FORMULAS IN FOLK VERSE AND FOLK PROSE: OVERLAP OR INDEPENDENCE?

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The existence of formulas in traditional songs of various kinds has been long recognized by scholars, and the presence of formulas in traditional tales has increasingly become a subject of discussion too. This prompts the question whether an individual who has a substantial repertoire of both songs and tales would use some of the same formulas in both these two modes. Or would it be the case that, as tales and songs have their own separate norms and rules, their formulas will not involve any significant similarities? To provide an initial response to such questions, this article draws upon verbal art documented in the third quarter of the twentieth century from one remarkable Newfoundlander, whose recorded repertoire included nineteen different tales and more than thirty songs.

Keywords: formula, genre, folktale, folksong, Newfoundland

THE STUDY OF FORMULAS, THEN AND NOW

Early work on formulas in verbal art focused their occurrence in verse.[1] The breakthrough work in formula studies, *The Singer of Tales* (Lord 1960), concentrates on the presence of formulas in such metred modes as south Slavic epic songs, Old English alliterative verse, *chanson de geste*, and Homeric epic. Those specialists who had worked on formulas before Milman Parry or Albert Bates Lord, such as Moritz Trautmann (1876) and Albert Cook (1888), also focused on verse rather than prose, and verse has continued to be the focus of many scholars of formulas ever since. But formulas are also to be found in traditional prose. To give the most obvious examples, folktales frequently begin with formulas such as *once upon a time* or Croatian *bila jednom* (lit. once there was), and end with

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formulas such as *happy ever after* or Croatian *zauvijek sretno* (lit. forever happily). And in between these two formulas, all sorts of other formulas may occur. Stith Thompson (1930) highlighted other formulas typical of folktales, including epithets (*the green woods*, *the red rose*) and numerals (*over seven hills*), as well as stereotypic snatches of dialogue, usually tied to a single character, such as *what big eyes you have!*

In recent years, the study of formulas in traditional verbal art, which had been becalmed, began to revive. Witnesses of this are certain publications (Frog and Lamb 2022, Sävborg in press 2022, Elmer and McMurray in press 2023), as well as the associated conferences on formulas held in Harvard, Helsinki, and Tartu.[2] And part of this revived interest in formulas has focused on prose language. Just as study of those who knew how to produce formulaic-rich epic verse in more than one language – such as the singer Salih Ugljanin who composed epic songs in both Albanian and (what was then called) Serbo-Croatian (Kolsti 1990) – has been informative, examination of skilled verbal artists who use formulas in more than one mode might also prove to be informative. Might there be some overlap between formulas and their use in the two modes or are they effectively independent? To address that question, this article draws on the tales and songs of one of the best-documented teller of tales and singer of songs in anglophone north America in the third quarter of the twentieth century, Freeman Bennett.

THE BENNETT FAMILY OF ST PAUL'S

A typical pattern in the fieldwork practice of researchers, at least among English-speaking folklorists (though no doubt among others too), has been that the people sought out for their knowledge of verbal art were typically asked about their songs long before they were asked about their stories (and indeed those who asked them about their stories were often later and different researchers). This is what happened with informants as diverse as William Colcombe in western midland England and Jane Gentry in western North Carolina, to give just two examples from the first half of the twentieth century. And this is also what happened with the Bennett family of St. Paul's in western Newfoundland.

In the 1950's, folksong researcher Kenneth Peacock, who was documenting traditional song in Newfoundland for the Canadian Museum of Civilization, recorded 140 songs from members of the Bennett family, a figure that amounts to over 10% of his total collection of songs from the Province (Peacock 1965, Guigné 2016). He acknowledged being especially impressed by the family:

> the Bennetts of St. Paul's are a rare phenomenon, even in rural Newfoundland. Centered about two brothers, Everett and Freeman, the whole family eats, lives and breathes folksong. (cited in Guigné 2004: 354)

[2] These conferences were, respectively, *Singers and Tales in the 21st Century*, held at Harvard in December 2010, *Formula: Units of Speech – "Words"'of Verbal Art*, held in Helsinki in May 2017, and *The Formula in Oral Poetry and Prose*, held in Tartu in December 2019.

But it was not for another decade that researchers visited the Bennetts and asked them about other forms of folklore. In this follow-up fieldwork, "it soon became clear that this family was as remarkable for its storytelling as its singing" (Halpert and Widdowson 1996: xxxii). Although the storytelling was semi-moribund at this stage, folklorists Herbert Halpert and John Widdowson were nevertheless able to document the practice extensively during repeat visits to St. Paul's, including in some cases making multiple recordings of the same tale from the same informant, and they published this data in an exemplary edition of almost 200 tales with unusually detailed textualizations (Halpert and Widdowson 1996). The contribution of the Bennetts to the folktale edition was even greater than to the folksong edition: around 20% of Halpert and Widdowson's material derived from members of the family. Four Bennett narrators are featured in the work, all males, and most of them older males: John Edward, Freeman, and Everett (and his son Clarence). Those Bennetts documented in Peacock's research (1965) as singers were a non-identical but overlapping set of individuals, including Everett and Freeman again, and now also Freeman's wife Becky (who both sang songs alone and also together with her husband) and Everett's other son, the teenaged Jim Bennett. Not only was there some difference in the performers, but their sources varied too. The songs had mostly been learnt within the family from the singing of their mother and father, while further song words (though not music) had been learnt from the "Old Favourites" column of the *Family Herald and Weekly Star*, a newspaper published in Montreal (Fowke 1979). The storytelling, on the other hand, was more of a male practice and had less of a familial aspect, being learnt from neighbours and fellow workers at lumber camps, as well as from older relatives. There is a literate aspect to the transmission of folktales too, in that a few stories about a character called "Black George" seem ultimately to derive from popular printed fiction, albeit retold in a profoundly altered way (Halpert and Widdowson 1996: 970–993). This article will draw on the tales and songs recorded from Freeman Bennett (1896–1981) in an attempt to look at the formulas of a single individual's prose and verse, and to gauge how similar they are.

FORMULAS IN FREEMAN'S TALES

The prose narratives recorded from Freeman typically begin with a formula such as "Well once upon a time in olden times you know […] there was a" if they are wondertales and a simpler "One time there was a" if they are shorter comic tales. The following may serve as examples of the former formula (here shown in the close transcription of the editors, Halpert and Widdowson (1996) which indicates various lengths of pause, together with my own addition of bold font to highlight the formulas):

> **Well once upon a time in olden times _ there was a** feller uh… his name was Jack see. An' uh…he was a poor man an' his uh…father was a poor man. But he had good education. (ibid.: 403)

> **well** uh _ **once upon a time ya know** that's in _ olden times that's away back uh _ not in our days at all. That's uh… that was before Newfoundland was discovered. Well er at them times see there **there was a** rich man _ an' a poor man. (ibid.: 488)

And as examples of the latter formula, we can take these examples:

> **One time there was a** woman an' she was married, see? An' her husband died. (ibid.: 812)

> **One time there was a** man and his wife an' they had a pig to kill. (ibid.: 835)

Freeman does not end his tales with the well-known and widespread formula "happy ever after", but with variations on a formula such as "when I left he/they had three or four children". For example:

> **when I left he** was…he was married an' **had three or four children**. (ibid.: 844)

> Well _ they got married an' uh …they lived there an' he went an' he'd brought the doctor an' his wife in an' he has his old grandmother an' they all lived together an' _ **when I left they had three children**. Huh! (ibid.: 1006)

Sometimes the end of the tale is marked further by such formulaic words as "That ends the story". While this may appear to be a string of spontaneous language, its repeated appearance shows it to be a formula, though a vanilla kind of formula when compared with the figurative language of the formulas beloved of Parry, such as "wine-dark sea".[3] At other times, the story is followed by a statement of the title of the story: "Now that's 'Lies and Truth' that is" (ibid.: 538, 550). The jests, by contrast, typically end with their own specific punchline. Rather than being formulas usable in a variety of tale-types, these punchlines are specific to each particular tale. The words ending Freeman's version of ATU 1541, "Now," he said, "you've give the half a pig away. Now," he said, "all we've got is half" (ibid.: 835), could hardly be appended to any other jest.

There are other formulas in Freeman's tales. We find that the protagonist is typically named near the start of the tale in this manner: "and his name was Jack" (as we see in the first example from Freeman's tales above). And often a phrase such as "one day" or "one morning" marks the transition between the opening words of the tale, setting out the general situation, and the subsequent words, relating deeds occurring at a particular time and place. While Freeman negotiates this transition in a greater variety of ways than is witnessed in various other historical folktale texts (Roper 2022a: 414–415; Roper 2022b), we do find clear examples of his use of the formula, such as in this example:

> Well they…used to be goin together. So very good uh…after they growed up _a man an' woman _she said uh…to…/Jack/ **one day** she said…he said to her. he said uh… "What about us gettin married?" (Halpert and Widdowson 1996: 521–522)

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[3] "Vanilla" is used here in the sense recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary, s.v.* "vanilla": "plain, basic, conventional".

Before the formula occurs, we have the habitual situation ("they … used to be goin' to-gether"), whereas after the formula we begin to be told what happens at a specific point in time ("he said to her").

FORMULAS IN FREEMAN'S SONGS

This brief survey of the formulas in his prose means that our question now is whether formulas such as "well once upon a time there was a", "one time there was a", "and his name was", "one day" and "when I left" occur in Freeman's songs. If they do occur, we should also ask whether they serve the same functions as they do in his prose tales. We can address opening formulas first: there are no examples involving "once upon a time", or "one time there was a". Instead, Freeman begins his songs in ways typically found throughout the anglophone world with opening formulas such as "It's/'Tis of a …", "As I roved/went/wandered [out]", "My name is/was …", "When I was a …", "A story I'll tell you, it happened …", "Come all you …", "In [place] did a [person] dwell", "Listen to my song/ditty", "On the [date] of [month], …", "Here's a health to …", and so on. Similarly, we do not find examples of "and when I left" at the end of the songs. In fact, it is not easy to identify any recurrent formulas at the end of Freeman's songs at all.

One reason for this lack may be that endings were marked in performance by means other than formulas, for example the frequent shift from singing to speaking in the last line of a song could serve as a mark of closure. Stanza breaks may also do the same work that formulas do, most especially enabling the transition from set-up to action, and vice versa. A further reason for the absence of certain formulas in the songs may be that closing formulas, such as "and when I left" (or "happy ever after"), while not poised at a meta-level, are still a step out from the storyworld of the song. So, closing formulas are more evident in any 'moral of the song' section that comes after the narrative proper has finished. And so it is that we find Freeman singing in the final verse of some songs words such as "Come all young girls, now a warning take" (Peacock 1965: 408) and "I hope this story will be a warning" (Peacock 1965: 686). These are not far from a formula found in numerous anglophone songs, and found indeed in Freeman's brother's repertoire, "A warning take by me" (Peacock 1965: 305). Warnings are one of the most common 'morals' that appear at the conclusion of narrative songs. Such warnings can also, of course, be mock warnings:

> Come all you rakes and rambling sports
> That goes a-courting in the dark
> Don't hit your toes against a chair,
> Or else you'll suffer for the crockery ware. (Peacock 1965: 258)

The "come all you" formula found in the final verse of this song is unusual, in that it is a formula that can be found either at the start and the end of songs. But all the same, neither "come all ye" nor "a warning take by me" are formulas found in the tales, so our

search for commonalities between the formulaic language of Freeman's tales and his songs continues to be fruitless.

Might this search be fruitless not so much because of mode (i.e. prose or verse) as because of genre? The kinds of narratives that Freeman relates in the two modes differ. In the prose tales there is always a happy ending, while in the verse songs sad endings are just as common as happy ones, and sometimes there is yet another kind of ending, where an offender is served his just deserts. If we only could find songs like Freeman's classic folktales, where impoverished young men set off, and after overcoming peril, find a fortune and a wife, then perhaps we would have more to go on. It so happens there is such a song.

WONDERSONG

Freeman called the song in question "Well Sold the Cow" (Peacock 1965: 36–37), and it is a version of Roud 2637. In it, the hero, called Jack, a farmhand working for an old farmer, is told to take a cow to the fair to sell her. On the way to the fair, he sells the cow to three men, but then comes across three robbers who try to take the money he has been paid. He manages to escape on the robbers' horse, however, which, when he gets back, turns out to have silver, gold and jewels wrapped up in its saddle. The old farmer rewards Jack by giving him half of the haul, as well as his daughter's hand in marriage. This song is reminiscent of certain tales, such as ATU 328A, which begin with Jack going to market and selling the cow on the way. Whilst these tales have different middle parts (typically what happens in them is that Jack sells the cow for (magic) beans, which grow into a beanstalk that Jack climbs to reach a land with a giant; he gains his fortune by defeating the giant), they nevertheless share a similarly happy ending. All in all, the song is one of the most folktale-like of all English traditional songs, which is why it might be thought the best place to find folktale formulas, if any are to be found in songs.

Freeman begins his song like this:

'Tis of an old farmer in London did dwell,
He had just one daughter and I loved her well;
When his cattle was gathered they had one to spare,
Saying, "Johnny, my boy, you must go the fair".
Jack sung, "Fall the doll, fall the doll day". (Peacock 1965: 36)

What we have is a wondertale-like song (a *wondersong*, perhaps?)[4] with a protagonist called Jack/Johnny. Given this, the fact that Freeman does not use his tale formulas in the song is noteworthy. Instead of introducing the situation with "once upon a time there

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[4] Such a usage would find its analogues in terms such as the Croatian *pjesma-bajka* or the Russian *pesnja-skazka*.

was a", we have two opening song formulas combined: "'Tis of" and "a [person] in [place] did dwell". And instead of a point-in-time formula, such as "One day" being used to move from the general situation to the action, we have "When". This absence of tale formulas is especially remarkable given there is another Newfoundland version of the song that sets up the situation with a verse beginning "There was an", and transitions into a second verse which launches the action with the point-in-time phrase "One day" (Peacock 1965: 33–35). While it may be thought special pleading to see the first as a highly compacted version of "once upon a time there was a", the second example needs no special pleading to accept as matching with tale usage. Moreover, the way the protagonist is introduced in this variant with the words "his name it was John" is close to Freeman's tale practice of using the words "and Jack was his name". This raises the suspicion that Freeman's verbal choices were less the simple absence of tale formulas than their deliberate avoidance.

It is not entirely clear who the words of the other variant of this song in Peacock's collection come from. The song is (initially) ascribed by Peacock to Leonard Hulan of Jeffreys, who certainly was the man who provided the melody he chose to print. But the song texts Peacock collected from Hulan were often fragmentary, and in the commentary to this song we find the remark "Much of the text of … is taken from a fourteen-verse variant by George Decker of Rocky Harbour" (Peacock 1965: 37). This is especially intriguing as Decker was a west coast singer who was personally known to Freeman, living just 40 km away. It is not impossible that if researchers had asked Decker about something other than songs, he might have proved to be one of those singers who also knew tales, and it would be possible for us to map his constellation of formulas within and across modes and genres. But such data is absent, and we can only work with what we have.

On the other hand, while the Decken/Hulan variant ends with the young man being rewarded simply with money, Freeman's variant ends like a genuine folktale with the farmer giving the farmhand his daughter in marriage along with his fortune:

> Oh now for your bravery and courage today,
> Now half of this money must go to your pay,
> I will give you my daughter to make her your wife,
> And you can crack on her all the rest of your life. (Peacock 1965: 37)

Yet while this is the same thing narratologically, nothing verbally serves as the "happy ever after" or "when I left" equivalent. Then again, such words could not rightly have appeared here, as the marriage itself does not take place within the song, and so there is no place for an ending involving the narrator coming away from the wedding feast or with reports of how many children Jack and his wife now had.

There is another variant of Roud 2637 from a place even closer to Freeman, although documented further back in time. In 1929, Elizabeth Bristol Greenleaf recorded a fourteen-verse version of this song from Daniel Endacott in the next village south from St Paul's (Greenleaf and Mansfield 1933: 44–46). As the geographical proximity might suggest, this version is closer to Freeman's version than to the Decker/Hulan one. It ends with Jack

(who is also called "John" in the song) being given "three parts of the money" and "my youngest daughter to be your sweet wife". But, once again, despite its folktale feel, it does not use the "one day" or "his name it was John" formulations.

To return to Freeman's variant, we have found that in this most folktale-like of songs, one involving a young lower-class male protagonist going out into the wide world and managing to make his fortune and find a wife, is that Freeman Bennett, prodigious folktale narrator, does not make use of folktale formulas, not at the opening nor the close, and not at the initiation of the action nor in the naming of the protagonist. And this is despite the fact that one singer living relatively nearby and personally known to him does use something not unlike them. It would be good to know more about whether keeping his practice in the two repertoires separate was a deliberate choice of Freeman's or whether such differentiation was a chance occurrence. But this is hard to judge as the current example is very much an edge case, and there are few songs like this in traditional an-glophone repertoires. It is worth nothing that Peacock chose to place this song under his category of "Children's Songs". No doubt songs reminiscent of folktales would be seen, by researchers such as Peacock (although not by his informants), as something childish, and thus consigned to this remainder category, the scholars not having created a better one for them.

There is another song found in western Newfoundland which has something of a folk-tale feel to it, and indeed it even has the word "tale" in its title, "The Tale of Jests" (Roud 1706). As it happens, the two of the three versions documented by Peacock are once more from George Decker of Rocky Harbour, and from Freeman's own brother, Everett (Peacock 1965: 24–27). Just as with "Well Sold the Cow", Peacock classified this as one of the "Children's Songs", commenting "it is generally supposed to be a rhymed version of *Jack the Giant Killer*" (ibid.: 29). But for all its folktale feel, it is much more of a comic song, as its punchline, appearing variously as "And he that tells a bigger jest I'm sure must tell a lie!", "And if you ever hear a funnier joke you'll hear a great big lie", and "And if I sing you a bigger song I'll sing you a bigger lie" (ibid.: 21, 23, 25), witnesses. And it is not so much a narrative as a series of exaggerations, featuring a dog that carries the narrator around the world in half a day and a hen giving birth to two hares, and other such impossibilities. Freeman's brother called the song "Once I had", which a quotation from the song itself, which perhaps also has a folktale flavour. He begins his first verse "Once I was an infant", and begins the penultimate and final verses with "[Oh] once I had a little black dog/hen" (ibid.: 26–27). Use of "once" may have a certain folktale flavour to it, and it is noteworthy that the other two singers do not use that construction, but the first occurrence seems rather to be a version of the folksong-initiating formula "When I was a …". As for the other occurrences, they go against any folktale norms as they are repetitions (rather than single occurrences) and are situated near the end of the piece (rather than near to the start). The most that can be argued about these introductory "once's" is that they give a little bit of a folktale flavour to the series of impossibilities in Everett's account. All the same, the other variants of this song in Peacock's collection can hardly be said to lack that flavour despite

lacking those "once's", and are, especially in George Decker's case, somewhat more like a narrative that a list of episodes.

The "Tale of Jests" does have a comic aspect, so perhaps it would be better compared to the jest than to the wondertale. But in terms of the comic tales Freeman tells, there is no equivalent of the tales based on verbal misunderstandings amongst his songs, no song, for instance, where the husband tells the wife to save the valuable food till a rainy day comes, and then a Mr. Rainy Day calls, and the wife hands the food to him. Even the songs that Peacock groups together as "Love Comedies" do not well resemble Freeman's other comic tales.

This brief look at the remarkable tale and song repertoires of Freeman Bennett suggests that there is next to no overlap between the formulas he used in the two repertoires. (Though we have not looked much at his brother's material here, the same seems true of Everett's repertoires too). On the face of it, the lack of overlap in formulaic systems in two sets of narratives known to a single individual would seem to be a sub-optimal way of organizing things, and something that demands explanation. In the final part of this article, we can proffer some possible explanations as to why folk verse and folk prose differ in their formulas, involving rhyme, register, and repertoire.

RHYME

The most obvious difference between the two sets of texts is that one is in prose, the other in metred verse that rhymes. The latter system imposes more constraints on the language Freeman can use: not only must there be phonetic matching between the final syllables of the words (usually of nouns or verbs) at the end of each pair of lines, but also the narrative must be made to fit into end-stopped lines, i.e. into brief segments of a dozen or so syllables which are followed by a compulsory pause. A regime which demands that utterance falls in lines, and which does not encourage enjambment, brings various constraints on syntax. (There is also the matter of ballad metre, though this is one of the least constraining of metres.) One of the most notable of these syntactic constraints is that in such verse no sentence can be longer than a stanza, at most. There is no such constraint on phrase shape or sentence length in the tales, a freedom that Freeman exploits fully, when needed. On top of this, there is another kind of syntactic difference in the tales: a greater variance from the norms of standard English syntax, as witnessed by the various non-sentences and cleft-sentences found in those stories.

Freeman's tale repertoire of closing formulas does not include some formulas that were found elsewhere in Newfoundland in his era. It does not include such rhyming formula as "And I had a pie for telling a lie" or "and if his tail had hung on stronger, my story would have been longer" (Halpert and Widdowson 1996: 95, 924; see also Roper 2022a: 423–424). It is also notable that he does not use rhymes in his opening formulas either,

although other anglophone narrators did, most especially in extended rhymed versions of the "Well once upon a time" formula (Roper 2022a: 415–421). This evidence suggests he may consciously be abjuring the use of rhymes in this prose medium. The only exceptions to this tendency are two sung quatrains present in a one story he, uniquely, performed together with his wife. Freeman termed it a "kind of a story an' … a song all together" (Halpert and Widdowson 1996: 513). Such prosimetric tales were something which Halpert was particularly interested in and referred to as "cante fables" (Halpert 1941, and see also Nicolaisen 1997), but they cannot be said to be typical of Freeman's practice.

How might rhyme affect the way language in the songs may differ from that of everyday language? One difference involves the word order of binomials. The Google n-gram viewer shows that while for a binomial involving "gold" and "silver" either word order is possible, "gold and silver" is more common than "silver and gold". For instance, the English (2019) corpus shows that the former is three times more popular than the latter (the American English, British English and English fiction corpora all show similar results), and its relative popularity was even greater in the past.[5] What then is the usage pattern in tales? Unfortunately, there turn out to be no instances of either phrase in Freeman's tale corpus. Once again, we have insufficient data. However, investigations of other traditional anglophone tale corpora are suggestive, showing that the former order, "gold and silver", is the norm: in the four volumes of *The Greenwood Library of American Folktales* (Green 2006), there are five examples of the former and none of the latter, while in Jacobs' *English Fairy Tales* (1890), there are six examples of the former and none of the latter. Thus it is intriguing that in Freeman's song "Well Sold the Cow" we find the latter pattern: "A very large fortune of silver and gold". No doubt this order is determined by fact that "silver" has far fewer rhymes than "gold". And, sure enough, the preceding line ends "… did behold". Here the use of the less common variant of a formula is due to the constraint of rhyme.[6]

We can consider another recurrent, and seemingly uninteresting phrase, the words "as you may understand". This seem to be the clearest example of filler in this tradition, a redundant phrase. Witness the following couplet (from the singing of James Decker, several villages to the north of Freeman):

> The tenth day of October as you may understand,
> We went down to Currant Island we anchored off Old Sam; (Guigné 2016: 99)

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[5] Studies of English "non-frozen" binomials, such as Benor and Levy (2006), suggest that *gold* is likely to precede *silver*, as semantically speaking it has more value and phonologically speaking it has one syllable rather than two. However, *silver* preceding *gold* would match the norms whereby first word in a pair has a higher and more fronted vowel and the second has a longer vowel. No doubt, these differing tendencies explain why it is not (yet) a frozen binomial.

[6] There is little metrical issue about the capacity of the generous English ballad measure (which is even more forgiving in practice than in principle) to accept "gold and silver" as opposed to "silver and gold". A (phonological) constraint will be triggered when the final word of the formula is placed in a line-final rhyming position, and such a placement is not an obligation. Indeed, the constraint is even lighter than it may seem at this first description, as many traditional songs choose not to rhyme line-final syllables in their odd-numbered lines.

If we were rewriting this as prose, then "On the tenth day of October, we went down to Currant Island, and we anchored off Old Sam" would suffice. We have added a preposition, a conjunction, and some punctuation, but have omitted the "as you may understand" formula as excess to requirements. But if we look at the phrase not from the point of view of information, but from the point of view of prosody and sound-patterning, then it can be said to add something to the song: this semantically-light formula permits the formation of well-made lines and stanzas. And, while the phrase may seem odd when encountered for the first time, it is acceptable within the tradition – indeed, even though it is the epitome of a vanilla formula, it is more acceptable than other possible phrases we could construct that would lack the patina, indeed the formulaic patina, that long use has given it. In terms of the positioning of the formula, its favourite location, *rima causa*, at the end of the first line of a stanza. It is a useful match for such high-frequency nouns as "hand" and "land". Given that Freeman eschews rhyme in his tales, the difference between his prose and verse formulas is deepened. For, after all, what keeps you straight in prose? There is no verse-line to keep you straight, neither is there any need to scan. If verse is like doing lengths in a pool, prose is like setting out to swim to a far shore, though with some occasional islands and flotsam to rest upon on the way, namely the parts with the most fixity, the formulas.

REGISTER

Another difference between Freeman's prose and verse involves register. While the tales are not in the register of everyday speech, the register of the songs is even further from everyday speech, in a more formal, mannered, and "poetic" manner than is found in the tales. When Freeman introduces a character's daughter in the tales, he uses phrases such as "well they had a…a daugh[ter]" (Halpert and Widdowson 1996: 388) or "well one had a daughter an' the other one had a son" (ibid.: 522), whereas in the songs he uses more high-flown phrases, such as "He had just one daughter" (ibid.: 66), "He had a daughter beautiful and fair" (407), and "He had a daughter beautiful and bright" (ibid.: 545). (Incidentally, in his tales Freeman likewise introduces sons without ceremony: "they had one son" (ibid.: 35).)

Such a practice is not simply a Freeman-ism. His brother Everett used straightforward phrases to express the same notion in his tales: "Now he had two daughters" (ibid.: 852). And another Newfoundland storyteller, Mose Troke, used the equally unceremonious "a king one time _ he got a … a daughter" (ibid.: 943). And when we turn to the practice of singers other than Freeman, we find they use non-straightforward phrases at such times in their songs, such as "He had one only daughter" (Peacock 1965: 210, 449, 451, 515, 634) and "He had but one daughter" (Peacock 1965: 273, 582). The register of the language does not correlate with the social status of the characters here, but with the mode (verse or prose): in the tales reference is plain, whether you are Jack or a princess. Here, the formulaic system of songs and that of tales differ once more.

REPERTOIRE AND PERFORMANCE

There are further factors that may play a role. For instance, the kind of narratives that Freeman narrated in the two mediums were rather different. Freeman's tales are essentially of two types – longer stories where a poor young man goes through various adventures and travails, which may involve the fantastic, before a happy ending in which he typically gains wealth and a wife, and shorter stories which rely on devices such as trickery or misunderstanding, and result not so much in a happy ending for the protagonists, as in a laugh for the listeners. By contrast, Freeman's song repertoire included a wider range of narratives, including love songs with tragic endings, "love comedies" where tricksters get their come-uppance, battle songs, pirate songs, songs commemorating local events, and so on. On top of this, some songs (*Love is Lovely, Monday Morning, A Rambling Young Fellow*) are more lyrical than narrative. Even though researchers recorded a remarkable number of tales and songs from Freeman, we would be in an even better position to speak on the workings of formulas if even more had been recorded from him. Perhaps there were no more tales or songs (in terms of types) to be recorded, but if the corpus was thicker, if there were additional recordings of the "same" tale or of the "same" song (especially the latter, which we lack altogether), more would have been revealed about what was variable and what was invariable in Freeman's art, what was optional and what was obligatory. Even in this case, where we have one of the very best documented informants of his time, we as researchers would be able to do a better job if we had yet more data.

Another factor that may play a role is the way the two repertoires were learnt and maintained. Their tales would be learnt by ear. Interestingly, there are three stories recorded from Freeman and Everett about "Black George" that do seem to have some ultimate connection to print, these retellings of printed fiction still seem far removed stylistically from their source, a sign that the oral tales are also likely to have been transformed from how they were first learnt. Another sign of this is the fact that the tales that Everett and Freeman learnt from the same source decades earlier were rather different when they were documented in the 1960s. Prose allows such liberties with the tales, whereas metre and rhyme ensured that the songs kept much more to their original shape. At one stage, members of the Bennett family wrote the words of the songs down on paper, so they could refer to them later, which would have been a further limitation on change, but it is important to acknowledge that this writing down may not have been during the lifetimes of Freeman and Everett. We might also consider the fact that songs must be *sung* to possibly be a performance constraint on the language in songs. But it seems doubtful that the method of vocal production was a constraint on language here, especially given Freeman's singing style was a typically relaxed traditional anglophone one, a style that was in sharp contrast to the harsh style (locally called an "older" style) of his wife, Becky.

CONCLUSION: THE AMBIT OF FORMULAS

Given all of this, it seems it would be better practice to speak, when we can, not of formulas *tout court*, but also of their ambit. After all, knowing what ambit particular formulas

have – whether that of an individual, of a family, of a region, of a nation, or of the entire anglosphere – should help us to better understand this aspect of verbal art. This partly involves the question of genre. A key question is whether a particular formula is only found in association with a particular plot, or with a particular genre, or across multiple genres. While there have been various works that have looked at the ambit of formula in different verse genres (e.g. Nenola-Kallio 1982; Tarkka 2013; Þorgeirsson 2013), the ambit of formulas in prose genres seems to have been neglected by folklorists.

Beyond this, there is the question, key to this contribution, of the ambit of formulas across modes. The current investigation, which found next to no overlap between the prose and verse formulas of one skilful storyteller and singer, suggests that mode might well be a highly significant constraint on a formula's ambit. As stated at the beginning of this piece, Parry's notion of formula is one derived for song, for verse. Some song traditions, including the ones that the formulaic theory was first applied to, are stichic ones. Such traditions, where the line is an individual unit, proved to be happy hunting grounds for formulas. It seems however that singing traditions involving rhymed couplets and quatrains may prove equally good hunting grounds. Certainly Freeman's (and the Bennett family's in general) *songs* have more of the formulaic than their *tales* do.

In the ongoing revival of formula studies, scholars are addressing *prosaics*, or to put it differently, "the poetics of prose". We should study the life of formulas within the relatively freedom of tales, just as much as within the relative fixity of songs. While this article is only one post house on a long road, some of the concepts it mentions, such as "vanilla formulas", "semantically-light formulas", and "formulaic patina", may prove useful in this endeavour. And perhaps some of its observations too could be further explored, for instance that anglophone tales feature a larger range of closing than opening formulas, whereas anglophone songs, by contrast, have a larger range of opening formulas. Similarly, the role of genre and mode in suppressing, as well as supporting, formulas might be investigated in a variety of languages, as indeed might the matter of the absence of an expected formula being a deliberate signal. The consideration of pockets of rhyme within prose, of register, and of repertoire will no doubt be important too. Nevertheless, in any such bold endeavours we may find that, even in cases like this one with unusually rich documentation, we still lack data sufficient to answer all our questions.

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FORMULE U NARODNIM PJESMAMA I NARODNOJ PROZI: PREKLAPANJA ILI NEOVISNOST?

U različitim vrstama tradicijskih pjesama već se dugo istražuju formule, a u novije se vrijeme o formulama sve više govori i u kontekstu tradicijskih priča. Stoga se možemo zapitati hoće li se kazivač sa znatnim repertoarom pjesama i priča dijelom koristiti istim formulama u ova dva modaliteta. Ili će, budući da priče i pjesme imaju svoje zasebne norme i pravila, formule biti različite bez značajnih sličnosti? U ovom se radu nastoji zacrtati put prema mogućem odgovoru na navedena pitanja, i to na temelju usmene tradicije zabilježene u drugoj polovici dvadesetog stoljeća kod jednog osobitog kazivača iz Newfoundlanda, čiji je zabilježen repertoar sadržavao devetnaest različitih priča i više od trideset pjesama.

Ključne riječi: formula, žanr, narodna priča, narodna pjesma, Newfoundland