6 times means "6 times in a given poem."

Set **e.** Exact phrasal formulae**:** phrases exactly repeated as a whole. (Parry 1971:*passim*, often when he is using the definition of set **g** loosely).

Set **f**. Regular exact phrasal formulae, "regular formulae" for short: exact phrasal formulae that are regularly employed (Parry 1971: cf. set **e**).

Set **g.**   Multi-purpose, regular, exact phrasal formulae: regular formulae that express an "essential idea"—that contain identical "stylistic superfluities" and mention an identical referent. This is how Parry himself defines the term "formula" (13, 272), but is by no means the only way he uses it.

If we are to determine statistically whether in fact Homer "kept to the formulas," we cannot use sets **a**, **b**, or **c**, because the definitions are too imprecise to enable even an approximate count. So we shall in this first argument use set **d** (and within it sets **e**, **f**, and **g**), which actually includes what most people have in mind by the term "formula" most of the time. I do not include word-groups lacking either a noun or a verb, since they are not comparable to the others statistically, and in some cases may well reflect the structure of the language itself and not merely the epic style.

Even set **d** contains some formulae that—for the mathematical portions of the following arguments—we shall eschew. Parry was primarily interested in noun-epithets, and it is probably wisest to follow mostly in his footsteps, since it is, after all, his reasoning that we are engaged in reinforcing. We must include noun-verb formulae, though, since our fundamental yardstick will prove to be the percentage of a noun's *total* occurrences that are formulaic occurrences, and we can hardly classify noun-verb formulae as non-formulaic! But in the statistics we shall set the purely verbal formulae aside, recognizing that Parry included them (11-16, 20, 276) but pleading that he did not allot them much space. Indeed, no one has studied verb-phrases very thoroughly, especially those occurring infrequently. It is therefore often hard to decide whether one that is not exactly repeated should be declared formulaic—even though Margalit Finkelberg's efforts along these lines have produced results quite consistent with those that I have arrived at for nouns.[10] We shall refer to verb-phrases

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[10] Finkelberg 1989. A typical problem: verb-phrase formulae frequently vary the verb itself, so that the only fixed element in a phrase may be a conjunction. If the conjunction is repeated in the same position a number of times, we can probably regard it as equivalent to a generic epithet with a noun; but if it only happens once or twice, we are at a loss to know whether we have a genuine formula or a simple feature of the language in general, as opposed to the specific epic style.

as we proceed, but omit them from numerical comparisons.

The relationship between formula and meter is absolutely vital, and it often happens that nouns in different grammatical cases have different meters. The role of syntax is important as well, and of course a different case has a different syntax. Hence with the exception of certain vocatives and certain instances in South Slavic where the formula is invariably exactly the same in two different cases, we always count a noun in one case separately from the same noun in a different case. Readers should keep this in mind if they feel that the stated number of nouns is impossibly large. Similarly with formulae: a formula in a different case is a different formula. Indeed, for statistical clarity, we must count all inexact repetitions—even inflections, even the same words in a different position—as different formulae. Thus phrasal formulae that are not exactly repeated (set **d** not including **e**, **f**, and **g**) occur only once, and there are a great many of these.

If a noun occurs only once, it cannot have a formula from sets **e**, **f**, or **g**, and its chances of having even an inexact repetition are curtailed; yet it may very well exhibit a phrase that we would have called formulaic had the noun occurred a few more times. Sometimes we can find the phrase in the *Iliad*, but usually we find ourselves either guessing or declaring a phrase non-formulaic that we are convinced is a formula. Even nouns that occur three or four times have reduced opportunities for repetition, and their failure to repeat may be quite accidental. Now if all we want is a general statement of how many formulae a given poem contains, such niceties may not matter; but if we want to say that one noun, or one poem, is more formulaic than another, and especially if we want to calculate percentages, it is evident that an error of one or two formulae in a noun occurring just a few times can be serious. For these purposes we must set aside all infrequently occurring nouns and not count them or their formulae.

How many times does an "infrequently occurring noun" occur?   If a noun is found 8 or 9 times, one or two formulaic occurrences more or less can mean percentage differences of 25%, and this is too much. If a noun occurs 20 times, an error of two becomes both less likely (most repetitions destined to occur will have occurred) and less serious; but we have eliminated too many nouns. The number 13 has proved workable here, so

we shall be distinguishing "thirteen-plus nouns" from "twelve-minus" nouns.[11]

Counting first all the nouns, we find in the *Odyssey* 5,368 different noun-phrase formulae from set **d** (including **e**, **f**, and **g**); counting just the thirteen-plus nouns, we find 2,185 formulae. Apparently Homer did "keep to the formulas"; apparently the "simple numbers" are overwhelming. But the inference that such numbers require an oral poet is invalid. Quintus' thirteen-plus nouns exhibit 1,979 different formulae. Fewer than Homer's, granted, but Quintus has only 8,770 lines; if he had the 12,111 lines of the *Odyssey*, his thirteen-plus nouns would presumably have exhibited 2,730 different formulae, considerably more than Homer's. Granted, Quintus uses relatively more thirteen-plus nouns than Homer: but even on a per-noun basis, Quintus has 7.9 formulae per noun, Homer only 7.5. Quintus, you will say, is an imitator of Homer; but here is our first encounter with the "point that Parry did not reckon with" (mentioned above): how do we know *prima facie* that Homer was not himself a literate imitator, without training in oral composition, of someone earlier than he? The mere number of formulae in the *Odyssey* is, in itself, compatible with that possibility.

Before we declare Argument 1 a failure, however, let us ask whether what Parry means by "simple numbers" may be total formulaic *occurrences* rather than different formulae. All the nouns in the *Odyssey*, twelve-minus and thirteen-plus together, display 11,441 formulaic occurrences—almost as many as the 12,111 lines in the *Odyssey* (many lines have two or more formulae, and quite a few have none). The poem is thoroughly formulaic— and we are, of course, not counting formulaic expressions (set **c**) or structural formulae (set **b**)! Even the thirteen-plus nouns exhibit 6,105 formulaic occurrences, and now Quintus suffers by comparison: his thirteen-plus nouns have only 3,490 formulaic occurrences—14.0 per noun, compared to Homer's 20.8. This difference is important, because it reflects

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[11] The number in Sale 1993 was 15, making the sample, the number of comparable nouns, smaller than I now feel it had to be. Make no mistake: the sample is in one sense still small. There are 4,394 different nouns or noun-forms in the *Odyssey*, and only 295 that occur 13 times or more; on the other hand, these 295 account for almost half the total noun *occurrences*, and more than half the formulaic occurrences, so their behavior ought to be highly significant. Granted, the sample exhibits a much higher formularity (69.4%) than the formularity of the twelve-minus nouns (50.6%) or of the whole (59.2%); but the same disparities may be assumed for our comparands, which is mostly what matters.

Homer's far greater number of regular formulae (see Argument 2); but what does it mean in itself? Is there some cutoff point for oral poets below Homer's 20.8 (or rather Avdo's 17.6) but more than Quintus' 14? Faced simply with the raw numbers, I feel unable to say that Homer has incomparably more formulaic occurrences and must therefore be an oral poet. And of course we must avoid conflating the formularity argument (Argument 1) with the regular-formulae argument (Argument 2).

Perhaps when Parry uses the phrase "kept to the formulas," he has in mind not the raw numbers, but rather a *consistently high formularity*. We can imagine a literate poet, one who loved formulae and wanted to reproduce what he took to be the old epic style, being highly formulaic now and again, or perhaps being consistently formulaic but not keeping up a high rate. But we might think it improbable that almost every passage in such an author would be highly formulaic from beginning to end, or that almost all of his frequently-occurring nouns would display about the same high percentage. Such consistency seems to point to what Parry calls a "complete need," a fundamental *style*, in which a poet must always be asking, consciously or unconsciously, "Does this referent on this occasion, in this verse, require a formula?" This question, if persistently asked, is surely being asked by an oral poet.

When we divide the total formulaic occurrences of the 295 thirteen-plus nouns in the *Odyssey* by their total occurrences, the result is 70% (69% if we adjust for formulae mentioned in note 9). This is the same as what we get if we calculate the formularities of each of these nouns and take the average; their group formularity is the same as their average formularity. And the individual formularities cluster reasonably closely around this figure.[12] Since the thirteen-plus nouns are distributed more or less randomly throughout the poem, one can take any passage of the poem of statistically meaningful length, and about 69% of the thirteen-plus-noun-occurrences will be formulae.[13] These figures are higher than those offered by the thirteen-plus nouns of Avdo's *Ženidba*, our modern oral comparand, which run about 65% formulaic. The *Odyssey* "keeps to the formulas" even more than the certainly oral poem does.

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[12] More precisely, 212 nouns have formularities between 50% and 88%; 38 lie below these figures, 43 above; 18 lie below 40%, 13 over 98%.

[13] The speeches are less formulaic than the narrative, but the difference is slight.

Quintus' formularity is 51%; we knew it would be lower than the *Odyssey*'s, because we have seen that Quintus has many fewer formulaic occurrences.

Quintus is definitely less formulaic than Homer. But the formularity of Avdo, falling somewhere between Homer's and Quintus', must give us pause. What does Homer's higher percentage signify, if it is higher than an oral poet's needs to be? It may well be a function of the difference between the hexameter and the *deseterac*; it may be personal idiosyncrasy; we do not yet know. Moreover, I do not find Homer more *consistently* formulaic than Quintus. If anything, the reverse is true: the formularities of Quintus' nouns fall in an astonishingly normal distribution around 51%, whereas Homer's distribution is somewhat skewed, and has as many between 60-65% as between 70-75% and 75-80%. So while Homer's formularity definitely proves him either a good literate imitator of oral poets or an oral poet himself, I do not think it allows us to choose which.[14]
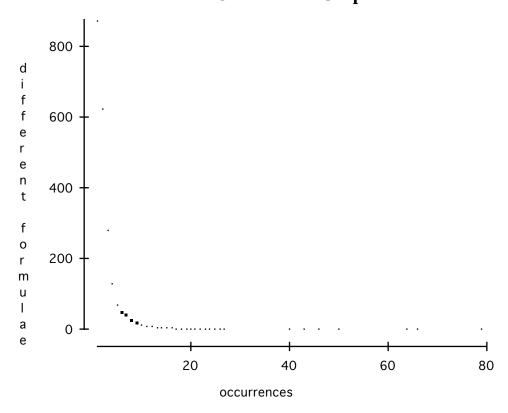
2. I call the **second argument** the "regular-formula argument," and start with Parry's assertion cited above that some formulae are used "very frequently" (317). Here we isolate set **f** and concentrate on formulae that are regularly employed, and our first question must be how often a formula must be exactly repeated to be called "regularly employed." It is useful to begin with the Formula-Occurrences Graph, a hyperbola with a bend running from $x = 6$ to $x = 9$ (I have highlighted these points below). On this graph are tabulated all the 2,185 different noun-phrase formulae for our thirteen-plus nouns. The *x*-axis gives the number of occurrences, the *y*-axis the number of different formulae that occur *x* number of times: 875

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[14] Bakker (1988:152) argues that in 1930 Parry extended the concept of the formula (cf. Parry 1971:313) beyond his original definition, inspired by the wish to demonstrate Homer's orality and convinced that the higher the formularity, the greater the likelihood of orality. I believe that even in 1928 Parry found formulae everywhere ("bardic diction is in great part, or even entirely, made up of traditional formulae," 196); but Bakker is right to say that Parry saw the pervasiveness of formulae as part of his argument for oral composition. Has the statistical method therefore weakened Parry's argument by omitting his first three definitions (above) and reducing the number of formulae thereby? Not, I think, if we accept the need for comparisons with Avdo and Quintus. Subjectively, and using all seven definitions, I experience both of these poets as less formulaic than Homer, but I cannot see what to infer from this judgment nor why anyone else should pay much attention to it.

formulae occur just once, 625 occur twice, 281 occur three times, and so on.

An elaborate analysis of a comparable hyperbola may be found in Sale 1993, to which I refer readers who may find the following summary insufficient. Obviously something is happening at x = 6-9; the curve has been steadily and sharply descending, and now it makes an abrupt turn, so as to form a hyperbola. Formulae occurring 9 times or more are clearly

Formula-Occurrences Graph

different, and the difference appears to set in at x = 6. Before that, there are forces at work dictating that formulae are far less likely to be exactly repeated than to occur just once, far less likely to occur three times than twice, and so on. One of these forces is entropy, the fact that systems tend to randomness, to disorderliness; exact repetition is more orderly than the lack of it, and therefore less probable unless some force intervenes to nullify the force of entropy. Another is infrequency of need. There are certain kinds of need that arise often enough to encourage formulaic composition, but where a *particular* formula may be rarely needed: arming

is frequent, while Ajax arms himself only once. At $x = 6\text{-}9$ these forces
appear to be nullified: at this point formulae are meeting needs that in fact
commonly arise; and the effect of entropy has been canceled out, so that
they are able to occur freely whenever they are needed. The structure of the
hexameter line has intervened to enable the canceling: most formulae
occurring 6 times or more—the   regularly employed, the "regular"
formulae—have been fashioned to fall in the cola between the familiar
caesurae and the end of the line, the more highly structured half of the line
(see Foley 1990:56-59, 82-84, *et passim*). Most of them are highly and
widely useful *multi-purpose formulae*, which we shall discuss at length in
due course. There are many fewer regular than infrequent formulae, 206
(270, counting the twelve-minus nouns) compared to 1982 (5100, again
counting the twelve-minus nouns), but each is used much more often: on
average, 11 occurrences per formula, while the vast hoard of infrequent
formulae average fewer than two occurrences per formula. Regular noun-
phrase formulae really are regularly employed: they occur 25% of the time
that a thirteen-plus noun occurs in Homer, even though half these nouns lack
regular formulae.[15]   This over-and-over-again quality has always struck
Western readers as an arresting and unique feature of Homer, whose
repetitions are somehow never dull, yet who seems sublimely uninterested in
variation for variation's sake. The *Odyssey* says δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς ("divine
Odysseus") 79 times, γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη ("grey-eyed Athena") 50 times,
ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα ("spoke winged words") 64 times, and so on,
2249 regular-formula occurrences in all—and these are exact repetitions: the
same words, the same grammatical case, the same order, the same position
in the line; the facts and the numbers are astonishing.[16]

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[15] There are also 60 verb-phrase formulae in the *Odyssey* exactly repeated 6 times
or more. They average 22 occurrences per formula; they too are regular formulae.

[16] The distinction between regular and infrequent formulae can assist us in a
problem of Parryan interpretation. Visser (1988:25) calls attention to a passage in Parry's
first thesis, TE, where he says that the "poet creates the noun-epithet formula of the desired
measure by adding x syllables of the epithet to the predetermined value of the substantive"
(84). From this Visser argues that at first Parry did not think of the formulae as
pre-existing fixed units; instead there were "lexical solidarities," meaning that "for a certain
noun there was a strictly limited number of epithets automatically present in the poet's
mind" (1988:26). Parry uses the term "poet" with various senses (see above), and in this

Quintus has only 352 regular-formula occurrences, 1.4 per thirteen-plus noun. This is many more than Apollonius and Virgil, to be sure; but Homer, at 7.6 per noun, has over 5 *times* what Quintus has. Just 14% of Quintus' thirteen-plus nouns display regular formulae at all, compared to 51% for Homer, nearly four times as many. Here, surely, is a dramatic difference—between, we now want to say, the oral poet and his imitator.

Avdo's formularity, let us recall, falls between Homer's and that of the assuredly literate poet, and this made us cautious about using formularity as a criterion for orality. And in fact Avdo does exhibit fewer regular-formula occurrences per word than Homer (5.2 vs. 7.6), and a smaller percentage of regular-formula nouns, 41% vs. 51%. Now, however, there is a huge gap between Avdo and Quintus: Avdo's 5.2 is almost four *times* Quintus', his 41% nearly three times. This difference says much more than the 14% difference in their formularities; it tells us in no uncertain terms that it is not formulae as such, but *regular* formulae that mark the difference between Avdo and Homer's literate imitator. And why should they not? Formulae that can be, and are, used over and over are exactly what the poet needs to enable him to compose quickly; otherwise put, an epic poet who must compose before an audience will naturally find himself often saying the same thing in exactly the same way (Arguments 4 and 7 will make clearer just when this happens). Granted, we cannot claim that the circumstances of composition as such compelled Homer to repeat quite as frequently as he *does,* since Avdo repeats somewhat less.[17] But we can say that a style that enabled and encouraged a poet to use the same words over and over is ideally suited to the circumstances of oral composition, and that poets whose training is divorced from those circumstances do not repeat themselves anything like so often.

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passage I think he means the idealized traditional singer, not Homer himself; Parry's traditional noun-epithet systems in TE are certainly systems of traditional *formulae*. But the passage gives an excellent description of one way in which *infrequent* formulae are created (by Homer himself, in my opinion); and since Visser's lexical solidarities are virtually the same as Parry's systems, they are a way of stating how *regular* formulae are employed (or come into being, in Visser's view). See also note 25 below.

[17] Homer's greater repetitiousness may be due to the apparently greater complexity of the hexameter verse line; but see Foley 1990:85-106 on complexity in the *deseterac*.

This does not mean that the *Odyssey* must have been orally composed. Naturally we feel that, with the leisure to write, a poet would surely have sought variation, as Virgil, Apollonius, and Quintus seek it. But we cannot be certain. If the poet's ear were wholly attuned to a style in which such frequencies were common, he might simply have felt no desire to vary. Parry speaks of Homer's as the "best of all styles" (324); if that is so, why would the oral poet change it just because he could write?

But this very argument forces us to acknowledge that the poet of the *Odyssey*, whether writing or singing, must have been thoroughly imbued with this style. He must have felt that this way, and no other, was the way to compose verse, that vital to his craft was the capacity to use regular formulae again and again without being boring. And the only way in which he could have learned to do it was through oral training, just as his chief reason for wanting to know how to do it was to be able to compose in performance. He must have been orally trained: he was an oral poet, however the *Odyssey* itself was composed.

Arguments 3-5. The statistics of Homer's regular formulae, and numerical comparisons of them with Quintus' and Avdo's, have hastened us to a conclusion that seems inevitable. But we cannot grasp Parry's arguments for orality by merely gazing at and taking in the quantity and percentages of formulae and formulaic occurrences, impressive though that may be. We need to look at the quality of the formulae; we must clarify now why Parry speaks of the "complete need" for "an easy way to make verses" (317). The "easy way" turns out to be the employment of multi-purpose formulae (Argument 3), arranged in systems (Argument 4), and of generics and Hainsworth-alterations in the creation of infrequent formulae (Argument 5).

3. Argument 3 isolates the formulae in set **g**, and might therefore be called the "multi-purpose-formula argument." We begin with the qualitative difference between the formulae on the very gradually descending right-hand tail of the above graph and those in the steep left-hand tail—that is, between the regular and the infrequent formulae. The infrequent formulae meet infrequently arising needs, and although some of them share all the characteristics of regular formulae except for frequency of occurrence (the "accidental infrequent formulae"), most do not.

a. Many point to the less familiar **referents**, to people, things, ideas, and so forth that are destined to be mentioned only a few times.

     b. Many, especially Hainsworth-alterations, occupy unusual **metrical** positions.

     c. Most do not put the noun at the **localization-point**, the position in the verse where the noun most frequently falls.

     d. Many cover the less frequent **syntactical** situations: common nouns in the nominative case, for instance.

     e. A large number may have been coined, or re-coined, *ad hoc*, to meet demands that arose in the course of composition, and are therefore very often not **traditional** formulae (though their parts may be, and probably are, traditional).

     f. Many, such as "Ajax armed himself," "the third day" (not the next or the seventh), or "Odysseus' halls" (not halls in general), are particularized. They are useful in certain **contexts** where the noun is employed, but not in others. Similarly with infrequent noun-verb formulae, where the verb narrows the possible use of the phrase dramatically: "Athena led," "Antinous answered," or "Menelaus gave" obviously cannot be used anywhere in the poem, but only where Athena is in fact engaged in leading, Antinous in answering, or Menelaus in giving.

     I have set these features out schematically so that they may be compared readily with the six features that characterize most regular formulae in the right-hand tail. These are the characteristics that enable the regular formulae to perform many tasks at once, to be multi-purposed:

     A. Most regular formulae point to the familiar **referents**, the characters, objects, actions, and concepts most likely to be mentioned.

     B. They suit the basic **metrical** structure of the hexameter as set out in Foley 1990 (chs. 3-4), meeting especially well the demands to fall before and after the common caesurae (to fall in what I call the major cola) and to enable right-justification (Foley 1990:ch. 4), greater rigidity at the end of the line. There are a number of frequently occurring verb-phrases that are designed to match regular noun-epithet formulae (see Parry 1971:8-16); some of these vary considerably in inflection, and are highly suitable to begin the line.[18] The noun-epithets, normally not variable, tend towards the end. So elegant and effective is the matching process that for a poet who knows his formulae and wants to say, for example, "So-and-so said," an excellent line of poetry virtually composes itself.

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[18] It is reasonable to speak of multi-purposed verb-phrase formulae; their ability to vary their endings makes them context-free.

C. They tend to put the noun at the **localization-point,** where it usually occurs, so that the poet will necessarily be experienced in building the remainder of the line around them—with matching formulae or otherwise.

D. They cover the familiar **syntactical** situations: proper nouns in the nominative and genitive (pertinentive) cases, common nouns in dative (locative and instrumental) and accusative, verbs in first and third singular and third plural past tenses.

E. Their epithets are colorful and evoke the **tradition**; indeed most of them are probably traditional.[19]

F. They are suitable for employment in a variety of **contexts** and are not particularized. They achieve their generality through the quality of their epithets or verbs, which are ornamental or, as I prefer to say, context-free. Parry thought that the "fixed epithet . . . has been used with its noun until it has become fused with it into what is no more . . . than another form of the name" (305); the audience was indifferent to the force of the epithets (118-72). I disagree, but rather than counter his arguments, let us observe that all the so-called ornamental epithets are carefully chosen: they are not only colorful, but their meanings are also consistent with virtually any passage in epic poetry. Odysseus is "richly endowed with cleverness" whether he is displaying it or not; he is "much-enduring" even in the *Iliad*, though he has not yet had a great deal to endure; Penelope is "circumspect" awake or asleep, flirtatious or frightened; and so on throughout almost all the 206 regular formulae. Usually Homer does not appear to have chosen an epithet to suit the context, though sometimes he surely has. We can agree with Parry that metrical convenience very frequently determined the choice of formula and therefore of epithet; still, the epithets very rarely jar against the context. But why did the early poets make such careful choices if they thought the audience would not hear their significance? Must they not have fashioned them to be this way because they knew that the audience *would* hear them? They are context-free (cf. Parry 1971:150), but not through audience indifference.

It would appear to be most destructive to a thesis to undermine the thrust of more than a quarter of its pages, but this is not the only place where Parry's intuition outpaces his argumentation. After all, why do we need context-free epithets? Why do we want formulae that may be

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[19] Parry 1971:1-190; Hoekstra 1965:*passim.*

employed anywhere in the poem? Is it not so that we, as poets, *can* consult metrical convenience, can freely use a phrase that works metrically that we know will work semantically? Is it not so that composition may be rapid? And who needs to compose rapidly, if not the oral poet? Scholars who have argued for a literate Homer because they disagree with Parry's assertion of audience indifference can feel their tools turning in their hands.[20]

With multi-purposed noun-verbs, one word mentions the referent and the other adds no additional referent. A person "speaks a *word*," or is "anxious" or "distressed at *heart*," or is "dressed in *clothing*"; the phrase "who occupy heaven" means the same as "heavenly"; "the setting sun" is the sunset. Participle-plus-noun usually amounts to an adjective, verb-plus-object to a verb. So "speaks a word" can be used wherever speaking occurs; the noun becomes the equivalent of a context-free epithet. Granted, their fixed internal syntax at first seems to make them harder to combine with other words. But that syntax, after all, yields a complete sentence; the difficult combinational task is faced by the noun-epithet and verb-phrase formulae, which must be combined *into* a sentence. Hence they really are just as handy as the noun-epithets.

Multi-purposed regular formulae, therefore, have the right connotation, as well as the right traditional flavor, the right syntax, the right localization, the right meter, and the right denotation. They are obviously immensely useful: there are 193 such formulae in the *Odyssey* (counting the twelve-minus nouns, since we are not now making comparisons), which is about 70% of all the regular formulae; they are used over 2,600 times in all in the *Odyssey*, over 12 times each on average. It is obvious that formulae so useful must provide the poet with an "easy way to make verses." And no one has thought of another reason for the existence of all these formulae than to enable rapid, that is oral, composition. They are among the very basic tools of the oral poet.

But did one need to have been trained as an oral poet to have had the experience of composing in performance, in order to learn how to use them? Apparently not, for Quintus displays a number of multi-purpose formulae. Not nearly so many as Homer; but we must not unwittingly use

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[20] This does not include Austin (1975) or Vivante (1982), mentioned in note 1 above, who object to Parry's treatment of the epithets but accept the theory of oral composition.

Argument 2, the quantitative regular-formula argument, all over again. We are in search of qualitative differences between the two poets, and we do not find them simply by looking at Quintus' multi-purpose formulae and comparing them to Homer's. Let us therefore leave Argument 3 with a verdict of "indecisive," and seek our differences elsewhere.

   4. Argument 4 is the "argument from extension," and begins with Parry's conviction that the "schematization of the style" (323) marked the oral poet; the phrase refers to what Parry calls "systems" (16-19). The table below reveals best what he meant by "systems" when he first used this term.[21] We have a large set consisting of different formulae that have different metrical and syntactic tasks; each individual task is performed by a subset of different formulae, often quite numerous, that behave in very much the same way.[22] Thus, "B2-12 nom" includes συβώτης ὄρχαμος ἀνδρῶν ("swineherd, leader of men"), etc.;[23] "B2-12 gen" Ὀδυσσῆος

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[21] The later definition offered at 275-76 extends the basic concept to include many more types of formulae than those that he talks about at length in 1928; it is different enough *prima facie* that Foley considers the 1930 construct "not part of the theory in the 1928 essays" (1988:28-29). Unfortunately, this means that for many systems under the new definition their extension "is rarely so great and their thrift never so striking" (278). This, he felt, would not matter, because he was sure that all later (all written) poetry was far less systematic; but as usual, he failed to discuss Quintus, and his account of Apollonius and Virgil on 299-300 is skimpy and not wholly accurate. Comparisons based on the 1930 definition would be formidably difficult to carry out completely with statistical accuracy; if we stick to noun-phrase systems we extend the material treated in 1928 somewhat while remaining able to make very telling comparisons.

[22] For the designations of the cola in the list that follows, see Foley 1990:78, 82. If we assign an integer to each half-foot in the hexameter ("six-foot") line, and the fraction 1/2 to each short syllable that begins with a half-foot, then the A1 caesura comes after 2 (after the first foot), the A2 after 3, the B1 (also called "penthemimeral," meaning "fifth half-foot") after 5, the B2 (also called "trochaic" or "feminine") after 5 1/2, the C1 ("hephthemimeral," meaning "seventh half-foot") after 7, and the C2 ("bucolic diaeresis") after 8. Members of the same subset in Table 1 can have somewhat different metrical properties: some begin with consonants or double-consonants, others with vowels.

[23] The extension πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς ("much-enduring divine Odysseus") obviously belongs here, but is not counted among the numbers given, because for statistical reasons we cannot count extensions as different formulae. To do so would not affect this formula, but would create problems for phrases such as Θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἥρη ("the goddess white-armed Hera"): this extended form occurs 22 times, but λευκώλενος Ἥρη

Θείοιο ("of divine Odysseus"), etc.; "B2-12 dat" Θεοῖσιν ἀθανάτοισιν ("to the immortal gods"), etc.; "C1-12 nom" φάος ἠελίοιο ("light of the sun"), πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς ("Odysseus richly endowed with cleverness"), etc.; "C2-12 nom" δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς ("divine Odysseus"), etc. Most of these subsets were no doubt traditional: Parry argued of his similar systems (and almost all scholars who have examined this point in print have agreed) that no one person could have created all or even most of the formulae in them, that they took centuries to create. There is not space here to labor the point, so I must invite skeptical readers to ponder the reasoning of Parry, Hoekstra, and others, and if unconvinced, to conceive of the system as merely pre-existing the composition of the *Odyssey*—as developed or taken in by Homer over the course of much of a lifetime of compositional experience. It may not be the product of centuries, but it is quite impossible that such an intricate system could have arisen for the first time *during* the creation of a single poem.

Table 1. Multi-purpose regular formulae in the *Odyssey* (13+ nouns)[24]

Cola	Noun-epithets					Noun-verb	Total
	nom	gen	dat	acc	voc		
Common Major Cola:							
B2-12:	8	5	6	2		10	31
C1-12:	13	2	2	4	1	7	29
C2-12:	15		7	18		21	61
Rarer Major Cola:							
1-A1 (b)(A2):					7		7
1-B1 (2):	2	1	2	1		3	9
B1-12:	3	3		1		1	8
Total	41	11	17	26	8	42	145

("white-armed Hera") itself occurs only 3 times. If we count the latter separately (19 times for the extension, 3 times for it), then it must be called an infrequent formula, which is absurd, since it occurs many times in and out of the extension.

[24] Were we to add accidental infrequent formulae, some of which are multi-purposed, as well as multi-purposed formulae, regular and infrequent, for the 12-minus nouns, the numbers would be genuinely, though not arrestingly, increased.

What is the purpose of such a system? Why does it exist? We can best answer this question by noting that the word "extension" really has two meanings. On the one hand, systems maximize the number of different formulae that fall in the *same* colon, with the same syntax and in the same case, and therefore can be handled in the same *way*, either by matching them with syntactically and metrically complementary formulae, or—more commonly—by using them as a basis for constructing a line that will be finished either by other formulae or by non-formulaic phrases, or both. Once I have learned how to handle one or two of the 15 nominative noun-epithets that occupy C2-12, I can easily handle the other 13-14; experience with one or two of the 21 noun-verbs in C2-12 trains me for the other 19-20. On the other hand, systems maximize the number of different formulae that fall in *different* cola and still have the same *referent*; if I want to say "Odysseus," for instance, I have not one, but (counting the extension) three different regular formulae, occupying three different positions in the verse, with which to do it: I am prepared for most of the metrical possibilities I am likely to encounter when I want to mention Odysseus.[25]

We are back again at ease of composition, at an "easy way to make verses." Not only are the individual multi-purpose formulae in themselves useful, but they fall into groups that offer useful similarities on the one hand, useful differences on the other. They are the tools of the trade of oral composition, arranged into positions in a portable toolkit that makes them even handier than each one is in itself.[26] This toolkit must have predated our *Odyssey*, whether it predated Homer or not. The fact that it is so extensively employed in the *Odyssey* means that Homer had learned very thoroughly how to use it. Does this therefore mean that he was trained as an oral poet?

This is the same as asking whether an untrained literate poet could master the systems, and I know of no other way to answer this than to look at known literate poets. Virgil, with 15 regular formulae in the *Aeneid*, and Apollonius, with 5 in the *Argonautica*, do not have enough regular

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[25] These three formulae illustrate the relationship between what Visser calls a "lexical solidarity" (1988:26; see above, note 16) and the elements of a Parryan system that have the same referent (here Odysseus).

[26] Parry does not imply of his systems, nor do I wish to imply of my toolkit, that the poet was conscious of possessing such orderly arrangements; I see no way of knowing how they existed in his mind, though that they existed there is certain.

formulae to constitute genuine systems. Quintus, on the other hand, has 44 noun-phrase regular formulae, of which 24 are multi-purposed, and when we tabulate them, we find that he has a fair number of nominative noun-epithets (10). But he does not have enough of any of the others, and is woefully deficient in genitives and noun-verbs. The reason for this distribution is that he has proportionately far too many formulae that fall in minor cola, almost 40%, and not nearly enough in any major colon except the 1-B1(2). He is thus very weak in the first kind of extension, the number of formulae that can be handled the same way.

When we look to the second kind, the number of different cola in which we can say the same thing in a regular formula, matters are even worse. Just five nouns have more than one regular formula and so offer more than one colon—the words for "son" (nominative), "sons" (nominative), "day" (dative), "time" (accusative), "word" (accusative); compare Homer's 32. In fact there are only three ordinary proper-noun regular formulae, one for Agamemnon in the nominative, and one each for Priam and the Argives in the genitive. Even Virgil does better than this, with *pius Aeneas, pater Aeneas, pater Anchises, puer Ascanius, Saturnia Iuno,* and (*rex*) *ipse Latinus*. For Quintus, the other nominative proper-noun formulae are all "son(s) of so-and-so," based on υἱός in various grammatical cases. It is true that Neoptolemus gets a full complement of three nominative formulae thereby; the Trojans get two; and Diomedes, Achilles, Odysseus, and the Achaeans one each. But by resorting to these "son(s) of" formulae, Quintus actually calls attention to his *lack* of an extended set of ordinary nominative proper-name formulae. And many major characters have no nominative proper-name formulae of any kind in any grammatical case: the greater Ajax, Aeneas, Eurypylos, Zeus, the Keres, Memnon, Menelaus, Paris, and Thetis are all mentioned at least 13 times in the nominative, under these names alone, without the use of regular formulae. In several cases, Homer could have supplied his wants—only as a literate poet, Quintus did not have the same wants.

Now just because Quintus *did not* display an extended system of formulae, though he might have taken over much of Homer's, it does not follow that an earlier literate poet untrained in oral composition *could not* have taken over or developed one. But with the example of Quintus before our eyes, we might well wonder why this hypothetical literate poet *would* have done so. He would never have faced the need for such a system before; he would not be facing that need when he sat down to write the

Odyssey; it is altogether reasonable to guess that he would have made selections from among the vast number of regular formulae that fell upon his ears (or, for all we know, met his eye).   Just as Quintus actually did. Therefore the presence in the *Odyssey* of such an extended system makes it very probable that its poet had been trained to carry the oral poet's toolkit— that he was an oral poet, however he may have created the *Odyssey* itself.

Argument 5 is the "argument from infrequent formulae," and begins with Parry's statement that the "singers, ever seeking to reduce the terms of their expression to the simplest pattern, used for this end the means of analogy.   That is to say, wherever they could obtain a new formula by altering one which was already in use, they did so . . ." (323).   For Parry the "singers" here are the pre-Homeric makers of formulae, not Homer, who is merely "grouping" them (324).   My formulation of Argument 5 makes a stronger case than this for Homer as oral poet.   By itself, though, it is not quite decisive; and I part company with Parry on the issue of Homer's creativity.[27]

There are four chief methods of forming infrequent formulae: exact repetition (the least promising for the case for orality, since it is something that literate poets do and that offers no challenge to an imitator); patronymics (perhaps the first thing an imitator does); generics; and Hainsworth-alteration.   The latter two are as fundamental to the technique of oral poetry as the use of regular formulae, and bear closer scrutiny.

Parry thought that modifiers became generic when one formula was created on the analogy of another ("horseman Tydeus" might be modeled on "horseman Nestor," for example).[28]   Just how the generics existed in Homer's mind, whether coupled with nouns or by themselves, we cannot say, nor does it matter; but it is easier to picture them separately, as they

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[27] I part company with Parry on another issue as well. He thought that in "these cases, and in all others, we see the sound of the words guiding the singers in their formation of the diction" (323; see also Nagler 1974:1-26). No doubt sound played a vital role; but so it does with most of the great literate poets, and in both cases I believe the sense too was vital.

[28] Epithets that were never transferred by analogy, and so were used of just one person or thing, he called *distinctive*.

appear on Parry's Table III (80-82), a table of epithets.[29] Such epithets are multi-purposed: they fall frequently in certain fixed parts of the line, they can be applied to a variety of names, they are context-free.[30] In fact, we find generics used to make regular as well as infrequent formulae. Parry calls Table III, with its variety of metrical patterns and grammatical cases, a system; it is almost certain, at any rate, that most of these words formed part of Homer's precompositional toolkit.

Parry does not quite say so, but it is evident that generics are a splendid tool for the immediate coining of formulae during the course of a performance; they enable rapid composition. A noun may lack a regular formula for a given colon, and the addition of a generic to the noun may give just the right meter. It will not happen all that often for any one noun (that is why these are *infrequent* formulae), but if it happened only once per noun in the *Odyssey*, that would be 4,400 instances. Or the poet may want a formula for a less common colon, or an unusual grammatical case, or where the regular formula may not say the right thing. The epithets in most regular formulae are context-free, but, even so, there are circumstances awkward for them, as where the poet needed to avoid such locutions as "He covered the corpse, did Achilles, swift in his feet, from head to feet," and elected instead to say, "He covered the corpse, did *great-souled* Achilles, from (its) head to (its) feet" (*Iliad* 23.168-69).

Parry said little about the phenomenon I call Hainsworth-alteration, the creation of new formulae by moving phrases around in the line, extending them, or inflecting, separating, and inverting their parts. Nonetheless, it plays a vital role in the making of infrequent formulae. It is obviously a wonderful tool for composing quickly: the poet has on hand formulae that can be readily altered so as to fit a variety of cola or syntactical needs at a moment's notice. As with the generics, we cannot imagine why they exist if not to enable rapid composition. And as with the

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[29] Table III does not contain generic verbs, and we ought properly to construct a table of both epithets and verbs, selected from the *Odyssey* alone; but I am hoping that the argument itself can be perfectly clear without it.

[30] Even the generic verbs, omitted by Parry, though semantically more precise and not context-free, are otherwise multi-purposed. They too fall repeatedly in certain fixed places, and they usually display variable syntax and can therefore be used with large numbers of nouns in various persons and numbers.

generics, we naturally suppose that the art of making formulae with them requires years of training and experience as an oral composer.

Since for Parry as he offers this argument Homer is only "grouping" formulae, not making them, Parry cannot use it to identify Homer as an oral poet, or even a good imitator. But even if we differ, and recognize a Homer who is highly skilled at using generics and Hainsworth-alteration, need he then have been an oral composer? Could not a literate poet have read enough, or heard enough, oral poetry to catch on to the art and not reveal his literacy?   Quintus uses both generics and Hainsworth-alteration in abundance. Granted, he often appears to use them to achieve variation for its own sake, which an oral poet does not do; but now we are wandering over to the argument from economy (Argument 6). Does he give himself away by being clumsy, or by making formulae where Homer would not? After all, Quintus maintained his formularity not primarily by repeating regular formulae but by creating an enormous pile of different formulae. Did he merely supply them mechanically?

Apparently not: Quintus' students agree that his use of the Homeric formulary technique is, generally speaking, successful. We have found him faulty in the matter of regular formulae; but if we overlook his lack of economy, which belongs in a separate argument, Quintus is a genuine craftsman of infrequent formulae. An orally untrained literate imitator can therefore learn this craft; Homer's mastery of it does not prove him an oral poet—except for his sensitivity to economy.

Argument 6.   And so let us turn to the argument from economy. None of the noun-epithet formulae on Table 1 above can replace any other: no two that have the same referent possess the same meter and syntax. If you want to mention wine in the accusative and fill the colon C2-12, the adonean clausula, there are, to be sure, two formulae available; but one begins with a vowel and the other with the consonant digamma, and the metrical consequences are different. This is what Parry meant by economy (or thrift or simplicity). We might call it "metrical economy," since we are here ignoring the meaning of the epithets: however different their meanings, if the formulae containing them are metrically and syntactically identical and have the same referent, the formulae violate metrical economy. The systems Parry constructed (17-21) do contain a few

overlaps, a few "equivalent formulae." But the *Odyssey* multi-purpose formula system as given on Table 1 has no overlaps at all.[31]

Let us emphasize that metrical economy is a feature of systems, not of formulae in general, let alone of all phrases. Parry made this clear (7, 16-19, 276-79), and then began the process of muddling matters by extending the term "systems" to cover groups of formulae so general that economy is inevitably often violated (313). Perhaps the easiest way to regain clarity is to ask why we have economy at all. We spoke above of a pre-compositional toolkit containing multi-purpose formulae that was probably traditional but might have been created by Homer before he made the *Odyssey*. Metrical economy belongs to the toolkit, not to the text. The poet is economical because he does not want to carry about with him any tool that he does not need; theoretically he is indifferent to how many metrically overlapping formulae he may create in the course of composition. Parry indeed speaks of a "great many" equivalent noun-epithet formulae (176); most of those he cites can be seen as having been created during composition, through the operation of analogy.

There is more to the toolkit than systems of multi-purpose formulae, among other things the system of generic epithets already discussed. Parry notes that 73 of the generics are metrically congruent with another generic; he still wants to speak of the system's economy (or "simplicity," 94).[32] This is statistically most unsatisfying, and when we pursue Parry on the meaning of the generics, we encounter confusion. On the whole he wants to speak of them as ornamental (127): he says that "the generic meaning is not possible in an epithet which is not ornamental" (166). It is therefore subject to audience indifference. But he also says that "where the epithet was not constantly used with a given noun, it could never have become indifferent to the audience" (164), where "constantly" and "given" (translating the French *certain*) alert us to obvious problems. And some of the particularized epithets he discusses are generic (155-65), at least by the definition he gives earlier (64).

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[31] The closest it comes is τόδε δῶμα vs. μέγα δῶμα but the μ in μέγα can make position, even though we have no instance of its doing so in this formula in our *Odyssey*. As a member of the toolkit, it is metrically not the same as τόδε δῶμα.

[32] Parry makes the number less than 73, on the grounds that of two equivalents only one, after all, can actually violate economy (94), but it is still far too large.

Rather than sift through the difficulties here, since I do not agree that the audience was absolutely indifferent, and since I find 73 exceptions or even half that number unacceptable, I suggest we modify the concept of economy in the case of the generics that appear in infrequent formulae. There are very few generics that are metrically, syntactically, *and* semantically equivalent. Many generics exist, in fact, in order to say something different from what the ordinary regular formula, or another generic, would have said. Generics not only do not avoid overlapping another epithet metrically and syntactically; they seek it. They wish to be chosen when another epithet would say the wrong thing, as when the use of the regular formula would at one point have forced Homer to say, "Of the Cretans, Idomeneus, leader of the Cretans, was the leader," and so he says, "Idomeneus spear-famed" instead (*Iliad* 2.645). They offer semantic alternatives. The epithets "godlike," "horse-taming," "man-slaughtering," and "mighty," all metrically equivalent in Greek, led Parry into an elaborate discussion that could, I think, have been short-circuited if instead of assuming that "the poet hardly gave thought to its signification" he had appreciated the differences in meaning. Therein lies their economy: very few formulae made with generics have the same referent, the same syntax, the same meter, and the same epithetic meaning.

Since one of the purposes of generics is to offer semantic alternatives in the text, it is now reasonable to speak of violations in the text as well as in the toolkit. If a poet uses a generic, a word intended to provide an alternative, in a place where we cannot detect any real difference in meaning, he has violated semantic economy. Granted, there may be places where we do not know why one of the alternatives was chosen; there may be places where we are convinced that the epithet chosen is a filler; and there are places where no alternative is available. But if an alternative exists and as long as the meaning it offers really is different, semantic economy has not been violated.

The poet has other semantic alternatives besides generics. Many a distinctive epithet, applied to only one noun or only one character, can offer a needed semantic choice. These too belong in the toolkit. A look at some of the examples of equivalent epithets discussed by Parry (177-84) can illustrate how this works. None of the passages cited from the *Odyssey* violates semantic economy. In two passages the poet chooses "Zeus who delights in the thunderbolt" over "Zeus cloud-gatherer," the regular formula for this colon. In both places the god is casting down panic; in both places

the poet has just mentioned the στεροπή, the "lightning-like flash" of bronze. The meaning "cloud-gatherer" is obviously much less welcome than the semantic alternative.   In 8.323 Homer prefers to call Apollo the "lord who works from afar" rather than the "son of Zeus"; he is deliberately *defining* him as a member of a group that includes the Earth-shaker Poseidon and Hermes the Helper, and 11 lines later, where definition is no longer needed, he uses the other epithet.[33] There are three other cases of distinctive epithets offering semantic choices: the γλαυκώπιδι ("bright-eyed") daughter of Zeus vs. the "daughter of great Zeus," the "long-oared ship" vs. the "blue-prowed ship," and the "loud-sounding sea" vs. the "sea with its wide ways." I shall not discuss the poet's choices here, not because they cannot be defended, but because it is beside the point, which is that the epithets clearly have different meanings that could without difficulty lead to contrasting interpretations.[34]

There are other generics besides epithets. Generic verbs have offered no violations of semantic economy in my experience.   There are also generic phrases. David Shive makes much of Homer's use of δαίμονι ἶσος of Achilles, where he might have used the regular formula δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς (1987:25-27).   Since the former can be and is used of others besides Achilles,   we have an obvious case of apparent metrical violation of economy in the text, but no violation in the toolkit. And even if δαίμονι ἶσος were confined to Achilles, we would still have semantic economy; the

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[33] The two phrases ἑκάεργος Ἀπόλλων and Διὸς υἱὸς Ἀπόλλων by themselves are not quite equivalent, since ἑκάεργος, unlike Διὸς υἱὸς, can create a preceding elision (22.15), though it need not. In the passages Parry cites the phrases are preceded by ἄναξ, and are equivalent; but we should see ἄναξ as a generic epithet useful in extending these and other formulae, an independent member of the toolkit. Thus ἄναξ ἑκάεργος Ἀπόλλων does not as such exist in the toolkit; the toolkit has the widely used generic ἄναξ and the regular formula ἑκάεργος Ἀπόλλων. The reader will see how this reasoning applies to other familiar extended formulae that appear equivalent to other formulae at first sight but are not so in the toolkit, such as Θεὰ λευκώλενος Ἥρη. None of this detracts from the interest we feel in *why* the poet elects to use them as equivalents in the text; see Janko 1981:251-54.

[34] Two more of Parry's citations entail equivalence because of Hainsworth-alteration of formulae not equivalent in other grammatical cases in which they occur; and the epithets have different meanings in any case. The rest involve the use of generics that either possess or permit (in the case of the epithets κάρη and Ὀλύμπιος used to extend a formula) alternative meanings.

phrase would be like another distinctive epithet. Here, as elsewhere, we may not always be able to say *why* one of two possible formulae was chosen; but as long as two metrically equivalent phrases offer genuinely alternative meanings, as long as genuinely different interpretations are possible, the principle of economy remains intact.

There may have been still other tools: some formulae that lend themselves especially to Hainsworth-alteration, some accidental infrequent formulae. The presence of all these tools made for a very large kit—but it was as small as it possibly could be. It embodied the principle of minimizing the number of tools by using the same tool for any given job, as long as it does the job well. This principle of economy is the precise counterpart of another: namely, in choosing a formula never seek variety for the sake of variety. The text often varies, not for its own sake, but rather to avoid unpleasant, or to seek desired, semantic or aural effects. If a given formula works well in a particular place, one is happy to use it no matter how often one has used it before. Such a toolkit, with its stress on efficiency, not making the poet carry about with him any needless tool yet providing him splendidly for so many emergencies, is manifestly the property of an oral poet. It is very hard to see how Homer could have been so skilled in its use if he had not been trained in oral composition. But again we need to look to Quintus for confirmation.

Quintus' so-called system has, as we saw, only five nouns that exhibit more than one regular formula, and thus only five opportunities for a regular formula to violate economy; and all five nouns behave themselves. On the other hand, even a casual reader of Quintus is aware that he violates economy all the time, and David Packard has confirmed this impression in a study of Book 1 (1976:85-91). Where we catch him out with his regular formulae is in the large number of infrequent formulae that have the same metrical properties as a regular formula and offer no significant semantic variation. After the bucolic diaeresis, for instance, the regular formula is δῆρις ὀρώρει, which Quintus twice in Book 5 varies with δῆρις ἐτύχΘη. He varies the regular formula epithet for the Argives in the genitive, εὐσΘενέων, with εὐπτολέμων and ἀρηιΘόων. He varies Θρασὺ σΘένος with μέγα σΘένος no fewer than five times after a short vowel before the trochaic caesura.[35] And so on; I count 11 such violations altogether among the 36 nouns with regular formulae. In none of these cases can I detect any

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[35] For him neither Θρ nor μ in μέγα makes position.

other motive than the desire for variety for its own sake. And often not even that: Quintus often feels sheerly indifferent to thrift. Why, after all, should a writing poet economize? There is nothing comparable in the *Odyssey*; Homer is stingy, Quintus is a spendthrift. Not that we can always speak of violations of economy in Quintus' toolkit: the generic epithets Θρασύ and μέγα are not everywhere interchangeable. But we must remember that with generics, we ask whether there are violations in the text; Homer's text almost always gives us a different meaning, even if we cannot always explain it. Quintus' text so often offers the same meaning. Again, the difference between Homer and his imitator is manifest; again it declares that Homer was an oral poet.

Argument 7 concerns localization, the percentage of times that a word falls in that position in the line where it falls most frequently.[36] The argument is not Parry's, but it offers a way to use the multi-purpose- formula argument (Argument 3), which is his. Some nouns have low localization: they tend to wander about the hexameter line, and appear less often at the "localization point." We can picture Homer electing to use one, positioning it relatively freely and embodying it in a formula about 60% of the time (lower than the overall average). It will usually be an infrequent formula. It may be a phrase he has already used, in which case he is simply repeating himself; but there is a good chance that it will be different, and formed with a generic modifier or by Hainsworth-alteration. It will almost always display semantic economy. Now so far as we can see, Quintus appears to behave in exactly the same way, except that he will use a formula only about 50% of the time, and, if he does, it may well be uneconomical. We do not know what, if anything, to infer from this 10% difference, just as earlier we did not know what to infer from the 14% difference in formularity between Avdo and Quintus. Homer's greater thriftiness is significant, to be sure, but we have exploited that fact already in Argument 6.

Now consider nouns that usually fall in the same position in the verse, nouns that have high localization. Many of these would be hard to fit into any other place in the hexameter line for metrical reasons; and as for the rest, various metrical pressures and conventions apparently required

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[36] I calculate the localization of each noun separately, but normally the percentages will be close to what O'Neill (1942) calculates for word-types, for all the words of a given metrical shape, and indeed close to the revised figures given by Hagel (1994:84).

most of them to fall in a certain spot.[37]   With such nouns, Quintus will do pretty much what he did before, except that he is somewhat more likely to use a regular formula than he was before, and somewhat less likely to use a different formula. But the difference really is slight, and he will still be choosing to use a formula about 50% of the time. Homer, however, will be acting differently. He is much more likely to use a formula: he will now be formulaic about 80% of the time, rather than 60%. If the noun has a regular formula, he will very probably use it. The likelihood of his employing very many different formulae is now much lower. Indeed, the principle of economy reduces the likelihood; there is only a certain number of formulae that can put the noun in the same place and say what needs to be said without overlapping either metrically or semantically.

We perceive a real difference in the response of the two poets to localization. Homer takes advantage of the opportunity to step up the use of formulae, to be more formulaic, mostly by using his multi-purpose regular formulae. Now we saw earlier that the use of multi-purpose regular formulae is indeed an easy way to make verses, that it contributes to rapidity of composition. But we did not dare infer from the mere presence of such formulae in Homer that he must be an oral poet, because we found them also in Quintus, and though Homer has many more, we had already exploited the quantitative difference between the two poets in Argument 2. But now we have an opportunity to exploit the qualitative difference. The multi-purpose formulae are regular—frequently occurring—formulae that occupy a major (frequently employed) colon, and usually put the noun at the localization-point, the one most frequently occupied. Owing to all this frequency, the art of using them necessarily becomes very familiar, especially to Homer, who has so many of them. He knows where to place them, and how to build up a verse around them, whether by a matching verb-formula or otherwise.   The anchor for this practice is the noun's localization: if the localization is low, the rest of the process cannot occur so frequently.[38]   The poet who responds to (and thereby creates) high

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[37] Ionics *a minore* (⏑⏑– –) and bacchiacs (⏑– –), for instance, almost always come at the end: the former are hard to fit in elsewhere, the latter happen to be placed there.

[38] Localization is both cause and effect: high localization leads to high regularity and formularity; the persistent use of regular formulae leads to high localization. A circle, perhaps (though some nouns *must* have high localization), but not vicious. We are indifferent to cause; we care only about the necessary simultaneous presence of the two.

localization is manifestly using a very familiar process in order to make it easy for himself—that is, in order to compose rapidly.

The very skillful imitator knows how to create a multi-purpose formula; but he does not know what to do with it. He does not see it as a time-saving device—because he has plenty of time. He has not been trained as an oral poet.[39] The reader will not be surprised to learn that Avdo Medjedović's response to high localization is very nearly the same as Homer's, certainly close enough to support the inference we would have made anyway: the connection between high localization and the "easy way to make verses" is present in Homer and absent in Quintus because Homer was an oral poet.[40]

8. The **eighth argument,** the "argument from metrical irregularity," states that under the pressure of rapid—oral—composition, poets kept to the formulae even when their use created metrical irregularities. "In such cases," says Parry, "it is not the poet who is to blame, but his technique, which is not proof against all fault, and which, in the unhesitating speed of his composition, he cannot stop to change" (319). This argument is clear, and needs no amplification from us.[41]

9. The **ninth argument** stems from the remark that "when one hears the Southern Slavs . . . he is hearing Homer" (1971:378). South Slavic poets employ countless noun-epithet formulae, such as "the foundling Simeon," and "Theodore the high-counselor," and even more verb-phrase formulae such as *Veli njemu [njojzi, njima]*, "said to him [her, them]" (379). Since these poets composed in performance with the same kind of tool that Homer used, they seemed a palpable proof of Homeric orality. I

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[39] Foley calls attention to the role of word-type placements in three oral traditions, ancient Greek, South Slavic, and Anglo-Saxon (1990:156, 197, 237). The precise relationship between this phenomenon and the localization of individual words has yet to be worked out, but there obviously is one and the possibilities are exciting.

[40] Readers have a right to the equations on which the above argument is based, together with their correlation coefficients and residuals, but that means 45 different equations, which is too many for present purposes. We can, however, encapsulate the basic argument in four equations; this gets fairly technical, so I have put it in the Appendix.

[41] It is mentioned (as set out in FM, 191-239) with emphatic approval by A. Hoekstra (1965:9-10), who does not, however, let it stand as convincing proof of oral composition. It is hard to see, though, why a literate poet who was unused to oral composition would have made just this sort of error.

call this the "argument from external analogy," to distinguish it from the process of creating formulae that Parry called analogy.

This argument has received a good deal of criticism, some of it just. Parry had claimed that almost all Homeric formulae were traditional. The South Slavic poets do employ traditional formulae, but they modify them freely and also invent formulae of their own (see Lord 1960:43-45). I have already suggested that we should depart from Parry and picture Homer doing the same. Some other complaints are neither just nor scholarly, and ought to be refuted. Michael Lynn-George thinks that Parry's "Yugoslav material did not seem to him to yield itself to the same kind of detailed formulaic analysis" (1988:65); David Shive adds, "although repetition of phrases in the Slavic epic was not rare, it was certainly not the general rule, nor the principal compositional technique" (1987:12). Both Shive and Lynn-George defend these extraordinary claims by quoting Parry's statement that "there existed for the Greek heroic songs a fixity of phrasing which is utterly unknown in the Southslavic . . ." (444). This may sound devastating to the analogy, but in fact it is quite irrelevant. Parry is thinking about the authorship of the Homeric poems; he is weighing the implications of the fixity of phrasing *between* the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, compared with the lack of fixity *between* one South Slavic poem and another. Shive and Lynn-George have apparently construed this as, "There is less fixity of phrasing *within* one South Slavic poem than within one Greek one." When Shive calls this "a crisis for formulae" (1987:12-13) and says that it was his South Slavic experience that drove Parry to serious alteration of his concept of what a formula is, Shive's desire to nail Parry has led to some very irresponsible scholarship.[42] We have seen that Avdo is only slightly less formulaic than Homer, so that most of us require statistics to perceive the difference. And Parry had extended (not seriously altered) his concept of the formula *before* he went to Yugoslavia in 1933 (see 301, 308-9, written no later than 1930; and cf. xxxiii and xxxv).

Others have assaulted the analogy on the grounds that South Slavic poetry is so greatly inferior to Homer that Homer must have been literate. Adam Parry made this inference in 1966, and it has resurfaced at various times since, recently in a piece by Hugh Lloyd-Jones (1992). Lloyd-Jones

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[42] Further (and very telling) criticism of Shive may be found in Danek 1991:25, 38; Danek concentrates on Shive's failure to take account of developments of Parry's position by later oralists.

cannot read South Slavic, or at least could not at that time, and failed to avail himself of Albert Lord's translation of Avdo's *Ženidba*. Adam Parry did have some South Slavic, but he too had not read the *Ženidba*. This may be all that needs to be said; Avdo's poem, read in the original, is, to be sure, not as great as Homer's, but it is first-rate. It is a profound study of the limitations of heroism, rich in moral and political insight; its characters are complex; it contains stylistic intricacies such as patterns of alliteration, rhyme, and ring-composition to indicate closure; its bipartite structure contrasts romance with satire and irony, the ideal hero with a tough, dirty, sometimes inspired, sometimes comic warrior, and asks why the Ottoman Empire requires the latter hero even more than the former.[43] Avdo is not so profound or complex as Homer, to be sure, but the analogy between them is never so faulty to tempt us to conclude that Homer must have been literate.

Mathematics can make a contribution to the analogy. We can construct the same equation for Avdo that we make for Homer and Quintus in the Appendix and find a correlation as good, and a residual almost as good, as Homer's; its slope and y-intercept are nearly identical to Homer's. These two facts—the precision of each equation and their identical parameters—mean that we can feed Homer's total occurrences into *Avdo*'s equation and predict correctly the number of different formulae that *Homer*'s nouns will display! This is a truly extraordinary fact, and cannot be left without an explanation. The mind turns to thoughts of imitation: Quintus' corresponding equation, though less precise than Homer's, as we saw, has almost the same parameters, and so when we feed Quintus' data into Avdo's equation, we get predictions for Quintus' formulae that are at least respectable, though definitely not as close as those for Homer. Quintus' insensitivity to localization accounts for the difference; the fact that he comes as close as he does testifies to his overall mastery of Homer's style.

But there is no possibility of imitation in the case of Avdo, no way he could have acquired a familiarity with Homer in Greek comparable to Quintus'. Nor is there anything about the human brain, or the epic genre as such, or even the epic that employs formulae, that forces this precision upon

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[43] For further stylistic complexities, all analogous to Homer's, see Foley 1990:158-200; on Tale, Danek 1991 and Foley 1995:ch. 2. For a fuller discussion of the poem's form and vision, see Sale 1996.

a poet: predictions for the formulae of Apollonius and Virgil are much further off. There seems no alternative to the conclusion that the style of both poems must have been evolved to meet identical *circumstances* of composition; and since we know Avdo's circumstances, oral composition, we naturally infer that the *Odyssey*'s were the same. Either it was composed orally, or its literate poet was thoroughly familiar with those circumstances and reproduced in writing the oral poet's response to them.

We have already seen how regular formulae mark the difference between Avdo and the literate imitator of Homer, and how similar Avdo's numbers are to Homer's. We could add more numbers; we could discuss the role of extension, economy, and metrically irregular verses in the analogy. For now, let us confine ourselves to two further similarities. Avdo's regular formulae are multi-purposed: they point to the familiar referents, suit the meter well, are sensitive to localization, cover the common syntactical situations, are traditional, and contain context-free epithets. And Avdo's four-valued equation shows that he uses these multi-purposed regular formulae in response to localization. More than anything else, the sound of multitudes of similar regular formulae used in the same way makes us feel that hearing "the Southern Slavs . . . is hearing Homer."

10. The **tenth argument** expands Parry's statement that "we know surely that Homer's poetry is governed by factors unknown to later Greek poetry" (290). Unfortunately, Parry never really confronted the imitator who really wanted to sound like Homer. In his master's thesis, Parry talked about Quintus with distaste, then set him aside as a comparand, presumably because he did not want to read him any more; this was an unfortunate decision, because Quintus' efforts to appropriate the Homeric style met with considerable success, as we have seen. That is why the stylistic differences between Homer and Quintus are so important; they add up to what I want to entitle the "literate-difference argument." What does an oral poet do that an excellent imitator does not, perhaps cannot, do?

Most of these have been discussed already: Quintus does not have enough regular formulae; he is insufficiently extensive and economical; and he is not sensitive to localization and its effect on the oral poet's use of multi-purpose formulae. Many details might be added here, but must await future publication. As with the argument from external analogy, so with literate difference: it is enough to concentrate on the quantity of multi-purposed regular formulae that the oral poet uses in response to

localization. These especially unite Homer and Avdo, and divide both from Quintus. These most of all pose unanswerable questions if Homer was not an oral poet. For example, *why* does Homer have the right number of multi-purposed regular formulae for an oral poet, over 4 times what Quintus would have had, if he had had the same number of lines? How could the untrained imitator know that this was the number needed for a poem the length of the *Odyssey*? Did some oral poet tell him? Can we imagine that an oral poet literally knew the number?

And why on earth should a literate poet *want* to give so minutely accurate an imitation? Scholars who require a literate Homer believe that the poet wished to achieve certain goals that (according to them) an oral poet simply cannot attain. Such a poet would therefore be profoundly conscious of the fact that what he was producing must necessarily differ from an oral poem. A Quintus, to be sure, might well say, I shall make my poem stylistically indistinguishable from Homer's. Of course the actual Quintus failed, but he had a right to think that he could succeed. The hypothetical literate Homer did not *want* to succeed. Why then labor to have the right number of regular-formulae? Or to correlate their use with localization? And so on; the questions multiply, and we always come back to the same answer: if Homer did indeed write the *Odyssey*, he had been an oral poet too long to avoid revealing his past.

Coda. It is natural to raise the question here, "What does such a defense of Milman Parry tell us about Homeric art?" We have, after all, abandoned Parry at several points: we have said that the fixed epithets are heard by the audience; we have stressed the difference between regular and infrequent formulae; we have allowed the possibility that Homer coined (or re-coined) a good many of the latter, at least; we have ignored, if not disallowed, the view that almost all the text is formulaic; we have said nothing to endorse the opinion that at "no time is he seeking words for an idea that has never before found expression" (324). In short, we have said that oral composition is consistent with considerably more individual freedom in the use of formulae than Parry appears to permit. I have indicated in earlier publications some of what I take to be the fruits of that freedom; it is Homer's use of formulae (1) to deepen the concept of Olympian religion (1984), (2) to extend the political and ethical vision of the epos (1989, 1994), and (3), more technically, to meet the demands of oral composition by creating and recreating infrequent formulae (1993). He achieves all that strictly literate poets achieve, but with different tools.

(Skeptics might ponder the incredibly moving ἀνδρὸς παιδοφόνοιο in *Iliad* 24.506: this is an infrequent formula, because –φόνοιο in position 4-5.5 is generic. It also displays the formula-creative feature of Hainsworth-alteration, both by separation—of ἀνδροφόνοιο, itself part of a formula—and inversion, too subtle for our statistics, of Ἕκτορος ἀνδροφόνοιο). And also he achieves what, if John Foley is right, strictly literate poets do not, word-power through the free use of formulae to invoke the entire oral tradition (Foley 1991, 1995).

Although our modifications of Parry's arguments may allot Homer such freedom, they cannot show that he exercised it. Gregory Nagy, if I understand his views correctly, does not want any one poet in the oral tradition to have altered the poem significantly. Except as a mythic figure, his "Homer" names only the last poet in the tradition to claim the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* or both as his own, and though this Homer may have "executed considerable refinements," he did not innovate (1990:79-80). Nothing in our reformulation of Parry's arguments would falsify Nagy's view.   Nor do we confront head-on those scholars such as Keith Stanley (1993) who feel that Homer's art requires literacy, since we cannot rule out the possibility that Homer learned to write. I would prefer to meet such dedicated Scripsists by developing the literary criticism (in the broadest sense) of the best work of the best poets known to be oral—such as Avdo Medjedović (cf. Sale 1996). This would still be Argument 9, perhaps, but elaborated far beyond our use of it here to defend Milman Parry.

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Appendix

In each author, Homer and Quintus, we first construct equations relating the number of different formulae (**df**) any noun will display (this is the y-variable) to the noun's total occurrences (**to**).   Homer's equation shows genuine, but not remarkable, correlation: the correlation coefficient, measuring the consistency with which y varies with x, is .78 (1.0 is perfect correlation).   The points on the graph are fairly near the line (the root-mean-square residual, a measure of this distance, is 3.6). Clearly there is a significant tendency in Homer for nouns to display more different formulae the more often they occur. This is genuine information, since it

was theoretically possible for him to start with a fixed number of formulae for each noun, and simply use them over and over, so that once those had appeared, **df** would *not* rise as **to** rose. Homer, of course, is not consciously concerned with this relationship: he adds formulae when he needs them, and *we* observe his consistency. When we create the same equation for Quintus, we actually get a higher correlation coefficient, .85, and a lower mean residual, 3.2; the imitator apparently *is* conscious of the **df/to** relationship.

Now let us include two more variables in Homer's equation, localization (**loc**), and occurrences per formula (**odf**), which together with **to** will make up a complex x-variable. Total occurrences will be in the numerator, the other two in the denominator; we are predicting that as **df** rises with **to**, it will rise less quickly if the localization is high—if the noun does not wander about the verse—and if the occurrences per formula rise with it. We expect **odf** to rise with **loc**, because we observed earlier that high localization accompanied the employment of regular formulae, which of course show more occurrences per formula than the others. We might simply have put regular formula occurrences in the denominator, but we are guessing that high localization may accompany more occurrences per formula of infrequent formulae as well. We do not put **loc** alone in the denominator, because **odf** may well move inversely with **df** independently of **loc**. None of these variables is to be seen as causal**.** Homer is the cause; the variables are merely the factors that affected him. Homer, though he cannot have been conscious of the equation we are constructing, was probably conscious of the variables; in any case, the equation tells us how he responded. The equation turns out to be **df = .4 (to/loc + to/odf) + .6.** Now the correlation coefficient is much higher, at .94, and the residual much lower, at 1.9; this is really an excellent fit.   It means that Homer's behavior is consistent throughout the *Odyssey*; wherever localization and occurrences per formula are high, this will slow down the rate at which the number of different formulae will vary with total occurrences. Our analysis of how Homer's behavior modulates in localization is nicely confirmed.

Naturally we must test this observation by examining Quintus' corresponding four-variable equation. We are not wholly surprised to see that the addition of the two variables to his two-valued equation leads to an insignificant improvement: the correlation coefficient goes from .85 to .86, the mean residual from 3.2 to 3.1. This difference probably means nothing whatever: we had already concluded that Quintus was virtually indifferent

to changes in localization, and we have merely confirmed this. It is obvious that Quintus is chiefly interested in maintaining his roughly 50% formularity. As total occurrences go up, he will make more different formulae, whatever the localization of his nouns.[44]

Our confirmation is complete. The skillful imitator does not respond to changes in localization because they mean nothing to him. The oral poet does respond, because high localization gives him the opportunity to use his multi-purpose formulae, the formulae designed to enable rapid composition, the "easy way to make verses."

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[44] This is not to say that he is merely mechanically making formulae. It is rather to say that each time he must face the problem of using a noun, the choice for him lies between formula or non-formulaic simply; he has time to ignore the constraints that varying localization places upon an oral poet. We can legitimately argue that he is creating formulae as he needs them, but his needs do not include rapidity of composition.

Indeed it is hard to see why localization would have much of a role if there were no time pressure. A noun has high localization, and wants to fall in a particular spot; fine, put it there, then decide whether to use an old formula, make up a new one, or eschew a formula altogether. You have time. A noun has low localization; put it where you like, and go through exactly the same set of choices. You have time. But the creator of the *Odyssey* either did not have time or, if he did, elected to use with dedicated precision the techniques that oral poets used.