VI.—Continuity and Interconnexion in Homeric Oral Composition

JAMES A. NOTOPOULOS

TRINITY COLLEGE

Literature has accepted from Homer certain features, such as the prologue, foreshadowing, and the flash-back technique, and has used them for artistic effects. It is the purpose of this paper to understand the genesis of these devices in oral composition and to suggest that, besides satisfying aesthetic impulses in the oral poet and his audience, they have an origin and development which can be understood only by the practical role which they play in oral composition. Because literature composed with the written word developed principles of literary criticism at a much later period, when its standards were guided by rational and organic concepts, it requires a stretch of the imagination to transcend this criticism and to go back to the basic physical factors that are present in oral creation. The reduction of Homer's art to what Radlov calls "elements of production"[1] may be irritating to the modern mind, which comes to Homer inbued with centuries of artistic study; yet we must be mindful with Aristotle that the μέθοδοι λόγων lead us to the conclusion that material and efficient causes are no less important for the whole truth than the formal cause, beautiful though that be. Homer will emerge all the greater an artist if we understand the origin of his art in the context of oral improvisation.

To understand the genesis of these devices of literature we must set them in the context of (1) the physical energy of the oral poet in improvisation or recitation;[2] (2) the time at his disposal and the interruptions imposed by the audience; (3) the inherent paratactic mentality of both the poet and the audience. Each of these factors creates difficult problems which the oral poet must solve.

We have valuable evidence as to the first aspect, the physical limitation in the vocal energy of the oral poet, in the studies of

[1] This phrase comes from V. V. Radlov, *Proben der Volkslitteratur der türkischen Stämme und der Dsungarischen Steppe* (St. Petersburg 1866–96) 5.xvi.

[2] These terms are used interchangeably in this paper, for in oral poetry a recitation is generally improvisation. The recitation of a fixed version, as in the case of the rhapsodes, is a later phenomenon.

Parry and Lord on Southslavic oral poetry.[3] Though the manner of recitation in Homeric times must not be assumed to be the same as Parry and Lord found in Jugoslavia, the case histories of oral recitations which they cite are, in the absence of direct Homeric evidence, valuable *points d'appui*. The case history of one oral poet is particularly relevant to our purpose.

> During the summer of 1935, while collecting at Bijelo Polje, Parry came across a singer named Avdo Međedović, one of those who had heard Čor Huso in their youth, whose powers of invention and story-telling were far above the ordinary. He was encouraged to take all the time which he wished, to rest whenever necessary, and to sing as long a song as he could. He sang for a week and our turntables rolled for about two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon, with short breaks every twenty minutes or half hour for a cup of Turkish coffee or some stronger refreshment. At the end of a week the song was still unfinished, but the singer's voice had gone, so medication was ordered and after a week's rest Avdo continued. Another week sufficed to complete the song, which ran to 13,331 lines.[4]

This instance gives us valuable evidence as to the limitation in the vocal energy of the oral poet. Taking into consideration the metrical difference between the Southslavic line, which is 10 syllables, and the Homeric hexameter, we can roughly estimate the time it would take to recite the *Iliad*, which runs to 15,693 lines, and the *Odyssey*, which runs to 12,110 lines.

We have an interesting piece of evidence in the *Iliad* itself which attests to the limitation of the vocal energy of the Homeric poet. In invoking the Muses before the Catalogue of the Ships Homer says:

> πληθὺν δ' οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω,
> οὐδ' εἴ μοι δέκα μὲν γλῶσσαι, δέκα δὲ στόματ' εἶεν,
> φωνὴ δ' ἄρρηκτος, χάλκεον δέ μοι ἦτορ ἐνείη.
> (*Il.* 2.488–490)

The wish for a voice which does not break, a voice which is also described as ἀτειρής (*Il.* 13.45; 17.535; 22.227), and the reference to χαλκεόφωνος (*Il.* 5.785) give us authentic testimony from the poet himself as to the limitation of the energy of the poet in oral com-

[3] M. Parry, "Homer and Huso: I," *TAPA* 66 (1935) xlvii; A. B. Lord, "Homer and Huso I: The Singer's Rests in Greek and Southslavic Heroic Songs," *TAPA* 67 (1936) 106–113.

[4] A. B. Lord, "Homer, Parry, and Huso," *AJA* 52 (1948) 42.

position. These passages find a parallel in a formula of Southslavic poetry, "If my throat will obey me," a reminder of the kinship that exists between oral poets of all times. The Homeric oral poet is incapable of sustained oral composition; his recitation is restricted to a few hours, and this fact imposes problems for the poet if he is to venture upon a poem whose length requires a consecutive group of evenings or days for narration. The point at which the Southslavic oral poet stops in a long tale is not determined by any organic consideration; he may stop in the midst of the tale at a point determined by no other consideration than his fatigue. The prologue of the *Odyssey* reminds us that the poet can begin anywhere,

τῶν ἀμόθεν γε, θεά, θύγατερ Διός, εἰπὲ καὶ ἡμῖν (1.10),

a fact illustrated by the points in the stories where Phemius and Demodocus themselves begin.[5] The oral poet likewise stops ἀμόθεν, at no pre-determined point dictated by reasons of natural pause or organic unity, as shown in our Alexandrian division of the books of the Homeric epics. The limitation of physical energy in an evening's oral composition therefore creates for the poet the problem of relating the discrete parts.

Contributing to this problem are other factors beyond the control of the oral poet himself. The time at the poet's disposal is dictated by the social occasion of the recitation. The studies of Parry and Lord on this phase of oral poetry as practiced among the Jugoslavs give us some insight into this problem.

> Now it is apparent that in none of these circumstances [of singing] has the poet any fixed or regular time during which he may sing. In the han or kafana [country inns and small town coffeehouses] guests are coming and going at all times, the men are ordering drinks, conversation is being carried on. Any one of a number of things may occur to cause the singer to stop and wait for a more favorable time to go on, or to leave the singing entirely unfinished. The same may be said of the home with the varied interests of different members of the family, and the arrival and departure of guests. Festivals are notoriously boisterous, and there are always other forms of entertainment in progress at the same time as the singing: while the older women serve the people, the young men dance the kolo and sing with the girls; and the older men sit about, talk in true heroic fashion, and perhaps listen to a singer of epic songs. In the homes of the aristocracy the story was much the same.

[5] *Od.* 1.325–327; 8.72–82, 485–594; cf. Odysseus' break in his narrative in book 11 to remind the Phaeacians of his eagerness to sail; they persuade him to resume his narrative (328–384).

As our singers have told us, the whole entertainment was at the mercy of the nobleman who was giving it. He told the singer when he was to start, and might at any time interrupt. "In every case," as Parry has noted in his commentary, "the singer himself has almost no control over the time of his performance, which, on the contrary, is subject to the convenience of the listeners."[6]

We get a similar picture in Cretan heroic poetry. In the *Song of Daskaloyannes* the illiterate oral poet Barba-Pantzelyos, who dictated his poem to a fellow shepherd, says as he recalls the gay times of the Sphakiots before the destruction of their homes and villages: "They do not see young men clad in silver arms, tall, slender-waisted, adorned like the viola, dancing, singing songs, moving, balancing themselves with such a modesty; and old men, white-haired, sitting at the table eating and drinking, and singing with a loud voice, reciting songs of heroic deeds and the sufferings of war; and the long table resounding from the beginning to the end."[7] A similar picture of oral recitation in Prevelakis' description of Cretan life[8] is the proper context in which to understand the problem facing the oral poet with respect to continuity and interconnexion in oral composition.

That the social context of Homeric oral poetry is not far different from the context as presented in Southslavic and Cretan oral composition is evident from the *Odyssey* itself. Odysseus tells Alcinous that "this is a good thing, to listen to a minstrel such as this man is, like unto the gods in voice. For myself I declare that there is no greater fulfillment of delight than when joy possesses a whole people, and banqueters in the halls listen to a minstrel as they sit in order due, and by them tables are laden with bread and meat, and the cupbearer draws wine from the bowl and bears it round and pours it into the cups." (9.3–10) Nor is the picture any different with respect to interruptions. Demodocus' performance in book 8 is in the following order: song, athletic contest, dancing, song, dancing, song (a b c a c a); he is interrupted by the outburst of grief on the part of Odysseus even as Phemius is stopped by Penelope, who likewise cannot bear to hear the song. As in the case of the fatigue of the oral poet or on the part of the audience,

[6] Lord (above, note 3) 108–109; cf. H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature* (Cambridge 1932–1940) 3.184–185.

[7] Barba-Pantzelyos, *The Song of Daskaloyannes*, ed. B. Laourdas (Herakleion, Crete 1947) lines 915–922.

[8] Panteles Prevelakis, *The Cretan* (Athens 1942) 2.9–26.

the stopping point is not determined by any clearly marked point in the story; when Demodocus stops at Odysseus' outburst of grief, he is in the midst of a tale (8.75 ff.). The occasion of recitation may be a religious festival, such as pictured in the *Hymn to Apollo*, with its vivid portrait of the blind old oral poet.[9] Here we have an excellent opportunity for the oral presentation of a poem of the length of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* which could be recited throughout the duration of the entire festival. However, even here the medley of events listed in the *Hymn*,

οἱ δέ σε πυγμαχίῃ τε καὶ ὀρχηθμῷ καὶ ἀοιδῇ (3.149),

prevents any assured fixed interval for recitation.

Neither the Homeric nor the modern oral poet can count on a fixed interval in which he can adjust his recitation to the segments of a whole. Though song be the crown of the feast in the Homeric scenes, the crown rests uneasy for the oral poet, who is faced with two choices. First, he can confine himself to a short poem, like the Song of Ares and Aphrodite. Such a poem may be the short heroic poem of which we have many instances in later oral poetry throughout various parts of the world. The oral poet can contract or expand the short poem, in ways which Parry has pointed out,[10] to suit the minimum or the maximum time at his disposal. Even then he is limited by his stamina, which in the case of the South-slavic guslar is an average of 20–40 minutes, and subject to interruption by any number of variable factors involved in a social occasion.[11] These short heroic tales are admirably suited for the length of one evening's recitation, and thus might have been, as has recently been pointed out by the Homeric neo-unitarians,[12] the nuclei from which the *grossepos* grew.

Secondly, the oral poet can, so to speak, "go the full nine innings." Radlov tells us that the Kara-Kirghiz oral poet "can sing for a day, a week, or a month, just as he can talk, and narrate

[9] *Homeric Hymns* 3.146–164, 165–178.

[10] M. Parry, *CP* 31 (1936) 359; cf. W. Wünsch, *Heldensänger in Südosteuropa* (Leipzig 1937); M. Murko, *La Poésie populaire épique en Yougoslavie au début du xx^e siècle* (Paris 1929); M. Braun, "Zur Frage des Heldenliedes bei den Serbokroaten," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 59 (1935); F. Saran, *Zur Metrik des epischen Verses der Serben* (Leipzig 1934).

[11] Lord (above, note 3) 109.

[12] Cf. W. Schadewaldt, *Iliasstudien* (Leipzig 1938); H. Pestalozzi, *Die Achilleis als Quelle der Ilias* (Erlenbach-Zürich 1945); E. Howald, *Der Dichter der Ilias* (Erlenbach-Zürich 1946); J. Th. Kakridis, *Homeric Researches* (Lund 1949).

all the time."[13] Avdo Međedović was able to sing a song totalling 13,331 lines, subject to the necessary stops and adjournment of a week to medicate a broken voice.[14] More remarkable is the Kara-Kirghiz oral poet Sagymbai Orozbakov who, just before his death in 1930, told the story of Manas in about 40,000 lines.[15] It is with these longer poems that we must classify the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, in narrative length if not in quality. The existence of such poems shows that the poet may choose to compose orally a long poem in serial form, extending the narration to a number of days, consecutive or interrupted. We may get some idea, *mutatis mutandis*, as to the time it would take to recite the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* from the data collected in Parry's field trip. Good singing, which consists in the case of the Southslavic guslar of singing as loudly as possible with vigorous accompaniment on the gusle, takes the whole strength of a man. Parry and Lord note that though singers vary considerably in their strength, the average length of time a man sings is 20–40 minutes, and the rates at which the poets sing vary from 500 lines to 200 lines (10 syllables long) in half an hour.[16] Taking in the average of lines sung and average length of singing we have 350 lines sung in half an hour. This gives us 11.6 lines to the minute for the Southslavic recitation. 350 lines of 10 syllables each are equivalent to 233 Homeric lines of an average of 15 syllables each. This makes 7.8 lines to the minute for Homeric recitation.[17] It would therefore take 33.5 hours to recite the entire *Iliad* and 25.9 for the *Odyssey*. If Avdo Međedović were

[13] Radlov (above, note 1) 5.xvi.

[14] Lord (above, note 4) 42; cf. M. Murko's report of a Southslavic oral poet, Salko Vojnikovic, who from January 2–February 17, 1887 sang at Agram from memory 90 heroic poems of more than 80,000 verses; considering that the Southslavic line of 10 syllables is shorter than the hexameter by almost a third it can be said that he sang almost double the combined length of the Homeric poems. Cf. "Neues über südslavische Volksepik," *NJbb* 43 (1919) 284. Chadwick reports that an unnamed Icelander strung out for twelve evenings of a Christmas festival the exploits of Harold III, King of Norway (cf. above, note 6, 1.581); for a modern Greek epic of 10,000 verses by Khadji Sekhreti, a blind oral poet, dealing with Ali Pasha cf. M. P. Nilsson, *Homer and Mycenae* (London 1933) 196; W. M. Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece* (London 1814) 1.462-497.

[15] C. M. Bowra, "The Comparative Study of Homer," *AJA* 54 (1950) 190; *Manas* (Moscow 1946), Russian translation in verse, by various hands.

[16] Lord (above, note 3) 109.

[17] Of interest in this connexion is Stanford's remark: "Actually Penelope speaks for 54 lines, i.e., about five minutes," *The Odyssey of Homer*, ed. W. B. Stanford (London 1948) 2.335, note on 19.508–509.

to recite these poems (4 hours of total recitation per day punctuated by frequent rests) it would take him 8.4 days to recite the *Iliad* and 6.5 days the *Odyssey*. The Homeric rhapsodes who recited the poems in succession (cf. Schol. Pindar *Nem.* 2.1) might consume about this time. Since, however, our Southslavic poet took two weeks of continuous recitation, with one week in between to rest his voice in order to recite a poem approximately as long as the average of the Homeric poems, but a third less in the average of syllables, we must calculate two weeks at the minimum for the recitation of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* by our Homeric oral poet. This estimate is based on maximum energy for oral recitation and does not include interruption by the audience. The extension of a poem over two weeks in the process of narration calls, as we shall see, for devices on the part of the poet to tie together the *disjecta membra* of recitation. But before we discuss this problem we must include another element, Homeric parataxis, among the factors in oral recitation calling for unifying devices.

Parataxis, the style of the λέξις εἰρομένη, characterizes the epic in its episodes, by means of which the story moves forward, in the structure of the language, in the arrangement of the similes, and in the very mentality of the poet.[18] Created by factors involved in oral composition, parataxis moves the epic story forward loosely. "Primitive poetry," Auden aptly remarks, "says simple things in a roundabout way where modern poetry tries to say complicated things straightforwardly."[19] The telling of a story in a roundabout way is effective both for the oral poet and for his audience. It is a style natural to oral recitation and is popular with the audience as Homer's popularity through the ages shows.[20] But it does raise the problem of the relation of the one and the many for the oral poet.

[18] Cf. J. A. Notopoulos, "Parataxis in Homer: A New Approach to Homeric Literary Criticism," *TAPA* 80 (1949) 1–23.

[19] W. H. Auden, *The Portable Greek Reader* (New York 1948) 5.

[20] Cf. C. S. Lewis' remarks: "In his *Discourses on the Heroic Poem* Tasso raises the whole problem of multiplicity or unity in an epic plot, and says that the claims of unity are supported by Aristotle, the ancients, and Reason, but those of multiplicity by usage, the actual taste of all knights and ladies, and Experience (*op. cit.*, III). By 'experience' he doubtless means such unhappy experiences as that of his father who wrote an *Amadis* in strict conformity to the rules of Aristotle, but found that the recitation of it emptied the auditorium, from which 'he concluded that unity of action was a thing affording little pleasure,'" *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (London 1942) 5–6.

The oral poet, like Calchas, must deal with *τά τ' ἐόντα τά τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα* (*Il.* 1.70). He must relate the present stage of his story to what is to come and what has gone by. He must create devices to overcome the gaps caused in the continuity by parataxis and by interruptions in oral composition. The oral poet, as he made a transition from a short story occupying one night's recitations, to a story whose narration extended over many days, evolved certain devices to bind together the parts of his story. In speaking of the technique of the Kara-Kirghiz poet, Radlov says "thanks to long practice, he has a long series of 'elements of production,' if I may so express it, which he puts together in suitable form according to the course of the narrative."[21] In addition to the transitional devices, such as typical scenes,[22] and transitional formulas,[23] we must include certain unifying devices. These grew with the tradition of epic poetry and from the poet's experience in handling large masses of material involved in a long poem. These devices essential in the oral *grossepos* are (1) foreshadowing, long noted, and carefully studied by Homeric scholarship; (2) retrospection, a device to tie the present stage of the narrative to those parts which had been previously narrated; (3) ringcomposition, a device connected with digressions. Some of the instances where these devices are used may be explained as the spontaneous workings of the laws of association. A comprehensive study of the evidence, however, shows that the oral poet of the large epic poem has shaped these laws into definite devices.[24] It is the object of this study to note the use of these devices in the problem of continuity and interconnexion in oral composition.

Foreshadowing, as a device to forecast the future, is prominent in ancient literature. Duckworth, who has made a definitive study of this device in the ancient epics, says:

> The epics and dramas of Greece and Rome do not, in general, strive to keep the reader in the dark concerning the subject-matter, but tend to give him a foreknowledge of the events to come; modern literature, on the contrary, places a greater emphasis upon the elements of unexpectedness and surprise. Especially prominent in the field of ancient epic is

[21] Radlov (above, note 1) 5.xvi.

[22] W. Arend, *Die typischen Scenen bei Homer* (Berlin 1933) and Parry's review, *CP* 31 (1936) 357–360.

[23] Cf. Stanford (above, note 17) 2.367, and note on 21.336 ff.

[24] Cf. J. Tate, *CR* 61 (1947) 126.

this tendency to prepare the reader for the incidents that he is to expect during the course of the poem. Many scholars have found fault with this characteristic, for in their opinion the interest of the reader is thereby lessened and the effectiveness of the poem destroyed. This point of view is well illustrated by the much quoted phrase of Finsler, "so ist von vornherein jedes Interesse ausgeschlossen."[25]

Homeric scholars, whether they approve or disapprove of this device, have sought the explanation for it on aesthetic grounds; Stemplinger, for example, finds the explanation for the lack of suspense in the epic and for the device of foreshadowing in the fact that the ancients considered content as secondary to the beauty of form. Wieniewski finds foreshadowing an aesthetic fault in Homer which destroys, through a knowledge of the outcome, the interest of the reader.[26]

The analysis of foreshadowing and of the forms it takes has been well worked out in Homeric scholarship. Its origin, however, and the necessity for it have been inadequately understood because it has not been related to the technique of oral composition. The genesis of this device must be sought in the formulaic and repetitive technique of oral composition. Parry has shown that repetitions are essential in easy oral versification.[27] It is time now to extend the function of repetitions to a new phase. Repetitions are also "elements of production" in the technique of oral composition which tie together the parts of the whole. They underlie those devices which the oral poet uses to coordinate the loose parts entailed by parataxis and physical factors connected with recitation. Among these devices is foreshadowing which, inserted at appropriate moments in the tale, is a form of repetition involving anticipation.[28] Foreshadowing is a phase of repetition which is needed to relate for the audience the parts of the whole. From the point of

[25] G. E. Duckworth, *Foreshadowing and Suspense in the Epics of Homer, Apollonius, and Vergil* (Princeton 1933) 1.

[26] Cf. E. Stemplinger, "Die ästhetische Spannung," *Sokrates* 74 (1920) 81; I. Wieniewski, "La technique d'annoncer les événements futures chez Homère," *Eos* 27 (1924) 113–133.

[27] M. Parry, "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making, I. Homer and Homeric Style," *HSCP* 41 (1930) 138.

[28] For illustration of this use of repetitive foreshadowing as a device which unifies the structure of the poem cf. F. W. Jones, "The Formulation of the Revenge Motif in the *Odyssey*," *TAPA* 72 (1941) 195–202. For the *fortleben* of this technique of "organizational use of repetition" and its further function in "marking the divisions and clarifying the arrangement of the composition" cf. H. N. Porter, "Repetition in the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite," *AJP* 70 (1949) 249–272.

view of the audience, who are partners in the story-telling, this device of foreshadowing binds them to a story which is subject to so many interruptions.

Foreshadowing takes various forms in the epic. Foremost is the prologue,[29] which sets forth the theme not in complete summary fashion but with many pregnant associations which find expression later in the story.[30] The poet will use this theme, whether it be *μῆνιν*, *ἄνδρα*, *νόστον*, as a foreshadowing device to sustain his listener through the recitation by offering him a thread of unity in the leisurely but interrupted story-telling. The prologue is thus explicable as a device in a literature which is composed and listened to in an oral context.

The other aspects of foreshadowing noted and classified by Homeric scholarship[31] are means for repeating this larger theme within the parts of the epic, for illustrating concretely in the actions of the characters the abstract theme, for relating minor themes within the larger theme, and finally for relating the theme of the poem or the fate of the individuals in the poem to the larger body of material known as the cyclic epic, from which the slices of Homer's own banquet came. The pervasive presence of foreshadowing in the epic, as illustrated by Duckworth, attests to the importance of the device in the oral poet's control of his material.

Just as parataxis characterizes much Greek literature after Homer, so foreshadowing influenced post-Homeric literature long after the conditions of composition had changed from the oral composition to the written literature, largely listened to in oral presentation.[32] For example, the prologue of the epic reappears in Herodotus, in the drama, and in oratory.[33] As employed in the prologue and within the play by such devices as irony, foreshadowing sometimes becomes an aesthetic device and sometimes it helps to keep the parts together. The highly dramatic Cassandra scene in the *Agamemnon*, for example, shows that foreshadowing had evolved

[29] For the prologue as a device to bind the parts together cf. B. A. van Groningen, "Éléments inorganiques dans la composition de l' *Iliade* et de l' *Odyssée*," *Revue des Études Homériques* 5 (1935) 19–24.

[30] On this point cf. Radlov's remark on the Kara-Kirghiz oral poet: ". . . he begins his song with a prelude which will direct his audience into the sphere of his thoughts," Chadwick (above, note 6) 3.184.

[31] Duckworth (above, note 25).

[32] Cf. W. C. Greene, "The Spoken and the Written Word," *HSCP* 60 (1951) 23–50.

[33] Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3.14; R. Böhne, *Das Prooimion, eine Form sakraler Dichtung der Griechen* (Baden 1937).

from a largely functional device for keeping the parts together in oral literature to an effective aesthetic device. Later post-classical literature, other than poems like Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which imitated the classical epic, largely abandoned this device and evolved means to create suspense and surprise for the reader. But by this time the practical role of foreshadowing in oral literature had been forgotten and modern criticism projected into Homer criteria of later origin which did not apply to oral literature. Hence the misunderstanding of Finsler, Stemplinger, and Wieniewski as to the true role of foreshadowing in Homer.

In addition to foreshadowing we have a sort of a reverse of foreshadowing which for lack of a better name may be called "retrospection." This device also is used by the oral poet to tie together the parts of the story except that here it is used to tie the present to the past. Retrospection takes various forms; if foreshadowing were run backward, as in a film rewinding, it would act at the same time as a retrospection; the two, however, are not identical, distinguished merely by forward or retrograde movement. Retrospection includes, besides the flash-back technique so effectively used in the *Odyssey*, summaries, formulas and similes used in associative characterization, and an anaphorical device used largely in digressions called ringcomposition.[34]

Before proceeding to an illustration of retrospection in Homer, it is necessary to examine the functions of this device in the Homeric epics. First of all this device is a development of the capacity in human beings for conscious or subconscious association. The present involves the problem of perspective and a feeling associated with the past.[35] The present is constituted by a flux of the past which is always immanent in the present. The artist therefore must inevitably deal with the past in describing the present; the force and liveliness of a past experience enter into the present, and the artist selects such significant moments and throws them into the background as perspective for the present. Such conscious or unconscious association with the past is present in every artistic expression. But as with the formulas, the extraordinary amount of retrospection in Homeric oral literature calls for an explanation.

[34] See below, pp. 97–99.

[35] The following remarks are influenced by some recollections of A. N. Whitehead's teaching.

The Southslavic poet has a formula, "Where were we, where did we leave off?" for continuing a recitation after interruption. The Homeric oral poet likewise must have felt a need to overcome the gap in the story caused by interruptions. He has need therefore of a device to tie the past to the present. Herakleitos aptly remarks one cannot step into the same river twice; and the truth of this applies equally to the stream of a narrative. Inevitable, therefore, as this device is in artistic experience, it is even more necessary in oral poetry. Homer shaped this utilitarian device into a thing of beauty, and among Aeschylus' slices from Homer's banquet we include the first chorus of the *Agamemnon* which projects the past into the present, and the Cassandra scene which foreshadows the future in the pregnant present. However, we must not let the artistic effectiveness of retrospection blind us to its necessary function of tying the past to the present in the context of oral composition.

As in the case of foreshadowing, we must also set this device in the context of repetitions which characterize the oral style Repetition is the essence of this integrating device. Retrospection, like foreshadowing, embraces events beyond the epic and within the epic. Retrospection to events beyond the epic is a device by which the oral poet plunges us *in medias res* and into his method of *τῶν ἀμόθεν . . . εἰπέ*. Essential background must be filled in so that the listener may appreciate fully the events with which the poet chooses to begin. Since the audience of the oral poet is familiar with the legends, this form of retrospection stimulates the memories of the audience and ties the context of the story to the past tradition. By applying retrospection to events within the story itself, as we have seen, the poet is able to insure continuity of the story with the previous parts, whose narration has been interrupted. Even as modern popular magazines present at the beginning of each monthly serial story a résumé of the antecedent portion of the story so does the oral poet use the device of retrospection to tie together the parts of his story as he progresses linearly in the narration. This is necessary not only for members of his audience, who were present at each of his recitations, but even for new members in his audience who need such threads of connexion to get their bearings in the present stage of the story.

Some examples from the *Odyssey* will illustrate this device in its diverse applications. With respect to retrospection from the

epic itself to the cyclic epic context, we have the significant line at the beginning of the poem

τῶν ἀμόθεν γε, θεά, θύγατερ Διός, εἰπὲ καὶ ἡμῖν (1.10).

The beginning of a story at any episode forces the oral poet to recall antecedents even if the audience is familiar with the cycle. The *medias res* technique forces the oral poet to retrospection as a means of binding his audience closer to him. The oral poet of the *Odyssey* contrives in divers ways to achieve this retrospection into the cyclic context. The bard Demodocus sings of the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles, of the Wooden Horse; Phemius sings of the return of the Achaeans after the war; Helen and Menelaus in their account of Odysseus to Telemachus recall events in the cyclic epic;[36] the first and second Nekyia are full of references to events and heroes outside the framework of the epic. The audience, no doubt, is delighted to have glimpses of the great champions of the *Iliad* again. In all these examples we have evidence of the device which the oral poet uses to tie his story to the rest of the sagas. Thus retrospection *in extenso*, as it were, is the proper background in which to understand the vast amount of retrospection within the epic itself.

Retrospection within the epic takes on various forms, each adjusted to the diverse needs of the oral poet. One important phase is recapitulation, that is, the insertion by the poet of summaries at appropriate points within the story. These summaries have been subject to suspicion and Procrustean excision in Homeric criticism. A typical example is Bérard's remarks on the summary of the adventures as it is told by Odysseus to Penelope in the 23rd book after husband and wife talk far into the night. "Nous avons là," he says, "un de ces *Résumés*, — *Épitomés*, disaient les Hellènes, — en vers qui dut être composé pour les enfants de quelque école athénienne, puis incorporé par les éditeurs subséquents dans la 'Poésie.' Les Byzantins nous ont transmis de pareils *Résumés* pour chacun des deux Poèmes; les uns sont en prose; les autres, en vers."[37] Yet when set in the very large context of retrospection which characterizes the Homeric oral style, these summaries play a useful role in the craftsmanship of the oral poet. Critics who have no understanding of the unique role which retrospection plays

[36] 8.72–82, 485–520; 1.325–327; 4.168–308.

[37] *L'Odyssée*, texte établi et traduit par Victor Bérard (Paris 1924) 3.169–170.

in the oral style, and who themselves ironically interpolate into the poem later aesthetic notions, are in the category of critics who ever since Aristarchus have been unaware of the important role of repetitions in the oral style. The ever increasing recognition of the repetitions as a cardinal feature of the oral style[38] should lead us to caution in excising not only repeated lines but other repeated features such as summaries. It is time now to apply the principle of Aristarchus himself, ἡ ἐκ τῆς λέξεως λῦσις, and to understand the role which summaries play in the Homeric oral style.

The first example of a summary retrospection in the *Odyssey* occurs in 5.1–20, a passage which recapitulates the Olympus scene in 1.26 ff. The summary of a second council of the gods occurs at a point in the story where the digression of Telemachus ends and the story of Odysseus' coming to Phaeacia is prepared. This second council is a repetition to connect the narrative which is interrupted by a digression. Even as digressions are framed by repetitions, so here we have a digression framed by a summary. The next summary retrospection is found in 7.242–297, which is a summary of books 5–6. It is motivated by the second and third questions of Queen Arete:

τίς τοι τάδε εἵματ' ἔδωκεν ;
οὐ δὴ φῆς ἐπὶ πόντον ἀλώμενος ἐνθάδ' ἱκέσθαι ; (7.238–239).

Odysseus then proceeds to give a short summary of the events in the preceding two books. This summary not only satisfied the curiosity of the Phaeacian court as to the immediate antecedents of the stranger, but enabled the oral poet to overcome any gap in the continuity caused by interruption in the narration.

Sometimes these summaries consist of only a few lines and refer to episodes which need frequent interconnexion with the story. The oxen of Helios, Calypso, Circe, etc. are repeated like decorations in a geometric vase.[39] By frequent reference to these adventures the oral poet is able to keep in the texture adventures which tend to fragmentation. Precise summaries of these adventures are used, therefore, not only for artistic effects, but as devices to insure continuity and interconnexion, as, for instance, the several refer-

[38] Cf. Lucian, *VH* 2.20; Stanford (above, note 17) 2.399; S. E. Bassett, *The Poetry of Homer* (Berkeley 1938) 20–21; M. H. A. Van der Valk, *Textual Criticism of the Odyssey* (Leiden 1949).

[39] See A. Gehring, *Index Homericus* (Leipzig 1891) *s.v.* Καλυψώ, Κίρκη.

ences to the removal of the arms from the hall of the palace. The opening of book 19 (lines 1–50) recalls lines 281–298 of book 16. This summary has been condemned by Munro, but as Stanford rightly points out, "Many of Munro's arguments are only relevant to a carefully compiled bookepic (like the *Aeneid* or the *Argonautica*), but not to an epic composed mainly by *Oral Technique* in which repetitions and minor inconcinnities were easily tolerated."[40] These passages, linked with 22.23–5, 140–1; 24.164–6, form a nexus binding the later books together. This theme and others, such as the revenge motif and the wasting of Odysseus' substance by the suitors, are instances where foreshadowing acts at the same time as retrospection.

All these summary retrospections are placed at appropriate intervals in order to bind the parts of the story together. We have, however, one final crescendo summary in 23.301–341 which recapitulates the entire *Odyssey* and ties all the parts together. It is in many ways an epilogue and flashes artfully on the screen all the previous *disjecta membra* of adventures. It is arranged in part, counterpart form; Penelope recapitulates her experiences when bereft of Odysseus; and he in turn gives a summary of his adventures. The poet has already told these to his Phaeacian audience, yet who deserves to hear them more than his own wife? Homer achieves here his double purpose of informing Penelope of her husband's adventures and at the same time using this summary as a retrospective device for purposes of continuity and interconnexion. Far from being an interpolation this summary retrospection must, like many athetized lines, be left in the text once it is realized how essential it is in the technique of oral composition.

In addition, we find our oral poet using retrospection as a device to achieve characterization. Odysseus, for example, indulges in fictitious autobiography to conceal his identity. The hard-luck story which reveals his πολύμητις nature is told on five occasions: 1) to Athena (13.256–286); 2) to Eumaeus (14.199–359); 3) to Antinous (17.415–444); 4) to Penelope (19.172–202); 5) to Laertes (24.303–314). An analysis of this multiple repetition shows that it is used first for its aesthetic role in creating suspense, secondly, as a retrospective device to bind the later books together in oral recitation, and finally as a means of associative characterization

[40] Stanford (above, note 17) 2.315.

beyond the noun-epithet formula. The flexible use of this story by Homer raises the difficulties which the five versions have caused.[41] The variation in this story is explicable, like the whole device itself, by the oral context of composition. The versions differ for the same reasons that all oral versions differ: the oral poet never sings the same version twice; and in improvisation, as Aristotle points out, *πάντες γὰρ προστιθέντες ἀπαγγέλλουσιν ὡς χαριζόμενοι* (*Poetics* 1460A.17–18).

This associative technique of characterization [42] is also evident in repetitions consisting of a few lines. The characters of Odysseus, Penelope, and Telemachus, in addition to the noun-epithet formulas associated with their names, are drawn repetitively by a vast number of associated formulas. An example will illustrate this device by which the oral poet achieves reticulation in the various parts of his story. In *Odyssey* 6.119–120 Odysseus says,

ὤ μοι ἐγώ, τέων αὖτε βροτῶν ἐς γαῖαν ἱκάνω;
ἦ ῥ' οἵ γ' ὑβρισταί τε καὶ ἄγριοι οὐδὲ δίκαιοι;

He utters the same words in 13.200–201. This repetition is used as a retrospective formula associated with the character of Odysseus. The vast amount of such associative repetition [43] shows that the oral poet of the Homeric epics was a master of his traditional technique and had become fully practiced in a highly developed formulaic art. He is able now to select his formulas with artistic relevance to their immediate context. In addition to their metrical convenience he uses formulas "with an appreciation of the special thought or feeling of the context."[44] The poet has advanced the formula from a ready-made mechanical verbal "element of production" into an artistic device of interconnexion; it makes not only for a mood of continuity but also for characterization.[45] Herein

[41] W. J. Woodhouse, *The Composition of Homer's Odyssey* (Oxford 1930) 126–136.

[42] Cf. Stanford (above, note 17) 2.xxiv–xxv.

[43] For some relevant examples of repetitions associated with the characterization of Penelope: 16.414–416 = 1.332–334; 17.40–42 = 16.22–24; 18.207–211 = 1.331–335; 19.124–129 = 18.251–256; 19.139–152 = 2.94–107; 19.594–596 = 14.101–103; 21.63–66 = 18.208–211.

[44] Greene (above, note 31) 27; cf. G. M. Calhoun, "Homeric Repetitions," *CPCP* 12 (1933) 1.1–26; Jones (above, note 28) 201–202; Porter (above, note 28) 260–261; Bassett (above, note 38) 14–20.

[45] For the use of noun-epithet formulas in unifying the structure of the poem and in creating characterization through adjustment to context see J. T. Sheppard, "Zeus-Loved Achilles," *JHS* 55 (1935) 113–123; and "Great-Hearted Odysseus," *JHS* 56 (1936) 36–47.

lies the genius of Homer and his transcendency over the rest of the extant oral literature. Without claiming for ourselves the ability to distinguish between our oral poet's degree of debt to tradition and his inventiveness,[46] we can detect evidence for the poet's overwhelming mastery of the traditional material to the degree that he can use formulas as the literary artist can use *le mot juste*. Our oral poet is able to transmute a device necessary for the craft of his composition into an artistic effect[47] which conceals with art's kind of concealment the functional role which it plays. The student familiar with Homer's formulas is able to discriminate between such inapt formulas as *ἀμύμων Αἴγισθος* (*Od.* 1.29), where it may be claimed that Homer nods, and the many felicitously used formulas of repetitive association in the characters of the poem. Among these devices of associative characterization may be included similes. The simile associated with a character can also serve to bind parts of an oral composition, as may be seen in *Odyssey* 23.47–48 and 22.402; 23.157–162, and 6.230–235. Some editors reject the simile in 23.157–162 as an interpolation, but it is evident that a repeated simile makes for associative characterization no less than a formula.

Included in the repertoire of devices for continuity and interconnexion in oral composition is another device in the Homeric style which has recently been given the name of "ringcomposition." Scholars have long observed that Homer rounds off a digression by repeating the formula which began the digression. Otterlo has made a detailed study of this anaphorical device to which he has given the name of ringcomposition.[48] It is a stylistic device which terminates with the end of the fifth century. Otterlo's careful analysis of it in the Homeric poems, Hesiod, the Cyclic

[46] Cf. F. M. Combellack, "Contemporary Unitarians and Homeric Originality," *AJP* 71 (1950) 363–364. For originality in Homer cf. Greene (above, note 31) 27–31, Bassett (above, note 38) 14–19.

[47] Cf. Lewis (above, note 20) 19: "'These repetitions,' says Mr. Nilsson, 'are a great aid for the singer for whilst reciting them mechanically he is subconsciously forming the next verse' (*Homer and Mycenae*, p. 203). But all art is made to *face* the audience. Nothing can be left exposed, however useful to the performer, which is not delightful or at least tolerable to *them*."

[48] W. A. A. Van Otterlo, *Untersuchungen über Begriff, Anwendung und Entstehung der griechischen Ringkomposition* (Amsterdam 1944) and *De Ringcompositie als Opbouwprincipe in de Epische Gedichten van Homerus* (Amsterdam 1948). For the use of repetition to mark off a section or resume a narrative after a digression see also Porter (above, note 28).

Epic, and Pindar shows that it is found in a large pattern of varied forms: 1) complex annular systems where an outer ring contains one or more inner rings; 2) single structures where the repetitive formulas either (a) mark the resumption of the main theme ("anaphoric") or (b) provide a frame for a more or less self-contained passage ("inclusive"). Its most prominent use is in episodic digressions, in descriptions, in similes, and in descriptions of single combat. Ringcomposition usually takes the form of repetitions which frame the beginning and the end of a digression; it often repeats the same or similar verb; repetitions extend from words to ideas.[49] This study of a consciously applied principle of composition, along with Arend's analysis of repeated scenes, are examples in recent Homeric studies which show that the repetitive character of the oral technique extends beyond formulas to larger units within the oral style. Though Otterlo does not go beyond the fact to the cause, he does point out some implications, namely, that the episodic recitations which have often been a stumbling block in Homeric criticism are composed in accordance with the principle of ringcomposition; and that many of the formulas condemned by critics as interpolations are the result of the misunderstanding of the ringcomposition technique in Homer.

It is necessary now, as has been the case with formulaic repetitions and type scenes, to inquire into the explanation of the repetitive pattern of ringcomposition in Homer. Why, for example, does it disappear after the fifth century, and what is its function in the technique of oral composition? It is evident from its pervasive presence in oral literature and its relative absence, except by way of Homeric influence, from later Greek literature, that ringcomposition performs a useful role in oral composition. Like foreshadowing and retrospection, whose repetitive nature it shares, ringcomposition is a device whereby the oral poet interrelates the parts of his material which are centrifugal for reasons delineated in this study. Digressions, which are so largely a part of the paratactic nature of oral poetry, must be attached to the web of the narrative. The device which the oral poet uses to link this digression to the story is ringcomposition. There is inherent in oral communication the desire to frame, to conclude with the words with which one begins,

[49] For a summary see Otterlo (above, note 48) *De Ringcompositie*, 87–92; and review by J. Tate, *CR* 63 (1949) 137–138, to which I am indebted for its excellent summary.

as illustrated in ballads, speeches, and conversation. Such a device is associated with the technique of oral composition where digression is a prominent element. The oral poet developed the technique of ringcomposition as a device to frame digressive elements. It is, like retrospection, a device to tie the parts of the story together. Its pervasive role, as shown by Otterlo's study, raises the question of its relation to retrospection. Ringcomposition is a phase of retrospection but it is restricted to digressions and does not include the phases of the retrospection illustrated above.

In addition to foreshadowing, retrospection, and ringcomposition, there is another factor which makes for continuity and interconnexion in oral composition. There is at work below the surface, as it were, of all these devices a vast tow tide which carries the oral audience forward in the story-telling and helps to bind the parts of a story together. It is the intimate tie that binds both the audience and the poet to their material. The present involves a feeling of the past, a perspective, a tradition. Both the audience and the poet of the oral literatures are bound to the past by invisible complex ties which bind the audience, the oral poet, and the traditional material into an intimate trinity. The poet and the audience are intimately related to their traditional material by ties that are not formally manifest in the story. Recent Homeric scholarship[50] is becoming increasingly aware of these ties from which we are excluded by removal from that tradition. We are beginning to understand how the audience cooperates in the story telling, how Homer makes the listener supply motivation, unconscious association. We must, in addition, assume that the listener supplies a large degree of unity in tying together the parts of the story; there is present in the oral recitation a common background of conscious association which moves the audience forward in the narrative. It requires scholarly interpolation on our part to supply factors naturally present in the oral audience. The poet would not begin ἀμόθεν . . . εἰπέ if this were not the case. The poet, however, does not completely throw the burden of unity on the audience, as the devices mentioned above indicate, but he can count on this conscious association between the audience and the epic material.

[50] Bassett (above, note 38) 128 ff.; for the relation of the oral poet to his audience see references by Greene (above, note 32) 54, note 33; Chadwick (above, note 6) 3.184–185.

It is the failure of past Homeric criticism to compensate adequately for this sort of polaric magnetism, which navigators allow for in the art of sailing, that has caused difficulties for the modern mind. The audience of the oral poet has an empathy for this material; and just as in the past Bentley restored the lost digamma to explain certain metrical peculiarities, so Homeric criticism today must replace logical standards of criticism with this *einfühlung* that existed between the audience, the poet, and their material. Thus many difficulties for the modern mind which are not present in the context of oral recitation would vanish.

It is time now to tie up the threads of our discussion and point out that the oral poet, through the devices of the foreshadowing, retrospection, ringcomposition, and the intimate ties that bind the audience to the epic material, compensates for interruptions in the recitation and for the inorganic parataxis of his material and method of composition. These devices appear in Homer in a very developed form as contrasted with examples from subsequent oral poetry. The origin of these devices of interrelation, however, must be sought in a suggested answer to an important question: what is the relation of the repetitive character of formulaic diction, to the repetitive character of these devices? It is obvious that repetition is integrally connected with the technique of oral composition and manifests itself first in the noun-epithet formula, whose function in oral composition Parry explained. The poet needs flexible metrical units in order to compose orally. These repetitive units are the basis not only for the schematic style of Homer but also of the frame of mind in which the audience listens to such poetry. The oral technique extended these metrical units from phrases to a line, then groups of lines constituting transitional scenes, type scenes which are essential in the improvisation of a story. As the improvisation extended from units of a single recitation to the *grossepos*, there arose for the oral poet the problem of integrating the parts disjointed by interruptions in recitation and by the paratactic nature of the oral pattern of composition. Repetition now took on a new role; in addition to forming the basis of easy versification, it forms the basis of the devices by which the poet binds the parts of his recitation together. Because the oral poet composed formulaically through repetitions, the origin of the devices used to achieve a measure of integration in oral poetry must be sought in the technique of repetition. Thus the repetitiveness underlying

our devices of integration originated in the repetitive technique of the formulaic style which extends from verbal to formal patterns.

The functional origin of repetition, however, had to be adjusted not only to the poet's technique but to the audience. The oral poet had to create through experience and after a long tradition a repetitive style which would aesthetically satisfy as well as be useful. He, too, had to evolve from the *utile* to the *dulce*, and in Homer's hands these devices acquired an aesthetic effect which conceals their functional role. It is only when one sets the genesis of these devices in their oral context that one realizes their role in the technique of oral composition. The more we understand these Homeric techniques for interrelation and continuity and their relation to the spirit of early literature, the more we realize that Homer, as a result of misunderstanding and of the resulting rejection of repetitions, resembles "the sea-god Glaucus whose first nature can hardly be made out by those who catch glimpses of him, because the original members of his body are broken off and mutilated and crushed and in every way marred by the waves, and other parts have attached themselves to him, accretions of shells and sea-weed and rocks, so that he is more like any wild creature than what he was by nature" (*Rep.* 612c). By becoming aware of the origin and utility of these devices in achieving continuity and interconnexion in oral literature, we let *Homer speak for himself* which is the true Ithaca, the *νόστος* for modern Homeric scholarship.