

FORMULAS AND THEIR RELATIVES: A SEMIOTIC APPROACH TO VERSE MAKING IN HOMER AND MODERN GREEK FOLKSONGS*

IN a book I published a few years ago, entitled *Towards a Poetics of Modern Greek Folksong*,¹ I examined certain aspects of the poetics of modern folksongs in the light of the 'oral composition theory' of Homeric poetry, originally expounded by Milman Parry² in the late twenties and early thirties and subsequently elaborated by Albert B. Lord.³ In this paper I propose to follow the opposite course, and inquire whether some of my findings regarding the verse-making techniques of the modern folksongs could be applied to the Homeric epics, and whether they could be made to cast some additional light on the making of ancient epic poetry. More specifically, in my study of formulaic and otherwise similar verses in the folksongs, I was able to distinguish five degrees of kinship, as it were, or of decreasing similarity, from identical formulas to sense units of similar type. Can a comparable scale of similarities be found in Homer, and, if it can, could it be used in modern discussions of ancient epic versification and composition, without further encumbering a terminology that is not always clear or generally agreed upon? The purpose of this exercise is not merely taxonomic; by using some basic concepts of structural linguistics as tools, I think we may perhaps come a little closer to understanding the verse-making process, which is a prerequisite for understanding Homer's manner of composition and, in the last analysis, his 'creativity' or even 'originality' vis à vis the tradition to which he belonged.

It will be useful to recall here that while most Homeric specialists profess a great respect for the Parry and Lord theory of oral composition, and the concepts of oral traditional poetry and composition or recomposition in performance are well entrenched, particularly in the English language specialist bibliography, very few people nowadays accept certain of its basic tenets, such as the concept of the formula as a metrically fixed group of words; some scholars reject the complementary principles of extension and economy of the epic language,⁴ while others continue to believe in them although they presuppose the metrically fixed formula. Sixty-five years or so after the appearance of Parry's theory, many of the old and some new Homeric questions⁵ keep being debated, including the all-important one whether traditional (i.e. formulaic) poetry is altogether incompatible with writing or whether monumental masterpieces with a unified plot, such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, could have been created without any recourse to writing (or dictating).⁶

* This paper has greatly benefited from the criticism of Mark W. Edwards and Odysseus Tsagarakis, for which I am very grateful to both of them. Needless to add that they have no responsibility for my mistakes, and may not agree with all views put forward here. My thanks also go to the anonymous referees of the Journal for their many useful suggestions.

¹ Για μιὰ ποιητικὴ τοῦ ἐλληνικοῦ δημοτικοῦ τραγουδιοῦ (Herakleion 1988).

² Adam Parry (ed.), *The making of Homeric verse. The collected papers of Milman Parry* (Oxford 1971; henceforth quoted as *MHV*).

³ *The singer of tales* (Cambridge, Mass. 1960, henceforth abbreviated as *ST*); *Epic singers and oral tradition* (Ithaca and London 1991); *The singer resumes the tale* (Ithaca and London 1995).

⁴ Cf. H. Lloyd-Jones, 'Remarks on the Homeric question' in *History and imagination. Essays in honour of H.R. Trevor-Roper*, H. Lloyd-Jones (ed.) (New York 1982) 15-29; D. Shive, *Naming Achilles* (Oxford and New York 1986).

⁵ As G. Nagy puts it in 'Homeric questions', *TAPA* cxxii (1992) 17-60.

⁶ The dictation theory was first advocated by Lord ('Homer's originality: Oral dictated texts', *TAPA* lxxiv [1953] 124-34, repr. in his *Epic singers and oral tradition* [Ithaca and New York 1991] 38-48) and then was taken up by others, cf. Adam Parry, *The language of Achilles and other papers* (Oxford 1989) 104-140; R. Janko, *The Iliad: A commentary*, vol. iv, books 13-16 (Cambridge 1992) 37-8. B.B. Powell in a recent monograph on *Homer and the*

This paper, however, aims at a much lower target than answering the above questions. It will attempt a comparison—at the level of phraseology and verse making—between ancient epic and modern folk (therefore, by definition, traditional and oral) poetry, and will chart similarities and analogies within corresponding groups of lines in the two poetic systems. Still, such similarities cannot be taken to imply by themselves the oral character of the ancient one, although they do point to the traditional character of both. ‘Traditional’ is a concept wider than ‘oral,’ encompassing medieval poetry, also, which is extensively formulaic, and although it makes occasional references to writing and reading it is often understood in terms of ‘oral style pressed into the service of literate composition’.⁷ This is not very satisfactory if only because it fails to address the problem directly. A better answer, I think, may be sought in the semiotic character of the formula (defined and discussed below).⁸ Formulas and formulaic style, I submit, are characteristic of *traditional* poetry and other forms of art whether oral (such as folk poetry and music) or produced with the help of writing or some form of symbolic notation (such as medieval poetry and music, Byzantine and Middle-Eastern music, and so on).⁹ Such a style may have its origin in oral composition, but retains its character as long as the society in which art is produced remains traditional in its (collective) beliefs and practices.

Given the assumption that for all the exceptional qualities of Homer's poetry, it is nevertheless rooted in tradition, the best way to approach and understand his art is through the study of his traditional craftsmanship. Only that is something concrete and susceptible to analysis, while the quality of art is always difficult to grasp and impossible to analyze in logical terms. The more, then, we understand the traditional in Homer's works the more we will appreciate the new and perhaps unique in them.

In this regard, the comparative study of other oral epic traditions may be invaluable, and has been applied by Parry, Lord, and others following in their wake,¹⁰ with very interesting results. This is what makes, as I hope, my approach and the objectives of this paper legitimate, but I want to reiterate that its scope is limited: it is to examine certain Homeric formulas and variants at the level of the verse, or small groups of verses, and to define their similarities and relations in comparison with parallel phenomena encountered in modern Greek folksongs.

origin of the Greek alphabet (Cambridge 1991) pushes the assumption of dictation to an extreme conclusion by putting forward the startling theory that the ‘genius and benefactor of mankind, who invented the Greek alphabet by adaptation from the preexisting Phoenician syllabary’ (12) did so in order to write down what Homer sang, and was thus instrumental in facilitating the production of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in a kind of joint venture and cooperative effort with the poet (230); we may even have known his name all along: Palamedes (233-7). However, neither the theories of dictation, nor the idea of a writing poet, nor the ‘evolutionary model’ for the genesis of the epic suggested by Nagy (see now his *Poetry as performance. Homer and beyond* [Cambridge 1996], especially 74-7, 110) manage to offer satisfactory answers to *all* the problems involved so as to be fully convincing.

⁷ So M. Curschmann with reference to the *Nibelungenlied* (‘Nibelungenlied und Nibelungenklage. Über Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit im Prozess der Episierung’ in Ch. Cormeau (ed.), *Deutsche Literatur im Mittelalter. Hugo Kuhn zum Gedenken* (Stuttgart 1979) 93-4, quoted by B. Fenik, *Homer and the Nibelungenlied. Comparative studies in epic style* (Cambridge, Mass. 1986) 173, 202; cf. Fenik, *Digenis. Epic and popular style in the Escorial version* (Herakleion 1991) 17. See also Curschmann, ‘Oral poetry in mediaeval English, French, and German literature: Some notes on recent research’, *Speculum* xlii (1967) 36-52.

⁸ Cf. G.M. Sifakis, ‘Τὸ πρόβλημα τῆς προφορικότητας στὴ μεσαιωνικὴ δημώδη γραμματεία’ in N. M. Panayotakis (ed.), ‘Ἀρχές τῆς νεοελληνικῆς λογοτεχνίας’ i (Venice 1993) 267-24.

⁹ Useful in this connexion is H. van der Werf, *The oldest extant part music and the origin of Western polyphony* i (Rochester NY 1993) 18 ff. (on ‘Notation in mediaeval music life’), and G. Amargianakis, *An analysis of stichera in the deuterios modes i-ii* (*Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen-âge grec et latin* xxii, Copenhagen 1977) (offering a breakdown of a group of Byzantine melodies into their constitutive formulas).

¹⁰ See, for instance, W.F. Bynum, *Daemon in the woods: A study of oral narrative patterns* (Cambridge, Mass. 1978); J.M. Foley, *Traditional oral epic: The Odyssey, Beowulf, and the Serbo-Croatian return song* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1990).

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Parry formulated his theory and wrote all his major works before he met the South Slav singers. But after his extensive field trips in former Yugoslavia and the vast collection of recordings he was able to assemble, he shifted the emphasis, in his unfinished work on Chor Huso, to 'the theme in oral poetry at the expense of the *formula*'.¹¹ There is no doubt that this change has to be attributed to the insight the field workers had into the living tradition of epic singers in old Yugoslavia, with its fluidity and multiformity of diction,¹² and the preponderance of story and theme over the fixed expression as represented by the formula. Later on, Lord was to state that 'Formulas (...) serve only one purpose. They provide a means for telling a story in song and verse. The tale's the thing'.¹³ Besides, in studying the formulas in the Serbo-Croatian narrative songs, Lord found the density of fixed expressions to be much smaller than in Homer and reached the conclusion that the 'principle of thrift' cannot be found to be operative across a whole tradition or even the singers of the same district, but only in the songs of one singer, and then not without exceptions and provided 'the acoustical context' is taken into consideration.¹⁴ But despite these conclusions and the fact that, as we shall see (p. 142 below), Lord further shifted his emphasis from the spontaneous use of ready-made formulas to the creation of new phrases by the improvising bards, he did not revise Parry's definition of the formula.

However, within a few years from the publication of ST Parry's definition came under attack and the fixed metrical value as a property of the formula was questioned. J.B. Hainsworth pointed out the flexibility and mobility of set-phrases consisting of the same word groups, metrically modified so as to be usable in different parts of the hexameter (and thus under various metrical conditions).¹⁵ Modifications may be slight or drastic, from elision, correption, or alternative forms of inflexion resulting in change of metrical value, to rearrangement of word-order, separation of the constituent words of a formula by other words (e.g., ναυσικλυτοὶ ἄνδρες and v. ἤλυθον ἄ.), or even division of set-phrases by the verse-end (e.g., δάκρυα ... | θερμό).

Another effort to account for conceptual and/or phonetic associations in phrases with a 'family resemblance' led Michael N. Nagler, at about the same time, to postulate the concept of a preverbal, abstract, 'template' which generates an unlimited number of 'particular phrases (...) in more or less similar forms in an endless variety of contexts' at the level of performance (which he calls 'allomorphs'). To describe this template he borrowed the terms 'Gestalt' from psychology and '*sphota*' from Sanskrit linguistics, and even compared its hypostasis in a 'given word, phrase, or sentence' (i.e. an allomorph of the template) to 'a particular geometrical shape [as] a hypostasis of its Platonic Form'.¹⁶

¹¹ Adam Parry in his Introduction to *MHV* xli.

¹² Cf. *ST* 100, and Lord, *Epic singers and oral tradition* 76, 102, 130, 209; *The singer resumes the tale* 23 ff., 95, 108.

¹³ *ST* 68.

¹⁴ *ST* 50-3. C.M. Bowra (*Heroic poetry* (London 1952) 234 ff.) had already denied the existence of thrift in other traditions outside Homer.

¹⁵ *The flexibility of the Homeric formula* (Oxford 1968). See also now his concise analysis of Homer's formulaic style in the introduction to his volume of *The Iliad: A commentary* iii: books 9-12 (Cambridge 1993) 1-31.

¹⁶ 'Towards a generative view of the Homeric formula', *TAPA* xcvi (1968) 269-311, and *Spontaneity and tradition: a study in the oral art of Homer* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1974) 13-15. Nagler's 'Gestalt' or '*sphota*', though, is a concept too vague 'and frankly mystical in tone' (*Spontaneity* 14) to be really useful as an analytical tool, so it has not been used by others. Also, his use of the term 'allomorph' is arbitrary because it refers to very dissimilar forms supposedly originating from the same template; but it has the advantage of dispensing with an Ur-

Hainsworth's all inclusive approach, which upgraded, as it were, many of the phenomena that Parry had called simply—and somewhat vaguely—formulaic elements or relations to the level of the formula, disconnected the recurrent word groups from the rhythmical patterns of specific verse segments, and suggested that the coherence of recurring word groups (their 'formular bond',¹⁷ or 'syntagmatic solidarity' in structural-linguistic terms) is not due to their metrical form and the convenience for spontaneous improvisation they offered, but to their meaning. However, he seems to me far more convincing when he points out how slight changes of metre made a formula adaptable and usable in different metrical conditions than when he includes under his very general definition of the formula (as a repeated group of words) expressions whose constituent words are not only separated by other words but also split between two lines or even three lines (τεύχεα ... | ... | καλά, *Il.* 18.82-84).¹⁸

Metre, of course, does not come into play in Nagler's notion of family resemblances. His 'allomorph' is unrelated to the use of the term in linguistics and refers to often very *dissimilar* forms originating from the same 'mental template'. Nagler tries to reach beyond the formula and account for resemblances that cannot be dealt with by any theory of formulaic versification. I wonder, however, whether such associations as those studied by Nagler might not be found in the works of writing poets (e.g., Pindar or the tragedians), or whether they do not belong in discussions of poetic imagery rather than the process of oral composition, if the metrical shape of traditional phraseology is to be disregarded completely. Besides, his 'Gestalt' or '*sphota*' (as well as his allomorphs) lack the strict definition which would make them useful as analytical tools,¹⁹ and cannot therefore be used by other scholars who might wish to take up the same line of research.

Between the two extremes, Parry's 'tight definition' of the formula (in Adam Parry's words) and Nagler's forsaking of the term, falls a great number of contributions to the study of verse-making techniques, the relationship of formulas to the hexameter, the history of individual formulas, and so on,²⁰ while yet another related approach that has produced impressive results is the study of epic narrative in terms of recurring content motifs, themes, or scenes, and their arrangement into symmetrical or other patterns and longer narrative sequences.²¹

formula from which others are derived (see p. 146 below).

¹⁷ Cf. *The Iliad: A commentary* iii 26.

¹⁸ The phrase τεύχεα καλά is indeed a formula that occurs many times elsewhere. But does this mean that the two words should be taken as a formula under any circumstances? It all depends, of course, on how the formula is defined, so even an uncommon case like this is consistent with Hainsworth's definition (which ignores metre and versification patterns).

¹⁹ Cf. W. Ingalls, 'Another dimension of the formula', *Phoenix* xxvi (1972) 115.

²⁰ All this literature, up to the mid-eighties, is reviewed by M.W. Edwards in an invaluable critical essay: 'Homer and oral tradition: The formula' I-II, *Oral Tradition* i/ii (1986) 171-230, and iii.1-2 (1988) 11-60. See also Shive (n.4 above).

²¹ To the earliest major study of this kind, W. Arend, *Die typische Scenen bei Homer* (Berlin 1933), many more and very good ones can now be added, e.g., J.I. Armstrong, 'The arming motif in the *Iliad*', *AJP* lxxix (1958) 337-54; N. Austin, 'The function of digressions in the *Iliad*', *GRBS* vii (1966) 295-312; M.W. Edwards, 'Type-scenes and Homeric hospitality', *TAPA* cv (1975) 51-72, 'The structure of Homeric catalogues', *TAPA* cx (1980) 81-105, and *Homer, poet of the Iliad* (Baltimore 1987); B.C. Fenik, *Typical battle scenes in the Iliad*, *Hermes Einzelschriften* xxi (Wiesbaden 1968), *Studies in the Odyssey*, *Hermes Einzelschriften* xxx (Wiesbaden 1974); G.S. Kirk, 'The formal duels in books 3 and 7 of the *Iliad*' in B.C. Fenik (ed.), *Homer: Tradition and invention* (Leiden 1978) 18-40; O. Tsagarakis, 'Oral composition, type-scenes and narrative inconsistencies in Homer', *Grazer Beiträge* viii (1979) 23 ff.; *Form and content in Homer*, *Hermes Einzelschriften* xlvi (Wiesbaden 1982). For a survey of this literature on type scenes, see M.W. Edwards, *Oral Tradition* vii.2 (1992) 284-330. See also the recent monograph of S. Reece on *The stranger's welcome. Oral theory and the aesthetics of the Homeric hospitality scene* (Ann Arbor 1993), and Lord on arming scenes in *The singer resumes the tale* 75-95 (and *passim* on themes in other traditions).

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Regarding the modern Greek examples quoted below, a few simple facts should be stated here for the benefit of classical scholars who have no familiarity with the modern language and traditional poetry: (a) The dactylic hexameter did not survive Graeco-Roman antiquity (as a popular metre, that is). (b) The medieval-Greek epic tradition survives mostly in fragments, in the so-called 'acritic' songs (concerning the guardians of the eastern frontier, *acrai*, of Byzantium) handed down through the mainstream of narrative folksong (chiefly ballads and songs inspired by historical events).²² (c) The commonest line in the medieval epic tradition and in modern narrative folksongs is the fifteen-syllable iambic (called 'political', i.e. non-ecclesiastical, verse in the Byzantine era), which has exactly the same form as the ancient iambic tetrameter catalectic, except for the fact that the rhythm is dynamic and based on the periodic alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables. So if we read, for instance, line 288 of Aristophanes' *Wealth*, in which all stresses happen to fall on long syllables, with the modern Greek pronunciation, it would sound exactly like a political verse:

ὥς ἦδομαι καὶ τέρπομαι || καὶ βούλομαι χορεῦσαι.

Like all long metrical lines, the fifteen-syllable iambic has an obligatory *diaeresis*, after the eighth syllable, that divides it into two balancing, though unequal, halves, and some other secondary, frequent though not obligatory, points of further subdivision of the hemistichs into smaller *cola* or segments. Each of these metrical lengths constitutes a rhythmical basis to which a phrase or sentence has to be accommodated. The smallest of the segments may not be long enough to contain a poetic utterance with a discrete meaning. The longer ones, however, such as a hemistich of the verse (like the longer segments of the hexameter on either side of the main *caesura*), not to mention the whole verse itself, offer a variety of possibilities to the singer who can formulate or articulate his units of meaning so as to fit these rhythmical vehicles.

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To begin with, there is a distinct gain if we give to Parry's terminology a semiological twist. His formula can then be understood as a poetic 'sign', that is to say, as a unit of significance whose content and form are isometric (or coextensive) and inseparable, like the two sides of a sheet of paper.²³ A poetic sign is a word group that carries a poetic meaning which is something more than the sum of its parts (i.e. its literal meaning) and has been established by repeated use of the sign in the poetic corpus. As the words, many common expressions, and idioms, of a natural language are verbal signs that belong to the lexicon of the language, so the formulas are poetic signs that belong to the poetic or literary language of Homeric poetry, or of the modern folksongs, and so on, as semiotic systems. The advantage of this description over Parry's definition is that it acknowledges the importance of meaning alongside form, whereas Parry's 'essential idea' refers to a core, descriptive, meaning only, and ignores the poetic

²² Only one major work, the epic/romance of *Digenes Akrites*, whose origins go back to medieval epic tradition, has survived in fifteenth century mss., as has the shorter lay of *Armoures*, alongside the acritic songs. Critical edition: S. Alexiou, Βασίλειος Διγενῆς Ἀκρίτης καὶ τὸ ἄσμα τοῦ Ἀρμούρη (Athens 1985); traditional style: B. Fenik, *Digenis* (n. 7 above); historical context, discussion of problems, bibliography: R. Beaton and D. Ricks (eds.), *Digenes Akrites. New approaches to Byzantine heroic poetry* (London 1993).

²³ This metaphor was, of course, used by Ferdinand de Saussure in his original definition of the linguistic sign in *Cours de linguistique générale* (Paris 1916; many reprints).

meaning. As he writes, ‘the essential idea of the words ἡμος δ’ ἠριγένεια φάνη ροδοδάκτυλος Ἥως is “when day broke”; (...) that of πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς is “Odysseus”.’²⁴ Unfortunately, this disregards the deep, diachronic, resonance of the formulas as well as their great perfection and polish that has resulted from their repeated use; and vice versa, their repeated use is due to the fact that formulas give a perfect form to thoughts, images, and concepts which are vital to the world of traditional poetry, and are the most distinctive markers of its style.²⁵ Therefore, no translator would easily part from ‘the young Dawn ... with her rosy fingers’ (in Lattimore’s wording), no matter how often he must refer to a new daybreak.

Often repeated typical expressions such as, for example, φάσγανον ἀργυρόηλον (silver-nailed sword), οἴνοπα πόντον (the wine-dark sea), ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα (he/she addressed [him] in winged words), καὶ ἀλεύατο κῆρα μέλαιναν (and avoided the dark death), τὸν δὲ σκότος ὄσσε κάλυψε (and a mist of darkness closed over both eyes), τανύφυλλος ἔλαφη, and its modern equivalent, ἐλιᾶν πλατύφυλλην (an olive-tree stretching its foliage);²⁶ or, to quote a few modern examples, βάνει τὸν ἥλιο πρόσωπο (she puts on the sun as her face), κι ἡ γλῶσσα του ἀηδονολαλεῖ (his tongue sounds like a nightingale), σκύβει, φιλεῖ τὸν μαῦρο του (he bends, kisses his horse), πασά ἔχει Λιάκος τὸ σπαθί (for pasha Liakos has his sword), ποτάμια, λιγαστέψετε (rivers, lessen your water), σὰν περδικούλα θλιβεται (like a small partridge she grieves), μυριολογᾷ καὶ λέει (she laments and says), σπαθιά ξεγυμνωμένα (swords bared), σὲ μαρμαρένια τάβλια (on a marble table), σὲ μαρμαρένια ἀλώνια (in marble threshing-floors), and so forth—all these expressions are felt to be parts of a poetic language either because they are remembered as verse-parts from repeated hearings, or because they contain glosses, are impossible or unlikely to occur in everyday speech, have a certain rhythmical shape, imply a poetic context and convey a specific meaning easily grasped by people who are familiar with the poetic tradition to which they belong. Any one of these reasons or combination thereof is enough to mark the above utterances as poetical, even when they contain no special vocabulary or syntax that could not be used in common speech.

A poem of any size, though, cannot consist entirely of fixed formulas, any more than common speech can consist of clichés and idioms only.²⁷ If, as we know from modern linguistics, all users of natural languages are creative, in the sense that they produce speech on the basis of their linguistic competence (i.e. internalized knowledge of vocabulary and grammar) and do not repeat ready-made phrases they have memorized (except when they are trying to master a new language), so also the traditional artist, poet or singer, does not manipulate ready-made phrases like the pieces of a puzzle or a pack of playing-cards,²⁸ but composes his work by using creatively his traditional resources: the vocabulary and grammar of poetic language,²⁹ including formulas and versification patterns, images, similes, metaphors, and other figures of speech, elements of content (such as motifs or themes), story patterns, and, last but not least, music. Taken together they constitute a poetic universe (a poetic *langue* in the Saussurean sense)

²⁴ *MHV* 13-14.

²⁵ This is another way of referring to what Foley describes as ‘traditional referentiality’, see his *Immanent art: From structure to meaning in traditional oral epic* (Bloomington and Indianapolis 1991), chps. 1-2, esp. pp. 6-10, 38-60.

²⁶ Cf. Sifakis, *Greece & Rome* xxxix (1992) 151.

²⁷ On formulas as idioms of poetic language, see P. Kiparsky’s very interesting article on ‘Oral poetry: Some linguistic and typological considerations’ in B.A. Stolz & R.S. Shannon III (eds.), *Oral literature and the formula* (Ann Arbor 1976) 73-106.

²⁸ This unfortunate metaphor was used by A. van Gennep, *La question d’Homère* (Paris 1909) 52, quoted by Hainsworth, *The flexibility of the Homeric formula* 15, n. 1.

²⁹ As Hainsworth says, the ‘οἰδοί were masters of a special form of language, not jugglers of formulas’, *The Iliad: A commentary* iii (Cambridge 1993) 16.

which, however, is a secondary system of signification and communication that depends on, and is constantly nourished by, the primary system of the natural language. So a poet draws on both systems at the same time in order to form his utterances. Therefore, although he has to be a craftsman, he is by no means a mechanic, and has lots of space to develop his *creativity*.

This kind of creativity, inherent in oral performance, became apparent to Parry and Lord in former Yugoslavia, and later on Lord, in his description of the process of oral composition, shifted the emphasis from exact repetition to analogical formation of new phrases (although he remained always faithful to Parry's original terminology); from memory, therefore, to creative improvisation, from *parole* or specific phraseology to *langue* and the competence to create anew. The art of the oral singer, he writes, 'consists not so much in learning through repetition the time-worn formulas as in the ability to compose and recompose the phrases for the idea of the moment on the pattern established by the basic formulas'.³⁰ For the singer 'does not "memorize" formulas, any more than we as children "memorize" language' (p. 36); he 'cannot, and does not, remember enough to sing a song; he must, and does, learn to create phrases. (...) I believe that we are justified in considering that *the creating of phrases is the true art of the singer on the level of line formation*, and it is this facility rather than his memory of relatively fixed formulas that marks him as a skillful singer in performance' (emphasis mine).³¹

Let us now look at some groups of verses that could be considered as formulaic systems according to Parry's terminology:

Θεέ, νά βρω τὸν κύρη μου στ' ἀμπέλι νά κλαδεύει (A 111, Fauriel)³²
(God, if only I would find my old man in the vineyard pruning)
Θέ μου, νά βρω τὴν Εὐθουκιά στὴ βρύση νά γιουμίζει (A 311)
(God, if only I would find Evthoukiá at the fountain filling up)
Θέ μου, νά βρω τὴ Νικολοῦ στὸ στρώμα νά κοιμάται (A 190)
(God, if only I would find Nikolou in bed asleep)

«Ὡρα καλή, καλόγερε» «Καλῶς τὰ παλικάρια.» (A 238, Peloponnese)
(‘Good time of day to you, monk’. ‘Welcome, lads’.)
«Γειά σου χαρά σου, Χάροντα.» «Καλῶς τον τὸν λεβέντη.» (Pol. 214)³³
(‘Hail to you, Charon’. ‘Welcome, lad’.)
«Πολλὰ τὰ ἔτη, ἀφέντη μου.» «Καλῶς τὸν κύρ Γιαννάκη» (A 119, Naupaktos)
(‘Many years to you, my lord’. ‘Welcome, master Yannakis’.)

κι ἡ λυερὴ ἐπρόβαλεν ἀπὸ τὸ παραθύρι (A 411, Nisyros)
(and the lass looked out from the window)
κι ὁ Χάρος τὸν ἀγνάντεψε ἀπὸ ψηλὴ ραχοῦλα (Pol. 214)
(and Charon regarded him from a high ridge)
Σαρακηνὸς τήνε θωρεῖ ἀπὸ τὸ μεροβίγλι (A 4, Crete)
(A Saracen spots her from the look-out)

³⁰ ST 5.

³¹ Lord did not use Saussure's terms, *langue* and *parole* (but cf. ST 279, n. 7), and could not have used N. Chomsky's notions of *competence*, *creativity* and *performance* (which corresponds to Saussure's *parole*), see *Aspects of the theory of syntax* (Boston 1965) 6-8, *Language and mind* (New York 1972), cf. J. Lyons, *Semantics* (Cambridge 1977) 77, 107, 265). He shows no awareness of L. Hjelmslev's connotative semiotics ('Pour une sémantique structurale' in *Essais linguistiques* (Copenhagen 1959)), but was able to point out that 'in studying the patterns and systems of oral narrative verse we are in reality observing the "grammar" of the poetry, a grammar superimposed, as it were, on the grammar of the language concerned' (ST 36).

³² 'A' stands for the Academy of Athens standard anthology of folksongs: 'Ελληνικά δημοτικά τραγούδια, G.K. Spyridakis (ed.) *et al.*, i (Athens 1962). References are to pages followed by the place of origin of the variant quoted (or, if not known, the name of one of the early folksong editors).

³³ N.G. Politis, 'Εκλογαὶ ἀπὸ τὰ τραγούδια τοῦ ἑλληνικοῦ λαοῦ (Athens 1914) 214.

The first of these groups is a proper formulaic system (in Parry's sense) because all lines begin with the same four-syllable formula, and then proceed differently but follow the same syntactical pattern. The other two verse groups contain some formulas, but obviously the similarity of their members lies in their metrical form and a substratum of meaning. This substratum in the above three line-groups is as follows: (a) Someone (not mentioned in the lines under examination) prays to God to find Subject X (towards whom he is moving) / being involved in a normal occupation. (b) Greeting and addressing by name; / welcoming response. (c) Subject X regards someone / from a vantage point.

Such verse systems, which could easily be expanded by the addition of many more examples, are *paradigmatic* planes or fields—or, more simply, tables of *syntagmatically* similar phrases—the terms of which form columns of identical, or synonymous, or variant, entities. If all terms of the syntagmatic,³⁴ or horizontal, order in (say) two examples are synonymous, or partly identical and partly synonymous, we have also synonymous poetic signs (if all terms are identical we have the same formula); if one or more terms vary, yet we have the same syntagmatic order and underlying general sense, as is the case with all the above examples, we have different signs of the same type, *variants of the same type* (type here refers to both the form and content of these units of signification).

Let us now look at some series of Homeric verses:³⁵

ὣς φάτο, μείδησεν δὲ πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς (*Od.* 23.111)
 (So she spoke, and much-enduring noble Odysseus / smiled)
 ὣς φάτο, ῥίγησεν δὲ βοῶπις πτόνια Ἥρη (*Il.* 15.34)
 (He spoke, and the lady the ox-eyed goddess Hera was frightened)
 ὣς φάτο, γήθησεν δὲ θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη (*Il.* 17.567)
 (So he spoke, and the goddess grey-eyed Athene was happy)
 etc.

The general sense underlying all these examples is that (in inverse order) 'Subject X has an emotional reaction to what someone (not mentioned in the same line) has said'. All examples are variants of the same type. In the following series, which overlaps with the former, the first term of the (inverse) syntagmatic order is different, and the general sense becomes: 'Subject X reacts emotionally at the sight of someone' (previously mentioned):

τὴν μὲν ἰδὼν γήθησε πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς (*Od.* 5.486, 24.504)
 (Seeing this, long-suffering great Odysseus was happy)
 τὸν δὲ ἰδὼν ῥίγησε βοὴν ἀγαθὸς Διομήδης (*Il.* 5.596, 11.345)
 (Diomedes of the great war cry shivered as he saw him)
 τοὺς δὲ ἰδὼν νεῖκεσεν ἀναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων (*Il.* 4.336)
 (Seeing these the lord of men Agamemnon scolded them)
 τὸν δὲ ἰδὼν ὤκτειρε Μενoitίου ἄλκιμος υἱὸς (*Il.* 11.813)
 (And the strong son of Menoitios looked on him in pity)
 τὸν δὲ ἰδὼν ἐλέησε πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε (*Il.* 15.12)
 (Then the father of gods and men seeing Hektor pitied him)
 etc.

³⁴ 'Syntagmatic' coincides here with 'syntactic', but the former is more general than the latter. Syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations in structural linguistics constitute the two axes of relationships of a verbal utterance. The former are relations *in praesentia* and hold together the terms of an utterance (a linguistic syntagm); the latter (actually called 'rappports mémoriels' or 'associatifs' by Saussure) are relations *in absentia* and refer to synonyms, homonyms, antonyms, etc., of each term in the syntagm, which may be recalled or connoted in the process of verbal communication.

³⁵ All translations quoted below are by Richmond Lattimore. I made no changes to them even when the same Homeric phrases, quoted next to each other, appear to differ in the translations.

In the following series we have: 'Subject X addresses someone in manner Y':³⁶

τὸν δ' ἄρ' ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν προσέφη πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς (*Il.* 1.148, etc.)
 (Then looking darkly at him Achilles of the swift feet spoke)
 τὴν δὲ μέγ' ὀχθήσας προσέφη νεφεληγερέτα Ζεὺς (*Il.* 1.517, etc.)
 (Deeply troubled, Zeus who gathers the clouds answered her)
 τὸν δὲ χολωσαμένη προσέφη λευκῶλενος Ἥρη (*Il.* 24.55)
 (Then bitterly Hera of the white arms answered him, saying)
 τὸν δ' ἐπικερτομέων προσέφη πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς (*Il.* 24.649)
 (Achilleus / of the swift feet now looked at Priam and said, sarcastic:)
 τὸν δ' οὐ ταρβήσας προσέφη κορυθαίολος Ἕκτωρ (*Il.* 20.430)
 (But with no fear Hector of the shining helm answered him)
 τὸν δ' ἐπιμειδίσας προσέφη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς (*Il.* 10.400)
 (Then Odysseus the resourceful smiled and spoke to him)
 etc.

In the next field the following syntagmatic structure can be seen: 'Pronoun (or subject carried over from previous line), place X as first object, transitive verb, place Y as second object, qualification of the latter':

οἱ δὲ Πύλον τ' ἐνέμοντο καὶ Ἀρήνην ἐρατεινὴν (*Il.* 2.591)
 (They who dwelt about Pylos and lovely Arene)
 οἱ δ' Ἄργος τ' εἶχον Τίρυνθά τε τειχιόεσσαν (*Il.* 2.559)
 (They who held Argos and Tiryns of the huge walls)
 οἱ τ' εἶχον Φθίην ἠδ' Ἑλλάδα καλλιγόναικα (*Il.* 2.683)
 (those who held Phthia and Hellas the land of fair women)
 Πιερτὴν δ' ἐπιβάσα καὶ Ἠμαθίην ἐρατεινὴν (*Il.* 14.226)
 (and [Hera] crossed over Pieria and Emathia the lovely)
 Ἀρήνην ἴκανε καὶ Ἀργυφὴν ἐρατεινὴν (*H. Apoll.* 422)
 ([the ship] reached Arene and lovely Argyrhee)
 Κυλλήνης μεδέοντα καὶ Ἀρκαδίης πολυμήλου (*H. Herm.* 2)
 (who rules over Kyllene and Arcadia of many flocks)

If the members of the above field seem too close to each other in form (particularly the four examples from *Iliad* 16), the examples of the next table have very different referents and come from distant contexts (much like the modern examples quoted above, p. 142), yet they are no less variants of the same type:

οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρὶ Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκεν (*Il.* 1.2)
 (and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the Achaians)
 οὐλομένην, ἣ τ' αἰὲν ἀήσυλα ἔργα μέμηλεν (*Il.* 5.876)
 (accursed, whose mind is fixed forever on unjust action)
 οὐλομένην, ἣ πολλὰ κάκ' ἀνθρώποισι δίδωσι (*Od.* 17.287, cf. 474)
 (a cursed thing, which bestows many evils on men)
 τρώκτης, ὃς δὴ πολλὰ κάκ' ἀνθρώποισιν ἔωργει (*Od.* 14.289)
 (a gnawer at others' goods, and many were the hurts he inflicted | on men)

Now what is most important to notice is that regardless of the number of formulas included in a paradigmatic plane or table such as those shown above (which, of course, could easily be

³⁶ Or 'A addressed him with qualification,' see M.W. Edwards, 'Homeric speech introductions', *HSCP* lxxiv (1970) 7. Eight more categories of speech introductions are studied by Edwards (pp. 1-36).

multiplied),³⁷ it constitutes a *productive matrix* that could generate ever more examples through a process of inventive poetic improvisation. Therefore, even if some of them appear to be unique, they are no less traditional for that, because the matrix that has generated them belongs to the poetic *langue* as much as any formula.³⁸ All are variants of the same type.

I would now like to introduce and define two more terms, *allomorphs* and *poetic synonyms*, using examples from both Homer and modern folksongs. The following table contains four passages from different folksongs. I have numbered the hemistichs to facilitate reference to them:

A. ¹ Καὶ τὸ μαχαίρι ντοῦ 'συρεν ² ἀπ' ἀργυρὸ φουκάρι,
³ ψηλὰ ψηλὰ τὸ πέταξε, ⁴ μπήχνει τὸ στὴν καρδιά τζη.
 (And he drew his knife / from a silver sheath, // high up he threw it, / he thrusts it into her heart. *Beloved brothers and unfaithful wife*, A 373, Crete)

B. ¹ τὸ μαχαίρακι τοῦ ἐβγαλε ² ἀπ' ἀργυρὸ φηκάρι,
³ στὸν οὐρανὸ τὸ ἔσυρε ⁴ καὶ στὴν καρδιά τοῦ 'φάνη.
 (He drew his little knife / from its silver sheath, // to the sky he pulled it / and it showed in his heart. *Wicked mother-in-law*, A 349, Aigina)

C. ¹ Βγάλλει τ' ἀρζυρομάχαιο ² 'ποὺ τὴ χρυσὴν τοῦ μέση,
³ στὸν οὐρανὸν τὸ πέταξε ⁴ καὶ στὴν καρτζιά τὸ 'δέχτη.
 (He draws his silver knife / from his golden waist, // up to the sky he threw it / and she got it in the heart. *Woman and Death*, A 424, Kalymnos)

D. ¹ Τανά εἰς τὴν κοξούλλαν τοῦ, ² βρίσκ' ἀρκυρὸ φηκάρι
³ τζαὶ μὲς στ' ἀρκυροφήκαρο ⁴ βρίσκ' ἀρκυρὸ μαχαίρι·
⁵ στὸν οὐρανὸν τὸ πέταξε, ⁶ στὴ γῆ χάμα τὸ 'δέχτη,
⁷ πάλε ξαναδιπλάζει το, ⁸ εἰς τὸ κορμί τ' ἀνέβη.
 (He reaches into his waist, / he finds a silver sheath, // and in the silver sheath / he finds a silver knife; // up to the sky he threw it, / he got it down on the ground, // again he throws it, / it climbed into his body. *Woman and Death*, A 424, Cyprus)

All the above line groups are carriers of the same meaning, which is not apparent to us unless we place them in their context. In fact, they exemplify a theme, namely the execution of a just or unavoidable killing or suicide, and the hesitation of an unwilling killer to carry out his action: at the last moment he throws his knife up into the air. But the knife miraculously reaches its target precisely because the killing is just and unavoidable. The fact that the identity of the killer or the nature of his action—suicide or the killing of someone else—is not revealed in these lines makes them reducible to the same paraphrase,³⁹ and therefore variant forms of the same sense unit (or motif) which, if we want to be precise, is part of the 'theme of unwilling killer'. Such variants differ from each other not in content, but in wording, syntax, length (and, therefore, in metrical and syntagmatic form). Line groups A–C and D are variant forms of the same poetic

³⁷ Some of Joseph A. Russo's 'phrase-patterns' would be useful here. However, in his well known paper on 'The structural formula in Homeric verse' (*Yale Classical Studies* xx (1966) 219-240), Russo is mainly interested in the localization of various types of grammatical/syntactical phrase-patterns to particular parts of the hexameter, and not in a common meaning underlying them. So his groups of examples do not constitute paradigmatic matrices in the sense indicated above.

³⁸ I suppose that this is a way of explaining the genesis of unique 'formulaic' expressions which Hainsworth rightly refuses to call formulas (cf. *The Iliad: A commentary* iii 17).

³⁹ 'He drew his knife from its sheath, threw it up into the air, but the knife [reaching its originally intended destination] pierced through his/her body.'

meaning, despite the fact that D is twice as long as A–C; they are, therefore, *poetic synonyms*. Examples such as those quoted above abound in folk poetry, including the Serbo-Croatian epic narratives, and this is what led Lord to the conclusion that the principle of epic economy is not operative across a whole tradition, but only in the songs of one singer (*cf.* p. 138 above).

Within the above poetic synonyms, some formulas can be located (A^2/B^2 , C^3/D^5), but more common are hemistichs that are synonymous rather than identical with each other in regard of meaning ($A^1/B^1/C^1$, $A^3/B^3/C^3$, etc.). These synonymous phrases, which are alternative forms of the same literal, as well as poetic, *signatum* or 'signified', I propose to call *allomorphs*. The methodological advantage of this term is that it does not necessarily imply an original form or prototype (as the 'allophone' does not imply an original phoneme),⁴⁰ even though the existence of such a prototype cannot be ruled out. Allomorphs, however, should not be taken to be variations of original forms (whose traces were probably lost early in the tradition) but to be generated in exactly the same way as the 'variants of the same type' that we have already seen, namely, by a paradigmatic matrix of synonymous phrases that recall one another and facilitate the production of additional ones at the level of poetic performance (e.g., $\psi\eta\lambda\acute{\alpha}\ \psi\eta\lambda\acute{\alpha}\ \tau\omicron\ \pi\acute{\epsilon}\tau\alpha\zeta\epsilon$, $\sigma\tau\omicron\nu\ \omicron\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\omicron\nu\ \tau\omicron\ \pi\acute{\epsilon}\tau\alpha\zeta\epsilon$, $\sigma\tau\omicron\nu\ \omicron\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\omicron\ \tau\omicron\ \xi\sigma\upsilon\rho\epsilon$, etc.).

Let us now turn to some Homeric examples. To begin with, here belong the metrically equivalent synonymous formulas, often discussed in connection with the rule of epic economy as if they represent exceptions to it; whereas allomorphs point in the opposite direction, which is to say that metrical synonyms are, not only equivalent, but equal constituent elements of the tradition and inherent in the process of improvisation. It should be said, however, in fairness to Parry, that this is much more apparent in the case of predicates than in noun-epithet equivalent formulas. The examples of the following table are one-line units describing the moment of death of Homeric heroes. They all are poetically synonymous, and contain formulas, allomorphs, as well as expressions which differ in content but are poetically and functionally equivalent:

- a ¹ ἦριπε δ' ἐξ ὀχέων,² στυγερός δ' ἄρα μιν σκότος εἶλεν (*Il.* 5.47)
(He dropped from the chariot, and the hateful darkness took hold of him)
- b ¹ ἦριπε δ' ἐξ ὀχέων,² κατὰ δ' ὀφθαλμῶν κέχυτ' ἀχλύς (*Il.* 16.344)
(and the darkness drifted over his eyes as he crashed from the chariot)
- c ¹ δούπησεν δὲ πεσῶν, ² κατὰ δὲ σκότος ὄσσε κάλυπεν (*Il.* 16.325)
(He fell, thunderously, and darkness closed over both eyes)
- d ¹ γνῦξ δ' ἔριπ' οἰμῶξας, ² θάνατος δέ μιν ἀμφεκάλυπεν (*Il.* 5.68)
(He dropped, screaming, to his knees, and death was a mist about him)
- e ¹ γνῦξ δ' ἔριπ' οἰμῶξας, ² νεφέλη δέ μιν ἀμφεκάλυπεν (*Il.* 20.417)
(and he dropped, moaning, on one knee as the dark mist gathered / about him)
- f ¹ δούπησεν δὲ πεσῶν, ² χθόνα δ' ἤλασε παντὶ μετώπῳ (*Od.* 22.94)
(He fell, thunderously, and took the earth full on his forehead)

⁴⁰ The term 'allomorph' is borrowed from linguistics, where it actually means an alternative morpheme. But it is a convenient term to suggest an alternative *morphe* (form), also, and in this limited sense it is a much more specific term than Nagler's allomorph (*cf.* pp. 138, 139 above). On the other hand, my allomorphs and their respective generative matrix constitute a much wider category than Hainsworth's examples of substitution (*The Iliad: A commentary* iii 15).

- g ¹ ἦριπε δὲ πρηνῆς, ² χθόνα δ' ἤλασε παντὶ μετώπῳ (*Od.* 22.296)
(He fell then headlong, and took the earth full on his forehead)
- h ¹ ἦριπε δ' ἐξ ὀχέων, ² ἀράβησε δὲ τεύχε' ἐπ' αὐτῷ (*Il.* 8.260)
(He fell from the chariot, and his armour clattered upon him)
- i ¹ ἦριπε δὲ πρηνῆς, ² ἀράβησε δὲ τεύχε' ἐπ' αὐτῷ (*Il.* 5.58)
(He dropped forward on his face and his armour clattered upon him)
- j ¹ δούπησεν δὲ πεσών, ² ἀράβησε δὲ τεύχε' ἐπ' αὐτῷ (*Il.* 5.42, 540, etc.)
(He fell, thunderously, and his armour clattered upon him)

All the above examples can be reduced to the same general paraphrase: 'He [the warrior previously identified, and mortally hit] fell down and died'. They are, therefore, variant forms of the same meaning, i.e. *poetic synonyms*. Several hemistichs in the table are formulas ($a^1/b^1/h^1$, $c^1/f^1/j^1$, d^1/e^1 , g^1/i^1 , f^2/g^2 , $h^2/i^2/j^2$), others are allomorphs ($a^2/b^2/c^2/d^2/e^2$); still others are poetically synonymous phrases, referring to the same *poetic* meaning with regard to the final fall of a warrior which precedes and signals his death ($a^1/b^1/h^1 \approx c^1/f^1/j^1 \approx d^1/e^1 \approx g^1/i^1$). The difference between these phrases and the allomorphs is that the former connote and announce the death of the warrior at the poetic level, but denote his fall in a variety of ways at the linguistic level; therefore, they are poetic synonyms, but different linguistic signs, which however fulfill the same poetic function in similar environments. By the same token, the hemistichs a^2-e^2 (referring to death as a cloud or darkness enveloping the dying warrior) and f^2-j^2 (referring to the warrior hitting the ground with his forehead, and to the clatter of his armour), although linguistically very different, are poetically synonymous, also, as they all connote the warrior's moment of death. I propose to call such units *functional equivalents*.

The functional equivalents a^1-j^1 and the allomorphs a^2-e^2 are also metrically equivalent, respectively, and practically interchangeable among the verses quoted above. A question that has now to be asked is whether such units always appear in the same metrical form. This question has already been answered in the negative with reference to poetic synonyms (of which both allomorphs and functional equivalents are subcategories).⁴¹ As regards allomorphs in particular, the answer should be the same as in the case of the formulas. Consider, for instance, the following examples:

- — — — — || τέλος θανάτοιο κάλυπεν (*Il.* 5.553, 16.502, 22.361)
 — — — — — || θάνατος δέ μιν ἀμφεκάλυπεν (see *d* above)
 — — — — — || νεφέλη δέ μιν ἀμφεκάλυπεν (see *e* above)
 — — — | θανάτου δὲ μέλαν νέφος ἀμφεκάλυπεν (*Il.* 16.350, *Od.* 4.180)
 — — | ἀμφὶ δέ οἱ θάνατος χύτο θυμοραϊστῆς (*Il.* 13.544, etc.)

The notion of death as darkness enveloping the dying warrior is present in all examples. So the answer to the above question depends on whether we accept that formulas retain their identity when they are metrically adapted and expanded. Although I, for one, would not accept all of Hainsworth's examples, it is very difficult to deny the virtual identity of the following pair of phrases (except for their metrical shape):

- — — — — || κατὰ δ' ὀφθαλμῶν κέχυτ' ἀχλύς (see *b* above)
 κάρ ῥά οἱ ὀφθαλμῶν κέχυτ' ἀχλύς, | — — — (*Il.* 20.421)

⁴¹ Cf. p. 146 above. As we shall see a little later (p. 149 and Table of Ship-setting-sail Theme), poetic synonyms are flexible and come in a variety of forms.

So if formulas can attain a considerable degree of elasticity by means of simple metrical adaptation, or the combination and interchange of synonyms,⁴² allomorphs should by definition be considered even more adaptable. Actually, I submit, many modified or expanded phrases should better (i.e., more accurately) be considered as allomorphs rather than as formulas (e.g., μοῖρα κραταιή, θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κραταιή, πορφύρεος θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κραταιή, ὑπέλυσε δὲ γυῖα, ὑπέλυσε μένος καὶ φαίδιμα γυῖα, etc.). On the other hand, metrical modification of both formulas and allomorphs entails a change of context and new 'neighbours' for them. Or, to be precise, it is the requirements of a new environment that bring about metrical adaptation of a phrase. But the proximity and interrelationship of formulas and other phrases is an aspect of Homeric style that needs further study before the great divide between Parry's original definition of the formula and later definitions (since Hainsworth) that ignore metrical shapes and values can be bridged.⁴³

To summarize: formulas, allomorphs, functional equivalents (the last two categories being poetic synonyms), and variants of the same type, represent distinct grades of relationship in the phraseology and versification of traditional poetry. Interrelated examples of each category—whether whole lines, more lines than one, or various verse segments—constitute systems of either metrically interchangeable examples or similar units of varying lengths, which recall one another and thus constitute a reproductive matrix that generates even more examples. Systems overlap, and units from different systems are combined by the singer in the process of composition. However, it must be recognized, and emphasized, that these considerable resources and aids of improvisation do not account for the majority of verses, and that the traditional singer must be able incessantly to recast anew his poetic utterances in the form of new verses or verse-segments, not only by adroitly handling the aforementioned materials, but also on the basis of associations of additional words and notions which have to be metrically shaped or reshaped before they can fit his compositional plan.

Such notional or conceptual associations, which indicate a more distant relationship on our scale of kinship, are mostly traditional, too, and belong to the ideological environment of the artist and the formative influences he receives during his upbringing and training, alongside narrative motifs or themes and story patterns (although they are seldom discussed in connection with formulaic or traditional poetic diction). Consider, for instance, how gods come down from the top of Mt. Olympus to visit their favoured mortals:

- a 1 ὧς ἔφατ', οὐδ' ἀπίθησε θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη,
2 βῆ δὲ κατ' Οὐλύμποιο καρήνων ἀΐξασα (*Il.* 2.167-8)
(So she [Hera] spoke, nor did the goddess grey-eyed Athene / disobey her, but went in speed down the peaks of Olympus).
- b 1 ὧς εἰπὼν ἔτρυνε πάρος μεμαυῖαν Ἀθήνην,
2 βῆ δὲ κατ' Οὐλύμποιο καρήνων ἀΐξασα (*Il.* 4.73-4, etc.)
(Speaking so he [Zeus] stirred up Athene, who was eager before this, / and she went in a flash down the pinnacles of Olympus).
- c Ἥρη δ' ἀΐξασα λίπεν ῥτόν Οὐλύμποιο (*Il.* 14.225, 20.114)
(while Hera in a flash of speed left the horn of Olympus).

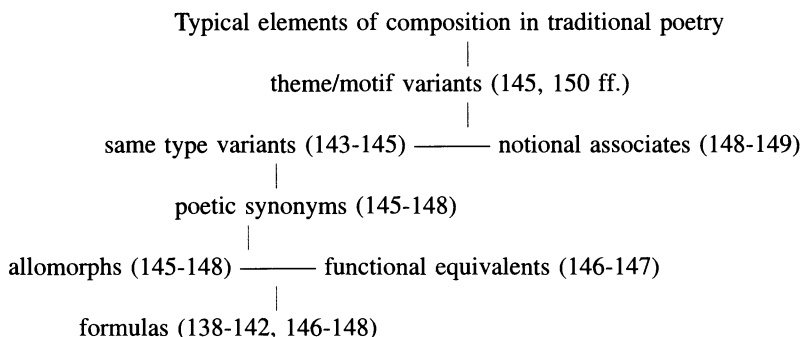
⁴² Hainsworth, *The flexibility of the Homeric formula* 82.

⁴³ Cf. P. Chantraine's pioneering work on 'Remarques sur l'emploi des formules dans le premier chant de l'Iliade' (*RÉG* xlv (1932) 121-54), 'an article on the "play of formulae"', which however 'remains the only work of its kind, an excellent source for observing how formulae are used', as M.W. Edwards says (*Oral Tradition* if/i (1986) 198).

- d* ἡ δ' ἱρηξ ὡς ἄλτο κατ' Οὐλύμπου νιφόντος (*Il.* 18.616)
 (And she [Thetis] like a hawk came sweeping down from the snows of Olympos).
- e* 1 ὡς ἔφατ', οὐδ' ἄρα πατὴρ ἀνηκούστησεν Ἀπόλλων,
 2 βῆ δὲ κατ' Ἰδαίων ὄρέων ἱρηκι εἰοικώς (*Il.* 15.236-7)
 (He [Zeus] spoke so, and Apollo, not disregarding his father, / came down along the mountains of Ida in the likeness of a rapid / hawk).

Although lines *a1* and *b1* are allomorphs, *e1* is not, because Apollo has taken the place of Athena (a change of subject that has resulted in a change of verb as well, οὐδ' ... ἀνηκούστησεν for οὐδ' ἀπίθησε); therefore, *e1* is a variant of the same type as *a1* (*cf.* pp. 143 ff. for this category). However, lines *a2/b2*, *c*, *d*, and *e2*, are more distant relatives in that they are connected only by associations of words and notions: the verbs ἀίσσω and ἄλλομαι, meaning to dart or speed downwards in a flash, the mountain-tops, the simile of the hawk. But they lack a common syntagmatic order (so they are not variants of the same type) and, because they may differ in verb and/or subject and adverbial complement, they lack a common signified (so they are not synonyms). I propose to call them *content* or *notional associates*.

Here is a schematic classification of all types of relationship discussed in this paper (with references to the pages where these terms are discussed and defined):



In my next, and last, set of examples, I have tabulated a number of instances of the same theme, that of a ship setting sail (usually at daybreak),⁴⁴ which occurs many times in the *Odyssey* and can be expected to contain many typical elements. Yet, as is also the case with other typical themes and scenes, such as, for example, arming scenes and duels in the *Iliad*, not any two instances of the theme are exactly alike.

Each horizontal course, or row, of the Table contains a passage divided into line groups corresponding to steps in the action described (rows are numbered with Roman numerals: I, II, III, etc.). The vertical columns correspond to thematic units or motifs in the narrative sequence (numbered with lower-case letters of the Latin alphabet: *a*, *b*, *c*, etc.). Line groups representing similar motifs are placed below each other in the same columns so as to facilitate comparison. We can see at a glance that our theme variants are unequal. The longest one is IX (2.416-431), which consists of fifteen lines divided into eight motifs; the shortest one is II (9.76-78), consisting of three lines and three motifs. None of the ten passages includes all content motifs, nor do motifs always follow the same order, so my grouping them under the symbols *a*, *b*, etc. (suggesting a typical sequence) appears, and to some extent is, arbitrary. The general, comprehensive, narrative line of the Ship-setting-sail theme, which can be extrapolated from the

⁴⁴ Arend also discusses ship departures, *op. cit.* (n. 21) 81-86.

	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>e</i>	
I 4. 576-80	ἦμος δ' ἠριγένεια φάνη ροδοδάκτυλος 'Ἠώς,		νῆας μὲν πάμπρωτον ἐρύσσαμεν εἰς ἄλα διαν,	ἐν δ' ἰστοῦς τιθέ- μεσθα καὶ ἰστία νηυσὶν έἴσης.		
II 9. 76-78	ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ τρίτον ἦμαρ εὐπλόκαμος τέλεσ' 'Ἠώς,			ἰστοῦς στησάμενοι ἀνά θ' ἰστία λευκ' ἐρύσαντες		
III 12. 399-402	ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ἑβδομον ἦμαρ ἐπὶ Ζεὺς θῆκε Κρο- νίων, καὶ τότε ἔπειτ' ἀνε- μος μὲν ἐπαύσατο λαίλαπι θύων,		ἡμεῖς δ' αἰψ' ἀναβάντες ἐνήκαμεν εὐρέϊ πόντῳ.	ἰσθὸν στησάμενοι ἀνά θ' ἰστία λευκ' ἐρύσαντες.		
IV 11. 1-3, 6-10		αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥ' ἐπὶ νῆα κατήλθομεν ἠδὲ θάλασσαν,	νῆα μὲν ἄρ πάμπρωτον ἐρύσσαμεν εἰς ἄλα διαν,	ἐν δ' ἰσθὸν τιθέμε- σθα καὶ ἰστία νητ με- λαίνῃ	ἡμῖν δ' αὖ κατόπι- σθε νεὸς κυανοπρόριον Ἴκμενον οὖρον ἱεὶ πλησίστιον, ἐσθλὸν ἑταῖρον, Κίρκῃ εὐπλόκαμος, δεινὴ θεὸς αὐδήσα- σα.	
V 9. 177-80			ὣς εἰπὼν ἀνά νηὸς ἔβην, ἐκέλευσα δ' ἑταίρους αὐτοῦς τ' ἀμβαίνειν ἀνά τε πρυμνήσια λύσαι.			
VI 12. 144-52			αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν ἐπὶ νῆα κῖων ὄτρυνον ἑταίρους αὐτοῦς τ' ἀμβαίνειν ἀνά τε πρυμνήσια λύσαι.		See under <i>g</i>	
VII 15. 217-21			Τηλέμαχος δ' ἐτάροισιν ἐποτρύνας ἐκέλευσεν «ἐγκοσμεῖτε τὰ τεύχε' ἑταῖροι, νῆτ μελαίνῃ, αὐτοὶ τ' ἀμβαίνωμεν. Ἴνα πρήσσωμεν ὁδοῖο.» ὣς ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ἄρα τοῦ μάλα μὲν κλύον ἠδ' ἐπί- θοντο.			
VIII 15. 285-93			ἐν πρύμνῃ δ' ἄρ' ἔπειτα καθέζετο, πᾶρ δὲ οἱ αὐτῷ εἴσε θεοκλύμενον· τοὶ δὲ πρυμνήσι' ἔλυσαν. Τηλέμαχος δ' ἐτάροισιν ἐποτρύνας ἐκέλευσεν ὄπλων ἀπτεσθαι· τοὶ δ' ἐσσυμένως ἐπίθοντο.	ἰσθὸν δ' εἰλάτινον κοίλης ἔντοσθε μεσόδμης στήσαν ἀεῖραντες, κατὰ δὲ προτόνοι- σιν ἔδησαν, ἔλκον δ' ἰστία λευκὰ εὐστρέπτοισι βο- εῦσιν.	τοῖσιν δ' Ἴκμενον οὖρον ἱεὶ γλαυκῶπις 'Αθήνῃ, λάβρον παιγι- ζοντα δι' αἰθέρος, ὄφρα τάχιστα	
IX 2. 417-31			νητ ἐνὶ πρύμνῃ κατ' ἄρ' ἔζετο ἄγχι δ' ἄρ' αὐτῆς ἔζετο Τηλέμαχος· τοὶ δὲ πρυμνήσι' ἔλυσαν, ἂν δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ βάντες ἐπὶ κληῖσι καθίζον. <i>e</i> τοῖσιν δ' Ἴκμενον οὖρον ἱεὶ γλαυκῶπις 'Αθήνῃ, ἀκραῆ Ζέφυρον, κελάδοντ' ἐπὶ οἶνοπα πόν- τον. <i>c</i> Τηλέμαχος δ' ἐτάροισιν ἐποτρύνας ἐκέλευσεν ὄπλων ἀπτεσθαι· τοὶ δ' ὄτρυνοντος ἀκουσαν.	ἰσθὸν δ' εἰλάτινον κοίλης ἔντοσθε μεσόδμης στήσαν ἀεῖραντες, κατὰ δὲ προτόνοι- σιν ἔδησαν, ἔλκον δ' ἰστία λευκὰ εὐστρέπτοισι βο- εῦσιν.	See under <i>c</i>	
X II.1. 477-83	ἦμος δ' ἠριγένεια φάνη ροδοδάκτυλος 'Ἠώς,		καὶ τότε ἔπειτ' ἀνάγοντο μετὰ στρατὸν εὐρὺν 'Α- χαιῶν·	See under <i>e</i>	τοῖσιν δ' Ἴκμενον οὖρον ἱεὶ ἐκάεργος 'Α- πόλλων. <i>d</i> οἱ δ' ἰσθὸν στη- σαντ' ἀνά θ' ἰστία λευκὰ πέτασαν·	

	<i>f</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>j</i>	<i>k</i>
I 4. 576-80	ἀν δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ βάντες ἐπὶ κληῖσι καθίζον.	ἐξῆς δ' ἐζόμενοι πολιὴν ἄλα τύ- πτον ἐρετμοῖς.				
II 9. 76-78						ἤμεθα· τὰς δ' ἀνεμος τε κυβ- ερνήται τ' Ἴθυ- νον.
III 12. 399-402						
IV 11. 1-3, 6- 10					ἡμεῖς δ' ὄπλα ἕκαστα πνησάμενοι κατὰ νῆα	ἤμεθα· τὴν δ' ἀνεμός τε κυβ- ερνήτης τ' Ἴθυ- νε.
V 9. 177-80	οἱ δ' αἰψ' εἰσ- βαῖνον καὶ ἐπὶ κληῖσι καθίζον,	ἐξῆς δ' ἐζόμενοι πολιὴν ἄλα τύ- πτον ἐρετμοῖς.				
VI 12. 144-52	οἱ δ' αἰψ' εἰσ- βαῖνον καὶ ἐπὶ κληῖσι καθίζον,	ἐξῆς δ' ἐζόμενοι πολιὴν ἄλα τύ- πτον ἐρετμοῖς. <i>e</i> ἡμῖν δ' αὐ κατό- πισθε νεδὸς κυανοπρό- ροιο ἴκμενον οὖρον ἴει πλησίσιον, ἐσ- θλὸν ἑταῖρον. Κίρκη ἐυπλόκα- μος, δεινὴ θεὸς αὐδή- εσσα.			αὐτίκα δ' ὄπλα ἕκαστα πνησάμενοι κατὰ νῆα	ἤμεθα· τὴν δ' ἀνεμός τε κυβ- ερνήτης τ' Ἴθυ- νε.
VII 15. 217-21	αἶψα δ' ἄρ' εἰσ- βαῖνον καὶ ἐπὶ κληῖσι καθίζον,					
VIII 15. 285-93				νηὸς ἀνύσειε θέουσα θαλάσσης ἀλμυ- ρὸν ὕδαρ.		
IX 2. 417-31	See under <i>c</i>		ἔπρησεν δ' ἀνε- μος μέσον ἰστῖον, ἀμφὶ δὲ κύμα στεῖρη πορφύ- ρεον μεγάλ' ἴαχε νηὸς ἰούσης.	ἢ δ' ἔθειεν κατὰ κύμα διαπρήσσουσα κέλευθον.	δησάμενοι δ' ἄρα ὄπλα βοῆν ἀνά νῆα μέλαιναν	στήσαντο κρα- τῆρας ἐπιστεφείας οἶνιοι,
X II. 1. 477-83			ἐν δ' ἀνεμος πρή- σεν μέσον ἰστῖον, ἀμφὶ δὲ κύμα στεῖρη πορφύ- ρεον μεγάλ' ἴαχε νηὸς ἰούσης.	ἢ δ' ἔθειεν κατὰ κύμα διαπρήσσουσα κέλευθον.		

examples quoted in the Table, is as follows: Either at daybreak of a new day (motif *a*), or as a travelling party reaches the seashore (*b*), sailors under command of their leader drag the ship into the water, or go aboard and cast off the stern cables; while passengers take their seats at the stern, sailors manage the gear of the ship and put forth to sea (*c*); men set up the mast and hoist the sails on it (*d*); a god sends a fair stern wind (*e*); oarsmen sit at the oar benches (*f*), and dash the oars in the sea in good order (*g*); the wind blows into the sails and a wave rises with a big sound at the cutwater (*h*); the ship swiftly cuts her way across the waves (*i*); sailors make fast the running gear (*j*), and sit, while the wind and the steersman drive the good ship (*k*).

A closer look at the actual variants will reveal that motif *a* occurs in passages/rows I–III and X; lines Ia and Xa are repetitions of the same formula (ἤμος δ' ἠριγένεια φάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως), lines IIa and IIIa are two variants of the same type (ἄλλ' ὅτε δὴ τρίτον ἡμαρ ἐυπλόκαμος τέλεισ' Ἥως / ἄλλ' ὅτε δὴ ἔβδομον ἡμαρ ἐπὶ Ζεὺς θῆκε Κρονίων).

The next motif (*b*) is a frequent formula elsewhere, but occurs only once in the theme instances tabulated here (IVb). I shall bypass motif *c* for the moment because it is the most complex one.

d occurs in seven out of the ten passages. In all cases we have poetic synonyms, which in VIII and IX take the form of the same three-line group of formulas, while in I, II, III, IV, and X, they appear as one-line allomorphs (e.g., ἐν δ' ἰστοὺς τιθέμεσθα καὶ ἰστία νηυσὶν ἔισης [Id] ≈ ἰστὸν στησάμενοι ἀνά θ' ἰστία λεύκ' ἐρύσαντες [IId] ≈ οἱ δ' ἰστὸν στησαντ' ἀνά θ' ἰστία λευκὰ πέτασσαν [Xd]).

Motif *e* is represented by three variants: A three-line group of formulas (IV, VI), a two-line version (VIII), and a one-line version (X). I hesitate to call them synonyms because they feature three different gods sending the fair wind, but we can easily pinpoint the kind of relationship they have with each other: τοῖσιν δ' ἔκμενον οὖρον ἔει ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων (Xe) is a variant of the same type as τοῖσιν δ' ἔκμενον οὖρον ἔει γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη (VIIIe¹⁻²); τοῖσιν δ' ἔκμενον οὖρον / ἔει (VIIIe, IXe, Xe) and ἡμῖν δ' αὖ κατόπισθε νεὸς κυανοπρόροιο / ἔκμενον οὖρον ἔει (IVe, VIe) are allomorphs; λάβρον ἐπαιγίζοντα δι' αἰθέρος, ὄφρα τάχιστα (VIIIe) and ἀκραῆ Ζέφυρον, κελάδοντ' ἐπὶ οἴνοπα πόντον (IXe) are one-line functional equivalents, and so on.

f is represented by two allomorphs (If, IXf ≈ Vf–VIIf, five instances in all). It is often combined with *g* (a formula that occurs in I, V, and VI), but is sandwiched between *c* and *e* in IX.

The rest of the vertical columns, *h* to *k*, show the usual mixture of formulas (IXh/Xh, IXi/Xi, IVj/VIj, IIk/IVk/VIk), allomorphs (νηὺς ἀνύσειε θεούσα θαλάσσης ἀλμυρὸν ὕδωρ [VIIIi] ≈ ἢ δ' ἔθεεν κατὰ κύμα διαπρήσσουσα κέλευθον [IXi/Xi]; ἡμεῖς δ' ὄπλα ἕκαστα πονησάμενοι κατὰ νῆα [IVj/VIj] ≈ δησάμενοι δ' ἄρα ὄπλα θοῆν ἀνά νῆα μέλαιναν [IXj]), or functional equivalents (ἤμεθα· τὴν δ' ἄνεμός τε κυβερνήτης τ' ἔθυνε [IIk/IVk/VIk] and στησαντο κρατήρας ἐπιστεφέας οἴνοιο [IXk]).

To go back to column *c* of the Table, it includes a number of distinct content variants rather than poetic synonyms: dragging a ship into the sea from a sandy beach (I, IV), going aboard a ship and putting forth on the sea (III), putting forth to the sea towards a specific destination (X), Telemachos ordering his men to go aboard and get hold of the tackle (VII–IX), etc. A close look at these variants will again reveal several formulas, allomorphs, etc. I shall omit the former and concentrate on the other categories. Ic/IVc and IIIc are functional equivalents. Vc and VIc are poetic synonyms, whose first lines are allomorphs: ὡς εἰπὼν ἀνά νηὸς ἔβην, ἐκέλευσα δ' ἑταίρους (V) ≈ αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν ἐπὶ νῆα κιῶν ὄτρυνον ἑταίρους (VI). The four lines of VIIc and the last two lines of VIIIc/IXc are also poetic synonyms; the expression ἐποτρύνας ἐκέλευσεν / ὄπλων ἄπτεσθαι (VIII/IX) corresponds with the notional variant ἐποτρύνας ἐκέλευσεν / ἔγκοσμεῖτε τὰ τεύχε', ἑταῖροι, νηὶ μελαίνῃ, / αὐτοὶ τ' ἀμβαίνωμεν, ἴνα

πρήσσωμεν ὁδοῖο' (VII), while the expressions τοῖ δ' ἐσσυμένως ἐπίθοντο (VIII), τοῖ δ' ὀτρύνοντος ἄκουσαν (IX), and ὡς ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ἄρα τοῦ μάλα μὲν κλύον ἠδ' ἐπίθοντο (VII) are allomorphs.

Such tables can easily be constructed and relationships between groups of lines, lines, or shorter expressions, pointed out. I know I have only scratched the surface, but I believe that this kind of analysis, despite its limited scope, not only helps to dispel the idea of the traditional poet composing his works automatically, by putting together ready made building blocks (this notion, after all, has long been given up by Homeric scholars), but also allows a glimpse into the process of composition at the level of epic grammar and versification.

At this (low) level of composition, Homer's creativity 'is within the tradition, not in the sense of being within limits but in the sense of being within potentials that can be realized by superior individuals'. So Lord, who speaks, however, of Homer's *originality*.⁴⁵ Yet, to the extent that originality can be distinguished from *creativity* in traditional cultures, it is more easily discernible at the higher levels of composition, i.e. in the arrangement of motifs, themes, or scenes, and in the general design of Homer's tales whose unity was praised by Aristotle in antiquity.⁴⁶

As regards the ever elusive relationship between tradition and an exceptional creator, I should like to end this paper with a quotation from Béla Bartók (1881–1945), referring to J.S. Bach. Bartók spent fifteen years of intensive field research in the regions of the former Austro-Hungarian empire, and became an expert in, and admirer of, folk music (and of course a great collector of it), but he never met, as he writes, any peasant who could, or was ever inclined, to compose an original melody, although all bearers of genuine folk music were precisely inclined to adapt and alter what they received from their predecessors or outside sources. But here is what he has to say about Bach: 'The work of Bach is a summing up of the music of some hundred-odd years before him. His musical material is themes and motives used by his predecessors. (...) Is this plagiarism? By no means. For an artist it is not only right to have his roots in the art of some former times, it is a necessity'.⁴⁷

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⁴⁵ *Epic singers and oral tradition* 78.

⁴⁶ *Poet*. 1451^a 28.

⁴⁷ *Essays*, ed. by B. Suchoff (New York and London 1976) 346.