

especially for this anthology.) To give the reader an overall history of the development of international folkloristics, Dundes selects essays written mostly by European scholars, some of whom are from small countries such as Ireland, Estonia, Latvia, and Finland. According to Dundes, smaller countries have often feared the loss of their national identity, and nationalistic and patriotic scholars have felt the need to preserve as much of their heritage as possible.

Dundes's anthology is a great reference source, especially for folklorists in countries such as Vietnam. With the support of Ford Foundation, the Vietnam Folklore Institute is making an effort to translate a number of important essays by international folklorists on the theories and methods of folklore from various languages into Vietnamese for folklore students, researchers, and faculty at Vietnamese educational and research institutions. When we finally get competent translations of those essays, which can be used as reference works, interested scholars will be able to better analyze Vietnamese folklore material, and will be able to write a standard course book for undergraduate and graduate folklore students. So far, Vietnamese researchers have been influenced by Marxist dogma and scholars of the former Soviet Union. But they lack the necessary reference works on folklore written in Western countries such as Germany, France, England, Denmark, Finland, and Hungary.

This anthology is also a good source for people who intend to write books on international folklore in their own languages. Anyone planning such a project will find suggestions for further reading in the history of folkloristics at the end of Dundes's book.

What we do not see in the anthology (except for an article by Kenneth Goldstein) are essays by American folklorists on oral-formulaic composition and theoretical issues of folklore as a performance; nor are there essays on festivals, material folklore, and mythology. Dundes's intention, however, was not to make an exhaustive anthology, but what he has presented us with is a book that can be used as a practical reference for the teaching and studying of theories, fields, and genres of folklore.

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FOLEY, JOHN MILES. *Homer's Traditional Art*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999. xviii + 363 pages. Appendices, bibliography, index, and index locorum. Cloth US\$48.50; ISBN 0-271-01870-4.

Readers of Foley's article "Oral poetry" in the latest volume of the *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* (*EM*, Vol. 10, 2000) know about the author's standing as one of the most proficient scholars of the Homeric question. He is able to quote about twenty larger publications of his own concerning his field. Foley, who is the founding editor of the periodical *Oral Tradition* and director of the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition at the University of Missouri-Columbia, is asking again, "How far were the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* rooted in oral tradition?" His account is in effect a survey of the important steps forward that oral poetry research has made in recent years. Homeric epics amount to a "cultural encyclopaedia" but with Foley's approach the point is another one.

In a previous publication, FOLEY (1991) refers to Homer's "traditional art" as "verbal art," and as "very immanent" but not as literature. Homer's epics derive from an oral tradition, as most scholars around the world agree. However, some still wonder whether Homer had a stylus in his hand. Where once in the Romantic era Homer was lionized as the "blind singer of tales," the "voice of the people" that gave back to the people its own texts in a purified form, nowadays scholarly interest has centered on oral verse composition tied to specific

formulae as a process of performance (and on the place, the "performance arena," defined by the event and the audience).

Nonetheless, oral traditions in antiquity still present a puzzle. Despite the famous if not epochal research of Lord and Parry, culminating in the well-known "formulaic theory," it has required painstaking investigation over many years into the complicated transitions from orality to scriptuality to come to grips with the many facets of Homer's genius, in which the deceptively straightforward binary model of orality versus scriptuality (a "false dichotomy" p. 17) has been refined. One path has been to pursue oral formulaic theory further, another to locate research into the history of mentalities at the point of intersection between orality and scriptuality (Ong, Havelock, Zumthor), which includes taking so-called ethnopoetics (Hymes, Tedlock) forward by means of performance-oriented approaches (R. Baumann). Broadly similar basic patterns of narration (such as those of the Bosnian *guslari* discovered by Lord and Parry), it was agreed, constitute the basis in all cultures for the oral recitation of longer, traditional oral texts.

Foley has drawn all these approaches together in a survey of the various refinements that have been achieved over recent decades. His book once again emphasizes the role of tradition beyond "the only seemingly clear concept of orality." The traditional strategies of Homer's poetic repertoire, and the "writing" of his "transitional texts" (16) at the interface of orality and scriptuality, is Foley's starting point for the understanding of texts that were then valid and which in some instances are still so today, however incomplete. The oral traditional background of the texts provides the "natural background," against which each individual act of the Homeric epics, however unique it may appear, takes place: in other words, the uniqueness of the instance is embedded in its traditional meaning. "Oral tradition functions like speech only more so"; with this pregnant phrase of his own coining, Foley concludes both this book and his above mentioned article in the *EM*. He hopes that in the future this turn of speech will acquire proverbial status among researchers, as a "facsimile proverb." In the course of his book he offers another five "formulae" for scholars to ponder.

Foley organized the book into four parts, with a total of eight chapters plus an afterword. In the first part, first chapter, he follows Homer's sign language, analyzing his *sēmata* and their function as markers with traditional referentiality. In this opening chapter Foley also develops his theory. The second part, "Homeric and South Slavic Epic," is a comparative one; Foley presents the "much cited but understudied" congruencies and differences between Homeric and South Slavic epics. Chapters two to five, which make up this part, focus on analogy and singers, traditional register, and traditional referentiality. The third part, "Reading Homeric signs," presents the entire story pattern as *sēma*. The *Odyssey* is seen as a "return song," a term referring to a well-known Indo-European tale type, the *nostos*-pattern. This part is followed by a section about smaller units, "ready-made building blocks," like the "typical" scenes of "feast" and "lament." It concludes with a chapter on the smallest units, on traditional phrases (words, idioms and proverbs, aphorisms) and the speech-act. Foley recognizes these "stock expressions" also as *sēmata*. Since "the proof is the pudding," part four, demonstrates what the author understands by "rereading *Odyssey*" (i.e., reading the text again using the above elaborated devices). In an afterword Foley presents an Anglo-Saxon "parallel," the "Deor," in order to show how the *sēma*-principle functions in other poetic environments. As support for the entire demonstration, a glossed text and an *apparatus fabulosus* (story-based apparatus), an index of names and things, and an *index locorum* conclude the book.

In his introduction Foley mentions the episode of Bellerophon's tablet (*Iliad* 6.166–80), in which Homer himself mentions graphic signs (*sēmata*). The context is a written message, threatening "to kill the bearer" of the tablet, another motif well-known in international folk-

lore. There are, however, several hypotheses about this section of the *Iliad*, but according to Foley none of them gets to the core of what Homer meant by “signs.” In the course of the book Foley examines in detail and redefines the word “sign,” making it his central critical term. We learn that there are 58 occurrences of the word *sēma* in the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and *Hymns* (25). *Sēma* thus appears in almost every recurrent pattern in the multiform scenes and at every level of organization throughout those works. And the reader is expected to understand its richly coded meaning better in the end.

Although “the bard,” Homer, himself does not call the “myriad” formulaic expressions for which his books are known *sēmata* (e.g., noun-epithet phrases like “rose-fingered dawn,” “swift-footed Achilles,” “green-eyed Athena,” “wise Penelope”), they are ready-made compositional units that function as “idiomatic markers” in order to mark “secret” meanings. They bear implications beyond their literal meaning and their connotations are multifold: in short, they project “traditional referentiality” (4). Because they serve to index traditional ideas Foley intends to read them “as a coherent language” and we learn that a literary reading alone can never “decode” an oral text.

Presenting then six “homemade proverbs” as headlines in the central part of the book, Foley unfolds his programmatic procedure step by step, considering the why and the how of the following:

1. Oral tradition works like language, only more so (see above)
2. Performance is the enabling event, tradition the enabling referent
3. Composition and reception are two sides of the same coin
4. *Artis causa*, not *metri causa* (It is art that counts, not the tyranny of the prefabricated meter, here the hexameter)
5. Read both behind and between the signs (perspective must therefore be a balanced stereoscopic view)
6. An instant meshes inseparably and always with implication (i.e., “The art of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* stems not solely from the uniqueness of the instant nor solely from its traditional meaning, but rather from their interaction. We cannot afford to neglect either between-the-signs singularity or behind-the-signs resonance.” [6–7])

But how are we then enabled to detect this extra layer of meaning, the rich and complex associative meaning of those “narrative conventions,” the referentiality of the signs or the field of reference to which performance adverts, or the true function of the patterns if we do not share the local vernacular, or “the epic register” (Hymes) of the oral poet Homer and of his audience? The answer may seem simple but it is not: living genres are to be compared with Homer. Some exhibit features of ancient and medieval texts that can thus—with patience—partially be reconstructed, and Foley’s “Sign-Language-Companion” (his *apparatus fabulosus*), offers great help.

However, in the end the readers may be captured by resignation—never can we really become Homer’s and his tradition’s contemporary audience! The book is written for insiders, who share at least Foley’s own complex register. But as such it is certainly one of the profoundest studies of the great art of the ancient poet.

#### REFERENCE CITED

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