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Helsingin yliopisto, kulttuurien tutkimuksen laitos, folkloristiikka
2014


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Parallelism in Verbal Art and Performance

Pre-Print Papers of the Seminar-Workshop
26th–27th May 2014
Helsinki, Finland

Edited by Frog

Folkloristiikan toimite 21
Helsinki: Folklore Studies, University of Helsinki
Parallelism in Verbal Art and Performance is a seminar-workshop to be held 26th–27th May 2014, in the Great Hall of the Finnish Literature Society, Helsinki, Finland. The event is organized by Folklore Studies of the University of Helsinki and the Academy of Finland research project “Oral and Literary Culture in the Medieval and Early Modern Baltic Sea Region: Cultural Transfer, Linguistic Registers and Communicative Networks” (2011–2014) of the Finnish Literature Society.

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Published by Folklore Studies of the Department of Philosophy, History, Culture and Art Studies, University of Helsinki.

Cover photo of the master poet Kornalius Medah from the domain of Bilba on Rote by James Fox.

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Number 21 in the series Folkloristiikan toimite.
ISSN 1458-4875

Parallelism in Verbal Art and Performance has been made possible thanks to support from the Academy of Finland research project “Oral and Literary Culture in the Medieval and Early Modern Baltic Sea Region: Cultural Transfer, Linguistic Registers and Communicative Networks” (2011–2014) of the Finnish Literature Society, the Academy of Finland research project “Oral Poetry, Mythic Knowledge, and Vernacular Imagination: Interfaces of Individual Expression and Collective Traditions in Pre-modern Northeast Europe” (2012–2016) of Folklore Studies, University of Helsinki, and the Research Community “Cultural Meanings and Vernacular Genres (CMVG)” of Folklore Studies, University of Helsinki.
Parallelism and Musical Structures in Kalevala-Metric Poetry

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In oral poetry, the relationship between poetic meter and varying forms produced in performances is sometimes complicated. Kalevala-metric oral poetry in Finnish, Estonian, Ingrian and Karelian languages is a good example of varying local practices of poetic meter and performance. This paper offers a preliminary survey of the different relationships between textual parallelism and melodic structures in different linguistic-cultural areas where Kalevala-metric poetry was recorded.

Kalevala-metric poetry was a mega-genre: epic, lyric, charms, ritual songs, mocking songs, lullabies and proverbs all used the same poetic idiom. The meter is based on both the length and the stress of syllables. Typically, one verse consists of from eight to ten syllables, organized in four poetic feet (or eight poetic positions). The substantial, but irregular use of both alliteration and parallelism are generally taken into descriptions of the poetic meter. A Kalevala-metric poem consists of no stanzas, but the verses are connected by syntactic and semantic passages of various length. Most genres of Kalevala-metric poetry were used as songs or recitations, with narrow melodies equivalent to one or two poetic lines. In theory, any Kalevala-metric poem may be sung with any melody, but, in practice, the melodies and the ways of performing the poems were connected to situational local genres.

Typically, the theories about the poetic meters and forms do not take into account various structures created in the performance. Pentti Leino (1986), who has made one of the most thorough analyses of metres in Finnish poetry, sets his level of analysis at the linguistic forms of poems, independent of the various forms the poems may receive when performed. Indeed, in Finnic poetry, the cores of metrics are, in many cases, analysable even from purely textual or linguistic materials. Yet, in the case of oral poetry, the relations between performed forms, transcriptions and the abstractions of meter are rather complex. Some metrical details may be different in song and speech (Saarinen 2013). In speech, the words may take shorter forms than in song, while, in song, the singers may use additional syllables or use particular song structures with partial repetitions, absent syllables or refrains (see also Kallio 2013).

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1 A long stressed syllable should be placed in a rising position; a short stressed one in a falling position. The placement of the non-stressed syllables is free.
The analysis of the relationship of the purely linguistic (or textual) features and the forms of performances is a task involving both the abstract metrics and the practical performances. In the case of Kalevala-metric poetry, certain forms of performance may affect poetic structures, such as parallelism, and, on the other hand, the metrical or linguistic form of the poem often affects the details of the way it is performed.

Parallelism is one of the most visible features of Kalevala-metric poetry. Matti Kuusi (1963, 136; see also Leino 1994; Harvilahti 1994) describes it to encompass the synonymic, analogical or antithetical repetition of a content of a verse. In the context of this paper, the most essential feature of parallelism in Kalevala-metric poetry is that it occurs irregularly: a verse may or may not have a parallel verse; there may be one or more parallel verses; parallelism may encompass part of the verse, the whole verse or a group of verses. Thus, it is a rather complex phenomenon. In this paper, the focus is on the relationships of textual and musical parallelism in performance.

The Variety of Kalevala-Metric Singing Traditions
The poetry we call Kalevala-metric, kalevalaic or rune-song tradition was used in a large geographical area and in several Finnic languages: Finnish, Estonian, Karel, Ingrian, and Votic. In different places and communities, both the singing and the poetry took different forms. The poems were sung in solo, duo and choral performances. In Karelia, Finland and Estonia, the solo performance seems to have been the most common one. In Ingria and Estonian Setomaa in particular, women often sang as an alteration of lead singer and chorus. In Viena Karelia and some other locations, such as Estonian Kihnu Island, the women sang as a choir with no lead singer. The spectre of different song structures was most varying in Setomaa and Ingria, where various patterns of repetition, partial repetition, additional syllables and refrains were used, and the singing often had particular polyphonic structures. In many other localities, the verses were sung as such, with simple one- or two-line melodies. Although the most common melodies were rather simple, they were often varied during the performances. In southern areas, the poems were sometimes danced to. Sometimes the singers adapted melodies of other genres to use with Kalevala-metric poems, such as melodies of rhymed Russian, Finnish and Estonian folksongs, instrumental dance music or laments.

Leea Virtanen (1968, 44) has named possible reasons for occasionally repeating the poetic verses in songs, which occurs quite often in sound recordings of Kalevala-metric poetry. One reason may be a need to think a moment for the next verse, another to start a melodic sequence with an initial poetic verse. In my experience, the pattern of a verse
repetition might be connected also to genre-dependent melody types, local singing styles, or individual preferences.

There are only a couple of detailed studies on the relationships of the textual and musical or performative aspects in Kalevala-metric poetry on a level that is relevant for the scope of this paper. These indicate that the situation is highly dependent on local, genre-bound and even individual singing styles.

Heikki Laitinen (2004) made a detailed analysis of one song of one of the most well-known Viena Karelian singers, Anni Tenisova. Tenisova sang her long solo performance in 1953 with a narrow-scaled, two-line melody typical to her local singing tradition. In her song, the different aspects of textual and musical melody seem to take independent routes, as if there were several self-sufficient levels of variation. Her musical structures do not coincide with the textual ones. For example, she does not seem to feel a need to match parallel poetic verses with the second line of the melody, nor to begin a new thematic section with the first line of the melody, or, indeed, to mark the thematic sequences of her poems in any musical or paralinguistic way, such as melodic or rhythmic variation or a breathing pause. On the other hand, Pekka Huttu-Hiltunen (2008), who has made an analysis of both Tenisova and five other singers of the same Vuokkiniemi parish, claims that, occasionally, the singers do use some musical features, breathing pauses or verse repetitions in order to mark the poetic structure of their song. Thus, it seems the singers may have varying strategies of realizing the text–music relationship even within one locality. It has not been analysed whether this could relate to different genres of poems or melodies, or to different singing styles.

Janika Oras (2010) has analysed the relationship of poetic and musical structures in songs by four singers from different Estonian parishes. She finds that singers preferred verses with “a greater number of syllables” and “more ‘intense’ variants of melody” as initial poetic verses when singing with simple one-line melodies, whereas with the two-line melodies, the singers attempted to “align the beginnings of the melodic strophes and verse groups.” Thus, here, the singers had tendencies to musically mark the initial poetic verses and parallel verses in performances, and the ways of doing this were dependent on the type of melody used. (Oras 2010, 55.) Thus, Oras notes, the variation principles of Estonian and Viena Karelian songs seem to be different even in the case of rather similar, narrow-scale two-line melodies. In Estonia, the singers clearly match the textual structures of their poems with the musical ones. The singers seem to highlight both the single verses that have no parallel verses and the first verses of the verse groups by using more syllables and particular musical variations. Oras (2010, 64) reminds us that:
there can be no talk of any absolute rules with regard to the present performers, but rather of tendencies, stronger or weaker, to prefer certain rhythmic and melodic figures in the song structure when performing verses that have different functions.

**Parallelism and Performance in Viena Karelia**

Viena Karelia or Archangel Karelia is one of the most Northern locations of Kalevala-metric poetry. The majority of the heroic and mythological Kalevala-metric epics were recorded here, which is the reason Viena Karelia was for a long time regarded as the most important region of old Finnic oral poetry. The majority of the poems are collected from men, although women also sang. The most prominent mode of singing was solo performance with melodies corresponding to two poetic verses.² The poetic verses were sometimes repeated, but, typically, not consistently throughout the song. The most typical melody was a five-beat, two-line melody type (SKSÄ A130/22a):

![Musical notation]

Nasti Huotarin’i, the singer of this example, did not vary this melody. Here, the textual parallelism has no links whatsoever to the melodic structure: the poetic lines are not repeated, and the melodic lines are not varied. Huotarin’i often sings an initial (poetic) verse with the second line of the melody, or a parallel verse with the first line of the melody. In the following, ‘I’ marks an initial verse, ‘P’ a parallel verse:

² There are also some references to duo performances, although no detailed descriptions nor sound recordings. It is suspected the tradition was similar to what Henrik Gabriel Porthan described from Western Finland at the end of the 18th century: the lead singer would sing a verse, the other singer would join into his last syllables and repeat the verse, and the lead singer would again join with the last syllables and sing a new verse.
Lemminkäinä lieto poika,
Lemminkäinä, the wanton boy,
I
lääsi Päivöläm pitö(ta),
going to the feast of Päivölä,
P
suurej joukoj juominkihe
to the drinking feast of the big crowd.
P
Emo kielsi pojuttahe,
Mother forbade her son,
P
emo kielsi vaimo käksi,
mother forbade, the wife ordered,
P
kieltäsän kavehta kaksi,
the two kaves [mythical maidens] forbade,
P
tahi kolme luonnotarta:
the three luonnotar [mythical maidens] forbade.
P
“Kolm on surmoa matalla.”
“There are three deaths on the way.”
P
“Sano surma ensimmäin.”
“Tell me the first death.”
P
“Mänetpä matkoja vähäsen, […]”
“You’ll go a little while, […]”
I
(SKsä A130/22a.)

Here, the musical and poetic sections are independent. Yet, some other singers seem to have a tendency to match their musical and poetic structures by using various strategies. Most typical of these is to repeat occasional verses in order to begin a musical section with an initial poetic verse. Some other strategies were also applicable. Siitari Karjalaini used the second line of his melody only occasionally, with some of his parallel verses (SKsä A 296/5-8):
In the Kalevala-metric singing tradition, the breathing pauses do not typically separate poetic verses. Indeed, many singers tended to breathe within their poetic verses, not between them. Yet, here, Karjalaini prefers to breathe after the parallel verses and after the second line of the melody in particular.

Another Viena Karelian singer, Anni Kirilloff, on the other hand, tended to mould her song into musical and textual sequences of four or eight lines, but did vary this structure according to the textual needs (SKSÄ 72/1. 1991):
When the thematic section or a parallel line flowed from one musical section of four lines to another, Kirilloff often did as above: she moulded the melody a little in order to avoid a musical cadence between two sections, to fade out the musical transition. Yet, she clearly preferred to start initial lines and thematic sections with the first line of the melody. Thus, her performance of the song about Väinämöinen tends to organise into textual and musical sequences of four or eight lines, while some manuscript versions (that were probably dictated) do not follow similar patterns. The four/eight line pattern is most visible with this song about Väinämöinen, while her song about Lemminkäinen follows a looser pattern. In the song about Lemminkäinen, sung with this same melody type as a part of the same potpurri, the musical-textual sequences vary between three and six verses. Probably, the structure of the poem was partly dependent on the mode of performance (song/speech), partly on the melody type, and partly on the poem itself.

The wedding melodies and performance practices were rather different from other Viena Karelian Kalevala-metric songs, but, in a similar manner, some of the verses were occasionally repeated. The melody of the wedding songs was, in Viena Karelia, a particular one-line melody, and the women sang all the verses together. It seem one of the women was often singing more strongly than the others, and led the singing when needed (Heinonen 2009). The women of a certain family or village had often developed their own versions of the wedding poems and their own pattern of verse repetition, so the performances were smooth enough, although the poems were long with many alternative possibilities for the choice of parallel lines.

[Terve] piha tä(y)sin’ese,
ulkon’i urohin’ese,
ulkon’i urohin’ese.
Tere tanhuo tä(h)ysin’ese,
lautakatto lapšin’ese,
lautakatto lapšin’ese.
Toisin toisešša talošša,
toisi(m) maalla vierahalla,
ei n’iin kuin emosen koissa,
ei n’iin kuin emosen koissa.
Alelemma kumartamin’i,
alemma šitäki vielä,
alemma šitäki vielä;
nuori selkä notkumin’i,
pešty kaula kaartumin’i.
pešty kaula kaartumin’i […]
(A-K 0329/20.)

Hail the yard with full [of people],
the outdoor space with men,
the outdoor space with men.
Hail the garden with full [of people]
the wooden roof with all the children
the wooden roof with all the children
Other ways in another house,
Other ways in a foreign land,
not like in mother’s home,
not like in mother’s home.
[You] should have bent lower,
yet lower.
yet lower:
the young back should bow,
the washed neck should curve,
the washed neck should curve […]
In the Viena Karelian wedding songs, there is a strong tendency to repeat some of the parallel verses, or, in particular, a tendency not to repeat the initial verses. Yet, the tendency is far from being a strict rule. Some singers repeated none of the verses of their wedding songs, while some repeated all of their verses.

**Parallelism and Performance in Ingria**

Ingria has, together with Estonian Setomaa, been regarded as a place of most varying and complex Kalevala-metric melodies and song structures. There were both very simple and narrow one-line melodies, and intricate structures with partial repetitions, additional and omitted syllables, refrains and some polyphonic elements. Most of all, Ingria is known for female choral singing: a lead singer would sing a verse and another singer or a choir would repeat it. Even the most complicated structures were based on repetition of one or two poetic verses, and the choral repetitions were always based on the one or two verses sung by the lead singer. Depending on the structure of the melody, the lead singer could repeat all of her verses (as a couplet, when singing with a two-line melody type), repeat occasional verses or repeat no verses at all. (Kallio 2013, 136–165.) The strategies of repetition by the choir were dependent solely on the structure of the melody and the repetition pattern of the lead singer.

Here, I will concentrate on the strategies of repetition in Ingrian two-line melodies. There, the text proceeded in pairs or couplets of verses first sung by the lead singer and then repeated (or replaced by a refrain) by the choir. The parts of the choir are indented in the transcriptions.

Often the lead singer just sang her verses independent of the melodic structure of the song, either not repeating them or repeating them all. Yet, in Ingria, a particular strategy was to repeat the second verse of the previous couplet as a first verse of the following couplet:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Anna Mitrintytär and an unknown choir: SKSÄ A 300/36 b.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>oi läksin koista kulkomaga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>veräjiltä vierömää</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>veräjiltä vierömgää</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isoin uuvesta tuva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isoin uuvesta tuvasta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>velloin karjoi kartano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This pattern of repetition could go on through the whole song or occur occasionally. In the context of this paper, the most interesting cases are those, where the pattern of repetition clearly accumulates on parallel verses:

```
oi läksin koista kulgomaHa
veräjildä veerö|mää
   oi liiaa veerömää
   veräjilda/ä veerömää
izoin uuvesta tuvasta
velloon karjoikartanoo/ée
   oi liiaa kar(a)tanoo
   velloin poika/(karjo)kar(a)tanoo
löimä jalgoni kiv(v)oiHe
istusin maaga itkemää
   oi liiaa itkemää
   istuin maaga itkemää
istusim maaga itkömäHä
kivem päälle kiljumaa
   oi liiaa kiljumaa
   kiven päälle kil(i)jumaa
kivem päälle kiljumaHa
aijoim päälle aikkamaa
   oi liiaa aikkamaa
   aijoim päälle aikkamaa
   (Ljuboi Jeyssen nainen and an unknown choir: SKSÄ A 300/26 b-)
```

Here, the sections of one initial line and two or more parallel lines are formed into a repetitive chain. The first two couplets consist of only one initial and one parallel line each, but after that, the second poetic verse in a musical couplet is repeated as the first poetic verse of the next couplet. The pattern makes me think that the singers wanted to create a sense of continuity in the parallel sections in particular, and maybe to lengthen those sections as well. Long parallel sections lead to additional repetitions that seem to highlight the parallel chains of verses.

On the other hand, in some cases the structure of two-line melodies seems to have created tendencies to form the performed version of the poem in a structure of couplets of parallel or thematically connected verses.
lenteli kessoism päivän
sykysiset yit pin|mee(n)
  ras kaalina maja
  ras maalina maja
etsi maata maataska
lehtua levätäk|see
  ras kaalina maja
  ras maalina maja
löysi mättägäm meroista
ygem mättägäm sinni
  ras kaalina maja
  ras maalina maja
toizen mättägän punnaisen
kolmas kelloin karval|lee
  ras kaalina maja
  ras maalina majo

valoi vaskisem pessäisen
muni kultaisem mu|naa
  ras kaalina maja
  ras maalina maja
tuli tuului aivos tuimoi
meroiv viihkura viih|haa
  ras kaalina maja
  ras maalina majo
viiretti munat vetteege
laski pesoil laukal|see
  ras kaa

(Liisa Petrontytär and an unknown choir: SKSÄ A 300/25 b.)

*Although this line appears to qualify as an initial verse because it contains distinct informational content, it may have been regarded as a type of parallel verse (see Frog, this volume), especially observing that the ‘egg’ and ‘nest’ are paired in the last parallel couplet.

In this song, no verses are repeated, and, nearly without exception, the parallel structures are limited to initial line and one parallel verse. A parallel verse tends not to begin a new musical section. It would have been easy to add some conventional parallel lines (Swallow-bird, day-bird / summer-bird, tongue-bird; a grove to rest / a rock to lay an egg), but the lead singer clearly preferred a more compact form. In cases like this, it seems the chosen song structure
or melody type tends to condense the parallel sections into couplets fitting into the melody pattern.³

**Local Aesthetics and Strategies of Variation**

It would be easy to continue with varying examples. In Kalevala-metric poetry, there is no single model for relating textual and musical parallelism, nor are there even two such models. Instead, there were various strategies relating to local singing cultures, song genres, melody types, singing styles and individual preferences. The most central factor affecting possibilities for relating the poem to the tune is the length of the melody. One-line and two-line melodies give different practical opportunities.

All in all, some singers do not mark the thematic and parallel structures of their poems in any particular musical or performative way: the structure of the text and that of a poem operate on different, independent levels of variation, and, thus, form various kinds of counterpoints. Nevertheless, quite often, both in Viena Karelia and in Ingria, the singers seem to highlight the parallel structures of the poems either with verse repetitions or melodic variations. In some cases, the repetitions mould the poem to fit better to the melodic structure: an occasional line may be repeated in order to match the poetic initial line with the first line of the melody. In other cases, it seems the chosen song structure may even direct the poetic content towards more regular, dense structures of parallelism and thematic sections than is conventional in the overall local practice. Here, the musical structure seems to direct the process of fabricating a particular version of a poem.

The relationship of textual and musical parallelism in Kalevala-metric poetry is a rather complex subject. An extensive analysis of sound recordings of different local, genre-dependent and individual singing styles would be needed to fully address this topic. In such an analysis, the different melodic, rhythmical, paralinguistic and textual variations/structures would need to be taken into account. This could help us to understand the ways that the singers themselves understood different forms and levels of musical structures and textual parallelism.

³ Here, it seems the singers wanted to condense their song to fit also into a short wax cylinder: the version is untypically dense and short, and the singers negotiate in the middle of their song whether they should still try to reach the end of the song. They do not make it to the end of the song because the recording breaks off.
Works Cited


