1: Pastoral: Poetic Term | Academy of American Poets

The Transition from Oral to Written Culture "Some might argue that, without writing, the same beliefs could not have prevailed over such a long period of time, but in reality, oral traditions are far more faithfully passed on than the written word. A written account can be open to multiple interpretations, distortions, and transformations, depending on the time and situation, economic imperatives, or the whims of political or religious leaders. Orally transmitted traditions, in contrast, must be rigorously and accurately passed on in order to survive in all their subtlety, and in the smallest of details. Furthermore, the written word, thought to be the surer and safer means of communication, is not only less reliable but also more permeable to outside aggression than are the more secret codes of an oral system. One of the twelve tablets--of the discovered by Austen Henry Layard in Ninveh--upon which the Epic of Gilgamesh was recorded. Because, as mentioned in 2. A, writing began in Mesopotamia and Egypt in the fourth millenium BCE, there is little or no documentation of the transitions from oral to written culture in those regions. The Epic of Gilgamesh, preserved in the library of Ashurbanipal, was an oral composition written in a literate culture, as distinct from an oral composition composed in an exclusively oral culture. But we need to appreciate a further point if we are to understand the position of this epic in relation to literacy. For Mesopotamia had not experienced a truly oral culture, a purely oral tradition, since that time. However its poetry was subject to influences both in the form and in content, in composition and in reproduction memorization , that emanated from the other changes that writing had wrought, promoted or accompanied. In the European tradition the earliest transition from oral to written culture, for which there are useful records, occurred in ancient Greece. During this transition literature was recorded, and passed down from generation to generation, in both the ancient oral tradition of memorization, and through the methods, new to this society, of reading and writing. It was a transition away from a purely oral culture but not a transition to a written culture in the sense that modern cultures are written cultures; it was an intermediate condition, in which, after the archaic period in which writing first developed, the elite educated class relied heavily upon writing, and the rest of the population was mainly affected by writing, as in the operation of their government or in having literature to read to them aloud. But some of the characteristics of an oral culture always remained present in the society--notably the widespread reliance on and cultivation of memory, and, in certain contexts, an ambivalence toward or distrust of the written record. It may also remind us to continue an element of the tradition by taking a critical view of what we read today. Both epic poems, products of the oral tradition, may have undergone a process of standardization and refinement out of older material beginning around BCE, when they may have been first committed to writing. Inevitably, texts from the oral tradition would have existed in a multiplicity of variants, which would eventually have been transcribed, and from which a standard text would eventually have been established. Homeric quotations by Plato and Aristotle, both of whom wrote in the fourth century BCE, show considerable variants which could be the result of reading or hearing variant texts; however, philosophers, orators and historians from this transitional period often quoted from memory, with all its limitations, rather than from a written text, making it impossible for us to know whether variants in their Homeric quotations are reflective of textual variants or the vagaries of recall. With memory valued as high or higher than a written text it appears that textual precision may not always have been appreciated at this time. Further evidence of textual variation of Homer is documented in the Homeric papyri of a total of literary papyri, the percentage of Homeric papyri reflecting the popularity of Homer in education. Pfeiffer, History of Classical Scholarship. From the Beginning to the End of the Hellenistic Age Working without an established tradition of philology, Zenodotus collated numerous formal manuscripts of Homer preserved in the library, deleted or obelized doubtful verses, transposed or altered lines and introduced new readings. It is probable that he was responsible for the division

of the Homeric poems into twenty-four books each, using capital Greek letters for the Iliad, and lower-case for the Odyssey. This manuscript, which was most probably written at the Imperial Library of Constantinople about CE, is preserved in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice. It was presumably copied from papyri written at the Royal Library of Alexandria, or from some intermediary copy or copies, which were later lost or discarded. Besides the awkwardness of manipulating the roll form, and the limited information each could contain, papyri were much harder to interpret than any modern book because punctuation, if any, was usually rudimentary, and texts were written in scriptura continua without word-division. Punctuation is, however, routine for marking periods i. Points of major division are most often signaled by the paragraphos a horizontal line at the left edge of the column. Note that the net effect is designed for clarity and beauty but not ease of use, much less mass readership. Importantly, this design is not one of primitivism or ignorance. The ancients knew perfectly well, for instance, the utlility of word division--the Greek school texts on papyri bear eloquent testimony to the need for emerging readers to practice syllable and word division. Similarly philhellenism in the early empire led to the adoption of scriptio continua in Latin literary texts, which earlier had used interpuncts raised dots to divide the words-- that is word division was discarded by the Romans in deference to Greek aesthetic and cultural traditions. As already mentioned, readers would sometimes add detailed punctuation to texts as a guide to syntax and breath pauses, yet the punctuation does not become more complex over time: In general the deliberate scribal practice was to copy only the bare-bones punctuation of major points of division even when detailed punctuation was available. Strict functionality, clearly, is not a priority in bookroll design. The bookroll seems, rather an egregiously elite product intended in its stark beauty and difficulty of access to instantiate what it is to be educated. It is generally understood that in the ancient world all reading was typically done aloud, either to oneself or to others. This process is believed to have continued until well after the transition from the roll to the codex, and after the decline of the Roman Empire, to around the fifth century CE, after which the rise of monasticism, with its ideal of silence, and the introduction of word spacing, gradually caused the preference for silent reading which we follow today. Parallel to reading aloud, scholars have debated whether scribal book production in the ancient world and the Middle Ages was done from visual exemplars or from dictation, or both. By reading aloud the sound of the words compensated for lack of punctuation and word-division. In this early period literacy was, of course, limited to only a small portion of society, and the oral tradition, with its mnemonic devices built in, would have continued both in the recitation of literature that had not been put in writing, and in customs of listening to written literature read aloud, which would have been maintained partly out of tradition, and partly because of the high cost and scarcity of books, and partly out of necessity. Because of the difficulties in defining literacy, and the enormous variations it entails, influenced by educational systems, geography, and economics, among other factors, these general quantifications should be taken chiefly to reflect the minorities in the populations that would have been directly involved with reading and writing. We might add that the peculiar difficulties that had to be surmounted in reading early manuscripts would more than likely have contributed to lower literacy rates: Punctuation was usually rudimentary at best. Texts were written without word-division, and it was not until the middle ages that a real effort was made to alter this convention in Greek or Latin texts in a few Latin texts of the classical period a point is placed after each word. The system of accentuation, which might have compensated for this difficulty in Greek, was not invented until the Hellenistic period, and for a long time after its invention it was not universally used; here again it is not until the early middle ages that the writing of accents becomes normal practice. In dramatic texts throughout antiquity changes of speaker were not indicated with the precision now thought necessary; it was enought to write a horizontal stroke at the beginning of line, or two points one above the other, like the modern English colon, for changes elsewhere; the names of the characters were frequently omitted. Another and perhaps even stranger feature of books in the pre-Hellenistic period is that lyric verse was written as if it were prose; the fourth-century papyrus of Timotheus P. It is to be noted that the difficulties facing the reader of an ancient book were equally troublesome to the man who wished to transcribe his own copy. The risk of misinterpretation and consequent

corruption of the text in this period is not to be underestimated. It is certain that a high proportion of the most serious corruptions in classical texts go back to this period and were already widely current in the books that eventually entered the library of the Museum of Alexandria" Reynolds and Wilson, Scribes and Scholars, 3rd ed. Herodotus, who wrote circa BCE, expected his Histories to be read aloud. He began his Histories with a sentence that has been translated in various ways: Such public readings could have been appropriately characterized as performances. In this transitional period in which oral and written cultures overlapped, it is believed that Herodotus relied primarily on oral sources and oral tradition for his Histories. He cites short inscriptions or epigrams mainly as illustrations of his narrative rather than the basis for his narrative. It is also increasingly agreed by scholars that Thucydides, who followed almost immediately after Herodotus, also relied primarily on oral sources, providing summaries of speeches, rather than actual transcriptions of what was said, throughout his history, and citing contemporary documents, chiefly point by point citations of treaties, only in Book Five. Even by the late fifth and early fourth centuries BCE, when both Herodotus and Thucydides wrote, much of the literary activity, knowledge and discussion in Greece seems to have been based upon oral communication rather than books, though books were available. It seems that during this period written texts were often viewed as aids to memory rather than the primary object of study. Herodotus knew that writing was full of ambiguities. Since a written document could not be cross-examined as a speaking person could, it might be used not to inform but to deceive. Themistocles, the Athenian general who led the resistance to the invasion of Xerxes. Both sides in the war were vying for the help of the Ionians, descendants of Greek settlers who had colonized the Aegean islands and the adjacent mainland coastal areas of present-day Turkey. Most Ionians sided with the Persians, their powerful near-neighbours, but the Greeks sought their aid on the grounds of common ancestry. Themistocles used the ambiguity of writing to enlist their help, or at least to minimize the potential harm they might do to the Greek cause. His plan was clever: As it happened, only a few Ionians defected to the Greeks see 8. Writing was not always so straightforward as it appeared to be. There was a danger in committing anything to writing since, if the document were intercepted, secrecy would be lost. Histiaeus, who had been made Despot of Miletus by Darius, learned this lesson when he sought through secret messages to stir up a revolt against his benefactor. Still, writing out a message and smuggling it to a confederate could be safer than entrusting it orally to a messenger, who could be bribed or tortured into talking if apprehended. Because of the possibility of such discovery, special care was needed over secret communications, and Herodotus found several instances of such security precautions. In one case, a Mede named Harpagus plotted with Cyrus to overthrow the King and install the young man in his place. Next, he inserted "a paper on which he wrote what he wanted," stitched the animal back together, and entrusted it to a servant, disguised as an innocuous huntsman. The servant made it past the guards along the road and delivered the message to its intended recipient 1. Besides bookrolls on papyrus, Athenians maintained a wide variety of written records on wood tablets, lead tablets, bronze tablets, wooden boards, and stone inscriptions. Apart from stone inscriptions, few examples of these media surivived. Dramatic exceptions to this overall lack of early Greek books and archival data are the Archives of the Athenian Cavalry from the fourth and and third centuries BCE preserved on lead tablets. This archive was excavated in from a water well within the courtyard of the Dipylon, the double-gate leading into the city of Athens from the north. It included lead tablets from the third century BCE. The lead tablets are illustrated on plates Six years later another hundred or so lead tablets from the fourth and third centuries BCE were excavated from a well at the edge of the excavated section of the Agora in Athens. Historian of ancient archives Ernest Posner characterized these as "by far the largest name file of ancient times. Tightly rolled or folded up, they contain the following information: Normally, only the name of the owner appears on the outside; the other data is relegated to the interior of the tablet and could not be read unless the tablet was unrolled or unfolded. A number of tablets are palimpsests; that is, the original entries were erased and replaced by new data. From the extensive information available, John H. Kroll, author of the primary paper on the excavation, developed a theory of the purposes and operation of the Athenian Cavalry Archives. Official annual records at Athens were normally kept in list

form on papyrus or whitened boards. But since a cavalryman was likely to have changed his horse at any time in the course of a year, a more flexible system of records was called for-the equivalent of the modern card-file system-whereby the record of a given horse could be pulled out and replaced if the horse itself was replaced. For such individual records, lead had obvious advantages over paper or wood, and, becatuse it was cheap and could be erased and re-used repeatedly, it would have been less costly in the long run. The re-use of the tablets, incidently, must surely be a factor in the low survival rate of tablets in most series and the loss of other entire series. There is one other respect in which the tablets stand apart from most annual records. I assume that they were rolled or folded simply to facilitate storage and not because the evaluations they contain were to be kept secret. But the fact that they were folded or rolled up, many of them as tightly as they could be, indicates that no one expected them to be referred to on a regular basis. Indeed, since all of the unbroken tablets were recovered from the Kerameikos and Agora wells in their original folded or rolled state, it appears doubtful that any of the extant tablets had ever been consulted. This of course does not mean that the evaluations were never consulted, merely that the records were made up annually and filed away to be consulted only in rare, though anticipated, cases.

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No single author each is a product of the oral tradition Written down after centuries of oral transmission â€" e. Primary epics were originally intended to be sung or recited to music: In primary epics, deities and other supernatural agencies are often involved in human affairs: The poem often has national interest and has a national bias: Often, the principal characters are larger-than-life demigods descendants of deities or heroes of immense stature and strength. In both kinds of epic, single combat is a common plot device; if the warriors are equals, such as Achilles and Hector, they fight with sword and spear; if the adversaries are not equally heroic, as in the case of Odysseus and the suitors, the protagonist may use lesser weapons such as a bow. The hero often has a special weapon e. The subject of the poem is announced in the opening lines, in an invocation in which the poet calls for divine assistance to tell his tale and epic question in classical epics. As opposed to the epyllion such as the line "Sohrab and Rustum" and Paradise Regained , the true epic is long the Iliad and the Odyssey each contain 24 books and dignified courtly address and epithet are common. Geographical and temporal settings are wide: However, the action may be compressed into a matter of days as in the case of the Iliad or even hours as in the case of the Song of Roland. The Odyssey takes roughly forty days. Such great issues as the founding of the Roman race and the state the AEneid are at stake. Elements of the Epic Style 1. The Epic or Homeric Simile is a protracted comparison beginning with "like" or "as"; the figure, loaded with description, often holds up the action at a crucial point to produce suspense. There is a general absence of this device in Beowulf, but later English writers such as Milton and Arnold have deliberately incorporated such protracted comparisons into their works to give them weight and dignity. Long, formal speeches such as challenges, inset narratives, flashbacks, and points of debate occur within the midst of the action; characters are commonly revealed in dialogue. Speeches are often followed by such phrases as "thus he spoke" to emphasize that the words are those of a character and not of the narrator. Elevated, literary language is the norm-even servants speak in dignified verse. The manner of address between characters is circumlocutious and courtly; characters often address one another in patronymics such as "Son of Peleus" Achilles. The pace is stately, the rhythm ceremonious. Catalogues lengthy lists, particularly of leaders and their military contingents create a sense of grandeur. Epic machinery includes bardic recapitulations e. The opening of the epic will involve an invocation and an epic question. The poet opens in the midst of the action "in medias res" rather than at the beginning. Epic conventions include the simile, the in-medias-res opening, the invocation, the epic question, the epithet, the climactic confrontation between mighty adversaries, and hand-to-hand combat; these were established by Homer and emulated by Virgil. Since epics were composed to honour the deeds of heroic ancestors, such poems often have an aristocratic bias: The action occurs in an heroic past, generations earlier, when deities freely interacted with humans. The events of the poem permeate the national consciousness â€"everyone in the audience already knows most of the details of the story. In the time of Homer, emotions and great natural forces are personified as deities. Characteristics of the Epic Hero The form of the poem suggests that the material dealt with should be "events which have a certain grandeur and importance, and come from a life of action, especially of violent action such as war" see C. Bowra, From Virgil to Milton, p. The hero is introduced in the midst of turmoil, at a point well into the story; antecedent action will be recounted in flashbacks. The hero is not only a warrior and a leader, but also a polished speaker who can address councils of chieftains or elders with eloquence and confidence. The hero, often a demi-god, possesses distinctive weapons of great size and power, often heirlooms or presents from the gods. The hero must undertake a long, perilous journey, often involving a descent into the Underworld Greek, "Neukeia" , which tests his endurance, courage, and cunning. Although his fellows may be great warriors like Achilles and

Beowulf, he may have a commitatus, or group of noble followers with whom he grew up , he undertakes a task that no one else dare attempt. Whatever virtues his race most prizes, these the epic hero as a cultural exemplar possesses in abundance. His key quality is often emphasized by his stock epithet: The concept of arete Greek for "bringing virtue to perfection" is crucial to understanding the epic protagonist. The hero establishes his aristeia nobility through single combat in superari a superiore, honour coming from being vanquished by a superior foe. That is, a hero gains little honour by slaying a lesser mortal, but only by challenging heroes like himself or adversaries of superhuman power. The two great epic adversaries, the hero and his antagonist, meet at the climax, which must be delayed as long as possible to sustain maximum interest. One such device for delaying this confrontation is the nephelistic rescue utilized by Homer to rescue Paris from almost certain death and defeat at the hands of Menelaus in the Iliad. The adversary might also be a good man sponsored by lesser deities, or one whom the gods desert at a crucial moment. The hero may encounter a numinous phenomenon a place or person having a divine or supernatural force such as a haunted wood or enchanting sorceress that he most use strength, cunning, and divine assistance to overcome. Notes on Epic Poetry An epic or heroic poem falls into one of two patterns, both established by Homer: Features of legend building evident in epic include the following: Milton employed the epic machinery of Homer and Virgil while attempting to redefine their heroic ethos from that of the man of action to that of the man of patient endurance and love. In attempting to make this shift Milton was recognizing that the heroic poem is essentially non-Christian since it is based on the deeds of a man of physical action, a warrior and military leader.

3: The Epic: Definition, Types & Characteristics | Owlcation

The word epic has been derived a Greek word epikos, which means a word, song or speech. An epic is well-defined as a long story in verse dwelling upon an important theme in a most elegant style and language. An epic is a long narrative in verse, while ballad is a short story in verse. Definition of Epic Britannica Encyclopedia explains the word epic as: They are discussed below: The first and foremost characteristic of an epic is its bulky size. An epic is an extensive and prolonged narrative in verse. Usually, every single epic has been broken down in to multiple books. Another essential feature of an epic is the fact that it dwells upon the achievements of a historical or traditional hero, or a person of national or international significance. Every epic extolls the valour, deeds, bravery, character and personality of a person, who is having incredible physical and mental traits. Exaggeration is also an important part of an epic. The poet uses hyperbole to reveal the prowess of a hero. Supernaturalism is a must-have feature of an every epic. Without having to use supernatural elements, no epic would certainly produce awe and wonder. There are certainly gods, demons, angels, fairies, and use of supernatural forces like natural catastrophes in every epic. Morality is a key characteristic of an epic. The poet wants to justify the ways of God to man through the story of Adam. This is the most didactic theme of the epic. The theme of each epic is sublime, elegant and having universal significance. It may not be an insignificant theme, which is only limited to the personality or the locality of the poet. It deals with the entire humanity. The theme of this epic is certainly of great importance and deals with entire humanity. Invocation to the Muse is another important quality of an epic. The poet, at the very beginning of the epic, seeks the help of the Muse while writing his epic. Look at the beginning lines of the Iliad, Odyssey and Paradise Lost. The diction of every epic is lofty, grand and elegant. No trivial, common or colloquial language is used in epic. The poet tries to use sublime words to describe the events. Use of Epic Simile is another feature of an epic. Epic simile is a far-fetched comparison between two objects, which runs through many lines to describe the valour, bravery and gigantic stature of the hero. It is also called Homeric simile. Which epic do you like to read?

4: Epic poetry - Simple English Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

BOOK REVIEWS Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Epic Poetry. By WILLIAM G. THALMANN. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

The Epic The epic is generally defined: A long narrative poem on a great and serious subject, related in an elevated style, and centered on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or the human race. The traditional epics were shaped by a literary artist from historical and legendary materials which had developed in the oral traditions of his nation during a period of expansion and warfare Beowulf, The Odyssey, The Iliad. Epic Conventions, or characteristics common to both types include: The hero is a figure of great national or even cosmic importance, usually the ideal man of his culture. He often has superhuman or divine traits. He has an imposing physical stature and is greater in all ways than the common man. The setting is vast in scope. It covers great geographical distances, perhaps even visiting the underworld, other wortlds, other times. The action consists of deeds of valor or superhuman courage especially in battle. Supernatural forces interest themselves in the action and intervene at times. The intervention of the gods is called "machinery. Writer invokes a Muse, one of the nine daughters of Zeus. The poet prays to the muses to provide him with divine inspiration to tell the story of a great hero. Narrative opens in media res. This means "in the middle of things," usually with the hero at his lowest point. Earlier portions of the story appear later as flashbacks. Catalogs and geneaologies are given. These long lists of objects, places, and people place the finite action of the epic within a broader, universal context. Oftentimes, the poet is also paying homage to the ancestors of audience members. Main characters give extended formal speeches. Use of the epic simile. A standard simile is a comparison using "like" or "as. Heavy use of repetition and stock phrases. The poet repeats passages that consist of several lines in various sections of the epic and uses homeric epithets, short, recurrent phrases used to describe people, places, or things. Both made the poem easier to memorize. Aristotle described six characteristics: Serious Epic fable and action are grave and solemn characterrs are the highest sentiments and diction preserve the sublime verse fable and action are light and ridiculous characters are inferior sentiments and diction preserve the ludicrous verse When the first novelists began writing what were later called novels, they thought they were writing "prose epics. Yet what they wrote were true novels, not epics, and there are differences.

5: Epic | literary genre | www.enganchecubano.com

Conventions of form and thought in early Greek epic poetry / Author: William G. Thalmann. --Publication info: Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, c

Epics have seven main characteristics: The hero is outstanding. They might be important, and historically or legendarily significant. The setting is large. It covers many nations, or the known world. The action is made of deeds of great valour or requiring superhuman courage. Supernatural forcesâ€"gods, angels, demonsâ€"insert themselves in the action. It is written in a very special style verse as opposed to prose. The poet tries to remain objective. Epic poems are believed to be supernatural and real by the hero and the villain Conventions of epics: It starts with the theme or subject of the story. In epics inspired from Western civilization the writer invokes a Muse , one of the nine daughters of Zeus. The poet prays to the Muses to provide divine inspiration to tell the great story. Narrative opens in medias res, or in the middle of things, usually with the hero at his lowest point. Usually flashbacks show earlier portions of the story. Catalogues and genealogies are given. These long lists of objects, places, and people place the finite action of the epic within a broader, universal context. Often, the poet is also paying homage to the ancestors of audience members. Main characters give extended formal speeches. Use of the epic simile. Heavy use of repetition or stock phrases. It presents the heroic ideals such as courage, honour, sacrifice, patriotism and kindness. An epic gives a clear picture of the social and cultural patterns of the contemporary life. Beowulf thus shows the love of wine, wild celebration, war, adventure and sea-voyages.

Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy: A History of Greek Epic, Lyric, and Prose to the Middle of the Fifth Century. Hermann Ferdinand Fränkel - - Blackwell. The Aorist Infinitives in -EEIN in Early Greek Hexameter Poetry.

After the formative period of the Vedic age, literature moved in several different directions. The close of the Vedic period was one of great cultural renewal, with the founding of the new monastic religions of Buddhism and Jainismâ€¦ General characteristics An epic may deal with such various subjects as myths , heroic legends , histories, edifying religious tales, animal stories, or philosophical or moral theories. Epic poetry has been and continues to be used by peoples all over the world to transmit their traditions from one generation to another, without the aid of writing. These traditions frequently consist of legendary narratives about the glorious deeds of their national heroes. Such ages have been experienced by many nations, usually at a stage of development in which they have had to struggle for a national identity. This effort, combined with such other conditions as an adequate material culture and a sufficiently productive economy, tend to produce a society dominated by a powerful and warlike nobility, constantly occupied with martial activities, whose individual members seek, above all, everlasting fame for themselves and for their lineages. Uses of the epic The main function of poetry in heroic-age society appears to be to stir the spirit of the warriors to heroic actions by praising their exploits and those of their illustrious ancestors, by assuring a long and glorious recollection of their fame, and by supplying them with models of ideal heroic behaviour. One of the favourite pastimes of the nobility in heroic ages in different times and places has been to gather in banquet halls to hear heroic songs, in praise of famous deeds sung by professional singers as well as by the warriors themselves. Heroic songs also were often sung before a battle, and such recitations had tremendous effect on the morale of the combatants. Among the Fulani Fulbe people in the Sudan, for instance, whose epic poetry has been recorded, a nobleman customarily set out in quest of adventures accompanied by a singer mabo , who also served as his shield bearer. The singer was thus the witness of the heroic deeds of his lord, which he celebrated in an epic poem called baudi. The aristocratic warriors of the heroic ages were thus members of an illustrious family, a link in a long chain of glorious heroes. And the chain could snap if the warrior failed to preserve the honour of the family, whereas, by earning fame through his own heroism, he could give it new lustre. Epic traditions were to a large extent the traditions of the aristocratic families: The passing of a heroic age does not necessarily mean the end of its heroic oral poetry. An oral epic tradition usually continues for as long as the nation remains largely illiterate. Usually it is after the heroic age has passed that the narratives about its legendary heroes are fully elaborated. Even when the nobility that originally created the heroic epic perishes or loses interest, the old songs can persist as entertainments among the people. Court singers, then, are replaced by popular singers, who recite at public gatherings. This popular tradition, however, must be distinguished from a tradition that still forms an integral part of the culture of a nobility. For when a heroic epic loses its contact with the banquet halls of the princes and noblemen, it cannot preserve for long its power of renewal. Soon it enters what has been called the reproductive stage in the life cycle of an oral tradition, in which the bards become noncreative reproducers of songs learned from older singers. Popular oral singers, like the guslari of the Balkans, no doubt vary their songs to a certain extent each time they recite them, but they do so mainly by transposing language and minor episodes from one acquired song to another. Such variations must not be confounded with the real enrichment of the tradition by succeeding generations of genuine oral poets of the creative stage. The spread of literacy, which has a disastrous effect on the oral singer, brings about a quick corruption of the tradition. At this degenerate stage, the oral epic soon dies out if it is not written down or recorded. The ancient Greek epic exemplifies the cycle of an oral tradition. Originating in the late Mycenaean period, the Greek epic outlasted the downfall of the typically heroic-age culture c. After Homer, the activity of the aoidoi , who sang their own epic songs at the courts of the nobility, slowly declined. During the first half of the 7th century, the aoidoi produced such new poems as those of Hesiod and some of the earlier poems of what was to become known as

the Epic Cycle. It seems probable that these rhapsodes, who played a crucial role in the transmission of the Homeric epic, were using some sort of written aids to memory before Homeric recitations were adopted in 6th-century Athens as part of the Panathenaic festivals held each year in honour of the goddess Athena. Verbal formulas To compose and to memorize long narrative poems like the Iliad and the Odyssey, oral poets used a highly elaborate technical language with a large store of traditional verbal formulas, which could describe recurring ideas and situations in ways that suited the requirements of metre. So long as an oral epic tradition remains in its creative period, its language will be continually refined by each generation of poets in opposite directions, refinements that are called scope and economy. Scope is the addition of new phrases to express a larger number of recurrent concepts in varying metrical values fitting the possible positions in a verse. Economy is the elimination of redundancies that arise as gifted poets invent new set phrases that duplicate, both in a general sense and in metrical value, the formulas that already exist in the traditional stock. Nowhere has this refinement proceeded any nearer to perfection than in the language of the Homeric epic. As has been shown by statistical analysis, it exhibits a remarkable efficiency , both in the rareness of unnecessarily duplicative variants and in the coverage of each common concept by the metrical alternatives useful in the composition of the six-foot metric line the Greeks used for epic poetry. Finally, some of the typical scenes in the heroic life, such as the preparation of a meal or sacrifice or the launching or beaching of a ship, contain set descriptions comprising several lines that are used by rote each time the events are narrated. This highly formalized language was elaborated by generations of oral poets to minimize the conscious effort needed to compose new poems and memorize existing ones. Because of it, an exceptionally gifted aoidos, working just prior to the corruption of the genre , could orally create long and finely structured poems like the Iliad and the Odyssey, and those poems could then be transmitted accurately by the following generations of rhapsodes until complete written texts were produced. Bases Oral heroic poetry, at its origin, usually deals with outstanding deeds of kings and warriors who lived in the heroic age of the nation. Since the primary function of this poetry is to educate rather than to record, however, the personages are necessarily transformed into ideal heroes and their acts into ideal heroic deeds that conform to mythological or ideological patterns. Some of these patterns are archetypes found all over the world, while others are peculiar to a specific nation or culture. Thus, in many epic traditions, heroes are born as a result of the union of a maiden with a divine or supernatural being; because these unions occur outside the usual social norms, the heroes are exposed at birth, fed by an animal, and brought up by humble foster parents in a rustic milieu; they grow up with marvellous speed, fight a dragonâ€"in their first combatâ€"to rescue a maiden whom they marry, and die young in circumstances as fabulous as those that surrounded their birth. In the traditions of Indo-European peoples, a hero is often a twin who acquires soon after his supernatural birth an invulnerability that has one defect, generally of his heel or of some other part of his foot , which ultimately causes his death. He is educated by a blacksmith, disguises himself as a woman at some time in his youth, and conquers a three-headed dragon, or some other kind of triple opponent, in his first battle. He then begets, by a foreign or supernatural woman, a child who, reared by his mother in her country, becomes a warrior as brave as his father. When this child meets his unknown father, the latter fails to recognize him, so that the father kills his own child after a long and fierce single combat. The hero himself usually dies after committing the third of three sins. The retainers reflect a mythological model, taken from Buddhism , of four deva kings, who guard the teaching of the Buddha against the attack of the devils. The concept was based on the discovery of the remarkable philosophy of a prehistoric nation that survived as a system of thought in the historic Indo-European civilizations and even in the subconsciousness of the modern speakers of Indo-European tongues. This philosophy sees in the universe three basic principles that are realized by three categories of people: In conformity with this philosophy, most Indo-European epics have as their central themes interaction among these three principles or functions which are: In the long Indian epic the Mahabharata , for example, the central figures, the Pandava brothers , together with their father, Pandu, their two uncles, Dhritarashtra and Vidura, and their common wife, Draupadi, correspond to traditional deities presiding over the three functions of the Indo-European

ideology. During the first part of their earthly career, the Pandavas suffer constantly from the persistent enmity and jealousy of their cousins, Duryodhana and his 99 brothers, who, in reality, are incarnations of the demons Kali and the Paulastya. The demons at first succeeded in snatching the kingdom from the Pandavas and in exiling them. The conflict ends in a devastating war, in which all the renowned heroes of the time take part. The Pandavas survive the massacre, and establish on earth a peaceful and prosperous reign, in which Dhritarashtra and Vidura also participate. This whole story, it has been shown, is a transposition to the heroic level of an Indo-European myth about the incessant struggle between the gods and the demons since the beginning of the world. Eventually, it results in a bloody eschatological battle, in which the gods and the devils exterminate each other. The destruction of the former world order, however, prepares for a new and better world, exempt from evil influences, over which reign a few divine survivors of the catastrophe. Early patterns of development In the ancient Middle East The earliest known epic poetry is that of the Sumerians. Its origin has been traced to a preliterate heroic age, not later than bce, when the Sumerians had to fight, under the direction of a warlike aristocracy, for possession of this fertile Mesopotamian land. Among the extant literature of this highly gifted people are fragments of narrative poems recounting the heroic deeds of their early kings: Enmerkar , Lugalbanda , and Gilgamesh. By far the most important in the development of Mesopotamian literature are the five poems of the Epic of Gilgamesh. This cycle tells the odyssey of a king, Gilgamesh, part human and part divine, who seeks immortality. A god who dislikes his rule, fashions a wild man, Enkidu, to challenge him. Enkidu first lives among wild animals, then goes to the capital and engages in a trial of strength with Gilgamesh, who emerges victorious. The two, now friends, set out on various adventures, in one of which they kill a wild bull that the goddess of love had sent to destroy Gilgamesh because he spurned her marriage proposal. Enkidu dreams the gods have decided he must die for the death of the bull, and, upon awakening, he does fall ill and die. Gilgamesh searches for a survivor of the Babylonian flood to learn how to escape death. The survivor shows him where to find a plant that renews youth, but after Gilgamesh gets the plant it is snatched away by a serpent. Gilgamesh returns, saddened, to his capital. The legend of Gilgamesh was taken over by the Babylonians , who developed it into a long and beautiful poem, one of the masterpieces of humankind. It recounts events from the beginning of the world to the establishment of the power of Marduk , the great god of Babylon. It shares with the Epic of Gilgamesh the theme of a human potential for and loss of immortality. Among clay tablets of the 14th century bce, covered with inscriptions in an old Phoenician cuneiform alphabet, from Ras Shamra the site of ancient Ugarit , in northern Syria , there are important fragments of three narrative poems. One of these is mythological and recounts the career of the god Baal , which seems to coincide with the yearly cycle of vegetation on earth. Another fragment, about a hero named Aqhat , is perhaps a transposition of this myth of Baal to the human level. Since the end of the poem is missing, however, it is not known whether Paghat, like Anath, succeeds in bringing her brother back to life. The third fragment, the Ugaritic epic of Keret , has been interpreted as a Phoenician version of the Indo-European theme of the siege of an enemy city for the recovery of an abducted woman. This theme is also the subject of the Greek legend of the Trojan War and of the Indian epic Ramayana. The Greek epic Eastern influences Especially in its originative stage, the Greek epic may have been strongly influenced by these Asian traditions. The Greek world in the late Bronze Age was related to the Middle East by so many close ties that it formed an integral part of the Levant. At Ugarit a large quarter of the city was occupied by Greek merchants, whose presence is also attested, among other places, at the gate of Mesopotamia, at Alalakh , in what is now Turkey. Thus, it is no surprise that, for example, the Greek myth about the succession of the divine kingship told in the Theogony of Hesiod and elsewhere is paralleled in a Hittite version of a Hurrian myth. The Hittites had continuous diplomatic relations with the Achaeans of Greece, whose princes went to the royal court at Hattusa to perfect their skill with the chariot. The Greeks, therefore, had ample opportunity to become familiar with Hittite myths. The Epic of Gilgamesh was then well-known in the Levant, as is indicated by discoveries of copies of it throughout this wide area. The Odyssey has many parallels with the Epic of Gilgamesh; the encounters of Odysseus with Circe and Calypso on their mythical isles, for instance, closely resemble the visit

by Gilgamesh to a divine woman named Siduri, who keeps an inn in a marvellous garden of the sun god near the shores of ocean. Like the two Greek goddesses, Siduri tries to dissuade Gilgamesh from the pursuit of his journey by representing the pleasures of life, but the firm resolution of the hero obliges her finally to help him cross the waters of death. In the Iliad , Patroclus, who dies as a substitute for his king and dearest friend, Achilles , and then gives Achilles a description of the miserable condition of man after his death, bears striking similarities to the friend of Gilgamesh, Enkidu. The heroic life If these are indeed borrowings, it is all the more remarkable that they are used in Homer to express a view of life and a heroic temper radically different from those of the Sumerian epic of Mesopotamia. The loss of a beloved friend does not make Achilles seek desperately to escape from death; instead he rushes into combat to revenge Patroclus, although he knows that he is condemning himself to an early death, and that the existence of a king in Hades will be incomparably less enviable than that of a slave on earth. The Mesopotamian mind never tires of expressing deep human regret at mortality through stories about ancient heroes who, despite their superhuman strength and wisdom, and their intimacy with gods, failed to escape from death. A decisively different idea, however, is fundamental to the Greek heroic view of life. It has been demonstrated that the Greek view is derived from an Indo-European notion of justiceâ€"that each being has a fate moira assigned to him and marked clearly by boundaries that should never be crossed. Human energy and courage should, accordingly, be spent not in exceeding the proper limits of the human condition but in bearing it with style, pride, and dignity, gaining as much fame possible within the boundaries of individual moira.

7: Epic - Definiton and Conventions

Formulae and Literature - ThalmannWilliam C.: Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Epic Poetry. Pp. xxvi + Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, $; £.

The oldest epic recognized is the Epic of Gilgamesh c. The poem details the exploits of Gilgamesh , the king of Uruk. Although recognized as a historical figure, Gilgamesh, as represented in the epic, is a largely legendary or mythical figure. Early twentieth-century study of living oral epic traditions in the Balkans by Milman Parry and Albert Lord demonstrated the paratactic model used for composing these poems. What they demonstrated was that oral epics tend to be constructed in short episodes, each of equal status, interest and importance. This facilitates memorization, as the poet is recalling each episode in turn and using the completed episodes to recreate the entire epic as he performs it. Parry and Lord also contend that the most likely source for written texts of the epics of Homer was dictation from an oral performance. Milman Parry and Albert Lord have argued that the Homeric epics, the earliest works of Western literature, were fundamentally an oral poetic form. These works form the basis of the epic genre in Western literature. Classical epic poetry employs a meter called dactylic hexameter and recounts a journey, either physical as typified by Odysseus in the Odyssey or mental as typified by Achilles in the Iliad or both. Epics also tend to highlight cultural norms and to define or call into question cultural values, particularly as they pertain to heroism. Harmon and Holman [10] An attempt to delineate ten main characteristics of an epic: Begins with an invocation to a muse epic invocation. Begins with a statement of the theme. Includes the use of epithets. Contains long lists, called an epic catalogue. Features long and formal speeches. Shows divine intervention on human affairs. Features heroes that embody the values of the civilization. The hero generally participates in a cyclical journey or quest, faces adversaries that try to defeat him in his journey and returns home significantly transformed by his journey. The epic hero illustrates traits , performs deeds, and exemplifies certain morals that are valued by the society the epic originates from. Many epic heroes are recurring characters in the legends of their native culture. Opens by stating the theme or cause of the epic. Writer invokes a Muse , one of the nine daughters of Zeus. The poet prays to the Muses to provide him with divine inspiration to tell the story of a great hero. The Epic of Gilgamesh , for example, or the Bhagavata Purana do not contain this element. Usually flashbacks show earlier portions of the story. Catalogues and genealogies are given. These long lists of objects, places, and people place the finite action of the epic within a broader, universal context. Often, the poet is also paying homage to the ancestors of audience members. Heavy use of repetition or stock phrases: Ancient Sumerian epic poems did not use any kind of poetic meter and lines did not have consistent lengths; [12] instead, Sumerian poems derived their rhythm solely through constant repetition , with subtle variations between lines. Italian, Spanish and Portuguese long poems were usually written in terza rima [15] or especially ottava rima. The French alexandrine is currently the heroic line in French literature, though in earlier periods the decasyllable took precedence.

8: Epic poetry - Wikipedia

Epic poetry, related to heroic poetry, is a narrative art form common to many ancient and modern societies. In some traditional circles, the term epic poetry is restricted to the Greek poet Homer's works The Iliad and The Odyssey and, sometimes grudgingly, the Roman poet Virgil's The Aeneid.

Epic narrative allowed poets like Homer no opportunity for personal revelations. There are three explicit references in Works and Days , as well as some passages in his Theogony that support inferences made by scholars. The former poem says that his father came from Cyme in Aeolis on the coast of Asia Minor , a little south of the island Lesbos and crossed the sea to settle at a hamlet, near Thespiae in Boeotia , named Ascra , "a cursed place, cruel in winter, hard in summer, never pleasant" Works Unlike his father, Hesiod was averse to sea travel, but he once crossed the narrow strait between the Greek mainland and Euboea to participate in funeral celebrations for one Athamas of Chalcis , and there won a tripod in a singing competition. Fanciful though the story might seem, the account has led ancient and modern scholars to infer that he was not a professionally trained rhapsode , or he would have been presented with a lyre instead. The poet is presented with a lyre , in contradiction to the account given by Hesiod himself in which the gift was a laurel staff. Some scholars have seen Perses as a literary creation, a foil for the moralizing that Hesiod develops in Works and Days, but there are also arguments against that theory. However around BC or a little later, there was a migration of seagoing merchants from his original home in Cyme in Asia Minor to Cumae in Campania a colony they shared with the Euboeans , and possibly his move west had something to do with that, since Euboea is not far from Boeotia, where he eventually established himself and his family. His farmer employs a friend Works and Days as well as servants , , , , , an energetic and responsible ploughman of mature years ff. However, while his poetry features some Aeolisms there are no words that are certainly Boeotian. Pausanias asserted that Boeotians showed him an old tablet made of lead on which the Works were engraved. However, some scholars suspect the presence of large-scale changes in the text and attribute this to oral transmission. He recalls Aristophanes in his rejection of the idealised hero of epic literature in favour of an idealised view of the farmer. One, as early as Thucydides , reported in Plutarch, the Suda and John Tzetzes , states that the Delphic oracle warned Hesiod that he would die in Nemea , and so he fled to Locris , where he was killed at the local temple to Nemean Zeus, and buried there. This tradition follows a familiar ironic convention: Later writers attempted to harmonize these two accounts. Dating[edit] Modern Mount Helicon. Hesiod once described his nearby hometown, Ascra , as "cruel in winter, hard in summer, never pleasant. Thereafter, Greek writers began to consider Homer earlier than Hesiod. The first known writers to locate Homer earlier than Hesiod were Xenophanes and Heraclides Ponticus , though Aristarchus of Samothrace was the first actually to argue the case. An upper limit of BC is indicated by a number of considerations, such as the probability that his work was written down, the fact that he mentions a sanctuary at Delphi that was of little national significance before c. Modern scholars have accepted his identification of Amphidamas but disagreed with his conclusion. The date of the war is not known precisely but estimates placing it around â€" BC, fit the estimated chronology for Hesiod. In that case, the tripod that Hesiod won might have been awarded for his rendition of Theogony, a poem that seems to presuppose the kind of aristocratic audience he would have met at Chalcis. Works and Days , Theogony , and Shield of Heracles. Other works attributed to him are only found now in fragments. The surviving works and fragments were all written in the conventional metre and language of epic. However, the Shield of Heracles is now known to be spurious and probably was written in the sixth century BC. Many ancient critics also rejected Theogony e. Moreover, they both refer to the same version of the Prometheus myth. For example, the first ten verses of the Works and Days may have been borrowed from an Orphic hymn to Zeus they were recognised as not the work of Hesiod by critics as ancient as Pausanias. Aristotle Metaphysics bâ€"a believed that the question of first causes may even have started with Hesiod Theogony â€"53 and Homer Iliad He seems in this case to be catering to two different world-views, one epic and

aristocratic, the other unsympathetic to the heroic traditions of the aristocracy. Despite the different subject matter between this poem and the Works and Days, most scholars, with some notable exceptions, believe that the two works were written by the same man. West writes, "Both bear the marks of a distinct personality: This cultural crossover would have occurred in the eighth and ninth century Greek trading colonies such as Al Mina in North Syria. Works and Days[edit] Main article: Works and Days Opening lines of Works and Days in a 16th-century manuscript The Works and Days is a poem of over lines which revolves around two general truths: Scholars have interpreted this work against a background of agrarian crisis in mainland Greece , which inspired a wave of documented colonisations in search of new land. This poem is one of the earliest known musings on economic thought. This work lays out the five Ages of Man , as well as containing advice and wisdom, prescribing a life of honest labour and attacking idleness and unjust judges like those who decided in favour of Perses as well as the practice of usury. It describes immortals who roam the earth watching over justice and injustice. Modern scholarship has doubted their authenticity, and these works are generally referred to as forming part of the "Hesiodic Corpus" whether or not their authorship is accepted. It was a mythological catalogue of the mortal women who had mated with gods, and of the offspring and descendants of these unions. Several additional hexameter poems were ascribed to Hesiod: Megalai Ehoiai , a poem similar to the Catalogue of Women, but presumably longer. Melampodia , a genealogical poem that treats of the families of, and myths associated with, the great seers of mythology. Precepts of Chiron , a didactic work that presented the teaching of Chiron as delivered to the young Achilles. Aegimius , a heroic epic concerning the Dorian Aegimius variously attributed to Hesiod or Cercops of Miletus. Kiln or Potters, a brief poem asking Athena to aid potters if they pay the poet. Also attributed to Homer. Ornithomantia, a work on bird omens that followed the Works and Days. The paraphrase survives only as a fragment. Thus for example Theocritus presents catalogues of heroines in two of his bucolic poems 3. It has been identified by Gisela Richter as an imagined portrait of Hesiod. In fact, it has been recognized since that the bust was not of Seneca, when an inscribed herma portrait of Seneca with quite different features was discovered. Comparisons with Homer, a native Ionian, can be unflattering. All three poets, for example, employed digamma inconsistently, sometimes allowing it to affect syllable length and meter, sometimes not. The extent of variation depends on how the evidence is collected and interpreted but there is a clear trend, revealed for example in the following set of statistics.

9: Hesiod - Wikipedia

The Epic. The epic is generally defined: A long narrative poem on a great and serious subject, related in an elevated style, and centered on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or the human race.

A selective bibliography to Herodotus items with an asterisk are on reserve The bibliography on Herodotus is as massive as the monumental history itself. Below are some starting points for investigation, topically arranged; included are first the principal resources and general studies, followed by studies of special interest for our course. A large bibliography accompanies this volume, somewhat unwieldy however since a collection of references from the individual articles rather than a thoughtful collection. Bergson, "Herodotus ," Lustrum Frank Bubel, Herodot-Bibliographie, See also Dewald and Marincola Waters , extensive selected bibliography, topically arranged. The fundamental commentary resource for the early books. David Asheri, Le storie: Superseded in part by Asheri Hude , Charles Hude, Herodoti Historiae. Wells, A Commentary on Herodotus. Long the best historical commentary for the whole of the Histories; the introduction is a useful brief account of Herodotus and his work. In large part but not entirely superseded by Asheri Lloyd , , Incorporated into Asheri Lanham and London, A radically idiosyncratic, but interesting, edition that reconstitutes text and spellings entirely based on MS A sic! Enoch Powell, A Lexicon to Herodotus 2nd ed. An extraordinary piece of work; very helpful, but sadly now out of print. Now the fundamental critical edition, but too expensive for classroom use. Idiosyncratic at times in critical judgment. Stein and Still the most ample critical edition; contains the testimonia, and the rather scanty scholia. Heinrich Stein, Herodotos, 5 vols. Many times revised; the last edition in Still the best philological commentary on the Histories as a whole, though largely superseded now by Asheri for the early books. General studies and standard references Arieti Arieti, Discourses on the First Book of Herodotus. Herodotus and the Invention of History, Arethusa special volume, 20 A good conspectus of the state of scholarship in the s, now generally superseded by collections such as Luraghi revision of the hardcover , Bakker et al. Peter Derow and Robert Parker. Herodotus and His World. Carolyn Dewald and John Marincola. The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus. A fine general introduction in the Twayne World Authors Series. An Interpretative Essay Oxford Evans and this are the best two short introductions to Herodotus. Jacoby, "Herodotos," RE Suppl. Eine Auswahl aus der neueren Forschung. Myres, Herodotus, Father of History Oxford Still useful in ways, though heavily analytical. James Romm, Herodotus New Haven, Auf der Grundlage von Herodots Werk verfasst Zurich Waters, Herodotos the Historian: His Problems, Methods and Originality. London and Sydney Useful bibliography, topically arranged. Style and language Bakker Denniston, Greek Prose Style. Word Order in Ancient Greek: More interested in Greek word order than in Herodotus. Fundamental on archaic style. On the broader question of archaic style, see further von Groningen and Thalmann Krischer, "Herodots Prooimion," Hermes 93 Form and Meaning in the Prolog of Herodotus. Composition and structure of the Histories Cagnazzi Fundamental on the question of the exact delimitation of the logoi. Immerwahr, Form and Thought in Herodotus Cleveland Gregory Nagy, "Herodotus the Logios," Arethusa 20 , esp. Does not speak directly to Herodotus, but important background on archaic principles of structure. Henry Wood, The Histories of Herodotus: An Analysis of the Formal Structure. Extremely clear and insightful for matters of structure and narrative method even if W. Motivation and Narrative in Herodotus. Ideology, Performance, Dialogue Oxford , Harrison, Texts, Ideas, and the Classics Oxford , Mabel Lang, Herodotean Narrative and Discourse. Method and genre in the Histories. Antecedents and Origins Aly From Geneaology to Historiography. Reinhold Bichler, Herodots Welt: Marco Dorati, Le Storie di Erodoto: Evans, "Oral Tradition in Herodotus," Can. Fowler Early Greek Mythographers. Includes select bibliography for the minor figures. Communication Arts in the Ancient World, Hunter, Past and Process in Herodotus and Thucydides. See his introduction on the relationship between certain ideas in Herodotus Book II and in the early Greek philosophers. Momigliano, "Greek Historiography," History and

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