WEATHERED
WORDS

FORMULAIC LANGUAGE AND VERBAL ART

EDITED BY

FROG AND LAMB

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edited by
Frog
and
William Lamb

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PART V. CONSTRUCTING WORLDS OF DISCOURSE

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Multiform Theory

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Wʜᴇɴ ɪs ᴀ ꜰᴏʀᴍᴜʟᴀ ɴᴏᴛ ᴀ ꜰᴏʀᴍᴜʟᴀ? The question of where to draw the line between a formula and a word concerns a formula's threshold of minimum complexity, and it comes into focus because "word" and "formula" are considered to refer to distinct, complementary categories. However, there is no similarly common term for a category greater than a formula, and the question of a formula's threshold of maximum complexity generally goes unasked. C. M. Bowra, for example, considered that an epic formula could be "a set of lines up to a dozen or so in number" (1952:222)—which could make a formula of about eighty-nine words based on the first twelve lines of the *Odyssey*. Yet, can such a stretch of text carry a meaning in the same way as *fleet-footed Achilles*? And will the variation of such a large unit be comparable to a line-internal formula?

The present chapter introduces *multiform theory*, an approach to verbal systems that produce stretches of text in verse or prose that may considerably exceed a line or clause. Whereas the word offers a category in relation to which the minimum complexity of a formula is considered, the *linguistic multiform* presents a corresponding category for considering its maximum complexity. The present discussion is organized with an initial overview of some relevant terms and concepts and an overview of the background of multiform theory, followed by a survey of several types of multiforms in metered poetry, and finally a consideration of multiforms in prose and conversational dialogue.

1. A Definition of Formula

The distinction of linguistic multiforms from formulae is dependent on how "formula" is defined. Research on formulaic language has developed in different branches or strands. These can be viewed in terms of: (*a*) research centrally concerned with the lexicon of a language or Saussure's *langue* (i.e. language as an abstract system); (*b*) research centrally concerned with language as

it operates in discourse or Saussures' *parole* (i.e. language as it varies in situated use); and (*c*) language as it works in oral poetry. The lexicon-centered and discourse-centered branches have developed in varying degrees of dialogue with one another and there is a continuum of research between them. Formula research on oral poetry has evolved more independently owing in large part to the long-standing tendency in Western cultures to treat "poetry" and "prose" as clear and distinct categories, reflected even in how each is arranged on a printed page. The tendency has been reinforced, on the one hand, by Western literary poetry's manipulation of any and all linguistic resources available for the production of unique works (cf. Hasan 1989). Oral poetry, however, develops and maintains a distinct register that relies on social recognizability for its communicative efficacy (Foley 1990; 1995; 1996; Frog 2015). On the other hand, Western research on oral poetry gradually became dominated by Oral-Formulaic Theory (OFT), reifying ideas that set "poetry" apart by initially propagating a "theory" that accounted for, and indeed defined, formulaic language through its relationship to metered verse (Frog and Lamb, this volume, section 1). The form of OFT that was disseminated through Albert Bates Lord's *Singer of Tales* (1960) belongs to an earlier era, here described as "Classic OFT," distinct from its more dynamic manifestations today. In a current register-based approach to oral and oral-derived verbal art the gap between language use in "poetry" and "prose" dissolves like a mirage.

The artificiality of a binary poetry/prose divide became clear as forms of verbal art were brought into focus on their own terms through Dell Hymes's ethnography of speaking (1962) and Dennis Tedlock's ethnopoetics (Rothernberg and Tedlock 1970), which highlighted how poetics operate on a spectrum. Nigel Fabb (2015:9–10) situates the breakthrough into poetry at the point where poetic principles such as meter, alliteration, rhyme, or parallelism are given priority over syntax and prosody in organizing a text into units (rather than only organizing units scattered within a text). From this perspective, the difference in language's operation in poetry is that poetic organizing principles become primary rather than complementary stylistic and rhetorical devices. In this case, syntax and prosody become subordinated and evolve along with use of the lexicon in relation to conventions of the formal organizing principles. Thus, some registers may have distinctive formulaic lexicons that might seem to work very differently from language in conversational speech, yet the phenomenon of formulaic language remains the same; its manifestations are simply shaped in relation to the particular hierarchy of organizing principles through which discourse is organized. The constraints that poetic organizing principles place on lexical choices can facilitate the crystallization of phraseology or drive variation (e.g. by requiring that a word begin with a particular sound for alliteration),

as well as shape lexical semantics, particularly in a register that is used to express a limited range of things. As a result, formulae in poetic discourse may become more saliently observable, as may more complex verbal systems.

The diversity of forms that formulae may take has proven challenging to pin down with a simple definition (Schmitt and Carter 2004:2; cf. Harvilahti 1992a:29–67, 141–147). In recent decades, however, the different branches of research increasingly tend to agree on defining formulae in relation to three criteria: (*a*) a formula concerns linguistic signs, (*b*) operates with unitary meaning or function, yet (*c*) is distinguished from simple "words" by its complexity.[1] The unitary nature of a formula as a linguistic sign tends to be more or less straightforward, although it may be described in various ways, for instance as a "morpheme-equivalent unit" (Wray 2008:11–12) or as a linguistic "integer of meaning" (Foley and Ramey 2012:80). A formula's complexity, on the other hand, may focus exclusively on lexical items as a phrase or idiom; it may be a combination of a lexeme and syntactic structure that generates a formulaic sequence, or a combination of a lexeme and a poetic structure like meter or parallelism, or a combination of a lexeme with paralinguistic features or discourse structures. In all cases, a formula is viewed as a linguistic and cognitive reality that becomes established as a distinct unit with an exclusive entry in the mental lexicon of users, even if the same unit of meaning may be arrived at by analyzing the formula through the lexicon and grammar (Wray 2002:9–21). As a practical working definition, a formula is here considered *a linguistic sign or equivalent signifier that is more complex than a single word yet has unitary meaning or functional value so that it operates as a distinct unit of the lexicon.*

2. Collocation versus Formula

Defining a formula in terms of unitary meaning or function also distinguishes it from other phenomena in many forms of verbal art that are also sometimes called formulae. Prose is centrally organized through syntax and prosody in relation to meanings, so formulae emerge and evolve through the interaction of the lexicon with those organizing principles for expressing meanings or discourse functions. Where poetic principles receive precedence, these affect the formation of units of language, shaping formulae, but, in some poetries, also

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[1] During the OFT boom of the 1960s and 1970s, "formula" became a trendy term to label a variety of types of phenomena in oral poetry research, several of which left phraseology to focus on syntactic, structural, or semantic patterns recurring "under the same metrical conditions." Much of the terminology developed during this period has dropped out of use, although Joseph Russo's (1963) concept of "structural formula" continues to be taken up (see also Saarinen, this volume).

driving the development of units for meeting *purely formal* needs such as rhyme or alliteration, to which syntax and meaning or discourse function may be incidental (Frog 2015:82–89; Frog with Tarkka 2017:217–221).

Lexemes or phraseology linked by sound rather than sense have been explored especially in Old English verse (e.g. Reinhard 1976; Tyler 2006). Oversimplifying somewhat, this poetry's meter demands that the two halves of a line should be linked by the alliteration of prominent syllables, and pairs and sets of alternative words developed to meet that metrical need. However, meeting the metrical need was complementary to syntax and meaning rather than bound to it, and it was common to conclude an independent clause in the first half of a line and begin a new one in the second (i.e. with the effect that the meter "requires" the performer to continue with the next sentence). For example, the pair *word* ('word') and *wuldor* ('glory') could be spread across the grammatical subject and object, as in *and þæt word acwæð / wuldres aldor* (*Genesis* 639) ('and the *word* decreed, / *glory's* elder [= Lord]', i.e. 'God decreed the word'), or it could equally be used across independent clauses in a line like *wuldres aldor. / Wordhleoðor astag* (*Andreas* 708) ('*glory's* elder [= Lord]. / *Word*-speech arose'). The *word–wuldor* pair is based on a *metrical* function without a unitary meaning or discourse function qualifying a formula above and thus needs to be terminologically distinguished.

The (conventionalized) occurrence of things together or things that (conventionally) occur together are described as a *collocation*.[2] The *word–wuldor* pair is a collocation organized by alliteration while other linguistic collocations are shaped by different principles. A formulaic sequence is a type of collocation distinguished by its parts having unitary meaning. Here, *collocation* without other specification is used to refer to *collocations that are not also formulaic sequences.* In Old English research, discussions of alliterative collocations have focused on their potential for connotative semantics or to operate as cues in narration (Reinhard 1976; Tyler 2006; in Old Norse, see also Rugerrini 2016), a potential for meanings that is important to recognize, but does not necessarily meet the criteria of a formula above. The collocation's constituents' meanings or discourse functions are not collectively unitary and operate *relative to syntax* as independent linguistic signs (or within formulae as linguistic signs). Regular connotative meanings or associations of the collocation operate *independent of the syntax governing its constituents.* Thus, the collocation's semantics do not operate on the same level of syntagmatic relations as basic units of the lexicon, formulaic or otherwise. Moreover, formally driven collocations

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[2]   Collocation is sometimes also used for alternative words that occur in a single position in a phrase or other unit of discourse (Halliday and Hasan 1976).

do not necessarily develop connotative semantics at all, nor does developing such semantics mean that they were not also used simply to meet formal parameters by some people or in some cases (cf. Frog with Tarkka 2017:225). Alongside formally driven collocations like *word–wuldor*, collocations may also emerge in relation to other factors, such as semantic association (Tyler 2006). Distinguishing formula and collocation in relation to unitary meaning or function on the one hand and syntax on the other provides a foundation for formally distinguishing a formula's upper limit of complexity; it predicts that a formula is unlikely to exceed the scope of a clause.

3. The Background of Multiform Theory

Classic OFT offers a model for how oral epic singers can versify at the rate of performance, which it explains through: (*a*) Milman Parry's model of metrically pre-fitted phraseology forming an idiom that equips a performer to speak in verse on familiar subjects (1928; 1971); (*b*) *themes* as "groups of ideas regularly used in telling a tale" (Lord 1960:68), sometimes distinguished from *typical scenes* or *type-scenes* and *motifs* (see Foley 1990:esp. 240–245, 279–284, 329–335);[3] and (*c*) the *song*, which "the singer thinks of [...] in terms of a flexible plan of themes" (Foley 1990:99; see also Parry 1971:453). OFT's formulae and themes operate at two levels of syntagmatic relations, the combination of which distinguishes Lord's "composition in performance" from "improvisation" (Lord 1987:335–336). Classic OFT research remained focused on distinguishing and analyzing units of each type—the lexicon of a tradition's *langue* at the levels of language and narrative content. OFT's themes have often been qualified by having recurrent language in verbalization,[4] yet the relationship between formulae and themes generally remained unclear (Zumthor 1983 [1990]:92).

There is nothing new in recognizing that an oral tradition may have resources for expressing a stretch of text. In 1890, Alfred Nutt claimed that

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[3] These terms have all been defined in various ways across time, with the distinction between *theme* and *motif* initially being quite vague and problematic (Propp 1928 [1968]:12–13), not least because they tended to be treated as practical rather than analytical terms (Thompson 1955–1958; Lamb, this volume). *Typical scene* or *type-scene* started off more or less as another term for the same thing (Arend 1933). Parry was developing a typology of themes (1971:446, 448, 450, 454) that was not developed further. Discussion was particularly sophisticated in Old English research, where some scholars sought to distinguish both terms from *motif* (Fry 1968; see also Hopkins, this volume; for a semiotic approach, see also Frog 2015:38–41), while, to complicate matters, *theme* is sometimes used in Indo-European studies for the semantic unit expressed by a formula (Watkins 1995:chs. 1, 15, 30, 36; *pace* Lord e.g. 1995:62).

[4] John Miles Foley (e.g. 1996, 1999) discusses themes in addition to formulae as "words" of verbal art, leveling the difference between the linguistic register and narrative or information that it is customarily used to mediate.

"stereotyped descriptive passages in verse or rhythmic prose, of a general character, so that they can be used indifferently with various incidents—are necessarily common in all bodies of myth or romance preserved orally" (1880:448–449). Nutt dubbed such a passage a *run* (1880:448–449), which became established especially in connection with Gaelic storytelling. Nutt's contemporary A. F. Gil'ferding (1894:24) similarly describes North Russian *bylina*-epics as having stable stretches of text while other stretches were quite variable. Finno-Karelian kalevalaic epic poetry is predominantly constituted of verbally stable units, making 'line sequences' (*säejaksot*) prominent in discussion (e.g. Krohn 1918). *Epithet* and *cliché* were used as complementary terms, whereas *formula* became common for a larger unit of language from relatively early on (e.g. Chadwick and Chadwick 1936:72).

Albert Lord picked up Nutt's term *run* (1960:58–60), a unit he describes as "a cluster of formulas" (1960:60) that "marks one of the characteristic signs of oral style" (1960:58; see also 1991:89). However, the term *run* did not gain the traction of OFT's other terminology,[5] probably because Lord only sought to show that runs were not memorized and did not contradict his theory of composition in performance, rather than exploring how they work and vary (e.g. Lord 1981:453; 1991:83). He later proposed a new term, *block of lines*, though without definition (Lord 1991:3 and ch. 5),[6] and made some observations linked to these units' memorability (1991:84, 89; 1995:62). In his posthumous monograph, he went on to argue that lyric poetry and ballads were not "memorized" by approaching them in terms of blocks of lines (Lord 1995:ch. 2, esp. 62; cf. also 1991:84), yet research was already moving away from concern about formal units and the operation of such verbal systems—however described—and such units did not receive interest in the evolution of OFT (although cf. e.g. Holzapfel 1980).

Terms like *run* or *block of lines* suggest a more or less continuous stretch of prefabricated text (e.g. McCarthy 1990:152). Particularly on the backdrop of Classic OFT's ideas of formulaic language, they give the impression of a chain of formulae with limited flexibility and variability. Classic OFT's emphasis in formulaic phraseology led non-formulaic verbal systems to generally remain in the shadows. John Miles Foley introduced *cluster* as an alternative to *run* that he applied equally to line series in South Slavic epic (1990:181) and also to the concentrated co-occurrence of lexical roots (rather than formulae) across a stretch of Old English verse (1990:211–212); he later used *paradigm* for a loose and variable verbal system with a coherent discourse function (Foley

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[5]   E.g. Lauri Harvilahti (1992b:91–96; 2004) offers the term *standard sequence* instead.

[6]   *Run* is used in three other chapters of the same book (Lord 1991:22–23, 152, 161, 183) and once in chapter 5 (1991:90); there is also inconsistency in whether a block includes a couplet (cf. Lord 1991:77, 82, 88).

1991:214–221), addressed in section 7 below. In the mid 1990s, Lauri and Anneli Honko (1995; 1998) were working on the question of the remarkable variability in length that they observed in different performances of long epics. The Tulu epic performer they were working with, for example, once condensed a performance of a full epic to twenty minutes in order to fit the schedule of a radio broadcast (Honko 1998:30). Classic OFT's model of formulaic language was a poor fit for the extremely variable Tulu epic phraseology (Honko 1998:112–113), but the Honkos observed that stretches of text exhibited recurrent verbal frameworks of words and phrases that contracted or expanded in their different uses. They proposed *multiform* as a technical term to designate this type of verbal system established in the mind of an epic singer as a flexible and variable framework for producing a stretch of text.

The Honkos considered OFT handicapped by its point of departure from the minimal units of traditional language and narration—formula and theme—that were in such sharp focus that researchers had difficulty seeing beyond them. They felt that OFT left the "the enigma of epic composition" unsolved (Honko 1998:105; Honko and Honko 1998:73) because it paid too little attention to the production of longer stretches of verbal text (Honko 1998:103–105; Honko and Honko 1998:72–73). Lauri Honko advocated his own model of *mental text* to account for narration on a broader scope (e.g. Honko 1998:92–99). Classic OFT accounted for verbal composition in performance by *the existence of* a tradition's formulaic lexicon, whereas runs or blocks of lines appear as regular chunks of texts of greater scope. A multiform was, in contrast, a looser collocative system of vocabulary—both formulae and individual words—that could be elaborated or abridged to its core elements, yet was not bound to a consistent unit of meaning or narrative content like a theme. This initial model of a multiform is the foundation of multiform theory.

The word *multiform* had circulated in discussions of OFT owing to its use in *The Singer of Tales.* It was carried along with terms like *formula* and *theme*, but Lord uses *multiform* colloquially and inconsistently. He handles it as a practical adjective and noun to refer to anything with multiple forms, but he also uses it in the place of *variant* (a term prominent in text-oriented paradigms of comparative folklore), making *multiform* a term for any single manifestation of something like a theme that takes multiple forms (e.g. Lord 1960:100, 112–113, 133; see also Honko 1998:101–102; Honko and Honko 1998:40).[7] The Honkos turned this around and formalized *multiform* as a term for the linguistic framework that generates something with multiple forms. This use can also be extended beyond

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[7]   John Miles Foley lists "multiforms" in the index of his 1988 review of OFT (1988:168); he formalizes the term "multiform" in *The Singer of Tales in Performance* (1995:2), yet the index headword is "multiformity" rather than "multiform" (1995:232; see also Honko 1998:101–102).

language to iconography, narrative motifs, themes, and so forth (as in Drout 2011:447).[8] I view multiforms as a general semiotic phenomenon, and therefore distinguish those addressed by the Honkos as *linguistic multiforms.*

The proposal that a skilled singer would develop such verbal systems for producing stretches of text is not surprising. A decade earlier, Anna-Leena Siikala (1984a:85–93; 1984b [1990]:80–86) observed that language *crystallizes* in the mind of a teller of legends as a variable framework for expressing a unit of narration. Siikala uses *crystallization* to refer to fixity and variability on a spectrum of degree rather than being either fixed or free, invariable or variable, memorized or improvised, as a binary opposition. Linguistic multiforms are the product of crystallization, which she observed as linked to semantically central units in repeated prose narratives (see also Kaivola-Bregenhøj 1988a:305–313; 1988b [1996]:192–199; Brodie, this volume). Siikala also explored this phenomenon in her work on the corpora of kalevalaic epics and incantations (1986; 1992 [2002]:111–112). Kalevalaic epic is a short epic form; epics are usually about 75–300 lines in length, depending on the plot and the region. Individual epics can be remarkably stable at a verbal level in transmission, in contrast to the long epics on which Classic OFT was developed (Harvilahti 1992a; Frog 2016b). Crystallization was saliently reflected in the poetry's transmission and accounted for how units of mythic knowledge and narrative or ritual elements were linguistically "ready-coded" (Siikala 1986:201) or "precoded" (1992 [2002]:111) for verbal performance (also Frog 2019:241–242). Siikala's extension of the concept to kalevalaic poetry advanced crystallization from something occurring within the mind of an individual to something bound up with a tradition's transmission, observable through the quantitative empirical data of a corpus.

The 1990s exhibit a scattered rise in interest in complex verbal units, including new terms for these units as *clusters* (Foley 1990) or *blocks* (Lord 1991; 1995). The Honkos' major innovation was to shift attention from units of content like themes to the verbal framework that may be used to express them. This shift in focus allowed the linguistic multiform to be tracked through a corpus across different contexts of use rather than starting from the unit of narration and looking at language that recurs with it. Foley's cluster of Old English word stems moves in the same direction and is easily identified with the

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[8]   The Honkos' working definition of multiforms makes no reference to language: "*repeatable and artistic expressions of variable length which are constitutive for narration and function as generic markers*" (1995:211; 1998:35, original emphasis). This definition's parameter of functioning as generic markers would be problematic even for many linguistic multiforms because it excludes the same multiform operating freely across genres, whether within a broader poetic system (e.g. Tarkka 2013) or in the broad category of "prose."

Honkos' multiform. Foley, however, saw this as a tradition-specific phenomenon corresponding to Lord's formula-dense *runs*, and his interest was in potential associations with meaning rather than exploring the cluster as a flexible framework for producing a stretch of text (Foley 1990:206, 211–212). In contrast, the Honkos brought into focus the operation of multiforms at the level of verbal texture rather than meaning, and thus their potential to be polysemic (Honko and Honko 1998:36).

Multiform theory is not widely known and even less widely used. Lauri Honko promoted it (1995; 1996; 1998; 2003), but not in a way that made it generally relevant to, or applicable by, other scholars. First, multiform theory was presented and discussed only in relation to the quite narrow research question about the flexible length of long epics in performance: it accounted for one thing in a type of oral poetry with a very particular profile; it was not shown to have a broader utility. Second, multiforms were only demonstrated for the mind of one individual: they were not shown to circulate like formulae, which would make them relevant for the analysis of social aspects of a tradition. Third, multiform theory was presented as an *alternative* to OFT rather than as complementary it. In sum, multiforms only seemed relevant to variation in long epics as performed by a particular singer; they were also introduced as potentially incompatible with the dominant framework for studying variation in that type of poetry.

I started working with multiform theory more than a decade ago. I initially took up the concept when wrestling with a complex verbal system that clearly circulated between poets for producing a metrically well-formed line, yet could vary considerably in syntax and also in the referents of particular words, as discussed in the following section. The Honkos' multiform offered a means of bringing all of the complementary moving parts of the unit and their variation into focus as a verbal system that could be used to communicate *different meanings* and manipulated for *aesthetic effects.* The multiforms studied by the Honkos are like verbal latticeworks that can be stretched or collapsed in performance to prolong or condense epic narration, whereas the verbal system I faced was of invariable length but flexible in alternative word choices and word order; both, however, operate as complex formal linguistic resources for producing a stretch of text without forming a regular unit of meaning. I decontextualized the concept from the Honkos' specific questions and tradition-type: rather than latticework multiforms defining the concept, I view them as one among several types of multiforms in a practice-driven approach. This approach views multiforms as verbal systems that evolve and operate in relation to the organizing principles of a type of discourse and how that type of discourse is used, acknowledging that individual multiforms may vary considerably in their degree of

crystallization. Working with the Honko's concept rapidly led me to use it as an approach to variation in the standard sequences or runs of kalevalaic epic poetry (Frog 2010b). Since that time, I have tested and refined multiform theory in relation to several types of oral poetry, including kalevalaic epic and incantations, Old Norse eddic and skaldic verse, Modern Icelandic *sagnakvæði*, and, to a lesser degree, Russian *bylina*-epics, Scandinavian ballads, Scandinavian verbal charms, and Rotenese ritual poetry.

Rather than conceiving a multiform simply as a set of words and formulae, I have extended the Honkos' model to consider syntax, equivalence sets of vocabulary (e.g. for meeting alternate alliterations or rhymes), and slots that are semantically, metrically, or functionally conditioned (Frog 2016a). Classic OFT was not well-suited to approaching shorter poetic forms (e.g. Holoka 1976:572), whereas multiform theory offers a framework for addressing mechanisms behind such poetries' more stable sequences of text (see also Lord 1995:ch. 2). When multiform theory is applied within the framework of OFT, short and long forms of poetry appear within a unified framework. The difference in length of the poetic form affects the degree to which multiforms crystallize. Depending on the tradition, such multiforms may become specific to a certain identity-bearing text, like a poem or song that is socially recognized as a particular thing made of language distinct from other poems or songs. It may even be specific to a particular part of a certain poem as opposed to others, as when a certain stanza is recognizable as a stanza of a particular episode of a particular ballad. In the context of the present chapter, an understanding of linguistic multiforms enables a distinction of a formula's upper threshold of complexity.

4. Formally Driven Multiforms

Some multiforms evolve primarily to meet formal rather than semantic needs. An exemplary case is found in Old Norse poetry in the *dróttkvætt* meter, although it is necessary to sketch out basic features of the poetic form and prominent features of the register to be understandable to an unfamiliar reader. *Dróttkvætt* is exceptionally demanding. It is composed in couplets of six-position lines that are normally formed with one syllable per position. Ideally, a pair of stressed syllables rhyme within each line and two stressed syllables in the first line of a couplet alliterate with the first syllable of the second—i.e. there are three to four sound requirements in each six-position line, on top of which are rules governing syllabic quantity. To accommodate these demands, the poetic register developed remarkably flexible (though still rule-governed) syntax that can scramble a clause across paired couplets—i.e. four lines—and embed one

independent clause inside another so that words from different clauses may be in the same line.

What makes this poetry interesting from the perspective of multiform theory is that the constraints and flexibility of the poetic form interact with an elaborate system for generating equivalence expressions called kennings. Although it is not necessary to explore this system in detail here, it is important to at least give a sense of its dynamism. A kenning is a rhetorical figure formed of two nouns in a genitive construction or a compound that refers to a third nominal category, like saying *geira hríð* ('storm of spears') or *geir-hríð* ('spear-storm') for BATTLE. Although kennings could be generated for anything, their referents are generally predictable, centering around war, wealth, women, poetry, and patronage as poets' favored subjects. This predictability allows tremendous flexibility in word choice for the two elements along three trajectories: (*a*) equivalence within a semantic category, so *geirr* ('spear') could be any word for WEAPON or ARMOR, and *hríð* ('storm') any word for WEATHER or WIND; (*b*) functional equivalence across categories, so words for WEAPON can be replaced by any of over one hundred names of the god Odin, the name of any valkyrie, or any mythic hero (MYTHIC AGENT OF BATTLE) without affecting the kenning's meaning, and words for WEATHER can be replaced by any word for NOISE or GATHERING; and (*c*) a word within a kenning can itself be replaced by a kenning. In principle, this enables a poet to formulate a kenning for central referents of the kenning system that will fit any combination of syllabic requirements, alliteration, and/or rhyme (or their avoidance). On the other hand, this system allows different combinations of the same words to express different things, a potential compounded by *dróttkvætt*'s syntax, which allows a syntactic break within a line.

Dróttkvætt's flexibility and transmission as personal compositions attributed to individual poets with minimal variation led to the common view that the poetry is not "formulaic." Some years ago, while looking for something completely unrelated, I observed in *dróttkvætt* what would have been called a "formula(ic) system" in Classic OFT (Lord 1960:48; see also Parry 1928) but which can be abstracted as an *open-slot formula*, i.e. a formula with a *slot* (X) that can be completed by different *slot-fillers* (see also Acker 1983:45; 1998:40): *[1 2 3] í dyn X* ('... in the din of X [= BATTLE]'; numbers indicate additional metrical positions). I then noticed that two of the slot-fillers were linked to a collocative rhyme system *hjalmr–malmr–almr–*(*hilmir*) ('helmet–metal–elm–[prince]'), although in one case a poet had formed the kenning with the words at the beginning of the line while the word in the final position, expected for the slot-filler, belonged to a different independent clause: *málmskúrar dyn | hjálmar* ('metal-shower's din [= BATTLE] | helmets'). I gradually discovered that *dynr* ('din') alternated with *gnýr*

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('roar') while the combination of either of these with the *hjalmr–malmr–almr–* (*hilmir*) collocative system exhibited recurrent vocabulary in the remaining positions. As diagrammed in (1), this system was used in a variant form where *dynr/gnýr* was transposed into the second of the line's six positions (-INFL and -GEN.PL indicate an inflectional syllable; variant word order and its occasional use of *himir* is in italic font below the double line; lexical choices only attested once are not shown; for data, see Frog 2009:239–240).

(1)

1	2	3	4	5	6
hjalm- malm- alm-	-skúr -þing	í	dyn gný	hjalm- malm-	-GEN.PL
	dyn- gný-	*-skúr- -við-*	*-INFL*		*hilmi*

1	2	3	4	5	6
helm- metal- elm-	-shower -assembly	in	din roar	helmet- metal-	-GEN.PL
	din- roar-	*-shower- -wood-*	*-INFL*		*prince*

This multiform is a case where lexical density and regularity likely made the unit recognizable as a formal resource, at least to skilled poets, although it was used in different contexts to express different semantic content and there is no reason to think it carried particular connotative semantics. However, the exceptional example that placed the syntactic break between positions 4 and 5 rather than earlier in the line contradicts expectations of usage in a composition where the poet is actively displaying his virtuosity. This case is most likely an example of the poet playing with expectations for aesthetic effect (Frog 2009:236).

Many multiforms in this poetry are much less complex, but they often seem to form around a kenning that has become *metrically entangled*,[9] which combines with a rhyme collocation or collocative system. Although a kenning is better viewed as a rhetorical figure than a formula, kennings used for a particular referent gravitate to conventions of use in particular metrical positions. Some of these are metrical-syntactic patterns common for kennings of different referents (cf. Russo 1963; Saarinen, this volume), but, even in these, conventional patterns of usage are reflected in preferred lexical choices. The *[1 2 3] (dyn/gný) X* formula (also used outside of (1)) is unambiguous in this respect: nineteen examples use *dynr*, twenty-two use *gný*, and fourteen use eight other words in that position (Frog 2014). In a case study of 340 kennings for BATTLE in their metrical positions in *dróttkvætt* lines (Frog 2016c), sixty examples formed a compound filling the first two positions of the second line in a couplet. Of these, nine had *hríð* as a base-word, as seen in (2), with an additional example from outside the earlier dataset. Six of the ten examples rhyme *hríð* with *síðan* ('then') at the end of the line (*dróttkvætt* rhyme concerns stressed syllables, not word endings), while *hríð* is not rhymed with *síðan* elsewhere in the 340 examples of the original case study. The rhyme appears as conventional specifically in connection with this semantic formula, so that *hríð* is not simply metrically entangled as a preferred lexical choice, but further entangled with a preferred rhyme collocation (noting that in viii and ix, rhyme is on the determinant rather than being regularly on *hríð*).

(2)

	X-hríð	[3 4]	[5 6]		
i.	malm-*hríð*	jǫfurr	*síðan*	X-storm ... then	Edáð *Banddr* 4[I].2[10]
ii.	odd-*hríð*	vakið	*síðan*	X-storm ... then	Hskv *Útdr* 10[II].2
iii.	odd-*hríð*,	ok, brátt	*síðan*	X-storm ... then	Kolli *Ingdr* 1[II].2
iv.	egg-*hríð*	né mun	*síðan*	X-storm ... then	Arn *Þorfdr* 16[II].2
v.	eld-*hríð*	es varð |	*síðan*	X-storm ... | then	Arn *Þorfdr* 20[II].6
vi.	vápn-*hríð*	konungr |	*síðan*	X-storm ... | then	Arn *Magndr* 8[II].2
vii.	vápn-*hríð* |	sonar	bíða	X-storm | ... await	EValg *Lv* 1[I].7–8
viii.	egg-*hríð*,	framir	seggir	X-storm ... say	ESk *Harsonkv* 2[II].4
ix.	geir-*hríð*	fregit	meiri	X-storm ... more	*ÞjóðA Magnfl* 6[II].8
x.	stál-*hríð*,	búendr	fríðir	X-storm ... good	Anon (*GBpA*) 3[IV].2

Examples (2.i–vi) reflect a complex unit *X-hríð [3 4] síðan* ('BATTLE ... then'). If *síðan* had a consistent syntactic relation to *X-hríð*, like 'then BATTLE' followed

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[9]   On *metrical entanglement*, see Frog 2021.
[10] All skaldic poetry quotations are referred to by sigla according to the Skaldic Project Database.

by a verb, this would operate as a formula expressing a regular unit of meaning, but the kenning and *síðan* are distributed across independent clauses in two of the six examples, comparable to the Old English *word–wuldor* collocation above. Conversely, the rhyme pair is linked to the particular semantic formula, so describing *X-hríð [3 4] síðan* simply as a collocation marginalizes the complexity of including a variable formula. I therefore distinguish this as a multiform.

5. Formula-System Multiforms

I use *formula-system multiform* to refer to a type of metrically driven multiform consisting of complementary sets of formulae that are associated in the mind of an individual to complete a metrical unit or its equivalent. This use of "system" is different from uses of the term in Classic OFT, where that word has been used in multiple ways, warranting prefatory comment to avoid confusion.

It is commonplace to use *formulaic system* to refer broadly to a formulaic genre's[11] idiom and principles of operation. Parry, however, used *system* to describe any network of formulae (in the sense of completed phrases) associated in the mind of a singer, looking especially at similar phrases in the same metrical positions and phrases expressing the same idea in different metrical positions (1928; 1930). Some of Parry's "systems" dissolve when metrical variation is accepted, but Lord propagated use of *system* to describe completed variants of an open-slot formula (1960:35–36, 47–49; cf. Saarinen, this volume). The extreme variability of Old English poetic phraseology led Donald K. Fry to shift emphasis from formulae as completed phrases to a generative model, defining a formula as "the direct product of a formulaic system" (1967:204, emphasis removed). Fry abstracted such a "system" to a template with fixed elements and variable slots (1967:199–203). Paul Acker adapted the concept of formulae having slots and slot-fillers from an independent strand of linguistic research (1983:94–96; 1998:63–66), an innovation that reconceived Classic OFT's systems as variable formulae. Parry's hierarchies of such formulae remain relevant, but can be viewed as hierarchies of metrically entangled slot-fillers, which may also crystallize into discreet formulae.

Where formulae used in the same metrical position can be assumed to be linked in the mind of a singer, potentially as alternatives, I would describe these as an *equivalence set*. This is contrasted with an *equivalence class* as the broader category of possible alternatives, irrespective of whether they are linked in anyone's mind. In metrical poetry, such alternatives form a metrical-semantic or metrical-syntactic equivalence set when the set of alternatives is linked in

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[11] On the concept of *formulaic genre*, see Kuiper 2009; Kuiper and Leaper, this volume.

the mind through some type of equivalence or belongingness to a common category used in particular metrical positions. I reserve *system* for formulae that get used *together* in complementary interaction, rejecting Parry's usage for sets of formulae. The operation of a whole formulaic idiom can thus be considered as forming a system. A system as a set of formulae, associated in the mind of a performer, to complete complementary sets of metrical positions or equivalent units is a *formula-system multiform*, as in the example from kalevalaic epic in (3).

Kalevala-meter is a trochaic tetrameter, so lines normally consist of eight syllables, with rules governing stressed-syllable placement and systematic alliteration. Names of mythic heroes often have a four-syllable form like *Väinämöinen* or *Ilmarinen* and an optional two-syllable epithet (see also Saarinen, this volume). These naming formulae form equivalence sets in the minds of performers, as becomes apparent when performers accidentally transpose them (e.g. Frog 2016b:68–69, 76). These formulae are complementary to equivalence sets of words completing the first two positions followed by an open slot for a six-syllable noun phrase in the nominative case. Syntactically, the noun phrase may be the grammatical subject or a vocative naming of the addressee. The two sets combine to form an epic formula-system for generating well-formed lines in the flow of epic performance ("is" in parentheses reflects use of the verb as an expletive particle to complete a metrical position; see also Frog 2016b:75).

(3)

2-syllable	6-syllable	2-syllable	6-syllable
tuo on	vanha Väinämöinen	that is	old Väinämöinen
siitä	nuori Joukahainen	then	young Joukahainen
oi on	Ahti saarelainen	oh (is)	Ahti island-dweller
sano	Antero Vipunen	said	Antero Vipunen
ajo	Pohjolan emäntä	drove	Mistress of Pohjola
etc.	etc.	etc.	etc.

A single formula completed in a limited variety of ways does not itself qualify as a multiform. For example, the formula *annan {ainoan} X* ('I will give

{my only} X') is used in a certain kalevalaic epic that takes the following forms in one local dialect:

(4)

i.	annan *kultia kyperän*	I will give *of gold a helmetful*
ii.	annan ainoan *orihin*	I will give my only *stallion*
iii.	annan ainoan *sisäreni*	I will give my only *sister*

<div align="right">Frog 2016b:73</div>

When the lines are presented together out of context, *annan {ainoan} X* may look like a generative system, but the stability of the expression becomes apparent when it is presented within the multiform of which it is the variable core, and when it is recognized that the three forms are each used in three cycles of question-and-answer dialogue. In (5), X_1 indicates the slot-filler of the *annan {ainoan} X* formula; X_2 is a parallel full-line repetition of the grammatical object:

(5)

{Oi on vanha Väinämöini}	{Oh (is) old Väinämöinen}
Myössytäs pyhät sanasi	Make your holy words harmless
Perävytä lauhiesi	Turn back your sentences
Annan {ainoan} X_1	I will give {my only} X_1
{X_2}	{X_2}
{Oman pääni päästimeksi	{For liberating my own head
Itscheni lunastimeksi}	as a ransom for myself}

<div align="right">Frog 2016b:85</div>

Annan {ainoan} X does not form a dynamic and generative system with an equivalence set of slot fillers and instead produces a set of crystallized alternative lines that are used within a particular, more complex multiform.

6. Formula-System Multiforms of Different Scope

The unit completed by a formula-system multiform may be greater than a single line. For example, the formula *[1 2] vanha Väinämöinen* in (3) forms a collocation with the semantically parallel complete line *tietäjä iän ikuinen* ('sorcerer of age eternal'). Use of the *vanha Väinämöinen* formula in the formula system can thus generate a couplet, although, in practice, the parallel line is not systematic and in many cases is not found more than once in a poem. Since the parallel line regularly follows the *vanha Väinämöinen* formula, forms a coherent unit of meaning with it,

and is not used independently, it can be viewed as part of a single formula: *[1 2] vanha Väinämöinen / {tietäjä iän ikuinen}.* A formula that can expand or contract can be described as a *telescoping formula.* This formula can also be completed with the additional epithet *vaka* ('sturdy') or contracted by omitting *vanha* ('old') in order to be used in combination with a four-syllable open-slot formula: *{{vaka} vanha} Väinämöinen / {tietäjä iän ikuinen}.* The point here is that even the simple system presented in (3) may extend across more than one line where participating formulae are parts of collocations for producing verse parallelism.

Formula-system multiforms may be quite complex. The Old Norse eddic poem *Alvíssmál* is organized as a dialogic test of knowledge in which the god Thor asks how something is called "in all of the worlds" thirteen times, and the dwarf *Alvíss* ('All-Wise') offers thirteen corresponding replies. Each of Alvíss' answers is organized in a regular stanza in the *ljóðaháttr* meter. The stanza is formed of two half-stanzas, each of which is comprised of one long line, made up of two half-lines joined by alliteration as in Old English verse (marked Ia–b and IIIa–b in (6)), followed by a *Vollzeile* (literally 'full line') which is shorter, has a particular rhythm, and line-internal alliteration (marked II and IV). Each half-line and *Vollzeile* is constituted of a simple open-slot formula that refers to a race of beings or the realm of the dead and is completed with a word or kenning for how the respective thing is called by those beings / in that place. The stanza on how CORN is called is presented in (6):

(6)

  Ia*Bygg* heitir með mǫnnom   Ibenn *barr* með goðom
    IIkalla *vaxt* vanir
  IIIa*æti* iotnar   IIIbálfar *lagastaf*
    IVkalla í helio *hnipinn*

                                  Alvíssmál 32, punctuation removed

  Barley it is called among men   but *barleycorn* among gods
    call [it] *growth*, the *vanir*
  oat [call it] giants   elves [call it] *staff of laws*(?)
    call [it] in Death's realm *drooping*

The thirteen stanzas of the dwarf's replies are each constituted of six open-slot formulae. The total of seventy-eight half-lines and *Vollzeilen* exhibit only fourteen formulae, shown in (7), with three minor variations that each occur on a formula's first use (formulae #3, #12, and #14; variations in parentheses).[12]

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[12] The formulae are otherwise remarkably regular in spite of the potential for flexibility in phraseology allowed by the metrical form (Frog 2011:48–50; forthcoming).

(7)

	#	Formula	Line type	Stanza 10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34
Line I	1	*X heitir með mǫnnum*	a-line	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34
	2	*en X með goðum*	b-line		12	14	16	18	20	22	24		28	30	32	
	3	*en með ásum (álfum) X*	b-line	(10)								26				34
Line III	4	*X jǫtnar*	a-line	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34
	5	*álfar X*	b-line	10	12		16	18	20	22	24		28	30	32	
	6	*en X dvergar*	b-line			14						26				
	7	*en í helju X*	b-line													34
Line II/IV	8	*kalla X vanir*	*Vollzeilen*	10	12			18			22	24	26 28		32	34
	9	*kalla X halir*	*Vollzeile*										28			
	10	*kalla X Y-regin*	*Vollzeilen*	10					20					30		
	11	*kalla X Y synir*	*Vollzeilen*				16									34
	12	*kalla dvergar X (dv. X)*	*Vollzeilen*		(12)		16			22	24			30		
	13	*kalla álfar X*	*Vollzeile*			14										
	14	*kalla í helju X (k. X helju í)*	*Vollzeilen*		(14)			18	20			26			32	

In each half of the stanza, the first formula (Ia, IIIa) does not vary. The slot-filler in that formula is required to carry alliteration, which drives the choice of the formula in the following half-line (Ib, IIIb). If that slot-filler requires vocalic alliteration (i.e. the stressed syllable must begin with a vowel; in Old Norse, all vowels alliterated with one another), it is carried by the poetic word for 'gods' (*æsir*) in Ib and 'elves' (*álfar*) in IIIb; if consonantal alliteration is required, another formula with different word order is used in which it is carried by the slot-filler, with a single variation in the final stanza (Acker 1983:94–96; 1998:63–66).[13] A *Vollzeile*'s structure requires alliteration of the first noun of the formula with its slot-filler. The three open-slot formulae used in IIIb all have equivalents in *Vollzeilen* with slightly different phrasing; these can be seen as metrically driven variations of a single formula (ten examples of #5 ~ one of #13, two examples of #6 ~ five of #12, one example of #7 ~ five of #14), in which case the multiform exhibits only

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[13] The final exception might be interpreted as driven by alliteration, since the formula carries *h*-alliteration on *hel* ('death; Death; realm of the dead'), but it could also be rhetorically driven in anticipation of Alvíss' death in the following stanza.

eleven potential open-slot formulae with variations (Frog forthcoming). Within the context of other variation, selection of the formulae in *Vollzeilen* appears more likely driven by the slot-filler than vice versa.

Viewed in isolation, each long line of this unit might be seen as a simple, generative formula system for the long line of each half-stanza. However, the whole stanza is governed by a condition of non-repetition of the main noun in each formula. The same category of GODS, GIANTS, or MEN can be mentioned, but the same word cannot be used for it twice. Non-repetition means that formulae are not being selected at the level of the individual line, but at the level of a whole stanza. Variation in these thirteen stanzas only becomes understandable when the formula-system multiform in the background is recognized.

7. Macro-Formula Multiforms

Especially in narrative discourse, multiforms crystallize around units of what language is used to communicate or "do" (see also Siikala 1986:201; 1992 [2002]:111). Such multiforms can be similar to sets of formulae connected with a theme in Classic OFT (cf. Foley 1990:240–245, 279–284, 329–335), although how these relate depends on how theme is defined (Honko and Honko 1998:72–73). If theme is identified as a relatively short narrative unit, like a ballad stanza (cf. McCarthy 1990:152–153), multiform and theme may align. The more complex plot unit as conceived by Lord (1960:68–98) might be expressed and elaborated through a number of multiforms, much as he considered blocks of lines in lyric poetry as "intermediate between the formula and the theme" (1995:62). Formulae linked to a theme as a broader unit may not develop the regularity and density suggestive of a coherent verbal system per se, and may become linked to individual constituents of the theme rather than to one another in the mind of a performer. The co-occurrence of certain formulae with a theme may also simply result from their conventional use for expressing certain things that happen to be part of that theme (cf. Magoun 1955; Fry 1968). A formula may also become a metonymic cue of a narrative unit (e.g. Foley 1995:96) without being linked to a more complex verbal system (see also Roper, this volume). Only when a multiform becomes socially recognizable as a linguistic unit for expressing a regular meaning or function does it have the potential to operate as a complex linguistic sign comparable to a formula (cf. Foley 1990:206). Owing to its greater complexity, a multiform that functions in this way is here distinguished as a *macro-formula.*

Crystallization does not inherently lead a multiform to become a salient linguistic unit with a regular meaning or discourse function. This was seen in

the *dróttkvætt* multiforms in (1) and (2) above. The Honkos foreground multi-forms' polysemy in Tulu epic (1995; 1998; also Honko 1998:100–116), yet the words of this epic register express regular, literal, propositional meanings. Thus, polysemy of the multiform would be in tandem with the fairly straightforward relationships between its constituent words or formulae and what is narrated, similar to collocations like the *word–wuldor* pair above. Both the Honkos (1998:41; also Honko 1998:102) and Lord (1981:459–460) doubted the social stability of linguistic multiforms or runs in highly variable long epic poetries, a view which would preclude use as a macro-formula. A multiform may also be regu-larly employed as an integer of traditional communication, as in what Foley (1991:214–223) calls the *Hwæt* paradigm in Old English. Foley describes this as "a collection of signals, not all bound by linear prosody, that cumulatively indicate the start of a tale" (1991:214). He summarizes this verbal system thus:

> the *Hwæt* paradigm [...] consists regularly of the interjection [i.e. *Hwæt!*], a verb of speaking or hearing, and identification of the speaker as 'we' or 'I'. It may also attract to itself other metonymic structures, such as the *þeod-/þrym* collocation, the 'in days of old/yore' phrase, and the whole line pattern involving *æðeling-* and *ellen*, but these latter items are most productively viewed as signals in their own right that may or may not appear with the *Hwæt* convention.
>
> Foley 1991:222–223

The three core elements of Foley's "paradigm" form a semantically and syntac-tically flexible unit that operates collectively as a discourse marker. As with Old English collocations, significance as a discourse marker operates at a different level than the propositional semantics of the phraseology. Variation in the first-person pronoun between singular and plural may be considered morphological, but variation in the verb produces different meanings in ways inconsistent with the definition of formula above. Formally, this multiform has a regularly struc-tured onset, beginning with the interjection, which is followed immediately by the pronoun, whereas the verb may be used in the same half-line or follow some lines later and additional collocated elements may either precede or follow the verb. Constituents also appear on a hierarchy in which the three core elements are the most regular and others are optional.[14]

Where a poetic form is shorter and especially where it also imposes formal constraints on variation, sequences of text can become much more regular and recognizable as narrating a specific unit or type of unit. The multiform's

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[14] The nature of the sources leaves it impossible to assess factors of regional or diachronic variation.

complexity affects its potential for variation in relation to the poetic form. For example, ballads with a rhymed stanzaic structure configure syntax within stanzas as formal units with breaks between them, and this correspondingly organizes the presentation of information. A rhymed quatrain structure can support the stability of a ballad stanza in social circulation, which is not to deny the poetic system's flexibility or performers' potential for creativity (see also McCarthy 1990). When the verbal unit becomes recognizable, it operates as a macro-formula for the unit of narration (sometimes addressed simply as a formula: see e.g. Holzapfel 1980: 21–27).

Finno-Karelian epic is stichic poetry—i.e. it is not composed in couplets or stanzas. Nevertheless, its macro-formula multiforms are remarkably crystallized and an epic may be performed almost entirely as a chain of such units (Frog 2016b; cf. Honko 2003:113–122). Someone competent in the poetry immediately recognizes certain lines as linked to a particular macro-formula or particular epic (Virtanen 1968:55; see also Tarkka 2013:90). They can make judgments about whether lines are "correct," or whether they align with one dialect of singing as opposed to another (Frog 2010b:99–100). The kalevalaic corpus is remarkably large, so a hundred or more examples of a particular epic may be collected across numerous regions and generations of singers. This allows nuanced perspectives on variation. The stichic poetic form opens these macro-formulae to potential variation in length, which does not seem so pronounced between performances in contrast to social variation on an individual, local, or regional basis. Several formal types of macro-formula multiforms are distinguishable according to how they vary.

The macro-formula in (5) above expresses a hero's offer of ransom in exchange for being released. This can be described as a *verbal core multiform*, a type common when dialogue is organized in cycles. The multiform will not appear without a particular core line or couplet while additional lines, such as a vocative phrase, parallel lines, and various, if conventionally established, elaborations can be omitted or sometimes added (see also Saarinen 1994:183). Some can be found expanded to perhaps ten lines or reduced to a single line or couplet without compromising narration. Singers generally did not capitalize on these multiforms' potential for variation. When a singer used the same multiform more than once within an epic, and even when singing the epic on different occasions, variation is not generally noticeable except for salient features linked to narration, like alternating slot-fillers or morphological variation between a request and a character's compliance (Frog 2016b:66–72). Nevertheless, verbal core multiforms exhibit flexibility in social circulation.

Kalevalaic macro-formulae that describe things in the third-person do not exhibit the same variability in length. In verbal-core multiforms, additional lines

surrounding the core normally only include information that can be inferred from the surrounding narrative or context, whereas the information presented in third-person narration more commonly adds detail. This information is often presented in an ordered series, although the order of elements may also be variable or less crystallized. The first kalevalaic multiform that I explored in detail was a description of a fire seen on an island at the opening of a certain epic, found in over a hundred examples and often presented as two couplets in fixed order (Frog 2010a:372–376), as illustrated in (8):

(8)

Savu soarella palave	Smoke on the island burns
Tuli niemen tutkamessa	Fire on the peninsula's tip
Suur' ois paimenen paloksi	Great would be for the blaze of a shepherd
Pien' ehk' ois' sovan savuksi	Small perhaps would be for the smoke of war

SKVR I$_1$ 722.1–4, punctuation removed

As is common for a crystallized series multiform, the opening lines are quite regular. Variation increases as the lines progress (Frog 2016b:76; see also Siikala 1986:198–199). Kalevalaic verse parallelism does not allow syntactic elements to be elided in the first line of a series, which inhibits inversion of the first couplet because the verb for burning is elided in its second line. In the second couplet, the verb *olla* ('to be') allows flexibility because it has monosyllabic forms and its vocalic onset allows apocope of a preceding vowel. Thus, *suuri* ('great') can be contracted to *suur'* followed by *on* ('is') or *ois* ('would be') without impacting the meter, as here. When this singer performed the same epic fifteen years later, she reversed the order of the couplet and sang *suuri* ('great'), eliding the verb (*SKVR* I$_1$ 722a.7). Singers also occasionally invert *suuri* ('great') and *pieni* ('small') in this couplet, which is semantically nonsensical but creates alliteration between three words in each line. This variation only becomes understandable when the phraseology is viewed as a complex system rather than viewing the lines as independent formulae. Inverting the couplets or omitting only the first of them is inhibited by the second's reference to a fire that has already been introduced. This type of two-part structure is common in the tradition, with the first part usually more socially stable than the second. The propositional meanings of each couplet operate as complementary to the more complex unit's coherent expression of a mythic image as a linguistically mediated sign.

Other multiforms are not so regular: crystallization often occurs for the individual performer, but the multiforms look much more variable in the corpus

because crystallization is not (as) integrated in social transmission. Among multiforms of this type, paired couplets may sometimes be interspersed with lines such as inquit formulae, creating variations in whether lines are or are not presented as direct speech, or whether they are presented as monologue as opposed to dialogue (cf. Frog 2010:365–371). Although kalevalaic crystallized series multiforms generally resist additional lines or multiforms being interposed into them, such variations can be found, as when the singer of example (8) later added the line *sanopa lieto Lemminkäini* ('Said loose Lemminkäinen') after the first couplet, so that the second became direct speech of the hero (*SKVR* I$_1$ 722a.3–7). This variation is doubly exceptional, because it is not simply idiolectal; it varies between one singer's performances. Here, the multiform may operate as a macro-formula emblematic or iconic of a particular situation in an epic, yet that macro-formula works at a different level than what the particular lines and their organization express.

Parallelism is a potential indicator of complexity exceeding a formula, especially where parallelism appears variable. A significant mythic image in the same epic as (8) is a fiery eagle described as in a fiery birch on a fiery skerry in a fiery river. This is expressed in a series of grammatically parallel lines with lexical repetition that can be expanded, as in (9):

(9)

Tuloop' on tulińi joki	Comes (is) a fiery river
Joess' on tulińi koski	In the river (is) a fiery rapids
Kosess' on tulińi luoto	In the rapids (is) a fiery skerry
Luuvoss' on tulińi koivu	In the skerry (is) a fiery birch
Koivuss' on tuliset oksat	In the birch (is) fiery branches
Oksiss' on tulińi kokko	In the branches (is) a fiery eagle

SKVR I$_2$ 754.128–133, punctuation removed

When this part of the image (the first of the two-part multiform) is expressed in only three lines, it could easily be viewed as a formula much as some couplets might be. However, it varies differently than most formulae: the first line opens with the verb in the formula (here) *tuloop' on tulińi X* ('comes (is) a fiery X'), following which the slot-filler X fills slot Y in a "terrace" series of uses of the formula *Y-ss' on tulińi X* ('in the Y (is) a fiery X') until X = "eagle" (or occasionally "talons"). The multiform telescopes or contracts according to the number of elements used in the series, though the order of elements remains fixed as a progression of narrowing focus or size. Whereas a formula may telescope through the presence or absence of potential elements, as in *{{vaka} vanha}*

Väinämöinen / {tietäjä iän ikuinen}, variation here is only understandable when the operation of slot-fillers in the system is acknowledged.

The conjuration of the tenth-century Old High German Second Merseburg Charm in (10a), operates similarly, although each slot-filler remains exclusive to one use of the recurrent formula *X zi X* ('X to X'):

(10a)

> ben zi bena bluot zi bluoda lid zi geliden
> bone to bone, blood to blood, limb to limb

Merseburger Domstiftsbibliothek Hs. 136

This conjuration can be observed across a millennium of oral-derived texts, with a more recent Danish variant offered in (10b):

(10b)

> Sener i Sener i Aare i Aare i Kjød i Kjød Blod i Blod etc.
> sinew to sinew to vein to vein to flesh to flesh, blood to blood, etc.

Hansen 1942 [1960–1961]:166

The conjuration is structurally, semantically, and even functionally regular. The slot-fillers are consistently elements that make up a human or animal limb, yet their number and order all vary (*pace* Watkins 1995:ch. 57). Whether a conjunction or preposition links the parallel units in series also varies, yet the slot-fillers are consistently governed by a principle of non-repetition, comparable to that in (6) above. A structure in which the same formula is used recurrently with non-repeating variations is widely found. It can be seen above in the *annan {ainoan} X* formula (4) in its repeating multiform (5), as well as in other contributions to this volume, such as the Norwegian rigmarole formula-pair *der sit X / s.VERB paa gull-Y* ('there sit X / [alliterating].VERB the gold-Y') discussed by Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir that produces a series of non-repeating units of information (this volume, section 2). An internal recurrence or parallelism is not a prerequisite of a macro-formula multiform, but it is a potential indicator of greater complexity that affects how the unit operates and varies.

8. Multiforms in Aesthetically Unmarked Spoken Discourse?

To my knowledge, a concept corresponding to multiform has not been applied outside of discussions of verbal art, where it has mainly been considered in verse, although also in certain prose narrative traditions (Nutt 1890; Bruford, A.

1966 [1969]:ch. 16; see also Roper, in this volume). In this section, the primary interest is not in a particular analysis, but a more general question of the applicability of multiform theory outside of verbal art.

Koenraad Kuiper finds that formulaic density increases where speech behavior becomes regularly structured and recurrent or ritualized (2009:chs. 1–2, 4, 6, 9; see also Silvonen, this volume). He analyzes the formulaicity of cashiers' speech at supermarket check-outs in New Zealand and reveals several complex sequences that he calls formulae, such as the one for a cash-call in (11). Kuiper's diagrammatic representation (2009:106, fig. 6.3) is here adapted to a textual sequence with curly brackets around each optional element; each of the four elements of this recurrent formulation is identified with a superscript letter-code. The value of this example is in the issues that it raises when trying to distinguish a formula and a multiform:

(11)
        [A]{That's} [B]X [C]{for the lot} [D]{thanks / thank you}.

If we accept a formula as a complex unit of language established in the mental lexicon, elements A (*That (i)s*) and C (*for the lot*) are multi-word strings each distinguishable as an independent formula. In D, we might quibble over whether to consider *thanks* as a formula, but *thank you* is a formulaic sequence. The order of elements A–C is invariant owing to situational conventions syntax, and they cannot be interrupted by D, presumably for the same reason. That the language could offer a greater range of variations without a grammatical violation (e.g. **For the lot, that's X, thanks, *That's X, thank you, for the lot*) is a potential indicator of formulaicity or macro-formulaicity (Wray 2008:ch. 8). The only stable element is B, the slot-filler of the amount which the client must pay; all elements surrounding B are optional. The unit looks comparable to a verbal-core multiform like (5) above, where the function in dialogue can be completed by the core element alone; other elements elaborate and prolong the core but they are not essential, even if they are not normally omitted. On the other hand, we can turn comparison on its head: (5) differs from (11) in that the poetic meter leads its formulae to be perceived as discreet units of text (lines of verse) and semantic parallelism between lines is an indicator of higher complexity among these units. The elements of (11) form a regular, ordered four-part sequence expressing a regular unit of meaning. Formulae operate as unitary integers of discourse, so there is no reason that they could not also be integrated into a more extensive formulaic sequence. From this perspective, (11) looks like a telescoping formula comparable to *{{vaka} vanha} Väinämöinen / {tietäjä iän ikuinen}*, although with an alternating element in D rather than elements organized in a

hierarchy like *vaka* not appearing without *vanha.* The question of how the unit is best understood becomes a question of how it is perceived by someone with native-like fluency.

The objectifying diagrammatic analysis of (11) makes all the elements appear atomic and the links between them equally weak, but syntax binds elements of the sequence A–C differently than their relationship to D. This is New Zealand English, and I might be assessing it with native-like fluency in the wrong English (cf. Kuiper 2009:ch.4). I have a number of years of experience in retail in the 1990s in Midwestern American English and, reflecting on my own linguistic competence (Searle 1969:12–15; Wray 2008:107–108), the corresponding formula would probably be:

(12a)
^{A}{That / It / Your total + (wi)ll be / (i)s / comes to} ^{B}X ^{C}{please$_{\text{marked formality}}$}.

Or, more abstractly:

(12b)
^{A}{pronoun / NP   + *be*.INFL / comes to} ^{B}X ^{C}{please$_{\text{marked formality}}$}.

This expression can also be atomized as a number of alternative expressions constituting A, a verbal core B, and an extending element C. How the sequence of discourse is represented in analysis can affect how it is interpreted. It can equally be presented as an open-slot formula *That'll be X, please* with (*a*) minor variations in *That'll be*, (*b*) *please* as an optional formalizing extension, and (*c*) *That'll be* as easily omitted without corrupting the communication or leaving it ambiguous (an omission that might increase the probability of including *please*, or at least reduce its markedness). The perspective of native-like fluency is nevertheless not unambiguous here: my intuitive view is that this is a formulaic construction—but is it a formula or a macro-formula multiform?

At a theoretical level, an additional factor to consider is that the expression can reduce to the slot-filler without disrupting communication: if the slot-filler in B is expressed alone—if a cashier simply says "X"—can that be considered a variation on the "formula"? This question is complicated by the fact that the slot-filler is itself a construction in which the two consecutive numbers are pragmatically apprehended as an amount in dollars and cents of payment required, as opposed to the cashier's *Ten twenty-five* being understood as "Twenty-five minutes past ten o'clock."[15] A kenning like WEATHER OF WEAPONS in particular metrical positions was considered a semantic formula above, although the

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[15] In American English, the construction requires two elements to be interpretable, so *Ten* alone would not be understandable as a monetary amount; it would have to be *Ten dollars* or *Ten cents.*

words completing it might vary. In contrast, the numbers completing B express situation-specific amounts: the construction provides the means of interpreting the numbers used to complete it rather than the numbers completing it forming a regular unit of meaning. As a native user, I can see *Ten twenty-five* as a situational variation of (12), but this returns to the question of whether (11) and (12) should be viewed as formulae that can be completed with the slot-filler only, or whether they should be viewed as a more complex and variable system of language. Viewed as a multiform, the collocative system of elements is a cognitive reality as a potential framework for expression (and interpretation). The framework has a verbal core of a monetary amount construction (whether or not this is considered as a formula proper), which is the only mandatory element for successful communication.

The expressions in (11) and (12) are quite variable, but each forms only a simple clause. Kuiper presents what he calls a change-counting formula (2009:107, fig. 6.6) that has been adapted as (13):

(13)

^{A}{That's / There's your / And} ^{B}X {^{C}change | ^{D}{thanks {very much}}.
| ^{E}{thank you {very much }}}.

This system is complicated by a hierarchical structure: whether D or E is used appears determined by the use or omission of C. I am not certain how the sequence operates in New Zealand English, but, within my own experience, this sequence of utterance or its equivalent would be conceived as two, distinct units of communication (separated by "|" above, not present in Kuiper's diagram): (*a*) a change-counting expression proper, referring to the immediate event of giving change, followed by (*b*) a thanking formula as a separate unit of discourse, referring to the whole interaction event of the financial transaction. In use, these would be separated by a brief pause as independent clauses. Since (11) and (13) are from the same study group, the potential for the alternative thanking formulae to be prolonged with *very much* in (11) is an indicator of a different relationship between the thanking formula and the preceding clause. This difference supports the interpretation that D/E in (13) is a separate unit of discourse from A–C. At the same time, the relation of C as a condition on use of D or E indicates that the two parts do not operate independently. Together, the complexity of this sequence is higher than in most units addressed as formulae: they form a stretch of text of multiple clauses and discourse functions that are not necessarily unitary in meaning. It thus seems relevant to distinguish the more complex type of unit from the expressions for change-counting and thanking that constitute it.

9. Concluding Remarks

Distinguishing multiforms from formulae is ultimately a question of utility rather than a theoretical necessity. I have proposed that the basic distinction between these analytical categories concerns complexity, which in turn has implications for differences in how the respective integers of language vary and how they relate to units of meaning. The organizing principles that distinguish oral poetry as verbal art make the relevance of multiforms more apparent and accessible, but, once multiforms are distinguished, questions of complexity and variation are brought into focus for this phenomenon in other contexts as well. Multiform theory offers a new frame of reference for considering formulaicity. It may also enable researchers to recognize and explore systems of multiple co-occurring formulae for producing or even coproducing stretches of discourse—systems that may have been generally overlooked because they remained beyond the scope of formula analysis proper.

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