THE HOMERIC SIMILE *in* COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

Oral Traditions from Saudi Arabia to Indonesia

JONATHAN L. READY

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For Jack

I'll dance the buckles off me shoes
for you, me Johnny lad

Scottish (and Irish) folk song

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Introduction

I here lay out the precedents for and goals of this study (section 0.1), discuss my choice of the phrases "the *Iliad* poet" and "the *Odyssey* poet" (0.2), review the comparative methods I use (0.3), provide a bibliographical survey of the modern oral poetries I investigate (0.4), define a simile (0.5), and detail the contents of each chapter (0.6). This sequence aims to convince Homerists and their fellow travelers in classical studies that they should read this entire book and to persuade those with interests in comparative literature, folkloristics, and linguistic anthropology that they should at least read part I.

0.1. PRECEDENTS AND GOALS

Twentieth-century researchers in Homeric studies did not have the same fraught relationship to comparison as researchers in other fields, such as religious studies (R. A. Segal 2001) or anthropology (Brettell 2013: 293–9). Homerists had found other literatures useful before (Schadewaldt 1938: 25 n. 2; cf. Haubold 2013: 21 n. 7), but we associate the comparative turn in Homeric studies with Milman Parry and Albert Lord's work with epic poets in the former Yugoslavia (Lord 2000 [1960]). Explorations both of Homeric themes and structures and of Homeric performance from comparative perspectives became ever more popular and have continued apace. Some look to, for instance, ancient Near Eastern literatures (Louden 2006, 2011; Ready 2012b: 58 n. 8; Haubold 2013: 18–72, 2014; Kelly 2008, 2014; Metcalf 2015: 191–220; Bachvarova 2016; Currie 2016: 160–222), and others to Chinese literature, from the ancient to the early modern (Raphals 1992; Shankman and Durrant 2000: 19–77; Beecroft 2010).

Still others (details in the next paragraph) consider modern oral traditions, meaning they investigate oral traditional works, from epics to folk tales, and their performers and audiences. Although comparative study tends to offer analogies rather than proofs, it can suggest new perspectives on our Homeric poets and their poems (cf. Martin 1989: 9, 2008: 119; Lord 1995: 193; Nagy 1996b: 11; Niles 1999: 198; Foley 2005a: 197; Thomas 2012: 226–7; Karanika 2014: 192, 220; Danek 2016: 125). As Lord reminds the Homerist, "Actually we have two songs" (2000: 183; cf. 158–9). Interrogating the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* from comparative perspectives can help one fill in some gaps.

I join a host of scholars—such as Georg Danek (1991, 1998, 2010, 2012a, 2012b, 2016), John Miles Foley (1991, 1995, 2002), Gregory Nagy (1995), William Hansen (1997, 2002), Kevin Tuite (1998), Ruth Scodel (2002), Thérèse de Vet (1996, 2008), Richard Martin (2008, 2014), David Elmer (2010), Minna Skafte Jensen (2011), and Stephanie West (2012)—in insisting upon the necessity for Homeric studies of the exploration of modern oral traditions, especially traditions involving poetry (and of the exploration of orality more broadly: Bakker 1997; Minchin 2001, 2007; Kelly 2007, 2012; Cantilena 2012). One can adhere to this axiom and still believe, in general, that oral poetry—although "quite different from poetries that come into being under textual rules and live out their lives solely as texts" (Foley 2002: 38)—does not stand in opposition to literate poetry and practice (Finnegan 2007: 96–113; cf. Azadovskii 1974 [1925/6]: 12; Beissinger 1991: 159–61; Mackenzie 2000; Foley 2002: 37–8; Scheub 2002: 206; Børdahl 2010: 100; Tsagalis 2011: 238–40; H. Gregory 2012; Currie 2016: 69, 146).

One can adhere to this axiom and still believe, in particular, that the first written texts of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were not "transitional texts" arising when an oral poet adopted some of the techniques associated with composition in writing (cf. Austin 2009: 89–90, 95; Jensen 2011: 197–203) but were the results of complex interactions between oral and writerly practices (Ready 2015). Alternatively, one can adhere to this axiom and still believe with Martin L. West that one archaic-era poet wrote the *Iliad* and that another archaic-era poet wrote the *Odyssey* (2011, 2014). In M. L. West's model, the poet, skilled in the compositional mechanisms of oral poetry, performed his poetry orally for his audiences and then wrote it down or wrote it down and then performed it orally (2011:

10, 36, 69). In other words, he was an oral poet who wrote. Writing stands as a different medium than the spoken word, but a written text can exhibit an oral orientation. The linguist Wulf Oesterreicher defines orality as a matter of "style" and of "conception," not medium: he chooses "the term language of immediacy (*Sprache der Nähe*) to designate the informal/oral type of linguistic conception" (1997: 191, 193–4). As a result, "a discourse that is *conceptionally* oral . . . is often *medially* oral as well, but it is also possible for such a discourse to be written" (Bakker 1997: 8, emphasis in original). Just so, the folklorist Lauri Honko finds that the written medium can "accommodate" the "oral style" (2002a: 20), and the comparatist Haun Saussy argues that the same features that mark oral traditions appear "in twentieth- and twenty-first-century literary avant-gardes" (2016: 73). One can imagine M. L. West's poet produced that kind of written text—oral in style, but written in medium.

Again, one can adhere to this axiom but also acknowledge the differences between modern oral traditions and the practice of Homeric poetry (Scodel 2002: 48–9). For instance, the pressures exerted by cultural institutions, such as the recurring festival of the Panionia at the Panionion of the Ionian Dodecapolis and the recurring festival of the Panathenaia in Athens, shaped Homeric poetry (Nagy 2010; González 2013; Bachvarova 2016: 413–14). Modern performers can also learn from one another when they gather at festivals. For twenty-six years, Ray Hicks, a teller of so-called Jack Tales, influenced fellow performers who converged at the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee (Lindahl 1999: 396). Kyrgyz performers of the Manas epic meet at competitions and festivals during which they pick up material from one another (van der Heide 2015: 135, 157, 306). Nevertheless, institutions similar to the Panionia or the Panathenaia do not necessarily play such an important role in modern oral traditions (cf. Jensen 2011: 157).

Aware of these nuances and possibilities, I come back to the following: because research into modern oral traditions elucidates the texts we have—as this book makes clear once again—denigrating the enterprise is foolish. More productive are the discussions and debates that arise among those engaged in this pursuit as to which oral traditions the Homerist should explore. De Vet, for instance, voices reservations about the Parry archive's dominance in Homeric scholarship (1996, 1998). Previously, Arthur Hatto had questioned the relevance of the "Serbo-Croatian" tradition, which he characterized

as comprising lays, to the analysis of epic (1989b: 152), a stance challenged by Honko (1998: 36).[1]

One of my goals, then, is to encourage Homerists to look into modern oral traditions and the scholarship of those who study them full time. They need not be the ones in this book. I apply modern comparanda in a manner thorough enough to buttress my claims and, in the knowledge that Bosniac oral epic accounts for a fraction of the world's oral poetry, I offer a sustained encounter with modern oral poetries beyond but including Bosniac poetry and with anthropological, folkloristic, and ethnographic scholarship on that species of verbal art that is orally performed before a live audience. Yet no one scholar could control all the data and bibliography relevant to the study of modern oral traditions. I work with primary sources accessible to me and sample pertinent secondary literature. I imagine that another scholar could produce the same arguments using different primary and secondary materials. Given that folklorists and ethnographers continue to make strides in documenting oral poetry in performance (Hale 1996; W. A. Collins 1998; Honko et al. 1998; Reichl 2007; Reynolds 2010–), the Homerist's understanding of what was required for and what it meant for our Homeric poets to perform before an audience will deepen as additional material becomes available (cf. Tangherlini 2003: 146–7; Jensen 2011: 21).

The more immediate goals of this book are twofold. First, I demonstrate that by looking at how modern oral poets deploy similes one can learn a good deal about how the poet of the *Iliad* and the poet of the *Odyssey* deployed their similes. This analysis prompts a reevaluation of the ways these Homeric poets put together their similes and the ways they and their audiences thought about similes. But the similes are a means to an end. For the second goal is to prove that by looking at how modern oral performers succeed in performance one can learn a good deal about how the poet of the *Iliad* and the poet of the *Odyssey* succeeded in performance. I follow here M. Parry's injunction that we return to the Homeric epics after gleaning from the study of modern oral poetries "just how the oral poet works, and

[1] "South Slavic oral epic refers to narrative songs that were performed by Serbian, Bosnian, and Croatian traditional singers who all spoke more or less the same language, now called Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian. These singers were either Christian (Orthodox Serbs or Catholic Croats) or Muslims (Bosnians)" (Beissinger 2016: 136–7). "South Slavic" remains an acceptable way to refer to the Christian and Muslim traditions together. The term "Serbo-Croatian" is outdated.

what it is that makes a poem good or bad in the judgment of himself and his hearers" (1987: 361). As I show, success was not just a matter of setting oneself apart but also of doing what other Homeric poets were doing.

A few critics have taken a comparative perspective on the Homeric simile. Cecil Bowra considers the Homeric simile alongside those from other traditions of "heroic poetry" (1952: 267–80), while James Notopoulos looks to the figurative language of modern Greek folk songs (1957). Phillip Damon (1961: 264–71), Jaan Puhvel (1991: 21–9), Robert Rollinger (1996: 166–71), and Mary Bachvarova (2010: 76–7) juxtapose similes in the Homeric epics and ancient Near Eastern literatures (cf. Ready 2012b). M. L. West detects parallels between Homeric similes and those from ancient Near Eastern literatures (1997: 217–19, 242–52) and from literatures of Indo-European extraction (2007: 95–9, 494–5). In demonstrating how the *Iliad*'s similes represent a generic shift and function as structural markers in performance, Martin calls on a range of modern oral poetries to buttress his claims (1997). Steven Shankman and Stephen Durrant bring out the tension between the two parts of the Homeric simile—how, for instance, do the suitors courting Odysseus's wife, Penelope, resemble fawns (*Od.* 4.335–40)?—by looking to (simile-like) comparisons in the Chinese *Classic of Poetry* (*Shi jing*), placed between 1000 and 500 BCE (2000: 60–1). These projects encourage renewed attention to the ways in which a comparative approach helps one reckon with how and why the *Iliad* poet and the *Odyssey* poet used similes.

I acknowledge another precedent for this study. William Scott's books and articles remain at the forefront of research into the Homeric simile. For my purposes, I note that Scott stresses the poet's negotiation of audience expectations when it comes to similes (2005: 21; cf. 1974: 185–6; 2009: 8–10, 31):

> It is of major importance to the interpretation of the similes to acknowledge that the audience had a firm knowledge of the alternatives which the poet considered and thereby could evaluate what he was accepting, modifying, and suppressing in supporting his narrative with a simile. There was a virtual simile outline in their minds built from memories of previous performances . . .

Scott's observation encourages renewed attention to the ways in which our Homeric poets played on and to their audience's familiarity with their similes.

0.2. HOMER

How Homerists use the proper noun "Homer" does not in the end alter the results of their analyses (cf. Sammons 2010: p. x). Still, they customarily offer their take on this word as well as on controversial matters related to the word, and doing so is useful for readers from other disciplines and from other subfields of classical studies.

Different scholars mean different things when they talk about "Homer." Sometimes they mean the poet of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Sometimes they mean the poet of the *Iliad* or the poet of the *Odyssey*. Sometimes they mean an oral poet operating in the tradition of Homeric poetry. Sometimes they mean the poems themselves: instead of speaking of the *Iliad* and/or the *Odyssey*, they will say "in Homer." When scholars talk about "Homeric poetry," they sometimes mean the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Sometimes they mean those two epics plus the Homeric Hymns. Sometimes they add in the poems of the Epic Cycle.

I have chosen not to use the proper noun Homer in this book except when I quote from or refer to other scholars who use "Homer." I speak of the *Iliad* poet and the *Odyssey* poet (or the poet of the *Iliad* and the poet of the *Odyssey*). I assume that our texts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* descend from two separate acts of dictation by two oral poets. Two assumptions underlie that assumption. First, the *Odyssey* "never repeats or refers to any incident in the *Iliad*" (Monro 1901: 325; cf. Nagy 1999: 20–1; Jensen 2011: 299), and scholarship detects "a contrast in the character and destiny" of Achilleus and Odysseus (Cook 1995: 28–32, quotation from 31) or sees them "as mirror images" (Wilson 2002: 248–54, quotation from 253). One can find differences in the poems' similes (Nannini 2003), and "the two poems exhibit notable differences of narrative manner, theology, ethics, vocabulary, and geographical perspective" (M. L. West 2011: 8; cf. 2014: 57–60). Such oppositions do not necessarily imply that the two poems come from two bards (Dalby 2006: 113–14; Currie 2016: 39, 71), but I prefer to make that leap, as others have done since antiquity (Fowler 2004: 230 n. 43). One might even imagine that each poet dedicated himself to performing one tale: that performers in a tradition with several long tales on offer specialize in one or two, or, at least, in a finite number, is attested in, for instance, the Suzhou chantefable tradition (Bender 2003: 14) or the tradition perpetuated by Mongolian bards (Chiodo 2008). Not every performer tells every

tale (cf. González 2013: 47 n. 24). Second, the best way to explain the uniformity of the textual tradition of the Homeric poems from our earliest witnesses is to imagine that a dictated text served as the archetype for the textual tradition of each poem (Reece 2005; Jensen 2011: 227–9).

The *Iliad* poet and the *Odyssey* poet each qualify as a Homeric poet. They stand as our representatives of the tradition of the oral performance of Homeric poetry. Many Homeric poets contributed to this tradition, performing the Iliad and the Odyssey orally countless times before some individuals got together to produce written versions of dictated presentations of the Iliad and Odyssey and continuing to perform the Iliad and the Odyssey orally afterwards. To create a written version of a poet's oral presentation is, in the language of folkloristics, to textualize it (Honko 2000b). The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—note the italics—are the written poems that both resulted from textualization processes and served as the archetypes for the textual tradition. Poets performed the Iliad and the Odyssey—note the roman font—before and after the emergence of those written poems (cf. Finkelberg 2012b: 94). The roman font signals that one is dealing with a tradition in which performers present what they think of as the same story, not with specific written texts: when John D. Smith speaks of "the epic of Pābūjī" (1991), Honko of "the Siri epic" (1998), Aditya Malik of "the oral narrative of Devnārāyaṇ" (2005), or Nienke van der Heide of "the Manas epic" (2015), none uses italics. Homerists acknowledge this phenomenon in their own way. Nagy writes, "Instead of referring to a *poem* in such a context, it would be better to speak in terms of a *tradition of performing a certain kind of poem*" (1990b: 79, emphasis in original). Lord observes (1994: 14),

> The specific return song/story that I have called 'The Return of Odysseus' was sung, or told, by many singers many times. It did not have any single text, any more than any oral traditional story has only one text, but in reality it had as many texts as there were performances. This specific return song must be kept separate, of course, from *The Odyssey* of Homer as we have it, which represents a particular performance, at a particular time, by a particular singer, namely Homer, of the specific return song, 'The Return of Odysseus'.

Jim Marks favors the "'*Odyssey*-tradition'" as "the notional, though irrecoverable, sequence of compositions-in-performance through

which the Homeric text evolved" and "'the *Odyssey*'" as "the text as we have it" (2008: 12–13). José González speaks of "recognizable Iliadic and Odyssean traditions" (2013: 418). The creation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had little or no impact on subsequent performances of the Iliad and the Odyssey (cf. Jensen 2011: 174, 264), just as when a written version of a Kyrgyz singer's performance of the Manas epic appears, it is not "the 'true' text—it is merely one single version of the Manas" (van der Heide 2015: 88; cf. 304), and other Manas singers who compose in performance (145, 303) do not read, much less memorize, it or any written version (228).

In order to refer to both the poet of the *Iliad* and the poet of the *Odyssey*, I speak of "our Homeric poets." To refer to a poet who performed the Iliad or the Odyssey, I speak of "a Homeric poet." By "the Homeric poems (or epics)," I mean the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. When I talk about "Homeric poetry," I have in mind the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and all the oral presentations of the Iliad and the Odyssey in hexameter verse by any number of poets that may have been inscribed in the minds of audience members but were not written down. The "(archaic Greek) hexameter poets" should refer to all the poets who performed a song in hexameters on any subject related to the mythic or heroic past. In practice, however, the "(archaic Greek) hexameter poets" include the poets of Homeric poetry; of Hesiodic poetry (I touch on four manifestations of that poetry: the *Aspis*, *Catalogue of Women*, *Theogony*, and *Works and Days*); of hymnic poetry manifested in the Homeric Hymns (I touch on the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, and those numbered 6, 24, and 32); and of Cyclic poetry manifested in the poems of the Epic Cycle (Burgess 2001: 33, 2009: p. xiii) (I touch on the *Epigonoi*, *Cypria*, and *Little Iliad*). I use the phrase "(archaic Greek) hexameter poems" to cover the Homeric poems, the Hesiodic poems, the Homeric Hymns, and the poems of the Epic Cycle.

0.3. METHODS OF COMPARISON

Since no one comparative method prevails (Grew 2006: 125, 131; Yengoyan 2006: 8, 12), scholars in different disciplines—such as anthropology, comparative literature, folklore, and history—have

approached and continue to approach the comparative project from a number of angles (cf. Dundes 1986; Felski and Friedman 2013: 4; Vlassopoulos 2014). For their part, Homerists take two approaches to modern oral traditions—what I label (1a), (1b), and (2)—to illuminate the ancient epics. I utilize (1a) and (2) at different points in this book.

First (1), Homerists concern themselves with the available evidence, making one of two moves. (1a) Scholars study a phenomenon common to both the Homeric epics and modern oral traditional works. By highlighting points of difference and of similarity, they deepen our understanding of Homeric practice. Olga Levaniouk, for instance, elucidates Penelope's dream in *Odyssey* 19 in which an eagle kills her pet geese by looking at Barcin's dream in the epic of Alpamysh (2011: 234–9), a modern Uzbek version of ATU 974 *The Homecoming Husband* (Uther 2004: 608), the international tale type either to which the *Odyssey* belongs (Hansen 2002: 202–11; M. L. West 2014: 15–17; Edmunds 2016: 39) or with which it interacts (Bakker 2013: 13–16). Or consider studies comparing the Homeric poems and textualized Bosniac poems. Margalit Finkelberg explores the ways these poems "premise their claims to truthfulness" (1990: 298). Hans Schwabl investigates our Homeric poets' use of formulas, type scenes, and themes in light of "Serbo-Croatian" poets' use of those mechanisms (1990; cf. Foley 1990). Danek queries the Parryan notion of formulaic economy as a marker of Homeric versification in an article that focuses on how individual Bosniac poets use name-epithet formulas for the hero Tale (1991). W. Merritt Sale juxtaposes the *Iliad* and Avdo Međedović's *The Wedding of Smailagić Meho* and their depictions of heroism, their presentations of complex characters, their plot-structures, and their meter and diction (1996b). In a reconsideration of Zielinski's law, Danek points out the differences and similarities in how the Homeric and South Slavic epics treat "concealed" (*verdeckt*) or simultaneous action (1998). In a piece on "hypertextuality," Danek compares how the *Iliad* poet and Međedović "link" their tales to other stories (2010), and in a piece on intertextuality, he explores the textual status that the *Odyssey* poet and Mehmed Kolaković construct for the analeptic stories their characters tell (2016; cf. Danek 2002b).

(1b) Homerists also study phenomena in other modern oral poetries that are analogous to those in the Homeric epics to shed light on a passage in or element of the latter. For instance, I cite again Martin's

reevaluation of the Homeric simile in which he explores "song or other genre shifts" in modern traditions of oral epic performance from, for instance, Africa and Central Asia (1997: quotation from 152). In another article, Martin argues that Helen's assertion of mantic expertise (*Od.* 15.172) and her earlier statement, "Shall I lie, or shall I speak the truth?" (*Od.* 4.140), make sense in light of her stance as a "paradigmatic lamenter" who deploys the skills and language of a lamenter even when not engaged in a formal lament (2008: 121–6, quotation from 124).[2] To bolster his thesis, he turns to studies of lamenters in modern Greece. Danek concludes the aforementioned article on Zielinksi's law with the suggestion that a motif found in both Muslim and Christian epic—signals by way of cannon fire—helps one think through "the motif of the shout of the Greeks on the third day of battle in the *Iliad*" (1998: 84–8, quotation from 84 [my translation]). Stephanie West proposes that comparing the *Odyssey* with Alpamysh "suggests . . . that many of the *Odyssey*'s generally acknowledged problems arise from the poet attempting to combine incompatible motifs in a single composition" (2012: 539).

Second (2), Homerists ask: given what happens in the case of modern oral traditions, can we reconstruct what happened in the Homeric case? This procedure represents one logical outcome of taking seriously both the specific propositions that Homeric poetry was oral traditional poetry and that our Homeric texts reflect this heritage and the general proposition that oral poetry maintains its integrity as a distinct phenomenon even if it is not to be set against written poetry. Danek attempts this kind of move in an essay on book 10's (the *Doloneia*'s) position vis-à-vis the *Iliad*. After looking at instances in which Međedović "takes over a specific song from a specific identifiable source and makes it part of his personal repertoire, while adding a substantial part of his own" (2012b: 116), he concludes (120),

> Concerning the Doloneia poet . . . our comparison with Međedović proves the point that . . . he no longer tried to recompose the *Iliad* as a whole in a creative way. He was a rhapsode who learned the *Iliad* by heart, using a written text, and decided to add to it a new part of his own (even if he used an old story).

[2] I provide my own translations of passages from the *Odyssey*.

Danek appends regarding the end of the *Odyssey*, "The analogy of Međedović thus suggests, in my eyes, that the 'continuation' was the last addition which the *Odyssey* poet himself added to his own epic" (121).

I cite another example of this strategy in action. As mentioned in section 0.2, many, myself included, favor the so-called "dictation" model as a way to account for the uniformity of the textual tradition of the Homeric poems. According to this model, a collector arranged for a poet to dictate his version of the Iliad or Odyssey to a scribe, and this textualized poem became the archetype for our text. The textualization of modern oral traditional works helps one envision this process. Investigating some exemplary feats of textualization, such as Honko's team's work with the Siri epic (Karnataka, India) (Honko 1998; Honko et al. 1998) and Karl Reichl's work with the Karakalpak Edige (Uzbekistan) (2007), Jensen proposes to reconstruct the creation of written versions of dictated presentations of the Iliad and Odyssey in 522 BCE (2011). Favoring a more diverse set of comparanda, I have shown that the textualization of a modern oral traditional work by a collector resulted in a text that was the co-creation of the performer, collector, and scribe (if a discrete third party) (Ready 2015). The written text resulting from a process that began when a collector had a poet dictate his version of the Iliad or Odyssey to a scribe was likely such a co-creation.

Homerists who deploy this second method find allies among those ancient historians who practice one brand of comparative history. Sara Forsdyke argues that one mechanism for "reconstructing" popular culture in Ancient Greece involves looking at "the culture of peasants and slaves in better documented eras," such as "medieval and early modern Europe, the antebellum South and contemporary South East Asia" (2012: 17). She adopts this approach in addressing Plutarch's account of events in sixth-century BCE Megara (117):

> For example, the poor invaded the houses of the rich and demanded to be feasted sumptuously. If the poor did not receive the hospitality that they sought, they treated the rich with violence and insolence. At the same time, Plutarch reports, some sacred ambassadors from the Peloponnesus were attacked by a group of drunk Megarians. The revelers rolled the wagons of the ambassadors, with their wives and children inside, into a lake and drowned many of them. Finally, Plutarch mentions temple robbery as a final example of the outrages that took place during this time.

To understand these events, Forsdyke turns to research on early modern Europe (135–7):

> These early modern examples of the relation between revelry and riot, symbolic inversion and real rebellion, are useful for interpreting events in sixth-century Megara. First of all, they demonstrate how ritual forms could serve as the basis for protest or rebellion. That is to say that the incidents of revelry, riot, and violence reported by Plutarch may reflect the escalation of ritual license into rebellion, or the borrowing of ritual forms in order to voice real protest.
>
> Even more important than the recognition of the potential for revelry to serve as a mechanism for protest, however, are the implications of the early modern examples for our understanding of the causes and consequences of riotous behavior in Megara. . . . In the case of Darnton's printer's apprentices, moreover, the workers were responding to the outsourcing of work to cheap day laborers. . . . The workers were responding to the breakdown of patriarchal relationships between rich and poor, not trying to undermine this traditional form of reciprocity. . . . Underdown's analysis suggests that revelry and riot were aimed at the enforcement of the traditional order. . . .
>
> Through these early modern comparisons, I do not intend to suggest that ancient Megara was undergoing economic changes of the nature and scale of, for example, the Industrial Revolution. Rather, I suggest a much more general similarity with the Megarian case, namely that the poor used cultural rituals of revelry to protest changing economic conditions and their worsening situation. More specifically, I suggest that changes in society and the economy . . . threatened the mutual dependence between rich and poor.

Forsdyke sees two lessons for how to interpret the events in Megara in scholarship on early modern Europe. First, in early modern Europe, revelry and ritual could become a site for protest or outright rebellion. One should understand the same equation to have obtained in Megara: there as well appeared "the tendency of ordinary citizens and peasants to use ritualized forms of popular culture as a medium for expressing discontent" (5). Forsdyke surmises that this equation also obtained in Athens: "The poor used ritual revelry to force Solon and his fellow elites to enact economic reform" (137). Second, one can understand the motivations for the actions of the protesting Megarians in light of the motivations of the protesting peasantry of early modern Europe: "The [Megarian] poor were concerned to assert a patriarchal relation between rich and poor" (141). Forsdyke

continues in this vein when addressing the reason for Solon's *seisachtheia* (the abolishment of debt and debt slavery) and for the Megarian *palintokia* (the return of interest paid to creditors): "The comparative examples suggest that the *Palintokia* and *Seisachtheia* represent measures to address the economic problems of the poor in order that they might not lead to more serious challenges to elite rule" (140). In short, this type of comparative history uses examples from other times and places to reconstruct what took place in antiquity and why. It aligns with the tactic of those Homerists who look to modern oral traditions to suggest ways of approaching the Homeric epics that one would not come upon by looking solely at the ancient evidence.

A difference arises in the examples cited to illustrate method (2). Some use one source to make their case, as Danek turns to the poetry of Međedović. Others use several, as Jensen and I do (and I would put Forsdyke in this camp). I am most comfortable attempting this sort of reconstruction when I cover a lot of ground (cf. Foley 2005a: 197; Ready 2014), and I endeavor to do so in this project. No one tradition of oral poetry, for instance, can be taken to stand for all oral poetry: we need to investigate a number of traditions (cf. Jensen 2011: 28). No one poet, and no one poem, can be taken to stand for a whole tradition: we need to investigate the work of as many poets as we can (cf. Tangherlini 2013b: 216–17, 225). By covering a lot of ground, I seek to establish what repeatedly happens in the world's oral traditions, especially its poetic traditions—that is, what seems widespread, not universal (cf. R. A. Segal 2001: 358). If something repeatedly happens, I ask if the *Iliad* and/or *Odyssey* might operate in the same way, absent explicit evidence to the contrary. I see if approaching the epics from that perspective helps me with the poems.

Investigations that fall under either (1) or (2) succeed when the researcher remembers that, as Foley's dictum has it, "the watchword for species within the genus OT [Oral Tradition] must always be diversity" (2012: 166), or that, as Eric Eve stresses in his interrogation of the relationship between oral tradition and the written texts of the Gospels, not "all oral traditions work in the same way and display identical characteristics" (2014: 7; cf. 159). Investigations that fall under (2) succeed when the researcher keeps in mind that the modern material helps one form a hypothesis, nothing more. Just because something happened elsewhere does not prove that it happened in the

Homeric case. Mahmoud Omidsalar lambasts those critics who argue for an oral background to the *Shāh-nāma*, a Persian epic by Abū al-Qāsim Firdausī (d. 1020 CE), by solely citing "evidence from Greek, French, Serbo-Croatian, and a host of other cultures and languages" (2002: 266). One can hypothesize that something happened in the Homeric case because it happened elsewhere, but to make the reconstruction convincing one has to show that it makes sense in and of the Homeric case. With these caveats in view, Homerists have profited from the study of modern oral traditions.

0.4. SOURCES OF MODERN MATERIAL

I rely on numerous secondary sources in this book, but single out in this section the primary sources that I analyze in detail.

0.4.1. Central Asia (Modern Kyrgyzstan)

Kyrgyz singers dictated to scribes poems that they composed in performance concerning the exploits of Manas and other heroes. Two critical editions by Hatto offer several of them transliterated into Roman letters along with facing English translations in prose. *The Memorial Feast for Kökötöy-Khan* (1977) presents a poem recorded from an unnamed bard under the supervision of Rotmistr Chokan Chingisovich Valikhanov "presumably on 26–27 May 1856, some miles to the east of the eastern end of Lake Issyk [in the eastern part of present-day Kyrgyzstan]" (p. v, cf. 94; Prior 2002: 61–2). Daniel Prior notes this poem's "contested attribution . . . to the bard Nazar Bolot" (2006: 1 n. 33), and van der Heide suggests 1858 as an equally plausible date (2015: 179). I use Hatto's abbreviation *KO* to refer to this poem (1990: 635).

The Manas of Wilhelm Radloff (Hatto 1990) comprises seven poems recorded by "the pioneer of Turkic Studies in the widest sense" (p. ix). Following Radloff's numbering, Hatto designates these poems I, 1) through I, 7). He determines that 1) was recorded among the Sarybagysh in 1869 and 2) through 7) among the Bugu in 1862 (602). The Sarybagysh and the Bugu are clans in the north and west of present-day Kyrgyzstan. The process of compiling the edition

leads Hatto to assert that "Radloff's seven *Manas*-sections fall into five groups presumably by five different bards: 1); 2); 3); 4)/5) and 6)/7)" (602). In particular, the "highly individual style of 3) proves that he had more than one bard for the *Manas*" (cf. Hatto 1982). I use this numbering system to refer to these poems.

Radloff also recorded *Joloy Khan* and *Er-Töštük* from the same singer "among the Solto" in the north of present-day Kyrgyzstan in 1869 (Hatto 1990: 602; Prior 2002: 175). Radloff identified *Joloy Khan* as II and *Er-Töštük* as III, but I label them *JK* and *ET1*, respectively. In 1885, Radloff published a two-volume set that contains I, 1) through I, 7), *JK*, and *ET1*: original language texts transcribed in Cyrillic letters in one volume (part 1); translations into German in the other (part 2).[3] Pertev Boratav and Louis Bazin (1965) offer a French translation of a composite text of Er-Töštük. They base their text on two poems: (1) 914 verses of the 2,146 verses of *ET1*; (2) the entirety of a performance of Er-Töštük as recorded from a famous twentieth-century bard named Sayakbay Karalayev (1894–1971) and published in 1938 (and then again in 1956). I refer to (2) as *ET2*.

In addition to *ET2*, I have reviewed three other twentieth-century productions. Prior offers a performance edition (including a musical transcription, an original language text transcribed in Roman letters, and a facing line-by-line English translation) of a rendition of Semetey by a bard named Kenje Kara recorded "in late 1903 or early 1904" (2006: 6). I refer to this poem as *KKS*. Elmira Köçümkulkïzï provides English translations of the poetry of two other twentieth-century Kyrgyz poets: (1) Alïmkul Üsönbayev's version of Kojojash (Köçümkulkïzï 2004). This poem was published in 1938 "by the famous writer Mukai Elebayev, but details of its origins are unclear" (Aitpaeva 2006: 111). I refer to this poem as *AUK*. (2) Sayakbay Karalayev's version of Manas (Köçümkulkïzï 2005). Köçümkulkïzï translates most of the first eight episodes that appeared in a 1995 edition. Kyrgyz scholars based this edition on materials collected from Karalayev during his lifetime (van der Heide 2015: 211, 220–1). I refer to this poem as *SKM*.

[3] Honko discusses Radloff's efforts at textualization (1998: 177–9). On the limitations of Radloff's volumes, see Hatto 1990: pp. ix–x.

0.4.2. Rajasthan, India

J. D. Smith recorded on cassette tapes a thirty-six-hour performance by Parbū (Prabhurām) Bhopo "in the Autumn of 1976" (1991: 104) of the epic of Pābūjī, "an oral epic in the Rajasthani language, which is performed to the present day in the Indian state of Rajasthan" (1). The performance reached such length because at Smith's request Parbū Bhopo presented "every *kaṛī* (couplet) . . . both in *gāv* (song) and in declamatory *arthāv*"—*arthāv* being "the spoken, loosely metrical version which the *bhopo* declaims between songs"—and appended explanatory comments in Hindi after each section of *arthāv* (104–5). In his 1991 volume, Smith provides a transcription in Devanagari script of the Rajasthani text of the *arthāv* as well as a line-by-line English translation (cf. Honko 1998: 211–15). In the poem, the eponymous protagonist embarks on martial adventures that end with his apotheosis during a fight with his enemy Khī̃cī. In the poem's final section, Pābūjī's son, Rūpnāth, kills Khī̃cī.

0.4.3. South Sumatra, Indonesia

Cik Ait sang the epic (*guritan*) of Radin Suane in the language Besemah in South Sumatra. At some point during his stay there from 1971 to 1973 (1998: 5), William Collins arranged for the poet to perform the epic over two performances on two successive nights (9–11). Collins recorded the event on cassette tapes. In his 1998 edition, which includes a transcribed original language text and facing line-by-line English translation, Collins divides up the text into 255 cantos, each ending with the syllable "Ai!", which Cik Ait would utter before pausing for a rest (10). A canto might be twelve lines (e.g. Canto 12) or as many as ninety-one lines (e.g. Canto 31) but seems to average around forty lines (cf. 33–4 at 1.2). In the poem, a young man, aided by his brother, goes on a journey to the end of the earth in search of his beloved.

0.4.4. Former Yugoslavia

Between 1933 and 1935, Parry, Lord, and Nikola Vujnović—Parry and Lord's fellow fieldworker and himself a singer (Foley 2004:

145–56)—collected oral epics in the former Yugoslavia and recorded conversations with the poets. The Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature in Harvard University's Widener Library houses this material along with the material Lord and David Bynum gathered on return trips in the 1950s and 1960s (Elmer 2013b: 341–3). The researchers captured these poems in various ways (cf. Honko 1998: 184–8): some were sung or recited and recorded "on the phonograph discs or on the wires" (Lord 1954: 18); others were dictated to and recorded by a scribe; others were "laboriously written down in pencil by the singer himself in ordinary school notebooks furnished to him for the purpose by Milman Parry" (Bynum 1979: 1); still others were sung for "our magnetic recorder" (14). In this book, I use the titles of songs as presented in their respective volumes (as opposed to in Kay 1995).

In volume 1 of the series titled *Serbocroatian Heroic Songs* (1954), Lord presents translations of twenty-one poems, and summaries of numerous other poems, recorded in Novi Pazar in 1934. The translations are in prose; no attempt is made to represent the original decasyllabic line. Volume 2 contains the original language texts (Lord 1953). The five singers included in these volumes represented one local tradition or dialectal area. Each singer originally came from or still lived in the adjacent municipalities of either Sjenica or Tutin on the southwestern edge of what is now Serbia. Novi Pazar, where the team recorded the poets, is the municipality immediately to the east. (Sjenica, Tutin, and Novi Pazar are three of the six municipalities in the Sandžak region of Serbia.) Fourteen poems are the work of Salih Ugljanin, an Albanian from Ugao, a village in the municipality of Sjenica (Lord 1954: 59). He told Vujnović that he had lived in Novi Pazar "for twenty years or more, twenty-five years" (60) and that he "began to learn [to sing Bosnian to the gusle] from the time I was thirty-five" (61). Ugljanin, then, was an accomplished performer in both Albanian and Bosnian, a master of two discrete but closely related traditions (Kolsti 1990). Sulejman Fortić and Đemail Zogić are each represented by one poem. Fortić was born in Gujice, a village in the municipality of Tutin (Lord 1954: 225), and moved to Novi Pazar when he was 11 (400). He reported, "When I was a boy, I heard the older men playing the gusle, and so tried it little by little until I learned a bit too, as best I could" (225). Born to Albanian parents, Zogić grew up in the village of Glogovik, also in the municipality of Tutin, and had lived in Novi Pazar since the age of 20