Rainer Friedrich

Postoral Homer

Orality and Literacy in the Homeric Epic

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FOR

HANNO, ANYA, ZOSIA, AND WISIA

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PREFACE

The research of the Oral-Poetry School has given rise to the pronounced awareness that the Homeric epic grew from a unique, never to recur, cultural constellation marked by the transition from orality to alphabetic literacy. This awareness is widely shared among Homerists. It implies that both orality and literacy had a part in the genesis of the Homeric epic. The irony is that those to whose researches it is owed do not share this awareness and will have none of it. The scholars of the Oral-Poetry School insist on the purely oral composition of the Homeric epics and are scandalized by the talk of a transitional period.

The present study is a response to the irony of the situation. Its first part, my 2007 monograph – *Formular Economy in Homer. The Poetics of the Breaches* – tackled the Parryist Theory of the Oral Homer at its strongest site: Milman Parry's epochal discovery of the organization of the Homeric name-epithet formulas in *systems of extension and economy*. Parry had dubbed his discovery the *schematization of the Homeric diction*. He succeeded in identifying it as a force in the Homeric narrative that is *exclusively oral*: indispensable as it is for oral composition-in-performance, schematization would be an encumbrance on written composition.

Parry was quick to extrapolate his discovery of schematization among the noun-epithet formulas to the whole of the Homeric diction. This extrapolation gave rise to the twin Parryist beliefs in (1) Homer's *strict observance of formular economy* and, as a corollary, in (2) the *ubiquity of schematization* in the diction of both Homeric epics. It is chiefly on these beliefs that the Parryist assumption of Homeric orality turns.

In examining the Parryist beliefs, my 2007 monograph had registered more than 300 infractions of the principle of formular economy. Such infractions serve for the most part *poetic design*. The results of my study called into question both Parryist beliefs: observance of formular economy is in no way strict and consistent, nor is schematization ubiquitous in Homeric diction. However, the result of my examination was rather inconclusive in the sense that formular economy in Homer is being *honoured both in the breach and the observance* (with apologies to Shakespeare): schematization, though diminished and attenuated, is still a real factor in Homeric diction, but of a far more limited compass and extent than Parryism assumes and makes it out to be.

Such inconclusiveness at the site, where the Homeric epic is assumed to be most pronouncedly oral, should give pause to Parryists. It should trigger a re-examination of some of Parryism's central tenets. Inconclusive is the outcome of my examination only within a model that postulates, as mainstream Parryism does, that the text must be either oral song or written literature, allowing no third term: *tertium non datur*. Yet with their frequent breaches of formular economy and diminishing schematization, the Homeric epics behave neither as straight oral songs; nor do they, given their still discernible observance of economy and schematization, how-

ever attenuated, behave as straight literate texts either. The mainstream Parryist model thus leaves them in limbo.

It is this very inconclusiveness that points beyond the Parryist model and demands a third term: *tertium datur*. In order to take the Homeric epics out of limbo and find for them (again with apologies to Shakespeare) "a habitation and a name", I postulated in the conclusion of my monograph Homeric *postorality* and the *transitional text*. Their *habitation* would be the as yet uncharted terrain between orality and literacy, the site of the *transitional tex*t; and *postoral* would be their *name.* To substantiate what I am postulating, and to enunciate Homeric postorality in its full scope and depth, are the twin purposes of this book.

The epithet *postoral* I coined for Homer decades ago in my *Stilwandel im homerischen Epos* (Friedrich 1975). The occasion was my perusal of Adam Parry's sagacious 1966 essay "Have we Homer's *Iliad*?" Parry *fils* does not use the term in his essay, yet the notion of *Homeric postorality* is already there in all but name. Very briefly and most generally put, and to be fully articulated and elaborated in this book, the notion assumes a Homer who, when being trained as an oral bard, had absorbed the Hellenic oral tradition with its formular apparatus, narrative techniques, and typical themes, along with the traditional body of tales set in the heroic age; yet who, in the course of his career as an oral singer, had acquired literacy and applied it to widen, deepen, and refine his epic art, and thus grew into 'postoral Homer', the author of so complex an epic as the *Iliad*.

The notion of an initially oral Homer attaining literacy is not quite novel. It had been considered intuitively by H.T. Wade-Gery and C.M. Bowra (Wade-Gery 1952; Bowra 1952). This notion was promptly dismissed by Albert Lord as an attempt at a flaccid compromise of scholars, uncomfortable with the idea of an unlettered Homer and yet forced to acknowledge an oral tradition operative in the Homeric epics (Lord 1953:124–26). What, then, can be claimed to be new (apart from the name 'postoral') in my enterprise? New is that it will go beyond intuition and develop the notion of the postoral Homer for the first time comprehensively and systematically, based on hard textual facts. One such fact is the co-existence of oral and non-oral – i.e., literate – features in Homer. A brief article with the title "Oral and Literate Elements in Homer" (Whitaker 1986:18–25) hints at such co-existence, yet without suggesting postorality.

Evidence for this co-existence I have furnished in a number of studies preliminary to the present book (Friedrich 2000; 2002; 2007; 2011). Of these, my 2007 book-length study *Formular Economy in Homer* constitutes practically the first volume of the project *Postoral Homer*. It has become the object of Edzard Visser's extraordinarily tendentious review in *GNOMON* (vol. 83.1, 2011). Teeming as it does with inaccuracies, distortions, and factually false assertions that allege the opposite of what is found in my text, his review is based on an at best cursory, if not altogether 'diagonal', reading, which is all too patent when he criticizes my text for alleged omissions while ignoring my explicit statements on pp. 13–4; 20–2; 92; 100–1; 104–6; 138–9 (to cite only the most egregious instances).

Part I of *Postoral Homer* is a critical analysis of Parryism that will turn on the problems and dilemmas of the Theory of the Oral Homer. It will examine long-held

assumptions of Parryism, in particular its belief of having proved the orality of Homer through a successful application of its four tests of orality. The resumption of the tests yields the central result of Part I: their inconclusiveness in the form of that co-existence of oral and literate elements in the Homeric epics that demands an explanation.

Part II will offer this explanation, proposing thereby a resolution to the dilemmas of Parryism's Theory of the Oral Homer in terms of the postorality of the Homeric epics. It will widen the scope of the book's argument: going beyond the microphilology of formula, stereotypical theme, enjambment, and schematized diction, it will embark on the discussion of the major topics of Homer-exegesis: non-schematized free narrative, characterization, and large-scale structural design, along with the *Iliad's* intellectual physiognomy and its underlying nexus of ideas. In the process the postoral argument will be conjoined with *Neoanalysis*.

Here are the unargued presuppositions of this study, which, apart from occasional references to the *Odyssey*, deals almost exclusively with the *Iliad*. I share the chorizont hypothesis of two distinct poets for *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which is unitarian for either epic – a position I have argued in Friedrich 1975. My chorizont perspective connotes the notion of the *Homeric epic* comprising both poems (except for spurious *Iliad* X) in the sense that the *Iliad*-poet Homer and the *Odyssey*-poet formed some kind of school of epic composition in terms of a master-disciple relationship, appositely characterized by Felix Jacoby as *creative mimesis* on the part of the younger *Odyssey*-poet (Jacoby 1933). This younger poet was possibly literate from the beginning. – As to the question of the date of the *Iliad's* composition – late eighth or early to mid-seventh century – I tend to be agnostic. Either date would go with the postoral argument; the seventh-century dating would facilitate it.

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Halifax, Nova Scotia Rainer Friedrich

I. THE THEORY OF THE ORAL HOMER AND ITS DILEMMAS

1. INTRODUCTION. HOMER'S ORALITY – AN OPEN QUESTION AGAIN

Milman Parry's epochal discovery of formular systems in the diction of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* had revealed a tradition of oral verse-making *behind* as well as *within* the Homeric epic. It had started as an *Essai sur un problème du style homérique* – the subtitle of Parry's 1928 Parisian *thèse*, *L'Epithète traditionnelle dans Homère*. The problem referred to in the title was the seemingly random use of the frequent and widely distributed epithets combining with names and nouns to form those recurrent word-groups called fixed formulas. Parry showed that they were adapted to the needs of versification in that their metrical shapes corresponded to the main divisions of the hexameter, its caesurae and diaereses. In their ensemble, they make up the thesaurus of ready-made formulas that the tradition furnishes the epic singers to meet their versemaking needs: to fill given metrical spaces with these names and nouns to complete both sentence and verse.

There is nothing random about their use. For the salient point of Parry's discovery is that this thesaurus of formulas, far from being an amorphous *Traditionsmasse*, is highly structured, organized as it is into systems by the twin principles of *extension* and *economy*. Such systems, Parry convincingly explained, were designed to meet a maximum of the singers' metrical needs (= extension), yet, for mnemonic reasons, to meet them with a minimum of formulas (= economy).

The *raison d'être* of such systems was to enable unlettered singers to compose during performance; or, to use Bryan Hainsworth's delightfully matter-of-fact description, "to accomplish the tricky task of improvising in Greek hexameters"[1]. For such schematization of diction is explicable only in terms of oral composition-in-performance. Here it has an essential function, while in written composition schematization would be counterproductive, a pointless encumbrance on the literate poet. Schematization causes the oral diction to differ *in kind* from the diction of written literature. Having demonstrated the existence of schematization in Homeric diction, Parry had thereby established an undeniable link between the Homeric epic and oral poetry – a κτῆμα ἐς αἰεί for Homeric studies.

The tradition of oral verse-making in Homer is thus most pronouncedly present in the systematic organization of the formulas. It is a tradition that had grown over many generations of oral singers who contributed to it in different measure. From this finding derives the Parryist claim that Parry's discovery has basically made the Homeric Question obsolete. It was assumed to have resolved the division and opposition of the analyst and unitarian schools by reconciling the respective principal tenets of either. A *multiplicity of singers* (the analyst tenet) was operative in the origin, growth, and development of the oral tradition from which the Homeric epics sprang – its formular diction and its narrative techniques for the epic shaping of the

1 Hainsworth 1969: 12.

canon of the Trojan-war themes; while *one outstanding singer* of this tradition, Homer, composed the epics as we have them by giving them their grand design (the unitarian tenet). Now this thesis is quite elegantly argued, but apparently in too facile a fashion to dispose of the old Homeric question. Yet there is something to this claim. Parry's discovery of an oral tradition behind and within the Homeric epic did lift Homeric studies out of the paralyzing impasse caused by the unitarian/analyst dichotomy. It did so by throwing light on an important feature of Homeric composition, central to the unitarian/analyst dispute. In conferring an altered status on the frequent forms of Homeric *iteration* – iteration of phrase, scene, theme, motif, pattern, all prime targets of analyst theories – it raised repetition from 'damnable iteration' (as Shakespeare's Falstaff vividly describes its pre-Parry status) to a distinct characteristic feature of an epic style that has evolved in and from an oral tradition. That Parry's discovery has demonstrated a link between the Homeric epic and oral poetry is indisputable. *Yet the exact nature of this link has remained a moot point*. It is, in short, an open question, one still to be settled. In fact, it is nothing less than the *New Homeric Question*, turning on the roles orality and literacy played in the genesis of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

Such talk raises Parryist hackles. 'Moot point' and 'unsettled open question' are hardly terms in which Parryism's scholars view the framework of Milman Parry's achievement. On the contrary, no matter how much the various Parryist approaches may differ from one another – they are agreed in their belief that Milman Parry has furnished "the decisive proof that the poems are oral compositions" by having demonstrated that "the language of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is formulaic from beginning to end"[2]; that this proof is "unanswerable and unassailable", representing "a truth that abides as surely as Euclid's demonstrations abide"[3], based, as it is said to be, on "irrefutable statistical facts that distinguish the texts of Homer from those of poets known to have composed by writing"; so that "it is obvious that on *statistical grounds alone* Homeric poetry was *fundamentally oral poetry*"[4], "thoroughly exemplify[ing] the formular economy and scope of a well-developed oral tradition"[5].

Thus, far from being seen as a moot point, Homer's orality has become the undisputed axiom of the Parryist creed. It was the dominant doctrine during Parryism's hegemony in Anglophone Homeric Studies that has lasted for several decades. Under this hegemony, paying homage or at least lip-service to this axiom had come to be de rigueur for many Homerists. In short, the Parryist view of the oral Homer is grounded in an axiom, which, as is the way of axioms, is advertising itself as a self-evident truth.

Parryist beliefs notwithstanding, Milman Parry had never proved the orality of the Homeric epics. In view of the hyperbolic claims of Parryists, one does well to recall Adam Parry's more sober assessment of his father's achievement in his Introduction to *The Making of Homeric Verse*. Milman Parry himself, he writes,

2 Fenik 1968: 2 (emphasis added).
3 Carpenter 1959: 6.
4 Nagler 1967: 274 (emphasis added).
5 Kirk 1976: 113.

> almost never discussed Homer, that is, the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, *as opposed to the tradition* in which Homer worked; *nor did he ever demonstrate*, although at times he seems to assume it, that Homer was himself an oral poet.

And he adds in a footnote:

> That Homer himself … was an oral poet, *there exists no proof whatever*. Otherwise put, not the slightest proof has yet appeared that the texts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as we have them, or any substantial connected portion of these texts, were composed by oral improvisation of the kind observed and described by Parry and Lord and others in Jugoslavia and elsewhere … What has been proved is that the style of these poems is 'typical of oral poetry', and it is a reasonable presumption that this style was the creation of an actual oral tradition[6].

It is quite astounding that a scholarly hegemony of the kind that Parryism has held in Homeric scholarship could have sustained itself for decades, based as it is on unsupported axiomatic claims. The vaunted 'irrefutable statistical facts' are nowhere to be found. The statistics offered for the claim of the formularity of the Homeric diction – its formular density, the "litmus test of orality"[7]– that have been offered, are, as will become patent, anything but irrefutable. Nor do they represent textual facts. How could they in view of the unsettled definition of the formula?!

This situation points to the fundamental dilemma of Parryism: its inability to produce a valid and generally accepted definition of one of its central concepts, the formula. This dilemma is to be discussed in detail below. As one self-critical Parryist has described the dilemma, there is an "almost universal agreement among oralists that Homer is a formulaic poet", matched by an "almost equally *universal disagreement on the basic definition of formula*"[8]. This was written in 1975; in the meantime this dilemma has been aggravated by the further proliferation of ever new concepts of the formula. In the natural and physical sciences such a dilemma, if it could arise there at all, would amount to a scientific scandal. But most oralists seem to be quite unperturbed by it, with some even trying to make a virtue out of a vice by celebrating the multiplicity of formula-concepts as indicative of a refined and richly nuanced Parryism.

Yet perturbed they should be. For without a valid definition of the formula, how could one claim that Homer's diction is "formulaic from beginning to end" and thus passes the "litmus test of orality"? Furthermore, the lack of a valid definition of the formula is only the chief one of Parryism's dilemmas and points to its general malaise, as will become patent: the diffusion and confusion that obtain in its nomenclature and conceptual apparatus. In this respect one could be tempted to describe Parryism as a body of unresolved dilemmas.

Thus the fact of the matter remains that Milman Parry's great discovery amounts to having established an irrefutable link between the Homeric epic and oral poetry, the nature of which has still to be determined – no more, no less. His discovery did not render the Homeric Question obsolete. But it has taken it to a new level. In fact, Parry's discovery had reframed it entirely as the New Homeric Question, turning,

6 A. Parry 1971: LX–LXI, and LXI n.1 (emphasis added).
7 Notopoulos 1964: 19. Cp. also Lord 1968: 24; Peabody 1975: 30–31.
8 Austin 1975: 14 (emphasis added).

as noted above, on the roles orality and literacy played in the genesis of the epics. Yet it had not, oralist beliefs and claims notwithstanding, settled it by proving the orality of the epics.

2. THE WANING OF PARRYISM'S HEGEMONY

That Homeric orality, after decades of ruling Parryist orthodoxy, has become an open question again is due to the waning of Parryism's hegemony. To be sure, this hegemony has given rise to a number of important achievements. There is, first of all, the edition of Milman Parry's collected papers, *The Making of Homeric Verse* (1971), edited by Adam Parry with an exegetical introduction to his father's work. Then there is Albert Bates Lord's canonical *The Singer of Tales* (Lord 1960), which can rightly claim the rank of a classic and whose impact on Homeric studies can hardly be overstated. On top of that, it initiated the new discipline of Comparative Oral Epic (on which more below). Its sequel *The Singer Resumes His Tale* (Lord 1991) is of similar importance. Furthermore, Richard Janko succeeded in the relative dating of the early Greek hexameter texts (Homer, Hesiod, Homeric hymns) on reliable linguistic evidence (Janko 1982). And finally, at its height, the hegemony gave rise to the six volumes of the monumental Parryist Cambridge *Iliad*-Commentary (1985–1995). Yet this crowning achievement of the Parryist hegemony may turn out to be its swan-song as well. Signs that augured its waning already appeared while the Commentary was being produced. The publication of a collection of essays by prominent Homerists in 1987, just two years after the first volume of the Cambridge Commentary had appeared, had the provocative title *Homer: Beyond Oral Poetry*. It was provocative in that it signaled that paying homage or lip-service to the doctrine of the oral Homer had ceased to be de rigueur. Meanwhile, Karl Reinhardt's Homer-book, notorious for its emphatic repudiation of Parryism, has been gaining currency in the English-speaking world: once dismissed by Parryists as the regrettable *sacrificium intellectus* to a traditional aesthetics one would expect of a German-speaking unitarian, it is now being frequently taken into account even by oralists[9]. Most importantly, through Wolfgang Kullmann's dialogical engagement with Parryism[10], Neoanalysis has risen to prominence in Anglophone Homeric scholarship – a school that at the height of the Parryist hegemony had met with extraordinary hostility and ridicule at the hands of Parryists, because its tenets involved Homeric literacy[11].

There are other, more subtle and indirect, signs that the hegemony is giving way to a more balanced state of affairs in Homeric Studies. The *Cambridge Iliad Commentary* was an entirely oralist affair; and the *New Companion to Homer* (1997) had a largely oralist tenor; yet the English version of the Italian *Odyssey Commentary* (1989) had oralists and non-oralists as authors; and the recently published *Homer-Encyclopedia* (2011) is an enterprise, to which oralists, postoralists, and non-oralists alike have contributed. Yet note that the only Homeric scholars

9 Most prominently so in Taplin 1992.
10 Kullmann 1984: 307–23 (= Kullmann 1992: 140–55).
11 Page 1963: 21–24.

whom the *Homer-Encyclopedia* grants an entry, complete with a portrait, are the founders of Parryism, Milman Parry and Albert Bates Lord, along with their precursor, Friedrich-August Wolff[12]. It is an intensive afterglow of the old Parryist hegemony.

A determined attempt to re-assert the hegemony was Gregory Nagy's "Homeric Questions", a programmatic declaration presented in the form of the Presidential Address at the 1991 Annual Meeting of the American Philological Association in Chicago. Taking offence at a book-title such as *Homer: Beyond Oral Poetry* and wondering how this title, along with the implied affront to oralist orthodoxy, was conceivable at all in this Parryist day and age, he proceeded to condemn the statement "Homer wrote" as irresponsible extremism born from ignorance, and solemnly anathematized it as reckless heresy[13]. Nevertheless, such heresy found its way into the *Praefatio* of the 1998 Teubner *Ilias*:

> Ilias materiam continet iamdiu per ora cantorum diffusam, formam autem contextumque qualem nos novimus tum primum attinuit, cum *conscripta* est; quod ut fieret, unius munus fuit maximi poetae[14].
>
> The *Iliad* contains narrative matter that had already been circulated by oral epic singers; yet the quality of form and coherence which we know it attained at the time when it was *written*; that it could come about was the work of a single outstanding poet.

It is a testimony to the waning of the hegemony. Adam Parry had argued the same point. Under the hegemony Parryist orthodoxy could still dismiss his view out of hand. Yet with the hegemony in decline, it no longer can. It is thus a decisive signal for the re-opening of the debate on the nature of the link of the Homeric epos with oral poetry. In this debate I intend to intervene by arguing at length for the notion of the postoral Homer, supported by textual facts.

a. ORAL THEORY & THE THEORY OF THE ORAL HOMER: A NECESSARY DISTINCTION

Before I elaborate on postorality, a number of points need clarifying. First and foremost among them is the distinction between *Oral Theory* on the one hand and the *Theory of the Oral Homer* (or *Parryism* for short) on the other. I resume and elaborate here this distinction already adumbrated in my *Formular Economy*[15].

A seeming obstacle to drawing this distinction is A. B. Lord's protest that "the phrase 'oral theory' with regard to the investigations into South Slavic oral epic by Parry and me is a misnomer". As he rightly claims, "these findings do not constitute a 'theory'; rather, they provide demonstrated facts concerning oral traditional

12 Finkelberg 2011: 487–89; 629–31; 936–39. (There are also entries with portraits of two archaeologists, C. W. Blegen and H. Schliemann).
13 Nagy 1992: 17–60 ~ Nagy 1996a: "Homeric Questions".
14 West 1998: V: This is now fully elaborated in West 2011; see pp. 10–11 ("Proposition 4").
15 Friedrich 2007: 28, also 9 note 1.

poetry"[16]. Lord has a point, and an important one to boot, which cannot be emphasized enough in this age of theoreticism, when self-indulgent theorizing that is forced on texts tends to obscure rather than illuminate them.

Yet the term 'oral theory' is not quite the misnomer that Lord makes it out to be. His own classic, *The Singer of Tales*, confirms my counter. Its two main divisions carry the titles "The Theory" and "The Application". This does, however, not amount to an inconsistency on Lord's part: the apparent contradiction is easily resolved: different uses of the term 'theory' are at work here. From the "demonstrated facts concerning oral traditional poetry", a result of their field-work and first-hand experience with living oral poetry in the Balkans, Parry, Lord, and Notopoulos had drawn general conclusions as to the nature, style, narrative techniques, and outlook of oral poetry; developed a nomenclature; and formulated the outline of a poetics for analysing and interpreting oral poems. These general conclusions, along with nomenclature and poetics, constitute what appears in *Singer of Tales* as *The Theory*.

Thus there arose *Oral Theory* or *Oral-formulaic Theory*, as the official name goes. It is *theory* in the sense of the methodical and systematic generalization from empirical evidence. Let us briefly state its main features: "an oral poem is not composed *for* but *in* performance"[17]. Lord's famous aphorism pithily sums up his definition of oral poetry as "composed in oral performance by people who cannot read or write" and being "synonymous with traditional and folk poetry"[18]. The salient point is the *configuration* of Oral Theory's chief categories performance, composition, reception, and transmission: *performance* before a live audience conjoins *oral composition* and *aural reception* with *oral-aural transmission*, fusing these four elements into one continuous process that is oral poetry.

From this fusion derives oral poetry's *multiformity*, central to the original Parry-Lord Theory of Orality. It arises from the *fluidity* of oral song. An often performed song is composed anew, i. e., re-composed, with each performance. Thus composition-in-performance should read *re-composition-in-performance* of a song that is in constant flux. During its oral-aural transmission, it undergoes mutations – minor ones or major ones depending on the circumstances and conditions of the re-performance. Its mutability gives way to stability only when a song is fixed in writing as a stable text through dictation or some mechanical recording.

Recomposition-in-performance and the concomitant fluidity of an oral song imply the absence of memorization prior to performance on the part of the oral bard. Prior memorization would mean the recital of a premeditated and rehearsed song, which would suggest a fixed text – a notion foreign to oral poetry. Since it is the creation, respectively re-creation, of a poem, an "oral narrative is not, *cannot* be, memorized"[19]:

16 Lord 1995: 191; Nagy 1996a: 19 f. reiterates this.
17 Lord 1960: 13 (emphasis in original text).
18 Lord 1965: 591.
19 Lord 1965: 592 (emphasis in original text).

> Pure oral transmission involves not memorization but recomposition; it does not consider any text, i. e., any performance as an 'original' or in any way fixed. It results in a retelling, not in a reproduction. Each performance, or multiform, has its own validity and is unique, whether it be a 'good' or 'bad' performance of the song[20].

Just as it "excludes verse composed *for* oral presentation", i. e., a memorized text, the Parry-Lord concept of oral poetry excludes with equal force "verse that is pure improvisation"[21]: oral composition *qua* recomposition consists in the *re-telling of an existing tale*, not in its creation *ex nihilo*.

It is the *application* of Oral Theory to the Homeric epics that gave rise to the *Theory of the Oral Homer* (= Parryism). It is theory in the sense of an *hypothesis* that has to prove its validity through both the evidence it can muster and the explanatory power it can offer. By drawing this distinction between Oral Theory and Parryism, I simply make explicit what is implied in Lord's canonical book. In short, Oral Theory and the Theory of the Oral Homer *qua* Parryism are related to one another in the terms of the main division of Lord's book, namely as *theory* to its *application*.

This distinction appears to be more clearcut and straightforward than it actually is. Matters are far more complicated and need exploring. To begin with, in their genesis both theories were intricately intertwined; and, quite naturally, they still interact. The discovery of systematic formularity in Homer and of its traditional nature – the results of Parry's two Sorbonne *theses* – had provided the decisive impetus for Oral Theory in that it had prompted Parry to turn to the modern oral singers of tales among the Southern Slavs for a study of analogous phenomena. Thereupon Oral Theory's formation, articulation, and systematization evolved as a result of Parry's, Lord's, and Notopoulos' field-work with living oral poetry in the Balkans, fortified by their reception of the work of scholars of folklorist studies in this area[22]. Armed with the insights, gained from their direct experience of a living oral tradition, the oralist triumvirate returned to the Homeric epos and, applying their discoveries to Homer, drew the "Yugoslav analogy". It was this analogy, then, that gave rise to the Theory of the Oral Homer[23].

Their initial interpenetration notwithstanding, both theories, when taking a systematic form, as they first did in *Singer of Tales*, became two distinct, though related, entities. Oral-Formulaic Theory has been comparative right from its inception with *The Singer of Tales* drawing, in addition to the Yugoslav and Homeric traditions, on *Beowulf*, *Song of Roland*, and the Byzantine *Digenes Akritas*. It is the larger and more comprehensive of the two theories. Based, as it is, on the study of a plurality of oral traditions, it provides the general fundamental categories. In particular, it provides the criteria and test-methods to be applied to texts that we have

20 Lord 1965: 592–93.
21 Lord 1965: 591 (emphasis added).
22 Especially Mathias Murko 1929.
23 Cp. Lord 1960: 144: "The formulaic techniques … in the Greek and South Slavic poetries are generically identical and operate on the same principles. This is the surest proof now known of oral composition, and on the basis of it alone we should be justified in the conclusion that the Homeric poems are oral compositions".