The Repetitive Structure in Verse: A Comparative Study in Homeric, South Slavic, and Ugaritic Poetry

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EPIC POETRY is one of the oldest manifestations of literature that have come down to us and it is attested in many ancient literary traditions. The ancient epic has reached us, of course, in written form; however, we can assume that the primal form of many epics was oral. As one may expect, the nature of epic poetry varies according to its peculiar setting, but side by side with its multi-colored embodiments we observe similar patterns and elements, which manifest themselves even in corpora distant from each other in time and place of composition and not at all alike in their literary character. It is well known that the element of repetition is one of the most persistent constants of this literature. Its employment can be divided into three categories: (1) repetition expressed in formula; (2) narrative repetition; and (3) the repetitive structure in verse.

(1) In Milman Parry's definition, a formula is "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea."[1] The combination of different formulae and formulaic expressions may create a formulary passage that repeats in precise or partial manner whenever the poet comes to speak of the same subject. Oral

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[1] M. Parry, "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making I: Homer and Homeric Style," *HSCP* 41 (1930) 80 [= A. Parry (ed.), *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry* (Oxford 1971) 272].

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poetry is often marked by formulae, but their extent differs from one corpus to another, Homer apparently being the one who employs formulae most frequently and to the widest extent.

(2) By narrative repetition I mean the repetition used to describe an act which took place twice or several times. Oral poetry tends to describe the same act in the same words. This type of repetition is most frequent in stories of two kinds. (a) Delivery by a Herald. The poet tells: one ordered a herald to say this and that to a person, and here the entire statement is given. The poet then describes the herald's arrival at his destination and delivery of the message, and at this point the previous statement is repeated verbatim. (b) The execution of a command. The poet tells: one ordered another to do so and so, and here the entire order is given. Later the poet tells that the latter did as he had been ordered, and the entire order is repeated verbatim.

(3) An additional type of repetition, frequently employed in oral poetry, is what we may call the repetitive structure in verse, a manner of shaping the course of the narrative or broadening the description by a partial repetition of a previous verse to which a new element is added. In its simplest form the complete verse is repeated verbatim or with minor modifications.

This paper will examine this third kind of repetition, the repetitive structure in verse, and its employment in two corpora of epic poetry: the poetry discovered at Ugarit in northern Syria (destroyed at the beginning of the twelfth century BCE), whose oral character is hypothetical,[2] and the South Slavic

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[2] For the formulaic character of Ugaritic verse see among others U. Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath* (Jerusalem 1971), and *Biblical and Oriental Studies* II (Jerusalem 1975) 16–59; L. R. Fisher and S. Rummel (eds.), *Ras Shamra Parallels* I–III (Rome 1972–1981); K. T. Aitken, "Oral Formulaic Composition and Theme in the Aqhat Narrative," *UF* 21 (1989) 1–16; R. E. Whitaker, *A Formulaic Analysis of Ugaritic Poetry* (diss. Harvard 1969; very short summary in *HThR* 63 [1970] 523–524), and "Ugaritic Formulae," in *Ras Shamra Parallels* III 207–219.

poetry as it was first documented by Milman Parry and A. B. Lord in Novi Pazar in the 1930s. We aim to show that although the roots of the phenomenon, which we call the repetitive structure in verse, lie in the very nature of oral composition, nevertheless repetitive structures are only rarely found in Homer. We shall try to explain this striking deviation from what seems to be one of the basics of oral poetry.

The scope of this paper is limited and is based mainly on three corpora: the Homeric poems, the South Slavic poetry, and the Ugaritic poetry. I should note that I am not an expert in the Slavic languages. The study presented here of the South Slavic material relies to a large extent on the translations of Albert Lord with some assistance from an expert in these languages.

Some general characteristics of repetitive structures in Ugaritic and South Slavic poetry

Ugaritic poetry

The principle of parallelism dominates Ugaritic poetry.[3] The small poetic unit is quite regularly composed of two, or sometimes more, cola set in a parallel structure, as in this description of the goddess Anath: tġdd kbdh bṣḥq / ymlʾu lbh bšmḫt, "Her liver swells with laughter, her heart fills up with joy" (*CTA* 3.ii.25–26). Being close to repetition by its very nature, the parallel structure makes it difficult to isolate repetitions. To avoid this difficulty the following survey will be limited to plain and clear examples and will not include verses in which the repetitive element is not conspicuous.

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[3] For a comprehensive examination of the relation between repetition and parallelism in Ugaritic Poetry see Y. Avishur, *The Repetition and the Parallelism in Biblical and Canaanite Poetry* (Tel Aviv 2002 [Hebrew]). Avishur claims that the origin of the parallel structure is complete repetition. The transition was gradual, beginning in changing one particle or word until the entire verse was modified. I follow the numbering of Andree Herdner, *Corpus des tablettes en cuneiformes alphabetiques* (Paris 1963: *CTA*). The translations from Ugaritic given here are by either H. L. Ginsberg, in *ANET³* (Princeton 1969) 129–155, or S. E. Loewenstamm (see below) or Avishur.

In one of the Baal Cycle stelae two cola are presumably repeated with a change of one word seven times (*CTA* 6.i.18–29):

ṭṭbẖ šbʿm rʾumm / kgmn ʾalʾiyn [b]ʿl
ṭṭbẖ šbʿm ʾalpm / [kg]mn ʾalʾiyn bʿl
[ṭṭ]bẖ šbʿm ṣʾin / [kgm]n ʾalʾiyn bʿl
[ṭṭb]ẖ šbʿm ʾaylm / [kgmn] ʾalʾiyn bʿl
[ṭṭbẖ š]bʿm yʿlm / [kgmn ʾal]ʾiyn bʿl
[ṭṭbẖ šbʿm y]ḥmrm / [kgm]n ʾal[ʾi]yn b[ʿl]

She slaughters seventy buffaloes as tribute to Puissant Baal; she slaughters seventy neat [as tr]ibute to Puissant Baal; [she slaugh]ters seventy small cattle [as tribu]te to Puissant Baal; [she slaugh]ters seventy deer [as tribute to] Puissant Baal; [she slaughters] seventy mountain-goats [as tribute to Pu]issant Baal; [she slaughters seventy ro]ebucks [as tribu]te to Puissant Baal.

In the following example a single colon is repeated (*CTA* 14.ii.73–75):

ʿl lẓr [mg]dl
wʿl lẓr [mg]dl
rkb ṯkmm ḥm[t]

Go up to the top of a [to]wer, and go up to the top of a [to]wer, bestride the top of the wal[l].[4]

Repetition of a single colon with some modifications is quite common. This type of repetition is getting close to parallelism. In the following example a single colon is repeated with a change of one word (*CTA* 23.8–9).

bdh ḫṭ ṯkl
bdh ḫṭ ʾulmn

In his hand the scepter of childlessness, in his hand the scepter of widowness.

The change of word(s) may be followed by a different order of words (*CTA* 15.iv.17–18):

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[4] But see Ginsberg, *ANET*[3] 143 n.8, who conjectures that ʿl lẓr mgdl is a dittography of the next colon.

ʿlh ṯrh tšʿrb
ʿlh tšʿrb ẓbyh

To him his bulls she brings, to him she brings his gazelles.

CTA 19.iii.114–115:

knp nšrm bʿl yṯbr
bʿl ṯbr dʾiy hmt

The eagles' wings Baal doth break, Baal doth break the pinions of them.

In the following example two words, ʿlk pht, are repeated seven times while the object of the verb pht is altered (*CTA* 6.v.10–19):

yšʾu gh wyṣḥ
ʿlk b[ʿ]lm pht qlt
ʿlk pht dry bḫrb
ʿlk pht šrp bʾišt
ʿlk [pht ṭḥ]n brḥm
ʿ[lk] pht [dr]y bkbrt
ʿlk pht [–]l[–] bšdm
ʿlk pht drʿ bym

He (Mot) lifts up his voice and says: upon thee (= because of thee), Baal, have I seen Downfall, upon thee have I seen Winnowing with sword, upon thee have I seen Burning with fire, upon thee [have I seen Gri]nding with hand-mill, up[on thee] have I seen [Siftin]g with sieve, upon thee have I seen […] in the soil, upon thee have I seen Scattering in the sea.

South Slavic poetry

The sequential rather than repetitive character of narrative in South Slavic poetry, as opposed to Ugaritic poetry, makes the repetitions more easily distinguished.

The repetition may include only part of verse (1.1358–1360):

Ne bi ćare, izun poklonijo;
Ej! Fatima krenu Bosni ravnoj.
Ej! Ne bi ćare, spremi se Fatima.

There was naught else he could do, so he granted permission, and Fatima departed for level Bosnia. There was naught else he could do, so Fatima made preparations.[5]

or a complete verse (10.155–157):

Toga ljeta petoga nisana
Ima svadba u našeg sultana,
Ima svadba u našeg sultana.

This summer on the fifth of Nisan there will be a wedding at the palace, there will be a wedding at the palace.

Sometimes the single verse is repeated after several verses. This form occurs in speeches: the speaker opens and closes his or her statement with the same words. In the following example the opening line is repeated at the end of the speech (1.1481–1485):

Hej! Gazijo, Đerđeljez Aljijo!
Sprema' svate kad je tebe drago!
U zdravlje te ćekala Fatima;
Sve ti rza ćuvam i namuza.
Sprem' svatove kad je tebe drago!

O, my hero, Đerđelez Alija! Send the wedding guests whenever you wish. Fatima has waited for you in safety. I have preserved my honor and my faith for you. Send the wedding guests whenever you wish.

The verbatim repetition is found more often in the lyric songs.[6] The less rigid repetition, one involving some modifications, characterizes the South Slavic epic tradition as a whole.

In the following example a verse is repeated with a change of one word (4.1588–1589):

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[5] The quotations from South Slavic poetry are taken from M. Parry and A. B. Lord, *Serbo-Croatian Heroic Songs / Novi Pazar* I–II (Cambridge [Mass.]/ Belgrade 1953–1954). Lord's English translations are in volume I; the original songs are in II, here cited by the number of the song and the line numbers.

[6] See B. Bartok and A. B. Lord, *Serbo-Croatian Folk Songs* (New York 1951).

Izvadiste lj' društvo sa zindana?
Izvadiste lj' društvo sa tavnice?

Did you rescue our comrades from the dungeon? Did you rescue
our comrades from prison?[7]

A verse is frequently repeated with somewhat larger modifi-
cations (26.176–178):

No ja dođo' u Stambolu gradu.
Kad ja dođo' stambolskoj kapiji,
Kad ja dođo' bijela pajtahta

When I came to the city of Stambol, when I came to the gates of
Stambol, when I came to the white imperial palace…

Some subjects are regularly described by repetition. Partial
repetition, a few verses long, is found in describing an action
that takes place with reference to several objects (24.634–636):

Majka će ti konja nabaviti,
Majka će ti ruho dobaviti,
Majka će ti oruže dobaviti.

Your mother will find you a horse, your mother will find you
clothes, and your mother will find you weapons.[8]

The arrival of a hero to a certain place and the beginning of his
affairs at that place are regularly expressed by repetition. In
this structure it is said that the hero went/rode/traveled etc.
"until he arrived at a certain place. When he arrived at this
place" this and this happened or so and so he acted. The verb
in the second verse ("when he arrived" etc.) is often replaced by
a verb with a similar meaning. For example (17.690–692):

Tako idu zemljom i svijetom,
Dok dođoše moru na obalu.
Kad stigoše moru na obalu

Thus they traversed land and countryside until they came to the
shore of the sea. When they arrived at the shore of the sea…

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[7] For the phenomenon of a couplet formed by repetition see Lord, *The
Singer of Tales* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1960) 57–58.

[8] Cf. *CTA* 6.i.18–29; 6.v.10–19 (quoted above).

This form is quite common in describing the hero's arrival at a certain place, but it occurs also with reference to other actions. For example (26.600–602):

> Eve Kajto sokacima dođe,
> Dokljen nađe zlaćene kanate.
> Kade nađe zlaćene kanate

> And Kajtaz walked along the streets until he found the portals of gold. When he found the portals of gold…

The expanded colon in Ugaritic verse

This phenomenon, entitled by the biblical scholar Samuel E. Loewenstamm "the expanded colon in verse," was recognized long ago, in the twelfth century, by the biblical exegetist Rashbam, the grandson of Rashi. Discussing the verse "Thy right hand, O Lord, glorious in power / thy right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy" (Ex 15:6), Rashbam cited similar biblical verses, such as "The floods have lifted up, O Lord / the floods have lifted up their voice" (Ps 93:3), and defined their structure as follows: "The first half is incomplete without the second half, which repeats and completes the thought." This stylistic phenomenon was further studied in comparison to similar verses found in Ugaritic poetry by Loewenstamm.[9]

Loewenstamm defined the basic structure of the expanded colon as follows: "after the first two words the poet interrupts his continuous flow of words with an address … repeats the first two words, and completes the sentence." A clear example

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[9] S. E. Loewenstamm, *Lešonenu* 27–28 (1964) 111–126 [Hebrew]. For previous and further research of the scheme see Loewenstamm's review at the beginning of his article and the supplement of Avishur, *The Repetition and the Parallelism* 65 ff. Loewenstamm expanded his article in English: "The Expanded Colon in Ugaritic and Biblical Verse," *JSS* 14 (1969) 176–196. See also his response to E. L. Greenstein's criticism ("Two Variations of Grammatical Parallelism in Canaanite Poetry and their Psycholinguistic Background," *JANES* 6 [1974] 96 ff.): "The Expanded Colon – Reconsidered," *UF* 7 (1975) 261–264. Eventually the two articles were published with further additions in his *Comparative Studies in Biblical and Ancient Oriental Literatures* (Neukirchen-Vluyn 1980) 281–309, 496–502.

is the Ugaritic verse ht ʾibk bʿlm / ht ʾibk tmḫṣ / ht tṣmt ṣrtk, "Lo, thy enemies, O Baal / lo, thy enemies shalt thou shatter / lo, thou shalt destroy thy oppressors" (*CTA* 2.iv.8–9). According to Loewenstamm's observation, there are three parts modified by this verse: (1) a repetitive formula of two words, thus ht ʾibk; (2) an intervening formula of one or two words, thus bʿlm; (3) a complementary formula of one or two words, thus tmḫṣ. The third colon ht tṣmt ṣrtk parallels the two first cola and especially the second.

In the text just cited the intervening formula between the two repetitive formulae is an address (bʿlm, "O Baal"). Loewenstamm observed another type of expanded colon in which an intervening formula serves as the subject of the sentence.[10] A third type observed by Loewenstamm and developed further with additional examples by Avishur[11] is indicated in the complementary formula only without any intervening formula. In this type one or two words at the end of the first colon are repeated at the beginning of the second. We can illustrate the three types of use of the expanded colon.

(a) With the intervening formula as an address (*CTA* 16.vi.54–57):

yṯbr ḥrn ybn
yṯbr ḥrn rʾišk
ʿṯtrt šm bʿl qdqdk

May Horon break, O my son, may Horon break thy head, Ashtoret Name of Baal thy crown

(b) The intervening formula as the subject (*CTA* 14.i.21–23):

yʿn ḥtkh krt
yʿn ḥtkh rš

[10] For yet another type of intervening formula detected in a single Ugaritic verse see Loewenstamm, *Comparative Studies* 291–292; Avishur, *The Repetition and the Parallelism* 79. For a repetitive formula of three words, instead of the regular two words, see Avishur, "Addenda to the Expanded Colon in Ugaritic and Biblical Verse," *UF* 4 (1972) 2, 4.

[11] Avishur, *UF* 4 (1972) 7–8; *The Repetition and the Parallelism* 115–116.

m'id grdš t̲bth

He saw his descendants, Krt, he saw his descendants destroyed, his dwelling-place utterly crushed

(c) With a complementary formula but without any intervening formula (*CTA* 15.iii.17–19):

tbrk 'ilm t'ity
t'ity 'ilm l'ahlhm
dr 'il lmšknthm

The gods blessed and they went, the gods went to their tents, the godly assemblage to their tabernacles)

CTA 23.35–36=31:

yqḥ 'il mštʿltm
mštʿltm lr'iš 'agn

El takes two kindlings, two kindlings from the top of the fire

CTA 23.50:

hn špthm mtqtm
mtqtm klrmn [m/t]

Lo their lips sweet, sweet as pomegranates

Similar patterns in South Slavic verse

A principle which bears a certain similarity to the expanded colon of Ugarit can also be found in South Slavic verse. One should not expect to find the unique features of the expanded colon of Ugarit in South-Slavic tradition. Yet the illuminating definition of Rashbam quoted above seems to apply here also, although at times in a looser manner: the first verse is incomplete without the second verse, which repeats and completes the thought.

First, in contrast to Ugaritic, the separation of the two repetitive formulae by an address at the end of the first verse is not a dominant characteristic of the South Slavic scheme; nevertheless, this type can also be found (20.148–149):

Sad da vidiš, moji sokolovi,
A da vidiš čuda golemoga.

Now you should have seen, my falcon friends, you should have seen a great wonder.

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In the following example the address is shorter, and therefore the repetition of the first verse is partial (4.749–750):

> Đuljić će ti halaljiti, ljubo,
> Halaljiti, pa i oprostiti.

> Đulić will give you his blessing, my love; he will give you his blessing and forgive you.

Second, a structure in which the last words (or word) of the first verse are repeated at the beginning of the second verse and the thought is then completed is frequent in South Slavic poetry (16.116–117):

> Ugrabi me još sedam tam rana,
> Sedam rana od sedam šešana.

> Still seven more wounds I received, seven wounds from seven rifles.

1.206–207:

> Znadi, Aljo ne da glave ramu,
> Ne da Aljo glave badihava!

> Know that Alija does not give up his head from his shoulders, that Alija does not give up his head without a struggle!

1.999–1000:

> A stadoše zedno na divanu,
> Na divanu pred našem sultanu

> When they both stood together in council, in council before our sultan

Sometimes prominent words are repeated which are not the last in verse (4.570–571):

> Stara majka priđe na vratima,
> Priđe majka i sestra Fatima.

> His aged mother came to the door, his mother came and his sister Fatima.

The completion of the thought may be of a looser character, as when the additional part of the second verse adds a second

verb (12.738–740):[12]

> I mrtvace krajom odvojiše,
> Odvojiše, te hi pokupiše,
> Pokupiše, pa hi pokopaše

> They put the dead to one side, they put them to one side and gathered them together, they gathered them together and buried them.

Repetitive structures are rarely found in Homer

The dominance of repetitive structures of the kind encountered in Ugaritic and South Slavic poetry does not exist in Homer. This sort of composition is alien to the basics of the Homeric style. Despite the formula's dominance in his work Homer's poetry is not at all repetitive in its nature. The events are recounted one after the other in a lucid sequence, and the same matter is seldom repeated unless a repetition is needed on account of the story proper.

Admittedly repetitive verses are not entirely absent from Homer, and as in any other literary work, some words are indeed repeated in close proximity. Consider examples from the beginning of the *Iliad*.

1.266–267:

> κάρτιστοι δὴ κεῖνοι ἐπιχθονίων τράφεν ἀνδρῶν
> κάρτιστοι μὲν ἔσαν καὶ καρτίστοις ἐμάχοντο.

> They were the mightiest of all men bred upon earth; mightiest they were and with the mightiest fought they.[13]

2.379–390:

> εἰ δέ ποτ᾽ ἔς γε μίαν βουλεύσομεν, οὐκέτ᾽ ἔπειτα
> Τρωσὶν ἀνάβλησις κακοῦ ἔσσεται, οὐδ᾽ ἠβαιόν.

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[12] See also 4.749–750 (quoted above). Cf. Lord, *Singer of Tales* 32.

[13] Translations from M. Hammond, *Homer: The Iliad* (Harmondsworth 1987), and W. Shewring, *Homer: The Odyssey* (Oxford 1980), with some minor modifications, mostly intended to give a more verbatim translation of repetitive expressions.

νῦν δ᾽ ἔρχεσθ᾽ ἐπὶ δεῖπνον ἵνα ξυνάγωμεν Ἄρηα.
εὖ μέν τις δόρυ θηξάσθω, εὖ δ᾽ ἀσπίδα θέσθω,
εὖ δέ τις ἵπποισιν δεῖπνον δότω ὠκυπόδεσσιν,
εὖ δέ τις ἅρματος ἀμφὶς ἰδὼν πολέμοιο μεδέσθω,
ὥς κε πανημέριοι στυγερῷ κρινώμεθ᾽ Ἄρηϊ.
οὐ γὰρ παυσωλή γε μετέσσεται, οὐδ᾽ ἠβαιὸν,
εἰ μὴ νὺξ ἐλθοῦσα διακρινέει μένος ἀνδρῶν.
ἱδρώσει μέν τευ τελαμὼν ἀμφὶ στήθεσφιν
ἀσπίδος ἀμφιβρότης, περὶ δ᾽ ἔγχεϊ χεῖρα καμεῖται,
ἱδρώσει δέ τευ ἵππος ἐΰξοον ἅρμα τιταίνων.

If ever we become of one mind and purpose, then there will be no more postponement of the Trojans' fate, not even for a short while. Now you should go to take your food, so we can then join again in battle. And let every man of you put a good edge on your spears, and a good hang to your shields, give a good feed to your swift-footed horses, and cast a good eye over your chariots, and take thought for battle, so that we can run the trial of hateful Ares all day long. There will be no resting, not even for a short while, except when the coming of night separates the fighters' fury. There will be sweating on a man's chest under the strap of his covering shield, and his hand will tire on the spear; there will be sweating on a man's horse as it strains at the polished chariot.

Yet repetitions of this kind do not resemble the structures discussed above, and this for two reasons. First, the rarity of such repetitions makes them stand out, so that their use seems to be intended for some special emphasis. Second, and carrying more weight, these repetitions in Homer are of the kind encountered in every sort of literature, written and oral alike, and they do not constitute part of a fixed system of repetition-structures.

However in three cases, all found towards the end of the *Iliad*, we encounter a phenomenon which bears similarities to the one we have seen in Ugaritic and South Slavic verse: the second verse repeats the end of the first verse and completes the thought.[14] Of the three cases quoted below the second is

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[14] Cf. M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon* (Oxford 1997) 256–257, who

the most striking, as in the other two the completion of the thought is of a looser character.

Il. 20.371–372:

τοῦ δ᾽ ἐγὼ ἀντίος εἶμι καὶ εἰ πυρὶ χεῖρας ἔοικεν,
εἰ πυρὶ χεῖρας ἔοικε, μένος δ᾽ αἴθωνι σιδήρῳ.

Now I am going to face him, even if his hands are like fire, if his hands are like fire and his strength like gleaming iron.

22.126–128:

οὐ μέν πως νῦν ἔστιν ἀπὸ δρυὸς οὐδ᾽ ἀπὸ πέτρης
τῷ ὀαριζέμεναι, ἅ τε παρθένος ἠΐθεός τε
παρθένος ἠΐθεός τ᾽ ὀαρίζετον ἀλλήλοιιν.

In no wise may I now from oak-tree or from rock chat with him, the way a girl and a boy, a girl and a boy chat with each other.

23.641–642:

οἳ δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἔσαν δίδυμοι· ὃ μὲν ἔμπεδον ἡνιόχευεν,
ἔμπεδον ἡνιόχευ᾽, ὃ δ᾽ ἄρα μάστιγι κέλευεν.

These two were twins. One drove all the time with the reins, drove all the time with the reins, while the other laid on the whip.

Indeed, the repetition that occurs in these verses is unique and quite untypical of Homeric style.

The rarity of repetitive structures in Homer may be illustrated by examining common subjects which appear in all three corpora and which tend to attract repetition in Ugaritic and South Slavic poetry. We shall examine two phenomena of this kind: the first is shared by Homer and South Slavic poetry, the second is common to all three corpora.

(1) Unperiodic enjambement: division of name and epithet. In epic poetry epithets are usually closely connected with the name that they describe. Although there are epithets that appear at some distance from their names, the division of name

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observed the similarity between the Homeric verses (below) and the Ugaritic style. C. M. Bowra, *Homer and his Forerunners* (Edinburgh 1955) 13, noted the resemblance of the repetition in *Il.* 20.371–372 to the technique used in Russian traditional style.

and epithet between two verses, which was classified by Parry as one of the types of unperiodic enjambement,[15] is less frequent both in Homer and in South Slavic poetry. When such a gap does occur, the name is mentioned with or without an epithet in the first verse, and in the following verse the description is expanded and one or more epithets are added.

In South Slavic poetry the expansion of the second verse is regularly followed by repetition of the name:[16]

1.115–116:

> Pa krenuše sa grada Stambola,
> Sa Stambola grada carevoga

> And they departed from the city of Stambol, from Stambol the imperial city.

11.491–492:

> Donesi mi piva i jediva,
> Slatka piva a dosta jediva!

> Bring me food and drink, sweet drink and bountiful food.

1.131–132:

> Kud skitaše, za Aljiju pita,
> Za gaziju Đerđeljez Aljiju.

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[15] M. Parry, "The Distinctive Character of Enjambement in Homeric Verse," *TAPA* 60 (1929) 200–220 [= *The Making of Homeric Verse* 251–265], and "The Traditional Epithet in Homer," *The Making of Homeric Verse* 164–165. For further studies in Homeric enjambement see G. S. Kirk, "Studies in Some Technical Aspects of Homeric Style, II. Verse-Structure and Sentence-Structure in Homer," *YCS* 20 (1966) 105–152; M. W. Edwards, "Some Features of Homeric Craftsmanship," *TAPA* 97 (1966) 115–179; H. R. Barnes, "Enjambement and Oral Composition," *TAPA* 109 (1979) 1–10; C. Higbie, *Measure and Music. Enjambement and Sentence Structure in the Iliad* (Oxford 1990). See also n.17 and 24 below.

[16] In fact the same phenomenon is also found in Ugaritic poetry. I excluded it from this survey because it is not common and is too closely related to the parallel structure that dominates this poetry to be distinguished as a special separate characteristic of style. See e.g. *CTA* 19.iv.163–164; 16.iv.7–8 (=11–12); 24.2–3.

> Wherever he wandered, he asked for Alija, for the hero Đerđelez Alija.

If we look now at the same phenomenon in Homeric verse, we observe that the division of name and epithet between two verses appears in most cases in a simple sequential structure without repetition.

Il. 24.478–479:

> χερσὶν Ἀχιλλῆος λάβε γούνατα καὶ κύσε χεῖρας
> δεινὰς ἀνδροφόνους, αἵ οἱ πολέας κτάνον υἷας.

> He took Achilleus' knees in his arms and kissed his hands, the terrible, murderous (hands), which had killed many of his sons.

Od. 6.262–263:

> αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν πόλιος ἐπιβήομεν, ἣν πέρι πύργος
> ὑψηλός …

> But when we shall reach the city, around which runs a wall with towers, a high (wall with towers) …

Od. 22.79–80:

> ὣς ἄρα φωνήσας εἰρύσσατο φάσγανον ὀξὺ
> χάλκεον, ἀμφοτέρωθεν ἀκαχμένον …

> With these words he drew his keen sword, (sword) of bronze, two-edged ...

There is another difference between the South Slavic examples cited above and the Homeric way of expression, which illuminates their relation to repetition. In South Slavic poetry the second verse functions as an expansion of the previous verse, while in Homer the second verse is often not a mere expansion: the supplemented epithet itself may contain a new striking idea, as in *Il.* 24.479 (above), or is quite regularly followed by a new thought which advances the narrative, as in καλὸς δὲ λιμὴν ἑκάτερθε πόληος, which is the end of *Od.* 6.263 (above) or ἆλτο δ' ἐπ' αὐτῷ, which is the end of *Od.* 22.80 (above).

But there are also several cases in which an expansion of a second verse in Homer is followed by name-repetition. This duplication is often closely connected to a relative clause dependent on the second appearance of the name.

Od. 1.22–23:

ἀλλ᾽ ὁ μὲν Αἰθίοπας μετεκίαθε τηλόθ᾽ ἐόντας,
Αἰθίοπας, τοὶ διχθὰ δεδαίαται, ἔσχατοι ἀνδρῶν

But now (Poseidon) had gone to visit the distant Ethiopians, the Ethiopians whose nation is parted within itself, the farthest of men

Il. 2.671–674:

Νιρεὺς αὖ Σύμηθεν ἄγε τρεῖς νῆας ἐΐσας,
Νιρεὺς Ἀγλαΐης υἱὸς Χαρόποιό τ᾽ ἄνακτος,
Νιρεύς, ὃς κάλλιστος ἀνὴρ ὑπὸ Ἴλιον ἦλθε
τῶν ἄλλων Δαναῶν μετ᾽ ἀμύμονα Πηλεΐωνα.

Then Nireus brought three balanced ships from Syme, Nireus the son of Aglaia and lord Charopos, Nireus who was the handsomest man that came to Ilios of all the Danaans, after the peerless son of Peleus.[17]

(2) Continuation in a period of time

In the three corpora we encounter a description of an action or a certain state of affairs which continues for a period of several days/months/years until a new event occurs in the last day/month/year or until the action reaches its peak. In Ugaritic and South Slavic poetry the subject may be expressed by repetition.

In Ugaritic poetry the time unit is of seven days. The first line introduces the action that is about to take place for a period of six days. After the introduction, the description has the following scheme: one day, a second day the action continued, a third day, a fourth day the action continued, a fifth day, a sixth day the action continued, but when the seventh day ar-

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[17] See also *Il.* 2.837–838 (≈ 12.95–96), 849–850 (≈ 21.157–158), 870–871; 6.153–154, 395–397; 21.85–86; *Od.* 1.50–51; Hesiod *Op.* 317–319, 579–580. A. Hoekstra, *Homeric Modifications of Formulaic Prototypes* (Amsterdam 1964) 34, noted that this repetition "looks like an old formulaic device of narrative poetry." For the common Homeric device of a relative clause following a runover epithet see Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse* 308; J. B. Hainsworth, "Structure and Content in Epic Formulae: The Question of the Unique Expression," *CQ* 58 (1964) 158–159.

rived a new event took place (*CTA* 4.vi.22–33):

tšt ʾišt bbhtm / nb[l]ʾat bhklm
hn ym wtn / tʾikl ʾišt bbhtm / nblʾat bhk[l]m
tlt r!bʿ ym / tʾikl [ʾi]št bbhtm / nblʾa[t] bhklm
ḫmš t[d]t ym / tʾikl ʾišt [b]bhtm / nblʾat b[qrb hk]lm
mk bšb[ʿ] y[mm] / td ʾišt bbhtm / n[bl]ʾat bhklm

Fire is set to the house, flame to the palace. Lo, a day and a second, fire consumed in the house, flame in the palace, a third, a fourth day, fire consumed in the house, flame in the palace. A fifth, a sixth day, fire consumed in the house, flame in the palace. Lo, on the seventh day the fire departs from the house, the flame from the palace.

The repetitive element in this scheme was reduced until eventually the descriptive formula (here tʾikl ʾišt bbhtm / nblʾat bhklm) has been abandoned completely. In the following example only the pairs of days are enumerated (*CTA* 14.103–109):

kʾirby [t]škn šd / km ḫsn pʾat mdbr
lk ym wtn / tlt rbʿ ym / ḫmš tdt ym
mk špšm bšbʿ / wtmġy lʾudm rbt!

Like the locusts that dwell on the steppes, like the grasshoppers on the borders of the desert, march a day and a second, a third a fourth day, a fifth a sixth day, Lo, at the sunrise on the seventh, thou arrivest at Udum the Great.[18]

A similar description appears in South Slavic poetry, but without a limitation to a fixed unit of time or to a rigid scheme. A common element in the examples below and in n.19 is the

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[18] Our short summary of the seven-day scheme follows S. E. Loewenstamm, "The Seven Day-Unit in Ugaritic Epic Literature," *IEJ* 15 (1965) 122–133; and in an extended version in *Comparative Studies* 192–209. See also D. Freedman, "Counting Formulae in the Akkadian Epics," *JANES* 3 (1970–1971) 73–81. In Ugaritic the strong repetitive element is peculiar to day-enumeration. The description of an action that takes place in a year-unit may also be repetitive but with no recurring enumeration of the years that passed (*CTA* 19.iv.173–180; cf. 6.v.7–9). See Loewenstamm, *Comparative Studies* 208–209.

repetitive indication of the period of time in which the action took place.

In this example there is a line which enumerates the time that passed from the beginning of the action to the present. In contrast to Ugaritic poetry, the description of the action is not repeated verbatim (26.116–125):

Ratovasmo Bagdat i Kandiju,
Ratovasmo tri godine dana.
Ne obi' mu vara sa duvara,
Nit' ne znado' otkljen su mu vrata.
Ratovasmo šes godina dana,
Ja ne nađo' od Bagdata vrata.
Ratovasmo dvanajes godina,
Ne obi' mu vara sa duvara,
Ni kamena koljiko kremena.
Pa se stade odmaljiti hrana.

We waged war over Bagdad and Kandija, we waged war for three years. We didn't disturb the mortar in the walls, nor could I tell where the gates of Bagdad were. We waged war for six years, and I still couldn't find the gates of Bagdad. We waged war for twelve years, and we didn't disturb the mortar in the walls, nor chip from the stones a piece the size of a flint. Then our provisions began to run low …[19]

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[19] For this scheme see also 15.117–122 (for a simple non-repetitive form of the siege-scene see e.g. 1.19–24, 29–32). With South Slavic use of this scheme in siege/war-scenes compare the seven-day unit in a description of a city's capture in the Ugaritic Krt epic (*CTA* 14.iii.114–120, v.218–222). See also the verses quoted by Lord, *The Singer of Tales* 60. In a different description the period of time is enumerated in days or nights: 4.1350–1354, 12.756–762. The action described in the latter example is not static but liable to change. Nevertheless the significant change happens after the last time mark. See also 30.501–506.

Note that the schemes presented and referred to here are not common. Much more common schemes for describing an action that takes place for a period of time until a change occurs or until the action reaches its peak are: (1) A simple structure of the kind found in Homer, for example: Pa mislijo tri noći i dana. / Kad ćetvrto jutro josvanulo, / Ta put sestru zovnu u odaju, "He

Stories of events that continue day by day or year by year until eventually a change occurs are found in Homer as well. Such descriptions are presented in simple patterns which lack any element of repetition. For example *Il.* 1.53–54:[20]

ἐννῆμαρ μὲν ἀνὰ στρατὸν ᾤχετο κῆλα θεοῖο,
τῇ δεκάτῃ δ᾽ ἀγορὴν δὲ καλέσσατο λαὸν Ἀχιλλεύς.

For nine days the god's arrows plied throughout the army; but on the tenth Achilleus called the people to an assembly.

Od. 7.259–262:[21]

ἔνθα μὲν ἑπτάετες μένον ἔμπεδον, εἵματα δ᾽ αἰεὶ
δάκρυσι δεύεσκον, τά μοι ἄμβροτα δῶκε Καλυψώ·
ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δὴ ὄγδοόν μοι ἐπιπλόμενον ἔτος ἦλθεν,
καὶ τότε δή μ᾽ ἐκέλευσεν ἐποτρύνουσα νέεσθαι

There I remained for seven full years, and watered with continual weeping the celestial garments that Calypso gave me. But when the eighth year came circling round, then she told me and urged me to return …

Od. 10. 142–146:[22]

ἔνθα τότ᾽ ἐκβάντες δύο τ᾽ ἤματα καὶ δύο νύκτας
κείμεθ᾽ ὁμοῦ καμάτῳ τε καὶ ἄλγεσι θυμὸν ἔδοντες.
ἀλλ᾽ ὅτε δὴ τρίτον ἦμαρ ἐυπλόκαμος τέλες᾽ Ἠώς,
καὶ τότ᾽ ἐγὼν ἐμὸν ἔγχος ἑλὼν καὶ φάσγανον ὀξὺ
καρπαλίμως παρὰ νηὸς ἀνήιον ἐς περιωπήν

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pondered for three nights and three days. When the fourth morning dawned, then he called his sister to the chamber" (13.287–289). (2) Lines of the kind discussed above (8 ff.), in which the second line repeats the first and completes the thought, for example: Sjekoše se uz dva dana ravna, / A dva dana a tri noći ravne. / Kad ćetvrto jutro josvanulo, / Maglje tame fataju planinu, "They cut one another to pieces for two full days, for two days and three full nights. When the fourth morning dawned, dark clouds enveloped the mountains" (4.1636–1639).

[20] See also *Od.* 10.28–29, 80–81; 12.447–448; 9.82–84; 14.240–242; *Il.* 2.328–329; etc.

[21] See also *Od.* 14.285–288, 292–295; 10.467–471; 19.151–155; etc.

[22] Cf. South Slavic 13.287–289 (quoted n.19 above). See also *Il.* 6.174–176; *Od.* 9.74–78, 12.397–400, 15.476–478; etc.

Then we disembarked, and for two days and two nights we lay there, eating out our hearts with weariness and sorrow. But when Dawn of the braided hair brought the third day at last, then I took my spear and my sharp sword, and hastened up from the ship to a vantage-point…

Conclusions

I have tried to demonstrate that repetitive structures are regularly employed in oral poetry by examining two corpora, Ugaritic and South Slavic; each belongs to a different time and is of a different stylistic and literary character.[23] Among the various types of repetitive structures we saw in particular the repetition of the 'expanded colon' in Ugaritic poetry and found that a somewhat similar way of expression is characteristic of South Slavic poetry as well.

Let us describe briefly the role of repetitive structures in epic poetry. This phenomenon finds its explanation in the oral setting of composition in performance. The repetitive schemes help the singer to compose verses and complete the verse in a rapid simple manner, providing him with a fixed unit of words to fill part of the next verse, as may be demonstrated from a South Slavic example: Majka će ti konja nabaviti, / Majka će ti ruho dobaviti, / Majka će ti oruže dobaviti (24.634–636, cf. 7 above).

A repetition of the kind in which the second verse repeats part of the first verse and completes the thought is clearly, at least in South Slavic poetry, an instrument of oral composition.

[23] I assume that the use of repetitive structures is not restricted to Ugaritic and South Slavic composition but is characteristic to oral poetry at large (see below). Of course, in order to establish this assumption a more comprehensive study is required, which will examine more corpora of oral epic composition. For an initial indication of the principal part played by repetitive structures in other epic poetries consider, for example, the verse-collection presented by Bowra, *Heroic Poetry* (London 1952). See also Bowra, *Homer and his Forerunners* 13; M. West, *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (Oxford 2007) 106–107; M. S. Jensen's survey in *Writing Homer* (Copenhagen 2011) 55 ff., and the bibliography quoted there.

The South Slavic verse is ten syllables long with a pause after the fourth syllable. The repetitive formula is also quite regularly four syllables long. The singer clearly uses it in order to fill an important unit in the verse. This structure seems also to answer the difficulty of introducing expressions which are too long for a single verse but not long enough for two verses. Partial repetition at the beginning of the second verse solves that difficulty.

This technique is especially suited to a style in which the unit of sense is limited to a single line. Such a limitation characterizes both Homer and South Slavic poetry, but in South Slavic poetry its rate is considerably higher.[24] The repetitive scheme provides the singer with means to avoid this limitation in composition: he splits the sentence into two parts and inserts between them a transitional unit, which interrupts the continuous flow by repetition and stretches the sentence across two lines.[25]

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[24] See Parry, *TAPA* 60 (1929) 200–220, and "Whole Formulaic Verses in Greek and Southslavic Heroic Song," *TAPA* 64 (1933) 179–197 [= *The Making of Homeric Verse* 376–390]; A. B. Lord, "Homer and Huso III: Enjambement in Greek and South-Slavic Heroic Song," *TAPA* 79 (1948) 113–124.

[25] I have limited the above explanation to South Slavic poetry and excluded Ugaritic for two reasons: (1) The oral character of Ugaritic poetry is hypothetical; even more important, (2) the Ugaritic verse is not set in a fixed rigid meter and therefore the possibility to reach robust conclusions in this case is more problematic. That said, it is possible that the rigid scheme of the expanded colon indicates that here too it provides a tool for oral composition. As Loewenstamm, *Comparative Studies* 281–309, noted, the expanded colon abides by the following form: the first colon contains two words followed by an intervening formula of one word. The second colon repeats the two words of the first colon and completes the sentence with one word. This pattern may be indicated thus: 2-1 ‖ 2-1. There is a slight modification to one of the following patterns: 2-2 ‖ 2-2 or 2-2 ‖ 2-1 (not including the type without any intervening formula). Furthermore, in the Hebrew Bible, which is apparently further removed from its source in oral tradition, the expanded colon shows such a variety "that almost every verse is a unique form" (Loewenstamm 307).

As the use of repetitive structures is closely related to oral composition, the rarity of such structures in Homer is striking. How are we to explain this variation from what seems to be one of the basics of oral poetry? It has long been claimed that the high literary level of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is inconsistent with composition in performance. Bowra therefore assumed that Homer was a traditional poet in the midst of a change produced by the introduction of writing, and as he also learned how to write, he committed his poems to writing. This enabled him to give a far greater precision and care to what he says.[26] A different explanation, offered by Lord, was that Homer dictated his poems to a scribe at a slow pace which is fit for writing.[27] Without trying to penetrate the perhaps impenetrable mist of circumstances which prompted the shaping and the transmission into writing of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, it is possible that these events were connected with a process of distancing and detachment from oral tradition and culture. It is perhaps this process which caused the Homeric poet(s) to reject repetitive structures as means of composition.

But if it was indeed a decline in oral culture that caused the Homeric poet(s) to put aside the technique of repetitive structures, this abandonment is somewhat inconsistent with the fact that other repetitive presumably oral devices of composition such as formulae and narrative repetitions (see above) were not rejected by the poet(s). Therefore it is also possible and more likely that the rejection of repetitive structures took place within the oral tradition, or in other words, that repetitive structures were simply not part of the traditional tools in the rich Homeric arsenal. If so, this lack should be linked with the special characteristics of the Homeric style. It stands to reason that the

[26] Bowra, *Heroic Poetry* 240–241. West holds a similar view, see especially *The Making of the Iliad*: *Disquisition and Analytical Commentary* (Oxford 2011) 3–14, 48–68.

[27] A. B. Lord, "Homer's Originality: Oral Dictated Texts," *TAPA* 84 (1953) 124–134; see also R. Janko,"The Homeric Poems as Oral Dictated Texts," *CQ* 48 (1998) 1–13.

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dominance of formula in Homer, its richness and elaboration, is what limited the dependence on repetition. The elaboration of the formulaic system, with its fitness to every position in the hexameter verse and to the variety of caesurae, apparently enabled the poets of the Homeric tradition to abandon repetitive structures as a means of composition. This rejection was probably accompanied by some esthetic reservations as well. Once again, the high degree of elaboration of the formulaic system made Homer reject a type of composition which is based on plain repetition. This manner of composition might have seemed too simple or crude to the ear of the Homeric singer as compared with the more refined character of ancient Greek traditional diction.

Perhaps some traces of this rejected manner of composition, whether it took place within the oral tradition or outside of it at its decline, are indicated in those few cases where we encountered a repetition-pattern which is somewhat more frequently attested (17 and n.17 above) or one of unique nature (14).[28]

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