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FOLEY, JOHN MILES, editor. *Comparative Research on Oral Traditions: A Memorial for Milman Parry*. Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, 1987. 597 pages. Hardcover US\$29.95. ISBN 0-89357-173-3.

As every folklorist knows, the co-founders of the modern study of oral poetry are the classicist Milman Parry and his student, the slavacist Albert Lord. Lord has had his festschrift: *Oral Traditional Literature: A Festschrift for Albert Bates Lord*, ed. John Miles Foley (1981). The prolific editor of that work has also given us the standard bibliography—*Oral-Formulaic Theory and Research: An Introduction and Annotated Bibliography* (1984)—as well as a welcome history—*The Theory of Oral Composition: History and Methodology* (1988)—of the Parry-Lord theory and its influence. Now Foley has produced a memorial festschrift for Parry, who died in 1935.

The work starts off with a preface by Albert Lord, a pleasantly anecdotal reflection on Parry's life and influence. It is followed by the editor's somewhat confusing introduction. According to Foley, "Parry's activity in the field . . . initiated the comparative method in oral literature research" (18). Foley goes on to say that "Africa, with its plethora of tongues and traditions, is beginning to yield startling new information about oral tradition and culture, while some of the most ancient civilization of the world, among them the Indic, Sumerian, and Hittite, also show signs of oral transmission of tales," and he concludes these thoughts with the assertion that "[t]his enormous field of research and scholarship, still in its relative infancy, is ultimately the bequest of Milman Parry" (19). But this claim vastly overstates the influence of Parry. The comparative method in oral-narrative research was already well established before Parry wrote (see, for example, *The Comparative Method in Folklore*, ed. Linda Dégh, a special issue of the *Journal of Folklore Research* 23, Nos. 2/3 [1986]); indeed, it goes at least as far back as the mythologist Bernard Fontenelle in the early eighteenth century. Nor can Parry be credited with the discovery of oral tradition either in modern Africa or in the ancient world. Foley seems to conceive of the entire field of folk-narrative research as being the child of Parry. It was not: Parry made contributions of astonishing brilliance to the understanding of oral poetry and therefore of oral literature, but he did not father the entire field.

Naturally, the assembly of essays in the collection reflects Foley's conception of Parry. Although many of the essays deal with oral poetry and most draw in one or another important way on the work of Parry or Lord, others are simply essays on one or another folkloric topic, such as Daniel Biebuyk's interesting "Names in Nyanga Society and in Nyanga Tales" and Ruth Webber's "Ballad Openings in the European Ballad."

And yet, ironically, there is also some truth in Foley's making Parry a founding father of folk-narrative research. As several essays in the collection show, literary scholars who are otherwise unacquainted with folkloric research do borrow concepts from the Parry-Lord theory of oral poetry and adapt them for use in the investigation of oral and literary narratives of any kind whatsoever. In short, Parry and Lord are used by non-folklorists to reinvent folkloristics.

Foley's collection consists of twenty-four articles on Greek, South Slavic, Old

English, Icelandic, French, German, African, and other narrative traditions. Although few of the authors are folklorists as such, every essay has some interest for folk-narrative scholars, and the collection makes for very good reading. If the choice of topics is occasionally surprising, the quality is almost universally excellent, for which the editor and contributors are to be congratulated.

Since there is not space here to cite every article, I conclude by mentioning a few that I myself particularly liked. In "Of Sticks and Stones and Hapax Legomena Rhemata," David Bynum nicely demonstrates that the statistical infrequency of a phrase in oral poetry in the corpus of a particular poet can never be taken as evidence that the poet invented it himself, for often such phrases appear in the works of other poets in the tradition; however, the statistical infrequency of a particular phrase can indicate that a singer's repertory of formulaic phrases is richer than that of another poet's. Martin Camargo's "Oral Traditional Structure in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" is an interesting meditation on the problem of ring composition and of the audience's perception of it as a structuring device. Donald Fry, in "The Cliff of Death in Old English Poetry," does a skillful job of tracing a traditional narrative theme in different poems. "'ez wart ein buoch funden': Oral and Written in Middle High German Heroic Epic" by Edward Haymes is an elegant essay on the decline of the oral epic and the rise of the literary epic in Germany and on the ways in which the different composers of these works sought legitimacy for them. Gary Miller's enthusiastic "Towards a New Model of Formulaic Composition" draws upon text linguistics and cognitive science to suggest a new model for the acquisition and transmission of songs. The best title in the collection belongs to Michael Nagler's "On Almost Killing Your Friends: Some Thoughts on Violence in Early Cultures." This essay is a wonderfully crafted exploration of violence in epic and in ancient societies. And finally Joseph Russo's "Oral Style as Performance Style in Homer's *Odyssey*: Should We Read Homer Differently after Parry?" offers a simple explanation of why the Homeric poems, though they are not literary works, seem to possess both oral and literary qualities.

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KVIDELAND, REIMUND and RORUM SELBERG, editors. *Papers III and IV. The 8th Congress for the International Society for Folk Narrative Research*. Bergen June 12th—17th, 1984. Two volumes. Bergen, Norway: Forlaget Folkekultur, 1985. ISBN 82-90258-06-2. No price.

The two volumes of papers introduced here are part of a four volume set of proceedings of the Bergen Congress. Unfortunately I had no chance to see the first two volumes, but I assume that the present two volumes contain the individual contributions. They are lined up in alphabetical order by the author's name. The reader has therefore no clue as to whether a paper may have formed part of a session organized around a certain topic or not. That such sessions may have been organized can be gathered e.g. from the series of contributions about women in folklore studies and as informants or focus of studies in the Scandinavian countries. It would have been advisable to keep the related papers together, and to give some orientation to a reader where to look for what kind of topic. Reading through the collected papers, one feels