Still, there is a good payoff in the interesting final chapter, and H.'s thesis deserves careful consideration.

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HOMER AND MEMORY

E. MINCHIN: *Homer and the Resources of Memory: Some Applications of Cognitive Theory to the* Iliad *and the* Odyssey. Pp. viii + 247. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. Cased, £40. ISBN: 0-19-815257-4.

M.'s book furthers a recent approach to the Homeric poems that explains their oral or post-oral features in terms of 'choice' of the medium of quasi-spoken/conversational language and not in terms of the 'binding' tradition of an oral culture still unaware of writing. This approach developed from recent scholarly interest in performance as a vital aspect not only for formal features but also for the genesis of much Greek archaic and classical poetry. Thanks to the works of Egbert Bakker, and their use of a terminology made easy for classicists, M.'s book is informed theoretically by the powerful interpretative schemes of the linguists' psychology of spoken vs. written language, and promises to provide a more reliable idea of orality than the one proposed by Parry and Lord. Indeed, 'conversational' orality as a choice in function of performance may be synchronically coexistent with writing, and therefore ought to be immune from the doubts cast on the idea of a pre-writing orality both by the evident elements of advanced 'artistic' refinement in the Homeric poems and by the ambiguous evidence provided by the comparativism of Parry and Lord about the poems' supposed 'oral' origins. In any case, I personally believe that the synchronic and 'historical' interpretations of orality cannot be easily kept separate in archaic Greece, when culture either was oral or at least freshly post-oral: since, of course, 'in illiterate societies, the only grammar is that of spoken language' (S. R. Slings, *CPh* 87 [1992], 100), it is undeniable that for the author(s) of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* choosing the grammar of the spoken language—if they really felt this as a choice—was a much more historically conditioned 'choice' than it may be, for example, for a modern storyteller-in-performance.

Following Bakker's analyses of microstructural features of Homeric language in terms of oral speech (particles, appositional syntax, formulas as 'tracking devices' for the hearers' attention), and of Homeric perception of verbal tenses in the perspective of a verbal actualization of the past into the present time of the performance, M. investigates some larger units of the narration: typical scenes (Chapter 1), catalogues (2), descriptive pauses (3), similes (4), invocation of the Muses (5), ring composition (6). Her task is to explore the dynamics of the storytelling-in-performance according to the 'economy' of the memory systems investigated by cognitive psychology. She assumes that 'if memory guides the processes of comprehension, it guides also the processes of composition' (p. 11), and seeks to prove that for the birth of the Homeric texts the memorization of a traditional *technē* of singing and of traditional contents of songs played a smaller rôle than the achronic strategies and the economies of memory in the practice of storytelling: 'professional storytellers work not so much *from* memory, but *with* memory' (p. 29).

Instead of the comparative model of the Serbo-Croatian singers, or of

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contemporary primitive cultures, which tried to be 'historically' analogical, M. and Bakker rely on a transcultural and panchronic invariability of the human *Gestalt*. In parallel with Bakker's comparative model of the colloquial speaker and his categories of 'intonation units' and 'tracking devices', M. sometimes resorts to parameters such as the dynamics of 'auditory memory' (for the interpretation of the Homeric catalogues) or of 'visual memory' (for the similes and the descriptive pauses); the 'schemas' or 'scripts' in the 'episodic memory', namely the standardized structures of routine actions or events that life experience conglomerates around the most common life situations, and which the storyteller can safely adopt, without doubting that his hearers will integrate any missing details (for the typical scenes); and the 'abstracts' and 'codas' by which the 'procedural memory' quite often stresses the main points in any kind of telling of anecdotes (for ring composition).

In reality, it is only in the case of the typical scenes that M.'s 'speech orality' is in competition with the 'traditional orality' of Parry and Lord, in the sense that only they are interpreted by M. as generated from a different origin—they should not be building blocks of the tale taught to the apprentice singers by experienced singers or by the traditional pre-existent songs, but 'scripts' of routine experiences not peculiar or exclusive to a well-trained oral poet, but part of everyone's repertoire in everyday speech. In all other cases M. is well aware that she is proposing a different but not incompatible interpretation: in trying to go beyond the convenience in composition which Parry and Lord acknowledged as the motivation for the main oral features of the Homeric texts, and which M. does not deny (p. 70), M. most often finds no more than the genesis of this convenience (the memory-based strategies help and speed up the singer in the preparation of the performance).

Of great importance are some of M.'s insights into the aesthetic results to which the singer's mastery of his powers of memory leads: the catalogues are 'showpieces' by which the singer displays an exceptional performative skill in arranging the material with euphonic attractiveness and in overcoming the common limitations of memory; the descriptions and the similes are often a form of 'internal evaluation' which highlights details of characters or situations without interrupting the narration and stepping outside it with an 'external evaluation' (subjective commentary), since inside speech-performance subjective utterances are more difficult (for the poet) and less engaging (for the listeners) than narrative. Especially convincing is M.'s analysis of the distribution of invocations to the Muses in the *Iliad*, which are instanced for the last time at 16.112–13: since they are meta-narrational interruptions of the story at special moments that need (and are intended) to re-engage the listeners' attention, 'the poet turns to his Muse and acknowledges her contribution to his performance during that long period when he is setting up his story, when he is weaving together its complications', but stops when the path of resolution is reached, and the poet becomes 'confident that the steady movement of the narrative towards its end-point would hold his audience's interest' (pp. 171–2). Of course, someone might doubt that this choice specifically instances the poet's grasp of the 'storytelling format' of complicating action vs. resolution, since it might also be a functional device of a writing poet. The same doubt can be thrown on M.'s interpretation of ring composition as a consequence of common speech formats, such as entrance- and exit-talks, abstract (a prologizing guide to the listeners that summarizes or evaluates the main contents), and coda (a summarizing epilogue or final comment), etc., where repetition of words or themes most often occurs. But the plausibility of alternative, and more traditional, explanations for some cases does not invalidate the importance of M.'s approach. Indeed, the surest outcome ofM.'s work is to show that the dynamics of memory and

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storytelling-in-performance provide a structural frame that *can* explain some aspects of the narrative style of Homer with which the 'traditional' orality of Parry and Lord could hardly cope, and which in recent times had been more and more often analysed in terms of narratology of written poetry. Whether the oral Homer(s) relied mainly on the strategies of conversation-in-performance or mainly on the 'artificial' techniques and themes of a tradition of oral poetry is an issue which perhaps will be still open—but as far as I know, a similar uncertainty exists about the nature of poetic language in general: *écart* from the rules (anti-prose) or rediscovery of the truest origins of language against the arbitrariness of linguistic signs?

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PITY IN THE *ILIAD*

J. KIM: *The Pity of Achilles: Oral Style and the Unity of the* Iliad. Greek Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches. Pp. x + 203. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000. Paper, $22.95. ISBN: 0-8476-8621-3.

J. Kim argues that the *Iliad* possesses a central unifying focus emphasized by formulae; more provocatively, this unifying theme is not Achilles' μῆνις but his pity. Pity and its cognates and opposites, including both pitilessness and wrath, link together the disparate themes commonly proposed of the poem by critics.

Following a brief introduction, K. begins her analysis with Book 24, and the argument that the burial of Hektor and reconciliation with Priam are made possible because 'Achilles *pities* Priam' (p. 12). Neither this pity nor Book 24 is foreign to heroism, to Achilles, or to the *Iliad* as a whole, for Achilles' pity towards Priam is intimately 'connected to the theme of Achilles' *mēnis*' (p. 33). This leads in Chapter 2 to a detailed study of the meaning and context of pity and its cognates and opposites in the *Iliad*. K. argues that pity in general, both in Achilles' case and that of other warriors and even gods, is not just a simple emotion, for it manifests itself in a variety of ways and can be seen to instigate specific actions: helping, healing, saving, avenging, and giving burial. As such, it is a feeling or action directed, almost by definition, towards mortals (pp. 66–7).

Chapter 3 is concerned with the *Iliad*'s structure. K. agrees that the poem is tripartite in structure, but claims some originality in locating Book 9 within Part Two rather than Part One (p. 69 n. 1). Thematically, the poem's divisions centre around pity, with the first section (Books 1–8) dominated by Achilles' pity for and subsequent pitilessness against the Achaians, the second section (Books 9–16) exploring the conflict between that pitilessness and his pity towards his friends, and the third (Books 17–24) focusing on Achilles' pitilessness against the Trojans, and ultimate reconciliation with and pity for Priam. In this sense, the sufferings of the Achaians are a direct consequence of Achilles' withdrawing his pity, just as Patroklos' return to the fray in Achilles' armour is not only 'The pivotal event of the poem', but also the 'thematic resolution of the series of pleas for pity directed to Achilles' throughout Books 9–16 (p. 103). K. argues further that Achilles in his wrath reassesses who his friends are and accepts that some of those friends are now Trojans (pp. 98ff).

Chapter 4 reiterates much that has gone before, notably the connexion between Achilles' μῆνις and pity (and pitilessness), but adds that the focus of that μῆνις subsequent to the reconciliation with Agamemnon is not Hektor but death. Connected

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