

From Oral Performance to Paper-Text to Cyber-Edition

John Miles Foley

A performance is not a text, no more than an experience is an item or language is writing. At its very best a textual reproduction—with the palpable reality of the performance flattened onto a page and reduced to an artifact—is a script for reperformance, a libretto to be enacted and re-enacted, a prompt for an emergent reality. I start by recalling this self-evident truth because our culturally sanctioned ritual of converting performances into texts submerges the fact that in faithfully following out our customary editorial program we are doing nothing less radical than converting living species into museum exhibits, reducing the flora and fauna of verbal art to fossilized objects. In a vital sense textual reproductions become cenotaphs: they memorialize and commemorate, but they can never embody.

Even the seemingly neutral and innocuous terminology associated with the performance-to-print ritual bespeaks its underlying process and goal, if we pay attention to what these terms really imply. Oral traditional performances are *collected*, that is, caught and imprisoned in the anthropologist's or folklorist's game-bag via inscription on paper, acoustic media, or video media. Lest they wriggle away, these performances are in effect euthanized, stripped of the dynamism that characterizes their living identity in preparation for mounting on the game-hunter's wall. Then come *transcribing* and *editing*, the initial stages in textual taxidermy, as scholars, now thankfully removed from the messiness of the original performance arena and comfortably ensconced in more clinical surroundings, render synthetic order unto the chaos of what once was a multi-dimensional, context-dependent experience. With *publication* the trajectory is complete: representing the organism as a one-dimensional textual photograph

completes its transformation and permits its inclusion in a culture's anthology of epitomes.

And what licenses this reduction, this ritual sacrifice of the once-living performance? Viewed soberly and without the "cultural cover" (the unspoken defense of "business as usual"), this is of course an abhorrent, indefensible practice. It is in fact nothing less than uncivilized, since it undertakes the forcible colonization of a vast and highly diverse category of human expression, all in the name of subordinating its differences to our imperial notion of what verbal art must be and how it can be understood and represented.¹ Although modern-day anthropology has put the lie to the myth of objective observation and recent methods of literary analysis have de-emphasized production in favor of a deeper consideration of the role of reception, scholars have been slow to recognize what is in some ways a more obvious, more patent, more fundamental problem: the unthinking, transgressive imposition of textuality upon an unsuspecting "nation" of oral performances.

The Challenge and Prior Solutions

Let me reframe the substance of these observations as a challenge to be confronted in the present essay, using the case of South Slavic oral epic as illustration. In seeking to represent oral performance with as much fidelity as possible, we are charged with the task of understanding, exporting, carrying over, and re-creating as much of the reality of the experience as we can. The edition that results must theoretically be useful and informative for specialist and nonspecialist "consumers" alike, and it is well to keep in mind that many such performances—South Slavic epic among them—will be unfamiliar in subject, context, and even story-line to the majority of those consumers.

For present purposes I will pass over the earliest editorial projects that sought to represent South Slavic oral epic, in particular the noteworthy nineteenth-century collection of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić,² and concentrate

¹ Internationally and over time, oral poetry dwarfs written poetry in sheer amount as well as heterogeneity; see Foley 2002: espec. 22-57 and 146-87. I will be referring throughout this essay to a new, experimental edition of oral poetry instanced in Foley 2004a.

² For a comparative study of the classic Karadžić collections and volumes versus the Parry-Lord project and publications, see Foley 2004b. On the history of editing "folk literature" in general, see Foley 1995a.

briefly on the latest series of edited volumes, *Serbo-Croatian Heroic Songs (SCHS)*, the official publication of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature at Harvard University.³ In terms of fidelity to oral performance, this project has certainly broken new ground. At the level of fieldwork, the research team of Milman Parry, Albert Lord, and Nikola Vujnović systematically surveyed six principal epic-singing areas in the Former Yugoslavia, recording songs by a variety of *guslari* either acoustically on aluminum records or via transcription into written text. They categorically favored the longer Moslem songs over the shorter Christian epic poems, chiefly because the former offered a more commensurate comparison for Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.⁴

Plans for editing and publishing this material also reveal an important advance over previous schemes. First, Lord insisted that the performances be transcribed and printed precisely as they were sung or recited, without the editorial intervention that was so common (indeed expected) in earlier published collections, both of South Slavic oral epic and other European folk genres. This policy meant that singers' "errors," hesitations, and other perceived blemishes were not silently emended, as had been customary, but rather left in the textual record as a true reflection of what actually transpired. Second, Lord advocated the publication of performances by district (what can be called the dialectal level) and then by individual singer (the idiolectal level), including multiple songs by the same *guslar* and by different *guslari* in order to foster comparative studies of flexibility and stability.⁵ The aim was to provide a glimpse of the entire tradition of oral epic as it existed in the 1930s in greater Bosnia, and the fact that Lord's comparative scholarship, especially *The Singer of Tales* (1960/2000), was based on that panoramic view lends it increased credibility.

In order to gauge the contribution of the *SCHS* series and the relative effectiveness of its format, we need to look further into the details of its content and context. As for the actual performances contained within its covers, volumes one and two present a selection of songs by different *guslari* from the region or district of Novi Pazar. In the original-language

³ On the *SCHS* project and its background, see espec. *SCHS* I:3-20; Foley 1988:31-35; Kay 1995; Foley 1999:39-45; and Mitchell and Nagy 2000.

⁴ On the distinction between Moslem and Christian subgenres of South Slavic oral epic, see Foley 1991:61-134; 2002:204-13. On the comparative criterion of length and complexity in the international context of epic, see Foley 1999:41-44.

⁵ On dialectal, idiolectal, and pan-traditional levels of structure and articulation in South Slavic oral epic, see Foley 1990:158-200, 278-328.

volume (II), these performances are transcribed into poetic lines—the characteristic ten-syllable verse-form of the epic—and the overall presentation is augmented with excerpts from conversations between the singers and the translator/interviewer Vujnović as well as skeletal notes to the transcriptions. The translation volume (I) includes English versions of some of the performances, synopses of the rest, excerpts from conversations, occasional bibliographical material, and Béla Bartók's transcription of the musical component of part of an epic sung by Salih Ugljanin. Importantly, the translations of the epic performances are done into run-on prose with no notation of poetic form.

Volumes three and four of *SCHS* present Avdo Medjedović's magisterial performance of *The Wedding of Smailagić Meho*, on which Lord and others have based so much. At 12,311 lines this song is Homeric in size and scope, and the rich complexity of the plot and description do indeed make it a worthy comparand for the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.⁶ The translation volume (III), by Lord, houses an unprecedented variety of supporting materials, with essays on the singer's life and times and on his originality (a vexed topic in oral epic studies), as well as copious conversations and other versions of the story, including the text that was read aloud to Medjedović and which served as his source. Again the translation is configured in run-on prose. The original-language volume (IV), by David Bynum, which is based on the oral-dictated text that was elicited and written down by Vujnović during fieldwork, consists of conversation excerpts, a dictated repertoire, the poetic text, and 19 pages of textual notes.

The two remaining *SCHS* volumes published to date contain edited transcriptions of both sung and oral-dictated epic performances, though without accompanying English translations, both under the editorship of Bynum. Volume VI focuses on additional contributions from Avdo Medjedović, while volume XIV houses performances by four *guslari* from the region of Bihać. Both present lineated poetic texts prefaced by introductions and synopses and supported by skeletal notes. Bynum explicitly introduces editorial conventions such as italics to mark nonstandard forms, ellipses to indicate omissions, horizontal carets to signal extended catalogues, and marginal symbols to inform the reader of a change in performative mode.⁷ Although his comments on the musical aspects of “the singing,” as he calls it, are not based on professional musical

⁶ For more on the parameters of the comparison, see Foley 1999:39-41; for analysis based on Medjedović's performance, see Lord 1960/2000:79-108.

⁷ See his explanations at VI:1 and XIV:14-43.

transcriptions and analysis, they do make us aware of the multiformity that also characterizes that dimension of South Slavic oral epic performance.⁸

Taken as a whole, then, the *SCHS* series represents a major step forward in providing readers with a sense of the South Slavic oral epic tradition. Innovations such as verbatim transcriptions, multiple and linked versions of various songs by various singers within a homogeneous dialectal region, the provision of some context for the performance (conversations with singers, repertoires, modest textual notes), and experiments with scoring the libretto have all helped to pry the performances loose from their conventional textual moorings and set them productively adrift. We undoubtedly understand their protean, emergent nature better because of such innovations.

At the same time, however, the *SCHS* series has left a number of stones unturned. In order to gain a comparative readership, which would in turn lead to more realistic comparative study, translations should always accompany original-language transcriptions.⁹ No matter how carefully configured a text may be, all of the energy that went into its making is by definition lost if only a very limited audience can gain access. Moreover, translations should be poetically lineated rather than converted into prose, both to give a more faithful impression of the performance's structure and texture (its "thought-bytes") and to promote closer attention by non-specialists, who if nothing else can locate similarities and differences by using the translation as a line-by-line key to the original. As for an appropriate apparatus, performance-based—rather than classically textual—notes are most helpful to readers of oral traditional works, whether they be specialists or not. If the *guslar* uses a nonstandard form, we will profit by learning why he did so; if *lapsus linguae* intervenes, an explanation for that slip of the tongue helps us understand the process of composition; if extrametrical interjections or "long" or "short" lines occur, we need to know whether they can be explained as performance-related phenomena. Other areas that the *SCHS* series does not address include the meaning of

⁸ For transcriptions and analyses by professional musicologists, see Bartók 1934, Erdely 1995, and Foster 2004.

⁹ Indeed, we face the further problem of the general paucity of South Slavic oral epic available for comparative study, a situation that is only exacerbated by publications that appear without English translations. Ironically, given the narrowness of the model (a single subgenre, Moslem epic, from a single oral tradition) the so-called Oral Theory—which has been generalized so widely (see Foley 1985 in its online, updated form at www.oraltradition.org)—is effectively balanced on the head of a pin. We need much more material made available in both the original language and translation.

traditional idioms (the traditional referentiality of phrases, scenes, and story-patterns), the variance between Nikola Vujnović's transcription of audio records and what the given *guslar* actually sang (the two do not agree by any means), the rhetorical function of music (which plays an actively expressive and not merely a passive, "accompanying" role), and a host of linguistic phenomena that figure in composition and reception of the songs. Most crucially of all, perhaps, no edition so far produced has allowed us to hear the actual performance: *SCHS* and all of its forebears have maintained an unbroken silence. To be fair, advances in some of these areas have been hindered by the tyranny of the book as the chosen (and sole) vehicle for presenting oral performances; as noted above, transforming an experience into an object amounts to a fundamental distortion of that experience.

A New Solution

As a new solution to the challenge cited above—to represent oral performance with as much fidelity as possible; to understand, export, carry over, and re-create as much of the reality of the experience as we can—I advocate a tiered strategy involving both the conventional (and still valuable) resources of the book and the newly available resources of the internet. This prescription emphatically does not mean that we should reflexively jump into using cybernetic media whenever possible, since along with great promise comes the inherent danger of fascination with the new technology for its own sake. Just because we *can* use the internet for various purposes doesn't mean that it always and everywhere provides the best option. By assigning appropriate tasks to each vehicle, we can take advantage of what each uniquely makes possible while avoiding the pitfalls of a monolithic approach. In short, I favor the policy of letting each medium do what it does best.

An Experimental Paper-Edition

Given the networks of intellectual exchange still current in the academy and elsewhere, one significant part of the dual solution proposed here is to reconfigure the book to more faithfully represent the oral performance. In accordance with the caveat issued above, the book medium still offers a handy vehicle for conveying a transcription, translation, and supporting materials of various sorts. Likewise, there is little doubt that the audience for such performances is at this point in our media history still

more fluent in the presentational idiom of the text than that of the internet, although that index is rapidly changing, especially among younger people. With these precepts in mind, then, and instead of abandoning the textual medium altogether, I have retooled the idea of a conventional edition to promote the contextual reception of the performance that is its basis. While not a perfect solution (a “perfect solution” would entail a native speaker’s deep familiarity with the tradition as well as his or her actual participation as audience for the event of performance), this experimental edition offers its reader new avenues into understanding the composite, many-sided experience from which it stems.¹⁰

Here are the paper-edition’s contents, with illustrations as necessary. The volume begins with introductory material that includes a preface (a manual on how to use the book), a pronunciation key, background on the Parry-Lord fieldwork, a portrait of the singer Halil Bajgorić (with excerpts from his interview with Nikola Vujnović), and a synopsis of the general story of *The Wedding of Mustajbey’s Son Bećirbey*. In order to ground this particular performance by this particular singer in the larger context of South Slavic epic as it existed in that time and place, I also include discussion of other *guslari* from the region of Stolac, a profile of Moslem as opposed to Christian epic, and historical, cultural, and legendary milieus. I then present the performance itself as a coordinated original-language transcription and English translation in facing columns. The transcription is as accurate a text as I could assemble based on a combination of analog and digital recordings from the original aluminum records inscribed on June 13, 1935 in the small village of Dabrica. Every last peculiarity and “blemish” is included, with variance from the standard contemporary and unmarked language signaled by italics,¹¹ while the translation is a consistent and almost always literal rendering of what Bajgorić sang, construed in poetic lines that correspond one-for-one to the original. Immediately below is a brief sample of the performance as textualized in book form (lines 1-19):

¹⁰ What follows is a description of Foley 2004a.

¹¹ To some degree the idea of a “standard, unmarked language” is of course mythical, since different speakers from different regions will define the standard differently. I have relied on broad-based dictionaries and lexicons as a guide for determining variance from the mythical standard, and have italicized unusual word-forms and inflections on that basis. For more on the specialized language of South Slavic oral epic, see Foley 1999:66-88.

0:30

wOj! Rano rani Djerdelez Alija,	Oj! Djerdelez Alija arose early,
vEj! Alija, careva gazija,	Ej! Alija, the tsar's hero,
Na Visoko više Sarajeva,	Near Visoko above Sarajevo,
Prije zore vi bijela dana—	Before dawn and the white day—
Još do zore dva puna savata,	5 Even two full hours before dawn,
Dok se svane vi sunce vograne	When day breaks and the sun rises
hI danica da pomoli lice.	And the morning star shows its face.
Kad je momak dobro vuranijo,	When the young man got himself up,
vU vodžaku vatru naložijo	He kindled a fire in the hearth
vA vuz vatru dževzu pristavijo;	10 And on the fire he put his coffeepot;
Dok je momak kavu zgotovijo,	After Alija brewed the coffee,
hI jednu, dvije sebi natočijo—	One, then two cups he poured himself—
hI jednu, dvije, tu ćejifa nije,	One, then two, he felt no spark,
Tri, četiri, ćejif ugrabijo,	Three, then four, the spark seized him,
Sedam, osam, dok mu dosta bila.	15 Seven, then eight, until he had enough.
vU bečara nema hizmečara,	A bachelor has no maidservant,
Jer Alija nidje nikog nema,	And indeed Alija had no one anywhere,
Samo sebe,ji svoga dorata.	Just himself and his bay horse.
Skoči momak na noge lagane,	The young man jumped to his light feet,

A few textual signals deserve explanation. The time notation (0:30) designates the onset of the actual singing of the epic after 29 seconds of instrumental introduction on the *gusle*, a single-stringed, lutelike instrument. Such notations occur throughout the transcription/translation, marking the start of each new aluminum record and thereby illustrating the singer's changing pace.¹² Extrametrical elements like the initiatory “wOj!” in line 1 and “hI” in lines 12 and 13 are enclosed in asterisks to indicate their relative position outside the rhythmic and melodic compass of the ten-syllable verse form; they are spoken, in effect, before the decasyllable (but not the poetic line) begins.¹³ Excrescent or substituted sounds such as those that occur,

¹² Parry and Lord employed a specially built recording apparatus with two turntables. As one aluminum record finished (after about 50 lines in this performance), Lord switched the recording to the other turntable and the next disk.

¹³ This distinction here is a crucial one, and central to the clear differentiation of oral performance from its customary representation in printed text. The poetic line is not simply a series of ten sung syllables, but also the overall musical and rhythmic pattern (both vocal and instrumental) in which those syllables are embedded. Thus, from a performative viewpoint, the two-beat measure of accompaniment on the *gusle* that usually intervenes between decasyllabic vocal segments is as much a part of “the line” as its verbal complement. If an extrametrical element also occurs during this measure, then it too belongs to the line though not to the decasyllable proper; from this perspective, such verses are in no way “long” or hypermetric. Likewise, eight- and nine-syllable lines, which include within them vocal rests during the first or a combination of the first and

respectively, in “vEj!” (for “Ej!” in line 2) and “savata” (for “sahata” in line 5) are marked as departures from standard forms by italicizing them. Punctuation, which was after all created for textual rhetoric, is spare, and in most cases reflects the tendency of this performance idiom to take the form of syntactically end-stopped lines that are at least nominally complete in themselves. In other words, every attempt is made—short of providing the actual sounds of the performance (on which, more later)—to economically convey what one hears on the record.

The next section of the experimental edition is the performance-based Commentary. As the name implies, this extensive digest provides information that bears on the composition and structure of Bajgorić’s poem *as a performance*. As an example of the role played by the Commentary, here are the notes that gloss lines 1-49:

1-2, etc. Singers often use expletives like *Oj!* And *Ej!* as attention-getters and (what amounts to the same thing) rhetorical devices to indicate beginnings and emphases. Sometimes they are extrametrical, as in line 1, while at other times they constitute part of the basic decasyllabic structure, as in line 2. They can be approximated by translating them as “Hey!” or “Yes!”, but I choose to maintain the original words in order to stress their performative function as something other than ordinary lexemes. Compare the initiatory *Hwæt!* (“Lo!”) that opens *Beowulf* and other Old English oral traditional poems; see further Foley 1991:214-23.

1. Note the relatively rare performative [w] that precedes the expletive *Oj!*, presumably to foster ease of articulation, as performatives do throughout the epic singing tradition. HB uses an unusual variety of these sounds ([v], [j], [h], [m], [n], [l], [w], and very rarely [nj], [d], and [s]), customarily to avoid intervocalic hiatus and the attendant glottal stop between words or between syllables in the same word (for comparison with hiatus in Homer, see Foley 1999:73-74, 85, 88). See further **NVR** and the section on **Performatives** elsewhere in this volume.

Here and throughout this performance it is crucial to recognize that although HB sings both 11- and 9-syllable lines, neither type is truly “long” (hypermetric) or “short” (hypometric). Rather the “extra” syllables occur outside the melodic and rhythmic frame of the line, while the “missing” syllables are actually vocal rests within that same frame. This phenomenon has major implications for the identity and dynamics of the poetic line, which is far more than an ordered sequence of lexical items

second positions, are not “short” or hypometric: rather, they maintain a symbiotic relationship with the whole, multi-dimensional identity of the verse form, and not merely one sector of that pattern. Whether the *guslar* sings eight, nine, or eleven syllables, his line—in all of its right-sized manifestations—is governed by the overall melody and rhythm rather than (merely textual) syllable-counting. See further the discussion below and Foley 2002:32-33.

(see further the section on **Music** in this volume). In addition to maintaining the basic integrity of the decasyllable as an expressive medium, the vocal rests are a species of the “right justification” that characterizes oral epic phraseology in South Slavic and ancient Greek (see further Foley 1990:82-84, 96-106, 129-55, 178-96). Each such line is marked in the original-language text (* * for extrametrical syllables and ## for vocal rests) and commented upon in the note attached to the individual line. Lines with initial extrametrical syllables are as follows: 1, 12, 13, 77, 93, 148, 160, 223, 347, 526, 630, 692, 713, 773, 830, 847, 914, and 966. Lines with initial vocal rests of one or two syllables are as follows: 111, 212, 431, 641, 745, 854, 886, and 911; cf. 1001 (this last instance internal).

2. Unlike *wOj!* in line 1, *vEj!* is rhythmically and melodically part of the ten-syllable increment. See further lines 511 and 514, with notes.

4-7. A four-line capsule that memorably describes early morning and, like Homer’s “rosy-fingered dawn,” acts as an initiatory marker in the narrative, signaling not only “day” but more fundamentally the onset of a new narrative segment or episode. See further the **AF**.

5. HB sings *savata* while NV transcribes as *sahata*, restoring the expected form via *lapsus auris*. Disparities such as this are tabulated in **NVR**.

8-15. This is HB’s Coffee capsule. Cp. line 222-24 and see further the **AF**.

10. Here (with *dževzu*) and throughout his transcription NV uses underlining to indicate either uncertainty or his conviction that a form is somehow nonstandard.

11. HB sings *kavu* and NV aspirates > *kahvu*. Cf. line 222 (with note) as well as the note to line 249.

12-13. In both lines HB uses a performative plus run-up glide (**hI**) to lead into the initial sound of the first metrical element (*jednu*). Both instances are extrametrical, occurring before the metrical and musical pattern of the decasyllable. See further the note to line 1. Cp. line 223, with note.

13-14. HB sings *ćejif-* while NV transcribes as *ćeif-*; see line 224, where the same disparity occurs. Š gives *ćeif* as the first form of this Turkicism.

16. The proverbial observation that “A bachelor has no maidservant” acts as a boundary following the Coffee capsule. See further line 100, with note, and the **AF**.

19. See the note to line 484 and the **AF**.

20. HB devoices *niz* to *nis* before *kulu*, and NV does not restore the standard form. It is well to note that this deflection is a natural and regular change usually obscured by (print-centered) orthographical convention; NV thus is doing no more than faithfully reflecting what HB actually sang. On the idiomatic force of this *Position change* line, see the **AF**.

21-49. This is an occurrence of the widely attested typical scene of *Readying the Hero's Horse*; see further Foley 1991:67, 125-27; 1999:84, 128, 133, 300n33. See further the **AF**.

25. HB fronts the final sound in *gori* (< *gore*), apparently under the immediate influence of *svali*, which then becomes a partner in the common traditional pattern of in-line or leonine rhyme. NV does not restore the standard form, but does mark his awareness of the unusual form with underlining (*gori*). See further lines 194 and 207 (with note).

26. NV adds palatalization, hearing *zlatalja* for HB's *zlatala* via *lapsus auris*.

27. NV first writes *svog* ("his"), then crosses out the second word and substitutes *dok* ("while"), reading "A dok dobra konja timarijo" ("And after he groomed [his] fine steed") and reflecting what HB actually sang. Here *lapsus auris* could have yielded a slight refashioning of the line, in the process changing the line from a dependent to an independent unit (at least nominally, since the additive, paratactic structure of the epic register programmatically blurs that distinction).

29. HB sings *djibretom* (cf. *djebre*, < and SAN) and NV does not restore the expected form.

30. This and seven additional occurrences of *bači* (72, 210, 640, 644, 645, 667, and 700; cf. also *zabači* at 37 and *prebačijo* at 453) instead of *baci* argue that the lexically nonstandard form is in fact a regular feature of HB's traditional idiolect. NV transcribes consistently (except for line 210, where his *baci* probably amounts to *lapsus calami*) as *bači*.

34. Lit., "Then he tightened it so that he did not overbalance it." Here (as sometimes elsewhere) NV transcribes by joining a proclitic to the next word; see further **NVR**.

35. A snaffle-bit is a restraining device consisting of two bars jointed at the center. HB sings *djemo'*, with initial palatalization and deletion of [m] before *studenijem*; NV deletes the palatalization and restores [m] via *lapsus auris*.

37. HB deletes the expected [n] from **Zlatnu* and sings *Zlat'u*, an instance of *lapsus linguae* perhaps attributable to the influence of the acoustically similar *vilicu* in the preceding line or to the mirroring of either the acc. s. of the name of Zlata, Bećirbey's betrothed (*Zlatu*, e.g., 262) or the dat. s. of *zlato*, the word for "gold" (*zlatu*, e.g., 459). See further the note to line 30.

40-42. On the traditional idea of a horse prancing without guidance from a rider, see the **AF**.

40. Here and throughout his recorded epic repertoire (but not in the register of speech used in his conversation with NV) HB pronounces *sj* as [š] rather than [sy], whether in this word (*šede* < *sjede*) or elsewhere. Since it thus amounts to a (regular) peculiarity of his singing dialect or idiolect, I transcribe the remaining instances below without further comment.

41. The semivowel [w], as here between the two elements in *Po avliji*, appears to be part of the general articulation of [o] or [u] before

another vowel (compare *vodu o'skočijo* at line 137), and so I do not transcribe it as a performative. If, on the other hand, [u] is used initially as a run-up glide, I transcribe it as a full syllable, positioning it between asterisks to mark its extrametrical character. See, e.g., lines 630, 692, 713, 773, 847, 914, 966; compare also lines 130-31 and the appended note.

42. Here (twice) and at lines 895 and 896 HB sings *prez* (for the standard *bez*, which occurs nowhere in this performance), and NV transcribes in all four instances as *prez* without any indication of the nonstandard form. Cp. line 412, where HB sings *brez*, maintaining voicing but again with intrusive [r]; NV transcribes as *brez* on that occasion, with the underlining signaling the nonstandard form.

44-49. Most similes in the South Slavic epic tradition are a single verse or two in length, but here HB provides an extended comparison between a horse so proud and well-trained that it prances independently about the courtyard and a young shepherdess roaming the upland pasture clad in her hood and motley jacket and carrying a lunch her mother packed for the day's nourishment. As in the Homeric epics, this simile memorably juxtaposes the world of heroic achievement and the domestic, bucolic world that knows little or nothing of battles and heroes. See further the **AF**.

44. HB sings *piški*, a difficult word that I take as a deflection of *pišljiv* ("valueless, insignificant"; therefore "careless") through addition of the common adjectival suffix *-ski* to the root. The lack of agreement (one expects **piška*) may be explained by HB's reflex to preserve the original vowel in the second syllable of *pišljiv(a)*, adjusted *metri causa* via apocope. Note that NV transcribes as the unpalatalized and uninflected *pišliv*.

46. HB handles numbers in a systematic fashion, reducing multiples of ten from *-deset* to *-des'* (*dvades'* at 310, 509, 510, 563, 1019); *trides'* at 81, 82; cf. the full forms at 710 [*trideset*] and 1028 [*pedeset*], where they fit *metri causa*). Numbers in the teens, on the other hand, are reduced from *-naest* to *-n'es'* or *-'es'* (*dvan'es'* at 93, 94, 357, 614, 687; *četer'es'* at 269, 544, 590, 865) and *-n'ejes'* (*petn'ejes'* at 303) or *-najes'* (*dvanajes'* at 320 and 395 [where it partners with *bešlija* to form a second-colon formula]). See espec. the note to line 544.

49. The palatalization of *nje* (< *ne*) seems to be due to the influence of the immediately preceding word *joj*, not at all an uncommon "leakage" of palatalization from one word to another (cf. back-palatalization in South Slavic, which proceeds in the opposite direction). Some instances of this phenomenon may be interpreted as simple *lapsus linguae*, while some appear to be built into the epic register as a natural phonological dynamic. See further the note to line 52, with note, where proximate phonological leakage may again be operative. HB adds initial [š] and sings *šcerka*; NV underlines the first sound (*šcerka*) but does not restore the standard form *čerka*.

For the type of reader (and such a reader is certainly in the majority) whose prior experience of the South Slavic oral epic tradition is limited or even non-existent, these notes aim to provide some general orientation and detailed explanation of otherwise puzzling phenomena. For example, the note to lines 1-2, etc. reveals that the first word of the poem—the extrametrical interjection “vEj!”—has the force of an attention-getting device, a signal for starting the performance, and has comparative analogues in other oral traditions. The next note (to line 1 alone) introduces the concept of “performatives,” non-lexical sounds that are inserted by the *guslar* to avoid hiatus and smooth articulation during his singing. Always italicized in this transcription in order to mark their special character, these sounds have customarily been completely eliminated from transcribed texts of South Slavic epic, and indeed even Vujnović, Parry and Lord’s interviewer/translator/amanuensis, silently deleted them from his transcriptions. Since performatives play such an important role in actual, living performance, however, they are included in this transcription and cross-referenced as appropriate throughout the Commentary. Later on in the volume, a special chapter on performatives analyzes their role in more depth (see below). In this same note also the first cross-references to the chapters on “Nikola Vujnović’s Resinging” (NVR) and on the role of music also appear (see further the descriptions of those units below).

The Commentary also fills in other sorts of background information that texts themselves can manage only clumsily if at all, such as the notation that lines 4-7 serve the idiomatic purpose of an initiatory marker. Beyond the literal meaning of the phraseology describing the beginning of day, the *guslar* is employing a traditional signal that cues the reader by aligning this performance-start with others in the audience’s or reader’s experience. Beyond the basic facts of structure and morphology, the conventional, idiomatic meanings implicitly attached to this unit, as well as to the “coffee capsule” at lines 8-15 and so many other traditional elements in the performance, are usually the province of another section of the volume, the Apparatus Fabulosus (AF), which is first cross-referenced in the note to lines 4-7 and discussed later on in this essay. Generally speaking, the Commentary deals with traditional units and the AF with their idiomatic connotations within the specialized language of the epic. Both perspectives are necessary if one aspires to a reading of the textualized performance that respects the poetics of this tradition.

Throughout the Commentary I have identified all of those places, except for the ubiquitous performatives,¹⁴ where the original transcription by Vujnović does not represent what the singer Bajgorić actually sang. In each case the reason for the discrepancy is explained, whether that be a simple difference in phonology (palatalization, aspiration, fronting of vowels, and so on), variation by *lapsus linguae* (slip of the tongue) or *lapsus calami* (slip in writing), or some other cause. There are also numerous references to the process I have called *lapsus auris*, a coined term that is meant to describe the differences attributable to Vujnović's own fluency in the traditional epic-singing idiom and, by consequence, his occasional modification of Bajgorić's song on that basis. The full implications of Vujnović's double identity as transcriber (he had four years of schooling) and as a practicing *guslar* himself are taken up programmatically in the NVR section of the volume, but the discrepancies themselves are first noted in the Commentary.

Brief notations on traditional units of all sorts occur in the Commentary. In the sample above, for instance, we encounter a proverb acting as a boundary at line 15, a recurrent idiom at line 19, an occurrence of the relatively common "Readying the Hero's Horse" scene at lines 21-49, and the rare simile (of quite Homeric proportions) at lines 44-49. In the same vein, the gloss to line 46 explains how the *guslar* systematically and formulaically handles numbers that fall in the teens or among the multiples of ten. Note that, as is the practice throughout the Commentary, these traditional units and patterns are simply identified, with other instances (chiefly but not exclusively within this performance) tabulated to give the reader some idea of their structure and morphology. The task of explaining their importance—in particular, their bearing on our reception of the poem as a performance—is left primarily to the AF section.

Naturally, this Commentary section of the experimental edition also contains the more usual kind of supplementary information found in commentaries to works of literature, including occasional explanations of customs, social events, and relationships; glosses of arcane terminology and certain aspects of material culture; and the explication of difficult or uncertain words and lines. Within this last category, the excursus on *piški* at line 44 illustrates how far the epic language can veer from the unmarked standard, and why this performance-based register needs special attention if we are to restore some of its lexical and illocutionary force.

Immediately following the Commentary is the section entitled "Nikola Vujnović's Resinging" (NVR), which documents an unexpected

¹⁴ The performatives are tabulated exhaustively in NVR, as well as discussed analytically in the separate section on performatives.

development that took place as the song-performance took initial shape as a textual document. I had originally assumed that my audition and retranscription of Bajgorić's performance would at best simply confirm what Vujnović had heard when, a decade after the 1930s fieldwork, he came to the Parry Collection to transcribe the acoustically recorded song-performances. Because he had not just a native speaker's but a *guslar*'s ear and was physically present at the very performances he was auditing, I assumed that he would prove the ideal transcriber.¹⁵ But in this assumption I was much mistaken. Vujnović's transcription differed from the acoustic recording in several ways: in general dialect (NV's speech, and to a degree his poetic language, was regionally more ijekavski, with more palatalized forms, than HB's); in personal idiolect; in HB's slips of the tongue (*lapsus linguae*, which NV usually corrected); in NV's slips in writing (the inevitable instances of "scribal error"); in NV's deletion of every last one of the hundreds of performatives that populate the sung performance (apparently recognizing that they were features of living performance only and feeling that they therefore had no place in the medium of fossilized texts); and in one other wholly unforeseen but uniquely revelatory respect.

Since NV was both the transcriber and a *guslar* himself, he made a number of adjustments that amount to remaking the poem. By using his personal fluency in the expressive idiom, which like his non-specialized, everyday dialect and idiolect was not identical to HB's, NV essential "re-sang" the epic on the page. For this process I have coined the term *lapsus auris*, a "slip of the ear," but it is a slip only from a textual perspective. Rather than making a mistake, NV was construing the epic tale in his own terms, not so much emending as reconceiving. Even with pen in hand, he was hearing and reporting what he heard through the filter of his personal epic idiolect. To illustrate the various ways in which NV's transcription differs from what HB sang, I include below a short excerpt from the master tabulation that accompanies the explanation of his practice in the section entitled NVR, with a variety of different phenomena and explanations marked in **bold**:

	<u>HB</u>	<u>NV</u>	<u>Explanation</u>
103.	sv' odaje	sve odaje	Lapsus auris / See note
104.	vOnda	Onda	Performative [v]
	momak	mamak	Lapsus calami
	vavliju	avlije	Performative [v] / See note

¹⁵ I speak here, of course, of the acoustically recorded performances (whether sung or recited) and not of the oral-dictated texts that Vujnović took down at the time of the original fieldwork.

105.	vOnda	Onda	Performative [v]
106.	vA	Pa	Performative [v], Lapsus auris
	vone	on	Performative [v], Grace note
	pušća	pušća	HB's idiolect / See note
107.	vA	Pa	Performative [v], Lapsus auris
	ji	i	Performative [j]
	vavliju	avliju	Performative [v]
108.	jama	jama	See note
110.	vondaka	ondaka	Performative [v]
111.	## vOndaka	Pa ondaka	Vocal rest, Performative [v]/See note
112.	vU	U	Performative [v]
	vavliju	avliju	Performative [v]
	preturija	preturijo	See note
114.	vA	Pa	Performative [v], Lapsus auris
115.	vA	Pa	Performative [v], Lapsus auris
	vudari	udari	Performative [v]
	von	on	Performative [v]
116.	veto	eto	Performative [v]
	šever	šever	Performative [v] / See note
117.	Saraj'vo	Sarajvo	Syncope & NV mirrors
118.	vUstipraći	Ustipraći	NV underlines / See note
	vonda	onda	Performative [v]
	vokrenovo	okrenuo	Performative [v] / See note

Most of the examples given above are self-evident. One finds performatives, instances of *lapsus calami*, syncope of syllables (various kinds of elision and dialect-based elongation are also common, *metri causa*), and so forth. But a few of the disparities labeled *lapsus auris* deserve specific explanation. First, at lines 106, 107, 114, and 115 we observe that NV substitutes “Pa” (“Then”) for HB’s “vA” (“And, But”). This exchange is reasonably consistent throughout the performance, and reflects divergent predispositions in the two singers’ idiolects; since both proclitic elements, when employed in this way at line-beginning, are more important for their (roughly equivalent) metrical-syntactic role than any lexical content, the replacement is logical and expectable. There is little to choose between the two words in such situations, and so the habit of epic idiolect (on NV’s part) supervenes verbatim reproduction of what HB sang. In another instance of *lapsus auris*, NV “repairs” the “short” line 111 as follows:

HB:	## vOndaka vrata zaključava,	Finally he locked them up,
NV:	Pa ondaka vrata zaključava,	Then finally he locked them up,

While HB rests vocally during the opening position in the line (as marked by ##), producing a verse with nine syllables but emphatically not a “short” or hypometric line, NV sees fit to insert his usual line-initial proclitic particle “Pa” and transcribe—or re-sing—the increment without a vocal rest and with ten articulated syllables. Adjustments such as these are common as NV not only transcribes but recomposes the epic poem.

Following the performance-based Commentary and the NVR section comes the Apparatus Fabulosus (AF), a story-based apparatus rather than the kind of critical digest usually appended to texts. The purpose of this part of the experimental edition is to provide the reader with the most elusive of all contexts: the idiomatic implications encoded in the epic register, the value-added meaning associated with the genre and performance that perishes without a trace when the experience is converted to an artifact. Oral poetry abounds with this kind of signification—or *traditional referentiality* as I have called it; attached to phrases, verses, scenes, and whole story-patterns, this idiomatic meaning is essentially “what goes unsaid but is always implied,” and is still very much (even necessarily) a part of the expressive contract between performer and audience. In regard to Homer’s *Odyssey*, for example, some knowledge of the underlying traditional story-pattern of Return will help understand often-debated issues such as the nonchronological order of the narrative, Penelope’s intransigence, and the question of where the poem actually ends. At the other pole on the spectrum, a simple Homeric phrase such as “green fear” (*chlôron deos*) has been shown to carry the idiomatic meaning of “supernatural fear,” which no lexicon will list because this composite word—an illocutionary amalgam rather than two freestanding items—doesn’t fit the lexicographical program.¹⁶ These are serious shortcomings and hindrances to faithful reception. That traditional referentiality does not customarily survive the semiotic shift of media makes for a disabling rupture of the expressive contract, a violation that the AF seeks to redress.

As the first set of examples from the AF, I reproduce here two glosses on the large-scale structure of the story. Taken together, they provide the subgeneric back-story for the Wedding Song, the type of epic that HB is singing:

1ff. *Wedding Song story-pattern.* The *ŽBM* follows a pattern known as the Wedding Song, a distinct subgenre of South Slavic oral epic with its own ordered and expectable cast of (generic) characters and series

¹⁶ On these and numerous other Homeric idioms, as well as for an Apparatus Fabulosus for *Odyssey* 23.69-103, see Foley 1999:241-62.

of events. The mere fact of Djerdelez Alija's seeking out Mustajbey may serve as a cue that this set of actions is in progress, but with Mustajbey's complaint about his son's fiancée at lines 252-77 the story-pattern map begins unambiguously to unfold itself. See further the gloss to lines 252-77 on *The fiancée problem*.

252-77. *The fiancée problem.* Here Mustajbey of the Lika tells the recently arrived hero, Djerdelez Alija, that Zlata, the young woman promised to Mustajbey's son Bećirbey, is in danger of being stolen away by the Christian enemy Baturić ban, who has already slaughtered the wedding party and forced Zlata to flee to Kanidža. Much more than a plot element specific to the *ŽBM*, this situation presents a highly conventional and indeed defining problem in the Wedding Song subgenre of South Slavic epic as a whole. Although the individual characters may change, the generic types and generic events vary only within limits. The broad implications of the story-pattern include, for example, a young man eager to prove himself, a comrade-in-arms who assists him, a young woman eligible for marriage but sought and captured by an enemy, a wedding party invited and assembled by the young man's father that modulates into an armed force to battle for the return of the young woman, and eventually a triumph in battle that ends with an explicit or implied wedding. This large "word" thus lays out a map for the song's action from start to finish, establishing the expectable sequence of actions via idiomatic referral. For the finest, most elaborate Wedding Song collected from this tradition, see Avdo Medjedović's *SM*. For structural analysis of this epic subgenre, see Bynum 1964, 1968.

Without this information, readers are left to negotiate the story-path without a map. Once given these idiomatic directions, however, they have at least some idea of what is assumed by the *guslar* and a knowledgeable audience: the rough sequence of defining events (which will of course be particularized in the given song), and a *dramatis personae* of character-types (correspondingly, the actual personages will vary from one such song to another). With this information—which is never rehearsed literally because it is "written into" the contract in force within the performance arena—readers will more deeply understand the macrostructural logic and resonance of the story. They will know in advance what to expect—in general terms, of course—from each event and each character, and the process of reception will consist not of wondering what happens next or who might turn up, but rather of how a known pattern of potentials will play itself out in this particular instance.

As a second set of examples, consider the following two entries from the AF, the former glossing a single, recurrent formulaic verse ("From [X] there came no objection") and the latter a common traditional scene, the catalogue of heroes' arrivals. In both cases there is truly more implied than

meets the eye, as idiomatic meaning supplements the literal force of these units in important ways:

380. Pivot line. “nU Djulića pogovora nema” (“From Djulić there came no objection”). Between the two instances of *Cannon signals* HB interposes this line, which also occurs in the repertoire of Mujo Kukuruzović, another *guslar* from the Stolac region. It thus has (at least) dialectal status in the traditional epic register. As a freestanding idiom this “word” can mediate between any order and the fulfillment of that order, in each case imposing an idiomatic frame of reference: a person in charge issues a command to a subordinate (defined politically or familiarly) with the expectation that it will be carried out without qualification even though it may entail danger for the subordinate. This “word” then certifies the fulfillment of the order—whatever it may be and whoever may be involved in its issuance and implementation—and points toward a narrative shift of some sort. In actual practice the Pivot line may itself serve as evidence that the task was accomplished or it may lead, as in the present performance, to an iteration of the command and point-by-point narration of the action being fulfilled. Here are six additional instances from Kukuruzović’s performances (1287a = a dictated version of the *Ropstvo Ograšćić Alije* (*The Captivity of Ograšćić Alija*), 1868 = a dictated version of the *Ropstvo Alagić Alije* (*The Captivity of Alagić Alija*), and 6617 = a sung version of *Ropstvo Ograšćić Alije* (*The Captivity of Ograšćić Alija*), followed by the line in question from the *ŽBM*:

	<u>Person in charge</u>	<u>Subordinate</u>	<u>Action</u>
1287a.283	Hadžibey	Drinić Osmanbey	Dismount his horse
1287a.1024	Bey of Ribnik	Huso (servant)	Deliver a letter
1868.339	Alagić Alija	Fata (his sister)	Don wedding attire
1868.413	Alagić Alija	Fata (his sister)	Prepare his horse
1868.1580	Bey of Ribnik	Djulić (servant)	Fetch Tale of Orašac
6617.330	Ograšćić Alija	Drinić Osmanbey	Dismount his horse
ŽBM.380	Mustajbey	Djulić (servant)	Fire the signal cannon

The lines in question are as follows:

1287a.283	U dajidže* pogovora nema	From the hero there came no objection
1287a.1024	U mladjega pogovora nema	From the young man there came no objection

1868.339	U djevojke pogovora nema	From the maiden there came no objection
1868. 413	U djevojke pogovora nema	From the maiden there came no objection
1868.1580	U Djulića pogovora nema	From Djulić there came no objection
6617.330	U dajidže pogovora nema	From the hero there came no objection
ŽBM.380	nU Djulića pogovora nema	From Djulić there came no objection

*Note that *da(j)idža* comes from the Turkish *dayı*, meaning both “uncle, mother’s brother” and, more generally, “war-champion, hero” (Š). It is the latter sense that seems more appropriate in lines 1287a.283 and 6617.330.

390-401. *Catalogue II: Arrival of guest-allies for wedding/battle.* This capsule enumerates the arrival of the invited heroes. According to a traditional muster-list format, HB names the arrived hero via a formulaic pattern (“Then here was X”) and specifies the number of men he led to the wedding/battle. Interestingly, the roster corresponds almost exactly with the list of invitees at lines 304-70:

<u>Arrivals</u>	<u>Invitees</u>
390: Introduction line	304-5: Introduction lines
391-93: Pasha of Budim	306-13: Pasha of Budim
394-95: Osmanbey	314-26: Osmanbey
396-97: Bišćević Alija	327-36: Bišćević Alija
398-99: Captain Mujo	337-43: Captain Mujo
***	344-57: King of Pokrajlo
***	358. [False ending?]
400-01: Topalović Huso	359-68: Topalović Huso

The disparity between the two lists lies in the “omission” of the King of Pokrajlo (invited at 344-57) from the arrivals, just the kind of difference characteristically found in such situations, and the false ending. Compare, for example, the parallel questions and answers in the so-called “negative comparison” structure in Moslem epic (cf. Foley 1991:75-83). Given the audience’s familiarity with the structure and content of such paradigms, a great deal is implied conventionally and idiomatically in their usage; in fact, under the rules for composition and reception in these situations, we may ask whether “omission”—which describes a singular and textual rather than a multiform and traditional phenomenon—isn’t the wrong term to apply in such cases.

For another, considerably more extensive pair of catalogues of invitees and arrivals, see Avdo Medjedović’s *The Wedding of Smailagić Meho* (hereafter *SM*) (invitation letters at *SCHS* III: 167-74, English translation, and IV: lines 6481-7108, South Slavic original; arrivals at *SCHS* III: 182-201, English translation, and IV: lines 7689-9315 [note the

discrepancy of six lines in the two volumes' typesetting over the position of the final catalogue boundary]). Further afield, one might compare the Catalogue of Ships and Men in Book 2 of the ancient Greek *Iliad* as a species of arrival list.

In the first case, a poetic line that might well seem no more than a filler reveals an implied connotation of some consequence. When the *guslar* uses this "Pivot line," he is in effect not simply assuring the fulfillment of an order or request (regardless of the danger or complications entailed) but also pointing toward an upcoming narrative shift. At least three points should be added about the nature of this signal. First, as with Homer's "green fear," there is absolutely nothing lexical that hints at the idiomatic meaning of the line; the immanent shift is encoded implicitly, under the expressive contract in force. Second, the "Pivot line" is a very broad-based signal; other than indicating some sort of narrative change of pace on the near horizon, it carries no specific information. Traditional referentiality in oral poetry is typically of many sorts, with many degrees of focus—some units bear specific and limited connotations, others bear structural or generic cues, and many fall between these two extremes.¹⁷ Third, as the AF gloss establishes, this metonymic line is at least a dialectal signal in the South Slavic epic register, being shared by HB's colleague Mujo Kukuruzović, another *guslar* from the Stolac region. This dynamic too is typical of the traditional language: each singer employs some phrases and other units that are common to his region (dialectal), others drawn from his own personal wordhoard (idiolectal), and still others that can be found in various different geographically defined areas (pan-traditional).¹⁸

The latter of the two AF glosses reproduced above concerns the second half of a frequent narrative pattern in South Slavic oral epic, especially in poems that follow the Wedding Song schema (itself, as noted above, an idiomatic traditional signal). This is the arrivals catalogue, which corresponds structurally to the catalogue of heroes that the groom's father,

¹⁷ For the theoretical basis of traditional referentiality, see Foley 1991:6-8, 38-60, 2002:109-24; for examples, see Foley 1995b:99-135 (Serbian charms), 136-80 (the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*), and 181-207 (the Anglo-Saxon *Andreas*) as well as Bradbury 1998 (British balladry).

¹⁸ Of course, the demarcation among idiolectal, dialectal, and pan-traditional signals is always contingent, since it is based on whatever evidence one possesses at a given time. Likewise, the status of any element can change based on either further evidence, the evolution of idiolects and dialects over time, or both. For examples of idiolectal, dialectal, and pan-traditional units within the epic repertoires of the Stolac *guslari*, see Foley 1990:158-200, 278-328.

who will modulate into the army commander as well, sends to invite Bosnian luminaries to his son's marriage ceremony. Although we might on textual grounds regard both poetic lists as dull and uninteresting detours from the main action, in fact the catalogues are a staple of the Wedding Song subgenre of epic. They provide an opportunity to celebrate the momentous nature of the marriage union as well as to flesh out the grand army into which (as well-prepared audience members and readers know) these guests must soon collectively evolve. As with the so-called Catalogue of Ships and Men in the second book of the *Iliad*, the emphasis is not so much on data for its own sake but rather on the atmosphere of power and splendor that the data creates.

To fill out the reader's experience, the AF gloss includes a number of perspectives on the catalogue pattern in this performance and against the background of the epic tradition at large. Initially, it parses or analyzes the muster-lists and compares the enumeration of the invitees with the subsequent roster of arrivals. The fact that they do not precisely match is symptomatic of the ontology of a performance within a tradition as opposed to a concrete, singular text: because so much is implied both structurally and content-wise, HB's performance is far less dependent on what we textualists prize as internal cohesion. In other words, each half of the catalogue resonates as much against the idiomatic pattern—as it exists over a network of other instances within the audience's experience—as against its partner in this particular song-performance. The King of Pokrajlo, invited but not cited among the arriving heroes, is not so much omitted as implied, and, as we have seen, implication is a powerful expressive force in this oral poetry (and others as well). In a cognate attempt to increase the reader's awareness of the larger context, I also add a reference to the catalogue pattern in another performance from the same subgenre, but by a different *guslar*—Avdo Medjedović's *The Wedding of Smilagić Meho*. The AF contains many such comparative citations.

The remainder of this experimental edition is given over to two aspects of South Slavic epic performance that have received short shrift in the past. One of these is the chapter on performatives, contributed by R. Scott Garner, which explores the structural and artistic dimension of how these excrescent sounds are deployed. In addition to their most basic and central function as hiatus bridges that smooth articulation by removing glottal stops between adjacent vowels, Garner shows that the choice of particular sounds (from the cadre of [v], [j], [h], and, less frequently, [m], [n], [w], [l], [nj], [d], and [s]) can best be explained by the singer's tendency toward various kinds of euphony. The chapter on music, written by H. Wakefield Foster, analyzes the structure and morphology of the vocal music

of this epic performance, illustrating its characteristic patterns and modes of change. Especially since music is perhaps the first casualty of the conversion from living experience to textual fossil, his study of HB's melodies is a very welcome contribution to the overall project of recontextualizing the performance. But there is more. In a telling advance over all previous related scholarship, Foster proves that the music not only accompanies but idiomatically cues the narrative. Although our text-making habits have effectively deafened us to the possibility that melody too could be idiomatic, he shows here that music is a full partner in the holistic experience of performance.

From Paper-text to Cyber-edition

Appending a performance-based Commentary, a log of Vujnović's resinging, the Apparatus Fabulosus, and chapters on music and performance seems an effective first step in restoring some of the oral traditional context of Halil Bajgorić's performance, *The Wedding of Mustajbey's Son Bećirbey*. As I have tried to illustrate, these sections of the volume fill out the transcription and translation in various ways, prompting the reader to understand the epic less as an item and more as an experience, and also as an instance that is both emergent and necessarily embedded in a larger context. One can imagine that this same edition-making strategy could be useful for opening up other oral traditional performances as well. Although the specifics of the individual tradition would need to be kept firmly in mind, most oral poetries should profit from exposure of their compositional structure, stylistic features and parameters, and the implicit meaning of the units that make them up. The same strategy, tailored appropriately, could also be applied to the edition of oral-derived works such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf*, the medieval Spanish *Poema de Mio Cid*, and dozens of other works that, although they have reached us only as texts, owe a clear debt to oral traditions.¹⁹

But no matter what textual prostheses we append to transcriptions, we are left with an irreducible problem: we remain book-bound. Notwithstanding the improvements offered by all of these aids to contextual embedding, we can use them only by silent page-turning, perhaps keeping one finger lodged in the Companion and another in the Apparatus Fabulosus while we flip back and forth from a particular spot in the transcription and

¹⁹ For a view of oral poetry that encompasses Oral Performance, Voiced Texts, Voices from the Past, and Written Oral Poetry, see Foley 2002.

translation. Or we might choose to load up a single printed page with all three (or more) parts of the edition, in a well-meaning attempt to eliminate the inconvenience and fragmented reading experience of the conventional, chapter-built book. But that accommodation will render the overstuffed page very difficult or impossible to read. As much of an advance as the experimental edition might appear to be, it quickly becomes apparent that it also entails unavoidable limitations traceable to its root identity as, after all, a book. Requiring our readers to hop back and forth frenetically from one chapter to another will subvert their smooth processing of the narrative, while too heavily encoding the single page will divert or overtax their attention and compromise continuity through too much “multi-tasking.”

But suppose we were to foreshorten the ever-compromising spatialization and linearity of the text. If it were somehow possible to diminish or eliminate altogether the inevitable distance and segregation that the book medium mandates between and among its parts, then reconstruction of the experience of performance would become simpler and more feasible. As with the original experience of an oral traditional performance, such a representation of the various dimensions of that performance would be much more integrated—allowing readers to glimpse all facets of the gemstone at once rather than condemning them to poring over a collection of favorite photographs of the jewel in question. Quite clearly, and for all its virtues, the book as a medium is constitutionally unable to support such a reintegration; its strength lies in its spatial and linear extent, and that strength becomes a weakness (or at least a hamstringing limitation) when we try to harness the book as a vehicle for conveying the elusive reality of an oral traditional performance.

A cyber-edition, on the other hand, can help to manage the reintegrative task; electronic, computer-based representation can begin to meld parts into a whole. The key to exploiting the new medium for this purpose (and to avoiding pitfalls due to blind overenthusiasm for the latest technological trend) is to pose a simple question about its endemic utility: *what can such e-editions do better than texts, and how do we fashion the most useful and user-friendly facility for representing oral performance?* Unless there is an unquestionable improvement in fidelity of (re-) presentation—and thus a concomitant improvement in the reader’s reception—invoking the new medium cannot be justified except as an interesting excursion into technology. Without a finite gain, engagement of internet and hypertext tools will amount to running in place, and perhaps (given the tried-and-true familiarity with the book as opposed to the still largely unplotted terrain of cyber-space) even to taking a step backward.

So we start by inquiring precisely what the e-edition can do to improve a user's reception of our example performance, Halil Bajgorić's *The Wedding of Mustajbey's Son Bećirbey*. The first answer is categorical and straightforward: we can simulate the audio environment by mounting a sound-file of the song on a designated web page, thus offering unconstrained access to anyone with a connection to the internet. In general, I favor the internet solution over an audio CD for a number of reasons: the internet facility (1) can always be edited and updated, (2) can more transparently support the combination of many different kinds of files to produce a multidimensional presentation (see below), and (3) can offer more democratic access, without the hindrance of added costs.

The ideal situation would combine such an audio file, streamed to a reader's desktop, with a scrollable text-file at the same site that could be read as the recording played. As of the date of this essay, that initial step has indeed been accomplished. At www.oraltradition.org any user can now bring up a text-file of the original-language transcription and English translation (matched by poetic lines in facing columns) and scroll through that document as the audio file plays. The interested "reader" can now become much more of an audience for this 1030-line oral epic performance.²⁰

The next step in the evolution of the e-edition is to dissolve the book-induced distance between these two (now joined) aspects of the performance on the one hand, and the contextualizing chapters on the other. As the project presently stands, we have put together a prototype with three additional interactive parts. The glosses that constitute the Apparatus Fabulosus are hot-linked to the English translation, so that clicking on the phrase "arose early" in line 1, for instance, brings up the following information about the idiomatic meaning of this formulaic expression:

The ubiquitous formula "Rano rani [character X]," or "[character X] arose early," has only nominally to do with the named person's actual awakening at a given hour. Like the *Line-initial expletives* (lines 1-2, with gloss) and the *Dawn marker*, its idiomatic role is to start up a tale or a

²⁰ The current configuration presents the transcription and translation as a complete, downloadable file in Adobe Acrobat Reader (pdf) format to resolve problems associated with cross-platform representation of diacritics; we have plans to update this file using the advances made possible by Unicode. The sound-file is accessible through RealPlayer; as part of our agreement with the Milman Parry Collection at Harvard University to maintain security, it cannot be downloaded either in whole or in part. I take this opportunity to thank Stephen A. Mitchell and Gregory Nagy, Curators of the Parry Collection, for permission to use and publish these materials, as well as David Elmer and Matthew Kay, who have helped this project enormously by providing me with copies of digital tapes and manuscripts.

prominent section within a tale. See further *Getting up early* (549-50, with gloss) and *Dawn marker* (lines 4-7, 580, and 745, with glosses).

As the reader's cursor moves over the increment "arose early," blue underlining appears to signal that the AF contains information on the specialized meaning of that phrase and to invite consultation. Since the implications of this formulaic line reach beyond literal denotation to traditional signification, this is an opportunity for readers to deepen their understanding of this narrative juncture (and many narrative situations across the expanse of this and other performances). But—and this is a crucial point—there is absolutely no requirement to do so. If readers wish to bypass the additional information, for whatever reason (because they are already aware of the idiomatic function of the phrase or simply because they wish to continue the reading process without even a moment's interruption, perhaps returning to consult this gloss later or perhaps not), they are free not to click on this link. Each person will find his or her own, individualized way through the opportunities or potentials that present themselves, making the reading process much more a self-selecting series of alternatives than a boilerplate mandate. Like singers themselves, readers will blaze their own pathways, and they may well choose different routes on each reperformance.

The prototype e-edition also includes interactive versions of the performance-based Commentary and "Nikola Vujnović's Resinging." In order to clearly differentiate the different linked resources, these two parts of the facility are currently cued by orange and green icons placed to the right of the English column in the transcription-translation. By choosing to click on the orange icon, readers can immediately consult the Commentary with its line-numbered notes on the structure of important elements within the performance, most of them referring to single lines but some to larger increments as well. Clicking on the green icon, on the other hand, will take readers to the NVR, providing them with documentation and explanation of how Vujnović's transcription differs from Bajgorić's actual articulation. Once again, as with the Apparatus Fabulosus, none of these "reading routes" is mandatory; the selection of the pathway—and thus the structure and texture of the experience of reperformance—remains entirely up to the individual. One can imagine many different goals: a quick once-over of the poem, a second or third reading at a slower pace involving more links and icons, a linguistic analysis of the whole performance or of particular phenomena (all of the interactive parts will eventually be electronically searchable themselves), a multi-faceted investigation of a particular traditional strategy or unit (for example, the catalogues of invitations and arrivals), and so on. Additional planned e-editions of other performances by

Bajgorić and other *guslari* from the Stolac region will multiply these possibilities, as well as foster comparative analysis of different performances along all of these lines.

Other sections of the experimental paper-edition will also be transferred to the e-edition, although their role in the overall presentation does not require that they be so closely and interactively linked to particular lines and passages in the transcription-translation. For that reason, then, the preface, pronunciation key, introduction, portrait of the singer, and chapters on music and performatives will be locatable via a global menu bar that will appear on every screen, and linked as whole entities that readers can consult (or not) at any time.²¹ Since the preface includes an explanation of “how to use this [e-]book,” it will be assigned an especially prominent place and featured on the first page that opens up when users select the e-edition. The master bibliography for the e-edition will likewise be available via a button on the menu bar, so that readers encountering a citation—whether in the preface, introduction, portrait of the singer, companion, NVR, AF, music chapter, or performance chapter—will be quickly able to track the reference. The synopsis of the story will be linked to an icon placed at the top of the performance-transcription file as well as repeated in the menu bar; in this way readers will be encouraged to review its thumbnail sketch of the action before engaging the narrative for the first time, as well as being offered the opportunity to review the synopsis at any point during any of their reperformances.

Coda and Envoi

This essay began by revisiting the self-evident but often submerged fact that a text is not a performance, but at its very best a script for reperformance. As makers, purveyors, and consumers of the written word (itself a tendentious phrase) we are in the culturally sanctioned habit of eliding this simple truth, preferring to ignore the semiotic gulf between the gripping, emergent experience of oral performance and the much-celebrated but curiously empty cenotaph of the text. The advantages of the book, that bound pile of surfaces on which we spatialize our thinking, are many, and the age of the (typographical) page has seen remarkable achievements in the construction and transmission of all of those kinds of knowledge that make

²¹ It should be mentioned in passing that this arrangement will allow readers to compare the streaming sound-file with H. Wakefield Foster’s musical transcription of the first 101 lines of the performance.

us human. But the price exacted by the book's dominance has been high: in the case of oral performance, we conventionally denature what we seek to understand and represent by reducing its diverse, many-sided identity to a print-centered shadow of itself. Sound and gesture and context and backstory are but a few of the innocent victims of this ritual sacrifice, and the apotheosis that rises up from the rite of edition must—if evaluated fairly and without “cultural cover”—reveal its severe, even crippling shortcomings.

There can be no magical, global solution to this quandary. Attending the performance with an insider's fluency and awareness lies beyond our reach. But we can make strides toward recovering some of the phenomenological reality of oral performance by taking steps toward a better, more faithful script for the reader's reperformance. In the first section of the paper I have described the wholesale retooling of the conventional model for paper-editions to answer (in part, at least) the challenge of representing the experience and medium of performance. The object of developing the various sections of the paper-edition of Halil Bajgorić's *The Wedding of Mustajbey's Son Bećirbey* has been to restore some of the expressivity of the event by providing avenues into an understanding of its idiosyncratic structure and meaning. Why do those curious “extra” consonants pop up in performance but never in oral-dictated texts? What is a poetic line in a poetry that does not default to page-bound strictures? What implications, if any, are conveyed by lines, scenes, or narrative patterns that recur either in this poem or elsewhere? What importance do the amanuensis Nikola Vujnović's seemingly inexplicable departures from the acoustic recording have? How does this song-performance relate to others, and to the South Slavic oral epic tradition as a whole? These are a few of the more crucial questions left unposed in conventional editions; the paper-edition described in this essay is meant first to recognize their existence and then to answer them as far as our present state of knowledge permits.

The second part of the discussion has consisted of an evolving plan to push representation and reception beyond the limits of even the most innovative and carefully retooled book-form. By enlisting cyber-techniques in a thoughtful, judicious way we can recover even more of what the page fails to capture in what I have called an e-edition. This facility, the first stages of which are already in place at www.oraltradition.org, not only allows its users access to the acoustic reality of the entire 1030-line song, playable against a scrollable original-language transcription and English translation. It also links the other parts of the book interactively, giving readers the opportunity to consult three digests of information (the Companion, NVR, and AF), each of them keyed to individual lines and passages at a single click, and connects the remaining sections via an

always-ready menu bar. The distance and separation that characterize and define the book format are greatly diminished or altogether dissolved in the e-edition; additionally, readers are licensed to blaze their own pathways through the rich thicket of expressive (and receptional) possibilities that await them. Over time, with the formulation of more e-editions of South Slavic oral epic, and by installing appropriate links between and among them, users will begin to be able to read not just more deeply into a single poem-performance, and not just back and forth among a group of related poem-performances, but, in effect, across the enormously larger and more resonant compass of the greater poetic tradition. At that point Homer's famous remark about the Muse having granted the ancient Greek singers the gift of knowing the pathways (the *oimas*) may also apply, in however postlapsarian a fashion, to the reader of e-editions, a.k.a. the newly fluent reperformer of South Slavic oral epic.²²

University of Missouri-Columbia

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²² *Odyssey* 8.481: οἴμας μουσ' ἐδίδαξε, φίλησε δὲ φύλον ἀοιδῶν ("the Muse has taught them the pathways, since she loves the company of singers").

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