

David F. Elmer

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Academic Appointments

Harvard University

Chair, Department of the Classics	2021-present
Eliot Professor of Greek Literature	2019-present
Professor of the Classics	2014-2019
Associate Professor of the Classics	2012-2014
Assistant Professor of the Classics	2007-2011
Junior Fellow, Society of Fellows	2005-2008

Education

Harvard University

PhD, Comparative Literature	June 2005
Dissertation: <i>Homeric epaineō: The Politics of Reception and the Poetics of Consent</i> .	
Examination Fields: Ancient Greek (primary field), Latin, Croatian/Serbian.	
MA, Comparative Literature	June 2002
BA, Classics, <i>summa cum laude</i>	June 1998

Publications

Monograph

The Poetics of Consent: Collective Decision Making and the Iliad. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013.

BMCR 2013.08.09 Werner Tietz; *NECJ* 40.2 (2013) 135-37 Roger Travis; *Phoenix* 67.3-4 (2013) 392-94 James Marks; *CJ-Online* 2014.04.01 Dean Hammer; *AJP* 135.2 (2014) 281-84 William G. Thalmann; *JHS* 134 (2014) 156-57 Christoph Ulf; *Hermathena* 129 (2012) 76-81 Elton T. E. Barker; *Sehepunkte* 16.10 (2016) Winfried Schmitz; *Gnomon* 89.1 (2017) 3-4 Paul Demont.

Edited Volumes

Co-edited with P. McMurray: *Singers and Tales in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge, MA: Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature (distributed by Harvard University Press), 2024.

Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 3rd ed. Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2019.

Co-edited with V. Bers, D. Frame, and L. Muellner: *Donum natalicium digitaliter confectum Gregorio Nagy septuagenario a discipulis collegis familiaribus oblatum* (electronic publication), Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2012.
http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebook:CHS_Bers_etal_ed.Donum_Natalicium_Gregorio_Nagy.2012

Refereed Journal Articles

“Textual Jealousies in Chariton’s *Callirhoe*,” *Classical Antiquity* 41.1 (2022), 180-220.

With A. Bonifazi: “Visuality in Bosniac and Homeric Epic,” *Classics@* 14 (2016).

“The ‘Narrow Road’ and the Ethics of Language Use in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*,” *Ramus* 44.1/2 (2015), 155-83.

“The Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature,” *Oral Tradition* 28.2 (2013), 341-354.

“Poetry’s Politics in Archaic Greek Epic and Lyric,” *Oral Tradition* 28.1 (2013), 143-166.

“*Kita* and *Kosmos*: The Poetics of Ornamentation in Bosniac and Homeric Epic,” *Journal of American Folklore* 123, no. 489 (2010), 276-303.

“Presentation Formulas in South Slavic Epic Song,” *Oral Tradition* 24.1 (2009), 41-59.

“*Epikoinos*: The Ball Game *episkuros* and *Iliad* 12.421-3,” *Classical Philology* 103.4 (2008), 414-22.

“Heliodoros’s ‘Sources’: Intertextuality, Paternity, and the Nile River in the *Aithiopika*,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 138.2 (2008), 411-50.

“Helen *Epigrammatopoios*,” *Classical Antiquity* 24 (2005), 1-39.

Book Chapters

With P. McMurray: “Introduction: Parry, Lord, and the Polyphonic Archive,” *Singers and Tales in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. D. Elmer and P. McMurray (2024), Cambridge, MA: Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature (2024), pp. 1-19.

With A. Bonifazi: “Visuality in Bosniac and Homeric Epic,” *Singers and Tales in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. D. Elmer and P. McMurray, Cambridge, MA: Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature (2024), pp. 123-44.

“South Slavic Epic and the Philology of the Border,” *The Oxford Handbook of Slavic and East European Folklore*, ed. Margaret Beissinger (2022). [Online publication in advance of print publication.]

“The *Odyssey* and the Desires of Traditional Narrative,” *Zbornik radova međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa “Natales grates numeras?”*, eds. D. Sorić, L. Mijić, A. Bartulović, Zadar: Sveučilište u Zadru (2020), pp. 3-22.

“Aeschylus’ Tragic Projections,” *Albert’s Anthology*, ed. Kathleen M. Coleman, Cambridge, Mass.: Department of the Classics, Harvard University (2017), pp. 57-59.

“The Epic Cycle and the Ancient Novel,” *The Greek Epic Cycle and Its Ancient Reception: A Companion*, eds. M. Fantuzzi and C. Tsagalis, Cambridge: Cambridge UP (2015), pp. 596-603.

With A. Bonifazi: “The Meaning of Melody: Remarks on the Performance-Based Analysis of Bosniac Epic Song,” *Child’s Children: Ballad Study and Its Legacies*, BASIS 7, eds. J. Harris and B. Hillers, Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier (2012), pp. 233-247.

“Orestes in Skopje: The Macedonian *Oresteia* of Milcho Manchevski,” *Donum natalicium digitaliter confectum Gregorio Nagy septuagenario a discipulis collegis familiaribus oblatum*, eds. V. Bers, D. Elmer, D. Frame, and L. Muellner, Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies (2012).
http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebook:CHS_Bers_etal_eds.Donum_Natalicium_Gregorio_Nagy.2012

“Building Community across the Battle-Lines: The Truce in *Iliad* 3 and 4,” *Maintaining Peace and Interstate Stability in Archaic and Classical Greece*, ed. J. Wilker, Berlin: Verlag Antike (2012), pp. 25-48.

With A. Bonifazi: “Composing Lines, Performing Acts: Clauses, Discourse Acts, and Melodic Units in a South Slavic Epic Song,” *Orality, Literacy and Performance in the Ancient World*, ed. E. Minchin, Leiden: Brill (2012), pp. 89-109.

Encyclopedia Articles

“Assemblies and Councils,” *The Cambridge Guide to Homer*, ed. C. O. Pache, Cambridge: Cambridge UP (2019), pp. 293-295.

“Homer,” “*Iliad*,” “*Odyssey*,” *The Virgil Encyclopedia*, eds. R. Thomas and J. Ziolkowski, Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell (2014).

“Oral-Formulaic Theory,” *The Homer Encyclopedia*, ed. M. Finkelberg, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell (2011), pp. 604-607.

Reviews

Review of Rainer Friedrich, *Postoral Homer: Orality and Literacy in the Homeric Epic* (Stuttgart, 2019), *Sehepunkte* 20.2 (2020).

Review of Jonas Grethlein, *Die Odyssee: Homer und die Kunst des Erzählens* (Munich, 2017), *Gnomon* 91.4 (2019), 289-93.

Review of Mary R. Bachvarova, *From Hittite to Homer: The Anatolian Background of Ancient Greek Epic* (Cambridge, 2016), *Classical World* 110.4 (2017), 590-92.

Review of B. K. M. Brown, *The Mirror of Epic: The Iliad and History* (Berrima, 2016), *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2017.07.39.

Review of Todd M. Compton, *Victim of the Muses: Poet as Scapegoat, Warrior and Hero in Greco-Roman and Indo-European Myth and History* (Washington D.C., 2006), *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 36.1-2 (2008), 190-95.

Review of Zymer Ujkan Neziri, *Studimi për folklorin I* (Prishtinë 2006), in *ibid.*, pp. 295-98.

Other Publications

“Foreword,” in *Love, Death, Fame: Poetry and Lore from the Emirati Oral Tradition*, by Al-Māyidī ibn Zāhir, trans. Marcel Kurpershoek, New York: New York UP (2023), pp. xiii-xvii.

“In Memoriam John Miles Foley (1947-2012),” *Folklore* 124.1 (2013), 104-6.

Lectures, Conference Papers, Presentations

Invited Lectures

“The *Odyssey* and Collective Memory,” Latymer Upper School Classics Society, London, UK (by Zoom), December 8, 2023.

“Milman Parry and the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature,” University of Sarajevo, June 27, 2023.

“The *Iliad*.” Guest lecture for HUMA 1600, “Readings from Western Cultures,” Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, August 25, 2020.

“The *Odyssey* and Collective Memory,” keynote lecture, Harvard Certamen, March 30, 2019.

“Initiating an Epic, Initiating a Hero: Diomedes and the *Iliad*,” Università Ca’ Foscari, Venice, November 14, 2018.

“Initiating an Epic, Initiating a Hero: Diomedes and the *Iliad*,” Helen North Lecture, Swarthmore College, March 26, 2018.

“Beyond the Oral-Formulaic Theory: Reflections of a Homerist on the Study of South Slavic Epic Song,” Stanford University (keynote speaker in the “Oral Literature and Literate Orality” Research Workshop, Department of Classics), May 18, 2015.

“Jealousies In and Of the Text in Chariton’s *Callirhoe*,” University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, December 4, 2014; Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, April 23, 2015.

“Ethical Transformation in Apuleius’ *Golden Ass*.” Guest lecture for HUMA 1600, “Readings from Western Cultures,” Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, November 12, 2013 and November 11, 2014.

“Competition and Community-Building in *Iliad* 23,” keynote lecture, Harvard Certamen, March 29, 2014.

“Poetry’s Politics in Greek Epic and Lyric,” 26th Annual Lord and Parry Lecture, Center for Studies in Oral Tradition, University of Missouri, March 13, 2012.

“Collective Decision-Making and the Iliadic Tradition.” Lecture delivered to the UCLA Department of Classics, Los Angeles, CA, October 10, 2011.

“The Hero in Greek Epic.” Guest lecture for Gen Ed 30 Cluster Course “Neverending Stories: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Myth,” UCLA, Los Angeles, CA, October 10, 2011.

“‘It’s Not Me, It’s You, Socrates’: The Problem of the Charismatic Teacher in Plato’s *Symposium*,” Martin Weiner Lecture, Brandeis University, November 10, 2010.

“Pragmatics and the Study of Bosnian Epic,” University of Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina, March 19, 2010 (delivered via Skype).

“Milman Parry and Homeric Studies.” Harvard Summer Program in Olympia, Olympia, Greece, July 14, 2008.

“From Homer to the Balkans.” SAS Honors Colloquium, Rutgers University, February 6, 2008.

“Homeric Exceptions.” Humanities Center New Faculty Lunch, Harvard University, March 22, 2007.

“Herodotus, Nilotic Inquiries, and the Search for a Father in Heliodorus’ *Aithiopika*.” Lecture delivered to the Department of Classics, Harvard University, January 17, 2006.

“Consensus and the Constitution of Tradition: The *Iliad*’s Politics of Reception.” Lecture delivered to the Department of Classics, University of California, Santa Barbara, January 31, 2005.

“Consensus and the Constitution of Tradition.” Lecture delivered to the Classics Department, University of Oregon, January 20, 2005.

“Parry and Lord: Theories and Methods” (address to students in Department of Anthropology), Università degli Studi della Basilicata, Potenza, Italy, June 14, 2004.

Conference Papers

“An Archive of Voices: The Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature at Harvard University” (invited lecture), *Le vie della poesia orale: storia e sviluppi delle ricerche di Milman Parry e Albert Lord*, University of Milan, April 28, 2022.

“Collective Memory, Social Structure in the Homeric Poems, and the Paradox of the *Odyssey*” (invited keynote lecture), *Ars Culturae Memoriae*, Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw, January 13, 2022.

“South Slavic Epic and the Philology of the Border” (invited speaker), *Oral Tradition from West Africa and the Balkans to Florida: A Zoom Symposium*, Florida State University, April 14, 2021.

“‘Narrative Desire’ and the *Odyssey*” (invited keynote lecture), *Changes in Narrative Strategies in the Context of the Specificity of Oral and Written Tradition*, Uniwersytet Wrocławski, December 5, 2019.

With P. McMurray: “Epic Mic Check: Milman Parry Sings Elliott Carter’s *Philoctetes*,” American Musicological Society Annual Meeting, Boston, MA, November 1, 2019.

“Divine Consensus and Cosmogonic Myth in *Iliad* 8,” Corhali Colloquium “Voix et paroles des dieux dans l’*Iliade*, l’*Odyssée* et les *Hymnes homériques*,” Université de Lausanne, June 13, 2019.

“Homeric Textiles and Homeric Textuality,” *Text/uality* (symposium sponsored by the Program in Ancient Studies), Indiana University, April 28, 2018.

“The *Odyssey* and the Desires of Traditional Narrative” (keynote lecture), *Natales Grate Numeras?* (conference celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Department of Classical Philology), University of Zadar, Zadar, Croatia, April 7, 2017.

“The Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature in the Digital Age,” *Folklore and Mythology In and Beyond Harvard: F&M at 50*, Harvard University, March 3, 2017.

“Jealousies In and Of the Text in Chariton’s *Callirhoe*,” 5th International Conference on the Ancient Novel, Houston, TX, October 3, 2015.

“*Ekphrasis* and *Anagnōrisis* in *Odyssey* 19.220ff.,” Corhali Colloquium “Modes iconiques: objets graphiques, objets textuelles en Grèce archaïque,” Nemours, France, June 13, 2015.

“The Milman Parry Collection in the Digital Age,” *Netlore: Globalizing Folklore in a Digital World*, Harvard University, April 3, 2015.

“Digitizing the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature: Achievements, Challenges, Aspirations,” 5th IEL International Seminar on Epic Studies and Oral Tradition Research, Beijing, China, November 29, 2013.

“*Iliad* 2.478-79 and Dumézilian Trifunctionalism,” Corhali Colloquium on similes in the *Iliad*, Cornell University, May 31, 2013.

“Consensus, Collective Decision-Making, and the Shaping of the *Iliad*: Ancient Greek Perspectives on Sustaining Epic Tradition,” International Summit on Epic Studies: Toward Diversity, Creativity, and Sustainability, Institute of Ethnic Literature, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, China, November 18, 2012.

“Consensus and the Constitution of the Iliadic Tradition,” Conflict and Consensus in Early Greek Hexameter Poetry, Durham University, Durham, UK, July 2, 2012.

“The Metamorphosis of a Folktale: ‘Beauty and the Beast’ in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*,” Grimm Legacies, Harvard University, February 4, 2012.

With A. Bonifazi: “Multimodality of Text Organization in a Serbo-Croatian Epic Performance,” 12th International Pragmatics Conference, Manchester, UK, July 7, 2011.

“The Narrow Pass of Language: Homeric Poetry’s Testing of Formulaic Epithets,” American Philological Association Annual Meeting, San Antonio, Texas, January 7, 2011.

With A. Bonifazi: “Visuality in South Slavic and Homeric Epic,” Singers and Tales in the 21st Century: The Legacies of Milman Parry and Albert Lord, Harvard University, December 4, 2010.

With A. Bonifazi: “Composing Lines, Performing Acts: The Relationship Between Melodic Units, Clauses, and Discourse Acts in a South Slavic Epic Song,” Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World IX, Canberra, Australia, June 30, 2010.

“The Treaty in *Iliad* 3 and 4,” Maintaining Peace and Interstate Stability in the Greek World (Harvard Humanities Center Symposium), Harvard University, May 9, 2009.

“Achilles and the Crisis of the Exception,” MACTe (Massachusetts and Connecticut Junior Faculty Forum), Yale University Department of Classics, May 2, 2009.

With A. Bonifazi: “The Meaning of Melody: Remarks on the Performance-Based Analysis of Bosniac Epic Song,” Child’s Children: Ballad Study and its Legacies, Harvard University, December 2008.

“Pantomime and the Novel,” 4th International Conference on the Ancient Novel, Lisbon, Portugal, July 2008.

“Međedović and Vlahovljak, Stesichorus and Homer: Competing Notions of Truth in Bosniac and Ancient Greek Epic Traditions,” The Return of the Song: The Milman Parry Collection and Its Reception in the World, Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina, July 2008.

“Managing Discourse Through Appeal to the Listener in South Slavic Epic Song,” International Conference on Advances in Oral Literature Research, University of Belgrade, Serbia, November 2006.

“The Milman Parry Collection of South Slavic Oral Tradition at Harvard,” Modern Language Association Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA, December 2004.

“The Economy of Desire in Plautus’ *Asinaria*,” American Philological Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA, January 2004.

“Marko and Marx: Numismatic Issues in the Serbian Epic Cycle,” New England Conference on Foreign Languages and Literatures, Hartford, CT, October 2003.

“Marko and Money, or, Marko and Marx,” Comparative Literature Graduate Student Conference “RePlacing the Nation,” Harvard University, February 2002.

“Prince Marko and the Armenian Legacy in the Balkans,” Graduate Conference on Slavic Literature and Culture, Yale University, February 2001.

Presentations and Interviews

“Il canto epico: il testo e la performance,” panel discussion in connection with the program “L’epica leggendaria del Kosovo,” Fondazione Cini, Venice, November 13, 2018.

“Milman Parry and the Discovery of the Oral Origins of Greek Literature,” Massachusetts Junior Classical League Classics Day, Boston University, December 6, 2013.

Discussion of *The Poetics of Consent* with students and faculty at Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, November 11, 2013.

Public conversation with Madeline Miller following a performance of the ArtsEmerson production of *An Iliad* (Lisa Peterson and Denis O’Hare), Paramount Theater, Boston, April 28, 2013.

“A Conversation about the *Iliad*,” public conversation with Madeline Miller, author of *The Song of Achilles*, at the Boston Book Festival, October 27, 2012.

“Rethinking the Classics,” multimedia presentation for the *Harvard Gazette*’s feature on Harvard “breakthroughs,” October 2011.
<http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/multimedia/rethinking-the-classics/>

“Milman Parry: 75 Years After,” Roundtable Discussion, American Philological Association Annual Meeting, San Antonio, Texas, January 8, 2011.

With Susanne Ebbinghaus: “Story and Image in Ancient Greece,” Two-Point Perspective Gallery Talk, Sackler Museum, Harvard University, December 8, 2010.

Respondent on panel “Logos kai Tekhnê,” Athens Dialogues, Onassis Cultural Centre, Athens, Greece, November 25, 2010.

“Orestes Laskos’ *Daphnis and Chloe* (1931),” Embassy of Greece, Washington, DC, December 10, 2009.

“The Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature: Digital Resources for Teaching and Research,” Workshop on the Use of Technology in Teaching and Learning at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, May 2006.

Discussion of article “Helen *Epigrammatopoios*” with Yale University seminar *Greek Epic, Elegy, and Epigram* (Prof. Egbert Bakker), New Haven, CT, October 2004.

“The Albanian Songs of the Milman Parry Collection: Publication and its Significance for Albanology, Ethnography, and Ethnomusicology” (co-authored with Nicola Scaldaferri). Poster presentation at the 20th European Seminar in Ethnomusicology, Venice, Italy, October 2, 2004.

Interview with Harvard University Library’s *Library Notes* (No. 1310), November 2002. (Text available at http://hul.harvard.edu/publications/library_notes/1310/elmer.html.)

Other Professional Experience

<i>Oral Tradition</i> (journal)	2019-present
Editor-in-chief	
Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature	
Curator	2023-present
Associate Curator	2010-2023
Assistant Curator	2000-2010
Harvard Summer School	2019, 2023
Co-director of the Harvard Summer School Study Abroad Program in Croatia and Bosnia.	

Awards and Grants

Institute of Museum and Library Sciences National Leadership Planning Grant	2014-2018
Roslyn Abramson Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Education	2011
Suzan Anthony Potter Prize (best student essay on any subject in the field of Comparative Literature, awarded for “ <i>Graeca Fides</i> : Plautus’ <i>Asinaria</i> and the Comparative Law of Sale”)	2004
Certificate of Distinction in Teaching	2004, 2003, 2002
Merit Fellowship (Graduate School of Arts and Sciences award for one semester of dissertation work)	Fall 2003
Graduate Society Summer Fellowship (for travel in Croatia)	2001
Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship in the Humanities,	1999-2000

Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation	
Shaw Fellowship, Harvard College (funded travel in Croatia and research on the relation between folk music and nationalism)	1998-1999
Hoopes Prize (for senior thesis, “ <i>Logos as Eikôn: Vision and the Written Word in Isocrates</i> ”)	1998
Phi Beta Kappa (Junior 24)	1997
Charles Eliot Norton Fellowship (for study at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens)	1996

Courses Taught

Harvard University

Aesthetic and Interpretive Understanding 33, “Ancient Fictions: The Ancient Novel in Context”
 Classical Philology 215, “Heliodorus”
 Classical Philology 223, “Heroic Fragilities: The Flaws of Tragedy”
 Classical Philology 238, “Greek Poems on Stones”
 Classical Philology 243, “The *Odyssey* in the *Iliad*”
 Classical Philology 263, “The *Iliad*”
 Classical Studies 97a, “Greek Culture and Civilization”
 Classical Studies 123, “Classics, Race, and Power”
 Classical Studies 154, “The Ancient Novel”
 Greek 109, “The Literature of Affliction”
 Greek 110, “Plato’s *Symposium*”
 Greek 112a, 112b, “The History of Greek Literature”
 Greek 113, “Aeschylus’s *Oresteia*”
 Greek 115, “The *Odyssey*”
 Greek 116, “Greek Lyric Poetry”
 Greek 201, “Reading Greek”
 Humanities 10a, 10b, “A Humanities Colloquium”
 Latin 123, “Apuleius’s *Golden Ass*”

Harvard Summer School

Comparative Literature S-108, “Cultural Geographies of Political Difference”

Service

Harvard University

Board of Freshman Advisors
 Committee on Joint Concentrations
 Division of Arts and Humanities Academic Planning Committee
 Faculty Council
 Harvard Yard Senior Common Room
 Library Faculty Advisory Committee (chair in 2022-23)
 Library Board
 Standing Committee on Athletics

Standing Committee on Degrees in Folklore and Mythology
University Hearing Committee Pool

Department of the Classics
Director of Undergraduate Studies