Bakhtin, Milman Parry and the Problem of Homeric Originality

John Peradotto

[From R. Bracht Branham, ed., *Bakhtin and the Classics* (Evanston 2002). Page numbers in red.]

[59] Milman Parry's work attempted to demonstrate the traditional character of Homeric poetry. Despite a later shift in focus from the concept of "traditional" to "oral" (Finnegan 1991: 120), with at least the implication of a relatively open system as opposed to a relatively closed one, Parry's early emphasis on tradition was so strong that his theory tended to be read as one discounting, if not actually denying, the possibility of innovation, creativity, individual "genius" on the part of any particular singer. Parry's own most explicit statement about this appears in his 1930 piece in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, where he concludes that "the question of a remnant of individuality in Homeric style disappears altogether" (M. Parry 1930: 138). That conclusion and the article in which it appeared are his detractors mainly fastened on. In his son Adam's assessment (A. Parry 1971: xxxi-xxxii),

> those who have tried to argue against the central thesis of Parry's work (viz. that the style of Homer is so traditional throughout that originality of phrasing, as we understand the term, is a negligible factor [M. Parry 1930: 137-38]) have been likely to concentrate their fire on [M. Parry 1930, the *Harvard Studies* article]. The matter is clearly still open to debate, and a dogmatic pronouncement is futile here. It can be said, however, that at the date of writing of this introduction [1971], the balance of scholarly and informed critical opinion finds Parry's central arguments convincing.

Perhaps the most extreme read on the implications of Parry's thesis was expressed by Combellack in a 1959 article (208):

> The hard fact is that in this post-Parry era critics are no longer in a position to distinguish the passages in which Homer is merely using a convenient formula from those in which he has consciously and cunningly chosen *le mot juste*. For all that any critic of Homer can now show, the occasional highly appropriate word may, like the occasional highly inappropriate one, **[60]** be purely coincidental—part of the law of averages, if you like, in the use of the formulary style.

With varying degrees of emphasis the same attitude regarding formulaic phraseology was held also about the artistic manipulation of traditional narrative themes.

Much water has passed under the bridge since then. What Adam Parry said in 1971 of the "balance of scholarly and informed critical opinion" I believe can no longer be claimed. There have been a number of studies which, without contesting the powerful influence of a traditional style, structure, and set of narratives, still portray a poet in control of that tradition, capable of originality and innovation, to counter the questionable image of a compliant replicator and a frozen tradition. Let me cite but two among those who have contributed to this corrective view, both of whom do so without abandoning their outspoken loyalty to Milman Parry. Gregory Nagy, in work of the early 1990s, (1990: 57-61, 70-72; 1992: 25), has given us a more flexible and more fully developed version of Homer's poetic tradition, one that was still inchoate in Nagy's earlier use of the term and was therefore open to misconstruction. And John Foley, perhaps more than anyone else, has moved us well down the road to an oral poetics in his painstaking attempts to articulate what may be said of written literary texts but *cannot* be said of oral or oral-derived productions (1991: 1-60). Nevertheless, despite such attempts, polemics are still

prevalent in a clash between those more inclined to espouse the cause of the innovative artist and those more inclined to insist on the sway of tradition.

The opposition between tradition (or convention) and innovation (or originality), insisted upon as a strict polarity, obliterates complexity and variety in a wide spectrum of cultural practices. That alone should make us skeptical about its usefulness as a critical or analytic tool, or at least about the reasons for dogged adherence to either pole. For one thing, pinning down what constitutes a tradition is not easy even in a cultural context open to empirical field investigation, not to speak of one that is not. Tradition is never merely "given" (Eisen 1992: 451).[1] As Ruth Finnegan observed in the Milman Parry Lecture on Oral Poetry for 1989-90 (1991: 113):[2]

> The term "tradition" and "traditional" in scholarly accounts almost always needs deconstructing through such questions as: "traditional" in what sense? is it necessarily old? or collectively composed? or passed on passively without individual manipulation? *who* created it in whole or in part? how has its editing and interpretation affected the evidence, and with what assumptions or for what purpose? The upshot of considering such questions seems to be that all traditions are likely to be in one way or another constructed or exploited by individuals and interested parties (although not always with conscious deliberation).

[61] The processes of reception and transmission are shot through with interpretation, and this goes for believers or nonbelievers, for insiders or outsiders, for members of the traditional group or their scientific investigators. For this reason among others the polarities traditional versus individual and traditional versus modern have been softened, with profit in many fields of inquiry. But that softening is of such relatively recent vintage and the polarities themselves are so ingrained as conceptual habits, that they continue to lead a vigorous afterlife.

In Parry's day they were even stronger, shaped by the influential work of thinkers like Weber, Durkheim, and Lévy-Bruhl. Weber had identified three ideal types of authority: traditional, rational, and charismatic. "Tradition" in this scheme meant ritualistic, habitual action, bearing an authority sanctified "through the unimaginably ancient recognition and habitual orientation to conform" (Weber 1921: 78). Weber manages a grudging modicum of respect for this tradition, but this is more than outweighed by his hostility, for he considers tradition so understood the barrier to the kind of rational activity on which his attention is centered and the deliberate, self-directed personality types he values most.

In Durkheim, the dichotomy between traditional or primitive and modern was equally influential, but it diverged sharply from what we find in Weber by showing more sympathy for tradition and by dramatically emphasizing social over individual causation. (In the citations from Durkheim that follow, it will be easy to see how readily his general remarks translate into particular Parryite terms.) Weber had said, "subjective understanding is the specific characteristic of sociological knowledge." For Durkheim by contrast, sociological explanation involved seeking "immediate and determining [social] causes." For Weber, "collectives must be treated as *solely* the resultants and modes of organization of the particular acts of individual persons, since these alone can be treated as agents in a course of subjectively understandable action." For Durkheim, "social phenomena are *sui generis* realities that can only be explained by other social phenomena and not by features of individuals."[3] Durkheim's extreme social determinism leads him to the conviction that "the individual's personal, spontaneous, private or egoistic desires and activities are, themselves, socially generated, rather than 'rooted in the organism' " (Lukes 1972: 23). What he called "collective representations" refer "both to the mode of thinking, conceiving or perceiving and to that which is thought, conceived or perceived" (ibid. 7). They are collective, then, in two senses, in that they are socially generated and "[in] that they refer to, and are in some sense 'about', society" (ibid.). In Durkheim's view, "once a primary basis of *representations* has thus been formed,"

these become "partially autonomous realities which live their own life," with "the power to attract and repel one another and form syntheses of all kinds" and engender new representations (Durkheim 1953: 30-31).

Durkheim had taught at the Sorbonne, but died some seven years before Milman Parry began his course of study there in 1924. Nonetheless, his influence there **[62]** remained enormous, and members of his circle continued to develop Durkheimian ideas in their own various fields of specialization (Lukes 1972: 403). Among their number was the great comparative linguist Antoine Meillet, who we know was one of Parry's teachers. A year before Parry's arrival, Meillet had himself advanced (1923: 61), although without any attempt at proof, the view that

> Homeric epic is entirely composed of formulae handed down from poet to poet. An examination of any passage will quickly reveal that it is made up of lines and fragments of lines which are reproduced word for word in one or several other passages. And even lines, parts of which are not found in another passage, have the character of formulae, and it is doubtless pure chance that they are not attested elsewhere.

Parry would in fact cite this passage early in the first of his French theses (M. Parry 1928: 10).

Durkheim's conception of collective representations, with its emphasis on the social and the traditional and its consequent depreciation of the individual and of individual initiative, would be taken up and elaborated yet further by his colleague Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, who was still very active and influential at the Sorbonne during the period of Parry's stay there.

Against such a theoretical background, one that for some time barely touched the American philological establishment, it is hardly surprising that Parry should emphasize tradition and devalue innovation or creativity, or at least give the impression of doing so. The intellectual environment in Paris was far more conducive to such a view than anything in America at that time. But theoretical constructs now exist which allow loyalty to Parry's fundamental insights without discounting individual achievement. I have in mind the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and Pierre Bourdieu. Here, to keep my address succinct, I shall limit my remarks to Bakhtin.[4] (Bourdieu is not easily summarized!) It might appear at first that Bakhtin is duplicating a Durkheimian model of analysis. At one point he says,[5]

> The speaking subject, taken from the inside, so to speak, turns out to be wholly the product of social interrelations. Not only external expression but also internal experience fall within social territory. Therefore, the road which links the internal experience (the 'expressible') to its external objectification (the 'utterance') lies entirely in social territory.... Individual subjectivism is *wrong* in that it ignores and does not understand the social nature of the utterance, and in that it attempts to deduce it from the internal world of the speaker as the expression of this internal world. The structure of the utterance, just like that of expressible experience, is a *social structure*.

[63] Despite this polemic against what he considered a misguided individual subjectivism, Bakhtin's thought goes a long way toward expunging the long-standing dichotomy between the social and the individual, between the traditional and the creative. The major instrument of this transformation of the old model is his concept of dialogism. The term "dialogism" denotes generally the epistemological mode of opposed and mutually conditioning voices or viewpoints which is found in discourse dominated by "heteroglossia": that is, by a dialectical play or negotiation between, in Bakhtinian terminology, "centripetal" and "centrifugal" forces. By "centripetal" Bakhtin means forces in any language or culture which exert a unifying, centralizing, homogenizing and hierarchizing influence; such forces tend to be closely associated with tradition and dominant political power, with the official and heroic, with

so-called high literary genres and so-called correct language. By "centrifugal" he means those forces which exert a disunifying, decentralizing, stratifying, denormatizing influence; these forces tend to be associated with the individualistic, the disempowered, the popular and carnivalesque, with the antics of the trickster, rogue, and outlaw, with so-called low literary genres and dialects (Bakhtin 1981: 272-73).

Some cultures, discourses, and narratives display the collision of the centripetal and centrifugal more openly and comfortably than others, but the centripetal tendency, which Bakhtin considers correlative to all power, favors the creation of what he calls an "authoritative discourse", as opposed to an "internally persuasive" one. "A word, discourse, language or culture undergoes 'dialogization'," says one of Bakhtin's editors, "when it becomes relativized, de-privileged, aware of competing definitions for the same things. Undialogized language is authoritative or absolute." An individual's development—an ideological process in Bakhtin's view—is characterized by a sharp gap between the categories of "authoritative discourse" and "internally persuasive discourse": "In the one," he says (Bakhtin 1981: 342),

> the authoritative word (religious, political, moral; the word of a father, of adults and of teachers, etc. [for our purposes, the traditional]) that does not know internal persuasiveness; in the other, the internally persuasive word that is denied all privilege, backed up by no authority at all, and is frequently not even acknowledged in society (not by public opinion, nor by scholarly norms, nor by criticism), not even in the legal code.

The result of this dialogue, insofar as poetic activity is concerned, is not a romantic, mystical view of individual creativity à la Sartre, who, in Bourdieu's characterization, "makes each action a sort of unprecedented confrontation between the subject and the world" (Bourdieu 1977: 73), but a more balanced perspective:[6]

> **[64]** For the poet, language is actually totally saturated with living intonations; it is completely contaminated by rudimentary social evaluations and orientations, and it is precisely with them that the creative process must struggle; it is precisely among them that one must select such or such a linguistic form, or this or that expression. The artist receives no word in linguistically virginal form. The word is already impregnated by the practical situations and the poetic contexts in which he has encountered it.... That is why the work of the poet, just as that of any artist, can only effect a few transvaluations, a few displacements in intonations, that the poet and his audience perceive against a background of previous evaluations and previous intonations.

In Bakhtin's model, it is not spelled out precisely how these "transvaluations" or "displacements" are achieved. But the French philosopher Merleau-Ponty, in his discussion of how new meaning is realized, considers "rearrangement" a major factor in bridging the gap, formed by the inadequacy of existent signifiers, between individual intention and communication. The intention to signify, he says, acquires self-awareness and embodiment, at one and the same time, in the search for an equivalent in the system of available signifiers. It is a matter of realizing a certain arrangement of these already signifying instruments, which elicits in the listener or reader the inkling of a new and different signification and inversely accomplishes for the speaker or writer what Merleau-Ponty calls the "anchorage" of a meaning unprecedented in already available meanings.[7]

In short, our data are more adequately served by a model such as Bakhtin's, one which liberates us from the inaccurate and damaging oppositions that for so long have shaped theoretical thinking about the relationship between tradition, society, or convention on the one side, and individual initiative on the other. Central to this model is the concept of dialogue or negotiation, which does not wholly expunge the

line between our two polarities, but certainly softens it. Obviously, the question of which participant in this dialogue may be more dominant will vary from culture to culture, context to context, period to period, and empirical investigation, where that is possible, may provide answers. But in the case of Homeric poetry, where empirical investigation is all but impossible, and where we must be highly skeptical of analogies drawn between it and oral poetic traditions more accessible by empirical investigation, we are limited pretty much to the texts themselves, stripped of their performative contexts. But interestingly enough, I would argue, those texts themselves have very much to do with narrative contexts—they, and especially the *Odyssey*, are stories about storytelling—and appear highly preoccupied with the personal predispositions, interests and purposes of its internal storytellers (a fact that may make them distinctive in the class of oral poetry in degree at least, if not in kind). Thus it becomes possible to make some not unreasonable inferences about their external storytellers and their audiences.

[65] Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the fictitious autobiography which Odysseus in disguise tells the swineherd Eumaeus in *Odyssey* 14, containing events not unlike those in Eumaeus's own unhappy history and thus calculated to draw the swineherd's sympathy, and followed by the patent fabrication that earns the disguised Odysseus a cloak for the night. That same story will be told twice again, each time artfully altered to suit its internal narrator's purpose vis-à-vis his new audience.

Another and, I think, subtler example: in book 4, Helen's tale of Odysseus's covert incursion into Troy, which could itself be viewed as not improbably her own fiction at least in part, is carefully tailored to her immediate audience, Telemachus and Pisistratus. And Menelaus's rejoinder to it, the tale of Helen at the wooden horse, suggests an even subtler and more complex, triangular relationship between this internal storyteller and his double audience, Telemachus and Pisistratus on the one side and Helen on the other. Here we have a concrete example of what Merleau-Ponty meant when he spoke of "realizing a certain arrangement of … already signifying instruments" to achieve new signification. In other words, imagine a pair of thoroughly traditional tales, one of Odysseus's incursion into Troy and the other of the wooden horse, narrated not by Menelaus and Helen before their internal audience, but by an anonymous, traditional narrator for whatever audience encounters his poem. The result is a narrative signification quite different from what we have in *Odyssey* 4.

And what of the history involving Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Aegisthus and Orestes? It is obvious that each time it is rehearsed, focus and emphasis change with the diverse interests and motives of each internal narrator and audience: Zeus (1.32-43), Athena disguised as Mentes (1.293-300), Nestor (3.254-312), Menelaus (4.512-37), Agamemnon's shade (11.405-34). Similarly, in book 23, when Penelope compels Odysseus to tell the tale of Tiresias's prophecy before making love, he answers, "Your heart will take no joy in it, nor I in telling it" (266-67):

> οὐ μέν τοι θυμὸς κεχαρήσεται· οὐδὲ γὰρ αὐτὸς
> χαίρω.

Yet another example: in book 1 Penelope's response to Phemius's song of the Achaeans' *nostoi* (one probably chosen for its appeal to the suitors) prompts her to interrupt his performance and to upbraid him for his choice of theme. In book 8 Demodocus's tales of the Trojan war draw tears from Odysseus. In these performances, neither bard is able to see the whole of his audience. Otherwise, one may speculate, each might have chosen a different theme or adjusted his tale in midcourse on noting the negative response it was eliciting.[8]

[66] The storyteller's sensitivity to such signals must have been all the more crucial when his audience included those in positions of power and in whose service he may actually have been retained.

The *ainos* of the Hawk and the Nightingale in Hesiod's *Works and Days* suggests the intimidating power of kings over bards and and how the kings must have striven to harness the persuasive power and charm of poetry to reinforce their own authority.

The dialogism of the Homeric poems has been observed by a number of classical scholars, who have not in every case announced themselves as proponents of a specifically Bakhtinian approach.[9] Peter Rose, in the first two chapters of *Sons of God, Children of Earth: Ideology and Literary Form in Ancient Greece* (1992), develops a Marxist analysis of the Homeric texts that shows a subtle sensitivity to basic Bakhtinian epistemology and a sure grasp of its tools, even as he maintains a stout historicist stance. No naive seeker after authorial intent or "original" audience response, Rose yet tries to reconstruct the historical crises that engendered these texts. He finds the *Iliad* torn between two representations, one centripetal, that validates an ideology linking kingship with divine genealogy, and another centrifugal, that criticizes ''the irreversible trend toward plutocracy represented by Agamemnon" and insists on ''claims of inherited excellence as valid only when demonstrated through risk taking and actual success on the field and in the trials of community deliberations" (Rose 1992: 90). As for the *Odyssey* Rose disputes the way in which the ambiguities in the text, its self-conscious preoccupation with punning and naming and with the potential duplicity of poetry are hypostatized by purely literary analysts as results of the inherently polysemous nature of all discourse and sign systems. He prefers rather to see these qualities primarily as ''creative responses to the political, social, economic, and psychological ambivalences of specific historical actors at a specific historical juncture," and as products of ''a concrete crisis in text production itself associated with the transition from an oral to a literate culture" (ibid. 139). He draws from the text a credible picture of a poet whose ''ambiguous allegiance results, on the one hand, from his role as the bearer of the elite culture and partial dependent of the aristocratic ruling element, and on the other, from his status as a wandering craftsman and his proximity to the discontented peasants and marginal elements in society" (ibid.).

As with Marxism, so also with feminist approaches, the social, reformative aim is primary, explicit, and insistent. The most recent and perhaps most insistent of these in Homeric studies is Lillian E. Doherty's *Siren Songs: Gender, Audiences, and Narrators in the Odyssey* (1995). The larger framework within which her reading of the *Odyssey* takes place is an active critique of the androcentric (and to a lesser extent the class-based) assumptions she sees informing not only Homeric epic, but also contemporary social conditions, including what becomes especially problematical for feminist classicists: the limited canon of works and their almost wholly androcentric focus. Using mainly tools associated with narratology and **[67]** audience-response criticism, she focuses on two questions. First, is the *Odyssey* a "closed" (redundant) text, ''one that by its self-consistency and adherence to convention seeks to limit the possibilities of interpretation"? Or is it an "open" (plural) text, one that ''disrupts its own structural patterns or the conventions of its genre, thereby making room for—even requiring—more interpretative activity"? And second, what strategies are available to feminist readers of the *Odyssey*? Her conclusion (Doherty 1995: 15), a not uncontroversial one, is

> that the *Odyssey* presents itself primarily as a closed text, and that this has serious consequences for female readers, whose responses it models in elaborate and seductive ways. At the same time, the existence of conspicuous narrative breaks or silences interferes with the text's redundancy. These 'openings' represent opportunities for the reader who would resist textual determinacy.

As one would expect, the feminist movement has brought keener attention to Homer's female characters, Penelope in particular, even in studies in which a feminist agenda is muted or barely perceptible. Nancy Felson-Rubin's *Regarding Penelope: From Character to Poetics* (1994) adroitly supports a moderate feminism with perspectives drawn from narratology, possible-world semantics,

audience-oriented criticism, Peircean semiotics and Bakhtinian dialogism in exploring the character of Odysseus's embattled spouse. Speaking of an audience's capacity to occupy the subject position of the poem's characters, Felson-Rubin maintains that ''the division between the genders is not necessarily so restrictive as scholars commonly imagine." Accordingly, she finds in the text a more deliberate and effectual critique of its own androcentric tradition than Doherty would probably want to concede. In this reading, Penelope is seen as the most enigmatic and puzzling character in the *Odyssey*, a judgment powerfully confirmed by the observation that, while the actions of Odysseus, the suitors, even the gods themselves are routinely forecast, leaving fairly little doubt about the poem's major eventualities, no authoritative voice ever makes clear what Penelope will do, before she does it. Instead, a number of hypothetical narrative outcomes (chiefly the Argive plot of Clytemnestra's treachery) are kept constantly within the range of possibility before finally yielding to the actual conclusion of successful second courtship and reunion.

One of my own observations is that in the *Odyssey* we see two views of poetic activity, analogous to Bakhtin's two discourses, distinguished from one another by how much weight either one gives to individual initiative or to duplication of a more or less fixed tradition. One is a discourse of *representation*, embodied in the blind Phaeacian bard, Demodocus, who gracefully repeats a fixed tradition given to him in inspiration by the Muses to keep the past intact. It is significant that his usual audience are fabulous utopian isolationists, who by deliberate choice have almost **[68]** wholly insulated themselves from change, or have tried to, and that the songs Demodocus sings are (except for the Olympian burlesque of Ares and Aphrodite) from a heroic tradition wholly at odds with their own soft hedonism, performances meant for detached, aesthetic contemplation, but not as a poetic laboratory where world views may be tested. The other discourse is one of *production*, embodied in Odysseus himself, who freely designs fictions out of his own ingenuity to control present circumstance and to serve his purpose for the future (Peradotto 1990: 170).

By way of conclusion, let me ask what metaphor we should choose to best represent the more complicated model I have been describing for the relationship between the Homeric poet and his tradition. Should we see it after the analogy of a musician performing a score already composed by someone else? That Durkheimian notion will of course no longer serve. Should we see it rather the way a structuralist would (e.g., Lévi-Strauss 1966: 95), as a card game in which the player holds cards he has not invented, plays by rules he has not invented, is dealt a hand that is contingent and unpredictable, and plays that hand better or worse than others would play it, even though the rules set limits on the ways it may be played? This is clearly better, but still imperfect, flawed in representing ever dynamic aspects of culture and tradition as cards and rules that are static and unchanging.

Still better, I would suggest, is the metaphor of the strange croquet game that Alice plays in Wonderland.[10] Very little about this game is fixed or stable: not the instrument in Alice's hand, not the object she is trying to hit, not the hoops on the field of play, not Alice herself or her fellow players. All are living, moving, dynamic. Alice's advisor, the Cheshire Cat, for whom she tries to interpret the game, is at best never fully present, and Alice must wait for the slow appearance of his ears before he can even be addressed. The rationale of the game is to achieve some semblance of order by integrating players, instruments, objects, environment. But that rationale and the order it aspires to are stymied at every turn by not altogether predictable movement among the variables. And as if all this were not frustration enough, the enterprise is superintended by a capricious authority, the queen, whose exercise of power sets limits on success in the game as well as on its interpretation.

Yes, the croquet game in Wonderland would seem to be a most fitting analogy—not only for the relationship of poet to tradition, but also, I believe, for the relationship of us investigators to that very problem.

State University of New York at Buffalo

NOTES

This essay appeared in an early, abbreviated version under the title "Homer, Parry and the Meaning of Tradition" in Françoise Létoublon, ed., *Hommage à Milman Parry: Le style formulaire de l'épopée et la théorie de l'oralité poétique* (Amsterdam 1997) 23-31.

[69] 1. Eisen's essay (1992) shows how the very same "tradition" serves two fairly disparate reconstructions of the past, in this case, of Judaism: one by Mordecai Kaplan that is conservative (*Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of American-Jewish Life* [New York 1934]) and the other by Judith Plaskow that is radically feminist (*Standing Against Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* [San Francisco 1990]), the latter based on "the impossibility of objectively locating the 'tradition' or its putative essence" (Eisen 1992: 445). Eisen remarks that for Plaskow, "the problem of authority thus resolves itself into the question of 'whether the primary community to which I am accountable' finds her images of God or Torah, or Israel compelling. Plaskow can reasonably assume that communities of faith coalesce and disintegrate over time in relation to visions and metaphors which do or do not prove adequate to their needs and experience" (ibid. 447).

2. See also John Miles Foley, "Oral Tradition and its Implications," in I. Morris and Powell 1997: 166.

3. For these citations and sources, see Lukes 1972: 19-20, n. 76.

4. For Bourdieu, see especially his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge 1977).

5. Voloshinov 1973: 107, 111-12. (In all likelihood this is Bakhtin's work, signed by his friend Voloshinov. For the problem of authorship, see Todorov 1984: xi.)

6. Voloshinov 1930, cited by Todorov 1984: 48-49. See also Morson and Emerson 1990: 49-62.

7. Merleau-Ponty 1952: 99. Compare the remark of Wittgenstein (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 4.03): "A proposition must use old expressions to communicate new sense."

8. These and other examples prompt us to speculate that Demodocus's blindness and the tradition of Homer's blindness—indeed, more generally, the dominant motif of the blind singer in the cross-cultural history of oral poetry (Zumthor 1990: 175-77) — are based on blindness as a symbol for emancipation from the social and political pressures of one's immediate audience (manifested mainly through visible signals), a verification that one's message has an inspiration transcending the ephemeral, parochial concerns and tastes of one's immediate social context. This way of interpreting Homer's blindness becomes all the more attractive when taken in tandem with Gregory Nagy's thesis regarding the universal, Panhellenic status of the Homeric poems. It also coheres with the function of the poet, as Hesiod expresses it in the *Theogony*, to make his audience forget its transient personal concerns to concentrate on the universal paradigms of value in cosmogonic and heroic narrative.

9. The following summaries of work by Peter Rose, Lillian E. Doherty, and Nancy Felson-Rubin are adapted from my "Modern Theoretical Approaches to Homer," in I. Morris and Powell 1997: 380-95.

[70] 10. The croquet game appears in chapter 8 of *Alice in Wonderland*. This comparison is inspired in part by Marike Finlay (1990: 2), whose use of the croquet game in Wonderland has more general purposes as an analogy for, in his words, "the problems of knowledge and representation facing modern science and discourse, including our own meta-discourse."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bakhtin, M. M. 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist. University of Texas Press Slavic Studies, 1. Austin. [These essays were

originally published in Bakhtin's Voprosy literatury I estetiki (Moscow 1975).]
Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge. [Originally published as *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique, précedé de trois études d'ethnologie kabyle* (Genève 1972).]
Combellack, Frederick M. 1959. "Milman Parry and Homeric Artistry," *Comparative Literature* 11: 193-208.
Durkheim, Émile. 1953. *Sociology and Philosophy*. Trans. D. F. Pocock. Glencoe, Ill. [Originally published as *Sociologie et philosophie* (Paris 1924).]
Eisen, Arnold M. 1992. "Constructing the Usable Past: The Idea of 'Tradition' in Twentieth-Century American Judaism." In *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*, ed. Jack Wertheimer, 429-61. Cambridge, Mass.
Finlay, Marike. 1990. *The Potential of Modern Discourse*. Bloomington.
Finnegan, Ruth. 1991. "Tradition, But What Tradition and For Whom?" *Oral Tradition* 6: 104-124.
Foley, John Miles. 1988. *The Theory of Oral Composition: History and Methodology*. Bloomington.
----------. 1991. *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic*. Bloomington.
Gerth, Hans and C. Wright Mills, eds. 1958. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Oxford.
Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1966. *The Savage Mind*. Chicago. [Originally published as *La pensée sauvage* (Paris 1962).]
Lukes, Steven. 1972. *Émile Durkheim, His Life and Work: A Historical and Critical Study*. New York.
Meillet, Antoine. 1923. *Les origines indo-européenes des mètres grecs*. Paris.
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1952. "Sur la phénomenologie du langage" in *Probèmes actuels de la phénoménologie*, ed. H. L. van Breda, 91-109. Paris.
Morris, Ian, and Barry Powell. 1997. *A New Companion to Homer*. Leiden.
Morson, Gary Saul, and Caryl Emerson. 1990. *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*. Stanford.
Nagy, Gregory. 1990. *Pindar's Homer: The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past*. Baltimore.
----------. 1992. "Homeric Questions," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 122: 17-60.
Parry, Adam, ed. 1971. *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*. Oxford.
Parry, Milman. 1928. "The Traditional Epithet in Homer." In A. Parry 1971: 1-190. [Originally published as *L'épithète traditionelle dans Homère; Essai sur un problème de style homérique* (Paris 1928).]
----------. 1930. "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making I: Homer and Homeric Style." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 41: 73-147.
Peradotto, J. 1990. *Man in the Middle Voice: Name and Narration in the Odyssey*. Princeton.
Todorov, T. 1984. *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle*. Trans. Wlad Godzich. Minneapolis. [Originally published as *Mikhaïl Bakhtine: Le principe dialogique suivi de écrits du cercle de Bakhtine* (Paris 1981).]
Voloshinov, V.N. 1973. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Trans. of *Marksizm i filosofija jazyka* (Leningrad 1929) by L. Matejka and I. R. Titunik. New York.
----------. Forthcoming [1930]. "On the Borders Between Poetics and Linguistics." In *Writings of the Bakhtin Circle*, trans. Wlad Godzich. Minneapolis.
Weber, Max. 1921. "Politics as a Vocation." In Gerth and Mills, eds., 1958: 77-128.
Zumthor, Paul. 1990. *Oral Poetry: an Introduction*. Trans. K. Murphy-Judy. Minneapolis.