

EARLY MODERN GREEK VERSE: PARALLELS AND FRAMEWORKS

Verse in Early Modern Greek (EMG) first survives from the middle of the twelfth century, when the *Ptochoprodromika* and a handful of other poems were composed, probably including the first form of the epic-romance *Digenis Akritis*. After a gap in the thirteenth century, EMG verse reappears in the fourteenth, with two major genres, the chronicle (particularly the *Chronicle of the Morea*) and the romance. Surviving romances, depending on definition, are about a dozen, about half being original Greek works and half translations from Western European originals. Other minor genres will play no part in this paper.¹

There has recently been a small explosion of critical interest.² In part, this is just further preparation of accurate, readable editions for these works, some of which survive in disparate manuscript versions. But there has also been an increase in a second category of research, attempting wider analysis and interpretation of this puzzling area of literature. The most ambitious project has been Roderick Beaton's study of the romance, with chapters on narratology, literary genealogy and reception (Beaton, 1989). There has been discussion of the dominant metre, the decapentasyllable.³ Controversy has centred on the many phrases repeated within each poem and between poems.⁴ Explanations have been sought for the wide range of Greek morphology used by the poets.⁵ Other problems concern the many changes to the texts made by the copyists of most of the manuscripts (Beaton, 1989: 178-180).

¹The best general survey remains Beck, 1971, translated into Greek as Beck, 1989. For romances see Beaton, 1989.

²Beside the bibliography given here, the best indices of recent scholarship are the publications of two major relevant conferences: Cologne in 1986 edited by Eideneier, 1987, and Venice in 1991 convened and to be published by N. Panagiotakis.

³See Jeffreys M., 1974a; Alexiou M. and Holton, 1976; Lavagnini, 1983; Koder, 1983.

⁴Beaton, 1989: 160-183 provides a survey of current work.

⁵See Jeffreys M., 1987 and Beaton, 1989: 178-182.

These features make up, as it were, a distinctive EMG style, a variant of which is used in nearly all surviving poems. How was that style formed? Most other lines of criticism demand at least a provisional answer to this question. But in attempting this, other fundamental problems arise: little is known, from the poems themselves or elsewhere, about the social and educational background of the poets.⁶ Even less is certain about the audiences for which the works were conceived, or the circumstances in which they were read or heard (Beaton, 1990: 177-180). What is more, these poems provide in themselves most of the evidence for vernacular Greek and its literary use between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries.

The lack of alternative information demands extra sensitivity in research on the surviving poems. But in fact this has been surprisingly thoughtless: problematic aspects of the poems' phraseology, language and textual instability have been ascribed, with little attempt at theoretical justification, to the incompetence of the poets and copyists of the manuscripts. I agree with Beaton that this is indefensible, even as a solution of last resort. But his alternative approach seems little more critically responsible:⁷ he treats the poets on principle as fully conscious artists, deliberately selecting items to make up their own characteristic style. Granted that the style is unexpected and widespread (with variations of detail and intensity), it is surely preferable to examine the contemporary context for a source of influence—as every poet is more or less consciously affected by his cultural surroundings.

The EMG poems, it must be remembered, are almost the only texts surviving from the period which seem *a priori* likely to have been understood and appreciated by the huge majority of Greek speakers who were uneducated. Such judgements cannot be absolute: religious needs kept older kinds of Greek in circulation, and in cities the formal Greek of official ceremonies will have had an influence. But it is hard to believe that an uneducated Greek-speaking Constantinopolitan or his

⁶*Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* was almost certainly written by the imperial prince Andronikos Palaiologos: Martini, 1896, cf. Beaton, 1989: 101. The other romances and chronicles are all anonymous.

⁷Beaton not only rejects accusations of incompetence, he attacks any attempt to connect the poets with a style they have not created themselves; 1989: 175, 177, 183.

rural cousin would have read or recited or sung or even heard with enthusiasm and adequate comprehension the range of formal poems preserved in manuscript from the last Byzantine centuries. The EMG poems, the subject of this paper, would have been more attractive; but they are few in number, particularly in comparison with contemporary Western European vernaculars. Much more such verse must have been available at an oral level than has survived. There were mechanisms in Byzantine society working against the preservation in writing of vernacular poems (see e.g. Browning, 1983, 1-18), like those which, several centuries later (see below) concealed the existence of Modern Greek folk-song until non-Greek travellers and collectors brought it to the world's attention.

Hence a suggestion that much Byzantine popular poetry has been lost is no daring hypothesis, but overwhelmingly more likely than the alternative—that no verse existed beyond what is preserved. It is all but certain that there was in the centuries concerned at least one category of vernacular poetry, orally composed and transmitted, for the existence of which little direct evidence survives. It is hardly conceivable that this had no influence on surviving EMG poems. In some respects at least, these could form an imperfect written record of a much larger unwritten corpus. The record must be imperfect, because most surviving poems are conceived as written texts or translations of written texts, and their style and language too must have been influenced by the circumstances and the medium of preservation.

But how can this help in analysing surviving EMG poetry? How can one explain puzzling poems which have survived by recourse to poems which have not? If research follows the apparently rigorous method of restricting data on late Byzantine poetry to hard evidence from late Byzantine sources, it will not progress beyond the circular arguments so far presented here. Otherwise, it may escape from the circle by condemning the poets and copyists as incompetent or—Beaton's alternative—assuming that they were conscious artists, creators of their style, despite its unexpected features.

Fortunately other methods are available, not based on contemporary evidence alone. There are many comparative studies on poems in world literature representing the first written expression of new languages, or of new written strata of languages already used in writing. Such poems

have been compared with poetry from societies at the same cultural stage observed in the twentieth century. One major class of such studies, based on the work of Milman Parry and Albert Lord,⁸ analyses common features of these poems, which may include repeated phrases or formulas, a language with many morphological variants and a fluid textual tradition. The similarity of this list to the problems of EMG poetry described above is close enough to support detailed comparative research.

Much of this has been done, at least for a few EMG poems. Results are published elsewhere, and will not be detailed here (Jeffreys E. and M., 1983; Jeffreys M., 1987). They put some EMG poems well within the range of the Parry-Lord theories. After this preliminary work, other poems could be added to the same categories with comparatively little effort.

Reactions to this work at first were few, but recent comments have increased in number and tend to be negative.⁹ Criticisms have been made from several viewpoints: some ignore comparative issues and are based on Byzantine evidence alone or appeals to common sense; others use details of Parry's and Lord's work on Homer to undermine conclusions on this very different case; others assume that the Parry-Lord theories have not advanced beyond their first primitive formulations; still others suggest approaches likely to improve the application of these theories to EMG. A clear conclusion may be drawn from nearly all the criticisms: work done on EMG by the Parry-Lord methods is widely misunderstood. When such work was first published, too much stress was probably placed on statistical analysis of Greek poems, rather than the parallels used for comparison, the methodology of the comparison itself and the conclusions to be drawn.

This paper will make a start in redressing the balance and removing

⁸Bibliography in Foley, 1985 and 1988. As Ruth Finnegan has reiterated, e.g. 1990: 140-144, the kind of formulaic poetry studied by Parry and Lord is only one of the oral and orally-derived forms found all round the world.

⁹Bakker and van Gemert, 1988: esp. 71-80; Beaton, 1989; Mackridge, 1990; Agapitos, 1990: 259 n. 12, and 1991: 42; and the contribution of G. Sifakis to the 1991 Venice conference, which Professor Sifakis was kind enough to send me in advance of publication.

misunderstandings. We shall visit several cultural areas (some proposed here for the first time) which I regard as parallel to EMG. Perceived similarities are based either on the facts of the situation or the methods of relevant scholarship. The list of parallels is arbitrary, and another investigator might have made different choices. None of these situations will be examined here with full rigour: we shall remain at the level of parallels and frameworks, brief reports of research done and suggestions of projects to be attempted.

One purpose is to show the wide range of the oral hypothesis. Comparative methods aim at finding distinct signs in difficult and undocumented situations (like EMG) of features which may be examined in more accessible cultures, more recent or more abundant or more systematically studied. The evidence is cumulative: the more numerous the problems of an area of literature for which credible explanations are found within similar comparative frameworks, the more convincing the argument as a whole. Such results must then be added to evidence derived from expert research focussed on the primary area.¹⁰ Comparative evidence should not be underestimated, granted the lack of alternatives in many cases where the influence of traditional oral material is suspected. A close fit on several comparative criteria may be of more weight than a few "solid", "historical" references to singers and songs.¹¹

Oralist theories are still dominated by research done by Parry and Lord in Yugoslavia between the wars, and the Homeric problems to which they applied it. They investigated several categories of Yugoslav singers, and found that these did not just perform songs, but recomposed even long epics at each performance (Lord, 1960: 99-123). In this difficult task the singers were helped by the organisation of their material, which Parry and Lord analysed at three levels. First there was *limited enjambement* between lines, allowing the poet to concentrate on adding a new line to a thought already temporarily complete in the line

¹⁰The need for specialist knowledge and increased rigour in its application is stressed by Foley, 1990: 8.

¹¹Justification of the comparative method may be found in Jeffreys M., 1973: 171-172; at several points in Bäuml, 1986; Finnegan, 1990, which also contains warnings over its excesses; and Foley, 1988 and 1990: 1-19.

before. Second, there were many *formulas*, repeated phrases and phrase-patterns for different characters and their actions, allowing recomposition from usefully-shaped elements larger than the word. Third, there were *themes*, repeated descriptive or narrative items with a recognisable shape, providing a structured yet flexible building-block some lines in length (Lord, 1960: 30-98). Analysis of these elements started with their role as an aid to composition, but has since used them more sensitively, for example, to recreate an oral aesthetic (culminating in Foley, 1991). Most Yugoslav singers were illiterate: Lord stated that literacy is incompatible with oral-formulaic composition, that literate singers produce songs in a different category, with no possibility of transitional texts (Lord, 1960: 136-138 and, 1967: 1-14). This issue was to generate much confusion.

What is the relevance of the Yugoslav parallel to EMG? Of the three given levels of organisation, many EMG poems show little enjambement of a non-oral kind—but this tool is not widely used in analysis, as other explanations are often available beside oral influence. Most EMG poems contain formulas at moderate to high levels, as has been precisely calculated in some cases and estimated in others.¹² Signs of themes, however, are limited.¹³ Does this show that EMG poets were illiterate improvisers like the Yugoslavs studied by Parry and Lord? Certainly not! Such ambitious judgements were made in the first

¹²For the *Chronicle of the Morea* 31.7% (Jeffreys M., 1973: 190); for the *War of Troy* 29.3% (Jeffreys E. and M., 1979, 118-119). I add, with due reservations, a preliminary count I made twenty years ago of repetitions in the second hemistich of several EMG texts, using a concordance made by Dr. Michael Levison, then teaching Computer Science at Birkbeck College, London. All second hemistichs in the poems were examined. Statistics are higher than they would be for whole poems, since second hemistichs regularly show more repetition than first. Since I did not record the criteria used to define repetition, these numbers may only be used for relative comparisons between poems on the list: *Imberios and Margarona* (ed. Kriaras, 1955) 35.7%; *Achilleis Ms O* (ed. Sathas, 1879) 35.0%; *Belisarios* (ed. Cantarella, 1935) 34.2%; *Achilleis Ms N* (ed. Hesseling, 1919) 29.2%; *Florios and Platzia-Flora* (ed. Kriaras, 1955) 22.4%; *Belthandros and Chrysantza* (ed. Kriaras, 1955) 19.7%; *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* (ed. Pichard, 1956) 12.2%.

¹³Jeffreys E. and M., 1971: 138-141; Jeffreys M., 1973: 195; a more interesting approach to the issue has been made by Nørgaard, 1988-1989.

years of the spread of the Parry-Lord theories, identifying as “unwashed illiterates” the poets of many ancient and medieval poems, but they had been modified well before serious investigation of EMG poetry.¹⁴ Thus the deflation of early claims, a necessity of recent oral scholarship in other areas, is less vital here.

Questions of illiteracy and transitional texts may be dismissed by a brief comparison of cultural pressures at work in Yugoslavia between the wars with those in the world of the EMG poems, Palaiologan Byzantium and crusading states on Byzantine soil. The Yugoslav singer lived in an illiterate culture peripheral to a society of printing. His government was engaged in a literacy campaign, including wide circulation of printed texts of traditional oral songs. When a singer met such a text, he must have been impressed by its regular external format, page layout, script and orthography, as well as the text of the poem. It is not surprising that such volumes imposed on the singers the idea of a fixed text and undermined their creative recomposition.¹⁵

EMG manuscripts, however, were rare and probably costly. What is more, it is hard to see how they could have impressed anybody by their fixity, with no standardisation of binding, ruling, scribal hand or orthography. Equally, manuscripts of vernacular verse are more characterised by textual fluidity than by stability from copy to copy.¹⁶ In Yugoslavia, the fixity of the printed text was undermining oral poetics; in EMG it seems that the fluidity of oral tradition was invading the manuscript. At another level, literacy in Yugoslavia meant reading and writing a vernacular, not dissimilar to that of the songs, which was used for the written needs of a twentieth-century state. Literacy in the EMG world was concerned with ancient Greek or Latin or perhaps French, not vernacular Greek, and for comparatively few purposes.¹⁷ Thus this part of the analogy does not stand. There is no need to

¹⁴Deflation is already well under way in Jeffreys M., 1973: 166-174.

¹⁵Lord defines the context precisely (1960: 136-138).

¹⁶Obvious from the *apparatus criticus* of any poem surviving in more than one manuscript. A brief example is given in Jeffreys E. and M., 1971: 152-156.

¹⁷Beaton, 1989: 88-89 and 182, stresses that literacy in Greek had to be learned via the learned language, even in the Frankish Morea. How does he know?

assume illiteracy in EMG oral singers, or to deny the possibility of transitional texts between oral and literate modes of composition.

The later tendency of comparative research has been to transfer conclusions from the poet to the tradition. It is now plain that past formulaic poetry is mainly (in J.M. Foley's term) "oral-derived", not orally composed, and so oral-formulaic analysis is less used than before to judge the cultural circumstances of an individual poet (Foley, 1990: 5). But the method retains a more general validity. I know of no case where poetry proven formulaic in a statistically significant way has been found independent of a tradition of oral composition. Proof of the use of formulas establishes the existence (somewhere in the antecedents of the text for which the proof is made) of oral-formulaic composers, and opens up a new subject, the investigation of their oral performances on the basis of all available evidence, especially poems which they may have influenced. From this it may sometimes be possible to work back to analyse particular surviving poems, their connection with the tradition, even the background of their poets.

But in talking of significant percentages of formulas we have jumped ahead of the comparative model. It is time to concentrate on the formula, the strongest link between EMG poems and comparative traditions. What definition of the formula should be adopted? How should the percentage of formulas in a poem be evaluated? On this issue we must first examine the strong boost given to oral studies by Homeric scholarship, in spite of its limited applicability to other cases.

Insights from Yugoslavia have dominated Homeric scholarship since the war, with hundreds of books and articles. Their primacy is now, very properly, under challenge, particularly as they have not brought the revolutionary results once threatened: but the continuing importance of oral theories as a major framework for Homeric scholarship is not in question (Griffin, 1980: xiii-xvi; Lynn-George, 1988). Analysis of Homer has brought positive results over enjambement, formulas and themes, and also in the area of oral language—an insight not derived from Yugoslavia. Formulas and language are the chief Homeric points so far applied to EMG.

The Homeric hexameter is very complex, permitting several

different breaks, leaving a wide range of metrical cola for which phrases may be needed for a poem's major characters.¹⁸ For this reason Homer's predecessors developed complex systems of formulas. To prove their importance, Parry was able to draw up tables for phrases referring to many gods and heroes, each phrase often consisting of a noun plus one or more epithets. From these tables he defined two principles, *thrift* and *scope*. By *thrift*, he meant that Homer rarely has two phrases for the same character with identical metrical shapes and syntactical properties: the system has few duplicates. By *scope*, he meant that most of the possible formulas which could be demanded by metre and syntax for major characters are in fact found in the poems: the system covers most eventualities, making active use of that cover. Parry's tables are a qualitative proof that formulas in Homer form a system with a clear functional base, adding a new dimension to the discovery of repetitions in the Yugoslav songs.

Unfortunately, such qualitative proof has not been reproduced outside Homer. In other oral-formulaic poetry, perhaps because of the brevity or predictability of other metres, there seems less need for the *thrift* and *scope* of hexameter formulas. Outside Ancient Greek, research has settled, with more or less resignation, on repetition as the basic index of a phrase's formulaic status. Parry's analysis must now be judged specific to Homer and of little use in comparative work (Foley, 1990: 128 and n. 8). Other determinants of the formula, like assonance in French or alliteration in Anglo-Saxon, have not yet resulted in the systematic tabulation which Parry achieved. This has led to some misunderstanding and disappointment when those initiated into oral theories by Homer and Parry turn to medieval and modern traditions.

For formulaic definition and statistics, the parallel suggested in this article is not Homer but Old French, the tradition of the *chanson de geste*. Several factors justify this choice: the volume of poetry available for analysis; its date, just a century or two before the EMG poems; the invasion of Greek lands by French culture after the Fourth Crusade, which may have helped to preserve the EMG poems (see below); and most importantly, the existence of comprehensive lists of formulaic

¹⁸Parry, 1971: 1-190; methodology is refined and later work examined in Foley, 1990: 63-84, 121-157.

percentages made by easily transferable criteria, which were in fact adopted in studies made of EMG poems.

J.J. Duggan has achieved in Medieval French (and Spanish) the fullest formulaic analyses of which I am aware. He has used computer techniques in a complete study of more than a dozen long poems, and has published the results in a useful way (Duggan, 1966: 343-344; 1973: 29-30; cf. 1969). His definition of the formula is based simply on the repetition of a phrase to fill a hemistich of the metre. The most common formulas, like "li quens Rollant" and "sur l'erbe verte", would disappoint any Homerist; they are plain phrases which could recur in a poem by coincidence, the most obvious way of expressing the given idea in French. Duggan suggests extensions to Parry's idea of thrift through assonance, without making them part of his system (Duggan, 1966: 340-341; 1973: 200-202). In listing results, he sets a bar at around 20% of repetitions. Above 20%, he feels that he is dealing with genuine oral-formulaic material, while below 20%, literary imitation becomes more likely.¹⁹

Of the EMG poems examined, the *Chronicle of the Morea* and the *War of Troy* give figures well above 20%, and informal estimates suggest that most vernacular romances would exceed that figure.²⁰ However, high formula counts are not universal: the *Alexander* poem gives much lower results,²¹ and, on a quick estimate, I doubt if any of the Ptochoprodromic poems or any manuscript of *Digenis Akritis* would reach 20%. But the high percentages in some cases provide firm evidence that the repetitions are not accidents of style, but used in a formulaic frame of reference.²²

¹⁹The terminology of this judgement should probably now change in line with Foley's use of the word "oral-generated".

²⁰*Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* is the only romance likely to show a significantly lower figure by Duggan's criteria, by informal estimates, see n. 12 above.

²¹Analysis of the *Alexander* poem (ed. Reichmann, 1963) is tabulated in Jeffreys M., 1973: 189.

²²Let me explain what I mean by statistical evidence of the existence of formulas. If the phrases "Western Australia" and "New South Wales" were repeated twenty times each in a poem which otherwise had few repetitions, this would merely show that the text is about Australian states. Mere repetition of a phrase does not make it a formula. If, however, the two

But other issues arise beside statistics in dealing with formulas from the past. By definition, they reach us in written texts. It is obvious that formulas will not always have the same necessary function in writing as in the oral composition observed in Yugoslavia, for the writer (whether poet or scribe) is unlikely to have been recomposing before an audience like the Yugoslav poets. The technology of writing creates a possibility that the writer may abandon the oral-formulaic style altogether, and write the poem in a non-traditional way. Yet the survival of Homer and many other formulaic poems from around the world shows that not all writers have used this opportunity. What may be said about the function of formulas in written verse? Here again Homer is of little use, because of our ignorance of the context in which his epics were written down. The most apposite work is that of F.H. Bäuml in Medieval High German, and his conclusions too must be summarised in this discussion.²³

Bäuml writes as an early enthusiast for the oral theories now slightly modifying his initial claims. Without denying that poems from oral tradition may sometimes reach manuscript form without significant change in formulaic use, he feels that, in the German poems he analyses, formulaic function lies towards the other end of a continuum. Formulas, for those like the poet of the *Nibelungenlied*, are in essence a sign authenticating the genre in which they compose: by using them, they can refer honourably to the oral tradition and at the same time derive strength and authority from it. Instead of being an essential tool, without which performance would be impossible (as in full oral composition), for subsequent literate poets the formula becomes a

phrases were repeated twenty times in a poem with many other repetitions, so that, say, 30% of the whole consists of repeated phrases, then I would conclude that it is a formulaic poem, and that the two phrases mentioned are used as formulas too. Statistics show the approach of a poet to his phraseology: if his repetitions are statistically significant, then I would claim that he is employing them—even banal cases like those mentioned—as formulas.

The last phrase of the paragraph refers to the theories of F.H. Bäuml which are the next subject for discussion.

²³The review-article Bäuml, 1986, in which he examines his own work in connection with that of others, is more useful for comparative purposes than Bäuml, 1984.

stylistic element with specific positive connotations, placing a poem at a particular point in the hierarchy of literary creation.

Bäumli's work is of great relevance to EMG. Beaton used it to define a conscious technique of the poets of the romances (1989: 34, 175). For him, Greek poets did not slip into the formulaic style as a known form, probably the best available for lengthy narrative. He claims that the use of formulas was a conscious decision to refer to the authority of contemporary ballad-style poetry resembling Modern Greek folk-song. Consequently he recognises few of the poems' repetitions as oral formulas—only the rare parallel phrases between the medieval poems and the later ballad tradition (1989: 174).

But what of the thousands of other repetitions, some appearing in several texts, which put many EMG poems in the range of Duggan's statistics, and create, for me at least, *prima facie* evidence that they have a connection with narrative oral poems like those of Old French and many other traditions, ancient, medieval and modern? For Beaton, these phrases are not sufficiently memorable or distinctive to serve as formulas in a fully operative oral tradition.²⁴ He appears to offer two explanations for their existence: they are mutual references of a literary kind between the poets, following the example of comparable references in the twelfth-century learned novels and/or subsidiary examples in Bäumli's framework, supplementing somehow the few accurate references to the ballad tradition (Beaton, 1989: 177-178 and 175 respectively).

I confess that I find neither suggestion convincing. Surely effective literary references from one poem to another (and nothing we half-understand may be condemned as ineffective) need more memorable phrases than most of the repetitions found in these poems, or even in *Roland*? It seems strange to disqualify hundreds of phrases as not distinctive enough for oral formulas, and then interpret them as literary references. Moreover many repetitions are not made from one poem to others but within the same poem. How do these fit Beaton's proposals? What literary purpose is served when a bland phrase from one poem is repeated in another ten times? Above all, it seems an uneconomical

²⁴Beaton, 1980: 209, n. 10, in a form which would condemn the formulas of most medieval traditions; and 1989: 173.

argument to suggest that, after referring to an oral ballad tradition with a few of its formulas, the poets should supplement that reference (or show their literary cohesion) by hundreds of other literary references which—presumably by coincidence—can convince twentieth-century observers that they derive from a different, narrative-style, oral genre? Why not assume in the first place that the main oral reference of the poems is to a narrative tradition? I think it is difficult for Beaton to claim support for his proposal from the analysis of Bäumli, where patterns of influence and reference appear much more direct.

I would pay less attention than Beaton to the poets' conscious intentions. After all, as almost all wrote in a variant of the same style, with the decapentasyllable, mixed language and more or less use of formulas, it is hard to decide after half a millennium whether they did so by coincidence of conscious choice or by unconscious acceptance. The important point for me is that I can find no way of explaining the style without the hypothesis of a pre-extant genre, an oral form with some of the characteristics of the surviving poems. The general shape of the underlying oral tradition I regard as recoverable, by comparative methods, from analysis of the poems.

It is tempting to pick out different reactions to the proposed oral-formulaic style, ranging from the *Chronicle of the Morea*, which seems to follow given models quite faithfully, to *Kallimachos and Chryso-rhoe*, which gives an impression of much greater independence. From a twentieth-century viewpoint, it is an attractive hypothesis that the former poet (whatever his background and education) is using oral patterns of Greek in writing in a quite unsophisticated way, while the latter is closer to the Beaton school, "composing in the style" of an oral tradition: this idea is supported by the identity of the poet of *Kallimachos* and a preliminary estimate of the poem's formula count (see n. 12 above). But such thoughts are premature at this stage. The conclusions I draw for EMG from Bäumli's work are two: first, that observed repetitions are unlikely to be fully functional oral formulas;²⁵

²⁵Beaton, 1989: 175, wrongly believes that "the Jeffreys" regard all repetitions as traditional formulas. Among other statements of our position, most of an article of ours analyses phrases from the *War of Troy*, placing them on the continuum between traditional formulas and those made up specially for the translation, Jeffreys E. and M., 1979: 124-138.

second, that the poems probably point, consciously or unconsciously, to one or more lost traditions of formulaic poetry, similar in some major characteristics to the surviving poems themselves.

Beaton finds this argument cumbersome and uneconomic (1989: 172-173, 175). Starting from the ballad tradition, he has used several pieces of evidence to make the hypothesis that songs resembling Modern Greek folk-songs were already sung in the Byzantine twelfth century.²⁶ I agree with this conclusion, without accepting all his evidence.²⁷ That tradition will have continued uninterrupted till this day. But if, as this paper suggests, the EMG texts of the fourteenth century owe several formal characteristics to a *narrative* oral tradition of that time, we have to accept a second hypothetical tradition as well. Not only must we support the early appearance of the ballads, based on thin contemporary evidence (and the solid fact of their existence centuries later); we must also accept a simultaneous tradition with different characteristics of a narrative type. For this the "historical" evidence is no stronger than for the ballad tradition²⁸ (and survivals in later tradition much less²⁹). This paper has claimed strong indirect and comparative evidence for a narrative tradition through the EMG poems. But what about the duplication? Are there examples of two different oral traditions in the same linguistic community? Do the two specific proposed traditions find any parallel in comparative situations?

At the most general level, a glance at a broad survey of popular

²⁶Beaton, 1989: 231, n. 6, with items of evidence from the twelfth, fifteenth and seventeenth centuries.

²⁷I cannot, for example, accept a bland statement that *Digenis Akritis* Ms E is a twelfth-century text; Beaton, 1990: 176. Proof has been given that some of that poem's references accurately reflect twelfth-century conditions. But even S. Alexiou's edition, 1985, though much improved over its predecessors, provides a most inadequate narrative, which I, at least, feel must involve distortion of an original composition. Ms G is no better, in other ways. Perhaps the ballad style found in E, particularly by Fenik, 1991, shows a conscious reworking of a twelfth-century text into an appropriate form for the fifteenth-century audience for which E was written.

²⁸Though it is not completely lacking: see Jeffreys E. and M., 1986: 506-509.

²⁹Equally, the surviving "historical" tradition of folk-songs, in spite of its inadequacies, does have its similarities to the EMG tradition; see Beaton, 1980: 175, 178, and 1987.

literature will confirm that all over Europe, roughly from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, narrative-type poetry was giving way to ballads.³⁰ If one is searching for a fall-back model in a situation where popular culture is poorly documented, as in EMG, this succession of forms is at least as likely as the uninterrupted ballad tradition which Beaton assumes. Disputes continue in many literatures whether the narrative (often epic) poetry had direct oral roots, whilst the ballad is usually conceded an oral base. But comparative research needs a more precise focus. I would suggest the analogy of the Spanish epic and *romancero*.

Discussion of these two forms and the connections between them is still dominated by the late R. Menéndez Pidal, who over decades of research developed a full historical framework for the rise of this side of Spanish literature. One of its pillars was the theory of epic fragmentation, whereby many early examples of the *romancero* were formed from the decaying epic tradition. But the evidence is diverse and inconclusive.³¹ Subsequent work has concentrated on smaller problems more likely to be solved. *Romancero* research has turned to the collection and analysis of surviving ballads from around the Spanish-speaking world. Epic studies have examined the relation of epic to history and to chronicles likely to preserve epic verses.

If one combines surveys with different ideological perspectives, the picture given is approximately the following.³² An epic genre, with disputed oral connections, surfaced in the twelfth century and can be shown to have influenced chronicles until around the end of the

³⁰Entwhistle, 1939, especially 71, remains one of the best surveys for this purpose.

³¹See, for example, the following comment on this issue in one of the first applications of the Parry-Lord theories to Spanish: "So the debate has continued on a question for which, unfortunately, lack of documentary evidence has made it impossible to do more than hypothesise", Webber, 1951: 248.

³²My reading of the literature on the Spanish traditions has no more pretensions than that of an enthusiastic amateur with little access to material in Spanish. The texts which have been most influential on this survey are the overall picture given by Webber, 1986 and the careful individualist survey of Deyermond, 1971: 31-49 and 124-129, tempered by the pugnacious traditionalism of Armistead, 1979-1980 and 1986-1987.

fourteenth century. The beginning of the *romancero* is only dated by ballads referring to historical events, the earliest of which are at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Many would allow an undocumented earlier existence of the *romancero*. Most would accept some connection between the two genres, since there are some common stories and formula-type phrasing. But in general, the earlier narrative poems with their comparatively heavy formula count, and the *romancero*, a ballad form with a shorter and more dramatic format, are regarded as separate traditions which succeeded each other with some temporal overlap.

There are similarities here with the situation in EMG suggested by this paper, not only for the parallel existence of the two forms, but even in dates. Similar but more distant parallels may be found in other European literary histories. Thus as the conclusions of this paper tally with cultural changes at the wider European level, the hypothesis of two submerged EMG traditions seems hardly more difficult than one—and I would repeat that, in the circumstances, the assumed loss of some vernacular material is neither unlikely nor uneconomical.

Like formulaic thrift and scope, another of Parry's techniques little used outside Homeric studies³³ is his demonstration that the Homeric language is well adapted for use as the language of an oral tradition. Homeric language includes several dialect elements—Ionic, in general use when the poems were committed to writing, and at least two others, Aeolic and Arcado-Cypriot. Researchers once assumed that the epics were composed in an area where speakers of these three dialects were mixed. But even before Parry it was becoming plain that the dialect mixture was a unitary system, not a haphazard confusion of three or more forms. Parry's contribution added a functional purpose for the fusion of the dialects, with a convincing historical dimension.³⁴

He showed that pressures towards the mixed language arose from tension between the needs of oral recomposition on the one hand and changes in the language of the tradition on the other. Since the details

³³Note, however, the comments relevant to French and Spanish of Duggan, 1989: 133-134.

³⁴Parry, 1971: 325-364; for a brief, non-schematic survey of current issues see Janko, 1992: 8-19.

are complex and some parts of the picture clearer than others, I will try to explain the process schematically. The dialect of the tradition, many years before the writing down of the epics, was Aeolic. The oral poets had developed methods of hexameter composition, exploiting the possibilities of Aeolic to fill the various possible cola of the verse. But then, somehow, the dialect of the tradition changed to Ionic. Most Ionic forms suited the problems of composition in hexameters as well as the Aeolic. But in some cases the poets had to choose either to abandon parts of their system or to leave Aeolic archaisms in their poems. They seem generally to have chosen the latter course. We may dimly discern a similar earlier change from Arcado-Cypriot to Aeolic, which had led to the survival of Arcado-Cypriot archaisms. It must be stressed that fossilised forms of the older dialects are not found in separate passages but in the same lines, sometimes the same words, as Ionic. The result has been called an artificial oral *Kunstsprache* created in performance for composition in the hexameter, an inseparable part of epic style.

The decapentasyllable was as dominant in EMG verse as the hexameter in archaic Greek. While much more flexible than the hexameter, it does become quite rigid at the ends of its hemistichs. Applying Parry's methodology to these two areas, hypotheses have been made about problems faced by oral poets in the decapentasyllable, and predictions given of the metrical shape of grammatical forms needed to solve them. These are likely metrical patterns for archaisms preserved by the oral tradition. Preliminary testing of variants in surviving poems suggests significant agreement with the hypotheses made. It is certain that some linguistic variation is systematic, not haphazard (Jeffreys M., 1987). Archaism has not survived on the Homeric scale because of the different metrical conditions. But two interesting categories may be proposed. The first consists of a few formulas, especially μικροί τε και μεγάλοι and μετά χαράς μεγάλης, which sound like fossilised phrases of some age.³⁵ The second is a list of morphological doublets, rarely found together in spoken dialects of any period, which may reflect two stages in the history of the language. Usually one is metrically suited for the end of the first hemistich and the other for the second, and both

³⁵*Pace* Mohay, 1974-1975: 178-179, Eideneier, 1982: 302 and Beaton, 1989: 173.

forms are in regular use over a wide range of the poem's lexicon. Some poems contain a huge range of variants, many of which may be archaisms. Equally, no poem may be ascribed on linguistic grounds alone to a particular local dialect, though we know that some dialects already had currency at the time.

Thus omens are favourable for comparative research by Homeric methods. But more needs to be done before success is claimed. One interesting point is that there is some correlation between systematic linguistic variation and high formulaic percentages. Prominent on both counts are the translated romances and the *Chronicle of the Morea*. These less sophisticated texts have more intense and systematic linguistic variation than, for example, *Kallimachos and Chryssorrhoe* or *Belthandros and Chrysantza*, just as they have higher formulaic percentages. For me, it is again easiest to assume that they are uncritically following a style, while their more sophisticated colleagues are making a more conscious reference.

Long before any oral proposals, problems in the language of EMG poems were the subject of a long and abusive quarrel in the decades around the turn of the century (Jeffreys M., 1974b: 174-176). Later research, perhaps wary of the bitterness then aroused, has merely described the poems' varied morphology in a few stereotyped pages of each edition, creating an impression of normalcy. But before such variation is accepted as an EMG characteristic needing no explanation, we must remember that the late Byzantine period is one of the darkest in the history of the Greek language. No serious historical framework has been constructed within which to place the language of particular poems. Robert Browning's surveys of medieval Greek recognise the problem, without suggesting a solution in oral tradition (1978; 1983: 81-83). No other current research of which I am aware has attempted to integrate the usage of the EMG texts into a credible history of the late medieval phase of the language.

Linguistic archaism, combined with the history of the decapentasyllable, may point to a long history for the hypothetical tradition. It has been suggested elsewhere that oral use of the metre predated its first surviving examples, the imperial laments of 912 and the spring song recorded later as established imperial ceremonial (Jeffreys M., 1974a: 168-170). Many details of the learned use of the

metre, from these first examples till the twelfth century, suggest that it was a popular metre, often used instead of prose as it imposed no stylistic constraints, sometimes for simple works for half-educated patrons. On the oral history of the decapentasyllable before 912 (maybe involving an associated narrative tradition), only speculation is possible; but J. Koder (1983) has found enough examples of the decapentasyllable shape in early *kontakia* to allow a suspicion that the metre could be heard well before 912: decapentasyllables in the time of Heraklios, even of Justinian, cannot be ruled out.

Another characteristic of EMG texts may be found only in the manuscripts, or at least the *apparatus criticus* of an edition. The copyists of manuscripts containing EMG material do not transcribe their models with word-for-word accuracy. In nearly every line, nearly every manuscript makes at least one change. Sometimes one formula is substituted for another, but more often the difference is a trivial linguistic point, profoundly irritating for editors of critical texts, who often have to decide between almost identical readings. Some have seen in these differences evidence that copies were not made from a written model, but from separate oral dictations (Trypanis, 1963; 1981: 535-543). This is unlikely in most cases, if not all. Variations in nearly every line of a text are often balanced by accurate reflection of the general shape of hundreds of lines in succession, allowing an editor to print the manuscripts in parallel with hardly a break—an unexpected feature in an orally recomposed poem. Equally, claims about the specific oral sources of individual poems are less frequent now than in the early stages of the oralist debate.³⁶

The copyists' attitudes are different from those shown for classical texts, whose wording is given much more respect. Even copyists of hagiographical works and chronicles, where changes are frequent, do not make the continuous variations visible in EMG.³⁷ It would be interesting to know whether vernacular texts have different, less competent scribes, or whether the same copyists adjust their attitudes

³⁶Parry and Lord, of course, first met oral poetry in a context of dictation, and it is natural that that mode predominated in early proposals based on their theories: see Foley, 1990.

³⁷See, in general, Beck, 1961, especially 470-493.

according to the material to be copied. My impression is that the second situation is more common, but unfortunately, in the present state of EMG manuscript studies, this is mere speculation.

No less speculative, in my view, is Beaton's explanation of the manuscript variations (1989: 178-179). He assumes that copying of EMG material was a private activity without financial reward, and notes that the later Cretan dramatist Foskolos copied out a predecessor's work. Hence he claims the copyists as apprentice poets, who made experimental changes in writing versions of others' poems, thus practising for independent composition. Beaton's proposal has little supporting evidence, direct or comparative. Moreover it cannot explain the beginning of the tradition (when there was nothing to copy) whilst providing plenty of practised poets in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when manuscripts were more plentiful but few fresh poems of this kind were written (Chatzigiakoumis, 1977: 247-248). I still find it easier to accept that scribes recognised in these texts a style which they knew from oral sources, and so included in their copying small-scale elements of oral-style recomposition.³⁸

In this connection I should like to include a methodological parallel. Recent developments in medieval textual studies on Western Europe have led to a nexus of attitudes sometimes called the New Philology.³⁹ Its basic tenet is that manuscripts have different cultural connotations from printed books, but that sometimes divisions in modern disciplines prevent us from treating the manuscript as a whole with a complex meaning in which all elements share. A particular concern is textual variation. A phrase of B. Cerquiglini has become a catch-cry of the New Philology: "Or l'écriture médiévale ne produit pas de variantes, elle est variance".⁴⁰

EMG scholarship is even more in need of this message than its Western equivalent. One thing we need to recognise is that the critical text, still an essential of post-Gutenberg civilisation, destroys the

³⁸Jeffreys E. and M., 1971: 153-155; Jeffreys M., 1973: 194; Jeffreys E. and M., 1986: 534-537; but *pace* Agapitos and Smith, 1991.

³⁹The best entrée to the subject is a volume of the periodical *Speculum*, especially Nichols, 1990, Wenzel, 1990 and Fleischmann, 1990.

⁴⁰"So medieval writing does not produce variants, it is variance", Cerquiglini, 1989: 111.

cultural context in which medieval poems communicated with their audience. We must avoid the blinkers of printing by paying more attention to all aspects of the manuscripts which preserve our texts.⁴¹ We need general studies of them in the context of all the Greek manuscripts in the relevant period. We have, in fact, two advantages over our western colleagues: the number of Greek manuscripts containing vernacular material is quite small, while there has been much investigation of Greek classical and religious manuscripts, with facsimiles available for comparative purposes. I would suggest that EMG studies have much to learn from the New Philology, and perhaps also something to contribute.

A surprising suggestion of this paper has been that translations from French are good reflections of the EMG narrative tradition, while the best of all may be the *Chronicle of the Morea*, an anti-Byzantine, anti-Orthodox poem. Is this not a contradiction in terms? To answer this objection we need a parallel example of written preservation of popular culture in a colonial environment—as the Principality of the Morea was. I have chosen an extreme parallel, the Xhosa people of South Africa. The only preserved poem of Ntsikana, the earliest named Xhosa praise poet, is a Christian hymn using the traditional techniques of eulogistic oral poems for chiefs and ancestors, which have been well studied by J. Opland (Gérard, 1971: 31-35; Jordan, 1958b; Opland, 1983). Among the next dated Xhosa works, beside Xhosa versions of the Bible, is Tiyo Soga's translation of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Xhosa oral tradition helped in the translation, recognising the exaggerated embodiments of good and evil and vivid, colourful narrative. In fact *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a key book in African literature: by 1923, 33 different African versions had been made (Wilson, 1926; Gérard, 1990: 63 n. 4). The Xhosa version, says the Xhosa novelist and literary historian A.C. Jordan, had "almost as great an influence on the Xhosa language as the Authorised Version of the Bible upon English" (Jordan, 1958a: 113).

A glance at any survey of African literature shows that the Xhosa experience is not unusual (e.g. Gérard, 1981 and 1990; Andrzejewski *et*

⁴¹I am plainly not alone in feeling that this is a weakness of Beaton, 1989: see Agapitos and Smith, 1991.

al., 1985). The only written access to nineteenth-century (and often early twentieth-century) forms of many languages is through Christian, usually Protestant, texts. In many areas, these provide standardised forms of the local language and its orthography, and have exerted enormous influence. The Christianisation of linguistic and literary history imported a foreign ideological framework into local African tradition. However, in other respects, the reflection of local forms is usually close. The missionaries wanted their translations used, and so they strove to get them right, with an enthusiasm for the vernacular like that of Luther. There is a vast literature comparing the purposes and methods of missionaries and anthropologists: this is one point at which their interests converge in accuracy of observation and recording.⁴²

In an African colony the strengths of the two competing cultures—European colonial and local African—are very unequal. In the Morea, there was comparative cultural parity, unbalanced by local Western military and administrative control. I would propose a mild variant of colonialist analysis for some EMG texts. There is a persistent, occasionally obtrusive Western input into their content and ideology.⁴³ As patrons, the Westerners had religious and other ideological purposes external to the Greek tradition. On the other hand, like missionaries, they had an interest in the accurate reproduction of all other features of the popular culture of their Greek subjects, if they wanted the texts disseminated and their ideological point made to a large audience. They may have based their patronage closely on Greek oral forms, leaving us scope for their reconstruction. This hypothesis seems to fit the situation we have examined, providing a reason why works with western connections seem to show a high degree of the features identified here as belonging to a Greek narrative oral tradition. Above all—and here we diverge from the African parallel—the Westerners would not be influenced by the Byzantine learned tradition, which continued to suppress or modify the products of its popular culture.

Learned Greek concealment of non-learned forms did not stop at the end of Byzantium. More than three centuries later we may observe

⁴²For one recent example see Van der Geest, 1990.

⁴³See Jeffreys E., forthcoming.

another likely parallel to the EMG situation. The ballads of Greek folk-song were not first described and published by Greek scholars. The Western Europeans' interest in this phenomenon and their consequent collecting of songs both predated and inspired the first such Greek activities, as recently shown in detail by A. Politis (1984). I would suggest that we may see in Politis's western travellers and early collectors some parallel to the activities of the unknown western patrons of the *Chronicle of the Morea* and other EMG poems.

This paper has supported the study of EMG poetry by analogy with parallels in different languages and at different dates. Suggestions have been made for the solution of a wide range of its problems. At one level, as in the introduction and the last paragraph, this involves diachronic study of the Greek learned tradition, and an estimate of the distortions it probably made in written records of Byzantine oral culture. At other levels, non-Greek parallels have been proposed to suggest frameworks missing from Greek sources. I have reported comparisons with Yugoslavia in the nineteen thirties on details of an oral tradition, and with the *chanson de geste* in twelfth-century France over statistical evaluation of formulas. More research is needed in the use of Homeric methods to interpret mixed oral language and associated archaism, and the German analysis of the post-oral function of the formula. Preliminary comparisons were made with Spanish culture for the succession and overlap of different oral traditions, with the principles of New Philology over manuscript studies, and with a South African example of colonialist distortion. Specific points have also been suggested where parallels break down and analogies must be rejected. The illiteracy of the Yugoslav bards, probably predicated on a print culture, and the qualitative definition of Homeric formulas, probably specific to the hexameter, should not be used in medieval studies.

The resulting picture shows a narrative Greek oral tradition in the decapentasyllable which left firm but indirect signs of its existence in surviving EMG texts. Its oral performances would have been longer than the average modern folk-song, and used many hemistich formulas of a narrative type, not the less direct generative patterns of the ballad. The language will have shown systematic variation, like that obvious in the *Chronicle of the Morea*. These were the characteristics of a style

so widespread and authoritative that it attracted imitation by nearly all surviving EMG texts, and had strong influence on the copyists of their manuscripts. The more sophisticated poets avoided full use of oral stylistic features less appropriate to writing (especially constant repetition and variable language). The unsophisticated used the oral style almost unchanged. Some of the latter were under a western patronage which probably promoted accurate reproduction of oral style, partly to compensate for a non-Greek ideological colouring in sponsored poems, partly through ignorance of any other Greek form, especially the rules of the learned tradition.

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A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE STUDY OF THE GREEK PRESS IN AUSTRALIA

Introduction

The press (newspapers and periodicals), like other forms of mass communication, is a social phenomenon, in direct relationship with the social conditions of its environment. As such it can be neither autonomous nor independent and unaffected by the rules and other factors which characterise a social system. It is self-evident that changes in social conditions also exert changes on the press (content, attitude, etc.).¹ Therefore, the press like other social phenomena, has both relativity and historicity and as a consequence it is impossible to consider it out of its social and historical context.

On the other hand, the press is a complex phenomenon. It constitutes the final product of a series of factors: technological, economic, political, etc. and is an industrial product of a multi-faceted process while, at the same time, it has cultural and intellectual dimensions. It is a medium of political and social activity and sometimes a haven for motivating and mobilising the masses.

For these reasons this is where the role and the power of the press lie, because ideas published in the press can acquire considerable influence and, as a result, the press can become a central social force with the ability to pull masses of anonymous individuals in its wake, to pursue the same ideal or even be drawn to the same pitfall.

The press of the Greeks of the diaspora² and, therefore, the press of the Greeks in Australia does not lack this influential role. On the contrary, just as the diaspora press has held a special position in the

¹On the influence of society on the press and *vice versa* see, for instance, Zioutos, 1954: 15; Brown, 1962: 69-70; Clark, 1972: 3-8, 10; Holmes, 1986: 1; Stangos, 1991: 273.

²See especially Petrakakos, 1921: 65-87; Mayer, 1957-1960: 1. 9-16, 285-291, 305-308; 2. 305-320; *Ο Κρίκος* (The Link), 1960: 21-52; Karykopoulos, 1984: ch. 1; Kanarakis, 1989: 175-177, notes 1, 4, 5, 7 [bibliography].