

APPENDIX: A FORMULAIC ANALYSIS OF ROBERT JOHNSON'S RECORDED BLUES

The following analysis presents supporting evidence for each formula occurring in the lyrics of the twelve recordings discussed in chapter 2. A half-line is considered a formula when at least two analogues exist elsewhere in the corpus compiled by Michael Taft in *Blues Lyric Poetry: An Anthology*. While phrases and collocations that recur only in Johnson's own work are noted to show his personal formula preferences, I do not include these instances as evidence of formulaity. My focus is on the dissemination of formulaic phrases throughout the corpus of blues recordings. The analysis proceeds stanza by stanza, and each stanza is identified with a reference code. For example, KH 1.1 refers to "Kind Hearted Woman Blues," take 1, stanza 1. The corresponding stanza in take 2 is identified as KH 2.1. Due to space restriction, I provide only two or three (sometimes more) examples of analogues for each formulaic phrase found in Johnson's texts. Because illustrative manifestations of major formula families appear in chapter 2, I do not present those examples here.

"Kind Hearted Woman Blues"

Take 1: 77 percent formulaic (26 half-lines, 20 formulas)

Take 2: 81 percent formulaic (32 half-lines, 26 formulas)

KH 1.1 and KH 2.1

I got a kindhearted woman do anything this world for me
I got a kindhearted woman anything this world for me
But these evil-hearted women *man, they will not let me be*

I got a kindhearted woman is a manifestation of the major x-formula *I have a woman*; variations similar to Johnson's occur in *I got a brownskin woman* (WillJ-4; AleT-2) and *Says I got a hard-hearted woman* (ArnK-36). Although

Johnson's r-position phrase "do anything [in] this world for me" might be related in sense to the following r-phrases, both of which are coupled with a *I have a woman* x-formula, there is no satisfactory analogue:

I got a woman in San Antone : I declare is sweet to me. (JonL-9)

I got a little woman : but I swear she treats me mean. (GibC-20)

In the closing line, the incomplete x-phrase "But these evil-hearted women" has no analogue. The final half-line, *man, they will not let me be*, is a fairly common r-formula, which also appears in the opening lines of Johnson's "Little Queen of Spades": Now, she is a little queen of spades *and the men will not let her be*. Other analogues include:

I had a good woman : *but the men wouldn't let her be*. (DorsT-12)

Guess I'll travel : *I guess I'll let her be*. (Blak-31)

KH 1.2 and KH 2.2

I love my baby my baby don't love me

I love my baby ooo my baby don't love me

But I really love that woman can't stand to leave her be

I love my baby is the major formula *I love you*. The second half-line can be found elsewhere in the same conjoined position: *Now I love my baby : but my baby don't love me* (CarrL-15). A second instance occurs in the opening stanza of Barrel House Buck MacFarland's 1934 "I Got To Go Blues," which is configured along the same lines as Johnson's:

I got to go : *got to leave my baby be*

And I love my woman : but my woman do not care for me. (McFaB-1)

Of the closing line, *But I really love that woman* is, again, a manifestation of the major x-formula *I love you*, and *can't stand to leave her be* is another manifestation of the last half-line of stanza 1 (see KH 1.1 and KH 2.1).

KH 1.3 and KH 2.3

Ain't but the one thing makes Mister Johnson drink

I's worried 'bout how you treat me, baby I begin to think

Oh babe, *my life don't feel the same*

You breaks my heart when you call Mister So-and So's name

I find no analogue for "Ain't but the one thing" and only one possibility for the r-phrase "makes Mister Johnson drink": The woman I love : has

driven me to drink (Blak-27). Thus, the phrase cannot be considered formulaic. Of the 149 occurrences of the word *drink* only 8 (2 being Johnson's) function as end-rhymes. *I's worried 'bout how you treat me baby* is a conflation of the two major formulas *I worry* and *I treat you good/bad*. Manifestations of the r-formula *I begin to think* include:

I told her to give me time: *and let me think*. (JohAl-2)

But I don't never sit down one time: *you know and just sit and think*. (WillS-21)

You keep on talking: *till you make me think*. (Ledb-11)

The first two examples rhyme "think" with "drink" as in Johnson's couplet. Like *drink*, only 8 instances of the word *think* (again, 2 are Johnson's) function as end-rhymes.

Of the second couplet, "Oh babe" is not a formula but rather a vocative element that prepares for the r-phrase. Analogues for the r-formula *my life don't feel the same* include:

Since we been apart: *my life don't seem the same*. (SykR-3)

Says I feel so different: *till this old world don't seem the same*. (ArnK-34)

Now ever since Louisa you been gone: *my life don't seem the same*. (WillS-6)

In the closing line, the x-formula *You breaks my heart* occurs elsewhere 6 times, including:

I know it would break her heart: if she found I was barrelhousing this way. (BaiK-1)

Lord it breaks my heart: to sing about Highway Sixty-One. (SykR-16)

The r-formula *when you call Mister So-and-So's name* is more commonly found as seen in the following lines:

Look a-here you get mad: *every time I call your name*. (MemM-2)

I think I heard: *my good gal call my name*. (JeffB-2)

KH 1.4 and KH 2.4

She's a kindhearted woman she studies evil all the time

She's a kindhearted woman she studies evil all the time

You well's to kill me as to have it on your mind

She's a kindhearted woman is a manifestation of a common x-formula, which exhibits a high degree of variation; examples include *She's a beautiful woman* (ChatP-8), *She's a cotton-picking woman* (PetW-4), *She's a easy rider* (AleT-19),

and *She's a high-stepping mama* (JefB-41). The half-line *she studies evil all the time* is an intriguing variation of a common r-formula, defined in general terms as *I do x all the time*. Other manifestations include *she barrelhouse all the time* (CarrL-23), *I'd stay drunk all the time* (LewF-2), *she keeps a good man worried all the time* (JefB-21).

The phrase *You well's to kill me* [You may as well kill me?] can be seen as a form of a general x-formula *I kill you*: *Going to kill everybody* (DanJ-2), *Now I'm going to kill her* (KelJ-9), *You don't have to kill me* (FulB-5). The final half-line *as to have it on your mind* is a variation of the major r-formula *some thing is on my mind*.

KH 2.5

Some day, some day I will shake your hand good-bye
Some day some day I will shake your hand good-bye
I can't give you anymore of my lovin' 'cause I just ain't satisfied

Although Johnson's doubling of "some day" is unusual, its use as a line opener is common:

Baby some day baby : you poor heart is sure going to ache. (WasbS-33)
But some day baby : you'll long for me. (Vinc-20)

Analogues of *I will shake your hand good-bye* include

You don't miss pretty mama : *till you shake your hand goodbye*. (Ledb-10)
 I don't want you no more sweet baby : *shake hands and tell your daddy goodbye*.
 (Vinc 14)

In the closing line, *I can't give you anymore of my lovin'* is a negation of the common x-formula *I give you some thing*: *Lord I'll give you satisfaction* (BigB-14), *I done give you my money* (TowH-4), *Can't give you nothing but loving* (WasbS-14). The final r-formula occurs twenty times and is typically presented as *I can't be satisfied*:

Got the blues : *can't be satisfied*. (Hurt-6)
 Poor boy has been mistreated : *now I can't be satisfied*. (ButlS-2)
 I've got these blues : *means I'm not satisfied*. (McTW-3)

"Ramblin' On My Mind"

Take 1: 80 percent formulaic (30 half-lines, 24 formulas)

Take 2: 73 percent formulaic (30 half-lines, 22 formulas)

R 1.1

I got ramblin' *I got ramblin' on my mind*
 I got ramblin' *I got ramblin' all on my mind*
Hate to leave my baby but you treat me so unkind

The opening x-phrase is a non-formulaic preface. *I got ramblin' on my mind* is a manifestation of the major r-formula *some thing on my mind*. The third line begins with a variation of the major x-formula *I'm leaving (some place)*. The r-formula *but you treat me so unkind* occurs in the songs of at least eight other artists; examples include:

Because the man I'm loving : *treats me so unkind*. (TucB-1)
 Judge I done killed my woman : *because she treated me so unkind*. (CarrL-20)

In take 1, the closing line is repeated as a refrain in all but the third stanza. In the fifth stanza of take 1, the x-formula is altered to *I go to leave my baby*.

R 1.2

I got mean things *I got mean things all on my mind*
 Little girl, little girl *I got mean things all on my mind*
Hate to leave you here, babe but you treat me so unkind

The first x-phrase is a non-formulaic preface. "Little girl, little girl" is a vocative preface. The r-formula of the first two lines is another manifestation of the major r-formula *some thing on my mind*. For the closing line, see R 1.1.

R 1.3

Runnin' down to the station catch the first mail train I see
 (I think I hear her comin' now)
Runnin' down to the station catch that old first mail train I see
I got the blues 'bout Miss So-and-So and the child got the blues about me

The formulaic construction of this stanza is discussed in chapter 2 (33–36). Analogues for the common x-formula *Runnin' down to the station* include:

I went down to the station : and I could not keep from crying. (WilsL-2)
I'm going to the station : meet the Cannonball. (CollS-5)

Two analogues exist for the x-formula *catch the first mail train I see*:

I'm gong to hit this old highway : *catch the fastest thing I see*. (WashbS-27)

Going to stand right here : *catch the first old gal I see*. (DickT-1)

Of the closing line, *I got the blues 'bout Miss So-and-So* is a manifestation of the major x- formula *I got the blues*. The x-formula *and the child got the blues about me* is found within the same line configuration in the following examples:

I got the blues for my baby : she got the blues for I say me. (Bare-1)

I've got the blues for my baby : my babe got the blues for me. (JorC-3)

R 1.4

And I'm leavin' this mornin' with my arm' fold' up and cryin'

And I'm leavin' this mornin' with my arm' fold' up and cryin'

I hate to leave my baby but she treats me so unkind

The x-formula of the opening (and closing) line is a manifestation of the major x-formula *I'm leaving (some place)*. The opening r-formula is a specialized version of the major r-formula *I cry*. For the closing line, see R 1.1.

R 1.5

See R 1.2.

R 2.1

See R 1.1.

R 2.2

And now, babe I will never forgive you anymore

Little girl, little girl I will never forgive you anymore

You know you did not want me baby, why did you tell me so

“And now babe” and “Little girl, little girl” (as in take 1) are vocative prefaces. The r-phrase “I will never forgive you anymore” has no clear analogue. It could, however, be related to the r-formula *I will never see you anymore*, but in all cases of this formula, the verb is definitely “see,” with one exception of “hear.” Thus, I consider Johnson’s r-phrase to be anomalous. In contrast, the closing line is a standardized conjoined unit;

analogues include:

I said if you don't want me : why don't you tell me so. (BrowR-1)

Now if you don't want me : why don't you tell me so. (Shaw-3)

If you didn't love me Elsie : why didn't you tell me so. (McCl-15)

R 2.3

See R 1.3.

R 2.4

An' they's devilment *she got devilment on her mind*

She got devilment *little girl, you got devilment all on your mind*

Now I got to leave this mornin' with my arm' fold' up and cryin'

The opening x-phrases are non-formulaic prefaces. The new r-formula *she got devilment on her mind* is yet another manifestation of the major r-formula *some thing is on my mind*. In the closing line, the x-formula is a manifestation of the major x-formula *I'm leaving (some place)*. The r-formula is a manifestation of the major r-formula *I cry*.

R 2.5

I believe I believe my time ain't long

I believe I believe that my time ain't long

But I'm leavin' this morning I believe I will go back home.

The incomplete statement *I believe* developed as an x-formula in its connection with the major r-formula *I'm going back home*. Here, it is linked to a new partner: *I believe my time ain't long* is a manifestation of the major r-formula *it won't be long*. The line *I believe I believe I'll go back home* is well established, appearing as the first line in songs such as Kokomo Arnold's "Sissy Man Blues" (ArnK-5), Leroy Carr's "I Believe I'll Make a Change" (CarrL-25), and Jack Kelly's "I Believe I'll Go Back Home" (KelJ-4). Johnson uses the line in "I Believe I'll Dust My Broom."

"When You Got A Good Friend"

Take 1: 77 percent formulaic (30 half-lines, 23 formulas)

Take 2: 75 percent formulaic (36 half-lines, 27 formulas)

W 1.1 and W 2.1

When you got a good friend that will stay right by your side

When you got a good friend that will stay right by your side

Give her all of your spare time love and treat her right.

In a broad sense, *When you got a good friend* can be seen as a manifestation of the major x-formula *I have a woman*, but as a “when” clause, it takes on a more specialized form. More specifically, the phrase is one of a small number of variations of *When you have someone*; further examples include *When you got a hard-hearted woman* (GibC-14), *Now when you got a man* (CoxI-2), and *Oh when you had that woman* (WasbS-17). The opening r-formula belongs to a small group that includes:

I cannot shun the devil : *he stay right by my side.* (Howe-8)

I didn't have to look for my buddy : *ooo well well he's right there by my side.*
(Gill-12)

If you want your lover : *you better pin him to your side.* (JefB-19)

In the closing line, *Give her all of your spare time* is an unique variation of a formulaic imperative *Give her some thing*. Other instances include *Give him thirty-nine days* (JackC-7), *Give a poor man a chance* (SmiB-27), and *Give me your money* (Gill-2). The phrase *love and treat her right* is a manifestation of the major r-formula *I treat you right*.

W 1.2 and W 2.2

I mistreated my baby and I can't see no reason why

I mistreated my baby and I can't see no reason why

Everytime I think about it I just wring my hands and cry.

I mistreated you baby is a manifestation of major x-formula *I treat you good/bad*. Analogues for the r-formula *and I can't see no reason why* exist in forms such as *I'll tell you the reason why* (Shad-9), *please tell me the reason why* (SmiBM-3), and *you know the reason why* (Blak-13).

For the closing line, there are two definite analogues for *Everytime I think about it*:

Every time I think : I think I'm downtown. (Stok-4)

Every time I think of that woman ; I wished I had never been born. (CarrL-23)

This formula can be seen as a member of the larger system *Every time I do something*, which includes *Every time I get drunk* (ArnK-31), *Every time I see*

you (Stok-4), and *Every time I move* (WillK-2). The r-formula *I just wring my hands and cry* is a manifestation of the major *I cry*.

W 1.3 and W 2.3

Wonder could I bear apologize or would she sympathize with me
 Mmmmmm would she sympathize with me
She's a brownskin woman as sweet as a girlfriend can be

Both half-lines of the opening line are original (i.e., non-formulaic). In the closing line, the x-formula *She's a brownskin woman* is of the same family as Johnson's earlier *She's a kindhearted woman* (see K 1.4 and K 2.4 earlier). Analogues for the r-formula *just as sweet as a girlfriend can be* include *as funny as can be* (WasbS-8), *and he's sweet as can be* (JonM-11), and *I know the feeling is sad as can be* (MartD-1).

W 1.4

Mmmm babe, *I may be right or wrong*
 Baby, it's your opinion *oh, I may be right or wrong*
Watch your close friend, baby then your enemies can't do you no harm

In the first line, “Mmmm babe” is a vocative preface. A small group of analogues for the r-formula *I may be right or wrong* include:

Lord : *am I right or wrong*. (HilSy-1)
 I may be right : *I may be wrong*. (Vinc-19)
 Boy I may be right Lord : *boy I may be wrong*. (Weld-5)
 Some people say I'm right now : *and some say I'm wrong*. (Spru-3)

As can be seen in the last three examples, Johnson's variation more typically occurs in an expanded full-line form.

For the closing line, I find only three other variations of the r-formula *Watch your close friend* exist: *You can't watch your wife* (ReyJ-1), *I mean to watch my man* (SmiB-15), *Boys you better watch them women* (Doyl-2). I have not included phrases based on “watch your step mama” or “watch yourself” because the sense diverges from that of mistrust. The r-phrase “then your enemies can't do you no harm” is original; of the twenty-nine instances of the word *harm*, twenty-two are found in the established r-formula *I don't mean no harm*, which I feel differs in sense from Johnson's half-line: the word *mean* emphasizes intention rather than actual threat of harm.

W 1.5

See W 1.1 and W 2.1.

W 2.4

I love my baby but [I can't make that agree]
I love that woman [but why can't we can't agree]
I really love that woman mmm wonder why we can't agree

The x-formula of all three lines is a manifestation of the major x-formula *I love you*. For the r-phrases, see chapter 2. Of the closing line, analogues for the final r-formula *mmm wonder why we can't agree* include:

Because you know I love you : *and how come we can't agree*. (JohLo-3)
 If I ever find a way to leave him : *if we cannot agree*. (MartD-1)
 Because don't you know baby : *you and I can't agree*. (WasbS-6)

W 2.5

See W 1.4.

W 2.6

See W 1.1 and W 2.1.

“Come On In My Kitchen”

Take 1: 56 percent formulaic (34 half-lines, 19 formulas)

Take 2: 65 percent formulaic (40 half-lines, 26 formulas)

Excluding Refrain

Take 1: 59 percent formulaic (22 half-lines, 13 formulas)

Take 2: 73 percent formulaic (26 half-lines, 19 formulas)

K 1.1 and Refrain (all stanzas)

Mmmm mmmm

Mmmm mmmm

You better come on in my kitchen babe, it's goin' to be rainin' outdoors

For a discussion of the nonverbal utterance, see chapter 2.

At a deep semantic level, *You better come in in my kitchen* is a manifestation of the major x-formula *I go (to some place)*; Taft provides the example *Says*

you coming back baby (ThpA-1; “Lyrics,” p. 527). Variations closer to the surface include *You had better come* (SmiC-12) and *Somebody better come here* (BakW-1) as well as a small family of *Come in x*-formulas, which include *Oh come in friends* (WhiW-9), *Said come in here* (CollS-11), and *Come in here baby* (GibC-4). Of the thirty-six occurrences of the word *kitchen*, all but three appear in the *x*-formula *some thing/one is in the kitchen: Rats is mean in my kitchen* (JefB-59), *Blues in my kitchen* (JefB-41), *Starvation in the kitchen* (BigB-2).

Although the word *outdoors* is a common rhyme word (twenty-two of its twenty-nine occurrences function as an end-rhyme), there is no satisfactory semantic analogue. In most cases, the “outdoors” *r*-formula renders the breakdown of a love relationship in the physical action of forcing the lover to leave. In other words, either the person or their belongings get thrown out: *you put me outdoors* (McTW-34), *she kicked me outdoors* (JorL-2), *she done set my trunk outdoors* (Aker-1). The *r*-formula is also used in the overdue rent/unsympathetic landlord scenario. The essence of Johnson’s *r*-phrase is quite different.

K 1.2

*Ah, the woman I love took from my best friend
Some joker got lucky stole her back again
You better come on in my kitchen it’s goin’ to be rainin’ outdoors*

This couplet is an established unit; I find six other occurrences, including:

*The woman I love Lord : stoled her from my best friend
But he got lucky : stoled her back again. (JamS-1)
I stole my good gal : from my bosom friend
That fool got lucky : he stoled her back again. (McTW-2)*

K 1.3

*Ah, she’s gone I know she won’t come back
I’ve taken the last nickel out of her nation sack
You better come on in my kitchen it’s goin’ to be rainin’ outdoors.*

This stanza’s *Ah, she’s gone* belongs to the *x*-formula group *She’s gone*, which includes seven instances of *My baby’s gone* (e.g., DaviW-1, McCoJ-13, and McTW-26) and at least eight versions of *You gone and left me* (e.g., SmiB-4, Rain-22, and Lock-1). The word *gone* (occurring 428 times) is predominantly used as a rhyme word. Three analogues exist for Johnson’s *r*-formula

I know she won't come back:

Because them double-crossing woman left me : *ooo well well and won't come back.* (Whea-29)

I said you may go : *you'll come back*

Now it don't worry my mind : *ooo well now I don't care if the woman never come back.* (Whea-38)

A closely related r-formula group retains the rhyme-word *back* but places the responsibility of the lover's return on the speaker:

If only : *could get my good man back.* (MemM-24)

Believe I'll take: *my old-timey rider back.* (GibC-11)

K 1.4

(Oh, can't you hear that wind howl?)

(Oh, can't you hear that wind howl?)

You better come on in my kitchen it's goin' to be rainin' outdoors.

Because the couplet is spoken, I consider the lines to be extraformulaic interjections. A note on howling in blues: the wind howls in a small x-formula group, as in *The wind is howling* : hear that wicked sound (JonM-7). More often, however, the howling is done by the speaker himself (again, as an x-formula), as in Johnson's "Stones In My Passway":

And when you hear me howlin' in my passway, rider please open your door and let me in.

K 1.5

When a woman gets in trouble everybody throws her down

Lookin' for her good friend none can be found

You better come on in my kitchen it's goin' to be rainin' outdoors.

When a woman gets in trouble is a variation of the multifaceted x-formula *I am in trouble*. Specific analogues include *When I was in trouble* (Gill-12), *Did you ever get in trouble* (McClu-1), and *You got me in trouble* (AleT-10). The following example employs the r-formula to similarly convey the fair-weather friend motif: *When you get in trouble* : you can always tell who's your friend (Luca-4). Johnson's *everybody throws her down* appears elsewhere in such forms as *your good friend throws you down* (OweG-1), *please don't throw*

me down (Howe-4), and *she try to put her sweetie down* (ChatB-8). Johnson's opening line as a whole appears with slight variation in two songs of Jaybird Coleman: *When a man gets in trouble : every woman throws him down* (ColFJ-1 and -6).

Of the closing line, many versions of *Lookin' for her good friend* exist; examples include *Looking for my girl* (LewF-1), *I'm looking for you baby* (JohMa-3), and *I'm looking for someone to love* (Gros-2). The r-formula *none can be found* appears elsewhere in Ida Cox's "Southern Women's Blues": Southern men will stick by you: *when the northern men can't be found* (CoxI-6). And Blind Boy Fuller uses the r-formula to convey the fair-weather friend motif: *Yeah now I'm broke: women and friends they can't be found* (FulB-15). As discussed in chapter 3, the formulas of Johnson's stanza are often employed to generate the motif of social abandonment and isolation. A stanza of Robert Lee McCoy's "Tough Luck" (1937) utilizes two of the formulas:

When a man gets in tough luck : nobody wants him around
 If he haven't got any money : *there is no friend to be found.* (McCoR-1)

K 1.6

Winter time's comin' it's gon' be slow
 You can't make the winter, babe *that's dry long so*
 You better come on in my kitchen 'cause it's gon' to be rainin' outdoors.

Winter time's comin' belongs to a subset of the general x-formula *It is coming*, in which slot-fillers often indicate time, particularly seasons: *And winter is coming* (DaviW-3), *Springtime coming* (ThoR-3), and *Harvest time's coming* (Hurt-7). Analogues of the r-formula *it's gon' be slow* include *Lord it's coming too slow* (Hull-5), *he was very slow* (LeeX-1), and *but she walk too slow* (LofW-3).

No analogue exists in Taft's corpus for the x-phrase "You can't make the winter babe." However, the seemingly unusual final r-formula *that's dry long so* does occur in the songs of three other singers:

Reason I'm hanging around here : *man I'm sticking here dry long so.* (JefB-27)
 Reason I'm hanging around here: *sticking here dry long so.* (Este-23)
 These hard times will kill you: *just dry long so.* (JamS-4)

K 2.1

See K 1.1.

K 2.2

See K 1.5.

K 2.3

See K 1.2.

K 2.4

See K 1.4.

K 2.5

*Nn, the woman that I love I crave to see
She's up the country won't write to me
You better come on in my kitchen goin' to be rainin' outdoors.*

Variations of this stanza appear in Blind Lemon Jefferson's "Wartime Blues" and Curley Weaver's "Oh Lawdy Mama":

*Well the girl I love : is the one I crave to see
Well she's living in Memphis : and the fool won't write to me. (JefB-12)
Woman I love : woman I crave to see
She in Cincinnati : won't even write to me. (WeaC-4)*

In light of the high degree of flexibility of the closing x-formula *She's some where*, Johnson's *She's up the country* is rather uninspired; it is an established formula that occurs nineteen times. For example: *Well I'm going up the country* (SpiV-10 and CollS-2) and *Lord she went up the country* (AleT-4).

K 2.6

*I went to the mountain far as my eyes could see
Some other man got my woman lonesome blues got me
you better come on in my kitchen cause it's goin' to be rainin' outdoors.*

This stanza also occurs in Johnson's "If I Had Possession Over Judgement Day." The formulas of the opening line developed as a conjoined unit. Variations include:

*Standing on the mountain : as far as I can see. (Hurt-7)
I went up on a mountain : just to see what I could see. (BirB-3)*

Likewise, both formulas of the closing line are found together elsewhere, as in following examples:

And that man had my woman : Lord and the blues had me. (ReedW-1)

Some man had my woman : and the worried blues had me. (Tore-2)

Another man had my wife : and I swear the Niagara blues had me. (ColeK-2)

K 2.7

My mama dead papa well's to be

Ain't got nobody to love and care for me

She better come on in my kitchen 'cause it's goin' to be rainin' outdoors.

My mama's dead occurs six times as an x-formula with minimal variation. Although the mother/father collocation is common, Johnson's r-phrase, "papa well's to be," is unique.

In the closing line, the x-formula *Ain't got nobody* occurs frequently in blues lyrics; analogues include *I ain't got nobody* (Blacw-8), *Now you ain't got nobody* (ThoJ-2), and *She ain't got nobody* (McCoJ-20). Johnson's r-formula *to love and care for me* combines two closely related formulas: *you don't love me* and *you don't care for me*. Analogues include *but my baby don't love me* (CarrL-15), *but my woman do not care for me* (McFaB-1), and *but you don't even care for me* (ArnK-21).

"Phonograph Blues"

Take 1: 75 percent formulaic (32 half-lines, 24 formulas)

Take 2: 69 percent formulaic (36 half-lines, 25 formulas)

P 1.1 and P 2.1

Beatrice, she got a phonograph and it won't say a lonesome word

Beatrice, she got a phonograph but it won't say a lonesome word

What evil have I done what evil has that poor girl heard.

The x-formula *Beatrice, she got a phonograph* is a variation of the common *I got a x*, which has infinite possibilities: *I got a letter from my rider* (NelsR-2), *She got a head like a switch-engine* (SykR-6), or *My baby she got a mojo* (McTW-33). The r-formula *and it won't say a lonesome word* is a form of *won't say a word*:

My baby quit me : didn't say a word. (BracM-4)

Eight o'clock in the morning : don't say one mumbling word. (MemM-27)

In the closing line, there are no analogues for the x-phrase “What evil have I done” in this position; elsewhere the phrase does occur as an r-formula; for example, Hey jailor : *tell me what have I done* (Rain-16). Although the half-line is formulaic, its anomalous position in Johnson’s line disqualifies it from being counted as a formula here. The subsequent r-formula *what evil has that poor girl heard* is an unusual variation of the *something she heard* group typically rhymed with the r-formula *won’t say a word*, as in the following:

Baby done quit me : *ain’t said a mumbling word*
 It weren’t nothing that she knowed Lord: *just something that she heard.* (Estes-9)
 And my friend passed me: *and she never said a word*
 Nothing I did: *but was something she had heard.* (BaiK-1)

P 1.2 and P 2.2

Beatrice, I love my phonograph but you have broke my windin’ chain
Beatrice, I love my phonogr’-ooo honey, you have broke my windin’ chain
And you’ve taken my lovin’ and give it to your other man.

The opening x-formula is a manifestation of the major x-formula *I love you*. Its r-phrase is unique due to the substitution of “windin’ chain” for “heart”; the r-formula *you broke my heart* occurs sixteen times in Taft’s corpus.

The two formulas of the closing line can be found together elsewhere, as in

Say you taken all my money : *give it to your no-good man.* (BigB-9)
You taken my money : *and spent it on your other man.* (Whea-5)

P 1.3 and P 2.3

Now, we played it on the sofa, now *we played it side the wall*
 My needles have got rusty, baby *they will not play at all*
 We played it on the sofa *and we played it ‘side the wall*
 But my needles have got rusty *and it will not play at all.*

This stanza is reconfigured in take 2 as a standard 2AA stanza. All of the x-phrases are unique. The r-formula *we played it ‘side the wall* is related to the general *some thing on the wall*; manifestations include *you can hang it on the wall* (WileG-1 and JohLs-3), *just like a clock up on the wall* (ArnK-39), and *put your foot up side the wall* (DaviW-18). Louise Johnson’s “On the Wall”

presents the idea of vertical sex more directly with the line, Going to tell you women : *how to cock it on the wall* (JohLs-3).

The rhyming r-formula *they will not play at all* belongs to the family of *I won't/can't do something at all : I can't see your face at all* (DaviW-1), *well, I won't be back at all* (JohTo-4), *I can't sleep at all* (WilK-5).

P 1.4 and P 2.4

Beatrice, I go crazy baby, I will lose my mind
And I go cra'-eee honey, I will lose my mind
Why'n't you bring your clothes back home and try me one more time.

Analogues for Johnson's *Beatrice, I go crazy* include:

Crazy about a married woman : afraid to call her name. (McCl-19)
I'm just as crazy crazy : as a poor girl can be. (MemM-21)
And I was almost crazy : because I had nowhere to go. (McTW-31)

In take 2, Johnson replaces *I go crazy* with a repeat of *I love my phonograph*, a manifestation of the major x-formula *I love you*. The r-formula *I will lose my mind* occurs frequently and is often paired with the above "crazy" x-formula:

Well well well I'm going go crazy : but baby I've got to now lose my mind. (Whea-3)
If I don't go crazy : I'm sure to lose my mind. (ThoR-4)
Lord you'll either run me crazy woman : or either make me lose my mind. (McTW-31)

Ordinarily, Johnson's *Why'n't you bring your clothes back home* would be used as an r-formula (as he does in take 2, stz.6), but, here, it can be viewed as an elaborate version of the x-formula *Come back to me*. Analogues include *Will he come back to me* (SmiT-9), *I'm going back home to my baby* (Spru-7), and *Come back home* (Glov-3). Or it can be seen as a variation of the x-formula *I'm going back home*, which includes *Said I'm going back home mama* (ArnK-11) and *If I ever get back home* (Linc-6). The x-formula *try me one more time* occurs elsewhere in conjunction with the x-formula *Take me back*, a construction Johnson adheres to in essence only.

Take me back baby : try me just one more time. (Linc-4)
Take me back pretty mama : try me one more time. (ReedW-2)
Take me back baby : try poor me one more time. (Darb-1)

P 1.5 and P 2.5

See P 1.1. This stanza repeats P 1.1 except that in take 2, Johnson replaces the x-formula with the vocative preface “Now, my (little) phonograph, mmm.”

P 2.6

Now, Beatrice *won't you bring your clothes back home*
 Now, Beatrice *won't you bring your clothes back home*
I wanna wind your little phonograph just to hear your little motor moan.

The opening x-phrase, “Now Beatrice,” is a vocative preface. Johnson uses *won't you bring your clothes back home* in the more conventional r-position. Here, it is a manifestation of the major r-formula *I'm going back home*.

The closing line echoes the metaphorical pattern of “Terraplane Blues” in which an x-phrase such as “I'm gon' hoist your hood, mama” is a template for *I wanna wind your little phonograph*. The closest analogues occur in a common *double entendre* x-formula *I want to squeeze your lemon*, as seen in the following:

Baby please let me roll your lemon : and squeeze it the whole night long. (ChatB-10)
Now let me squeeze your lemon baby : until my love come down. (Pick-2)
Come on let me squeeze your lemon baby : I mean anyhow. (Wills-8)

Johnson's concluding r-formula *just to hear your little motor moan* is an innovative play on the common r-formula *I moan*, similar in meaning but technically not analogous to the major r-formula *I cry*. Variations include:

That's the reason why : *you hear me cry and moan*. (HicR-21)
 I'm going back to Texas : *hear that wild ox moan*. (OweM-1)
 Baby baby don't you worry : *sugar don't you weep and moan*. (Spru-8)

“Cross Road Blues”

Take 1: 73 percent formulaic (30 half-lines, 22 formulas)

Take 2: 79 percent formulaic (24 half-lines, 19 formulas)

C 1.1

I went to the crossroad fell down on my knees
I went to the crossroad fell down on my knees
Asked the Lord above “Have mercy, now save poor Bob if you please.”

I went to the crossroad is a manifestation of the major x-formula *I go (some place)*. The stanza as a whole is a conventional collocation describing a ritualized plea. Other versions include

I went to the praying ground : and fell on bended knees
I ain't crying for no religion : Lordy give me back my good gal please. (McTW-16)
Then I'm going to the judge : and I'm going to fall down on my knees
Ask him please fair judge : have mercy on me please. (CarrL-20)
Went to the graveyard : fell down on my knees
And I asked the gravedigger : to give me back my good man please. (Hite-1)

C 1.2

Mmm standin' at the crossroad tried to flag a ride
Ooo-eee I tried to flag a ride
Didn't nobody seem to know me, babe everybody pass me by.

The first x-formula is a variation of the common *I am standing (some place)*, found in such forms as *Standing at the station* (Howe-9), *I was standing at the corner* (WasbS-11, WelS-1, MooAl-4), and *Standing here a-wondering* (JohBi-2). Johnson's *tried to flag a ride* appears elsewhere in the context of train travel:

Delano was a man: *who could flag my train for a ride.* (WillX-2)
 And I know he was a rambler : *when he caught that train to ride.* (BogL-20)
 Well now when a man takes the blues: *please now he will catch him a train a ride.*
 (Whea-4)
 Keep the blues: *I'll catch that train and ride.* (Hurt-6)

Of the closing line, *Didn't nobody seem to know me* belongs to a small family, which also includes *Nobody knows my name* (SmiB-19) and *Nobody knows my troubles* (RedN-1). This group could be extended to include the more common x-formula *I ain't got nobody* (e.g., SmiC-4, HendK-3, Blak-37). The half-line *everybody pass me by* qualifies as an r-formula based on a small number of occurrences of the general *someone/thing pass by*; variations include *still you pass me by* (Vinc-14), *see the worried blues pass by* (ColeK-2), or *must I pass on by* (JackC-9).

C 1.3

Standin' at the crossroad, baby risin' sun goin' down
Standin' at the crossroad, baby eee, risin' sun goin' down
I believe to my soul, now poor Bob is sinkin' down.

Johnson repeats the opening x-formula of the previous stanza (see C 1.2). The r-formula *risin' sun goin' down* is found verbatim in Blind Blake's "One Time Blues" (Blak-9) and Blind Boy Fuller's "Somebody's Been Talkin' " (FulB-10). More broadly, there are many versions of the r-formula *the sun go down*; the most common variation is—I hate to see : *that evening sun go down*.

The closing x-formula *I believe to my soul* occurs verbatim twenty-seven times in Taft's corpus:

I believe to my soul : sweet mama going to hoodoo me. (JefB-4)

I believe to my soul: my girl got a black cat bone. (WalkB-1)

Johnson uses the x-formula again in "From Four Till Late," recorded during the 1937 session: *I believe to my soul* that your daddy's Gulfport bound. Analogues for Johnson's *poor Bob is sinkin' down*" include:

Have all my money gone : *I feel myself sinking down*. (SykR-2)

Blue ghost has got me : *I feel myself sinking down*. (JohLo-28)

C 1.4

You can run, you can run tell my friend Willie Brown

You can run, you can run tell my friend Willie Brown

That I got the crossroad blues this mornin', Lord babe, I'm sinking down.

Johnson's opening line is unique; no analogues exist for either half-line. The closing line combines a manifestation of the major x-formula *I got the blues* and the "sinking" r-formula used in the previous stanza (see C 1.3).

C 1.5

I went to the crossroad, mama I looked east and west

I went to the crossroad, babe I looked east and west

Lord, I didn't have no sweet woman ooh-well, babe, in my distress.

The opening x-formula repeats that of the first stanza and is a manifestation of the major x-formula *I go (some place)*. There exists two instances that could serve as analogues for "I looked east and west," but both are found in the work of Henry Thomas; therefore, I do not consider the phrase to be formulaic.

The x-formula *Lord, I didn't have no sweet woman* is a negated version of the major x-formula *I have a woman*. The final half-line of take 1 is unique; the word *distress* does not appear in Taft's corpus (which does not include take 1 of "Cross Road").

C 2.1

See C 1.1.

C 2.2

See C 1.2.

C 2.3

Mmm, the sun goin' down, boy dark gon' catch me here
Ooo-ee boy, dark gon' catch me here
I haven't got no lovin' sweet woman that love and feel my care.

As an x-formula, *Mmm, the sun goin' down* is more flexible than the r-formula seen in C 1.3. Analogues include:

Well the sun going down : and you know what you promised me. (JamS-2)
Just at the setting of the sun: that's when the work is done. (WhiW-8)
See the sun went down mama: left it so lonesome here. (Brac-4)

Included in this family are variations such as *Well the sun rose this morning* (DayW-2) and *Before the sun rises* (PerkG-1). There exist four analogues for the Johnson's r-formula *dark gon' catch me here*; the first two are as follows:

Got a Saturday one: *well she better not catch me here*. (Hull-1)
 I've got a Thursday one: *that she better not catch me here*. (LofC-2)

The third shares Johnson's line collocation: *The rising sun : will never catch me here*. The fourth analogue occurs within a stanzaic collocation quite similar to Johnson's:

Said the sun going down now : black dark caught me here
Ain't got nobody to love me : nobody to feel my care. (BracM-2)

The closing line reuses the x-formula *I haven't got no lovin' sweet woman*, seen in C 1.5. It is a negated manifestation of the major x-formula *I have a woman*. In addition to the earlier instance (BracM-2), variations of Johnson's r-formula *love and feel my care* include:

The reason I feel that way mama : *I ain't got nobody to feel my care*. (Shor-5)
 Well well well if she do: *well well she sure don't feel my care*. (Whea-1)
 If he do: *he sure don't fell my care*. (Pope-2)

C 2.4

You can run, you can run tell my friend-boy Willie Brown
You can run tell my friend-boy Willie Brown
Lord, that I'm standin' at the crossroad, babe I believe I'm sinking down.

As in C 1.4, the opening half-lines are unique. The revised closing line reuses the x-formula *Standin' at the crossroad* (see C 1.2 and C 2.2) and the *sinking down* r-formula of take 1 (see C 1.4) with the elaboration of “I believe.”

NOTES

Introduction

1. In *WL* at line 1a, *W&E*, l.19, and “soðgied” [truth-song] in *Sfr*, l. 1b.
2. Timmer, “The Elegiac Mood,” p. 41, systematically eliminates all but two poems, concluding “we cannot speak of Old English elegies except in the case of *The Wife’s Lament* and *Wulf and Eadwacer*,” but, he says, “we are certainly justified in speaking of an elegiac mood in Old English poetry” and should not “confine ourselves to the nine poems mentioned here.”
3. Greenfield, “The Old English Elegies,” p. 143.
4. Palmer, *Deep Blues*, p. 43. See also Niles, “Story of the Blues,” p. 20. According to Odum and Johnson, *Negro Workaday Songs*, p. 19, W.C. Handy “is credited with having published the first blues (*Memphis Blues*, 1910) and with having had much to do with their popularization.”
5. For a history of blues recording, see Dixon and Godrich, *Recording the Blues*, who explain, on p. 9, Mamie Smith’s record was listed with no special attention to her race, but “the black press proclaimed ‘Mamie made a recording’ and sales were unexpectedly high.”
6. The concern for classification of blues appears to differ between African American and white writers. For instance, some of the tunes presented in Handy’s 1926 *Blues: An Anthology* would not be classified as blues today. Later, Murray’s *Stomping the Blues* treats the music of big-band and jazz musicians, such as Duke Ellington and Count Basie, as blues. For an example of categorization practices of the second audience, and a useful guide organized chronologically and regionally, see Oliver (ed.) *The Blackwell Guide*.
7. Oster, “Blues as a Genre,” 260. For a musical analysis of blues see Niles, “Story of the Blues,” pp. 17–20, and, more recently, Titon, *Early Downhome Blues*, pp. 137–174.
8. Taft, *Blues Lyric Poetry*, p. ix. For a discussion of meter in blues, see Barrie, “Oral Formulas,” 39–52.
9. Johnson, “Preachin’ Blues,” *The Complete Recordings*.
10. For example, Oliver, *Blues Fell This Morning*, discusses blues within their historical context.
11. In contrast, according to Howe’s study in *Migration and Mythmaking*, writings, such as *Exodus* and those of Alcuin, that evoke the migration myth in response to the Viking invasions do so in an effort to interpret the crisis.

Chapter 1

1. Texts of poems contained in the Exeter Book are from Krapp and Dobbie (eds.), *The Exeter Book*. Translations are my own.
2. Taft, *Blues Lyric Poetry: A Concordance*, 3 vols., of which volume 3 contains “Ranking Frequency List”: “my,” “me,” and “I’m” are ranked, respectively, fifth, seventh, and tenth. “I” occurs 9875 times in Taft’s corpus of over 2000 blues songs.
3. Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, pp. 48–54 and see pp. 68–88 for a survey of definitions of Signifyin(g). Signifyin(g) is embodied by the traditional character the Signifying Monkey, the African American cousin of the Yoruba Esu-Elegbara. Gates, p. 54, explains that in black vernacular, “one does not signify something; rather, one signifies in *some way*.” The term encompasses various types of verbal ritual, including boasting and the competitive insult ritual known as “the dozens” (in many respects very similar to medieval *flyting*).
4. Floyd, “Ring Shout,” 275.
5. Rosenberg, *American Folk Preacher*, p. 35.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Traditionally, the occupations of blues singer and preacher were perceived as antithetical: one preaches for the devil while the other preaches for God. However, many blues singers did have religious preaching experience, such as Rev. Rubin Lacy who recorded blues in the late 1920s. For a discussion of interrelationship of blues singing and religious preaching, and the “prodigal-son pattern” of the “reformed bluesman” story, see Keil, *Urban Blues*, pp. 143–148.
8. Davis, *Blues Legacies*, p. 55. Davis views the blues of the early women recording artists as a site in which feminist consciousness emerged. Through the songs of singers such as Gertrude “Ma” Rainey and Bessie Smith, women could assert their autonomy, gender, sexuality, and desires within an oral tradition.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 55–56.
10. “Trust No Man,” in *ibid.*, p. 57.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 57–58.
12. The most common variations of “Listen to me” include: “Now listen here (baby/folks/mama),” usually found as a first half-line, and “listen to my song,” utilized mainly in the second half-line.
13. Lyrics transcription in Taft’s *Blues Lyric Poetry*. Throughout this book, blues transcriptions are taken from Taft’s anthology unless otherwise indicated. Taft does not transcribe repeated lines and indicates the caesura with a colon. To identify the song and artist, I cite Taft’s reference in parentheses; (ChatB-19) refers to the nineteenth recording by Bo Chatman—“Bo Carter’s Advice,” on p. 56 of Taft’s *Anthology*. Bo Chatman was also known as Bo Carter.
14. According to Niles, “Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetics,” p. 369, one feature of oral heroic poetry is “invocation of the act of listening, either through direct address to an imagined audience or through asides (such as ‘I have heard tell’

- or 'so the story goes') that unite speaker and listener as participants in a common oral tradition that has, as one of its functions, the purpose of imaginative communion with one's ancestors."
15. The *uton we* formula occurs throughout the Vercelli homilies, as in, e.g.: "Uton we nu forð tilian" [Let us now, henceforth, strive, XI.46]; "Uton nu gehealdan georne" [Let us now zealously keep, XIX. 84]; "Uton us nu ealle þe geornor" [Let us now be all the more eager, XX. 19]; "Uton, men þa leofestan, georne leornian eadmodnesse" [Let us, most dearly beloved, eagerly learn humility, XXI. 8]. Text cited from Szarmach (ed.), *Vercelli Homilies ix-xxiii*. The association between homily and lament in *Sfr* and in *XSt* suggests that the lament was performed before an audience; the Anglo-Saxons may have considered the lament as a secular-poetic counterpart to the sermon.
 16. For example, the narrator prefaces the second lament with "Eft reordade" [Again spoke, l. 75a]; the second and third lament are separated by "Swa se weregast gast wordum sæde" [Thus the accused spirit in words told, l. 125]; between the third and fourth is "Þa gyt feola cwiðde firma herde" [Then yet keeper of sins said more, l. 159]. The text of *Christ and Satan* is from Krapp (ed.), *The Junius Manuscript*, pp. 135–158. Translations are my own.
 17. Finnegan, *Christ and Satan*, p. 151.
 18. Text in Davis, *Blues Legacies*, p. 290.
 19. My practice throughout this book will be to italicize formulas under discussion.
 20. Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance*, pp. 9–21.
 21. Johnson, "Cross Road Blues," *The Complete Recordings*.
 22. Klinck, *Old English Elegies*, p. 227.
 23. The speaker of *W&E* refers to "uncer giedd" [our song? l. 19]. For a discussion of the term *giedd*, see Klinck, pp. 244–245. The word appears in a variety of literary contexts; possible translations include song, poem, saying, proverb, riddle, speech, story, tale, and narrative.
 24. "Sið" occurs at *WL* l. 2a, *Sfr* l. 2a, and *Rsg* l. 97b; "soð" occurs at *Sfr* l. 1b and *Wan* l. 11b.
 25. Klinck, *Old English Elegies*, p. 228. The distinction between the epic and the lament parallels the basic difference between the third-person narrated, public ballad and blues song.
 26. For an analysis of the *I woke up* formula, see Taft, *Lyrics*, pp. 563–585. Taft, p. 410, points out that the phrase "in the Morning" is used in black folk preaching with its association to the Last Judgment. The spiritual "Great Gettin' Up Morning" describes the Last Judgment. *I woke up this morning* and *I got the blues* are what Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance*, p. 21, calls "special formulas" that, like "Once upon a time," function as a "marker of specific genres."
 27. Robert Johnson, "Walking Blues," *The Complete Recordings*.
 28. The formulaic construction of isolation is discussed in chapter 3.
 29. A similar question arises with *The Seafarer* in which an abrupt shift in voice, subject, and attitude occurs at line 33b and again at line 103.
 30. Pope, "Dramatic Voices," p. 187. Pope also treats *The Seafarer* in the same manner.

31. Pope, "Dramatic Voices," p. 186. The assertion of two speakers in *Wan* is put forward in 1943 by Huppé, "*The Wanderer*," 516–538, to which Greenfield responded with the counterview of a sole speaker in "*The Wanderer: A Reconsideration*," 451–465.
32. Pope, "Dramatic Voices," p. 171.
33. Greenfield, "The Old English Elegies," p. 147.
34. Greenfield, "Min, Sylf," 214–215.
35. *Ibid.*, Sylf," 219. Further discussions of the speaker(s) of *Wan* include Bolton, "The Dimensions," 7–34; Richman, "Speaker and Speech," 469–479; Bragg, *The Lyric Speakers*, especially pp. 121–138; Klinck, *Old English Elegies*, pp. 108, 118, 123–124, 126; and Head, *Representation*, pp. 28–29.
36. For instance, Hollowell, "Identity," pp. 86–87, identifies the Wanderer as a "wodborā," a seer figure who is associated with wisdom and poetry. Woolf, "Genre of *Plantus*," pp. 192–207, proposes *The Wanderer* be regarded as *plantus*. The difficulty of *The Wife's Lament* has also led scholars to assign a specific identity to the speaker and to consider the presence of more than one speaker. For a survey of interpretations see Mandel, *Alternative Readings*, pp. 149–173.
37. Brown, "The Blues," 292.
38. In his study of Patton's lyrics, Fahey, *Charley Patton*, p. 62, states, "the stanzas of each song, taken as a whole, remain disjunctive. Most of them could be interchanged. A difference in their order would not increase (or decrease) their 'rationality.'" In order to make sense of the first stanza, some transcribers, such as Taft, second guess the title and substitute "hammock" for "hammer."
39. Head, *Representation*, pp. 33–34.
40. Ellison, "Richard Wright's Blues," pp. 78–79; Ellison's statement is made in the context of a review of Wright's autobiographical novel *Black Boy*. In 1977, Titon, *Early Downhome Blues*, p. 40, noted, "the assumption that blues lyrics are factually autobiographical remains common in blues scholarship."
41. Barnie, "Jailhouse Blues," 22.
42. Eastman, "Country Blues," 163.
43. Jarrett, "The Singer," 32.
44. *Ibid.*, 536.
45. Gruver, "Dramatic Monologues," 31. See Titon's response to Gruver in his "Autobiography," 79–81; the debate becomes one of genre definition: Titon, p. 80, claims that autobiography is not "discursive," as Gruver states, but is in "fact. . . dramatic, imaginative literature," and, thus, "The 'I' of [the blues singer's] texts must be a persona, even when the lyrics do refer to something the singer has directly experienced." Gruver's rejoinder appears in "Autobiographical Theory," 129–130.
46. Cone, *The Spirituals*, p. 102.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 103. While understood, the principle is challenged by members of the white, middle-class second audience who perform blues.

48. Pearson, *Sound So Good*, p. xiii. It is important to note that interviews with blues singers occurred during the blues revival years of the 1960s and 1970s, when traditional artists were performing before a second audience. See also Siems, “Brer Robert,” 141–157, who discusses the “artistic oral performance” of the bluesmen’s stories in which they typically present themselves as an escape-artist trickster figure.
49. Pearson, *Sounds So Good*, p. 130.
50. Floyd, *The Power of Black Music*, pp. 73–74, discusses the blues crossroad legend as a version of the Yoruba myth of Eshu-Elegbara.
51. Head, *Representation*, p. 34.
52. Renoir discusses the contexts of history, manuscript, and literary tradition in “Old English Formulas,” pp. 65–79.
53. The story is found in the *Völundarkviða*; see, Krapp and Dobbie (eds.), *The Exeter Book*, p. liii, and Klinck, *Old English Elegies*, pp. 161–162.
54. See Klinck, *Old English Elegies*, pp. 162–164; Muir (ed.), *Exeter Anthology*, 2: 568. Anglo-Saxon readers of the Exeter Book may not have known “Mæthild” either. Frank, “Germanic Legend,” pp. 88–106 discusses the relationship between *Deor* (and other poems) and the Anglo-Saxon audience; she states, “It is impossible to know how much more (or less) the Anglo-Saxons knew of Germanic legend than we do” (p. 103).
55. For various readings of the “Mæthild” stanza, see Klinck, *Old English Elegies*, pp. 162–164.
56. This process will be discussed in chapter 2.
57. For a discussion of how “extrinsic” knowledge informs the text, see Renoir, *Key to Old Poems*, especially pp. 23–26.
58. The antecedents of the statement are ambiguous: if “that” refers to the situation just described, say that of Beadohild, does “this” then refer to the business of Mæðhild? Or to *Deor*’s own situation of unemployment? Or to a situation external to the text known to its original listener–reader? Mandel, “Audience Response Strategies,” 132, argues that the refrain’s lack of referent includes the listener in the suffering of the exempla: “With *bisses swa mæg* (so can this) the poet implies that any misfortune suffered by a listener that is at all similar to the misfortunes of Welund and Beadohild can also pass away.” Also see Mandel, *Alternative Readings*, pp. 109–134.
59. For the consideration of performance in the editing of Old English poetic texts, see Doane, “Editing Old English,” pp. 125–145.

Chapter 2

1. The oral formula in Old English scholarship is surveyed by Olsen, “Oral-Formulaic Research I,” 548–606 and “Oral-Formulaic Research II,” 138–190; see also Watts, *The Lyre*, pp. 46–72; Foley, *Oral Composition*, pp. 65–74; and for a more general bibliography see Foley’s, *Oral-Formulaic Theory*.
2. For difficulties in the application of the Parry–Lord oral-formulaic theory to Old English poetry see, e.g., Watts, *The Lyre*, pp. 63–125; Quirk, “Poetic

- Language,” pp. 150–171; Rogers, “Crypto-Psychological Character,” 89–102 and a rebuttal by Edwards, “The Parry–Lord,” 151–169; Fry, “Variation and Economy,” 353–356; Miletich, “The Quest,” 111–123; Ogilvy and Baker, *Reading Beowulf*, pp. 137–158; Niles, “Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetics,” pp. 359–377.
3. An early example of the belief that formulaity precluded artistry is Tatlock, “Epic Formulas,” 529, “In Middle English, formulas are rather numerous, but short, inorganic and commonplace, not an artistic feature but a metrical convenience, and do little for an epic effect.” Studies that discern individual style within formulaic composition include Peter, “Old English *Andreas*,” 844–863; and Isaacs, “Personification,” pp. 215–248.
 4. Discussions of literary influence on “oral” texts and vice versa include Schaar, “New Theory,” 301–305; Conlee, “Verse Composition,” 576–585. More recently, Orchard, *Poetic Art*, p. 124, finds in Aldhelm’s Anglo-Latin hexameter verse flexible systems of formulaic patterns strikingly similar to those of Old English vernacular poetry: “since the same sort of formulaic patterning of phraseology occurs in Aldhelm as in *Beowulf* it seems reasonable to describe both as products of a traditional (and oral-derived) system of versification.”
 5. See, e.g., Renoir, “Oral-Formulaic Rhetoric,” pp. 103–135; and Haymes, “Formulaic Density,” 390–401.
 6. Benson, “The Literary Character,” 335. For a survey and discussion of the debate between the Old English “oralists” and “literates,” see Renoir, *Key to Old Poems*, pp. 49–63.
 7. Wilgus, review of *Singer*, by Lord, 43.
 8. *Ibid.*, 43–44.
 9. The application of the Parry–Lord oral-formulaic theory to blues can be seen in the work of Titon, *Early Downhome Blues*, especially pp. 175–189; Taft, “Lyrics”; and Barnie, “Formulaic Lines,” 457–473. For a discussion of the Parry–Lord theory in blues scholarship, see Barnie’s article “Oral Formulas,” 39–52, in which he criticizes the lack of precision in some blues studies, reflected in terms such as “commonplace.”
 10. Blues singers such as Son House, Mississippi John Hurt, and Skip James, who recorded blues records during the years around 1930, performed at folk festivals in the 1960s. Outside of the “folk” context, artists such as Muddy Waters and B.B. King (who, in 2003, was still touring) continued the blues tradition with their electric “urban” style; although he does not treat the formulaic nature of blues, Keil, *Urban Blues* is one of the few writers to study the live performance of blues in its social context. Also, Evans, *Big Road Blues*, bases his study of folk blues on extensive field research.
 11. Odum and Johnson, *Negro Workaday Songs*, pp. 22–23; they continue, “In the last ten years the phonograph record has surpassed sheet music as a conveyor of blues to the public. Sheet music, however, is still important. In fact, practically every ‘hit’ is issued in both the published and phonographed form.”

12. Finnegan, *Oral Poetry*, pp. 16–24.
13. Lord, *Singer*, pp. 124–125; Finnegan, *Oral Poetry*, p. 28.
14. Finnegan, *Oral Poetry*, p. 28 (emphasis hers).
15. *Ibid.*
16. The term “vocality” was introduced by Zumthor, “The Text,” 67–92; see also Zumthor, *Oral Poetry: An Introduction*. For discussions on performance, “voice,” and reception of Old English and medieval texts, see, e.g. Doane, “Oral Texts,” pp. 75–113, and “Ethnography,” 420–439; O’Keeffe, *Visible Song*; Schaefer, “Hearing from Books,” pp. 117–136. For a comparative approach to performance see Opland, “‘Scop’ ” 161–178; Orchard, “Oral Tradition,” pp. 101–123; Foley, *Immanent Art*, “Performance, and Tradition,” 275–301, and *Singer of Tales*.
17. Orchard, “Oral Tradition,” p. 114.
18. The ideas and vocabulary are found in Schaefer, “Hearing from Books,” especially pp. 120–124.
19. Olson, “Utterance to Text,” 277.
20. The term is offered by Foley in “Performance, and Tradition,” p. 291 and *Immanent Art*, p. 5.
21. Zumthor, *Oral Poetry: An Introduction*, p. 90.
22. Robert Johnson was born in 1911 or 1912 in Hazelhurst, Mississippi, and died on August 16, 1938. Relatively little is known about his short life and violent death; the most recent biography is by Guralnick, *Searching*. The 1936 recording session took place in San Antonio and involved three sittings; as per Dixon, Godrich, and Rye, *Blues & Gospel Records* 1997, pp. 476–477, recorded on Monday, November 23, 1936 were “Kind Hearted Woman Blues,” “I Believe I’ll Dust My Broom,” “Sweet Home Chicago,” “Ramblin’ On My Mind,” “When You Got a Good Friend,” “Come On In My Kitchen,” “Terraplane Blues,” and “Phonograph Blues.” On Thursday, November 26: “32–20 Blues,” On Friday, November 26: “They’re Red Hot,” “Dead Shrimp Blues.” “Cross Road Blues,” “Walkin’ Blues,” “Last Fair Deal Gone Down,” “Preachin’ Blues,” and “If I Had Possession Over Judgement Day.”
23. According to Guralnick, *Searching*, p. 37, “One song, ‘Terraplane Blues,’ was a modest hit; perhaps it sold four or five thousand copies. . . .” The 1937 session took place in Dallas and consisted of two sittings. On Saturday, June 19 Johnson recorded “Stones In My Passway,” “I’m A Steady Rollin’ Man,” and “From Four Until Late.” On Sunday, June 20: “Hell Hound On My Trail,” “Little Queen of Spades,” “Malted Milk,” “Drunken Hearted Man,” “Me and the Devil Blues,” “Stop Breakin’ Down Blues,” “Traveling Riverside Blues,” “Honeymoon Blues,” “Love in Vain,” and “Milkcow’s Calf Blues.” Between the two recording sessions, ARC released five 78rpm’s; see LaVere, “Loose Ends,” 31–33. A 1938 Vocalion catalogue lists twelve titles (six 78s), four of which were from his first session: “Kind Hearted Woman” / “Terraplane Blues” (Vo 03416) and “Sweet Home Chicago” / “Walkin’ Blues” (Vo 03601); for a photo-image

- of the 1938 catalogue listing, see Calt and Wardlow, "Robert Johnson," 50. Vo 04630 ("Love in Vain" / "Preachin' Blues") was issued posthumously.
24. Sante, "The Genius of Blues," review of five books on blues and blues singers in *New York Review*, 49. Today, Johnson has become an icon for the second audience of blues listeners. His influence on the development of popular rock music was recently commemorated with his induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland and a conference devoted to his work.
 25. See Guralnick, *Searching*, pp. 53–54.
 26. See the brochure for *The Complete Recordings*, for essays by Eric Clapton and Keith Richards on Johnson's influence on their music.
 27. For a description of various performance contexts, see Taft, "Lyrics," pp. 117–189.
 28. Evans, *Big Road Blues*, p. 73. Speir was significant in the discovery of many Delta singers, including Robert Johnson; for more on Speir, see Evans, "Interview," 117–121.
 29. Taft, "Lyrics," pp. 167–168. Evans, *Big Road Blues*, p. 74, states, "These performers regularly use a limited supply of lyrics, melodies, and instrumental figures in various combinations for many of their songs. Therefore, not all of their blues are completely different from each other. In addition, since 1920 thousands of blues had been issued on phonograph records. Folk blues singers eagerly learned many of these blues or added portions of them to their repertoires."
 30. Taft, "Lyrics," pp. 133–134.
 31. Feedback did come eventually but in the form of record sales. According to Taft, "Lyrics," pp. 145–149, few singers relied on recording to make a living, but a successful record could help the singer gain further employment through a renewed recording contract and live performance engagements. For the variety of pay arrangements, see Titon, *Early Downhome Blues*, pp. 214–215.
 32. Taft, "Lyrics," p. 166. For a discussion of censorship of race records see Oliver, *Screening*, in which he states, on p. 186, "any assessment of the content of Race records soon reveals the preponderance of sexual themes above all other subjects. It might be even argued that they constitute a third, perhaps more, of all Race recordings. . . some of these may be considered as direct expressions of sexual desire while others have tendencies to obscenity. What constitutes pornography in these terms remains debatable, but the complex evasive tactics employed by some singers to elude the censor suggest that either the singer himself or the recording executives had established in their own minds vague standards of what was deemed acceptable for issue."
 33. For a discussion of Spivey's "My Handy Man," see Oliver, *Screening*, pp. 209–210. Other examples of *double entendre* include Virginia Liston's "Rolls-Royce Papa" and Bessie Smith's "Empty Bed Blues."
 34. According to Brown, in "The Blues," 292, the treatment of sex in blues became less artful in the 1940s; he complains, "Many recent commercial blues strain to get double, even triple meanings, as close to obscenity as the

- law allows. Earlier folk blues were broad and frank, Chaucerian; but many of the belt-line productions are prurient and pornographic.”
35. Taft, “Lyrics,” p. 213.
 36. *Ibid.*, pp. 212–217.
 37. Barnie, “Formulaic Lines,” p. 457.
 38. Taft, “Lyrics,” p. 217. Odum and Johnson, *Negro Workaday Songs*, p. 19, note that W.C. Handy’s “Memphis Blues” was the first published blues song in 1910. Later, Handy published *Blues: An Anthology*, which featured lyric and music transcriptions of various types of songs, many of which would not be classified as blues today. For the second audience, written transcriptions of recorded blues became an important aspect of reception, serving various purposes: Sackheim’s *Blues Line* presents blues as poetry and attempts to capture vocalicity (e.g., cadence) typographically; Taft’s *Blues Lyric Poetry* is primarily an academic resource tool; and the many books on lyric and music transcriptions are available for those who wish to learn to play established blues songs of particular singers. For example, Ainslie and Whitehill (eds), *Robert Johnson*. Interestingly, blues lyrics defy stability on paper; transcriptions of Johnson’s lyrics, e.g., differ (sometimes quite widely) from one transcriber to the next.
 39. In fact, Johnson’s level of literacy and education remains unclear; information based on interviews with people who knew Johnson are conflicting. It appears that he did attend school: Calt and Wardlow, “Robert Johnson,” 42, write, “Son House’s wife Evie recalled that Johnson liked to play the instrument [harmonica] during lunch recesses held outside the one-room Methodist church schoolhouse near Robinsonville both attended (on a three month basis) in the late 1920s.” Guralnick, *Searching*, pp. 12–13, quotes Johnny Shines, a blues artist who had traveled with Johnson, as saying, “No, Robert didn’t have no education at all as far as I could tell. I never saw him read or write, not even his name. He was just a natural genius” but notes that Shines is also reported as remembering, “Robert had beautiful handwriting. His writing look like a woman’s writing.” LaVere, liner notes to *The Complete Recordings*, p. 11, recounts the story about Johnson retreating to a secluded location and writing in a small black book. Calt, “The Idioms,” 53, reports that Elizabeth Moore, a former neighbor of Johnson’s, remembers that he “wrote the words to his songs on paper.”
 40. Guralnik, *Searching*, p. 38.
 41. Charley Patton’s “Hammer Blues,” presented in chapter 1, is a good example of the seemingly random structure of the blues of earlier male singers. Tilton, *Early Downhome Blues*, pp. 34–36, presents the lyrics to three versions of Blind Lemon Jefferson’s “Match Box Blues” as a demonstration of the process of blues composition. Even though two of the versions were recorded on the same day, the texts are quite different from each other apart from beginning with the same stanza.
 42. Eastman, “Country Blues,” 161–176, compares two takes of Tommy Johnson’s “Lonesome Home Blues” to Robert Johnson’s takes of “Kind Hearted Blues” and concludes, on p. 174, “As compared to the more

improvisatory feel of the two takes of 'Lonesome Home Blues,' this song may well have been a highly developed part of Robert Johnson's repertoire by the time he recorded it. The lyrics appear to be better thought out than were Tommy Johnson's, and they present a more 'finished' quality." Springer, *Authentic Blues*, p. 76, states, "While Patton and other rural musicians frequently offered loose or barely structured songs, [Johnson's] own best blues, in spite of their incorporation of traditional stanzas, come across as having been composed and polished by years of work. His more thematic and coherent lyrics, rich in detail and utterly personal, often make use of symbols and allegories."

43. Quoted in Taft, "Lyrics," p. 218.
44. "Identical" duplication allows for minor changes such as the substitution of "girl" for "baby," but overall the lines and sequence of stanzas are unaltered. For the second session, alternate takes exist for "Little Queen of Spades," "Drunken Hearted Man," "Me and the Devil Blues," "Stop Breakin' Down Blues," "Love in Vain," and "Milkcow's Calf Blues."
45. According to Calt and Wardlow, "Robert Johnson," 45, Elizabeth Moore (a neighbor of Johnson's) said that she had heard Johnson perform "Kind-Hearted Woman, Ramblin' On My Mind, 32-20 Blues, Come On In My Kitchen, and Cross Roads Blues" four years before his first recording session.
46. I am indebted to Steve LaVere, who informed me of this matter by email correspondence (July 20, 2004).
47. Taft, "Lyrics," abstract in *Dissertation Abstracts*.
48. For a survey of the formula in blues scholarship, see Taft, "Lyrics," pp. 222-229.
49. See, e.g., Ferris, *Blues from the Delta*; and Fahey, *Charley Patton*.
50. Taft, "Lyrics," pp. 238-239.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
52. For a discussion on meter in blues lyrics, see Barnie, "Oral Formulas."
53. Taft, "Lyrics," p. 241.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 417-418; the corpus he refers to is that contained in his *Anthology*, which contains transcriptions of more than two thousand commercially recorded blues songs.
55. All transcriptions of Robert Johnson's songs are my own, made from the compact disk set *Complete Recordings*. Those of other artists are from Taft's *Blues Lyric Poetry* and *Blues Lyric Poetry: A Concordance* unless otherwise indicated. Taft's transcriptions mark the caesura with a colon, standardize the English, and do not include repeated lines within a stanza.
56. Taft, "Lyrics," pp. 252-257.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 260.
58. The parenthetical citations following each example contain Taft's reference code: (JamJ-2) refers to the second recording by Jesse James, which is "Southern Casey Jones" on p. 122 of Taft's *Blues Lyric Poetry*.
59. Taft, "Lyrics," p. 246.

60. Examples of r-phrases ending in “see” include

I’m broke and disgusted : with every man I see. (Simp-1)

Black snake is evil : black snake is all I see. (JeffB-58)

But I’m too good a woman : you just wait and see. (SpiV-11).

61. Johnson’s awareness of balance is evident in the employment of “about” (rather than “for”) in both formulas. In other words, he is not using and revising formulas haphazardly.
62. For the list, see Taft, “Lyrics,” p. 406; for his analysis of the major formulas see the Appendices of “Lyrics,” p. 521.
63. The interrelationship of these themes is more closely examined in chapter 3.
64. For the sake of clarity, I have revised Taft’s generalized form “I come to some place” to “I go to some place”; according to his analysis, in “Lyrics,” p. 526, my change does not alter the basic meaning of “movement towards.” Confusion can arise with manifestations that generate the verb “come,” as in *Says you coming back baby* and *Just come here*. Taft states that this formula is “the most frequently occurring formula in blues, but at the same time, the most diffuse.” It produces a number of stable subformulas, such as *I go to the station, I go to the mountain, I go to the river, and I go downtown*.
65. Taft, “Lyrics,” p. 406, lists the formula as “I go away from some place.” It differs semantically from *I go to some place* in that, here, the idea is “movement away from.” Again, confusion can arise with a number of manifestations that generate the verb “going,” as in *I’m going away*.
66. This formula could be treated as an element of the travel theme, as Taft does, but the idea is similar to that of the x-formula *I quit my woman*.
67. Of this formula, Taft, “Lyrics,” p. 409, suggests, “It emphasizes that change and disruption will come soon, that time is short, and that the ‘threat’ of something new and perhaps unpleasant is just around the corner.”
68. *Ibid.*, p. 417.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 267.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 268.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
72. Ainslie and Whitehill, *Robert Johnson*, p. 12, suggest that Johnson auditioned for H.C. Speir with this piece.
73. In Taft’s *Concordance*, the word *love* occurs a total of 768 times and *loving* 321 times. In contrast, *hate* occurs 68 times.
74. Brown, “The Blues,” 289.
75. Calt, “The Idioms,” 58, suggests that the term “kind-hearted woman” is an “obsolete black slang phrase for a woman who keeps a gigolo.” Calt, p. 53, further states, “Robert Johnson’s songs were unusual for 1930s blues in their frequent use of slang terms and idioms, which gave them a 1920s cast and projected an image of Johnson as a barrelhouse habitué. . .The idiomatic character of his songs is all the more remarkable in light of Elizabeth Moore’s [a Robinsville neighbor of Johnson] recollection that Johnson customarily wrote the words to his songs on paper.”

76. Interestingly, “good-hearted” women appear only in the blues of female singers; the formula *I’m a good-hearted woman* is employed by Ma Rainey in “Slave to the Blues” (Rain-23), Memphis Minnie, “Don’t Want No Woman” (MemM-8), and Ida Cox, “Lonesome Blues” (CoxI-7).
77. Oster, “The Blues as a Genre,” 262–263; Oster continues, “The result of these elements in combination is a quotable verse, complete in itself; often aphoristic, rhythmically appealing as the words trip easily off the tongue, and readily remembered—roughly analogous to the heroic couplet of the eighteenth century, if we disregard the repetition of a line in the blues.”
78. Taft, “Lyrics,” p. 300.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 305.
80. The r-formulas *man, they will not let me be* (stz.1) and *can’t stand to leave her be* (stz.2) are manifestations of the same basic formula *I let you be*.
81. The shift occurs musically as well: Ainslie and Whitehill, *Robert Johnson*, p. 12, state, “The third stanza functions musically as a bridge, establishing a very different feel and harmonic rhythm before returning to the verses.”
82. Taft, *Blues Lyric Poetry*, p. xiii. Other stanzaic structures found in blues include the unembellished AA couplet, the older 3AA form (first line repeated twice), and ABAB.
83. “Mister So-and-So” is a common label for a competing lover; it occurs twenty-six times in Taft’s *Concordance*.
84. Instrumental interludes may very well have been a feature of Johnson’s live performances—his guitar playing is legendary. Guralnick, *Searching*, pp. 36–37, explains, “Johnson’s walking bass style on guitar, adapted from boogie woogie piano, while it may not have been entirely original with him, popularized a mode which would rapidly become the accepted pattern. As Johnny Shines has said, ‘Some of the things that Robert did with the guitar affected the way everybody played. In the early thirties, boogie was rare on the guitar, something to be heard. Because of Robert, people learned to complement themselves, carrying their own bass as well as their own lead with this one instrument.’” For Son House’s often quoted story of Johnson’s sudden technical improvement, see House and Lester, “I Can Make My Own Songs,” 41–42.
85. Blind Lemon Jefferson: “I want you to stop and *study* don’t take nobody’s life” (“Blind Lemon’s Penitentiary Blues,” JefB-33). Willie McTell: “Sit here and *study* with your eyes all red” (“Southern Can is Mine,” McTW-15).
86. Evans, “Pact with the Devil,” p. 12, finds the opposition between the “kindhearted woman” and the “evil-hearted women” of the third line problematic and interprets the “evil” as sorcery, stating, “there is a distinct possibility that Johnson simply hadn’t thought out his composition very carefully.”
87. There exists an x-formula *I got some thing*, but it requires a noun to fill “some thing,” as in *I got a nickel* or *I got a letter*.
88. Spoken asides are common in blues; Johnson uses the device often and effectively. In songs such as “Preaching Blues,” Johnson’s interjections

function as audience response (spoken words are within parentheses):

The blues is a low-down shakin' chill (yes, preach 'em now)

. . .

Well, the blues is a achin' old heart disease

(Do it now. You gon' do it? Tell me all about it)

Palmer, *Deep Blues*, p. 44, states, "many Delta guitarists mastered the art of fretting the instrument with a slider or bottleneck; they made the instrument 'talk' in strikingly speechlike inflections." Floyd, *The Power of Black Music*, pp. 214–216, discusses the instrumental imitation of train sounds as a traditional feature of African American music.

89. Ferris, *Blues from the Delta*, p. 53, explains that in competitions between blues singers, "blues verses are used as a form of verbal competition somewhat like the 'dozens.' The singers face each other and sing until one is unable to continue in verses. Apparently this form of verbal competition is traditional, as it was observed before 1940 by John W. Work during fieldwork with black blues singers in Nashville, Tennessee."
90. Repeated stanzas also occur in the single extant take of "Believe I'll Dust My Broom," "Sweet Home Chicago," "32–20 Blues" (a repetition that does not occur in Skip James's earlier version "22–20 Blues"), "They're Red Hot" (first and last), "Last Fair Deal Gone Down," and "I'm a Steady Rollin' Man." In "Stop Breakin' Down Blues" the identical first and last stanzas of take 1 are changed in take 2.
91. For the "stall" in the sermons of African American preachers, and suggestive possibilities for Old English poetry, see Rosenberg, "Formulaic Quality," 3–20. See also Orchard, "Oral Tradition," pp. 111–112.
92. Of the twelve occurrences of *forgive*, eleven are configured as *forgive me*; the twelfth is "Now the preacher told me that God will forgive a black man" (Smj-1).
93. Conventionally, the line is used as a stanza opener, as is the case in nine of its ten occurrences in Taft's corpus. Johnson's "anymore/so" rhymes aurally: Furry Lewis also rhymes "tell me so" with "no more" in "Jellyroll" (LewF-1). Of interest are the first two stanzas of Joe Linthecome's "Pretty Mama Blues," which exhibit a similar collocation to Johnson's:

Listen here pretty mama : *what's on your worried mind*

How come you treat me : *so unkind*

If you don't want me mama : why don't you tell me so

I can beat ??? : getting down the road. (Lint-1)

94. Taft, "Lyrics," p. 308: "Formulas and lines often develop into a loose association with a small group of other formulas and lines."
95. The folded arms formula is a favorite of Son House: it occurs also in "My Black Mama—Part 2" (Hous-2) and "Preachin' the Blues—Part 2" (Hous-4).
96. Taft, "Lyrics," pp. 271–273, identifies this type of phrase as an extraformulaic "locutionary element," but in this cluster of images, it appears to be expected.

97. "If I Had Possession" borrows yet a second stanza and the tune from "Roll and Tumble Blues"; the song was also recorded by Garfield Akers as "Dough Roller Blues" (Aker-3).
98. But not unique: Buddy Boy Hawkins uses the closing line "I couldn't do anything partner : *but fold my little arms and cry*" in "Number 3 Blues" (Hawk-2).
99. "Ramblin' " continues the idea of departure and travel introduced in the first recording "Kind Hearted Woman" ("Some day, some day, I would shake your hand good-bye") and continued in "I Believe I'll Dust My Broom" ("I believe, I believe, I'll go back home") and "Sweet Home Chicago" ("Oh baby, don't you want to go"). The thematic associations may have influenced Johnson's song sequence.
100. The song appeared on *Robert Johnson: King*.
101. The word *sympathize* occurs in Clifford Gibson's "Levee Camp Moan" (GibC-13).
102. *I'm sorry* is an established x-formula.
103. "My enemies they have betrayed me, have overtaken poor Bob at last."
104. My attempt roughly agrees with that of LaVere, liner notes to *The Complete Recordings*, p. 28, who hears the r-position half-lines as "but I can't make that agree" and "but what can we can't agree," respectively.
105. Taft, *Blues Lyric Poetry*, p. xiii: "On rare occasions, the singer might sing only a partial blues stanza; that is, there would be no rhyming line to complete the couplet. These partial stanzas could take any number of forms, depending on the repetitions and refrains which the singer used: A, 2A, 3A, Ar, 2Ar: AA, and so on. In theory, these partial stanzas should not be considered blues couplets at all, but they generally occur within the context of a song where the other stanzas conform to the texture of blues poetry. . . these stanzas seem to be 'implied couplets' in which the singer and listener agree to break the rules in a song."
106. Ainslie and Whitehill, *Robert Johnson*, p. 28. Ainslie and Whitehill, p. 28, quote Johnny Shines who recalls a live performance of "Come On In My Kitchen": "[Johnson] was playing very slow and passionate, and when we had quit, I noticed no one was saying anything. Then I realized they were crying—both women and men."
107. Ainslie and Whitehill, *Robert Johnson*, p. 28, comment, "Johnson's second take is remarkably different in text and feel, and while it is done well enough, it seems sloppy and improvised when compared to the first take. What happened to the carefully honed guitar and vocal interplay? The tight narrative pacing and the plaintive slides of the first take?"
108. Zumthor, *Oral Poetry*, p. 128.
109. Taft, "Lyrics," pp. 266–268.
110. The extended growling "mmmm" of "Preachin' Blues" adds emphasis to the hard-driving quality of the song and also echoes the style of Son House who recorded his own "Preachin' the Blues" (Pts. 1 and 2). In "Hellhound On My Trail," the "mmmm" of the opening stanza affects a plaintive moaning quality, which creates the eerie atmosphere of approaching despair so

- noted and admired by Johnson commentators. However, in “Terraplane,” the wordless line is the first line of a stanza that fails to continue the elaborate sexual metaphor developed in the preceding five stanzas. Johnson salvages the stanza by repeating in part the first stanza and then goes on to a new final stanza that reflects the earlier poetry. A second take of “Terraplane” does not exist, but I think the text reveals a momentary lapse in memory.
111. See the appendix for examples.
 112. Of the established line *A nickel is a nickel a dime is dime*, Taft, “Lyrics,” p. 312, states, “One may say that, in blues performance, the two formulas have ‘ossified’ into an indivisible line.” Barnie, “Oral Formulas,” 47–48, writes, “A singer who begins with ‘The sun’s gonna shine in my back door some day’ will almost invariably conclude with ‘The wind’s gonna rise, blow my blues away.’ . . . No doubt the widespread dissemination of blues via gramophone records hastened this process of ossification; but it is probably inherent in the lyric structure of the blues itself, which makes it easy and natural for memorable lines and stanzas to achieve a set form.” Both writers note that the convention does not prevent the singer from inventing a new variation. Barnie, in “Formulaic Lines,” 457, points out that “a singer will often show a preference for a particular coupling of formulas, so that in *his* blues that coupling becomes ossified—a set piece committed to memory.”
 113. The motif contributes to the larger premise of social isolation, which is discussed further in chapter 3.
 114. Calt, “The Idioms,” 59; Calt explains that barrelhouse proprietors and prostitutes wore nation sacks.
 115. For example, LaVere, liner notes to *The Complete Recordings*, p. 29, defines “dry long so” as “a dialectic description of an impoverished condition. In this case, it relates specifically to not having enough necessities to last through the winter.”
 116. Calt, “The Idioms,” 56; for the citation, see Hurston, *Watching God*, p. 42. Calt offers the translation “For no reason; for nothing” and concludes, “Johnson’s couplet apparently implies that a homeless girlfriend will find it necessary to trade sexual favors for shelter.”
 117. For example, *I received a letter* : that my man was dying (SmiC-10).
 118. For example, *I’d go up on the mountain : call my baby back* (MooP-2; Virg-1; and JefB-45).
 119. Groom, “Standing,” 11.
 120. Of Johnson’s “Phonograph Blues,” Oliver, *Screening*, p. 188, writes, “the Vocalion company chose to censor it and it was unissued. . . Perhaps it was the specific reference to Beatrice that occasioned the rejection of the recording. . .”
 121. Johnson also employs extended sexual metaphors in “Dead Shrimp Blues,” “Milkcow’s Calf Blues,” “They’re Red Hot,” and, possibly, “Stones In My Passway.”
 122. Take 2 is also different musically; Groom, “Standing,” 11, states, “The two takes of *Phonograph Blues* provide an interesting example of Johnson trying out different guitar accompaniments to the same lyrics. The first

- take is at a slower tempo than the second and uses a guitar accompaniment similar to the slow boogie of 'Dead Shrimp Blues' whereas take two has a recurring 'Dust My Broom'-like phrase adding urgency to the performance."
123. For example: "When I get down and out : sing this lonesome song" (WillJ-8).
 124. Here, the explicit call to God significantly contrasts with the presence of the Devil in Johnson's later work such as "Me and The Devil Blues" and "Hell Hound On My Trail," both recorded in 1937. Johnson's demonology receives much attention from today's blues audience; see, e.g., Evans, "Pact With The Devil," 21 (1996): 12–13; 22 (1996): 12–13; 23 (1996): 12–13.
 125. *Poor boy* occurs thirty-nine times in Taft's corpus.
 126. Johnson is the only singer to name himself in this way; "poor Bob" recurs in "Preaching Blues"—"Travel on, poor Bob"—and "Stones In My Passway": "My enemies have betrayed me, have overtaken poor Bob at last." The device leads writers to believe his songs are autobiographical.
 127. Willie Brown is thought to be the Delta blues singer who recorded, in 1930, "M&O Blues" and "Future Blues" and who sometimes accompanied Johnson's mentor Son House.
 128. Occurring 563 times in Taft's *Concordance*, *morning* is the 83rd most frequently used word; it is most often found in the major x-formula *I woke up this morning*.
 129. Groom, "Standing," 12, states, "The second take is slightly slower-tempoed, a less separate but more ominous ('dark gonna catch me here') performance than take one."
 130. Lord, *Singer*, p. 13.
 131. Barnie, "Formulaic Lines," 457.
 132. Taft, "Lyrics," p. 404.
 133. O'Neil, "Oral-Formulaic Structure," p. 75.
 134. *Ibid.*, p. 72. O'Neil also includes statistics for *Beowulf* as comparison in terms of poem length and genre: *Beo I* is 79% formulaic and *Beo II* is 70%.

Chapter 3

1. Examples include Springer, "Regulatory Function," 278–287 and Ottenheimer, "Emotional Release".
2. Cone, *The Spirituals*, p. 112.
3. The poetic expression of the Old English *Wulf & Eadwacer* and *The Wife's Lament* is constructed somewhat differently from that of the male-spoken poems; likewise, the blues songs of female singer-speakers, which predated and thereby greatly influenced the recordings of male singers, are quite different in many respects in terms of composition and style. Therefore, I have elected to treat exclusively the poetry of male speakers here. In keeping with my study of Robert Johnson's work in chapter 2,

all examples are from songs recorded before 1937, the year of Robert Johnson's second, and last, recording session.

4. *Deor* l. 35 and *Wan* 8–9a. The introductory cluster is discussed in chapter 1.
5. Greenfield, “The Formulaic Expression,” 200–206.
6. *Earmne anhogan* occurs verbatim in *Beo* l. 2368a and *Max III* l. 19a. A variation, *enge anhoga*, appears in *Glc* l. 997a.
7. *Wineleas urecca* appears in *WL* l. 10a and *Res* l. 91a. Greenfield, in “The Formulaic Expression,” 201–202, notes that the substitution of “guma” in the *Wan* “avoid[s] alliteration in the off-verse.”
8. *Lonesome* occurs 185 times in Taft's *Blues Lyric Poetry: A Concordance*, ranking 174th in frequency.
9. On the deprivation formula, see Greenfield, “The Formulaic Expression,” 202.
10. For more on type-scenes, see Fry, “Old English Formulaic,” 48–54.
11. Edwards, “Exile, Self,” pp. 24–25, uses *Wan* and *Sfr* as examples in his discussion of memory in exile literature as a “mode of transformation.”
12. Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*.
13. Similarly, at the very end of *Wan* the “narrator” reconfigures, in Christian terms, a lost past of stability as a future state sought by the faithful: “Wel bið þam þe him are seceð, /frofre to fæder on heofonum, þær us eal seo fæstnung stondeð [Well be it for him who seeks grace, consolation from the Father in heaven, where for us all stability resides, ll. 114b–115]. Within the Wanderer's memory of the lord resides, for the Christian narrator, spiritual hope; the external conflation of past and future within the lord–thane scene seeks to console the Wanderer's despair of earthly transience.
14. See Oliver, *Blues Fell This Morning*, pp. 132–146.
15. Greenfield, “The Formulaic Expression,” 204.
16. See Oliver's chapter, “Railroad for My Pillow,” in *Blues Fell This Morning*, pp. 43–68, for a discussion on the railroad and travel in blues. He sees the association of escape and freedom with the railroad as a tradition surviving from the days of the Underground Railroad.
17. House, “The Jinx Blues.”
18. Greenfield, “The Formulaic Expression,” 203.
19. Another collocation occurs in *Juliana*, when the devil states, “. . . ic sceal feor þonan / heanmod hweofan, hropra bidæled, . . . [. . . I must go far from there, wander downcast, deprived of pleasure, . . . , ll. 389b–390].
20. The other available option for dealing with problems in blues is physical violence, evident in songs such as those known as Caliber Blues. The idea of working things out in a quiet, rational manner does not exist in the blues of the 1920s and 1930s; Keil, *Urban Blues*, p. 73, states that “attempts to understand and patch up conjugal bonds and other problems” arises later as a thematic stance in the lyrics of postwar urban blues.
21. *Home* ranks sixty-eight in Taft's frequency list, one place higher than *blues*.
22. “Ain't No Tellin',” *Mississippi John Hurt*.
23. For commentary on these lines, see Klinck, *Old English Elegies*, p. 115.
24. *Mind* occurs 533 times in Taft's *Concordance* and ranks 86th in frequency.

25. According to Jackson (ed.), *Wake Up Dead Man*, pp. 29–30, worksongs are sung specifically to accompany work: “The aesthetic has always been one of *participation*, not performance; . . . The songs differ from all other folksongs in one regard: they do not posit an audience.” Worksongs “supply a rhythm for work,” help ease the boredom of work, and “offer a partial outlet for the inmates’ tensions.” The complexity of a song’s lyrics and melody depends upon the work it accompanies: the less structured the work, the more highly structured the song. The solo songs used when picking cotton sometimes take the structural form of blues, and many in Jackson’s collection, compiled in the 1960s, contain lines and phrases found in the blues of the 1920s and 1930s.
26. Jackson, *Wake Up Dead Man*, p. 37.
27. The formula is often found in conjunction with another full-line, which blames the lover:

*I’m lying in jail : with my face turned to the wall
And that woman I’m loving : she was the cause of it all.* (Wilk-1)

28. Lacy uses the stanza in his “Mississippi Jail,” which is an extended “groan,” void of humor.
29. Jackson, *Wake Up Dead Man*, p. 39.
30. For a discussion of *ham* in *XSt*, see Sleeth, *Studies in Christ and Satan*, pp. 93–97.
31. “Æce æt helle duru dracan eardigað” [Forever at hell’s door the dragons dwell, *XSt* l. 97]. “Hær is nedran swæg” [Here, is the sound of snakes, l. 101b].
32. *Niðer under næssum* is a formula that occurs at *XSt* l. 90a and in *Glc* l. 563, also in reference to the location of hell.
33. *X gebunden* [x bound] occurs over twenty times in the *Concordance ASPR*.
34. A variation of the formula occurs later in Eve’s speech as “*beorned ð in bendum*” [burns in bonds, *XSt* l. 412a]. The formula is found also in *Chr I* at l. 147a and *DHell* at l. 88a. The *XSt* poet did not take advantage of *bendum fæstne*, a bondage formula that elsewhere occurs verbatim four times.
35. For a comparison of the two Satans, see Finnegan, *Christ and Satan*, pp. 48–49.
36. Greenfield, “Spiritual Exile,” p. 324, sees the sequence of exile imagery marking the phases of “man’s spiritual history.”
37. Rendall, “Bondage and Freeing,” 505, states, “a principle way in which the expanding relevance of the poem’s subject is brought home is through the expanding application of the image of bondage.”
38. Of the ninety-five occurrences of *luck* in Taft’s corpus, eighty-five or so pertain to *bad luck*:

Bad luck and trouble : and the blues without a dime. (GibC-15)

Hard luck and trouble : meets me at the door. (GreLi-13)

May bad luck overtake you : pile up on you in a heap. (Whea-31)

Hard time(s) occurs twenty-nine times, referring, in most cases, to a general economic state:

Hard times here : everywhere you go. (JamS-4)

Hard times don't worry me : I was broke when it first started out.
(JohLo-17)

But hard times : is knocking on everybody's door. (DaviW-3)

39. In Taft's *Concordance*, the opening line occurs only in the songs of Bracey, but it occurs much later in Holiday's 1954 "Stormy Blues." The closing line is formulaic and often paired with, or in close proximity to, the line *If you don't believe I'm sinking : look what a fool I've been* (ThoH-7).
40. As in "Oh, Lord, Oh, my Lord, Oh, my good Lord! / Keep me from sinking down," 31B in Dixon, *Wesen und Wandel geistlicher Volkslieder Negro Spirituals*.
41. Occurring 201 times, *worried* ranks 166th in frequency. After *blues*, to be "worried" is the next most common expression of mental distress. *Trouble* is not far behind *worried*, ranking 173rd with 186 instances in Taft's corpus.
42. Of the twenty-nine instances of *bothered*, sixteen occur within this formulaic line. Blind Lemon Jefferson has a slightly different version: "She keeps me worried : and bothered in the mind" (JefB-28). *Worried* and *bothered* are also paired in the x-formula *I'm worried and bothered*.
43. In, respectively, "My Black Mama, Pt. 2" (Hous-2) and "Walking Blues."
44. Robert Johnson, "Come On In My Kitchen" (take 2).
45. Trouble can also be found with bad luck:

Bad luck wakes me every morning : trouble follows me all night long.
(GibC-10)

Bad luck is my buddy : and trouble is my friend. (LewN-9)

46. See Siems, "Brer Robert," 141-157.
47. Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, p. 6, states, "Esu is the guardian of the crossroads, master of style and of stylus, the phallic god of generation and fecundity, master of that elusive, mystical barrier that separates the divine world from the profane."
48. The devil, sometimes known as Legba, plays a significant role in the lore of blues, especially in connection to the receipt of musical skill at the crossroads. Both Robert Johnson and Tommy Johnson were said to have undergone the ritual.
49. *Good morning x* is an x-formula often used to begin a song. The addressee is most commonly the Blues, or the judge of prison songs, and one instance of "Mr. Devil."
50. For example, "Me and the Devil Blues":

Early this mornin' when you knocked upon my door
Early this mornin' ooo when you knocked upon my door
And I said, "Hello Satan, I believe it's time to go."

Me and the devil was walkin' side by side
 Me and the devil ooo was walkin' side by side
 And I'm goin' to beat my woman until I get satisfied.

51. Culler, "Apostrophe," p. 139.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 142–143: "The poet makes himself a poetic presence through an image of voice, . . . A phrase like 'O wild West Wind' evokes poetic presence because the wind becomes a *thou* only in relation to a poetic act, only in the moment when poetic voice constitutes itself."
54. *XSt*, l. 39a.
55. The hunger of the mind is emphasized later in line 62 when the speaker's thoughts travel "gifre ond grædig."

Chapter 4

1. Krapp and Dobbie (eds.) *The Exeter Book*, p. ix. Leofric was appointed bishop to Crediton in 1046 and then moved the bishopric to Exeter in 1050. While it is possible that Leofric brought the Exeter Book with him from Crediton, Conner, in *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, p. 94, concludes that it was produced at Exeter along with two other manuscripts written in the same hand: London, Lambeth Palace, MS. 149 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Bodley 319. See also Muir, "Watching the Exeter Book," 3–22.
2. For the dating of the manuscript, see Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, item 116, p. 153. Muir (ed.), *The Exeter Anthology*, pp. 1 and 27–30, offers the period "circa 965–75." Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, p. 76, concludes a slightly earlier time frame of "ca 950 x ca 970" and in "The Structure," 238, believes that "[o]ne scribe probably did write the manuscript, but at different times."
3. See Sisam, "The Exeter Book," p. 99; for a discussion of Exeter during the Benedictine Reform, see Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, pp. 21–32.
4. Krapp and Dobbie (eds.), *The Exeter Book*, p. xi.
5. Förster, "The Preliminary Matter," p. 44, explains that the first 7 folios contain records of Leofric's and Canon Leowine's donations to St. Peter's, Exeter, a Latin abstract of Leofric's donation list, and twelfth-century legal transactions such as manumissions and conveyances of land. It has been determined that these preliminary folios belong to Cambridge University Library MS li. 2. 11 but, as Muir, *The Exeter Anthology*, p. 3, states, "were probably removed from that codex and bound with *The Exeter Anthology* when the former manuscript was given to Archbishop Parker in 1566." Thus, the Exeter Book proper consists of 123 folios. For a detailed codicological examination of the Exeter Book, see Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, pp. 95–147; Muir, *The Exeter Anthology*, pp. 3–16; Krapp and Dobbie (eds.), *The Exeter Book*, pp. ix–xvi; and Pope, "Palaeography and Poetry," pp. 25–65.
6. Conner, "The Structure," 234–235.
7. Muir, "Watching the Exeter Book," 11–12.

8. Conner, "The Structure," 236–237, finds that four of the seven drypoint drawings contained in MS 3501 were written over. Muir, *The Exeter Anthology*, p. 16, finds four more drawings in addition to Conner's seven.
9. Krapp and Dobbie (eds.), *The Exeter Book*, pp. li and 174, treat this fragment as the conclusion of *Ptg* ll. 1–2a, but there is probably a leaf missing; Muir, *The Exeter Anthology*, pp. 276–277, separates the texts, naming the second *HmF* 3.
10. Conner, "The Structure," 233–242.
11. *Ibid.*, 234.
12. Conner's theory that the first booklet was written last is based on the progression of the ligatures with long-s and the initial *eth*; see his *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, pp. 110–128.
13. Krapp and Dobbie (eds.), *The Exeter Book*, pp. xiv–xv; Muir, "A Preliminary Report," 277, finds goldleaf traces on ninety folios: "The presence of these traces in a manuscript lacking illumination indicates that at some stage after the Exeter Book was copied, and probably when the texts were no longer understood, it became a repository for sheets of goldleaf used to decorate other manuscripts produced in the scriptorium."
14. The runic signature of Cyn(e)wulf appears within the texts of *Chr* 2 (797–807a) and *Jul* (704–708). On Cynewulf, see Anderson, *Cynewulf*; Sisam, "Cynewulf and His Poetry," pp. 1–28.
15. Each riddle is begun on a new line with a large initial capital and finished with end punctuation. However, there is no break (i.e., end punctuation or capitalization) in the manuscript between the riddles Krapp and Dobbie number 2 and 3, 42 and 43, 47 and 48. Within *HbM*, lines 12 and 25 are treated in the same manner as a closing line: the final words are wrapped and followed by end-punctuation, and the next line is begun with a large capital letter. See Muir, *The Exeter Anthology*, 2: 357. The fact that the scribe treated *Deor* similarly does not seem to bother editors: each section begins with a large capital and is end-punctuated.
16. Sisam, "The Exeter Book," pp. 98–103. For instance, the nonword "swist" appears three times for "swift" and is corrected only once.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 102–103: "It seems unlikely that the latest scribe is responsible. His highly schooled, monumental hand, the frequent confusion of similar letters. . . , and slips like *Azarias* 148 *sacerdos sadfaest* for *sacerdas soðfaest*, all point to a mechanical copyist." But, see also Doane, "The Ethnography," 420–439, esp. 429n.
18. Frank, "Germanic Legend," pp. 88–106.
Notably, English poetry anthologies were around in the mid-ninth century; in his biography of King Alfred, Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, p. 75, tells us that the young Alfred won a book of English poetry from his mother by being the first of his brothers to learn and recite its contents.
19. Frank, "Lexicography," p. 210, notes that the Exeter scribe's confusion over the language suggests that it had "early fallen into disuse."
20. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 202.

21. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 202.
22. Sisam, "The Exeter Book," p. 98.
23. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 202.
24. Muir, *The Exeter Anthology*, p. 25.
25. Anderson, *Two Literary Riddles*, p. 3.
26. Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, p. 148; on pp. 158–159, Conner offers Walahfrid Strabo's "Elegy on Reichenau" as an analogue for *Wan*, *Sfr*, and *Rim*, all of Booklet II. While his booklet theory makes sense, I am not convinced that the *Chr* and *Glc* poems reflect a development in style, mainly because the last extant lines of this booklet contain exactly what Conner identifies as pre-Reform poetry: *Glc B* 1346b–1356a contains a lament of exile, spoken by Guthlac's disciple, which is similar in tone to *Wan*. Exile passages can be found as late as the 1065 chronicle poem "The Death of Edward": "Wæs a bliðemod bealuleas kyng, / þeah he lange ær, lande bereafod, / wunode wræclastum wide geond eorðan," [The blameless king was always blithe in mood / though he, long before, deprived of land, endured the exile-paths widely throughout the earth, ll. 15–17]. The poem appears in MS. Cotton Tiberius Bi and MS. Cotton Tiberius Biv.; I have cited from the edition of Dobbie (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*.
27. Frank, "Lexicography," p. 215.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 215–216.
29. Howe, *The Old English Catalogue Poems*, p. 14.
30. See Howe's discussion of *Wds* and *Deor* in *The Old English Catalogue Poems*, pp. 166–201.
31. The convention of the *sum* list is alluded to in *Deor* at lines 31–34: the Lord changes frequently showing favor to many and "sumum weana dæl" (to some a share of misery, l. 34b).
32. *Max* 1 35: "Dol biþ se þe his dryhten nat, to þæs oft cymedð deað unþinged" [Foolish is he who does not know his lord, so often comes death unexpectedly].
33. *Phx*: "wundrum wrætlice" (l. 63a), "Wrælic is seo womb neoþan, wundrum fæger" (l. 307), and "aweht wrætlice wundrum to life" (l. 367).
34. "Noldan hi þa torhtan tacen oncnawan / þe him beforan fremede freobearn godes, / monig mislicu, geond middangeard" [They would not acknowledge the splendid signs which the Son of God performed before them, many and various, throughout the earth, *Chr* ll. 642–644].
35. Head, *Representation*, p. 12.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
37. *Ibid.*
38. The other instance of overlap between poetic codices is Exeter *Soul and Body II* and the Vercelli *Soul and Body I*. The differences exhibited in both cases of shared text give rise to many questions with regards to exemplar and scribal intervention; see Sisam, "The Authority," pp. 29–44.
39. Head, *Representation*, p. 109.
40. *W&E*, l. 19; *WL* l. 1a.
41. "Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America," 1324.

42. *Ibid.*, 1325. For an account of Lomax and Leadbelly at the MLA see Wolfe and Lornell, *The Life and Legend*, pp. 133–136; see also Porterfield, *Last Cavalier*, pp. 342–343, who comments that the event “surely rates high in the all-time annals of cultural collisions.” The program for the smoker also included “Elizabethan Ayres to the Virginals, sung by Mary Peabody Hotson” and “Songs and Chantees by the diners, with Leslie Hotson as Master of Singing.”
43. According to the “Proceedings of the Semi-Centennial Meeting,” 1429 and 1442, for the 1933 MLA in St. Louis, Lomax presented “Songs from Negro Convict Camps” for a Comparative Literature session and “The Folk Songs of Negro Convicts” for the smoker held after the “Old Guard Dinner.” Of the presentation at the 1933 MLA, Wolfe and Lornell, *The Life and Legend*, p. 130, state, “This was the first time that recordings of black vernacular music had been heard at the MLA meeting. . .”
44. Wolfe and Lornell, *The Life and Legend*, p. 135.
45. Lomax, *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter*, p. 112.
46. See Dawidoff, “Prologue,” pp. 3–19, who states that contrary to the belief that country music is “pure white,” it developed as a “hybrid form conflating many extant styles of popular and religious music with whatever individual innovations people like Rodgers brought to it,” and many well known country musicians had “black musical mentors.”
47. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
48. Richardson’s “T and T Blues” was recorded on February 13, 1928 and is the earliest usage of the line “T for Texas. . .” listed in Taft’s *Concordance*. The others include Frank Stokes’s “Nehi Mama Blues” (August 1928; Stok-16), Billy Bird’s “Alabama Blues—Part 1” (October 1928; BirB-2), Willie Brown’s “Future Blues” (1931; BrowW-2), and Bo Chatman’s “Shake ‘Em On Down” (1938; ChatB-23). Regardless of where or with whom “T for Texas, T for Tennessee” originated, I assume that the success of Jimmie Rodgers’ “Blue Yodel” (which later gained the subtitle “T for Texas”) had a lot to do with the line’s inclusion in the repository of blues formulas.
49. Lomax and Leadbelly were featured in a *March of Time* newsreel: see Wolfe and Lornell, *The Life and Legend*, pp. 164–168; and Nolan Porterfield, *Last Cavalier*, pp. 354–356.
50. Wolfe and Lornell, *The Life and Legend*, pp. 158–159, recount the conflict between the commercial “sensibility” of the ARC officials and Lomax’s insistence on “folk” music during the recording sessions. Leadbelly did record “Irene” (the song made famous by the Weavers in 1950), but it was never issued.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 159. “Governor Pat Neff” is the legendary song said to have motivated the Texas Governor to release Leadbelly from prison, a story much publicized in the media. Two months later, ARC made one more attempt; six more songs were recorded, and one record was released. Unfortunately, that too failed and ARC wrote off the venture.

52. Lomax's son Alan, who was affiliated with the left, and family friend Mary Barnicle, a professor of folklore and literature at New York University and social activist, were instrumental in helping Leadbelly obtain singing jobs at labor movement events.
53. Wright, "Huddie Ledbetter." See also Wolfe and Lornell, *Life and Legend*, pp. 200–202.
54. Wright, "Huddie Ledbetter."
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Ibid.*
57. Denning, *The Cultural Front*, p. 91.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 355.
59. For a study of the blues of the Piedmont, see Bastin, *Red River Blues*.
60. Cantwell, *When We Were Good*, pp. 139–140, explains that a number of people were associated with the Almanacs, which was more of a singing organization than one fixed group: the "informal mixing actually resulted in several Almanac groups, sometimes answering different bookings simultaneously on a given night."
61. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
63. The observation is attributed to Richard Reuss in *Ibid.*, p. 147.
64. Asch, "Birth and Growth," p. 94, owner of Folkways Records, explains that Smith, like himself, bought up large numbers of 78s during the war when a shellac shortage forced the record companies to buy back discs from their dealers: "New York Band and Instrument and all the other dealers I used to pick up records from had tables full of this stuff—the greatest music in the world that New Yorkers knew nothing about."
65. Smith, foreword to Handbook for *Anthology*.
66. Cantwell, *When We Were Good*, p. 204. Of the original cover, Marcus, *Invisible*, p. 93, observes, "[The hand of God] divided creation into balanced spheres of energy, into fundaments; printed over the filaments of the etching and its crepuscular Latin explanations were record titles and the names of the blues singers, hillbilly musicians, and gospel chanters Smith was bringing together for the first time. It was if they had something to do with each other."
67. Marcus, *Invisible*, p. 93n. The recent (CD) reissue of the *Anthology* returns to Smith's original cover.
68. Cohen, "Rare Interview," [p. 126]. Smith does not elaborate upon his criteria for evaluating the quality of the performances.
69. The Handbook presents examples of typical record sleeves and catalogue covers, some illustrated with racial and rural stereotypes. Smith's caption on p. 23 of the Handbook reads, "The advertising on these envelopes gives a good idea [*sic*] of the companies['] attitude toward their artists."
70. Cohen, "Rare Interview," [p. 134].
71. Cantwell, *When We Were Good*, p. 193.
72. This would be especially true in 1952 when the *Anthology's* sounds were truly new to most of its audience members. In contrast, by the late 1990s

the Handbook was of less importance to new listeners as an orientation tool, mainly because the *Anthology* was instrumental in opening up a market for reissues of early recordings. As a result, the blues and country tunes like those in the collection are now easily available and thus familiar. But the latest release of the *Anthology* on CD features *A Booklet of Essays, Appreciations, and Annotations Pertaining to the Anthology of American Folk Music*, which augments Smith's notes with updated information on all aspects of each song including updated research on the performers. The *Booklet of Essays*, along with the vast number of literary publications on blues and country music that have appeared in the last forty years, attests to how the second audience experiences the oral texts through reading.

73. For example, selection 5: "Old Lady and the Devil / by Bill and Belle Reed / Vocal solo with guitar. / Recorded in 1928. / Original issue Columbia 15336D(wi472ii). // MEDIEVAL WOMAN DEFEATS DEVIL DESPITE HUSBAND'S PRAYERS // The motif of a wife who terrorizes daemons is widely distributed in Europe and Asia. Child's two versions (no. 278) are both quite similar to the present recording. / See also other British versions in Alfred Williams' *Folk Songs of the Upper Thames* p. 211 and H.R. Hayward's *Ulster Songs and Ballads* p. 32. // Discography: *Battle Axe and the Devil*. Bill Cox and Cliff Hobbs. Vocalion 04811. . .Bibliography: Barry-1-325; Barry-11-60; Belden-94; . . ."
74. Smith, Handbook, notes to selection 41.
75. *Ibid.*, notes to selections 42, 43, and 56.
76. "Run and tell Aunt Sally that her old grey goose is dead / The one she's been saving to make a feather bed."
77. In order, the songs are "Poor Boy Blues" by Ramblin' Thomas, "Feather Bed" by Cannon's Jug Stompers, "Country Blues" by Dock Boggs, "Ninety-Nine Year Blues" by Julius Daniels, and "Prison Cell Blues" by Blind Lemon Jefferson. In his Handbook notes to selection 71, Smith explains that the songs themselves display little overlap in lyrics, but in each "most of the verses are selected from a general stock of about 800 frequently heard couplets dealing with prison."
78. Smith, Handbook, notes to selection 74.
79. Fahey, "Untitled," p. 9, states, "The White and Black folks found [in the *Anthology*], despite the persistent protestations of many white artists. . ., listened to and drew from each other's musics in a landscape of musical interchange nonexistent during this same period between any other traditions to be found under the rubric of 'American' music."
80. Harry Smith's words in Cohen, "Rare Interview," [p. 127].
81. Marcus, *Invisible*, p. 87.
82. For example, "When That Great Ship Went Down" is about the sinking of the Titanic in 1912, and, according to Smith's notes, the Child ballad "Fatal Flower Garden" recounts events that occurred in 1255.
83. See note 26 earlier for the exilic portion of the 1065 chronicle poem "The Death of Edward."

Conclusion

1. Lunney, "Deor," *The Margaret Annas*, Big Deal Records, 1998.
2. Guralnick, *Searching*, p. 5.
3. Ellison, *Shadow and Act*, p. 257.
4. Marcus, *Invisible*, p. 113. For Dylan and blues, see also Gray, *Song & Dance*, especially ch. 9.

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