

FOLEY, JOHN MILES. *Immanent Art. From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991. xiv+278 pages. Appendix of translations of two Kraljević Marko songs, bibliography, index. Hardcover US\$39.95 (plus 20% for orders from outside the US); ISBN 0-253-32216-2.

Basing this book on his investigations in his prior work *Traditional Oral Epic* (1990), Foley indicates at the outset that he departs from other approaches to oral traditional art in his understanding of structure, i.e. the phraseology and narrative dynamics typical of oral traditional epic. At the core of his thesis lies his argument that the often-quoted dichotomies, like mechanism versus art, obscure our interpretations of oral traditional work; the advocates of the "mechanist" view imprison the poet in his compositional idiom, and those of the "aesthetic" view look at the work of art through the lens of literary values and assumptions. Seeing oral traditional and literary works of art from the perspective of such polarities, or others like inherent and conferred meaning or connotative and denotative meaning, would seriously jeopardize the progression of the theory of verbal art. Foley therefore proposes to envisage such dichotomies as complementary couplets which allow the analyst to penetrate the aesthetics and meaning in oral traditional works, thus aiming to answer the question of "how" a work conveys meaning, rather than answering that of "what" that work conveys.

What helps him throughout the book to fulfill his mission is "traditional referentiality," a concept which encapsulates his assumption that the structure of an oral work of art summons certain meanings by virtue of its traditionality. The concept crucially includes an extratextual dimension, which comprises the personal, but more significantly the extrapersonal, collective knowledge that the members of a community share. It is a complex of unpronounced norms, beliefs, expectations, conventions, and the like which are vitalized by oral works. This mode of signification, peculiar to oral traditional work, Foley calls *metonymy*, to designate the part-whole relationship of the tradition-bound structures and the meaning generated.

His five-step "reading program" for comparative investigation of structure, which includes the principles of text-dependence, oral or oral-derived provenance, genre-dependence, tradition-dependence, and synchronic and diachronic context, appears to be a sound suggestion. The fourth of these principles is central to Foley's analyses and is worth mentioning here since it calls for the recognition of the inherent differences—and similarities—among traditions, and necessarily involves an appreciation of oral traditional works in the context of the language and the community where they are produced. One wonders, however, how an analyst could possibly succeed in a diachronic and a truly synchronic comparison, as he suggests. It is crucial to realize that in the domain of linguistics, from which Foley has borrowed these terms, they designate quite distinct areas of study, and require a different analytical apparatus, however complementary the fields of study they designate. Unless his suggestion is a rough approximation of synchronic and diachronic studies of language, it is unfortunate from a linguistic perspective since it is next to impossible to attain a rigorous diachronic comparison of meters, phraseologies, and narrative patterns as well as a meticulous synchronic study of such.

Foley's attempt in chapter 2 is praiseworthy, where he calls attention to the role of the listener/reader in understanding an oral traditional work. Basing his project on Wolfgang Iser's "Rezeptionästhetik," he proposes that analysts take into consideration

the reader's individual history, attitudes, and values, as well as the shared body of knowledge that is his and the community's inheritance. This kind of extratextual knowledge, he convincingly argues, crucially monitors the audience's interpretations and guides it to fill in the gaps of indeterminacy in the text. It follows that the poet's role is that of providing clues for the audience to invoke its hidden store of knowledge, while that of the audience is to pick up and rationalize the cues to rebuild the text against the background of its inherent knowledge. The underlying assumption of this argument is that an oral work of art, as opposed to a literary work, cannot exist independently of the audience, and that the oral poetic activity is communal in character.

In chapters 3-6, Foley provides the readers with a myriad of examples of tradition-dependent structures, such as narrative patterns, phraseology, themes, motifs, and figures from the Serbo-Croatian Moslem and Christian epic tradition, the twenty-fourth book of the *Iliad*, and *Beowulf*, respectively, to explain how such patterns function as signals, or "cognitive categories," to invoke extratextual implications. Especially worth mentioning is his deep understanding and appreciation of the traditional context that forms the background of Serbo-Croatian songs, and his successful treatment of Homeric epithets, which, he satisfactorily argues, are not used merely for metrical convenience as Parry has said, but are functional in appealing to the traditional hoard of knowledge of the audience. A further point which Foley has brought to attention for reconsideration is the "Beasts of Battle" in *Beowulf*, which he explains cannot be accounted for satisfactorily if it is seen as a theme used for its utility. Just as in the traditional patterns of Serbo-Croatian tradition and the *Iliad*, this pattern, he argues, is metonymic, setting up "channels of perception through which reality can be seen." Not losing sight of the issue of aesthetics, Foley frequently injects his opinions on this matter into the examples he cites. His basic argument is that aesthetic experience in oral traditional work takes shape on the foundation formed jointly by the texts and the extratextual associations implied by them. The talent of the poet is not to be found in the originality with which he composes his song, but in how effectively he "orchestrates" the traditional structures to activate the inherent, shared, traditional knowledge of his audience.

On the whole, Foley's book is based on a good balance between theory and practice and provides a fresh treatment of controversial and much-discussed issues; it also offers original material from a variety of traditions along with their translations, as well as answers to a wide range of questions—including the role of structure in conveying meaning, how aesthetics should be viewed in oral traditional work, and the differences between literary and oral traditional works. The book should not only be of interest to scholars and students of folklore and especially oral tradition, but also to readers of language/general linguistics, who would find in it insights into the speech-act theory, and implications pertaining to the role of language in shaping the perception of reality. Careful readers could trace the basic argument of the author to the Prague school of linguistics; reflection on his definition of the extratextual and extrapersonal context should show that it is a body of knowledge which has only a potential existence analogous to *langue*, and that the poet's activities of enlivening this body of knowledge and embellishing the performance are analogous to *parole*. Thus, *langue*, i.e., the hoard of traditional knowledge shared by the members of a specific community, ensures the interpretation of a specific oral work of art, i.e., *parole*. Readers who are familiar with structuralism—especially in the sense of Lévi-Strauss—and the Russian school of formalism might be attracted to the book by its title. There is hardly any trace of the thoughts of the structuralist school as such, but one might find some insights of

the formalist school in the book.

Deniz ZEYREK  
Middle East Technical University  
Ankara, Turkey

NØJGAARD, MORTEN, JOHAN DE LYLIUS, IØREN PIØ, BENGT HOLBEK, eds.  
*The Telling of Stories: Approaches to a Traditional Craft. A Symposium.* Odense, Denmark: Odense University Press, 1990. 192 pages.  
Paper 200,00 Dan. Kr.; ISBN 87-7492-748-5.

This slim volume contains the presentations given at the 13th International Symposium of the Centre for the Study of Vernacular Literature in the Middle Ages (Odense, 21-22 November 1988); its theme was the performer and his craft.

L. Röhrich's "Tiererzählungen und ihr Menschenbild" [Animal stories and their images of human life] (13-33) is a casual, easy-going interpretation of several tales of various genres which sides with the long-held view that many folktales portray the weak gaining over the strong. In his "Moral Attitudes in Traditional Narratives about Childlessness and Childbirth" (35-46), B. af Klintberg offers a "research program" for the investigation of differences in the telling of the same tale-type by male and female narrators; his examples are four versions of the tale-type AaTh 755 and several versions of a joke about adultery. In the presentation "How Storytellers Interpret the Snakeprince Tale (AaTh 425, 430, 432, 441)," L. Dégh brings several versions of this tale-type as told recently in Hungary by her long-time narrators. In the reviewer's opinion, the texts show a clear loss of fairy-tale style and the strong influence of mass literature and electronic media narrative productions—never mind the degree of literacy of the narrators. TV does not demand literacy, and style, apparently, trickles down. H. El-Shamy offers in "Oral Traditional Tales and the Thousand Nights and a Night" (63-117) a concise review of the intellectual attitudes of the local Egyptian literary circles to oral literature and to the collecting and publishing of folktales from the eighteenth century till the recent academic efforts. In doing this he displays a broad basis of learning, for which the scholarly community is very much indebted to him. In the second part of his paper, El-Shamy compares two stories from the *Arabian Nights* (versions of AaTh 676 and AaTh 980, respectively) with their life on the recent Egyptian scene and in the Egyptian contemporary oral folk tradition. One may not always agree with El-Shamy's classifications of the tales, but there can be no doubt about the erudition that he displays. The most interesting part of the paper is the description of the Egyptian literary attitudes of the twentieth century that repeat those of the Romantic period in Europe in the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries, and of an Egyptian, U.S.-based scholar finding it interesting to pick up today an argument from the early thirties with WESSELSKI (1931). Apparently, no jumps are possible and everybody has to have his own experience. H.-J. Uther's "Hans im Glück (KHM 83). Zur Entstehung, Verbreitung und Darstellung eines populären Märchens" [Lucky Hans (KHM). Study of the genesis, distribution and graphic representation of a popular fairy tale] (119-64) is a very learned history of the literary fortunes of this story (AaTh 1415) in word and picture, which Uther considers to be a literary and not an oral product. The last two papers, the crisp style of which is a welcome dessert after the heavy main course of the two previous papers, address themselves to Hans Christian Andersen's work. B. Holbek, "H.Ch.A.'s