

Nevertheless, when one reads that “once the nodes are activated, the work issues forth with surpassing communicative economy” (54), or that “communication within a performance tradition is uniquely economical” (55), one is left wondering whether such economy is more hypothetical than measurable, and, indeed, whether it even stands on the same plane as the other two items. (Again, on page 127, communicative economy is vaguely described as something engendered by the performance keys and metonymic signals.)

Foley talks time and again about the “intersemiotic translation from experience to text” (viii), as well as the “intersemiotic translation from event to object” (18). More appropriately, however, intersemiotic translation should be understood in the sense defined by Roman Jakobson, as “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems” (JAKOBSON 1959). Foley is of course using the term in a more vague and generalized way. But why not simply use “intralingual translation”—the interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language (the oral by the written)?

One might also take issue with Foley’s choice of a less-than-informative title. Since such a great part of the book deals with the ways in which traditional oral integers persist in textual cenotaphs, and since in any case Foley is most perceptive in his discussion of textualization, one cannot help but wish that at least some reference had been made in the title (even just as a subtitle) to the “text,” to tip the balance away from the emphasis on the “singer” and the “performance.”

For all this, *The Singer of Tales in Performance* must be adjudged a groundbreaking work of scholarship that clears the path for solving the perennial problem of the interpretation of oral-derived texts. In arguing for a pluralistic approach, for the use of a spectrum model and a syncretic poetics, Foley has dismantled the binary model of orality versus literacy, moving this age-old debate onto a new plane of discussion. The book will be of immense value to students of folklore and literature, and to those seriously interested in the interface of the two traditionally divided disciplines.

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Leo Tak-hung CHAN
Lingnan College
Hong Kong

LORD, ALBERT BATES. *The Singer Resumes the Tale*. Edited by Mary Louise Lord. Myth and Poetics Series. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995. xiii + 258 pages. Frontispiece, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$43.95; ISBN 0-8014-3103-4.

“This is Albert B. Lord’s book,” says its editor in the preface (xi). Most of it was written by Lord himself, and Mary Louise Lord made every attempt to bring it close to what her husband had planned. The book consists of ten chapters, two of which were unpublished lectures (chapters 4 and 8). Three other chapters (5, 7, and 10) consist of lectures and parts of lectures that Lord regarded as preparation for the work he long intended as a sequel to *The Singer of Tales*.

The book is a clear reflection of Lord’s belief in literary criticism based closely upon the text. This is discernible in the meticulous textual analyses of passages from Anglo-Saxon

poetry and South Slavic oral epics, and in the uncomplicated terminology he makes use of in his exposition. The text-based approach he advocates throughout the book also becomes the tool by which he redefines notions like “traditionality,” “theme,” “formula,” and “transitional texts” in a way that leaves no question as to their meaning and role in the field of oral traditional literature.

Chapter 1, “The Nature and Kinds of Oral Literature,” commences with Lord’s attempt to resolve the paradox of “oral literature” (1). He expresses his belief that carefully structured oral verbal expression qualifies as literature fully as much as carefully constructed verbal expression does. What is needed are criteria for setting forth the particulars of the poetics of oral traditional literature and of written poetics. The most important aspect of the former is traditionality, which is “a depth of meaning set into [oral] literature, from its origin, by previous generations” (1). It is a dynamic and ongoing process that needs to be investigated in both the text and the context so that the singers and the listeners, and even the settings where the singing takes place, are not lost sight of.

The second chapter, “Oral Traditional Lyric Poetry,” seeks to understand the composition and transmission of lyric poetry. Among the examples Lord refers to are lyric texts from Milman Parry’s collection of South Slavic oral traditional songs and Latvian *dainas*. These are short nonnarrative songs that help Lord investigate textuality, which he sees as a means to determine whether songs are fixed textually and hence memorized or are the result of composition in performance. The degree of verbal correspondence among the variants of a theme in the songs is the criterion he uses in this pursuit. Lord finds that traditional oral songs consist of a stable core of one or more groups of lines linked in various ways. The ways they are linked and the content of the songs are traditional, providing a plan for the singer that is easily followed. This leads Lord to conclude that lyric songs are not memorized but easily recalled when a mass of interrelated motifs and their formulaic expressions long present in the tradition are brought to the singer’s consciousness. Thus even short lyric songs cannot be said to be fixed textually, but are composed in performance.

In chapter 3, “Homer and the Muses,” Lord explains his understanding of Homer and Homeric poetry in the form of a response to Paolo VIVANTE (1982). Using for examples words (e.g., epithets) and combinations of words (formulas and themes) in the arming scenes of the *Iliad*, and comparing their use and function to those in *Beowulf*, he argues convincingly that such devices are part of an inherited poetic language adapted to metrical utterance. This makes Homer an oral poet who creates a new song at each retelling. Also mentioned in this chapter is the mythic pattern of the almost-death of the hero in the *Iliad*, which also exists in South Slavic epics and in *Beowulf*. Without noticing such latent themes in Homeric poems, Lord says, one cannot appreciate Homer’s mastery of his song.

In chapter 4, “*Beowulf* and Oral Epic Tradition,” Lord shows that *Beowulf* is a product of oral tradition. This he does by examining its subject matter—which, with its allusions to Germanic history and legend, is certainly that of a traditional tale—through a search for the mythic pattern of the monster-slayer (showing it at base to be an Indo-European myth) and an analysis of the song of creation (associating it with Judaeo-Christianity). The poet of *Beowulf*, Lord writes, was an oral traditional poet/singer who had been influenced by biblical stories, probably because of living in a monastery. The analysis of *Beowulf* gives Lord another chance to repeat his belief that tradition is what singers before and contemporaneous with another singer/performer bequeath to him (101), and that this is neither improvisation, memorization, nor imitation.

Chapter 5, “The Formula in Anglo-Saxon Poetry,” and chapter 6, “The Theme in Anglo-Saxon Poetry,” examine the degree to which oral traditional style manifests itself in *Beowulf* and other Anglo-Saxon poetry. Lord redefines the concepts of the formula and the

theme while he argues against criticisms of the adaptation of Parry's definitions of these terms to Anglo-Saxon poetics. In response to FRY's proposals regarding the formula (1967, 1968b, 1981), he reiterates Parry's definition and gives a detailed explanation of what Parry meant by the term. He emphasizes the importance of "regular use" and "essential idea," which Fry discards, and explains why he disagrees with Fry's limiting of the formula to a half-line. In his discussion of the concept of the theme he again addresses himself particularly to FRY (1968a), arguing, on the basis of Anglo-Saxon and South Slavic poems, that the concept of the theme involves a sense of textuality and a crucial degree of verbal correspondence (158).

Chapter 7, "Textual Stability, Variation, and Memorization," deals with the textuality of ballads. Referring to several variants of "Barbara Allen" in BRONSON (1962) and a Serbo-Croatian ballad from the Milman Parry Collection, Lord shows that ballads display a sense of textuality in that they have a recognizable text and that the singers recognize this fact. Citing examples of the use of language in the variants, he proves that this does not imply the memorization of a fixed text, contrary to what JABBOUR (1969) seems to think. In chapter 8, "Rebuttal," Lord replies to criticisms by GREEN (1990) that Parry and Lord himself erred methodologically in applying their findings from Yugoslavia to the Homeric epic; Lord argues that their work offers verifiable evidence regarding a living oral tradition that is relevant to the study of another oral tradition. In his replies to other criticisms Lord turns to a different tradition (that of the Solomon Islands) for examples of the ritual preparatory to the composition of a poem, and says that the traditionality of poetry is more pertinent than its orality, but that both aspects must be understood. This chapter ends with various considerations often brought up by critics, namely, the tests of orality by formula density, thematic composition, unperiodic enjambment, and thrift.

In chapter 9, "Two Versions of the Theme of the Overnight Visit in the Weddings of Smailagić Meho," Lord analyzes the function of theme as illustrated in Avdo Mededović's epic song and shows the range of stability and variation within a theme in the repertoire of a highly talented poet. In the last chapter, "The Transitional Text," Lord considers various kinds of evidence for the existence of transitional texts. He identifies Italo Calvino's tales as such, since Calvino consciously used and manipulated traditional material without making up anything new (except the final outcome).

The Singer Resumes the Tale is an extremely enlightening book that offers a thorough analysis of the nature of oral traditional literature. It provides the reader with an unparalleled analysis of oral tradition from Homer to the twentieth century by an excellent researcher and scholar, one with a deep appreciation of what an oral poet actually does and of how history and his setting shape his art. It has much to offer anyone interested in such poetry, and is certain to be of interest to the literary critic and researcher of oral tradition already familiar with Lord's revolutionary work.

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Deniz ZEYREK

Middle East Technical University

Ankara, Turkey

JAPAN

GONICK, GLORIA. *Splendor of the Dragon: Costumes of the Ryukyu Kingdom*.

With an essay by Ichiko Yonamine. Los Angeles: Craft and Folk Art Museum, 1995. 48 pages. Map, illustrations, exhibition checklist, bibliography, glossary. Paper, n.p.

Splendor of the Dragon is the catalogue for an exhibition of Okinawan costumes held at the Craft and Folk Art Museum of Los Angeles from November 1995 through January 1996. The beautifully illustrated volume introduces the cultural background of these costumes with a condensed history of the Ryukyu Kingdom's cultural contacts with Imperial China, Southeast Asia, Korea, and also Japan. Despite its brevity, this history describes some of the more painful moments in the islands' relationship with Japan. The publication of this small book is thus most timely, as it comes at the historical moment when Okinawa is calling attention to the unequalness of its relationship with Japan and, through her, with the United States. It is a gentle and yet clear reminder that (to take just one example) claims on Okinawa as a source of Japanese culture are often close to attempts at appropriation. Okinawa's position at the intersection of various cultures has shaped its own culture into what people call a *chanpuruu*, "a mixture of various elements" (23), like a dish consisting of heterogeneous ingredients. *Splendor of the Dragon* is an effort to increase appreciation for this mixture and explain how it emerged through a historical process of borrowing and interchange with the neighboring countries. Although some of the borrowing occurred under politically humiliating conditions, it led to a peak of artistic and technical sophistication that is a tribute to the distinctive forms of Ryukyuan expression.

This is a straightforward publication, not weighed down by heavy scholarly discussion, and yet it is a solid guide to Ryukyuan forms and feelings that is written with great empathy for the people and their culture. A short section guides the reader to appreciating the materials and techniques of dyeing. There is also a handy glossary of Okinawan terms. After the pleasure of reading this book the reviewer only regrets that he did not have a chance to see the exhibit.

Peter KNECHT