2 Sketch for a history of Indo-European poetics

The study of what we now term Indo-European poetics has hitherto proceeded in three distinct streams, each with its own historical sequence and sometimes greater, sometimes lesser independence from the other two. These may be termed (1) formulaics, (2) metrics, and (3) stylistics. Formulaics—the oldest—examines and compares lexically and semantically cognate or closely similar phrases in cognate languages, like Homeric Greek ἀλέκος ἱππότην 'swift horses', Young Avestan aspž holes...śauoro 'id.', and Vedic dēvās...dēvāh 'id.', securely reconstructible in root, suffix, and ending as *hpk-eh-es hēgh-ös, in either order. Metrics examines and compares similar verification systems, like the mostly isosyllabic, quantitative, bi- or tricolic verse line grouped into strophes in both Vedic and Greek lyric poetry. Stylistics examines and compares all the other linguistic devices, figures, and other recurrent phonological, morphological, and syntactic variables which may be in play in verbal art in cognate languages.

I treat these three topics separately and in the order given, since their histories are largely independent. A very detailed study of the history of Indo-European poetics, with the emphasis on formulaic comparisons, may be found in Schmitt 1967, the author's dissertation under Paul Thieme. Schmitt's impulse for producing this magnum opus was evidently his discovery six years before of the formula mṛtyutām tar- 'overcome death' in the Atharvaveda (quoted in chap. 40), which provided a Vedic phrasal counterpart to the Greek compound νέκ-τοπ, the 'nectar' which 'overcomes death', in Thieme's etymology to the root of Latin nex 'death' and Vedic tar- 'over-come'. See Thieme 1952 and Schmitt 1961 (reprinted in 1968:324) and 1967:190. Many of the classic studies are reprinted in Schmitt 1968; these will be so signaled where mentioned. Other general discussions of the issue may be found in Meid 1978 and Campanile 1987.

1. Formulaics

Rigvedic dēkṣīt śrēvāḥ (1.40.4b, 8.103.5b, 9.66.7c), śrēvāḥ...dēkṣītām (1.9.7bc) and

Homerid kλέος ἄποτα (Il. 9.413) all mean 'imperishable fame'. The two phrases, Vedic and Greek, were equated by Adalbert Kuhn as early as 1853, almost en passant, in an article dealing with the nasal presents in the same two languages. 1 Kuhn's innovation was a simple one, but one destined to have far-reaching consequences. Instead of making an etymological equation of two words from cognate languages, he equated two bipartite noun phrases of noun plus adjective, both meaning 'imperishable fame'. The comparability extended beyond the simple words to their suffixal constituents śrav-as...a-kṣīt-tā-m, kλέος-εός... ἄποτ-α-ν-ν. 2 What Kuhn had done was to equate two set or fixed phrases between two languages, which later theory would term formulae. Thus in M. L. West's somewhat lyrical words (1988a:152), 'With that famous equation of a Rig-Vedic with a Homeric formula... Kuhn in 1853 opened the door to a new path in the comparative philologist's garden of delights.' The equation has itself given rise to a considerable literature, notably Schmitt 1967:1102 and Nagy 1974; it is discussed at length with further references and the equation vindicated in chap. 15.

Kuhn made further investigations directly concerned with proving a common inherited Indo-European poetics and poetry, basing himself on comparison of the charms and incantations of Atharvavedic white and black magic with those of Medieval and contemporary Germanic folklore. While he was only moderately successful at demonstrating these to posterity, and some of his comparisons rest only on elementary parallels and are therefore to be rejected, a more sophisticated methodology can and has justified the essential correctness of his instincts and many of his insights. They are examined in detail in part VII below. In particular, Kuhn's attention and sensitivity to the comparability of genre was a notable step forward, even if later work has shown that comparable structural sets may also sometimes occur in radically different genres.

In another article in the same year 1853 Kuhn had, again in passing, noted the similarity of the Vedic phrase iṣṭeṇa mānasat, more or less 'with eager mind' (RV 8.48.7), and its exact Homeric cognate ἠρήν μάνοι in the set tag phrase ἠρήν μάνος ('Apollo etc') 'holy spirit/strength (of Ailiconos)', narratologically equivalent to the proper name alone. The Belgian Iranist Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin renewed the discussion of this still-enigmatic pair in 1937, as did Antonio Pagliaro in an essay first published in 1947/48 and subsequently reprinted (see Schmitt 1967:28, n. 176). The relevance of the formula to the semantic notion of the 'sacred' was touched on by Bervenište 1969:196, perhaps over-hastily. We must recognize that the semantics and pragmatics of the original inherited phrase antedate its attested use in both the Rigveda and Homer. Cf. also Schmitt 1973.

With the contributions of Kuhn, the concept of an Indo-European poetic lan-

1. KZ 2.467. The annual, Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Sprachforschung, was founded by Kuhn only the previous year, and for the first hundred volumes of its existence was so abbreviated, for 'Kuhns Zeitschrift'. With volume 101 (1988) it became Historische Sprachforschung (HS).

2. The identity of the equation could be captured by a reconstruction reducing each of the two in the same common prototype. Historically the first reconstruction in Indo-European studies, with precisely the declared aim of capturing the common prototype underlying the feminine participles Greek -ανα and Indic -ant, had been made by August Schleicher only the year before Kuhn's article, in the preface to Schleicher 1852.
A small but well-chosen and ably commented selection of common Indo-Iranian phrases, the fruit of a lifetime’s sporadic gleanings, was published by Emile Benveniste (1968) in the volume honoring his friend and collaborator Louis Renou. A much fuller and systematic collection, without comment or discussion, was presented in the same year by Bernfried Schlerath, in Konkordanz C of his Vorarbeiten II to an unfinished Avesta dictionary (1968:148-64; with valuable index of keywords 189-99). His findings are now systematically incorporated into Manfred Mayrhofer’s etymological dictionaries of Old Indic (1956-1980, 1986-).

Schlerath’s useful introduction (1968:viii-xv) specifically states as a methodological principle that only expressions or formulas with at least two etymologically related words in each language qualified for inclusion. This restriction is not valid, as we saw in the preceding section. Renewal of one, two, or more members of a formulaic syntagma, of one or more significat, under semantic identity—preservation of the signifié—is a perfectly normal and commonplace way for formulaic sequences to change over time, as I and Errico Campanile and others have long insisted. (See chap. 17 for examples and discussion.)

The most detailed collection of Indo-Iranian phrasal collocations is due to L. G. Geseenberg [Hertzenberg] 1972. He assembled nearly 350 two- or three-member phrasal collocations of cognates in Vedic (almost all Rigveda) and Avestan; his collections include comparisons outside Indo-Iranian where relevant. Each is provided with a syntactic and lexical reconstruction; only collocations involving pairs (or more) of etymologically related words are added. His sets are presented laconically, without comment or context, and could well be re-examined with profit. For a single example see chap. 12.

Other languages and traditions have made important contributions to the collection. A famous example first compared by Jacob Wackernagel in 1910 (reprinted in Schmitt 1968:30-33) is that of Avestan pasu-vira, a dual dvandva compound ‘cattle and men’ and Umbrian uuire peqno ‘men and cattle’, possibly showing the same archaic syntax. Comparable expressions from the other traditions like the Roman poet Ovid’s pecudque virisque (Met. 1.286) were subsequently added by others (see Schmitt 1967:16, 213 and chap. 17, this vol.). Note that this formula like goods and chattels is another merism, a two-part figure which makes reference to the totality of a single higher concept. Cattle and men together designate the totality of moveable wealth, wealth ‘on the hoof’, chattels. The same semantics underlies another paral phrase first noted by Albrecht Weber in 1873 (see Schmitt 1967:12) in Vedic dvipaçpada (ca) cêtsapad (ca) ‘(both) two-footed (and) four-footed’, Umbrian dupurus petapurus ‘two-footed, four-footed’. See on these Watkins 1979a.

A good example of the unfortunate consequences of Schlerath’s restriction is his treatment of the Avestan pair pasu- ‘cattle’ and nar- ‘man’ as against pasu- and vira- in the same meaning. His restriction leads him to ignore the Old Avestan karnanar- ‘having few men’ and kannashta- ‘few cattle’ (Y.46.2), astutely discussed by Benveniste 1968, 1969:1.49.

The collection of formulaic phrases common to two or more Indo-European poetic traditions has proceeded at a slow but steady pace for nearly a century and a

---

3. One of the benefits of the comparison and reconstruction of formulas involving the phrasal combination of two or more words is their contribution to the study of Indo-European syntax, despite the pessimism of Schlerath 1992.

4. See most recently Campasile 1993 for a reaffirmation of our principle, with many examples.
half. See for example Kurke 1989, on the pouring (IE *gheu-*) of a poem or prayer like a libation in Vedic (and grie ... juhemi 'pour these songs' RV), Greek (exóriá ... késona ‘pouring votive prayers’ Aeschylus), and Latin (fundere preces Horace, Vergili). If the Latin examples of the Augustan age might reflect Greek influence, as she acknowledges (124, n. 24), one could also point to the Old Irish idiom feráid fáite ‘pours welcome’ where Greek influence is not possible.

The collection is still ongoing. Recent acquisitions include the equation in 1992 by a graduate student in Classics at Harvard, Fred Poria, of Vedic mahā dīmasya (‘Savītṛ the sun rules’) the great path, way (of the horses of the sun’s chariot) (RV 4.53.4) with Greek µήπος, ἡμοίος ‘the great path, way (of the horses of the moon’s chariot’) (Homeric Hymn to Selene 32.11). In the following year, 1993, Michael Weiss in his Cornell dissertation argued convincingly that Latin itāgis ‘everywhere’, Greek ὑπός ‘healthy’, Cypriote (1928a and 1979b). The whole of Part Two of this work shows that a single word, for not just metrical but also more important for thematic reasons (Watts 1977). A similar view is expressed by G.S. Kirk in the preface to his Homer commentary (1985:xxiii): ‘single words, even,’ may evoke ‘formular status’, ‘because they can sometimes have an inherited tendency, not solely dictated by their length and metrical value, to a particular position in the verse.’ Here the operative phrase, I would suggest, is ‘inherited tendency’. The ‘particular position in the verse’ is subject to the caution expressed already by Nagy 1974:8 n. 24, that Parry’s definition of the formula “is suitable for a working definition, provided that the phrase “under the same metrical conditions” is not understood to mean “in the same position within the line”.

The whole of Part Two of this work shows that the formulaic (or ‘formular’) status of derivatives of the root *μήπ- ‘smute, slay’ is precisely an ‘inherited tendency’ in all the ancient Indo-European language contextual nexuses—mythic, epic, or apotropaic charms—which continue it, regardless of language or verse-line.

Nowhere is the notion of the formula so important today as in its original locus, the Homeric poems. G.S. Kirk in the preface to his Homer commentary (1985:xxiii) writes further,

Student and successor Albert Bates Lord with his influential 1960 work The Singer of Tales, and in selected papers reprinted in Epic Song and Oral Tradition (1991), have tended to replace ‘oral’ by ‘oral-traditional’, while others, like Gregory Nagy, prefer just ‘traditional’.

Parry’s theory as developed by Lord has been further significantly modified by the work of others on different traditions around the world, such as Finnegan 1970, 1977, Ivanov and Toporov 1974, Nagy 1974, Kiparsky 1976, and Opland 1983, to name only a few. See the several collections, introduction and bibliography of Finley 1981, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988. One should mention also the work of J. Latalcz (e.g., 1979) and his school, for example E. Visser 1988, with references.

The primary modifications of the notion of the formula were to de-emphasize the purely metrical as a condition sine qua non, and to place greater emphasis on the notion of theme (Parry’s ‘essential idea’). At the Ann Arbor Conference of 1974, bringing to the question the insights of contemporary syntactic theory in a pioneering fashion, Paul Kiparsky felicitously termed the formula a ‘ready-made surface structure’. At the same conference I termed the formula in traditional oral literature the verbal and grammatical device for encoding and transmitting a given theme or interaction of themes, and five years later added ‘that theme is the deep structure of formula’. The point can stand today even if for some time I have been inclined to think that ‘deep’ theme is not so very far from ‘surface’ formula.

Another modification to Parry’s definition has been to remove its restriction to ‘a group of words’, by recognizing that a single word may have true formularic status. I argued this at length for Greek µήπος ‘wrath’—the very first word in the ἔλαιον—both not just metrical but more important for thematic reasons (Watts 1977). A similar view is expressed by G.S. Kirk in the preface to his Homer commentary (1985:xxiii): ‘single words, even,’ may evoke ‘formular status’, ‘because they can sometimes have an inherited tendency, not solely dictated by their length and metrical value, to a particular position in the verse.’ Here the operative phrase, I would suggest, is ‘inherited tendency’. The ‘particular position in the verse’ is subject to the caution expressed already by Nagy 1974:8 n. 24, that Parry’s definition of the formula “is suitable for a working definition, provided that the phrase “under the same metrical conditions” is not understood to mean “in the same position within the line”.

The whole of Part Two of this work shows that the formulaic (or ‘formular’) status of derivatives of the root *μήπ- ‘smute, slay’ is precisely an ‘inherited tendency’ in all the ancient Indo-European language contextual nexuses—mythic, epic, or apotropaic charms—which continue it, regardless of language or verse-line.

Nowhere is the notion of the formula so important today as in its original locus, the Homeric poems. G.S. Kirk in the preface to his Homer commentary (1985:xxiii) writes further,

the whole question of the formularic, conventional or traditional component in the Homeric language is extremely important for the exact appreciation of any particular passage, and of course of the whole poem. Something of a reaction is detectable

Formula and theme.

The study of these inherited phrasing in the various Indo-European traditions was fundamentally affected by the epoch-making work of Milman Parry in his Paris dissertations (1928a and 1928b). Parry’s work on Homeric phraseology and the technique of oral composition, largely influenced by his field work on the living epic tradition of Yugoslavia, showed that formulas functioned as the ‘building blocks’ of Homeric verse. His subsequent famous and influential, if now outdated, definition of the formula was ‘a group of words which is regularly employed, under the same metrical conditions, to express a given essential idea’ (Parry 1930 = A. Parry 1971:266-324). Parry’s great contribution was the founding of a new genre in literary theory, termed by him ‘oral poetry’, even if not ‘orality’ in the sense of non-literacy, nor ‘poetry’ in the sense of metrical, is a necessary condition. Later writers, notably Parry’s
at present from the extreme claims and inconclusive statistics that proliferated after
the Milman Parry revolution [emphasis mine - C.W.,] but it remains true, nevertheless,
that the deployment of a partly fixed phraseology is a fundamental aspect of
Homer's style and technique— one that shaped his view of life, almost. One can as
well ignore Homer's 'use of phrases' as an ordinary poet's 'use of words'.

The same recognition—if somewhat tardy, as he himself acknowledged—of the
'Milman Parry revolution' was well expressed by Ernst Risch in the preface to the
second edition of his Worblung der homerischen Sprache (1975:vi): 'Since the studies
of Milman Parry (1928), which did not become known until far too late, even the
phenomenon of epic poetry looks different.' Risch's first edition had appeared in 1937,
9 years after the publication of Parry 1928, but made no mention of it. Despite the
review articles of such distinguished Homeriasts and linguists as Chantre (1929) and
Meillet (1929). Parry's work was only signalled in the bibliography of Meillet's great
Aperçu d'une histoire de la langue grecque from the 3rd edition of 1936 on.

If scholars have been slow to appreciate the 'Milman Parry revolution' in
Homerian studies, they have been even slower to acknowledge its significance and
implications for the study of most of the other ancient languages of the family. A
notable exception is Kiparsky 1976, who was able to bring the hymns of the Rigveda
into the Parry-Lord universe of discourse by showing the artificiality of the latter's
insistence on composition in performance as a condition sine qua non for 'oral
poetry'. The poetry and prose alike of the entire thousand-year Vedic period in India,
roughly 1500-500 B.C., was composed orally, memorized, and transmitted orally; only
afterwards did the art of writing spread from the West to the Indian subcontinent.

The 'formular, conventional or traditional component' (Kirk, supra) of the
language of the Vedic hymns is just as marked and just as important as for the Homerian
language, and the same observation is equally valid for early Iranian verse, for the
prose—n.b.—narrative of Hittite and Aryan myth, and in a lesser degree for the
early poetic monuments of many, perhaps most later Indo-European traditions.

When in favourable circumstances we can assert that a given phrase or even word,
is or was once formulaic (or 'formular') in its own tradition in the technical Parry
sense, and when we can also assert that a phrase, or even word, cognate to the first in
another tradition is also or was once formulaic in that tradition, then the inference from
the comparative method is clear. Both formulae are descended from a common original
formula in the technical Parry sense, a building block in the construction of 'literary',
'artistic', or otherwise non-ordinary verbal messages or texts in the—necessarily
oral, pre-literary—society of the speakers of the proto-language common to the
two traditions. If the two traditions are, for example, Homer and the Vedas, then an
Indo-European comparative literature becomes no longer just an antiquarian frill but an
interpretative necessity for literary theory. It is the obligation of the student of these
literatures, singly or together, to give an account of what Kirk termed, perhaps
unwittingly, the real 'inherited tendency'. It is that inherited tendency toward the
deployment of parallel partly fixed phraseology which is a fundamental aspect of the
style and technique of not only a Homer but a Vaisplhuil—and one that shaped both

10. I take here only as emblematic the name of one legendary Vedic rishi and his family—with a
bow to Heine, Die Heimkehr 45 (Der Kriidis Wissensrntiz, / Den treten's ohne Rast und Kuhl, / Er will durch
poets' views of life, almost. The responsibility is clear; the present work is my own
tempt to answer it.

2. Metrics

The middle of the 19th century, not long after Kühn's 1853 equation of Greek σάριος
ἀριθμὸς with Vedic एकगुण्ड सद्य, saw also the halting beginnings of a comparative
Indo-European metrics, with Westphal 1860. Westphal's attempt lacked—understandably
for the time—the requisite sophistication both in the comparative method and in the
phonological and prosodic foundation of metrical systems. The defect would be remedied in
altogether masterly fashion by Antoine Meillet, with a systematic equation of the meters of the
Vedic hymns with those of Greek lyric, based on the
quantitative rhythm and prosodic system which is common to both. First
announced in an article on Vedic metrics of 1897, then more amply argued in the chapter
entitled 'Les origines de la metric grecque' of his Aperçu d'une histoire de la
langue grecque (1913), his analysis was finally presented in monograph form in Les
origines indo-européennes des mètres grecs (1924).

Meillet had proved his case, and it is now generally accepted by competent
authorities, e.g. West 1982, as it was largely ignored by most Hellenists. Meillet's
own judgment is worth quoting, as expressed in the 3rd edition (1930:xvi) of the
Aperçu, where the 1923 monograph is the final item in the bibliography: 'Doubtless
Hellenists have for the most part remained sceptical as regards the conclusions of
this work; but I believe I have there correctly applied the methods of comparative
grammar and the principles of rhymes.

In the system of the (dialectal) proto-language ancestral to Greek and Indo-Iranian
the rhythm was quantitative, based on the alternation of long or heavy (strong
verse) and short or light (weak verse) syllables. Long syllables contain a long
vocalic nucleus (long vowel or diphthong) followed or not by one or more consonants,
or a short vowel followed by at least two consonants; short syllables contain a short
verse followed by no more than one consonant. The basic rhythmic alternation
consisted of long and short syllables separated by weak lines of one or two
shorts. The verse line tended to be isosyllabic, i.e. with a fixed syllable count, sometimes
varied by suppression of the final staccato. The arrangement of
lyric lines was strophic (line-by-line), typically grouped into three- or four-line strophes
which could themselves be grouped in units of three (the Vedic τρόπος and the strophe,
antistrophe, and epode of Greek choral lyric). The longer line of 10-12 syllables
contained an obligatory word boundary (pause) adjoining the 5th syllable, i.e. 1234
5 or 12345 6. It contained three cola: the initial, up to the caesura, with free alternation
of long and short syllable, a partially regulated internal colon, and a rhythmically
fixed final colon or cadence. The shorter line of 7-8 syllables usually lacked a fixed
caesura and contained only two cola, the free initial and the fixed cadence. The
quantitative opposition of long and short was neutralized in the verse-final syllable (anacepses),

Kampf and Biausac (Erwerben Wachtchas Kuh), which I owe to J. Schindler.
11. On this remarkably innovative work see the penetrating appreciation of A. Morpurgo Davies
1988c.
In Indo-Iranian and Early Greek poetry the convention is that a verse line equals a sentence, whether a longer or a shorter line. In practice verse boundaries are often the boundaries of syntactic constituents of (longer) sentences, and syntactic phenomena sensitive to sentence boundary are frequently found adjoining metrical boundary, both external (e.g. line boundary) and internal (e.g. caesura). Metrical boundaries frequently coincide with formula boundaries. The resultant interplay or counterpart between syntax and meter is a very distinctive characteristic of the earliest Indo-European poetry, and presumably of the poetic grammar of the proto-language as well.

Paul Thiemer 1953:8 could justly claim that "We may state with certainty that they [the Indo-European community] possessed a poetic art whose metrical form can be reconstructed from the comparison of Indic, Iranian, and Ancient Greek data with an exactitude whose precision excludes any possibility of doubt."

Other scholars since Meillet have adduced the evidence of many other metrical traditions around the Indo-European world. Roman Jakobson (1952) argued for the Indo-European origin of the South Slavic epic 10-syllable line (epski desvetec) with obligatory caesura and a statistical tendency to a rhythmic cadence of an anapest followed by an anacrusis. He compared the identical Greek cadence known as the paromoeic or 'proverb' verse, from its frequency as proverbial utterance occupying the second half line or hemistich of a dactylic hexameter, and proposed as Indo-European metrical prototype a 'gnomic-epic decasyllable'.

In the beginning of the 60's (1961 [presented 1960], 1963; more cautiously 1982) I argued for the Indo-European origin of a Celtic meter, the archaic Old Irish heptasyllabic [4 ii 3] line with fixed caesura and trisyllabic stress cadence 'o o o' or 'o o o'. It shows as well the variants [5 i 2], [4 ii 1], [5 iii], and others, but the word boundary as caesura is mandatory. While I still believe this archaic Irish verse form is inherited, I would now rather associate it with the other manifestations of the Irish rose, discussed in chap. 24. Th is is to say it should be compared with other examples of what I term 'strophic structures' or the 'strophic style', an Indo-European poetic form distinct from, and perhaps of earlier date than, the quantitative meter ancestral to that of Greek and Vedic. This poetic form is examined in part III. The 1963 paper (reprinted in Watkins 1994) retains its utility both for the analysis of the different Early Irish rose meters, and for the presentation and derivation of the different Greek and Indic verse forms.

Other traditions as well have been invoked in support of an Indo-European

12. Some doubt in fact inheres in the inclusion of Old and Young Avestan here, since the old quantitative opposition of long and short syllable has evidently been given up in Iran. But it is well-nigh impossible not to compare the [4 ii 7] 11-syllable line of the Gathas with fixed caesura after the 4th syllable with the Vedic 11-syllable trigubri (or 12-syllable gāyāt) with caesura after 4, and similarly the typical 8-syllable Younger Avestan stichic line with the Vedic 8-syllable gāyāt. Both the Old and the Younger Avestan lines are likewise arranged in strophes.

13. And doubtless prehistoric Iranian. Old Iranian preserves most clearly the two verse forms, one isosyllabic, with two hemistichs separated by a fixed caesura (the Gathas or Songs), and the other strophic, with lines of variable length corresponding to syntactic groups (the Yama Haṭpiṭale Itiṣita). (See chapter 21.)
In my spear is my kneaded bread; in my spear
Ismanian wine; I drink leaning on my spear,

with its triple figure of anaphora of the weapon, will surely recognize and respond to the same figure of anaphora, this time five-fold, of another weapon in Rigveda 6.75.2:

dhānvanī gā dhānvanājīn jayema
dhānvanī tvrīṣā samādo jayema
dhānā śātīr apakātām kpnti
dhānvanī sārīb prādo jayema

With the bow may we win cattle, with the bow the fight;
with the bow may we win fierce battles.
The bow takes away the enemy’s zeal;
with the bow may we win all the regions.

The observer will also note that the Vedic anaphora is more complex, encompassing the repeated verb jayema, and that the Vedic anaphora includes a figure of polyptoton or variation in case, instrumental — nominative.14

So James Darmesteter in 1878 entitled his paper on the formulaic nexus ‘crafting of words’ (above, 1) ‘a grammatical metaphor of Indo-European’, with full consciousness of its stylistic and poetic nature. Text-linguistic giants like Wilhelm Schulze and Jacob Wackernagel made countless stylistic observations over their lifetimes, but the most influential was a lecture delivered by Wackernagel at Munich on 29 November 1912, called ‘Indogermanische Dichtersprache’, with the German word, literally ‘poet-language’, that I have paraphrased (1992b:4.36) as ‘style and poetic language’. Wackernagel’s lecture was published posthumously during the Second World War, and reprinted in his Kleine Schriften (1953) and in Schmitt 1968.

The paper is historically significant enough and of such extraordinary richness in its implications — often inadequately recognized — that it requires the detailed examination given below. Here for the first time Wackernagel presented a sketch for a whole Indo-European stylistic and poetic language, centered around four characteristic features: (omission of) the augment, the metrical form, word order, and word selection.

The first is morphological, the absence of the augment (verbal prefix ē-, a-) in past indicative tense forms (those with ‘secondary’ endings) in early Greek and Indo-Iranian poetic texts. Wackernagel suggested that the omission of the augment was an archaism of poetic practice, the remnant of a time when there was still no augment.15 The question is complicated now by the data of Mycenaean Greek, which show almost no augmented forms. These are non-poetic texts some 500 years before Homer, so Wackernagel’s view is probably to be rejected. For discussion see Morpurgo Davies 1988b:78.

14. Saussure noticed the same thing when he referred to Rigveda 1.1 as a ‘verified paradigm’ of the name of the god Agni.

15. The augment is found only in the dialect area including Greek, Armenian, Indo-Iranian, and the fragmentarily attested Phrygian.

Wackernagel’s very brief treatment of metrical form simply spoke favorably of Meillet’s work, and disallowed alliteration as a property of Indo-European poetic language in the way that it functioned in later Celtic, Italic, or Germanic, all of which show or showed a fixed ‘demarcative’, word-initial stress accent (word-final in British).

In my view alliteration was one of a number of phonetic figures available to the Indo-European poet, used widely as an embellishment and not ‘bloss ganz vereinzelt und spielerisch’ (with Wackernagel of the Indians and Greeks). As such, alliteration was an ‘equivalence’ token, capable of being promoted to the ‘constitutive device of the sequence’ (Jakobson 1981:27) any time the appropriate phonological and prosodic conditions were met. This appears to have occurred in different branches at very divergent times.

In Insular Celtic the development of the initial mutations, which presuppose identical treatment of consonants between vowels in syntactic groups both word-internally and across word boundary, is incompatible with a demarcative stress (which would serve to differentiate the two positions). Once the morphophonemic system of mutations was in place, however, it would be natural for the languages to develop demarcative stress, to signal the grammatical information now carried by the initial consonant of the initial syllable. The development of the mutations is generally dated to shortly before 400 A.D.

The system of alliterative verse in Germanic must be considerably older, on the evidence of a crucial feature. Finite verb forms do not regularly participate in the alliterative scheme, unless they are verse- or sentence-initial. This convention must be related to the accentuation of the finite verb in Indic and indirectly in Greek: the finite verb in main clauses was unaccented16 except in verse- or sentence-initial position. This scheme is found already in our earliest documentation of Germanic (Gallehus runic inscription) ek hlewasatir holtijan horna tudio. I. Hlewasatiz of Holt, made the horn and must reflect very ancient Germanic prosodic practice.

Wackernagel’s most acute observations are found in his final two topics, word order and word selection (‘diction’). The parallelism between the two is clearer in the German Wortstellung and Wortwahl, as is their striking similarity to Jakobson’s model of the intersecting axes of combination and selection (1981:27), on which more below.

Wackernagel begins by pointing out the well-known contrast in early Indo-European between the highly regulated word order of Vedic prose or the Old Persian inscriptions and the highly variable, apparently ‘free’ or non-configurational word order observable in the Vedic hymns or the Songs of Zarathustra. He notes in Ancient Greek poetry three stages of non-prosac order of increasing ‘irationality’: Homer, the least complex; then the choral lyric of Pindar, Bacchylides, and Stesichorus;17 and finally the quite artificial perturbations of word order found in the

16. Whence the recessive accent in Greek.

17. He points out that Stesichorus 65 (PMG 242) σειστό με τον ιακάν την ‘yourself first, o fighter at the gate’ shows a word order impossible in Homer, who has only σ’ μετίν (ll. 10.389. 22.35). One would like to know the full verbal and metrical context of this hexameter, and the position of the verb governing the accusative. See note 20 below.
recherche versification of the Hellenistic period (and its Roman imitators). Wackemagel regards the latter as 'manifestations of overripeness', and compares the artifices of Old Norse skaldic poetry. As we will see in chap. 9, the same degree of perturbation of normal word order is found in Ireland, in the late sixth and seventh centuries, long before the language of the skalds.

Wackemagel then turns to Homer, to examine clearly inherited features of poetic word order. Some of these are in fact rules of ordinary grammar. Wackemagel first signals three: sentence-second position of enclitics and other weakly stressed particles ('Wackemagel's law'), 18 Behaghel's 'law of increasing members', and the disjunction (German Sperrung) of constituents of syntactic groups.

Recent work of considerable syntactic sophistication has shown that there are in fact at least three 'Wackemagel's laws' governing the positioning of enclitics, particularly in strings, which account for superficially variable or contradictory orders. See in detail Hale 1987 and to appear.

Behaghel's 'law of increasing members' rests on a plethora of examples from Germanic, Greek, and the other Indo-European languages which show the stylistic figure of enumeration of entities whereby only the last receives an epithet: 'X and Y and snaggle-toothed Z'. The Catalogue of Ships in Iliad 2 offers in its lists of names of persons, peoples, and places examples practically without exception. The fact gains interest with the recognition today that the Catalogue is in some—though hardly all—respects a 'Bronze Age' text, accurately reflecting the geography and settlements of middle to late second-millennium Greece. 19

The poetic disjunction of the constituents or syntactic groups has received considerable light from the study of formula and its relation to meter. In particular there is a marked tendency for separated constituents to themselves adjoin metrical boundaries. Thus in Wackemagel's example from Tibullus 1.9.4:

sera tamen tacitis poena uenit pedibus

yet tardy justice comes on silent feet,

where sera and poena follow line-initial and hemistich boundary, and tacitis and pedibus precede hemistich and line-final boundary. Wackemagel goes on to point to two cases at the beginning of each epic where contrary to received opinion Homer violates his own word-order practice. One is Od. 1.7 ἵπποι γὰρ ὀξυμέρον ἡκτέοικαν διόντω 'they perished because of their own folly', where the genitive ἵπποι quite abnormally precedes the pronominal possessive adjective. 20 'Presumably this reflects the modification of a formulaic prototyipte like II. 4.409' writes S. West in the Odyssey commentary, citing the same model as Wackemagel had. The other is the more common licence, beginning with II. 1.1, to reverse the natural "iconic" order of name and patronymic ('from the oldest Indians to the Russians of today'). Πηλιτέως Ἀχιλλεύς. A comparable poetic licence is to depart from the historical order in the enumeration of public offices held, the cursus honorum, for metrical reasons: the Roman satirian in a Scipionic inscription consol censor aidinis hic fuut apar nos. Such licences probably belong to the domain of poetic universals.

Under "word selection" ('dictum') Wackemagel includes formulaic noun phrases like 'imperishable fame', noting that their locus is precisely the language of poetic eulogy—the business of the Indo-European poet. He likewise links Germanic and Indo-European two-part personal names to poetic phraseology, as later defended by R. Schmitt 1973, and links the poetic and the hieratic in the language of cult, as exemplified by Greek Ζεός πάππερ, Latin happier, Vedic dâyus pitar. As we saw in chap. 1.2, the last can now be extended by Anatolian and Celtic facts.

Wackemagel then turned his attention from phrasal and lexical phenomena to the non-meaningful level of phonology and morphology: deformations like metrical lengthening and shortenings, and the special doubly marked poetic o-stem nominative plural ending -āhās (for -ās) of Vedic and Avestan, which after going "underground" in Classical Sanskrit resurfaced in Middle Indic early Buddhist poetry and whose hieratic value was transparent in the unique Old Persian example, the formula Aoramazdā ... uta amiýāha bagāha tayaity kehitty 'Ahuramazda and the other gods there are.'

His final example was a widespread stylistic feature of (typically prose) folktales, a text-initial, existential form of the verb 'to be' introducing the typical person or place: in Homer εστι πλάνας 'Iliad' (II. 6.152) 'There is a city Ephrye...', ἦν δέ τις ἐν Τρακίας δήμος 'There was among the Trojans a certain Dares...'. One need only compare the numerous Indo-European texts beginning 'There was a king...', Sanskrit āsīd rāja, Old Irish boí rí, Lithuanian būvo karalius, Russian ſіλ-бýл кoрěл ('car'). Greek preserves a remarkable morphological and semantic archaism in Aeolic (PMG 74) ἦς τις Καρφίων ποιόνσαν 'There was a certain Cepheus ruling...', where the existential value of the suffixed form in -ός corresponds exactly to the same value of Old Latin escī 'there is', demonstrated by Frankel 1925:442. The verb can undergo ellipsis, as in the description of Calypso's island (Od. 1.51), beginning θέους δεβροῦσαν, ἔτοι β' ἐν ἑανόμενα νομίζει 'An island full of trees, a goddess dwells within'. This syntactic and stylistic feature must be itself inherited; it recurs at the very beginning of the narrative part of the Homeric Appu-folk-tale SiBoT 14, I 7f (following the moralistic proem) URO-ūs SUM-an-ēs URO-URO-URO-URO.RO-URO-URO-Lulluwa=yu-šēkan KUR-e armu ZAG-ši šēki 'A city—Sadul its name—and the Lulluwa-land is on the edge of the sea.'

With this programmatic lecture, delivered in 1932 at the crowning point of Wackemagel's long career, the study of Indo-European stylistics and poetic language had found itself.

For the work of the last two generations we can be brief. In the postwar period the German Indologist Paul Thiemere made a number of contributions, reprinted in
Schmitt 1968. One in particular is discussed in chap. 42 below. The same decade saw the publication of seminal works on the general theory of stylistics, linguistics, and poetics by Roman Jakobson, reprinted in 1981. The Italian classicist and Indo-Europeanist Marcello Durante in 1958, 1960, and 1962 published three very imaginative and learned treatises, part of an ongoing project of research into the prehistory of Greek poetic language. They deal with metaphor, the terminology of poetic creation, and the epithet, resting primarily on original observations of verbal and thematic parallels to Greek texts in Vedic and other languages. These are reprinted in German translation in Schmitt 1968, and revised and somewhat streamlined versions were later published in Durante 1970 and 1976. The latter is particularly rich in Indo-European comparanda.

Schmitt 1967, already cited at the outset, is important also for stylistics, approaches to genre in Indo-European, and a host of individual correspondences, not to mention the virtually exhaustive bibliography up to that date.

The Italian Indo-Europeanist and Celtologist Enrico Campanile published in 1977 an important monograph with the intriguing title Studies in Indo-European poetic culture. The great innovation of this work was to emphasize the cultural and societal position and function of poet and poetry, based largely on the study of the traditional poet in Celtic and Indic society. Campanile makes valuable observations on stylistics, on the poet as professional, and on the “total”—all-embracing—character of Indo-European poetic culture, and makes very precise our notion of the functional meaning of some Indo-European stylistic figures. Later works of this author, most recently 1990, develop some of the same themes, with the notions of societal and cultural history predominating.

Indo-European "poetic culture" is also the domain of a number of lengthy recent contributions of François Bader, with the accent on myth. These include Bader 1989, 1991, and 1993.

In 1981 there appeared in German translation an article of fundamental importance by the Russian Indo-Europeanist Vladimir Nikolaevič Toporov. This lengthy, learned, and literarily sophisticated essay in fact offers no less than a theoretical foundation for the study of Indo-European poetic cultures. It is marked by the thought of Roman Jakobson, as well as Saussure and Starobinsky, but most firmly and clearly by the two traditions with which it is concerned, the language and literatures of Vedic and Classical India on the one hand, and the European critical aesthetic and intellectual tradition of the last century or so on the other. Striking is his juxtaposition (p. 194 with n. 8) of the definition of Bhāṣāma (7/8th century A.D.) in his Poetics (Kātyāyana’s) L.16: satārthāsahita kāvyam "poetry is sound and meaning put together" with the statement of Paul Valéry, writing in 1938: "L’opération du poète s’exerce au moyen de la valeur complexe des mots, c’est-à-dire en composant à la fois son et sens ... comme l’algèbre opérant sur des nombres complexes" (Œuvres 1.1414). Toporov’s work appears to be widely unknown to Sanskritists, Indo-Europeanists, and students of literary theory alike, but it amply repays serious study.

In 1988, there appeared an important article by M.L. West, "The Rise of the Greek Epic", with extensive reference to the Indo-European poetic literary and cultural background. We may look forward to the promised—or at least envisaged—book developing the ideas there presented, and detailing the genesis of the Homeric poems.

For completeness's sake, let me merely record that in 1979 I gave the Collitz lecture to the Linguistic Institute in Salzburg, with the title 'Aspects of Indo-European Poetics' (published 1982), in which I tried to sketch in a few lines a total picture of the essential Indo-European poetic language, its function, and its techniques. At the University of Texas at Austin in 1981, at the Session de linguistique et de littérature at Aussois (Savoie) in 1983, at St. John's College, Annapolis, and Yale University in 1984, I presented variations on a lecture entitled 'How to Kill a Dragon in Indo-European', subsequently published in Watkins 1987. As the titles would indicate, these two articles (reprinted in Watkins 1994) together furnish the nucleus from which the present work has grown.

I conclude this brief history with a paragraph from Meillet 1930:144 (compare 1913:159), to reiterate what we have known now for 80 years:

Greeks and Indo-Aryans received from the Indo-European period a literary tradition ... This literary tradition made no use of writing ... But there was an oral tradition of Indo-European poetry, as shown by the original identity of the two metrics, which one must take account of in order to explain the beginnings both of Greek poetry and of Greek thought.

That is to say that the comparative method in linguistics and poetics can illuminate not only ancient ways of speech but ancient modes of thought.