Trends in Classics – Supplementary Volumes

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Homeric Contexts

Neoanalysis and the Interpretation
of Oral Poetry

Edited by

Franco Montanari, Antonios Rengakos
and Christos Tsagalis

De Gruyter

Preface

On 28–30 of May 2010 the 4th Trends in Classics International Conference “Homer in the 21st Century: Orality, Neoanalysis, Interpretation” was held in Thessaloniki. The title of the Proceedings is only slightly modified in the present publication, now brought out as *Homeric Contexts: Neoanalysis and the Interpretation of Oral Poetry*. The event was part of a long-standing consolidated tradition which is still vibrant and dynamic, and will be represented this year by the 6th Trends in Classics International Conference, “Hellenistic Studies at a Crossroads”, to be held in Thessaloniki on 25–27 May 2012. As is known, all the Proceedings of these Thessaloniki Conferences are published in the series “Trends in Classics – Supplementary Volumes” (TCSV). Let us offer a quick historical overview of the events and their Proceedings.

The first Trends in Classics International Conference was held in December 2007, on the theme of “Narratology and Interpretation”; the Proceedings were published in 2009 as Vol. 4 of the series, with the same title, *Narratology and Interpretation*, Editors Jonas Grethlein and Antonios Rengakos.

The second Conference was held in December 2008, with the title “Language-Text-Literature. Archetypes, Concepts and Contents of Ancient Scholarship and Grammar”. The published version came out in 2011, as nr. 8 of the series TCSV, entitled *Ancient Scholarship and Grammar. Archetypes, Concepts and Contents*, Editors Stephanos Matthaios, Franco Montanari and Antonios Rengakos.

The third Conference, held in 2009, was devoted to drama, with the title “Crisis on Stage: Tragedy and Comedy in Late Fifth-Century Athens”. The Proceedings, published at the beginning of 2012 as nr. 13 of the TCSV series under the same title as the conference, were edited by Andreas Markantonatos and Bernhard Zimmermann.

After the 2010 Homer Conference, the fifth in the sequence was held on 27–29 May, 2011 and was the first to be devoted to a theme focusing on Latin literature: “Generic Interfaces: Encounters, Interactions and Transformations in Latin Literature”, organized by Stavros Frangoulidis, Stephen J. Harrison, Antonios Rengakos and Theodoros Papangelis. The Proceedings are forthcoming.

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For May 2012 we are now preparing for the sixth Conference, as mentioned above. We are confident that the sequence will continue in the future, producing further important volumes for the TCSV series.

The Proceedings published as the present volume focus in particular on Neoanalysis and the Oral Poetry Theory, with special attention to the issues concerning their inter-relation in current Homeric criticism. This question is also addressed in the *Introduction*. The volume is divided into five parts, which range over a vast array of topics: *Theoretical Issues* (which opens with the methodological-programmatic essay by Wolfgang Kullmann, the founding father of the “new” Neoanalysis); *Iliad*; *Odyssey*; *Language and Formulas*; *Homer and Beyond*. In the round table which concluded the Homer Conference “Omero tremila anni dopo”, held in Genoa on 6–8 July 2000, Kullmann wrote¹: “The congress has proved that the Homeric studies of today are still absolutely alive and have not lost their attractiveness and their importance for our understanding of European history and culture. I am sure it will stimulate vivid discussions in the various countries from which the participants have come”. I am confident we can fully endorse these words, which are just as much in tune with cutting-edge research today as they were at the time: they are a fitting complement to the May 2010 Thessaloniki Conference and its Proceedings and they have lost none of their significance today.

Lastly, we would like to express our warmest thanks to Flavia Cecchi and Giulia D'Alessandro for compiling the Indices.

Franco Montanari – Antonios Rengakos – Christos Tsagalis

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¹ Montanari (ed.) 2002, 671 f.

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Introduction The Homeric Question Today*

Franco Montanari

On 6–8th July 2000 a Conference devoted to Homeric studies was held in Genoa, with the title “*Omero tremila anni dopo*, the Proceedings of which were published in Rome in 2002¹. Ten years after, the 4th Trends in Classics International Conference, held in Thessaloniki on 28–30 of May 2010, was centered around the title “Homer in the 21st Century: Orality, Neoanalysis, Interpretation”; its Proceedings are now published in the present volume, with a slightly modified title: *Homeric Contexts: Neoanalysis and the Interpretation of Oral Poetry*. There are probably no cogent reasons for establishing a relation between these two events, which took place at a distance of ten years from one another, just as ten years separate the publication of the two sets of Proceedings, save for the fact that they constituted two important occasions for reflections on Homeric studies at the outset of the 21st Century and that a number of scholars attended both events and played a significant role on both occasions. This certainly creates a common thread of a certain significance between the two conferences, but it may perhaps be more interesting to observe and interpret the links and differences on the thematic level and on that of the development of research.

The 2000 Genoa Conference was structured into three distinct parts: 1) Il testo: forme dell’espressione e forme del contenuto; 2) La trasmissione del testo: manoscritti ed esegesi antica; 3) Il contesto: archeologia e storia. There was also an extensive “Short Papers” section that addressed a variety of themes, the publication of which takes up one-third of the volume of the Proceedings (a total of sixteen, selected from a widely advertised call for submission)². Just as the title, of an essentially evocative and symbolic

* English translation by Rachel Barritt Costa.

1 Montanari (ed.) 2002.

2 As pointed out by M. Finkelberg in BMCR 2005.09.75 “Some of the so-called Short Papers make up for lacunae in the preceding sections ... Generally speaking, assigning to these papers (some of which are actually longer than those in the preceding sections) the unenviable position of an appendix to the main corpus neither does justice to the high quality of many of them nor works well in

character, in no way implied a dating of Homer³, the aim of the Conference was not to survey the state of the art or to summarize the status quaestionis of every aspect of Homeristics in the transition from the 20th to the 21st Century. Given such a broad-ranging and varied thematic framework, it would have been impossible, on the occasion of one single event, to pursue any aim other than that of presenting a group of authoritative contributions on the various different sectors of Homeristics.

The 2010 Thessaloniki Conference had a strikingly different structure. There was a precise focus underlying the organizational intentions and the resulting works: despite the multifaceted approach, with papers reflecting a wide range of different points of view and planes of analysis, the core thematic line was represented by Neoanalysis and Oral Theory, i.e. the two main streams of interpretation and conception of Homeric poetry in current Homeric studies. Also of particular interest was the emphasis placed on the relation and inter-relation between these two visions of the Homeric problem. No paper had been devoted to Neoanalysis in the 2000 Genoa Conference⁴, but a mention by W. Kullmann during the concluding round table deserves to be recalled: "It seems that these allusions quote fixed texts, like the allusions mentioned by Danek and Schein⁵. This may, but need not, mean that these were written texts⁶. I would like to conclude with an open question: is it conceivable that the constant improvisation of the songs, which has been claimed as dogma by the oral poetry theory, had been given up already, before the transition to written texts, and that the singers were constrained to pass over from improvisation

terms of the organization of the material". Finkelberg's observation is quite correct and her criticism is acceptable (in effect the title *Short Papers* for the fourth section of the Proceedings is not the best of choice...), but distributing the content of all these papers over the three sections (occupied by the papers of the invited speakers) would have created even greater difficulties.

3 R. Janko, in Montanari (ed.) 2002, 653, felt that the title called for a few words of explanation.

4 However, see the interesting contribution by P. Grossardt on the myth of Meleagros (Montanari (ed.) 2002, 425–430), which takes as its starting point a discussion concerning an argument developed by J. Kakridis and concludes with a reference to A.B. Lord (cf. P. Grossardt, *Die Erzählung von Meleagros. Zur literarische Entwicklung der kalydonische Kultlegende*, Leiden 2001); and, on a slightly different aspect, the contribution by Danek, cf. below, foll. n. & n. 15.

5 The reference is to two papers read at the Conference: G. Danek, *Traditional referentiality and Homeric intertextuality*, and S. L. Schein, *Mythological allusions in the Odyssey*, in Montanari (ed.) 2002, respectively 3–20 and 85–101.

6 Cf. Kullmann 1984, 142.

to the more or less exact repetition of the texts by heart because of their fixed, though oral, character?"⁷. The "open question" is one of the issues at the center of attention in current debate.

In the 2010 Thessaloniki Conference, Neoanalysis played a major role in the panorama of Homeric studies, in addition to – or rather, together with – Oral Theory, acting in relation, cooperation and synergy with the latter. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that given the makeup of Homeristics in the 21st Century, if we set aside the aspects of a primarily historical and archaeological character (which certainly constitute a very lively field), the interplay between Neoanalysis and Oral Theory is one of the main themes of current attention, and it remains the core of the problem even when it is not declared explicitly. This can be explained by noting that it touches a crucial point, namely the conception of the pre-Homeric (both the immediate and non immediate) and its influence on what we call Homer. In effect, even when the critical approach, according to its declaration of intents, is purposely limited to analysis of the text of the poem as it is, in the form in which it has been handed down to us by tradition, the mind is inevitably drawn to the key questions: what was there before the Homeric poems, what was the process through which they were formed, in what relation did they stand to their precedents, that is to say, to the tradition within which they arose?

Can one abstain from addressing these questions? I fear not, *pace* old and new substantially acritical illusions, if such still exist. Whether the arguments start by underscoring the fluidity of improvised oral poetry that subsequently became fixed through various stages, or by assuming the creation of a series of well defined poems that played the role of sources or models, in either case the effort of scholarly studies embody an attempt to define the features of a scenario, the pre-Homeric, which seems beyond our grasp. Specifically, the endeavor is to identify the aspect of a tradition that constitutes the poetic code and the system within which the poems that have come down to us can be positioned and understood. In actual fact, the relation between this final product, however it arose and whoever was its maker, has always been the crux of the problem (and even the ancients themselves raised a number of queries concerning what came "before" Homer). The history of the Homeric question still presents itself as the never-ending story of the different attempts to compare "Homer" with his precedents (in a word, with his "culture") and to imagine what there was before the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. It represents an undying desire

7 Kullmann, in Montanari (ed.) 2002, 670.

to understand how these poems came to be created, and to interpret them in the framework of a system and a code with which they entertain a dialectical relation of tradition-innovation, as is natural for any literary work.

As a matter of fact, problems of this nature have to be addressed for all authors: no poets are studied and interpreted as if they sprang from a void or operated in a desert. Poets always work in the context of a code with regard to which they build up their particular relationship of conservation and renewal, adaptation to and differentiation from a norm. But in the case of Homer these procedures give rise to special difficulties because "Homer" is the *first* text we know, we do not have his precedents available, nothing of what constituted his traditional culture is left for the modern age to read. Admittedly, some sources of information can be called upon for help, but they are highly problematic and are subject to contradictory interpretations. One such source consists of the evidence and the surviving fragments of the various cyclic epics: here there seems to be a general consensus that their known (albeit only scantily) form is post-Homeric but that their contents are pre-Homeric⁸. Or take the case of the various comparisons, not infrequently rash and somewhat debatable, or even the case of everything that is known on the text tradition at least up to the Hellenistic age⁹. All these points are the object of notably differentiated assessments. Overall, none of these sources of information can even remotely aspire to become the kind of evidence that could supply direct knowledge of what was produced prior to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and was concretely known to these two works. There remains the fact that the best source – although not the one and only source – of information on the pre-Homeric is certainly Homer himself, together with the many types of analyses carried out on the texts we have. It has always been the case, as is decisively confirmed by modern developments, that the fundamental difficulty of the Homeric question (which concerns not so much the physical person of the poet as, rather, his quintessentially literary and historical-literary aspect) can be stated in precisely these abstract and general terms.

Neoanalysis and Oral Theory are the two methodological approaches through which this problem has been addressed. They embody the two forms the conception of the pre-Homeric assumed during the second half of the 20th Century (after the developments ensuing from the research by M. Parry and the embryonic studies by J. T. Kakridis and later the ach-

8 One recent example is the discussion on the Memnon-Sarpedon relationship, by Aceti 2008, 224–262.

9 An overview in Montanari 2002, 130–135; Montanari 2004, 128–138.

ievements by W. Kulmann). For several decades these two currents held sharply opposing and apparently irreconcilable views on the very issue of how the pre-Homeric should be conceived and on the genesis of the poems. The divergence was also reflected, roughly speaking, in their areas of geo-linguistic provenance, at least until recently, as Neoanalysis was predominant in studies conducted in the German-speaking area while Oral Theory prevailed among English-speaking scholars. The terms of the controversy are well known and an in-depth description of the dispute would be superfluous here. In a nutshell, Oral Theory sees the genesis of the Homeric poems as arising within the multifaceted background of a fluid tradition of oral poetry, wherein the elements of diction and contents belong to a common heritage and the products of poetic activity have no authorial individuality. Rather, the poetic compositions exist as an improvised performance made possible by a shared heritage of techniques and knowledge that are in no way fixed or preserved. Neoanalysis, on the other hand, which adopts an explicitly unitary stance, contends that the *Iliad* (fewer studies have been devoted to the *Odyssey*), more or less in the form in which it has come down to us, is the work of a great individual poet, in other words a genuine "author" who was active and composed it during the final phase of archaic oral epic poetry (one might hazard a guess of between the second half of the VIIIth and the first half of the VIIth Century). The Neoanalysis approach further argues that during the period in question there were already a number of poems in circulation that had been well fixed as individual works: accordingly, Homer is claimed to have built on and adapted thematic motifs of various kinds and episodes from these predecessors, which implies that these earlier compositions can be defined as his models and his "sources".

Thus with regard to the parallels (very specific points, whole motifs or even scenes and structures) between the Epic Cycle and Homer (though the same could be said of the repeated elements found within Homer himself), these can be taken as variants of a common tradition but independent from one another (Oral Theory) or seen as linked by a relation of dependency on a specific source (Neoanalysis). The Oral Theory concept, which holds that themes are "typical", stands in contrast with the idea put forward by Neoanalysis, in which it is suggested that a particular motif can be drawn from a source and reinterpreted in an individual manner by another poet (for instance Memnon and Achilles in *Aithiopsis* and *Iliad*). On this point, the difference between the two approaches has been fairly sharp and their positions would appear to be mutually exclusive, but over the last twenty-five years or so (starting from the article by Kullmann in 1984,

and continuing to develop right up to the 2010 conference¹⁰), a possible conciliatory perspective has begun to take shape. This could lead to a unitary vision of the pre-Homeric based on Neoanalysis + Oral Theory, which could become a crucial factor in 21st Century debate on the Homeric Question.

In this context, there are two points that should be regarded as fundamental, and they play a pivotal role in developing the line of reasoning. On the one hand, we have the idea that as the oral tradition evolved over time, it little by little reached a phase of texts that were fixed and more or less stably memorized, although not yet enshrined in the unchangeable medium of the written form. Thus one can speak of gradually fixed performance traditions¹¹. On the other side stands the idea that the “sources” of the Homeric poems need not necessarily have been written poems: they may, instead, have been oral poems fixed by virtue of memorization, and therefore existing in a form that was no longer improvised and unstable, even though it was not written¹². It is important, however, to distinguish the individual results of these two analytical approaches – specific passages may be interpreted in divergent ways – from the fundamental elements of the theory.

In this perspective and from this point of view, a memorized oral text, i.e. one that is substantially stabilized, is equivalent to a written text, even though in modes and forms that do not coincide exactly with those characteristic of a totally literate civilization, and such a text can act as an individual source/model. Its earlier poetic history may have been part of totally oral poetry, rooted in the traditional practice of improvisation, and the “typical” in the forms of content and expression belongs precisely to this the kind of poetry. But at a later stage, traditional improvised poetry gave way to a situation featuring fixed and individual oral texts, which also allowed for mutual relations of source-model and imitation. Typical scenes or traditional themes could thus become individual motifs belonging to a specific poetic-narrative context and endowed with particular elements peculiar to that individual poem; a scene could be entirely composed of fully traditional elements and yet constitute an individual variation of a certain motif¹³. This “evolutionary” vision does not devalue the importance and the weight of traditional improvised oral poetry in the form of the Ho-

meric poems and in their genesis: however, it places improvised oral poetry somewhat further back in time as compared to the immediate pre-Homeric, which can now be seen as populated by oral texts that had become stabilized in form and content. But naturally, this should hardly be taken as suggesting a sudden transition from the earlier to the later situation, with the poetic typology undergoing rapid and total replacement. Rather, it is far more reasonable to think in terms of gradual transformation, linked to tastes and fashions, which tended to change rather slowly in an archaic world, in the same way as it has more than once been plausibly conjectured that there must have been a period of coexistence between forms of oral poetry and forms of poetry crystallized through writing.

The contents of epic poetry embody the set of mythic stories that make up the great and global “sacred history” of ancient Greek civilization (*klea andron te theon te*). As W. Kullmann states in this volume: “I have claimed that a special characteristic of early Greek epic is the existence of an oral *Faktenkanon* (standard list of events) and that epic storytelling, unlike the modern novel, is marked by a strong tendency to preserve its traditional content. Exaggeration, substitution or suppression is allowed but not a strong deviation from the contents of the story that had been established to a certain degree. Apparently there was a rule that some basic elements must not be altered by free poetic invention.”¹⁴. It is difficult to establish how long it took for the process of formation and consolidation of a standard list of events concerning a certain mythic story, e.g. the Trojan saga, to take shape and become consolidated. That such a list must have existed in the minds of poet and audience alike would, however, account for the recognition of the events narrated on all occasions, and the audience’s understanding of the story. In this sense, both Neoanalysis and Oral Theory are certainly interested not only in the rich global repertory of the “sacred history” (a reservoir of contents of archaic Greek epic poetry) but also in the *Faktenkanon* of each single story. Cyclic epic poetry provides us with information on the *Faktenkanon* of the myth of Troy, which was known to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and therefore to Homer’s audiences. The version of which we know a (meager) part belongs to a post-Homeric phase, but the standard list of events on which their narrative content is based is undoubtedly pre-Homeric, and in the immediately pre-Homeric phase it had shaped the contents of fixed and stable oral poems.

On the basis of these arguments we would maintain that the conceptions, interests and results of Neoanalysis and of Oral Theory can be rec-

10 To which we should add at least Finkelberg 2011 and Tsagalis 2011.

11 Tsagalis 2011, partic. 225–226, 231–238.

12 Kullmann 1984, 309; Finkelberg 2011, 198.

13 Kullmann 1984, 315.

14 In this volume, p. 13.

onced in such a manner as to compose a plausible picture of the pre-Homeric and shed light on the genesis of the Homeric poems. But this does not deny that Oral Theory, while invoking the notions of 'typical' and 'theme' as a means of categorizing the forms through which content is conveyed, has an inclination towards analysis of the forms of expression that concern diction and language, whereas Neoanalysis observes and preferentially focuses on the thematic motifs and the source/model – reutilization/imitation relations that mould the narrative content of the poems fixed in their stable forms. Finally, having reached this point, a further element can be added: given the vision of the Homeric problem as outlined here, it may be helpful and appropriate to extend the conceptual horizon to include phenomena of intertextuality¹⁵. Such a line of investigation would not restrict itself to encompassing the *Iliad-Odyssey* relation, but would also broaden the viewpoint to take in the relations between Homer and the pre-Homeric, the latter being regarded as populated by fixed and stable (oral) poems¹⁶.

Considering the prolonged history of Epic Poetry in Greece prior to Homer, we may venture to put forward what may perhaps seem to be a rather oversimplified outline, although there may be some virtue in this type of schematization despite its apparent defects. That is to say, as the temporal frame of reference gradually shifts from the most ancient pre-Homeric period, i. e. from the most distant in time (the phase of totally improvised oral poetry), towards what we have called the immediate pre-Homeric, the conception of traditional epic poetry most specifically embraced by Oral Theory undergoes a transformation, making reference to a process of gradually fixed performance traditions, thereby drawing closer to a conception that more properly characterizes Neoanalysis and which contemplates the possibility of fixed oral poems, even though the weight of the aspects and characteristics of fluid oral poetry highlighted by Oral Theory remains one of the major features of the immediate pre-Homeric and the Homeric phase, above all on the level of diction and expressive style.

Enhancement of this evolutionary idea in a long-term perspective could help to reach a non-traumatic solution that would counterbalance

15 Numerous lines of research can be taken into consideration and revived in this perspective, and it would be worthwhile to undertake a survey in this direction. I have in mind, for instance, Danek 1998 and Danek 2002 (in the Genoa 2000 Proceedings).

16 Tsagalis 2011, 228: "Such a highly interactive character and self-consciousness indicate that allusive intertextuality was indeed operating between gradually fixed performance traditions".

the ancient dualism inherent in the question: is it tradition or the individual author that determines the form of the Homeric poems? Both factors are at work, at different stages and in different ways, exerting a variety of influences on numerous different phenomena¹⁷. Last but not least, this vision of the evolution of archaic Greek Epic Poetry easily accommodates the idea that, even in the framework suggested by Oral Theory, the position of the Homeric poems in Greek epic tradition was indeed unique, no matter whether they arose in the oral form or made use of writing, this point of view being no longer decisive even in the Neoanalysis perspective¹⁸.

There still remains, if I am not mistaken, one problematic aspect that cannot be disregarded, although it would be beyond the scope of this *Introduction* to offer more than a brief reflection. The question concerns the dating, either Mycenaean or high archaic (let us say, roughly much more ancient or more recent) of the narrative content of the Homeric poems and of the cyclic poems as we know them. In other words, how far back in time must one go in tracing the origin of the *Faktenkanon* or standard list of events on the myth of the Trojan War as we can reconstruct it in its overall structure from the Homeric poems + the Cycle? Once again, different positions have been taken on this point. Kullmann: "The story of Telephus is an old component of the Trojan legend and disproved the hypothesis still held by Latacz that the story of the Trojan War was invented in Mycenaean times. At least it presupposes the beginning of the Aeolic colonization in Asia Minor that took place in post-Mycenaean times ... It seems plausible that with respect to the Trojan War there was an oral tradition that goes back to the beginnings of Greek colonization but not beyond that timeframe"¹⁹. I hope that I have not fallen victim to intellectual bias or to overconfidence, but I cannot bring myself to reject the idea that a concrete and strong evolutionary model is able to explain even the most problematic phenomena that are closely linked to the narrative content. What is there to prevent us from assuming that the *Faktenkanon* evolved over time, that some aspects underwent a transformation, that some episodes and characters were eliminated while others were added? I fail to comprehend what prevents us from conceiving of a more essential and relatively small-scale *Faktenkanon*, different from the one we know, a *Faktenkanon* with an ancient Mycenaean origin that later underwent various changes in the wake of new needs linked to the subsequent historical pe-

17 In this perspective, interesting reflections are offered by Tsagalis 2011.

18 Cf. most recently Finkelberg 2001 and in this volume.

19 In this volume, pp. 17–18.

riods and to its circulation in different settings. It strikes me as entirely legitimate and possible to conceive of a more ancient *Faktenkanon* of the Trojan saga without the Teuthranian Expedition, in which this element was introduced, together with the necessary adaptations and additions, after the beginnings of Greek colonization. The fact that “the wrath of Achilles and his fight against Hector are not central events of the Trojan cycle of myths”²⁰, yet they do enjoy such a position in the standard list of events that characterizes the myth as it was transmitted to the combined unit Homer + Cycle, may depend precisely on the extension of a previously more restricted canon, that was expanded in response to an evolution of epic poetry, or to the rise of new tastes, or even to the activity of a single author, who adapted elements of the canon to his own poem. Might one perhaps think of a singer who was so brilliant and innovative that he invented something of such beauty and strength as to modify the previous standard list of events? Do we not sometimes think of “Homer” in these terms? How much and up to what point was the *Faktenkanon* capable of undergoing change? Not only are the roots (anthropological – religious) of a myth distinct from the varied and different historically situated artistic forms that narrate and represent it (whether they are works of verbal or figurative art), but even the canonical structure of a saga also acquires its form over time, it adapts and is moulded through the effects of the manifold forces of history and poetry.

I do not mean to imply by these arguments that such momentous and challenging problems have now been solved: I am convinced they remain constantly open to new ideas and to the enquiring mind of research – and *in Homericis* this is true to the highest degree. I merely believe that today the long-standing Homeric question is moving according to research lines that can be delineated fairly transparently, as Martin West has once again pointed out recently, with arguments that concern more specifically the point of view of composition, authorship and dating rather than what we have called pre-Homeric²¹. Homeric studies are still absolutely alive, awaiting, of course, the next revolution.

Genova, March 12, 2012

20 Kullmann 1984, 317.

21 West’s latest survey is *The Homeric Question Today*, Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 155, 2011, 383–393; see also *The Making of the Iliad*, Oxford 2011.

Part I: Theoretical Issues

Conclusions

There can be little room for doubt that Milman Parry discovered and described the system that underlies the working of Greek traditional diction. Yet, he proceeded from the assumption that the same rules should be applied both to the impersonal epic tradition and to its personal medium, the individual poet. Not infrequently, however, his conclusions seem to have the latter out of the account. It seems indeed that the main methodological problem of Parry and his followers is that they failed to draw a distinction between the system of formulaic diction and the concrete manifestations of this system in the work of individual poets. However no system, oral formulaic or another, can be treated as identical to the individual text that derives from it: the distinction between 'langue' and 'parole' would certainly be in place here. In other words, the applicability of the oral formulaic hypothesis to Homeric diction cannot be regarded as absolute.

Should this conclusion be considered fatal to the theory as we have it? According to the prevailing assumption, in so far as the Parry-Lord hypothesis does not work as a total system it inevitably loses its explicative value and should therefore be abandoned. This is, however, to overlook the fact that the explicative value of the hypothesis of formulaic composition has proved its worth in the work of many scholars whose main interest was not so much the formulaic theory as such but, rather, the study of a given traditional Greek text cast in hexameters. To claim that the formulaic theory does not work in so far as it cannot be indiscriminately applied to the totality of the text of Homer is to ignore that its application in the course of the last seventy years has changed Homeric scholarship almost beyond recognition. This being the case, it would be an unforgivable mistake to abandon the approach that contributed so much to our understanding of Homeric diction. Yet, to sustain the Parry-Lord theory as a valid scientific hypothesis, we have to recognize its limitations and to work out a more comprehensive theory that would include the original hypothesis as its central core.²⁶

²⁶ Earlier versions of this paper were read in spring 2007 at Columbia University and at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton; I am grateful to the audiences present on both occasions for their helpful comments. My special thanks go to Albio Cesare Cassio and Susanne Saïd for their spirited discussion of the contents of this paper at the Thessaloniki conference.

Memory and Memories: Personal, Social, and Cultural Memory in the Poems of Homer

Elizabeth Minchin

Introduction

Much of my research on Homer and memory has been concerned with the universal structures of memory – that is, with the ways we all organize, store, and access memory and process information.¹ I have also over recent years made some room for the study of memory at the personal level (the poet's representations of autobiographical memory and of the persistence of memory, for example).² At present, however, I am studying memory not as a universal phenomenon nor as it relates to the individual; instead, my focus is on memories that are common to all members of any one culture and any one social group within that culture.

Remembering does not take place in a vacuum. The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs was the first to show us that memory is a social phenomenon, introducing the term 'collective memory' to describe the communal store of shared experiences, shared stories and shared memories that members of any social group acquire over time as they interact with the world around them.³ Jan Assmann, Egyptologist, archaeologist, and cultural theorist, has proposed a different designation.⁴ He suggests

¹ See, for example, Minchin 2001.

² Minchin 2005; Minchin 2006.

³ Halbwachs 1952, 146–177.

⁴ Assmann had been concerned about the ways in which many scholars (for example, Knapp 1989; Zerubavel 1997) had been applying the term 'collective memory' – not only to the social sphere of memory but also to the cultural sphere – and the resulting impreciseness of scholarly discussion. On this, see Assmann 2008, 110; 2006, 9: "it is precisely the misunderstanding of the concepts of 'collective' and 'cultural memory' that has impeded comprehension of the dynamics of culture up till now".

that we should use the term 'communicative memory' or 'social memory' to describe this purely social and non-institutional aspect of memory, which stores information about the recent past.⁵ And, going beyond Halbwachs, he distinguishes social or communicative memory from 'cultural memory', which, for Assmann, identifies a culture's memory for its traditions and institutions – the narratives, songs, and dances, for example, that come from its remote past.⁶

In the next few pages I shall elaborate on the two modes of remembering that Assmann has identified, drawing attention to their distinguishing features. This will serve as a preface to my discussion of the representation of memory in the epics that we associate with Homer's name.

Communicative and Cultural Memory Contrasted

How far back does a society's, and a culture's, memory go? Every society establishes for itself historical horizons beyond which past events are regarded as irrelevant and forgettable. What Assmann would call everyday communication (that is, communicative memory) reaches back no further than 80 years, the span of three interacting generations.⁷ Formal cultural memory, as I have noted, refers to a remote past.⁸ Between these two zones of memory there is, in literate cultures, what Jan Vansina calls a 'floating gap' between recent memory and what is remote.⁹ But, for oral societies, consciousness of the past operates on only two levels: the recent past and the remote; there is no 'floating gap'.¹⁰

What do societies remember? The communicative memory of any generation within a society is the accumulation of the recollections of its composite groups. Since each of us as an individual belongs to a variety

5 Assmann 1997, 50–1; 2006, 3; 2008, 111; and A. Assmann 2006.

6 Halbwachs could not envisage a mode of memory that was not embodied, as are personal and social memory. For a brief account of cultural memory, see Assmann 1997, 52; 2008, 110–111, 117.

7 Assmann 1997, 50–51; 2008, 111.

8 Assmann 2006, 24–25, 28–29.

9 Vansina 1985, 23–24, 168–169.

10 Assmann 2008, 112; Vansina 1985, 24: "Beyond a certain time depth, which differs for each type of social structure because time is reckoned by reference to generations or other social institutions, chronology can no longer be kept. Accounts fuse and are thrown back into the period of origin – typically under a culture hero – or are forgotten".

of groups, such as family, neighbourhood, even nation, as well as professional groups and associations of all kinds, the social memory of our own generation (that is, all of us, together) comprises a countless number of smaller and larger clusters of shared experience, stories and memories.¹¹ We share these experiences and these memories with those around us in our world – even with contemporaries whom we have never met.¹² Many of these memories will be handed down to the next generation, as parents (and grandparents) share their memories with their children and grandchildren – hence the three-generation span of communicative memory.

So what do we remember as a culture? Cultural memory refers to fixed points in the distant past ("Fixpunkte in der Vergangenheit") that mark events of great significance:¹³ the Trojan War, for example, with its rich tapestry of legend, is such a fixed point for the ancient Greek and Roman worlds; the futile World War I assault on the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915 is now acquiring that status amongst Australians and New Zealanders. The cultural memory of a society represents its members' awareness of what unites them and what distinguishes them from others; it relates to their self-image; and it plays a normative role – those who live in this culture are expected to endorse and to aspire to the same virtues as their ancestors.¹⁴ I should note, however, that cultural knowledge may be evaluated differently as circumstances change over time. It is possible that the 'facts' of cultural knowledge may be adjusted and even reconstructed, as the world changes.¹⁵ But the reverse may also occur: as we try to make our experiences and

11 Communicative memory, by contrast with personal memory (which is at no point shared with others), lives in everyday interaction and communication: Assmann 2008, 111.

12 This claim was made real for me recently when my elderly mother made a new acquaintance. She reported to me with pleasure in her voice, "She remembers the same things that I do!". For my mother the pleasure lay in the reassuring bond created by shared memories. Although these two women had not met before, they had been members of similar social groups (or what Zerubavel 1997, 82 calls 'thought communities') that shared the same interests.

13 Assmann 1997, 52.

14 Assmann 1995, 130–133; 2006, 7–8.

15 In an Australian context, this change over time is observable in the ways in which Australia Day (26 January) is interpreted and celebrated. The celebration of post-1788 colonization, which, 50 years ago, would have been a cause for self-congratulation, has been abandoned. Australia Day is now observed as a more generalized commemoration of achievement and 'Australianness'.

our memories fit our culture's traditions, we may misremember or distort what might have seemed to us to be 'unusual' details.

The form that a society's or a culture's memories take may be a narrative form. A narrative structure underpins oral histories (communicative memory), our accounts of our own nation's past (communicative and cultural memory), and the age-old stories that Homer tells (cultural memory) – as well as the stories that are told within them.¹⁶ But narrative is not the only medium for memory-work: we should not ignore the role of performance of all kinds, including ceremonies, rituals, and re-enactments, even (or especially) cuisine, in the maintenance of a cultural tradition.¹⁷

Whereas social memory is linked to individuals who share information and tells stories to one another in their daily lives, cultural memory is mediated. The bearer of cultural memory is not the man, or the woman, in the street; rather, the bearers of our cultural traditions are specialists in a particular practice, such as priests or teachers, or bards or poets.¹⁸ The occasions on which such memories are rehearsed are performances that are marked by a degree of formality; they are ceremonies, whether on a modest or a grand scale.¹⁹

There is an important difference between the quality of cultural memory in an oral context and that of cultural memory in a literate society. Whereas, in a literate society, writing has the capacity both to store knowledge and to open up 'the depths of time'²⁰ and illuminate them, an oral tradition must rely on word-of-mouth transmission of all its rituals, its festivals, and its heroic tales.²¹ In Homer's world, there-

16 Much of our episodic memory-store is underpinned by a narrative-like structure, with a causal chain connecting events and actions: Minchin 2001, 15–16, 35–36. The transmission of significant memories, too, requires an internally consistent and complete storylike narrative: Zerubavel 1997, 98–99.

17 On this, see especially Connerton 1989, 87–88.

18 Vansina 1985, 36–39; Assmann 1997, 54: "Schamanen, Barden, Griots . . . Priester, Lehrer, Künstler, Schreiber, Gelehrten, Mandarine . . .".

19 Assmann 1997, 55–56.

20 Assmann 2006, 24.

21 The fact that oral traditions have no competence other than memory for storing knowledge is a limitation on the amount of knowledge that can be accumulated as cultural memory. Oral traditions, however, make more creative use of visual imagery and spatial experience as prompts to knowledge of all kinds: see Rubin 1995, 46–48; Yates 1966, 1–3. On memory cues in the society that Homer depicts, for example, see Scodel 2002a, 99–116; on artefacts as prompts for stories, see Minchin 2001, 119–122.

fore, the bard and the priest transmit much of the wisdom of that society to the next generation; as the guardians of cultural knowledge they preserve the remote past.

An account of communicative and cultural memory, as Assmann describes these phenomena, offers us a means of engaging with any oral epic tradition in a number of ways. It gives us, for example, a basis for understanding broader neo-analytical issues, such as how memory for one story in a tradition might contaminate memory for another. At a purely local level, it allows us to think about memory and remembering within the epics themselves and to talk about them in a more rational way. By separating out the social and the cultural from the universal, on the one hand, and from the personal (the memory that is never shared),²² on the other, we may gain some insight into the world that the poet depicts and the way its members remember the past, process the present, and consider the future. As a first step in that direction, I propose to test the validity of these distinctions as they apply within the Homeric epics. I shall observe both how the poet evokes these modes of remembering in his representation of a society of heroes who are preoccupied with memory and how personal, social, and cultural memory play with and against each other in meaningful ways in the narrative. By way of introduction, I offer three brief examples that will allow us to recognize the different modes of remembering – the personal, the communicative, and the cultural – as they are represented in the epics.

Personal, Communicative, and Cultural Memory

Personal Memory

The poet offers us a rare example of personal memory at *Od.* 19.392–466, when Eurycleia, as she washes the feet of the beggar (Odysseus in disguise), discovers the scar on his leg (392–393):

νίξε δ' ἄρ' ἄσπον ἰοῦσα ἀναχθ' ἐόν· αὐτίκα δ' ἔγνω
οὐλήν, τήν ποτέ μιν σῶς ἦλασε λευκῷ ὀδόντι

She came up close and washed her lord, and at once she recognized that scar which once the boar with his white tusk had inflicted

22 Assmann 2006, 3.

The scar prompts a memory-sequence about a hunting accident that had befallen her 'absent' master. What flashes into Eurycleia's mind at this point is not a memory of the boar-hunt, during which Odysseus sustained the injury, nor of the boar's attack and the wound which young Odysseus suffered; *that* segment of the narrative (413–462) is a replay of communicative memory (we assume that the nurse has heard this tale from the young Odysseus himself). What she remembers first-hand are the events that preceded the boar-hunt and the events that followed it. She has personal memories of the visit of Autolycus to Laertes' home, for she herself had presented the old man with the baby his daughter Anticleia had borne (399–402); she had requested that Autolycus should name the child (402–404); she heard him give the child the name Odysseus (405–409) and invite his grandson, when he was grown, to go to Parnassos to visit him (409–412). She remembers too the moment when Odysseus left his home for Parnassos, as well as the moment of his return, recovered and rejoicing, and the story he then told of the hunting accident (462–466). Thus the old nurse recognized the scar (467–468).²³

Such a silent canvassing of memory is unique in the epics that we associate with Homer. It represents a clever solution to a narrative problem: how to convey the story about the hero's scar to the audience in an engaging way, capturing the excitement and the suspense of this long moment – while keeping Odysseus' identity from the suitors.²⁴ For this reason all the information that lies behind Eurycleia's recognition of the hero has been presented in silence, as a personal memory.

23 For an extended discussion of Eurycleia's 'flashbulb memory', see Scodel 2002a, 108–11, who argues that moments before Eurycleia detects his scar Odysseus too has experienced a similar, but not identical, flashbulb memory (388–391).

24 As Russo 1992, 95 observes, Homer emphasizes the suddenness with which the disguise could be penetrated. On suspense at this point of the narrative, see de Jong 2001, 476–477: Eurycleia's personal recollection of how Odysseus acquired his distinctive scar is told *before* we are told of her reactions (at 467–475).

Communicative Memory

When Nestor – an old man well past his prime, whose age-peers have already died²⁵ – reminisces about his past to the younger heroes of the *Iliad*, we are observing the kind of interaction that Assmann describes, when memories of the recent past are passed down from one generation to the next and the next – across the span of about 80 years. Nestor's tales, at *Il.* 1.260–273, 4.319, 7.132–756, 11.670–761 and 765–789, and 23.629–645, are vivid narratives, certainly well-rehearsed, that reflect on the old man's early days when he enjoyed the vigour of youth and, indeed, was just as committed to the heroic ideal as he was in his later years.²⁶ These are communicative memories, in that Nestor shares them with his extended social group. As befits a senior member of this society, he uses them to perform an important educative role, as he tries to persuade his younger listeners to heed the advice of an older man whose vast experience on the battlefield could be instructive.

In the *Odyssey*, by contrast, Nestor's memories are not intended as a strategy of persuasion. Here in the *Odyssey* Nestor's reminiscences at 3.103–200, 254–328, in response to Telemachus' enquiries about his father, are more typically the kind of communicative moments that we all share, as we speak of our own circumstances and discuss news of friends and acquaintances.²⁷ Telemachus had asked for information; Nestor is very happy to tell him as much as he knows. As the old man says, at 3.184–187, all the information that he passes on about his fellow heroes he has heard from others (who also have been 'doing' communicative memory as they share their experiences).

Cultural Memory

The poet represents remembering at the cultural level in his account, in his own voice, of Agamemnon's sceptre, at *Il.* 2.100–108. He tells us that the sceptre, over time, had been passed from Pelops to Atreus, from Atreus to Thyestes, and from Thyestes to Agamemnon. Thus he

25 *Il.* 1.250–252 and, on Nestor's age, see Kirk 1985, 79; see also Minchin 2005.

26 Minchin 2005, 61, 65–66.

27 The length of Nestor's response, in which he does not actually answer Telemachus' question about how his father died, characterizes Nestor as an old man who enjoys talking about the past.

accounts for the three-generation span of social memory. But Homer, in fact, begins his history of the sceptre much earlier in time, in this society's remote past: we hear the story of its origins. This was a sceptre fashioned by Hephaestus (101). He had given the sceptre to Zeus, who had passed it to Hermes; and he in turn had given it to Pelops (102–104).²⁸

Ἥφαιστος μὲν δῶκε Διὶ Κρονίωνι ἄνακτι,
αὐτὰρ ἄρα Ζεὺς δῶκε διακτόρῳ ἀργεῖφόντῃ
Ἑρμείας δὲ ἄναξ δῶκεν Πέλοπι πληξίππῳ

Hephaestus gave it to Zeus the king, the son of Cronus,
and Zeus in turn gave it to the courier Argeiphontes,
and lord Hermes gave it to Pelops, driver of horses

Kirk comments on the language of the description with the words 'not ... very archaic'.²⁹ But the features of the language are not important to my discussion. What is important is that this account of the sceptre is presented as a history that begins in the mists of time, as is appropriate to a symbol of kingship.³⁰

Homer's characters, like the poet himself, know something of the nature of cultural memory. Helen, for example, at *Il.* 6.357–358, associates the preservation of cultural memories with the singing of traditional oral epic; she anticipates that, in the course of time, she will be given a place in her culture's memory, as a subject of a significant tale from the remote past. Helen's story will be a story of shame; but glory too is celebrated in song. Telemachus speaks of Orestes' fame, which will be celebrated in song in generations to come (*Od.* 3.203–204).³¹

Song, however, is not the only medium for commemoration at the cultural level. The society of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* knows the poten-

28 See the commentary of Kirk 1985, 126–127 on the story of the sceptre's origins. This symbol was created by Hephaestus as a symbol of kingship for Zeus himself, possibly after the defeat of Cronus. Hermes is probably a messenger god here, rather than a player with a more substantial role.

29 Kirk 1985, 126.

30 The genealogy of Aeneas (*Il.* 20.213–241) is another example of the reach of cultural memory deep into the past: Priam is the *sixth* king in line from (and including) Zeus' son, Dardanus.

31 Telemachus looks ahead to a time when singers will celebrate the story of Orestes, whose deeds by that time will be recorded in cultural memory. Bards may sing songs of either glory (Orestes) or shame (Helen and Paris; Eury-machus [*Od.* 21.249–255]; and Eupheithes [*Od.* 24.426–437]).

tial of landmarks of all kinds, and of grave-markers in particular, as prompts for memories: for example, the tomb of Ilus, son of Dardanus, serves as a landmark on the Trojan Plain (*Il.* 11.166–168); when Elpenor gives instructions for his funerary rites, he asks that after his cremation his grave be marked with the oar he used while alive (*Od.* 11.71–78), καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι, so that those to come will know of me, 76; and, finally, we hear Hector's promise (*Il.* 7.81–91) that, if he takes the life of his opponent in single combat, he will give the body back to the Achaeans so that they can heap up a burial mound for their comrade beside the Hellespont – a mound which will stir the memory of men to come, who will say: "This is the mound of a man who died long ago in battle, who was once one of the bravest; and glorious Hector killed him (89–90) . . . τὸ δ' ἐμὸν κλέος οὔ ποτ' ὀλεῖται, and my glory will never be forgotten (91)". Grave-markers do not retain memories of individuals and events, as Zerubavel suggests;³² but they have the capacity to cue memories, even memories from the remote past.³³

Those instances that I have described above relate to the ways in which the epics represent the three modes of remembering: in the first instance, a personal memory, one that went uncommunicated, from the recent past; secondly, a string of social memories, all shared generously by old Nestor; and, thirdly, some representations of cultural memory, looking far back into the past from the vantage point of the present – or, indeed, back to the present from the future. I turn now to two scenes that are founded on the interplay of these three modes. I turn first to Andromache's impassioned plea that Hector should wage war from within the walls of Troy – and his defence of his decision to return to the plain (*Il.* 6.405–665).

Case study I: Hector and Andromache

Andromache has based her plea on personal grounds: she is without a father, a mother (413), and brothers (421–424). Hector, she argues, must fill those roles for her (429–430). He must not venture out onto the plain again. As she speaks, naming these family members, her mind is crowded with images and memories, personal memories of her family, and, most of all, of her mother, who had come 'here'

32 Zerubavel 1997, 94.

33 Minchin 2008, 10–13.

to Troy – her use here of δεῦρ', at 426, surely captures a personal recollection – as Achilles' captive, before she was returned to her father.

Hector's response is at first gently dismissive (ἤ καὶ ἐμοὶ τὰδε πάντα μέλει, γύναι, "all these things are in my mind also, lady", 441). He acknowledges the argument that his wife advances, but he is for the moment far more concerned about his own standing in his community: about imputations of cowardice and the shame that he himself would feel (441–443) were he to stay within the walls. As he says, he has been schooled to fight and to win great glory for himself and for his father (444–446):

... ἐπεὶ μάθον ἔμμεναι ἐσθλὸς
αἰεὶ καὶ πρῶτοισι μετὰ Τρώεσσι μάχεσθαι,
ἀρνύμενος πατρός τε μέγα κλέος ἢ δ' ἐμὸν αὐτοῦ.

... since I have learned to be valiant
and to fight always among the foremost ranks of the Trojans,
winning for my own self great glory, and for my father.

Hector, that is, is preoccupied with memory at both a social and a cultural level: we see the normative force of cultural memory in Hector's preoccupation with his community's collective understanding, based on models of heroism from the distant – and the more recent – past, of how a warrior should behave.³⁴ His implicit understanding of how social memory works is evident in his concern that the reports about him that will be handed down to the next generation (and, ultimately, the distant future) should be favourable.³⁵

As Hector speaks, his anxiety about his own future yields to disquiet about that of his wife. This is a particularly tender moment in a justly famous episode, when Hector declares that there is no family member whom he cares about as much as Andromache (450–455); and he imagines a scene in the aftermath of the fall of Troy. Andromache is now a captive somewhere in Argos. She weeps as she goes about her work. An unnamed individual, on seeing her weeping, will recognize her, saying (460–461):

Ἐκτορος ἦδε γυνή, ὃς ἀριστεύεσκε μάχεσθαι
Τρώων ἵπποδάμων, ὅτε Ἴλιον ἀμφιμάχοντο.

34 Trojan heroes who might serve as paradigms are listed, for example, in Aeneas' genealogy, at *Il.* 20.213–241.

35 As Hector will say a moment later, at 460–461, he aims to be identified as "the bravest fighter of the Trojans".

'This is the wife of Hector, who was ever the bravest fighter
of the Trojans, breakers of horses, in the days when they fought about
Iliion.'

This projected 'memory' is revealing of Hector as he tries yet again to reassure himself that his reputation will live on in social memory after his death. But what moves us is that he sees her future (even after death has parted them) still entwined with his. In a sympathetic sequel he predicts that, as his name is mentioned in her hearing, Andromache's thoughts will turn to him yet again, and she will once more feel the pain of loss (462–463):

σοὶ δ' αὖ νέον ἔσσεται ὄλγος
χῆτεϊ τοιοῦδ' ἀνδρὸς ἀμύνειν δούλιον ἦμαρ.

and for you it will be yet a fresh grief
to be widowed of such a man who could fight off the day of your slavery.

The poet's representation of this moment, whereby, through a leap of the imagination, Hector enters the mind of his wife, is very powerful. It is powerful in narrative terms because of its complex layering of temporal reference (present to future; future to past). This complexity demands our attention; it involves us in the moment. And it is powerful in dramatic terms, because we see the hero setting aside his concern about *his* place in the memory of many over time to contemplate the consequence of his actions and the pain that he will bring upon a single individual, his wife, again and again, as memories of her husband are awakened in her heart. The explicit *contrast* and finally the *interweaving* of these different modes of memory in the scene as a whole and, specifically, in the structure of Hector's response to Andromache contribute to the poignancy of this scene.

It is clear to me, as I review the *Iliad* in the light of Assmann's proposals, that the poet is concerned throughout with the way his characters use and respond to their memory store, and with the importance the heroes attribute to social and cultural memory. To take this scene as an example, Hector lives his life with social and cultural memory at the forefront of his mind. Constantly measuring himself against the paradigmatic heroes of the recent past and the greater heroes of the remote past, such as the heroes of the earlier generations of Troy, he is preoccupied with creating memories that are sufficiently meritorious to be handed on, as shared memories, within his immediate community and within the wider community of heroes. Andromache, as a woman, a wife, and a mother, is set in contrast: she is preoccupied with the home,

the family, and with what is between her and Hector alone. *Her* concern is with the intimate. Andromache, like her husband, values communicative memory, that sum of words and moments shared, especially with Hector; but she puts a high value also on the uniqueness of personal memories. Her lasting regret, at *Il.* 24.742–745, is that she had no chance to hear some last phrase from her husband, a πυκινὸν ἔπος, an indelible memory (744), that she might treasure to herself all her days and nights.³⁶

Case study II: Odysseus on Scheria

At *Od.* 8.72–92 and 485–531, we observe in Demodocus' songs two occasions on which social memory, cultural memory, and Odysseus' own personal memories coincide. Odysseus has been received by Arete and Alcinoüs in the palace on Scheria. At the end of his stay, as a final gesture of hospitality before he continues on his way, the Phaeacians prepare for him a feast and offer entertainment. They invite the palace bard to offer a song. Prompted by the Muse (73), the blind bard Demodocus sings not an episode from the remote past, as we would expect, but an episode from the Trojan War: he has chosen the story of a quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles (75–82).

Odysseus' reaction to the song is surprising. He veils his head with his cloak and weeps (83–92), αἶδετο γὰρ Φαίηκας ὑπ' ὀφρύσι δάκρυα λείβων "for he felt shame for the tears running down his face before the Phaeacians", 86). Alcinoüs responds to his guest's distress sympathetically, calling off the singing, and inviting him to join the men in games. Afterwards Demodocus performs again; he sings the light-hearted song of Ares and Aphrodite (266–366). This song gives Odysseus much pleasure (367–369). Finally, after the formalities of farewell, Odysseus himself invites Demodocus to sing. The hero, like the bard, turns his thoughts to the relatively recent past; his memory of those events re-awakened, he asks the bard to sing the episode of the Wooden Horse (487–495). Demodocus sings; and again Odysseus weeps (521–522):

36 On πυκινὸν ἔπος, see Martin 1989, 35–36; Richardson 1993, 355. My study of the modes of remembering tracks to its origins a peculiar feature of this passage noted by Kirk 1990, 219: the "deliberate conjunction of two styles normally kept distinct ... the severe and the heroic on the one hand, the intimate and the compassionate on the other".

αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
τήκετο, δάκρυ δ' ἔδευεν ὑπὸ βλεφάροισι παρειάς.

but Odysseus
melted, and from under his eyes the tears ran down, drenching
his cheeks.

Why does the hero weep? Homer does not tell us in so many words. But we can deduce that it is not the quality of Demodocus' singing that makes him respond this way, because, had this been the case, he would have wept also during the story of Ares and Aphrodite. Odysseus weeps only at those stories in which he himself was involved. He weeps even during the story of the Wooden Horse, an account of a stratagem devised by Odysseus himself, a stratagem that was brilliantly executed and highly successful.

There has been no persuasive explanation of Odysseus' tears in *Odyssey* 8.³⁷ But I suggest that a clue to his tears lies in the coincidence of modes of remembering. What Odysseus has discovered, at first by chance (75–81), is that stories of Troy, which he would have expected to encounter in casual talk, as the anecdotal of communicative memory, are now, remarkably, stored in the cultural sphere: a singer on a remote island, only ten years after the fall of Troy, already sings what had been a memory that Odysseus had shared with Achilles and the Achaeans at Troy.³⁸ Overriding the distinction between the recent past and the remote past, between social memory and cultural memory, the poet has produced a powerful moment in the epic.³⁹ He has brought

37 See the comment of van Wees 1998, 11, who refers to "sadness and despair"; de Jong 2001, 75 and 198 observes, correctly, that the Troy veterans in the *Odyssey* look back on the war with grief, despite their victory: 4.76–112 (Menelaus); 11.482–491 (Achilles); 24.95–97 (Agamemnon). But she is not able to identify why this should be so. As I argue below, each of the veterans she cites is either lamenting a story that ended badly for himself (Achilles and Agamemnon) or that had not yet ended for all concerned (Menelaus, who, at 4.104, laments Odysseus' unfinished tale). The reasons for Odysseus' tears here in *Odyssey* 8 are more complex again, as I shall demonstrate. For discussion of the unfinished tale as a source of unhappiness and stress, see below.

38 Cf. de Jong 2001, 195, who comments on this as a "special form of dramatic irony". De Jong recognizes (at 196) the shock which Odysseus might feel, but does not identify the significant interplay of different memory modes.

39 It is a daring move on Homer's part: here the poet has played with time and action, *analepsis* and *prolepsis*, in a way that reminds us of the poet of the *Iliad*, who just as fearlessly compressed and expanded time for narrative purposes. There the poet, while purporting to tell the story of a quarrel in the tenth

the distant future back to the present and has allowed us, his audience, as well as Odysseus himself, to see how the hero's adventures will be celebrated in times to come. So the hero's tears must be, at least in part, tears of surprise, at hearing his own story retold by a stranger to an audience of strangers. But Odysseus' tears are also, quite naturally, tears of distress. His distress, too, has its roots in memory.

Why does Odysseus weep yet again, at Demodocus' second Odysseus-story?⁴⁰ Surprise cannot be an issue this time. Odysseus' tears must be even more closely related to the events themselves: Demodocus' account of the final stages of that long war. We hear how the hero and his companions leave their hiding place in the wooden horse and take on the Trojans successfully, and how Odysseus and Menelaus make their way to the house of Deiphobus and, with Athene, are victorious (502–520). As he hears this (and relives the action, with images and sound supplied from actual memory – αἰνότατον πόλεμον ... πολήσαντα, “enduring the grimmest fighting ...”, 519) Odysseus responds to the emotions that those memories stirred. Those frightening encounters which brought about the end of Troy had left their mark: his tears are tears of distress, specifically, unresolved, post-combative stress, as he remembers vividly that moment of triumph, the events that preceded it and those that followed – namely, his perilous and at this point still uncertain *nostos*.⁴¹ His tears are a response to the deaths on the battlefield of so many fine men, his own long, frustrating, and unfinished journey home, the loss of all his companions, and the enormous risks and dangers that he himself, by now alone, has had to face – and those that he has yet to face.⁴²

year of the Trojan War, created a context that reminded his audience of the principal events of the war as a whole: the quarrel over Helen (*Iliad* 3); the gathering of the fleet (*Iliad* 2); the fighting (*passim*); the death of Achilles (*Iliad* 18); and the fall of Troy (*Iliad* 24).

40 On the accompanying simile (523–530), see de Jong 2001, 216–217.

41 Stanford 1947, 345 refers to Odysseus' tears as his sorrow for lost companions and for the “sad sequels to the victory”. But in the post-Vietnam era we can describe his tears more precisely. On the impact of post-combative stress (PCSD), see Grossman 1993, 75, 236–237, 281. Here he attributes the stress symptoms of war veterans to survival guilt, the trauma of killing another person, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), that is, the reactions of a victim of a violent event (on PTSD see also Shay 2003). I thank Christopher Matthew for his helpful comments on this section of my paper.

42 Ahl – Roisman 1996, 76–77 and 84–86 (and see also n. 20 for further bibliography variously suggesting as the reasons for Odysseus' tears nostalgia, sorrow,

What Demodocus celebrates in song is that part of the story that is held now in the memory of many – the triumph at Troy. What is unique to Odysseus, and still unresolved, is his own unfinished tale, which will, in time, encompass both his triumph at Troy and his triumphant return to Ithaca. For Odysseus, as he listens to Demodocus' song amongst the Phaeacians, the memories of Tróy continue to be fragmented and distressing. Not until he is safely at home, in his own bed, can he tell his wife his story (at 23.300–343). At that point his memories will have been assembled into a narrative with a beginning, a middle, and, most importantly, an end.⁴³ Then for the first time he will find pleasure in his tale. As Eumaeus says, at 15.400–401, “For afterwards a man who has suffered much and wandered much has pleasure out of his sorrows”. Odysseus' tears in *Odyssey* 8, therefore, draw our attention quite effectively to a coincidence of memory modes. The pain of Odysseus' still raw and unresolved personal memories has been re-awakened by the bard, as he celebrates – although rather prematurely – the hero's role in the Troy-story, destined to be a major theme in Greek cultural memory.

If we view the *Odyssey* through Assmann's eyes, we find that social memory and cultural memory form the backdrop of the poem, as in the *Iliad*. But these modes of remembering are employed in each epic to different ends. The framework of the *Iliad* is a series of stories of heroic achievement that, taken together, reinforce a traditional view of heroism, defining what it means to be a hero. The normative function of cultural memory there serves both a didactic and, as we have observed, a poetic end. The framework of the *Odyssey*, on the other hand, comprises the stories of Troy: the Wooden Horse, the Sack, the Returns of Agamemnon, of Menelaus, of Nestor, of Diomedes. Nestor's and Menelaus' tales in *Odyssey* 3 and *Odyssey* 4 are clear examples of commu-

and grief) propose that Odysseus' tears are “orchestrated” (86), designed to draw attention to himself and to bring the song to a halt. This explanation seems to me misguided, if not banal: Demodocus' theme was, after all, a subject selected by the hero himself.

43 Odysseus will recover from this stress disorder when two conditions have been fulfilled: first, his *nostos* must be complete; and, second, he must subsequently have the opportunity to talk through his memories, constructing a story that begins and ends. As Shay 2003, 55 says, recovery depends on ‘communalization’, the telling of one's story to socially-connected others (39). See also Minchin 2006, 3–5. I thank Sue Lutton for talking with me about the value of narrative therapy for PCSD and PTSD sufferers.

nicative memory, as the older heroes tell Telemachus their own (and their comrades') *nostos*-tales. Odysseus' own unfolding story interacts with those other narratives: will *he* return safely? has *his* wife remained true? will *his* return be straightforward, like Nestor's – or disastrous, like Agamemnon's?⁴⁴ The poet employs communicative memory here purely as a literary lure – to engage his audience, drawing his listeners into his tale, and keeping them absorbed. Demodocus' tales of the Trojan War and its aftermath, on the other hand, are of particular interest to me, since in these we observe the poet of the *Odyssey* collapsing time. In a bold move, the poet treats memories from the recent past, the events of the Trojan War, as though they belonged in the remote past – the domain of oral song and of cultural memory. Thus he promotes these Odysseus-tales from the status of communicative memory – the news of the day – to that of enduring cultural memory.⁴⁵

Our poet would certainly not have been able to explain in Assmann's terms how he achieved this brilliant effect, as he played with time-relationships and modes of remembering to create a moment in his tale that was not only dramatic but also deeply engaging. But I propose that he, like other poets in this tradition, was at least subconsciously aware of the distinctions between personal and social and cultural memory, in the same approximate way as we are. Indeed, we have some evidence that this epic tradition saw a qualitative difference between the transmission of memories far and wide *in their own world* (communicative memory, as Penelope describes it at *Od.* 4.722–726) and the transmission, through singers and their songs, of stories of momentous deeds, down through time *to those in the distant future* (as described at *Il.* 6.357–358, in Helen's words, and at *Od.* 3.202–205, by Telemachus). Thus, although he may not have realized precisely how he achieved the effects he sought, Homer allowed these three modes of mem-

44 Throughout the poem the poet plays on the possibility that Odysseus' return may parallel that of Agamemnon. Ahl – Roisman 1996, 28 describe this strategy neatly, as "the narrative warp" upon which the return of Odysseus is woven.

45 Since this is an oral culture, we observe no 'floating gap'. On this concept, see above. The poet's allusion here to the glorious songs that will, in the future, celebrate Odysseus' successful return home is not out of place: the glory that awaits Odysseus is the theme of the epic.

ory to play off each other, for he knew, as a storyteller, that this strategy, in storytelling terms, would work.⁴⁶

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