

# Structural Sympathies in Ancient Greek and South-Slavic Heroic Song

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## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

*Seit den Feldforschungen von Milman Parry (1933–1935) sind serbokroatische heroische Gesänge oft herangezogen worden, um die Kompositionspraxis des altgriechischen Epengesangs zu interpretieren. In vorliegendem Zusammenhang wird der Nutzen dieses Vergleichs hinterfragt, auch im Hinblick darauf, wie weit man bei dem Vergleich gehen kann, besonders, was die Melodik der beiden Traditionen betrifft. Ist die Methode, indoeuropäische Dichtung mit den Forschungsergebnissen Bartóks zu Parrys Sammlung zu vergleichen, geeignet, gemeinsame Wurzeln von griechischen und serbokroatischen Traditionen zu ermitteln?*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it scarcely occurred to scholars to treat the Homeric poems as musical documents. And yet clearly ancient Greek heroic narratives *were* sung, typically to the *phorminx*, the round-based lyre of Aegean tradition. Demodocus, Phemius, and Achilles are so portrayed by Homer as they sing ‘the famous deeds of men’ (*klea andrôn*). There is besides the explicit literary testimony of Sextus Empiricus: “The epics of Homer were of old sung to the lyre”. Conversely, Hesiod was considered exceptional for *not* accompanying his song: “It is said that Hesiod too was ruled out of the [*sc.* Pythian] competition, not having learned to play the *kithara* along with his singing”<sup>1</sup>.

Today it is common knowledge that oral narrative song traditions, though mostly evanescent, have survived in many parts of the world, and in others did so until very recently. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, when ethnographers first began to gather such material, these traditions were virtually unknown. The collectors’ designation of such singing as “folk music” is telling: archaic forms, once esteemed by all classes of an ethnic group,

can survive longer in geographical and social spheres less subject to the cultural ferment of court and city. Oral composition survives in isolated areas not because it is inherently peasant music, but because these populations remain illiterate longer than urban societies<sup>2</sup>. Such oral narratives had become thus marginalized in many parts of Europe already at the end of the Medieval period (see below), and by the 20<sup>th</sup> century the gulf between the scholarly world and the traditional poet was so wide that one may speak of genuine discoveries. Thus Bartók, despite years of energetic field work in the Balkans, would remark to Kodály of South-Slavic heroic song: “It is almost incredible that up to now I hardly had any idea that this last vestige of folk minstrelsy still flourishes in our neighborhood”<sup>3</sup>.

Bartók was introduced to this material in America during the war, having accepted an appointment at Columbia University, where he was to make transcriptions of material in the Milman Parry collection at Harvard. Parry had assembled this famous archive to test his hypothesis that Homer had been an illiterate oral poet; the curious phraseological repetitions of Greek epic diction, which had puzzled generations of scholars were, he argued, traditional formulae that were used by the poet as an aid to spontaneous composition during performance. Parry’s untimely death in 1935 left the burden of proof to his student Albert Bates Lord, who fulfilled the charge in an admirable series of studies culminating in the influential *Singer of Tales* (1960). Our understanding of Homer’s compositional process continues to be refined, and many scholars still maintain that literacy had some effect on the ultimate formula-

<sup>1</sup> S. E. M. 6.16–17 (166.17 f.), τὰ Ὀμήρου ἔπη τὸ πάλαι πρὸς λύραν ἤδετο. Pausanias 10.7.3, λέγεται δὲ καὶ Ησίοδον ἀπελαθῆναι τοῦ ἀγωνίσματος ἅτε οὐ κιθαρίζειν ὁμοῦ τῇ ἀδῆ δεδιδασμένον.

<sup>2</sup> Lord 1960, 6, 20.

<sup>3</sup> Bartók ap. Erdelyi 1995, 1 and n. 1.

tion of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as we have them<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, it is now universally accepted that these poems are at least *derived* from a living, pre-literate tradition. This poetic art was one of song.

Since Parry, for better and worse, Serbo-Croatian epic has been the primary comparandum for imagining Homeric performance. This is due to a general unfamiliarity among classicists with other examples of oral epic: the publications of Lord remain the best-known and most consulted studies, and are besides of immediate interest since the comparison with Homer is explicit and detailed. Naturally, scholars with a special interest in the oral epic are better informed, and in the last twenty years other narrative song traditions have attracted increasing scholarly attention<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, early rigid models of composition and transmission – relying too much on the peculiar dynamics of the Yugoslav art – have been undermined by the recognition that the orality of every tradition is unique.

## 2. INDO-EUROPEANISM AND INDO-EUROPEAN POETICS

And yet, given that the Greek and Slavic languages and cultures are historically related due to their shared Indo-European ancestry, one might assert that these two heroic song traditions have a greater right to comparison with each other than to, for example, Philippine or Mongolian epic. It must be stressed that Parry himself did not choose to collect the Yugoslav songs because he believed in a *genetic* relationship with Homer; he simply wished to observe the oral method generally; his preference for central Asian epic was frustrated by contemporary political conditions. Likewise, Lord never pressed an Indo-European connection in his comparisons with ancient Greek epic – although there are hints that he came to accept its validity<sup>6</sup>. For the comparative study of Indo-European poetic traditions has become highly sophisticated since the *Singer of Tales*, revealing deep connexions between the poetic methods of cognate cultures.

It has been known since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that Greek and Serbo-Croatian (which belong to the Southern group of the Slavic language family) descend from a single ancestral tongue, generally dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C.<sup>7</sup>, termed Proto-Indo-European (PIE). Other languages or language groups deriving from PIE are Celtic, Germanic, Italic (including Latin), Indo-Iranian (including Sanskrit, Old Persian, and Avestan), Baltic, and Albanian; now extinct are Hittite and other members of the Anatolian group (including Luwian and Lydian), Tocharian, Thracian (including Phrygian) and Illyrian.

This simple vertical family-tree conception, long conventional, is now being refined through greater attention to the phenomena of ‘dynamic synchrony’<sup>8</sup> – the mutual adjustment of, or feedback between, languages in geographical contact (whether historically related or not). And yet even the most energetic attempts at revision – notably in India where the ‘Aryan’ question is very sensitive politically – have failed to negate the primary validity of the basic diachronic relationships. Only thus can one explain close linguistic and cultural sympathies between e. g. the Celtic and Indic worlds, which, in the historical period, were not geographically contiguous or in significant political contact with each other.

The most reliable discoveries of diachronic cultural kinship come from historical linguistics, because these data are amenable to scientific treatment. Cognate cultures may bear little superficial resemblance to each other after centuries (or millennia) of individual innovation since their common origin, just as most languages, which are known to be related are – by definition – mutually unintelligible. But deep structural sympathies affinities may lie below the surface, and the more closely these may be related to language use, the more securely they may be demonstrated, since linguistic and semantic continuity go hand-in-hand. By ‘continuity’, of course, I mean the persistence of elements, which can be shown to descend from a common archetype, without suggesting that these cognates are the *same* as each other. Through the comparative method an increasingly detailed picture of Proto-Indo-European culture has emerged: in religion, cult, law, mythology, social institutions, magic and medicine, remarkable sympathies have been revealed between kindred language-culture groups<sup>9</sup>.

The aspect of Indo-European studies, which is of greatest relevance to music archaeology, is the comparison of poetic technique and diction, including conceptions of poetry and the poet, as found in the earliest evidence of the cognate traditions. The subject was born with Kuhn’s assertion that a pair of poetic phrases – Greek *kleos aphthiton* and Sanskrit *śrāva(s) ākṣitam*, both meaning “imperishable fame” – were, in terms of historical linguistics, equivalent in phonology, accentuation,

<sup>4</sup> See e. g. Knox 1990, 19–22.

<sup>5</sup> See e. g. Lord 1962, 1991; West 1986, 43 f.; Foley 1999; Reichl 2000a.

<sup>6</sup> Lord 1993, 15.

<sup>7</sup> See now Gamkrelidze/Ivanov 1995, 1.761.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Gamkrelidze/Ivanov 1995.

<sup>9</sup> See especially Benveniste 1973; Polomé 1982b; Watkins 1995; Gamkrelidze/Ivanov 1995.

and quantity (syllable lengths)<sup>10</sup>. In other words, they are descendants from a fragment of poetic diction (reconstructable as PIE *\*klewos ndbg<sup>w</sup>hitom*) which was handed down in parallel over many centuries, in continually diverging forms, by generations of singers whose ultimate ancestors shared an archetypal repertoire of poetic formulae and narrative themes. Long controversial, the formulaic status of these phrases is now firmly established<sup>11</sup>; thus, though “imperishable fame” might seem a heroic commonplace, a distinctly Indo-European conception is linguistically provable. A substantial corpus of such cognate poetic material has now been identified<sup>12</sup>, and the subject of Indo-European poetics won official scholarly acceptance when the Goodwin Award of the American Philological Association went to Calvert Watkins for *How to Kill a Dragon* in 1995.

### 3. INDO-EUROPEAN METRICS

A subordinate branch of Indo-European poetics, with important musical implications, is the comparative metrical study of cognate poetic material (first attempted by Westphal in 1860). This allows the identification of rhythmic features in the ancient Indic, Greek, and South-Slavic evidence, which are so specific that independent development is impossible.

The dactylic hexameter of ancient Greek epic verse, as well as other Hellenic metrical forms, shares with the Serbo-Croatian *deseterac*, the ten-syllable heroic metre, the property of being ‘stichic’, whereby a finite metrical grouping is repeated indefinitely. A further specification of stichic poetry can be ‘isosyllabism’, when a metrical grouping consists of the same number of syllables in each repetition or ‘line’ (the line *per se*, of course, results from writing down such oral forms). Stichic repetition and isosyllabism are found in the Vedic poems, which are the earliest examples of Indic poetry, dating back to the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C., when these poems assumed their present, ‘static’ form. The same features are found in the decasyllabic Serbo-Croatian *deseterac*. In the Homeric hexameter and much other ancient Greek poetry, by contrast, quantitative resolution and substitution – the exchange of two short syllables for one long, or vice versa – could cause a varying syllable count. However, stichic isosyllabism is found in the poetry of Sappho and Alcaeus, whence such verse-forms became known as ‘Aeolic’, after the ethnicity of Lesbos. In fact, isosyllabism was not restricted to the poetry of Aeolic populations, but is attested throughout the Greek world, in cult, ritual and popular con-

texts, allowing us to conclude that isosyllabism represents a very ancient, pan-Hellenic practice<sup>13</sup>. According to a hypothesis now widely-held, the epic hexameter itself evolved from the combination of two such ‘Aeolic’ structures (see further below).

Stichic rhythms and isosyllabism are not unique to the Indo-European traditions – although they are far from universal<sup>14</sup>. But the ‘Aeolic’, Vedic and Serbo-Croatian evidence reveals a further specification, which is otherwise unparalleled outside the Indo-European world. This is the close of isosyllabic lines in clearly defined quantitative cadences – distinctive patterns of long and short syllables. By contrast, the opening of the isosyllabic line is *not* strictly regulated by quantity, being either completely indeterminate (Serbo-Croatian), or showing only partial tendencies to quantity (‘Aeolic’ and Vedic).

This combination of stichic, isosyllabic and quantitative features, taken together, constitutes a very distinctive fingerprint, and it was this which led Meillet – one of Parry’s mentors – to advance his theory of a common origin for the Greek and Indic metres in 1923<sup>15</sup>. Jakobson went on to demonstrate the statistical tendency of the Serbo-Croatian *deseterac* to a quantitative cadence, with two short syllables and a long in positions seven, eight and nine respectively ( $x \ x \ x \ x \ | \ x \ x \ u \ u \ - \ x$ , where ‘x’ marks an indeterminate position). Decasyllabic verse and closely related forms are found throughout the Slavic cultures, and may be traced back to the earliest evidence. This includes fossilized forms in Russian formulaic diction deriving from the influence of pitch accent, which disappeared from that language by the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the ten-syllable form had become completely unknown to the educated of some parts of the Slavic world, as shown by a scribe who “tried to force the initial verses into the usual octosyllabic scheme”, and so was clearly unfamiliar with the ancient decasyllabic art. In areas where vestiges of such verse still survive, the ancient quantitative cadence has been all but lost, since now only Serbo-Croatian preserves clearly the distinction of syllabic length. Yet even in Bulgaria, where quantity had vanished from the spoken language, epic singers maintained a preference for an elongated ninth syllable – a musical fossil from an earlier linguistic age<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Kuhn 1853.

<sup>11</sup> Contra, Finkelberg 1986. Now established by Watkins 1995, 173–178.

<sup>12</sup> Schmitt 1967, 1968; Gamkrelidze/Ivanov 1995, 1.731 ff.

<sup>13</sup> West 1973, 165 f.

<sup>14</sup> See for instance Reichl 2000b, 136; Revel 2000, 195–197.

<sup>15</sup> Meillet 1923; cf. Nagy 1974.

<sup>16</sup> Jakobson 1952, 23 ff., 28, 30; cf. West 1973, 170 f.

Subsequent studies have argued for the Indo-European derivation of Italic, Celtic, Germanic, Hittite, Lydian, Iranian, and Baltic metrical examples<sup>17</sup>. While many scholars now believe that “the hierarchical dependence of metrical form on phonological and phonetic form makes actual *reconstruction* of metrics an unrealistic goal”, the general validity of Indo-European metrical kinship is now accepted by all “competent authorities”<sup>18</sup>. This phenomenon demonstrates the astonishing powers of conservation possessed by the traditional singers, in their roles as guardians of lore. As Watkins puts it, “the formulas tend to make reference to culturally significant features – ‘something that matters’ – and it is this which accounts for their repetition and long-term preservation”<sup>19</sup>. Beyond metrical kinship and cognate phraseology, many specifically Indo-European compositional elements, such as ring-structure and a predilection for sound patterns (e. g. assonance, alliteration, and chiasmus of vowel or consonant classes) have also been identified<sup>20</sup>.

#### 4. INDO-EUROPEAN ‘MELODICS’ AND THE COMPARISON OF ANCIENT GREEK AND SOUTH SLAVIC HEROIC SONG

For the study of Indo-European poetics, the data are drawn from the most ancient material available in each of the subordinate traditions. In many cases this is sung poetry. In others, like the archaic religious, legal, and magical material of the Hittites, which displays patterned and artistic – i. e. poetic – language, our exemplars may not have been song *per se*; and yet it is clear that such material derives from the same poetic matrix which gave birth elsewhere to songs<sup>21</sup>. Indeed, it is highly probable that the antecedents of such religious, legal, historical, and genealogical ‘poetry’ were in fact musical. A student of Aristotle reports that laws were still sung in parts of Thrace, and there is evidence for the practice in Greece itself which goes beyond the mere word-play on *nomos*, meaning both ‘song’ and ‘law’, which we find in Plato<sup>22</sup>. Herodotus mentions the ritual incantations and theogonic songs of the Magi, the Median priests who served as religious functionaries to the Persians, and whose descendants left us the *Avesta*, sacred texts of Zoroastrianism which, like the *Rgveda*, preserve very ancient elements of the Indo-Iranian proto-culture<sup>23</sup>. Caesar left a crucial description of the Celtic druids as guardians of lore through song, the regional schools where training could take as long as twenty years, and the sacred injunction against the use of writing – a fre-

quent characteristic of Indo-European societies<sup>24</sup>. Tacitus attests that the Germanic tribes sang “ancient songs, which is the only kind of record and archives that they have”, to celebrate their gods, the interrelations and migrations of the kindred tribes, and as a means of divination<sup>25</sup>.

One may therefore posit for the Proto-Indo-European culture a unified musical stream of which there were metrical and dictional components, and for which there must also have been a melodic aspect.

One must beware from the start, however, that the term ‘melody’ is apt to be misleading. Because the word derives from Greek, it is basically Hellenocentric and ultimately irrelevant to any song tradition which predates, whether historically or structurally, the spread of the Greek musical art (with its strong Near Eastern infusion) in the Hellenistic period. Even within the ancient Hellenic musical cultures, it is probable that *melôidein* (‘to melodize’) referred to music based on tone structures very distinct from those used by the epic singers. Thus Homer uses the simple *aeidein* (‘to sing’) of his vocal process. By contrast, the later *melôidein*, as a compound, is inherently more specific, denoting a special kind of singing according to the different intonational customs – i. e. heptatonic – designated by *melos*<sup>26</sup>. That *melos* was dis-

<sup>17</sup> Watkins 1963; Cole 1969; West 1973; Gamkrelidze/Ivanov 1995, 1.737–740.

<sup>18</sup> Watkins 1982, 164 f. Cf. Gasparov 1996.

<sup>19</sup> Watkins 1995, 9.

<sup>20</sup> Watkins 1995, 34 et passim; Gamkrelidze/Ivanov 1995, 1.735–737.

<sup>21</sup> See generally Watkins 1995.

<sup>22</sup> Ps.-Arist. Pr. 19.28 offers the explanation that prior to literacy laws were sung, and reports that this was still true among the Agathyrsoi of Thrace. Hesiod describes the Muses singing the laws (*nomoi*) of the gods (Th. 66 f., μέλπονται, πάντων τε νόμους καὶ ἦθεα κεδνὰ / ἀθανάτων κλείονσιν). Plato develops the association of the legal and musical *nomos* extensively at Lg. 656c–660c, 799e; cf. Phdr. 278c; cf. Mart. Cap. 9.926 *Graecarum quippe urbium multae ad lyram leges decretaque publica recitabant*; Clem. Al. Strom. 1.16.78, καὶ τοὺς Λακεδαιμονίων νόμους ἐμελοποίησε Τέρπανδρος.

<sup>23</sup> Hdt. 1.132.

<sup>24</sup> Caes. B. Gall. 6.13–14. Cf. Diod. Sic. 5.31.2–5, εἰσὶ δὲ παρ’ αὐτοῖς καὶ ποιητὰ μελῶν, οὓς Βάρδους ὀνομάζουσιν. οὗτοι δὲ μετ’ ὀργάνων ταῖς λύραις ὁμοίων ἄδοντες οὓς μὲν ὑμνοῦσιν, οὓς δὲ βλασφημοῦσι (“And among them are also poets of music, whom they call Bards. And these, singing to instruments like lyres, make songs of praise and blame”). For the sources used by Caesar and Diodorus, as well as other ancient testimony, see Rankin (1987), 272–276 et passim. Further ancient references to Celtic music are collected by Ahl 1991. On the strength of the Celtic bardic tradition as late as the 17<sup>th</sup> century, see further Watkins (1995), 76 ff. For the injunction against writing in Indo-European cultures, see Polomé 1982b, 166 f.

<sup>25</sup> Tac. Germ. 2–3 *celebrant carminibus antiquis, quod unum apud illos memoriae et annalium genus est* etc.

<sup>26</sup> Franklin 2002b, 145.

tinct from *epos* is confirmed by a number of sources traceable to Heraclides of Pontus (4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), according to whom Terpander – who flourished in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century and became the symbol of Archaic heptachordal music – was the first to combine “the epic diction (*epê*) of Homer and the melodies (*melê*) of Orpheus<sup>27</sup>. With this caveat, however, I shall henceforth use the term ‘melody’, for convenience, to designate the musical use of pitch in both Greek epic and South-Slavic heroic singing, relying on further arguments to clarify its ‘non-melic’ properties.

In theory, at least, the general melodic character of the proto-Indo-European art could be understood by deduction from the comparative evidence of the descendant traditions. If we could hear and study the Celtic, Germanic, and Iranian melodies mentioned by the classical authors, and compare them with Greek epic and Vedic song, perhaps we could identify similarities of method.

Unfortunately, there is very little direct evidence for these ancient traditions. Vedic song, discussed below, may constitute an important exception. As for Greece, West has argued that a hexametric inscription from Epidauros is supplied with a melody, dating perhaps to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. or earlier, which is to be repeated with each line<sup>28</sup>. This is an exciting possibility, but even if it is right the melody would be in ‘Terpandrian’ style, using epic diction sung to proper ‘melody’, i. e. using heptatonic structures, and so rather different from the pure Homeric art. Moreover, the inscribed melody gives us no idea of the myriad melodic variations that one should expect in real performance.

Similarly, Johannes de Grocheo, in a much-cited passage from the 14<sup>th</sup>-century *De musica*, discussed the Medieval French *chansons de geste*, in which “the same melody must be repeated in every verse”<sup>29</sup>. This description fits well enough with the stichic (but not isosyllabic) nature of the poetry<sup>30</sup>, and suggests a broad similarity to South-Slavic practice – though the French scholar, like the Epidaurian inscription, neglects the subtle variations which make the songs of the *guslar* so fascinating. His further statement that the *chansons de geste* “should be sung to the aged, to citizens that labour, and to those of humble birth”<sup>31</sup> is of particular interest, revealing the waning status of this art – at approximately the same time as the decadence of decasyllabic verse in many parts of the Slavic world – and providing yet another example of the survival of narrative song in cultural backwaters.

For the Slavic family we have, besides Parry’s recordings, the transcription of a 16<sup>th</sup>-century Bohemian melody, which accompanied a decasyllabic verse related to the Serbo-Croatian *deseter-ac*<sup>32</sup>.

Thus, by contrast with the usual comparative method of the Indo-Europeanist, the oldest poetic documents of each tradition are of little direct help for the comprehension of melodic technique. Conversely, the traditional – and audible – songs of relevant present-day societies have been neglected by Indo-Europeanists because they are so much more divergent from the proto-Indo-European culture than the ancient documents, and potentially quite confused by secondary influences<sup>33</sup>. The recorded South-Slavic narratives, for instance, are millennia younger than evidence available from ancient Greek, Sanskrit, Latin, and Hittite literature. The *content* of these Yugoslav songs is a world apart from the ancient societies.

And yet, as we have seen, the Serbo-Croatian songs reveal clear traces of inherited structural features. Indeed, they are vital evidence for establishing the Indo-European character of the ancient Greek and Indic isosyllabic metres with quantitative cadence; for it is a dictum of the field that an archetypal element is only firmly established when its descendants are demonstrated in three, not two, traditions.

Clearly this may have implications for the parallel survival of melodic technique, for melody and rhythm are interdependent, and might to some degree stand and fall together. We must therefore briefly examine the historical circumstances, which account for the persistence in the Serbo-Croatian art of this Indo-European metrical feature, a vestigial survival of very archaic musical technique. In other words, is the great separation in time between the Greek and South-Slavic songs an insuperable obstacle to the comparison of the two traditions on a deep structural level?

<sup>27</sup> Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 1.16.78, ‘Ομήρου μὲν τὰ ἔπη, Ὀρφέως δὲ τὰ μέλη. Cf. Heraclides Ponticus fragment 157 (Wehrli) (= ps.-Plutarch *De musica* 1132c), μέλος τε αὖ πρῶτος περιέθηκε τοῖς ποιήμασι; Alexander Polyhistor FGGrH 273F77 (= ps.-Plutarch *De musica* 1132e–f); Suda s. v. Τέρπανδρος. See further Franklin 2002a, 445 f.

<sup>28</sup> West (1986), 44 f.

<sup>29</sup> *Idem etiam cantus debet in omnibus versibus reiterari*. Cf. West 1986, 43; Erdely 2000, 69.

<sup>30</sup> Rychner 1955; West 1986, 43 n. 12.

<sup>31</sup> See Erdely 2000, 15.

<sup>32</sup> Jakobson 1952, 28 f. A certain number of Russian *bylina* melodies have also been written down (see Reichl 2000a, 1 ff.).

<sup>33</sup> Other material that might be valuable, but which has not been considered from this perspective, includes Romanian ballads and heroic songs (Beissinger 1984, 2000), the modern oral epics of India (Reichl 2000a, 32), North Iranian lyrical verse, which uses a few tune types for thousands of texts (Nettl 1993, 113), Icelandic *rímur* and the Faroese ballads. The Albanian narrative songs in the Parry collection are regarded as due to diffusion from Slavic areas (Dietrich 2000), but it might be profitable to study their melodic material in isolation.

The great efflorescence of South-Slavic narrative song, as *we* know it from the Parry collection, was during the Ottoman period, when singers were esteemed not just in villages, but in the courts of the conquerors. Conversely, after the Turkish victory at Kosovo in 1389, the art waned in Christian communities through lack of patronage. This situation clearly admits complications of external cultural influence<sup>34</sup>. Thus a certain amount of Turkic tonal material has been identified in examples of South-Slavic melody, both narrative and otherwise<sup>35</sup>. Likewise, with the frequent court settings and aristocratic motifs of the heroic songs, there can be little doubt that Turkic thematic elements were also absorbed. And yet, according to recent research, while both text and tune groups may cross linguistic barriers, they do not generally do so together, but rather in haphazard, piecemeal fashion<sup>36</sup>. If this is right, then the Serbo-Croatian material would be *a priori* unlikely to represent an originally Turkic art which passed into Yugoslav culture, but was rather an indigenous South-Slavic art which was occasionally influenced, melodically and thematically.

In fact, as we have seen, an ultimately Indo-European basis to the *deseterac* is proven by metrical features. Moreover, it is generally held that the systematic observance of quantity in the classical Sanskrit and Greek metres (i. e. post-Vedic and non-Aeolic respectively) was a generalization of what had once been only a tendency (see above)<sup>37</sup>. Thus the Serbo-Croatian *deseterac*, as the Slavonic poetic form most faithful to the ancestral characteristics, may well represent “a very archaic state of affairs, parallel with the Vedic rather than the Greek situation”<sup>38</sup>, its principal features far older than any Turkic influence.

Bartók confirmed that Turkic musical elements were distributed more densely in places like Bulgaria where there had been active settlement for centuries, and were relatively uncommon in more autochthonous regions<sup>39</sup>. Such were the remote reaches in which Parry collected, where many archaic features of common Slavonic culture had persisted, like the survival of pitch accent and syllabic quantity in the Serbo-Croatian language. Yugoslav populations also maintained the strict segregation of male and female recitations – epics and narrative laments respectively – an ancient pattern whereby “men glorify the deeds of fallen heroes and women bewail their downfall”<sup>40</sup>.

Ancient Greek epic was produced by a culture less remote from the Indo-European proto-culture, simply by virtue of time elapsed. Due to its geographical position, however, the Hellenic world was exposed to a myriad of external influences, which caused a nearly continuous cultural ferment in which inherited Indo-European attrib-

utes were frequently obscured or annihilated. Yet there is good reason to suppose that the narrative song tradition of the Dark Age, which was brought to a high polish by Homer, represents the continuation of a more archaic – and hence more recognizably Indo-European – musical substrate. In the Mycenaean period, when the Achaean palaces formed the Western reach of a Bronze Age metaculture, foreign musical influence – whether Minoan, Egyptian, Anatolian, West Semitic, or Mesopotamian – is likely to have been relatively restricted to elite circles<sup>41</sup>. This is not to say that inherited narrative song was not also cultivated, perhaps in more rarified form, within the palaces; the existence of Mycenaean forms in the Homeric *Kunstsprache*, and reference to aristocratic items which genuinely belong to the Bronze Age, make this a probable assumption. The point is rather that ancestral poetic forms, with their popular mandate, would have continued throughout Hellenic culture independent of the rise and fall of the Achaean palaces. Any influences in the Orientalizing Period or thereafter, such as those associated with Terpander, have of course no bearing on the Homeric evidence.

In short, while one must allow for a great disjunction in time between the South-Slavic and ancient Greek material, and account for synchronic innovations which might obscure more archaic diachronic sympathy, the historical circumstances do not *per se* rule out the possibility of benefiting from the cautious application of the comparative method.

## 5. TEXT, TUNE AND TONE: THE THEORY OF INDO- EUROPEAN ACCENT- MELODY

The unfortunate fact that no Homeric melodies survive has several methodological consequences. Even granting, on historical and cultural grounds, the validity of comparing the two traditions, specific Serbo-Croatian melodies have no value *per se*, since no *direct* comparison is possible. By the same token, it would be fatuous to attempt the reconstruction specific Greek melodies on the basis of the Yugoslav material.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Jakobson 1952, 21.

<sup>35</sup> Erdely 1995, 42 f.; Bartók/Lord 1951, 55 n. 45.

<sup>36</sup> Nettle 1993, 113.

<sup>37</sup> Watkins 1995, 19–21.

<sup>38</sup> West 1973, 173.

<sup>39</sup> Lord/Bartók 1951, 55.

<sup>40</sup> Jakobson 1952, 34.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Franklin 2002a, 443 f., 2002b, 670.

In order to proceed at all, one must abstract the investigation to the comparison of evidence actually surviving in both traditions, and which can itself be proven to be cognate. Such evidence – which can only be linguistic and philological – could therefore bear only indirectly upon the issue of melody. And yet, even within these limits, the evidence might still increase our understanding of more narrowly musical issues. As Nettl has recently written:

“If music can be analyzed with methods that can also be applied to language, then we should be able to make parallel studies of the simultaneously appearing structures of text and music. In other words, methods that can be applied to both structures are the ones that ought to be first tried in a study of the relationship.”<sup>42</sup>

Nettl envisions the parallel study of text and music within a single tradition. But one may easily extend this approach to the comparison of related traditions: musical poetry composed in cognate languages and exhibiting cognate metrical features, might be made to reveal cognate melodic features, provided that melody, like metre, was related to language. The elements of the equation may be schematized as follows:

<i>South Slavic</i>		<i>Ancient Greek</i>
Extant Text and		Extant Text
‘Text-Melody’		<Hypothetical ‘Text-Melody’>
Poetics/Metrics	cognate proven	Poetics/Metrics
Language	cognate proven	Language

It is a common feature of many oral narrative traditions that the narrowly musical elements of the art are a development of features inherent in the language. Language, in its message-bearing capacity, is the raw material for the composition of poetry, as a specialized semantic construction. But each language is also characterized by its own sound properties, which may be equally exploited to make poetry stand apart from the sound of ordinary language. An example of this is in the Indo-European stylization of syllabic length to create distinctive rhythmic cadences, and the patterning of sounds discussed above.

In many traditions, the linguistic use of pitch is also incorporated in the melodization of poetic texts<sup>43</sup>. Of great potential importance for ‘Indo-European melodics’ is the traditional singing of the *Rgveda*, the melody of which is a stylization of the pitch accents of the poetry. (It also serves as a sufficient example, against Lord, that verbatim transmission is possible in oral tradition.) The Saman chant, which uses the text of the *Rgveda*

but is more recognizably ‘melodic’ – less bound to the pitch accent, and exceeding at times a sixth in range<sup>44</sup> – might also be valuable: its beginnings must have been before the Vedic hymns received their finished form, since they are already mentioned in the *Rgveda*<sup>45</sup>. Unintentional, cumulative change in Vedic melodization itself is shown by the disagreement of ancient theory and current practice<sup>46</sup>. Yet there is little doubt that its main features have survived relatively intact from the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. We may also assume an earlier, perhaps more fluid, phase of development in the Indo-Iranian period, from which both the Vedic hymns and the Magian theogonies and incantations (and ultimately the *Avesta*) derive.

West’s hypothetical reconstruction of a Homeric tuning expanded upon Deubner’s controversial defense of an ancient tradition that Terpander’s seven-stringed lyre replaced an earlier instrument of four strings<sup>47</sup>. Pointing to both Serbo-Croatian heroic song and the chanting of the *Rgveda*, West argued that this instrument implied a limited melodic range which might be typical of an ancestral Indo-European song tradition<sup>48</sup>. Though the reality of a four-stringed lyre remains disputed<sup>49</sup>, this detail is really beside the point, for the plausibility of an epic song style using only a few pitches is overwhelmingly supported by ethnographic analogies. Given that the tonal accent was an original part of PIE, West suggested that “the practice of ‘singing’ texts by disposing the syllables over a limited set of fixed notes according to their accents was also Indo-European”<sup>50</sup>. (Besides some intriguing parallels drawn by Fox-Strangways between Greek and Indic music, I know of no other theory about Indo-European melodic practice<sup>51</sup>.) In Greek tradition, West argued, the development of this ancestral practice resulted in “epic poetry on four notes, the four notes to which [the singer’s] phorminx-strings were tuned ... he followed the contours given by the word accents”<sup>52</sup>.

Anderson has since challenged the usefulness of the Vedic analogy, on the grounds that the Greek and Indic accentuation systems are incompatible<sup>53</sup>. This objection is misplaced, however, for

<sup>42</sup> Nettl 1993, 115.

<sup>43</sup> See especially the essays in Wade 1993.

<sup>44</sup> See e. g. Faddegon 1951.

<sup>45</sup> Fox-Strangways 1914, 249 n. 2.

<sup>46</sup> Fox-Strangways 1914, 246 f.

<sup>47</sup> Strabo 13.2.4; Deubner 1929; 1930.

<sup>48</sup> West 1981.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Maas/Snyder 1989, 26, 36, 203.

<sup>50</sup> West 1981, 114.

<sup>51</sup> Fox-Strangways 1914.

<sup>52</sup> West 1986, 45.

<sup>53</sup> Anderson 1994, 46.

musical practice could naturally diverge alongside the respective languages.

At any rate, it is known that the Greeks of a later period incorporated the pitch accent in many of their melodies; this can be observed in a number of the extant fragments<sup>54</sup>. This characteristic cannot be retrojected onto Homeric practice without further argument, however, since there must have been substantial differences between these ‘melic’ fragments and the earlier epic art. Nevertheless, the heroic singer’s observance of pitch accent may be supported by the following facts. Peculiarities of Homeric accent and pronunciation were preserved in the rhapsodic tradition long enough to receive the attention of Hellenistic grammarians<sup>55</sup>. Important new evidence from Herculaneum – fragments of the *On Poems* by Philodemus – reveals that a type of accent-melody, or accent-composition, was systematically addressed by certain Hellenistic literary theorists, who treated ‘euphony’ as a formal art. One Pausimachus cites in our fragments two Homeric passages in his treatment of accent-harmony in poetry, and the refutations of Philodemus show that the issue was still alive in the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. – as do accents inserted in parts of the text by the unknown owner of the papyrus<sup>56</sup>. The most likely explanation of these data is that the melodic observation of pitch accent, as seen from the extant melic fragments, is actually a survival from the Homeric art, an important tributary to the musical confluence of epic and melic attributed to the age of Terpander (see above).

This hypothesis receives striking confirmation in Hagel’s sophisticated statistical study of the Greek epic corpus, and especially the *Iliad*<sup>57</sup>. Metrical ‘localization’ – the tendency of a given metrical shape to occur at preferred locations in the hexameter – is proven to be a property of word groups rather than individual words. The poet did not have in his mind the neatly-stichic, word-divided text as we see it, but composed by sound, individual ‘words’ joining harmoniously in ‘musical’ phrases. Pausimachus may have addressed this very issue, although the text of Philodemus is quite damaged here<sup>58</sup>. Lord described the same phenomenon in the Serbo-Croatian material, and identified many other examples of ‘composition by sound’<sup>59</sup>. This concern with euphony, the harmony of musical speech, is also found in the Sanskrit grammarians, and was, as mentioned above, a basic feature of Indo-European versification<sup>60</sup>.

For the present purpose, the most important of these sound patterns is the purposeful distribution of pitch accent. Analyzing the localization of end-accented word-groups – which provide the best test case because, as shown by the extant (melic) fragments, their relation to melodic contour is the

most unambiguous – Hagel has demonstrated a high proportion of these ‘oxytones’ at metrical bridges, positions in the hexameter in which word-group boundaries are avoided. Conversely, oxytones are avoided at important caesuras, or word-group boundaries. Since bridges and caesuras constitute the chief colometric features of the hexameter, and the localization of formulaic language occurs largely in connection therewith, it follows that conscious, artistic use of the pitch accent was an important part of the composition of Greek oral epic, and was closely bound to metrical structure. Further accent patterns were detected in relation to the syntactical rhythm, which, through devices like enjambment, forms a kind of super-metrical counterpoint with the colometry<sup>61</sup>.

All of this implies (Hagel argues) a long musical prehistory for the hexameter, contrary to the prevailing belief that the dactylic hexameter was a relatively recent innovation based on the combination of archaic ‘Aeolic’ verse forms<sup>62</sup>. Clearly this has important implications for any theory of an Indo-European melodic, since it is precisely in the archaic ‘Aeolic’ forms that one would most wish to find a correlation of pitch accent and metrical divisions. There are several possible ways out of this difficulty. One might try to move back the hypothetical date at which the hexameter coalesced from Aeolic forms. Or, if one supposes that the hexameter was taken over from a non-Indo-European culture – the Minoans are the usual suspects – it remains equally possible that the earliest ‘Homeric’ singers adapted a traditional formulaic language, complete with metrical accent patterns, to this new form. An important investigation would be the application of Hagel’s methods to the corpus of Aeolic poetry – though here the sample size is probably too small to yield meaningful results.

These discoveries offer strong support for the validity of the Vedic analogy. Even if the *rigid* melodization of accents was a specifically Indic development, it seems more probable than ever that poetic accent patterning was a general charac-

<sup>54</sup> See Pöhlmann 1960, 17–25; West 1992, 198–200.

<sup>55</sup> West 1981, 114 f.

<sup>56</sup> Philodem. *Poem.* 1.93–94; cf. Janko 2000, 84, 298–301.

<sup>57</sup> Hagel 1994.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Janko 2000, 296 f.

<sup>59</sup> “Man without writing thinks in terms of sound groups and not in words, and the two do not necessarily coincide... When the singer is pressed then to say what a line is, he, whose chief claim to fame is that he traffics in lines of poetry, will be entirely baffled by the question”, Lord 1960, 25; cf. 1956; 1960, 42, 51 ff.

<sup>60</sup> Watkins 1995, 26 ff. et passim.

<sup>61</sup> Hagel 1994, 93 ff., 103 ff.

<sup>62</sup> Berg 1978; cf. Haug/Welo 2001.

teristic of Indo-European versification, and that Greek epic, and the Archaic ‘Terpandrian’ melic, preserved this ancient feature even as the ancestral trait of stichic isosyllabism became increasingly archaic.

The same phenomenon of patterned pitch accent within a formulaic metrical environment has now been detected in the Yugoslav material. In a little-known paper which appeared posthumously, Lord studied the distribution of pitch accents within a sample of Serbo-Croatian decasyllabic verse, observing a 77 % incidence of pitch accent and/or long syllable in the ninth position<sup>63</sup>. The same was true, but to a lesser extent, in the third syllable. By contrast, such coincidence was distinctly avoided in the first and fifth positions, i. e. the beginnings of cola. We have then the same conjunction of metrical and accentual patterns that is found in both the Homeric and Vedic material:

Moreover, this tendency is most strongly marked precisely in the quantitative cadence – the very feature, which is a proven hallmark of Indo-European versification.

Unfortunately, the value of Lord’s study is limited by the very small sample size he considered – a mere 225 lines out of the entire corpus. There appears as yet no distinction between the metrical treatment of the four accent types<sup>64</sup>. Nor can I detect, in the 25 lines which constitute Lord’s primary sample, any apparent correlation between accent and melodic contour, much less a distinction between the four types. So far as it goes, then, this evidence cannot yet support the theory of Indo-European accent-melody *per se*. But clearly a more comprehensive statistical examination, comparable to Hagel’s analysis of Homer, is needed to refine our understanding of accent patterns in the *deseterac*. Possibly even some faint determination of melody by accent will emerge.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In the meantime, let us consider the melodic consequences raised by the comparative use of the Vedic, Homeric, and Serbo-Croatian material in our present state of understanding. In all three traditions, accent-patterns were an important factor in composition. The Yugoslav melodization differs from the Vedic in its apparent neglect of these patterns, and in this respect the Vedic material may offer the more valuable analogy to the Greek situation, given the very probable observance of accent in Homeric melody. If it is right that Indo-European narrative melodies were originally based on accent, some eventual dissociation of the two would have been unavoidable in the daughter cultures, since the accent has itself proven to be an

evanescent feature. In Serbo-Croatian itself, the observance of accents in the spoken language diminished significantly even during the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>65</sup>. It is conceivable, then, that the collected melodies represent a late, sublimated stage of an ancient form in which a relationship between accent and melody would have been more obvious.

In their present state, Yugoslav heroic melodies exhibit characteristics which seem to lie midway between Johannes de Grocheo’s simplistic description of ‘the same melody repeated in every line’ (and possibly the single melodic line of the Epidaurian inscription) and the fluid movements of the Homeric accent patterns – which, if indeed they influenced melody, must have produced many subtle variations within a seemingly repetitive song<sup>66</sup>. It is true that, in addition to a special opening and concluding pattern, a Yugoslav singer might know only a few melodic patterns for sustained narrative passages, between which he will switch occasionally for the sake of variety<sup>67</sup>. These patterns vary from singer to singer all through a region<sup>68</sup>, as though each develops his own melodic trademark. But within these restrictions, a good singer will introduce much variety, with the result that the melody becomes as fluid as the poetic diction it accompanies:

“A given phrase is apt to show up in a number of variant forms as the song moves along; some of these changes can be ascribed to features of the changing text lines, but many of them cannot be. The variation of a basic melodic idea goes so far afield that it can be quite difficult to draw the line as to where it remains true to itself, and where it begins to shade off into some variant of another musical phrase, in a manner which can be disconcertingly Protean.”<sup>69</sup>

In other words, Serbo-Croatian melodies, in contrast to their decasyllabic metre, are not adequately described as stichic, just as the outward form of the Greek hexameter belies the complex inner accent-counterpoint identified by Hagel. Erdely aptly describes the songs of Mujo Velić as “contour melodies moving in gentle curves, or simple tags, changing their shapes like reflections on the water. He is talented in variation, in changing his motifs, their scale notes, and modes”<sup>70</sup>. The putative ‘normal’ line-by-line movement can be further obscured by considerable modulations of

<sup>63</sup> Lord 1993.

<sup>64</sup> Lord 1993, 24.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Anderson 1973, 197.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Hagel 1994, 102.

<sup>67</sup> Lord 1960, 37; cf. 1993.

<sup>68</sup> Erdely 2000, 76.

<sup>69</sup> Herzog 1951, 62.

<sup>70</sup> Erdeley 2000, 80.

tempo for dramatic reasons, where melody may be obscured and 'speechified' in faster passages.

Unless the Yugoslav modular melodic approach be regarded *solely* as the sublimation of an archaic accent-melody, one might entertain the possibility that in Greek heroic song too the accent patterns did not themselves provide the entire melody, but rather tempered and varied more stereotyped melodic motifs. Towards this end it would be useful to search the Greek epics for 'local' accent-distribution patterns, rather than analyzing the statistical tendencies of single poem (or corpus) as a whole. (In this scenario, however, the Vedic practice of rigid accent melody would have to be regarded as a special development.)

To conclude with a few words about the limitations of this investigation, I venture to assert that the three melodic traditions – Vedic, Homeric, and Serbo-Croatian – can rightfully claim a common, if remote, historical foundation. There is, however, no question of comparing or reconstructing *actual melodies*. One is deducing, rather, the general features of a poetic and musical *method*. Specific melodies are irrelevant except where they might be correlated with metrical, accentual, or other characteristics which are proven to be cognate on philological grounds. Much more remains to be discovered in all three bodies of material, and we can look forward to important advances in the future.

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For ancient authors I use the abbreviations of Lidell/Scott/Jones 1940. The most recent editions are given in Hornblower/Anthony 1996, under the entry for each author.