Homeric Speech Introductions and the Theory of Homeric Composition*

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I. Introduction

Milman Parry's work on oral–traditional composition is frequently called the most important Homeric research done this century. However, subsequent work on the theory of oral composition–in–performance and on its significance for the interpretation of Homer has progressed in fits and starts.[1] The last few years have clearly been marked by progress. Two of the main tools of this work are (1) the recognition that oral composition cannot be simply equated with the use of a particular repertoire of fixed formulae, but is a multi–faceted process, and (2) an interest in explaining some or all of these facets in terms of natural speech production faculties.

This paper starts (section II) with a critique of one recent line of research, that of Edzard Visser. Visser has made some very interesting suggestions about how lines describing commonly performed actions are composed. By and large this study will confirm his results, but some extensions and modifications will also be presented. The third and final section will be devoted to an examination of the relationship between Visser's analysis and other parts of the theoretical apparatus surrounding the notion of oral composition. This examination will center on the relationship of the categories of formal, *post eventum* analysis and the actual production of verse. The remainder of this introduction will sketch the theories of Visser that I wish to critique.

Visser observes that lines (as well as somewhat larger text chunks) in repeated type–scenes are composed of formulae representing a highly restricted set of series. For example, in Visser's own work on killing scenes in

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[1]For a review of the recent literature up to about 1986, Mark Edwards' review (1986, 1988) is indispensable. Edwards is clear and even–handed, but his interest is weakest in the linguistic areas which this paper considers; his own warning in this respect (1988:54) should be heeded.

the *Iliad*, a typical line is composed of name of killer, name of victim, a verb, and a conjunction. The form of the names is determined entirely by the specific story context; if Bienor is the victim, then the poet must use the accusative singular Βιήνορα. Visser calls terms so metrically fixed "determinants." The verb "he killed" and the conjunction can take on any of a number of forms:

Table 1. *Iliad*—Killings[2]

1a)

ἔλ'	V∪C
ἔλεν	V∪∪C
ἔλε	V∪∪V
πέφνε	C–∪V
εἷλεν	V–∪C
εἷλε	V–∪V
κτεῖνεν	C–∪C
κτεῖνε	C–∪V
ἔκτανεν	V–∪∪C
ἔκτανε	V–∪∪V
ἔπεφνεν	V∪–∪C
ἔπεφνε	V∪–∪V
κατέκτανεν	C∪–∪∪C
κατέκτανε	C∪–∪∪V
ἐνήρατο	V∪–∪∪V
ἐνάριζεν	V∪∪–∪C
ἐνάριζε	V∪∪–∪V
ἔκτεινεν	V– – –C
θυμὸν ἀπηύρα	C–∪∪– –V
ἐξενάριξεν	V–∪∪–∪C
ἐξενάριξε	V–∪∪–∪V
ὑπο γούνατ' ἔλυσεν	V∪∪–∪∪–∪C
ὑπο γούνατ' ἔλυσε	V∪∪–∪∪–∪V

1b)

δ'	CØC
δέ	C∪V
δ' ἄρ'	C∪C
δ' ἄρα	C∪∪V
δ' ἄρα	C∪–V
δ' ἔπειτ'	C∪–C
δ' ἔπειτα	C∪–∪V
δ' ἄρ' ἔπειτ'	C∪∪–C
δ' ἄρ' ἔπειτα	C∪∪–∪V

1c)

αἶψ'	V–C
αἶψα	V–∪V
αὐτίκ'	V–∪C
αὐτίκα	V–∪∪V

Visser calls this second kind of term (with a variety of shapes) a "variable." The shape of a variable in particular lines is fixed by metrical context rather than by plot. According to Visser, the composition of a killing can be reconstructed as follows: first the poet realizes that he needs a killing scene, then based on the story he has in mind, he selects the determinant elements (at

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[2]V and C indicate whether a given form begins and ends with a vowel or consonant. ∪ denotes a light syllable and – a heavy syllable. Underlined forms violate metrical economy. 1a and 1b are from Visser (1987:75–6, 92), but I have omitted a dual form from the first list as marginal and probably not synonymous (but see Visser [1987:249–50]). Inclusion of this form would not decrease economy.

least the subject and object, perhaps other items).[3] These are placed in the line according to the rules of localization discovered by O'Neill (1942) and depicted in Figure 2a.[4]

Figure 2. Line Construction (after Visser [1988:35–6])

a) Ἰδομενεὺς ∪ ∪ Φαῖστον ∪ – ∪ ∪ ǀ – ∪ ∪ – x
b) Ἰδομενεὺς δ' ἄρα Φαῖστον ἐνήρατο ǀ – ∪ ∪ – x
c) Ἰδομενεὺς δ' ἄρα Φαῖστον ἐνήρατο Μήονος υἱόν

Forms of variable elements are then inserted into the line to fill in gaps between the determinants and/or major breaks in the line (e.g. line end, main caesura), as in Figure 2b. This leaves only a small part of the line to be filled in by freer composition, though even this material, such as epithets added to proper nouns, is largely traditional (or at least typical) itself (Figure 2c). Visser decomposed the killing scenes in the *Iliad* and in Quintus of Smyrna and discovered that the series of killing verbs is completely economical in Homer, but highly uneconomical in Quintus.[5] Visser takes this difference of technique as further evidence for oral composition–in–performance of Homeric epic. Since these expressions for "he killed" are largely one word (rather than phrasal), they have not previously received much attention in discussions of "formulaic" technique. Traditional oral theory has spoken of series of formulae which can be freely substituted to accommodate metrical context; Visser tries to explain how members of different series are fitted together. Thus Visser's syntagmatic theory is complementary to previous, paradigmatic approaches.[6]

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[3]The subject and object will normally (always?) be among the determinants. Optionally they may be followed (still as determinants) by secondary modifiers (e.g. πρότερος) which are fixed by the plot, but not necessary to its exposition.

[4]Visser (1988:337–43) corrects O'Neill's figures to account for the difference between words ending in light and heavy syllables at line end. Eventually these figures will need to be recalculated on the basis of the entire texts, rather than of samples. Furthermore some words may have localization patterns distinct from those of their respective metrical shapes; for a dramatic example see Kahane (1992). I do not mean to claim that localization will produce a unique place in the line for a particular word, but rather that it will direct the poet to one or more preferred locations.

[5]I will try to restrict my use of "economy" to the technical sense—the property of a series of (effectively) synonymous expressions, each with a unique metrical shape. I will try to use other terms, such as "compactness," for more general cases in which the poet appears to make maximal use of the smallest number of memorized units of various types (word roots, phrases, entire series).

[6]One particularly important consequence of the reading of certain "formulaic" lines as instantiations of a single general scheme rather than as independent, fixed syntagmatic formulae is that it does not make sense to call rarer instantiations less traditional or less formulaic than the

My work concentrates on another type of line and one that has received scholarly attention in the past—speech introductions. In the second section I will use an analysis of this material to defend Visser's theory against one of the significant objections to it. In the process I will also modify his approach slightly and try to achieve a new and richer appreciation of how it relates to previous work. Finally, this formal analysis will also suggest some more general conclusions about the role of direct speech in Homeric epic.

II. Homeric Speech Introductions

A cause for uncertainty about Visser's theory is simply that it has not been sufficiently tested yet; as Bakker (1991:449) points out in a review, the original analysis is only applied to a single system of lines. I have found that the bulk of speech introductions in the *Odyssey* can be decomposed in the same fashion as killing scenes in the *Iliad*. In particular I consider roughly those lines which Mark Edwards (1970) groups together as "introductions with verb of general sense," that is "address," "answer," or "speak." It excludes more specialized forms such as τις–speeches or introductions with verbs of reproach.[7] These verbs represent other (speech–)acts than simply speaking or replying and so are no more represented by the same set of formulae than more dramatically different type scenes (e.g. arming and killing). I have somewhat arbitrarily restricted my study to the most general (and most common) speech types. As I analyze the remaining group, there are four different schemata for speech introducing lines: each is used for a slightly different situation: (a) "and person X spoke (a speech)," (b) "and person X spoke to one person," (c) "and person X spoke among several persons," and (d) "and person X answered" (Table 3a–d for examples). Note that person X may be referred to by a personal name, patronymic, or pronoun, or (more rarely) simply be understood.

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more common ones as Finkelberg (1989) tries to do with expressions of rejoicing. In fact, the verbs of rejoicing also form an extensive and economical series. Jahn (1987) illustrates the use of common instrumental variables to fill out these lines.

[7]The phrase φάτο φώνησέν τε occurs in both *Od.* (1x) and *Il.* (2x) and would thus be considered a formula under some definitions. However, φάτο occurs eight times in speech–introduction context and φώνησέν τε seventeen. Since φώνησέν τε requires the presence of another verb anyway, the combination could easily arise by chance twice. Μυθήσατο occurs in two speech introductions, both times in the collocation προτὶ ὃν μυθήσατο θυμόν, and introduces only soliloquies, not dialogue. The other verbs listed at Edwards (1970:16–20) can all be eliminated on the grounds of inherently having a more specific sense than "he said." I have not included ἀμειβόμενος δὲ προσηύδα as an answering formula. It is marginal (2x, *Il.* only) and the combination of participle and verb is more common (3x) when they are separated (ἀμειβόμενος ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα).

Table 3. Speech–introduction Types

a) "speak (a speech)": καί ῥα ἑκάστῳ φωτὶ παρισταμένη φάτο μῦθον

b) "speak to (one person)": καὶ τότ' ἄρ' Ἰδαῖον προσέφη κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων

c) "speak among (several)": τοῖσιν δ' Ἀλκίνοος ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπεν

d) "answer": τὸν δ' αὖτ' Ἀλκίνοος ἀπαμείβετο φώνησέν τε

The form is similar for each type: the line is composed of a subject and object (determinants) and of a main verb and conjunction (variables). In the first type the expression denoting the speech is the object, while the addressee is in an optional dative phrase. All four types employ similar secondary modifiers such as ἐπευχόμενος, πρότερος, or ὑπόδρα ἰδών. The general situation is largely the same as that which Visser found in the killing scenes except that pronouns, patronymics, and null specification are used much more freely in place of proper names. I will consider the significance of this in the next section.

There is already an improvement over earlier analyses. Edwards identified ten main categories (for instance: "person A addressed him in answer," "person A addressed him with qualification," "person A addressed person B," "he addressed person B"), each with several subtypes. This is because his largely paradigmatic scheme does not allow for parametric variation (especially between nouns and pronouns) as well as the current analysis does. The four–group analysis is more natural because it is based on the meaning of the line, rather than on what are fairly arbitrary syntactic criteria (see n. 23 on the possibility of a three–group analysis). The relative simplicity of the system makes it useful for oral composition.

A little additional confirmation of Visser's approach comes from looking at word–localization. Examining all lines of the type "speak (a speech)," we find that every one of the purported determinants (the speaker, addressee, and type of speech) is placed in the line where one would expect it based on its metrical shape. The variables are also largely appropriately localized, but for them (in contrast to the determinants) there are exceptions. Most notably the verb προσηύδα would normally be expected line–finally on grounds both of localization and prose word order,[8] yet it is displaced to an earlier part of the line roughly twice as often as would be expected of a word of its metrical shape. For example *Il.* 6.214: αὐτὰρ ὁ μειλιχίοισι προσηύδα ποιμένα λαῶν. Similarly, προσέφη almost always appears in the last of three positions which, on purely metrical grounds, should be roughly equally preferred. This

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[8]Dover (1960:25–31) indicates that prose order of object and verb would if anything exaggerate the localization in final position.

is because the first two positions are usually preempted by long (determinant) modifiers such as ὑπόδρα ἰδών or ἀπαμειβόμενος.

Now looking at the proposed classification in more detail, consider the series of verb phrases used in each of the four schemata (Table 4a–d). Conjunctions (Table 4e) are the same for all schemata.

Table 4. *Odyssey*—Speech Introductions

4a) "speak"

		4b) "speak to"	
φάτο[9]	C∪∪V	εἶπε	V–∪V
εἶπε	V–∪V	εἶπεν	V–∪C
εἶπεν	V–∪C	προσέφη	C∪∪–V
ηὔδα	V– –V	προσέφην	C∪∪–C
ἔειπε	V∪–∪V	προσηύδα[10]	C∪– –V
ἔειπεν	V∪–∪C	(φώνησέν τε	C– – –∪V)[11]
ἔννεπε	V–∪∪V	προσέειπεν	C∪∪–∪C
προσηύδα[10]	C∪– –V	προσέειπε	C∪∪–∪V
(ἔπος τ᾽ ἔφατ᾽ ἔκ τ᾽ ὀνόμαζε)[12]		προσεφώνεεν	C∪∪–∪∪C
		προσεφώνεε	C∪∪–∪∪V
		πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπεν	C– –∪∪–∪C[13]

4c) "speak among"

		4d) "answer"	
μετέφη	C∪∪–V	ἠμείβετ᾽	V– –∪C
προσέφη (9.407, 22.34)	C∪∪–V	ἀμείβετο	V∪–∪∪V
μετέειφ᾽[14]	C∪∪–C	ἠμείβετο	V– –∪∪V
μετηύδα	C∪– –V	ἀντίον ηὔδα	V–∪∪– –V
μετέειπεν	C∪∪–∪C	ἀπαμείβετο φώνησέν τε	V∪∪–∪∪– – –∪V
μετέειπε	C∪∪–∪V		
μετεφώνεεν	C∪∪–∪∪C		
μετεφώνεε	C∪∪–∪∪V		
μετὰ μῦθον ἔειπεν	C∪∪–∪∪–∪C		

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[9]Although most common in capping formulae, φάτο is not unknown in speech introductions.

[10]Note that προσηύδα is in two different series.

[11]This form has an intrinsic conjunction and so is not strictly synonymous with the others; perhaps it should be treated as part of the ornamental material rather than part of the regular verbal series. φώνησεν should not be considered separately since the whole phrase localizes together (on localization as evidence for formulaic unity see Bakker [1988:168–71]).

[12]The value of the initial in (ϝ)ἔπος seems to be particularly variable; the number of cases in which C and V are demanded are approximately equal both in terms of distinct preceding lexical items and of absolute number of lines involved.

[13]These line–final formulae also have prosodically irrelevant variants with final vowel.

[14]Μετέειφ᾽ co–occurs only with the subject ἱερὴ ἲς Τηλεμάχοιο.

ἀγορήσατο καὶ   V∪∪–∪∪–∪∪–∪C
  μετέειπεν

4e)   **4f)**

δ'   CØC   αἶψ'   V–C
δέ   C∪V   αἶψα   V–∪V
δ' ἄρ'   C∪C   αὐτίκ'   V–∪C
καί   C–V   αὐτίκα   V–∪C
δ' ἄρα   C∪∪V
δ' ἔπειτ'   C∪–C
δ' ἔπειτα   C∪–∪V
δ' ἄρ' ἔπειτ' C∪∪–C
δ' ἄρ' ἔπειτα C∪∪–∪V

Note that each shows complete metrical economy, except for two occurrences
of προσέφη (which will be explained later). Visser showed by comparison
with Quintus of Smyrna that this kind of economy was peculiar to Homer. For
the sake of variation I will use Apollonius to make the same comparison (Table
5a–d; underlined forms violate economy).

Table 5. *Argonautica*—Speech Introductions

5a)   **5b)**

φάτο   C∪∪V   ἔννεπεν   V–∪∪C
εἶπεν   V–∪C   μύθειτο   C– –∪V
ηὔδα   V– –V   προσέειπεν   C∪∪–∪C
ἔκφατο   V–∪∪V   προσέννεπεν   C∪–∪∪C
ἔειπε   V∪–∪V   μετηύδα   C∪– –V
ἀνενείκατο   V∪∪–∪∪V   μετεφώνεεν (1.702) C∪∪–∪∪C
φώνησέν τε   C– – –∪V   μυθήσατο   C– –∪∪V
                             προσελέξατο   C∪∪–∪∪V
                             <u>προσεφώνεεν</u>   C∪∪–∪∪C
                             <u>μετεφώνεεν</u>   C∪∪–∪∪C

5c)   **5d)**

μετηύδα   C∪– –V   <u>ἀμείψατο</u>   V∪–∪∪V
<u>μετέειπεν</u>   C∪∪–∪C   <u>ἀμείβετο</u>   V∪–∪∪V
<u>προσέειπεν</u> (4.82) C∪∪–∪C   ἠμείβετο   V– –∪∪V
<u>μυθήσατο</u> (2.1046) C– –∪∪V
μετεφώνεεν   C∪∪–∪∪C
<u>μετεφώνεε</u>   C∪∪–∪∪V

We see again that the later author is less economical.[15] The difference is not as
dramatic in this case as in Visser's original work, but we should keep in mind

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[15]Theoretically, the categories could be reshuffled to give greater economy, but in practice it
seems impossible to do so and still maintain distinctions of meaning or usage which are not

that the shorter text of the *Argonautica* would give fewer opportunities for
violation of economy. There is also another difference between the two authors
that Visser did not note. While the degree of extension is roughly equal in both
Homer and Apollonius (if the difference in length is again taken into account),
this extension is gained by different means. Homer fully exploits the optional
v–movable to produce six pairs of forms that differ in metrical shape only in
having a final vowel or consonant;[16] Apollonius (who nearly always adds the v)
has only one such pair and two pairs produced by resorting to two different
verbs (e.g. προσελέξατο, προσεφώνεεν). Once again the Homeric system is
more compact.

Comparing the killing scenes and the speech introductions we can even
see some overlap between the two sets of schemata. Both use essentially the
same series of conjunctions (Tables 1b and 4e). Similarly a short series of
adverbs meaning "straight away" is used in both schemata (Tables 1c and 4f).[17]
Thus there is economy both within and among the common type scenes.

The final piece of formal analysis will be consideration of what is taken
to be one of the most famous violations of economy in Homer: τὸν δ' αὖτε
προσέειπεν ~ τὸν δ' ἠμείβετ' ἔπειτα. These are normally understood as two
metrically equivalent formulae both expressing the essential idea "he answered
him."[18] We can now take a different view of the pair. The first is part of a
canonical "spoke to (one person)" line, containing object, conjunction, verb,

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completely *ad hoc*. One might also try to make something of the difference between words
which begin with one consonant and those beginning with two. In fact, Apollonius does not
seem to exploit this distinction.

[16]On the v–movable in Homer see Russo (1964:71–111).

[17]For another example of a small series see Bakker/Fabbricotti (1991) on dative expressions
for "spear." On a much larger scale see the careful examination of place phrases in Sale (1987)
and the lists of mental organs in Jahn (1987:254, 256).

[18]Janko's (1981) thesis that, while the poet had two equivalent formulae, one or the other
tended to predominate at any give time is initially attractive. As evidence he produces several
long runs of one or the other formula in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Unfortunately, his statistical
argument is unsound. For instance, he calculates the chance that a particular sequence of five
formulae will be identical (i.e. the chance of a single occurrence raised to the fifth power). Such
a combination is indeed unlikely, but in a sufficiently long text it will occur eventually (unless
there is a non–random factor enforcing variation). We might rather want to know the (much
greater) chance that such a run will occur somewhere. An alternative statistical test is described
at Pfaffenberger and Patterson (1981:802); their test measures the possibility that a sequence (as
a whole) could have been generated by the repeated use of a fixed probability distribution. This
test indicates that neither the *Iliad* nor the *Odyssey* shows a clearly non–random distribution of
this particular pair of formulae. Miller (1982:44–6) gives several more examples (as well as
theoretical support) to Janko's position, but it is hard to tell whether the collected evidence is
significant yet. Cf. also Stanford (1969), who advances considerations of euphony.
Hainsworth (1976:83–6) and Parry (1971:183–7) discuss formula clumping more generally.

and a short modifier αὖτε. The second is syntagmatically, but not semantically parallel: it is composed of object, conjunction, verb (this time "he answered"), and peripheral modifier. One might suspect a distinction in emphasis between "he answered" and "he spoke in answer," although this would be hard to prove. However, even if there is no real distinction between these two phrases there is a difference between the semantics of their core verbs. It is the use of the secondary modifiers (particularly αὖτε) which causes the meanings of the two phrases to shade together. As long as the core semantics of two similar basic types are still different enough to be economically distinguished, poets will continue to learn and use both of them.[19] In this case it is not surprising that some forms of overlapping meaning will continue to be generated.[20]

So far we have seen confirmation of Visser's syntagmatic approach to formulaic composition in a significantly large body of additional data (527 lines and partial lines). We have also seen evidence of a system which is highly economical in several dimensions and so lends credence to Visser's underlying hypothesis of oral composition. As Lord (1960:48–9) observed, economy is characteristic of individual singers, not whole traditions. Thus systematic economy is strong evidence of oral composition, not simply imitation of or dependence on an oral tradition. Furthermore, this analysis also holds for the *Iliad* (another 508 lines), with one point of difficulty.[21] Now I want to mention three ways in which this kind of formal study can enhance our understanding of other aspects of Homeric poetry.

1) The distinction between the "speak to" and "speak among" types formalizes a well–known fact of Homeric diction (Chantraine [1953:116]): the alternation between προς–compounds of verbs of speaking plus accusative for single addressees and μετα–compounds plus the dative for multiple addressees. Less commented on are the two violations of this rule in the *Odyssey*. At 9.407 and 22.34 the verb προσέφη is used with the plural object τούς rather than

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[19]Sale (1989:390–391) discusses a very similar situation involving the addition of generic epithets to noun phrases to create apparently non–economical compounds.

[20]Austin (1975:29, 62–3) makes an incidental attack on the economy of the speech introduction formulae, but his examples are largely due to compounding as described here. He also cites (30) the fact that there are three different lines containing both γήθησε and πολύτλας δῖος 'Οδυσσεύς. In fact all three lines have different meanings (one starts with a speech–conclusion formula, one involves the common phrase τὸν...ἰδών, and the other is the simple form).

[21]This point is the single occurrence of ἀμείψατο (*Il.* 4.403). There does not seem to be any difference in sense between this aorist and the normal imperfect, nor are there any manuscript variants. Still, one might be tempted to emend to ἀμείβετο. This violation is unique in Homer, but becomes systematic in Apollonius. The *Iliad* has no examples of προσέφη with a plural object.

with the expected singular τόν. In both cases a specific effect can be attributed
to the collective reference to the entire group of addressees. *Od.* 9.407 (τοὺς
δ' αὖτ' ἐξ ἄντρου προσέφη κρατερὸς Πολύφημος·) depicts the blind
Cyclops' pathetic address to his unseen and therefore undifferentiated audience.
At *Od.* 22.34 (τοὺς δ' ἄρ' ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν προσέφη πολύμητις 'Οδυσσεύς·)
Odysseus contemptuously lumps the suitors together before he slaughters
them.[22] These two lines seem to be examples of the manipulation of formulaic
expectation for performance effect.

2) There is no regular system of expressions marking the beginning of a
series of speeches. Occasionally the initiation of speech is marked by the verb
ἄρχομαι or by the adjective πρότερος (just as the first in a series of killings
is often marked by πρῶτος), but more often the poet simply uses a line of the
"speak among (a group)" type. The converse of this is also true; with only
three or four exceptions, uses of these lines occur at the beginning of a
discussion or after a pause in conversation (often for audience reaction, as
noted by Edwards). The προς–forms are almost completely restricted to
transitions within discussions.[23] This illustrates the highly agonistic character
of Homeric discourse. A speaker may start by addressing the community at
large, but once talk has begun, all remarks are necessarily addressed to the
preceding speaker. This one–on–one confrontation is a function of the
inherently competitive nature of public speaking explored by Richard Martin
in *The Language of Heroes* (1989). A pause for description of the reaction
seems to imply an evaluation by the internal audience. Thus the competitive
cycle ends (at least potentially), and conversation can begin anew.

3) In the same work, Martin argues that the description of a speech as a
μῦθος or as ἔπεα πτερόεντα (as opposed to ἔπος alone) marks it as a speech
act considered as such, and furthermore one that claims authority for itself;
ἔπος and ἔπεα (unwinged) are merely the words of an utterance as viewed in
isolation from their context. This is the most recent entry in a debate going

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[22]My interpretation of these lines presumes that in both cases the speaker serves as implicit
embedded focalizer for the speech–introduction. In her narratological discussion of speech
introductions in the *Iliad*, de Jong (1987:195–220) does not record any instances of this specific
phenomenon, although she does note cases where the internal audience focalizes similarly.
Nonetheless, I do not think that this presumption is a very strong one. Possible parallels are
discussed by Nagy (1979) and Martin (1989:236–7).

[23]Given these usage facts, one might be tempted to collapse the "speak to" (b) and "answer"
(d) types into one group. If this were done, the combined series would still be completely
economical. On the other hand (b) verbs, but not (d) verbs, can introduce a conversation so
long as there are exactly two participants. Hence I think it best to assume that the natural
semantic distinction is maintained.

back to Milman Parry and George Calhoun over whether the choice of terms describing a speech is determined solely by metrical features or not. As noted above these terms are determinants in the most common context, the "spoke a speech" line type and thus metrically relatively free. In addition modal datives such as ἔπεσσι(ν) and μύθοισι are independent, secondary modifiers, not parts of variable series (they also follow the expected localization patterns); hence the poet again has free metrical choice. Only in a few phrases is the choice of μῦθος (Tables 4b, c) metrically determined. This removes a major obstacle to theories such as Martin's which seek to establish semantic or pragmatic distinctions among the various terms.

To summarize this section, we have divided most of the generalized speech–introducing lines in the *Odyssey* into four groups based on the meaning of the main verb. Each of these types can be decomposed into determinants, whose form in an individual line is fixed by the story and are given priority in placement in the line, and by a series of variables, whose particular form is accommodated to the remaining metrical space. These series are individually metrically economical and (where appropriate) are shared between schemata. Localization data are compatible with the proposed order of composition. The facts of economy and localization show that this categorization of speech introductions has real content. Apollonius of Rhodes does not show the economy that Homer does; this provides empirical confirmation for the theoretical expectation that a poet using retractative composition (even one with a deep familiarity with traditional epic language) will not employ economical systems. This evidence tends to confirm Visser's theory about how pieces of common type–scenes are composed and to support the notion of composition–in–performance.

III. Theory and Production

In this final section I want to raise a question about the nature of objects like "determinant" and "variable." Are they merely convenient analytical categories, or do they seem to be part of the actual process of composition?[24] To approach this question I want to compare the notions that have been used so far to another important theoretical concept—the distinction between nucleus

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[24]I adopt here the "mentalist" position of Chomsky; that is, a sufficiently descriptive and predictive model of linguistic behavior may be taken to reflect, at least partially, the actual underlying mental processes (see Horrocks [1987:5–10] and his references). Readers who reject this principle out of hand may prefer to read this section simply as additional argument that the analysis of the second section is the best available in purely formal terms.

and periphery.[25] Within a unit of composition (e.g. scene, line, or phrase) elements which are assumed to be present from the nature of the unit as a whole by the composer are said to be "peripheral." Thus peripheral elements tend to provide redundant information. Those elements which are specific to one instance of the compositional unit are "nuclear." For instance, in scenes of killing in the *Iliad*, phrases meaning "with a spear" are peripheral to the line (e.g. ἔγχεϊ χαλκείῳ, *Il.* 6.31). Spears are the unmarked weapon, and the addition of these phrases simply spells out something which is already assumed.[26] On the other hand, the very same phrase is nuclear in a line describing the driving of horses (e.g. *Il.* 5.852). Less obviously, the verb meaning "he killed" in the standard killing scenes is also peripheral. This verb is automatic in what is already known to be a killing scene *from the point of view of the composer*. Hence the determinant/variable relationship can be seen as a special case of nucleus/periphery. Bakker and Fabbricotti[27] (1991:67) contend that "peripheral elements have to be (i) as neutral as possible with respect to their context, and (ii) metrically variable." Furthermore, they offer the observation that "peripherality is a recursive affair: it [also] applies *within* expressions that are *as a whole* peripheral to something else [emphasis original]" (69).

    To take the second observation first, let us consider the nuclear-peripheral distinction within the phrase, the smallest domain in which it would make sense. (I would prefer not to call parts of words nuclear and peripheral, at least not in a specifically poetic context.[28]) Bakker and Fabbricotti's flagship example is that of proper noun and epithet formulae. They point out that in Milman Parry's earliest work these formulae are not conceived of as individual fixed units (πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς or ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς), but as a single essential (i.e. nuclear) element—the proper name—and a variety of optional (i.e. peripheral) extensions that could be added where metrically convenient—the epithets. This makes sense for the proper noun formulae,[29] but does not work so well for common noun formulae or for verbal formulae.

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[25]The discussion and examples of this paragraph are based closely on Bakker and Fabbricotti (1991).

[26]And within a phrase like "with shining spear," "shining" is essentially redundant (there are few dull spears in the epic world) and therefore peripheral.

[27]Generalizing and translating Jahn (1987:249).

[28]One could, however, make a case for describing the past indicative augment as peripheral to a nucleus consisting of root and endings.

[29]Thus normally these epithets will be peripheral material, added in the last stage of line composition. There are, however, persistent reports of locally significant use of personal epithets (e.g. Austin [1975], Vivante [1980]). If these are correct, then they would be nuclear uses of the same words, added earlier in the composition (like πρότερος).

Consider the formula series cited above for "speak (a speech)" or that for "sword (nom. sing.)" (Paraskevaides [1984:21–2]):

ξίφος	CᴗᴗC	ξίφος ἄμφηκες	Cᴗᴗ– –ᴗC
φάσγανον	C–ᴗᴗC	φάσγανον ἄμφηκες	C–ᴗᴗ– –ᴗC
ξίφος ὀξύ	Cᴗᴗ–ᴗV	ἄορ παγχάλκεον	Vᴗᴗ– –ᴗᴗC
μέγα ξίφος	Cᴗ–ᴗᴗC	τανύηκες ἄορ	Cᴗᴗ–ᴗᴗ–C
ἄορ ὀξύ	Vᴗᴗ–ᴗV	δεῖνον ἄορ τανύηκες	C–ᴗᴗ–ᴗᴗ–ᴗC
μέγα φάσγανον	Cᴗᴗ–ᴗᴗC	φάσγανον ἀργυρόηλον	C–ᴗᴗ–ᴗᴗ–ᴗC
φάσγανον ὀξύ	C–ᴗᴗ–ᴗV	ξίφος ἀργηυρόηλον	Cᴗᴗ– –ᴗᴗ–ᴗC
χάλκειον ἄορ	C– –ᴗᴗ–C		

Both are highly suppletive, using a variety of terms for the nuclear idea. Thus the poet cannot choose a nuclear term without knowing the metrical shape of the whole phrase. This suppletion also characterizes the other "he said" formulae, "he killed" formulae, Jahn's (1987:254) mental organ formulae, Bakker and Fabbricotti's spear formulae, and many of Paraskevaides' other common noun series. It is still possible in the abstract to identify the nuclear and peripheral elements in these formulae, but they do not seem to have compositional significance. Rather, most verbal and common noun formulae are best taken as units. Furthermore, if we consider the case of formulae with specialized meanings, then even the abstract nuclear/peripheral distinction can be lost. If a phrase like ἔπεα πτερόεντα has acquired an idiomatic sense that is attributable to neither adjective nor noun (see section II), then neither part can be considered nuclear or peripheral. Similarly, if a phrase like ἐπὶ νηυσὶ θοῆσιν actually means "in the Greek camp" (Sale [1987:24]), then we might not want to select any single element as being nuclear.

Now let us return to the properties that Bakker and Fabbricotti assign to peripherality: (i) semantic neutrality in context and (ii) metrical extension. The first property, as they point out, follows directly from the definition of peripherality. The second is not logically necessary, but seems to hold in all the cases that have been examined so far. This systematic metrical variety is, of course, one of the best arguments from formularity for oral composition–in–performance: in a written composition variety of phrases might be motivated, but not metrical variety. We might now ask whether this property is reversible; that is, are items which occur in extensive and economical series peripheral (in a significant number of contexts)? We can see a suspicious case in speech introductions. The terms αὖ/αὖτ'/αὖτε/αὖτις/ἔπειτα[30] /ἀμειβόμενος/ἀπαμειβόμενος all have the same sense ("in turn") and each is

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[30]I refer here to the word ἔπειτα alone (as in τὸν δ' ἠμείβετ' ἔπειτα), not as part of the conjunction series (Tables 1b and 4e).

metrically distinct. The meaning "in turn" is clearly not appropriate to some addresses,[31] and there are seven terms. More dramatically we can look again at Sale's (1987) lists of locative expressions. There is very little that can happen in the Achaean camp that cannot also occur (at least in Homer) in Troy; it is impossible to supply a locative simply on the basis of scene type. Hence these expressions will almost never be context–neutral. In general it is hard to imagine that common noun phrases in the nominative or accusative, such as the sword system cited above or the smaller (nominative) mental organ system of Jahn,[32] can be semantically context–neutral more than occasionally.

Although variables need not be peripheral elements, it is still possible that the other implication could hold. All determinants could be nuclear elements. This question is not really decidable from material currently at hand, but the following facts may be suggestive. One of the features that distinguished the speech introductions from the killing scenes was the frequent use of pronouns for personal names when, as often, the reference was quite clear. In fact, lines such as these:

κα⸍ί οἱ ἐπευχόμενος ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα

ἀγχοῦ δ' ἱσταμένη προσέφη γλαυκῶπις 'Αθήνη

show that there is even a null option for the object when his identity is clear from the context. (I take οἱ closely with ἐπευχόμενος in the first example.) Since the pronouns are in this sense redundant, they may be considered peripheral. Now consider the localization of these pronouns (τόν, τήν, etc.) when they do occur. They normally take the first position in the clause.[33] In particular, the collocation τὸν καί (before a consonant) occurs nine times in the speech introductions to the complete exclusion of the metrically equivalent καὶ τόν (*Il.* 5.632, 13.306, 14.41, 16.858, 22.364, 23.438, 24.485; *Od.* 16.460, 17.74): τὸν καὶ Τηλέμαχος πρότερος πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπεν (*Od.* 16.460). Otherwise τὸν καί occurs only three times (*Il.* 1.406, 8.285, 20.234). Given the individual shapes of the two words and the general tendencies of clause–connective καί, one would expect the other order at least occasionally, as happens several times in less stereotyped situations: καὶ τὴν μὲν προπάροιθε

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[31]More specifically, these could be peripheral to verbs of answering, but not to the more general (and more common) verbs of address.

[32]In his review of Jahn, van der Mije (1991:443–4) points out that Jahn's treatment of obliques is much more convincing than that of the nominatives.

[33]In this case localization presumably has more to do with the word's status as an anaphor than with metrical factors.

ποδῶν Ἀχιλῆος ἔθηκεν (*Il.* 20.324). In all, καὶ τόν/τήν occurs 7x in *Il.* and
5x in *Od.* In ten of these twelve examples τόν is the direct object of the main
verb. The unusual word order of the speech introductions can be explained if
we assume that the determinant retains priority in placement in the line even if
it is expressed by a pronoun rather than a proper noun. In other words,
priority is assigned not on the basis of the fixity or flexibility of individual
metrical forms, but of the prototype case which, for direct objects of verbs of
address or killing, is a proper noun. This is normally a fixed form and must be
placed accordingly.

The appeal to the notions of nuclear and peripheral attempts to explain
the strategies of oral poetry as the exploitation or specialization of more
general and pre–existing cognitive or linguistic strategies. I have argued above
that abstract categories of nucleus and periphery do not line up exactly with the
categories of determinant and variable. In particular, the distribution of τὸν
καί and καὶ τόν suggests (though by no means conclusively) that the latter pair
best describes the process of composition. Similarly, within formulae the
nuclear/peripheral distinction seems irrelevant to the actual production of
many verbal and common–noun phrases. Whatever their historical origin,
many of them would be learned and used as unanalyzed units by poets.[34] Thus I
contend that in both cases the poet has not merely used a normal cognitive
structure (i.e. a general notion of givenness or salience), but has formalized
and generalized the most common form of that structure (i.e. the
determinant/variable distinction or certain long formulae). Hence, because the
direct object is normally nuclear, it is always a determinant in common type–
scenes. Frequently used combinations of nuclear noun and peripheral adjective
are eventually learned as single units. None of this argues against the
importance of the nuclear/peripheral distinction; it is one of our most
important tools for understanding why Homeric composition takes on the
formal structures that it does. On the other hand it is important to note that,
just as in vocabulary and morphology, there is an element of artificiality in the
"syntax" (broadly defined) of the Homeric poems.

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[34]In fairness to Bakker, it should be pointed out that he has never been interested in ruling
out these units; nonetheless, I do see between us a difference of emphasis on the role of such
units.

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