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## Homer, His Art and His World [Review]

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Joachim Latacz, Homer, His Art and His World. J. Holoka (trans.). Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996. Pp. 175 + xi. \$29.95. ISBN 0-472-08353-8.

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First let me say what this book is not. Although the dust-jacket claims that the book includes “sections on the relevance of Homer to modern issues in literary criticism”, it cannot be said to offer anything approaching a representative, let alone a comprehensive, survey of modern criticism, even as it is currently applied to Homer (H.). It does, in 34 pages, outline “the historical background to Homer and his poetry”, but only for those who share the author’s assumptions on the time, place, and circumstances of composition.

What the book does manage to do, both clearly and succinctly, is to introduce anglophone readers to the current state of German historical and philological scholarship on H. If approached on these terms, Homer, His Art and His World provides a valuable service. Although the book’s usefulness as a general introduction is limited by the audience for which it was originally written, its provincialism will make it invaluable to most American graduate students in the classics and to some undergraduates as well. I would not wish to see this book in the hands of the uninitiated, only because the average reader will have difficulty recognizing that virtually every aspect of its historical model is vigorously debated on this side of the Atlantic. Of course, L. may well be right in many if not all of his views, but the evidence is often open to alternative explanations, and the “wider public” for whom this book was meant to “sum

up” recent advances in Homeric criticism is often denied the chance to weigh the evidence and to reach its own conclusions.

In the Introduction, L. declares that his mission is “to make Homer’s epics speak directly to present-day readers” (2). For L., the key is to position H. and his work in their historical context, and to elucidate the basic laws of Homeric composition. Having established his mission, L. positions his own efforts in the context of “A Historical Sketch of Homeric Scholarship” from the 8th century to the present day (5-13). He distinguishes among 4 basic phases, of which “the fourth and, for the moment, last phase is that of systematic philological (historical, archaeological, linguistic) textual analysis and literary criticism of Homer’s works in connection with comparative epic studies and, most recently, modern narrative theory” (8). Small wonder that not a single example of French literary criticism makes it into the bibliography, while American entries are limited to A. and M. Parry, A. Lord, and S. Richardson, and the English to C.M. Bowra and J. Griffin.

In ch. 1, L. argues that rumors of H.’s alterity have been greatly exaggerated. For L., there are universals of human experience, so that H. becomes relevant once we learn to look beyond the differences between our own cultural and artistic sensibilities and those of Dark Age (DA) Greece. H. owes his success at presenting and manipulating these universals to the fact that he was literate: “according to our present state of information, he is at the same time the first author in Western culture whose works (or large segments of them) were created through the use of writing” (15; see also 66 and 89-90). According to L., 4 centuries of illiteracy followed the collapse of Bronze Age (BA) culture, during which period “the communicational and behavioral forms of an oral society had again developed” (16). After the reintroduction of writing, “the new, writing-determined styles of life had to evolve again.... This process, contrary to earlier

assumptions, seems to have gone on quite continuously ... but should still be reckoned at a few decades" (16-17). Since on other grounds L. dates H. to the 8th century, and since a proliferation of extant literary texts occurs around 700, "the inference is that Homer first brought about the actual breakthrough of eighth-century Greek culture to textuality" (18). From this point on, "the culture of the West has been a writing and text culture" (19).

Many American scholars will have difficulty with L.'s model of the transition from orality to literacy in Greece, and of H.'s role in that process. It is true that Mycenaean Greeks developed a cumbersome system of writing for administrative purposes, but there can be little doubt that this system was never used for any other purpose or understood by anything but a handful of palace scribes. The Greek BA was every bit as much an oral culture as the DA. More important are the claims that H.'s literacy is an accepted fact, that Greek culture was transformed from orality to literacy in the space of twenty years, and that H. was largely responsible for the transformation. From an oralist perspective it is not enough that the Greeks began to see writing as a means of preserving literary texts (17), singers trained in the art of oral composition must also see their poetry as 'texts', as compositions that exist independent of performance. A chief attraction of positing an amanuensis, especially for those who date the mss to a period so soon after the introduction of writing, has always been that he can mediate between incompatible conceptual frameworks. The amanuensis does not transcribe a text but creates it by translating heroic song from one medium to another. Others, myself included, would prefer to think of an initial formative stage in the 8th century followed by an extended period of oral transmission. Whether or not a 'monumental composer' stood at the beginning of this process, and hence whether the process itself was evolutionary or devolutionary, will be more important to some than to others (for discussion, see most recently G.

Nagy, Homeric Questions [Austin, 1996]). At any event, it cannot be said that L. represents a consensus opinion among Homeric experts on this side of the Atlantic, or indeed in much of Europe.

The thesis of ch. 2 is that the aristocracy survived the collapse of BA palatial society with its status largely intact, preserved Greek cultural traditions, including heroic song, through the DA that followed, and was largely responsible for the Renaissance that began in the 8th Century. In the course of the 7th century, however, the status of the aristocracy gradually declined. This model permits L. to conclude that H. could only have lived during the 8th century, a date that is “nowadays accepted as the most probable by the international community of Homeric scholars” (63).

L. begins with a lengthy argument against the historical accuracy of the Vitae from which, however, he accepts the name, ‘Homer’, and the poet’s homeland, the west coast of Asia Minor (23-30). L. then contrasts the H. of legend with the poets depicted in the epics, who are established court singers and enjoy considerable prestige. L. argues that these court singers constitute H.’s own “indirect self-representation”, and so can be used to reconstruct the milieu of the historical figure. They are to be distinguished from poets referred to by Eumaios as demioergoi (Od. 17.375-85), who belong to a lower social class (31). L. thus accepts Bowra’s distinction among “aristocratic”, “primitive”, and “proletarian” epics, and places H. at the apex of this hierarchy (49).

L. supports identifying H. as a court poet with appeal to the elevated characters and themes of the epics (32; see also 56). In fact, H. belonged to the nobility himself, and it is his social status that explains the superiority of Homeric poetry to that of e.g. modern *guslari*. In short, a poet can only describe the nobility as compellingly as H. does because he was part of it. In a similar vein, L. suggests that H. may also have visited the places he described, owing to

the “smallness” of the Greek world at this time: “from Troy in the north to Crete in the south is a distance no greater than from Berlin to Munich” (69).

There follows a historical sketch. The Greeks are said to have wandered into the Balkan Peninsula around 2000 BCE, where under the influence of more advanced cultures they developed palatial societies at various sites (35). In the 15th century, an alliance of these “plain-states” conquered, annexed, and occupied Knossos, at which time the Greeks adopted a good deal of Minoan culture, including its writing system. Heroic poetry numbered among the refinements of court life (36-37; see also 51). Mycenaean Greeks probably attacked Troy 200 years later (88). By and large, the Greek states coexisted peacefully until BA civilization was brought to a climactic end by an invasion of the Sea Peoples around 1200.

L. argues that conditions during the DA that followed were not nearly so dire as is often supposed. Nor does the collapse of BA palatial culture mark a complete cultural break. It is true that the DA is marked by a substantial decline in population, and by economic and cultural fragmentation and impoverishment. Recent discoveries at Lefkandi, however, reveal that the aristocracy continued to thrive in Euboea, while the discovery of numerous votive offerings from all parts of Greece dating from 1100 to 725 in the grotto of Zeus on the Lassithi plateau of Crete suggest that Lefkandi is not an isolated case. The aristocratic class preserved Greek cultural traditions from the BA into the 8th century. Since the aristocracy led the Ionic colonizing movement, these traditions passed over to the west coast of Asia Minor (45-46). Excluded from this cultural unity were the Dorian Greeks (48).

The final twenty pages of the ch. position H. within this historical construct. L. argues that epic was a medium of self-validation and even of inspiration for the nobility. Archaisms in H.’s formulaic language point clearly to

a BA phase in the development of Greek epic. Although these poetic traditions continued throughout the DA, they were only able to thrive once the aristocracy had regained its former prosperity. This stage was reached in Asia Minor during the 8th century. Aristotle's remark that the majority of the inhabitants of Kolophon were "wealthy and noble" in the 8th century indicates that these settlements quickly developed into the richest cities of Greece, as does the reference to the Ionians assembled on Delos in the "seventh century" Hymn to Delian Apollo (46-47 and 52; see also 56). The "hotbed of innovation" at this time was Euboea, which was actively engaged in NE trade. East Ionia was nevertheless able to benefit from this NE contact, largely through the mediation of Samos. Although archaeological evidence from East Ionia is "relatively scanty" in the 8th century, the numerous votives bearing horse motifs found at the Heraion on Samos and the massive city wall at old Smyrna dating to 850 "point to a firmly entrenched aristocracy", since the aristocrats dominated warfare at this time (55).

L. now returns to the claim that H. was an 8th century East Ionian aristocrat. He begins by contrasting the supposed optimism of H.'s world view with the pessimism of Hesiod's, and on this basis assigns them to different stages of historical development: H. grew up during a period of "renaissance and revitalization", while in Hesiod's day the aristocracy "had already passed the apogee of its power" (57). The decline of the aristocracy is explained with the emergence of the middle class, a sense of public spirit and individual responsibility fostered by the colonizing movement, the ability of writing to increase self-reliance, and the democratization of warfare brought about by the adoption of massed fighting techniques. These developments go unmentioned in H., and the epics survived this period, because "they originated at a time when they could still be widely accepted and welcomed, a time when there was still no

danger of their being discarded as the self-portrait of an incipiently marginal elite class" (58). H. belongs rather to the 8th century, a time when a Greek national consciousness began to develop at Panhellenic festivals, as did a new engagement with the BA past.

Having argued that H. best fits an 8th century social context, L. searches for external confirmation in later archaic poetry and vases: "the result has been a battery of corroborative arguments" (59). H.'s influence is said to be visible in Hesiod "who wrote around 700", and in the lyric poets, including Semonides and Alkaios (fr. 44). On the vase paintings, L. argues that "there can be only one explanation for the fact that, of the many different cycles of legend in circulation at the time, the heroic scenes on vases between 725 and 600 illustrate characters and incidents drawn exclusively from the saga of the Trojan War: we must assume that the vase painters were dependent on a preeminent literary version of the subject matter then in vogue. Such a version can only have existed in the Iliad and in the Odyssey" (60-61).

L. also cites the famous 8th century potsherd from Ischia on which are written 3 verses mentioning a cup that belongs to Nestor. Since the poem assumes the reader's acquaintance with such a cup, and since the first, iambic, verse referring to it is followed by a pair of hexameters, L. infers that the reference must be to a well known hexameter poem. That poem is, of course, our Iliad, which describes a 'BA' goblet owned by Nestor (11.632-37). The facility with which the verses were written and the access to writing materials provided by contemporary NE trade indicate that there were no technical obstacles to writing down the epics at this time. The impetus to do so was the desire of the nobility to celebrate its recent achievements. The degree to which the original ms has suffered interpolation is hard to assess, but the Doloneia may not be genuine.



The question whether H. also wrote the Odyssey must likewise remain open, even though it is on the whole “more modern” (67).

L.’s historical model works well enough in outline. He is certainly right to argue that theories of a complete cultural break at the end of the BA have fallen somewhat into disfavor. His definition of DA aristocracy as a sub-palatial ruling class whose authority was based on property and birth fits the ‘decapitation’ model proposed by I. Morris (e.g. CA 5 [1986] 81-138), and will find wide-spread approval among DA historians. Recent linguistic studies by C. Ruijgh leave little doubt that heroic song was a mainstay of BA life (“D’Homere aux origines proto-myceeniennes de la tradition epique”, Homeric Questions, J. Crielaard ed. [Amsterdam, 1995] 1-96).

Still, the decision to compress the discussion of the BA into 4 pages has produced some potentially misleading generalizations, such as that frescoes at Knossos, Pylos, and Thera point to Greek cultural refinements stimulated by trade, and the apparent claim that pottery was the most important element of the BA export economy (36). More important is the statement that mainland BA civilization “reached its pinnacle in the thirteenth century” (37). It is understandable, given the book’s target audience, that L. avoided acronyms like LHIIA2-LHIIIB1 in favor of an absolute chronology; yet based on the current state of our knowledge LHIIA2 belongs to the 14th century, while the second half of the 13th century, LHIIIB2, is a period of real decline both on the mainland and on Crete. These factors are clearly relevant to the claim that “since the destruction was more or less simultaneous everywhere, an invasion by outsiders must be assumed.” (38). Admittedly, in the context of discussing a millennium the 50 years separating the first destruction from the last may seem relatively insignificant; yet it bears directly on whether, as L. contends, the destruction was caused by invaders. In the last few decades, the dramatic image of alien hordes

sweeping across Greece has given way to a more complex image of natural disasters, agricultural over-production, and economically ruinous building programs accompanied, perhaps, by opportunistic incursions of non-Greek peoples (K. Kilian, "Mycenaeans Up To Date: Trends and Changes in Recent Research," in Problems in Greek Prehistory, E. French and K. Wardle edd. [Bristol, 1986] esp. 134-35). Whether or not the Dorians followed the Sea-Peoples into Greece (38; see also 48) thus becomes highly problematic. Some would argue that the Dorians were an indigenous people who came out on top in various regions of Greece after the fall of its palace culture.

L. correctly refrains from calling the apsidal structure at Lefkandi a heroon. It does not necessarily follow, however, that the local ruler cremated and buried in the structure belonged to a hereditary nobility, and the material evidence could be used to support identifying him as a so-called "Big Man" (J. Whitley, Style and Society in Dark Age Greece [Cambridge, 1991] 184-86). In any case, Messenia offers better evidence for hereditary status in the early DA (K. Morgan, Athletes and Oracles [Cambridge, 1990] 73-79). The finds on the Lassithi plateau are indeed exciting, but in terms of L.'s thesis everything depends on the frequency and provenience of the 11th-10th century votives. Little beyond the ability of the culture to preserve the memory of the place will be proven if the votives slow down to a trickle in this period. I note that in 1986 the excavator J. Sakellarakis could still entertain the idea that all of the dedications were made by Cretan aristocrats and merchants ("Some Geometric and Archaic Votives from the Idaian Cave", in Early Greek Cult Practice, R. Hägg et al. edd. [Stockholm, 1988] 173-93, 192). More important is the recent demonstration of K. Morgan that the cult sites of Olympia, Delphi, and Delos attracted chiefly regional participation during the 8th century and first achieved true Panhellenic status in the course of the 7th and 6th centuries (Morgan, e.g. 147). It is surely significant

that our closest institutional analogy to the Panhellenism that defines Homeric poetry is a 7th century phenomenon. It is perhaps not entirely coincidental that Troy and Olympia can equally be described as sites of Panhellenic assembly at which the aristoi gather to determine relative rank in athletic competition, that the aition for the Olympic games and for the Trojan War centers on deadly competition for a woman who is finally won by trickery, or that the mnesterophonia takes place during an athletic competition for a woman held during a festival to Apollo.

The force of L.'s argument that heroic poetry is a form of aristocratic self-validation, and hence can only date to 8th century Greece, is more difficult to evaluate. To this reviewer it seems remarkably tenuous, as does the reconstruction of 8th century East Ionia. The city walls of Old Smyrna, for example, may be remarkable for their period, but the 8th century houses thus far discovered within them are anything but. It could also be argued that advocating aristocratic values is more likely at a time when those values are under attack, rather than when they are assumed. Obviously, the epics celebrate heroic excellence, but just as clearly they also condemn immoderate behavior, in particular the destructive pursuit of self-interest. The sensibility behind this condemnation, which lies at the thematic center of both poems, receives a positive articulation in the most egalitarian of ancient Greek maxims: "nothing to excess". On this basis, it could be argued that in H.'s day the aristocracy had already accommodated itself to the realities of polis-life. Whether or not this would have been possible in the 8th century is unclear to me at least, but I see no reason why a poetry that simultaneously espouses aristocratic elitism and an ethic of moderation would not be very much at home in the world of 7th century lyric (I. Morris, "The Strong Principle of Equality and the Archaic Origins of Greek Democracy", in Demokratia, J. Ober and C. Hedrick edd. [Princeton,

forthcoming]). I note in this context that Phemios and Demodokos do not much resemble the aristocratic poet L. supposes H. to have been. If they are to be identified as demioergoi, then it could be argued that heroic song had already been appropriated by the larger community in H.'s day. On the other hand, if H. were the exclusive preserve of an aristocracy that was marginalized by the 7th century, it becomes hard to imagine why the Peisistratidai went to such lengths to promote the epics, or why they did so by staging competitive performances of H. at a festival designed to foster a sense of national unity and attended by the entire citizen body. Such traditions suggest that the appeal—by which I mean ideological as well as aesthetic and nostalgic—of H. was limited neither to the aristocracy nor to 8th century Greece.

The weakest aspect of the argument, then, is its use of a developmental model of history designed to banish H. from any time or place but 8th century East Ionia. Diachronic 'evolutionary' models such as this are of course a mainstay of German scholarship and have made an incalculable contribution to classical studies, but this particular example is based on problematic assumptions of cultural homogeneity that allow the author to generalize the evidence, so that e.g. hero-cult can be used to suggest renewed East Ionian engagement with the BA past. Yet even on the mainland, conditions were by no means uniform during the DA. At Athens for example, a return to elite burial practice around 700 after a brief hiatus suggests a restoration of the DA social order (I. Morris, Darkness and Heroes [Oxford, 1997] chs. 4-8). To pursue the analogy, East Ionian quiescence during the early stages of the colonizing movement could be explained in terms of continuing elite control, or even in terms of cultural stagnation as has been argued in the case of Attica. Nor did colonization contribute to the decline of the aristocracy in 8th century East Ionia, since participation was essentially limited to a few cities, chiefly Miletos, and did not begin until the 7th century. As for the

role played by warfare, a subject to which L. has made a number of important contributions, H. van Wees has recently argued that the battle tactics described in H. reflect 7th century practice (G&R 41 [1994] 1-18, 131-55), while M. Bennett argues that Homeric armor, in particular the bell corslet, zone, and mitre, provides a terminus post quem in the middle of the 7th (Belted Heroes and Bound Women [Lanham, forthcoming]).

Use of poetry and vase painting to establish a terminus ante quem for H. is of course an old game, but it would be misleading to argue that it has yet produced concrete results. No less a connoisseur of archaic poetry than M.L. West finds it plausible that Hesiod, Tyrtaios, and Mimnermos, have all influenced the Iliad, and he argues that there is no case where the reverse is true before Alkaios fr. 44 (MH 52 [1995] 203-19). Despite its lacunose nature, the Alkaios fragment does seem to indicate that the tradition of Akhilleus' wrath was known in Mytilene around 600. The implications of this are indeed profound, although it cannot be said to prove that H. was an East Ionian aristocrat who wrote his Iliad in the 8th century.

L. also identifies the elegiac fragment beginning with "ho Khios aner" as the work of Semonides (59-60). Although this position is still tenable, it should be acknowledged that both the authorship of the fragment and the date of Semonides are disputed. In his 1974 Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus (179-80), M. L. West had already concluded on linguistic grounds that the fragment was by Simonides or his school, and he assigned it to uncertain authorship in the first edition of his Iambi et Elegi Graeci (1972, Oxford) 2.114. However, with the publication of P.Oxy. 3965 by Peter Parsons, the fragment can be securely assigned to an ancient collection of Simonidean poetry (vol. 59 [1992] 5-6 and 23), and it appears under that author's name in West's 2nd edition of the elegiac fragments (Oxford, 1992) 2.123. T.K. Hubbard argues that Semonides and

Simonides were already confused in the Hellenistic Age, so that P.Oxy. 3965 proves nothing about the poem's authorship, but he places Semonides' floruit in the late 6th century, in which case the linguistic arguments of West become irrelevant (AJP 115 [1994] 175-97 and Arethusa 29 [1996] 255-62).

So far as I can see, the verses on the potsherd from Ischia suggest only that Nestor was associated with a cup in an 8th century hexameter poetic tradition. I note that "eimi" is almost certainly the correct reading in the lacuna at line 1 (A. Johnston, "The Extent and Use of Literacy", in The Greek Renaissance of the Eighth Century B.C., R. Hägg ed. [Stockholm, 1983] 63-68, 63), so that the poem belongs to the so-called talking inscriptions analyzed by J. Svenbro (Phrasikleia [Ithaca, 1992]). This is clearly relevant to the claim that the poem attests to "a method of composition already based on writing" in which reading was "the normal form of reception" (63-64), and to the author's implicit inference that the poem therefore supports his view of H. as an 8th century poet who composed the Iliad with the aid of writing. In declaring Ischia a "remote" outpost so as to suggest widespread diffusion of literacy and of Iliadic texts by 730, L. also ignores the facts that Ischia was a Euboian emporion, and that the cup was quite possibly inscribed in Euboia itself.

The vase paintings, on the other hand, can be used to argue for a late 7th century terminus post quem for the Iliad. K. Fittschen finds that only 5 vases, all of them dating to the last quarter of the century can be said with certainty to depict scenes from the Iliad (Untersuchungen zum Beginn der Sagedarstellungen bei den Griechen [Berlin, 1969] 177). Of these, 3 Corinthian aryballoi depict a duel between Aias and Hektor (one shows Aias about to hurl a rock), and another Corinthian arabyllon depicts a charioteer and a rider identified as P]atroklos. A Rhodian plate dating to c.625 is of special importance, since it depicts Menelaos and Hektor fighting over the body of a minor Iliadic

character, Euphorbos. It is important to note, however, that before their appearance stands a well established tradition of mythological vase illustrations, marked by an early preponderance of scenes from the Herakles-Saga and the gradually increasing popularity of scenes drawn from the cyclic epics.

Even more striking are the 7th century illustrations of the Odyssey: 4 vases, the earliest being the famous Eleusis amphora, depict the blinding of Polyphemos, and another two depict the escape from the cave. These vases provide a solid terminus for the Cyclopeia, and possibly for the Apologoi, of 680-650. Only those who believe that an episode bearing a close resemblance to the Cyclopeia could not have circulated independently of our Odyssey will use them to date the epic (see Fittschen, 194). So far from proving, or even supporting, an 8th century date for the epics, an embarrassing lack of pictorial quotations in the 7th century must be explained by those who would date H. to the 8th. This is certainly possible, although the art historian K. Schefold has recently concluded on the basis of the pictorial evidence that an 8th century Ur-Ilias must have undergone an expansion at about 580 into the monumental epic that we have today (Götter- und Heldensage der Griechen in der Früh- und Hocharchaischen Kunst [Munich, 1993] 9-10).

The final 2 chs. of the book consist of a 62 page narrative summary on the Iliad and another of 20 pages on the Odyssey. The goal of these essays is not to offer a complete reading of the poems, but to suggest a strategy of reading. L. begins ch. 3 by arguing that whereas H. clearly intended the Iliadic proem to create suspense, the modern reader will be puzzled instead because of a lack of prior knowledge on which the poet relied. In order to avoid "false" readings of the poem, "the modern reader must reclaim the position of a member of the contemporary audience" (73). Because the stories lacked novelty, the audience's

interest could only be sustained by the quality of the narrative and the originality of the perspective.

Having established the need, L. now rehearses the background to the Troy Saga (82-90). Although he does not attempt a formal definition, L. attributes a historical basis to Saga that distinguishes it from e.g. folktale. Thus, the Sagas of Oidipous and the Seven originated in an actual Theban conflict. As the historical event faded in time, many of these Sagas became myths. Although the “original” form of the Trojan War Saga is now irrecoverable, its basic outline would have been known to H.’s audience. The authenticity of a performance consisted of abiding by this outline; but the individual poet enjoyed considerable freedom in fleshing out the story. The poet and his audience were both aware that this fleshing out process introduced an element of fiction into the narrative, but it would be wrong to conclude that the larger outline was also fictional. Even if it were fictional, we can only experience the poem “in an authentic manner” (88) by accepting the historicity of the war, as the original audience had done.

L. now turns to the theme of Akhilleus’ wrath (92-106). When Akhilleus summons an assembly to request the help of a seer, we are to see him and Kalkhas working together for the benefit of the group, by “unobtrusively” guiding Agamemnon “back onto the right path” (96). However, a crisis is quickly reached when Agamemnon threatens to take Briseis for himself: Akhilleus cannot kill Agamemnon, yet to repress his feelings and passively to suffer humiliation would have been impossible for a character such as he were it not for a divine expedient. Akhilleus’ rebuke of Agamemnon in verses 233-44 is the first in a series of programmatic speeches designed to foreshadow events; at the same time it articulates the wrath theme announced in the proem into a concrete plan of action (100). The poet’s expository technique is one of incremental disclosure,



in which the increments are kept deliberately small in order to maintain suspense (105-6).

The decision to organize the narrative with the menis of the hero introduces a technical challenge, since once Akhilleus has withdrawn from battle the audience is liable simply to forget him. H.'s solution, which simultaneously attaches a number of scenes to the plot, is to remind the audience repeatedly that these events are occurring only because Akhilleus is absent from battle. H. deliberately retards the advancement of the menis plotline for 6 full books in order to recapitulate by overt reference and symbolic reenactment the history of the entire war leading up to the quarrel in Book 1. His motive is to transform "an episode—the wrath of Akhilleus—into a grand epic of the Trojan War" (130).

Again, L.'s analysis is by and large unobjectionable, although one wonders whether it could not have been written 50 years ago as easily as 10. Many will still prefer E.T. Owen's The Story of the Iliad (Toronto, 1946), which offers a similar but more detailed plot analysis, while M. Edwards' Homer: Poet of the Iliad (Baltimore, 1987) provides a more balanced philological survey. I would also have liked to see more attempt at correlating the historical sketch with the literary interpretation. At times, they seem downright opposed. For ex., L. rightly stresses the sharply negative portrayal of Akhilleus' wrath in the proem, and of Agamemnon's autocratic behavior in the opening scenes, but makes little attempt to reconcile this with his view of epic poetry as aristocratic "self-validation". I am not saying that it would be impossible to do so, only that a crucial point is left unaddressed. The claim that the hero's wrath normally falls on the enemy rather than his own laos also begs some important questions about the wrath of Odysseus, the madness of Herakles, and the Seven Against Thebes. Is the strategy of self-repression that Odysseus uses to punish his laos so very different from that used by Akhilleus? This is not to discount the validity of the

contrast that L. draws between the Iliad and the cyclic epics, which is both eloquently and persuasively argued, but to suggest that it has a deeply traditional basis in a defining aspect of heroic character. Likewise, more than one American Homerist would disagree with the claim that the poet would wish to advertise his originality in the proem, or that he announces his theme “in the guise of an invocation of the muse” (71). As a consequence of such views, L. also assumes that when Odysseus asks Demodokos to sing the story of the Trojan horse, the poet simply “fleshes out Odysseus’ four-line sketch of the framework of the narrative” (86). There are in fact reasons to suppose that conservatism is an inherent property of epic, and not simply of oral poetry. Servius records that Virgil was censured in antiquity for several passages of the Aeneid for which no precedent could be found (on Aen. 3.46): “vituperabile enim est, poetam aliquid fingere, quod penitus a veritate discedat”.

In the final ch., L. argues that the Odyssean proem is much less focused than its Iliadic counterpart: its theme is not a single episode from the hero’s life, but the hero himself. The theme is quickly limited by the statement that he “wandered much after he sacked the sacred city of Troy”. From this L. infers that “only the post-Trojan War part of the hero’s life is to be included. But within these limits, no further boundaries are drawn at first” (135). This apparent imprecision is a function of the theme, for the character of Odysseus is in fact a “symbol” that attracted to itself countless stories celebrating “the ultimate triumph of the human spirit” (136). Because of an almost limitless fund of material celebrating a single triumph, the poet could begin practically anywhere: “Tell us, too, about these things, starting anywhere, goddess!” (137). In marked contrast with the first 10 verses, “which seemed to conform to customary past practice” (138), those that follow resemble the Iliadic proem in that they are concrete and outline a course of action that begins at a critical moment.

L. concludes by charting the poet's elaboration of the program announced in the prologue. The Odyssey is said to have a bipartite structure comprising Books 1-12 and 13-24, in which the first 12 books break down into subunits consisting of 1-2, 3-4, 5, and 6-12. A divine council provides background information and sets events in motion. The second, nearly identical, council that begins Book 5 should not be explained in terms of Zielinski's law that Homer describes simultaneous narrative seriatim, because "it does better justice to the poet to credit him with having wished to make the two actions appear as distinct, nonintersecting, continuous blocks, each with its own motivations, two unified episodes moving toward convergence" (142). L. considers his case strengthened if the Iliad had already been circulating in written form for several decades, in which case "the Odyssey poet was living in an era of advanced textuality" (142).

After a brief summary of the Telemachy and the adventures, L. turns to the 2nd half of the poem. The story of Odysseus' homecoming is said to be one of proving his identity after he had long been given up for dead. First, he must go to the hut of Eumaios in order to ascertain the situation to which he has returned. This strategy, suggested by Athene, creates a setting in which Odysseus can reveal himself to Telemakhos "who recognizes him without external distinguishing signs" (150). But then, how could he? Thereafter he survives and triumphs over the suitors by superhuman self-control and intelligence. These strategies announce a "new ideal of the human being.... The nobility has changed its outlook on the world" (151). The stage has now been set for the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope, whose longing for one another "spans the whole epic" (151). The psychological dimension of the hero is thus seen to be every bit as central to the Odyssey as it is to the Iliad.

The analysis of the Odyssean proem draws a number of useful contrasts with the Iliad, but falls short on two important points. The statement that the

hero 'wandered greatly after he sacked Troy', and the choice of the Thrinakian episode as the deigma, indicate that the Odyssey will be about the wanderings described in Books 5-12. It is a post facto inference that disregards the actual language of the proem to say that they designate the hero's entire life after the Trojan War. It is, perhaps, because the author treats the Muse as a literary convention that he sees verses 11-19 as a simple expansion of the proem. These verses represent the Muse's answer to H.'s request for a starting point in verse 10, and they outline a program very different than the one the poet had envisaged, one that pointedly does include Ithake (V. Pedrick, YCS 29 [1992] 39-62). To employ L.'s own methods, the decision to begin with the penultimate adventure and to include the hero's return creates suspense in the audience: "What? No Cyclopeia?" The poet, moreover, leaves his audience in suspense for 8 full books, until the hero is allowed to narrate the adventures himself. I do not know on what basis L. can say that "the poet is clearly interested in the homecoming rather than the adventures" (138). The proem itself would seem to indicate both the level of his own interest and that of his audience. What does seem clear is that H. has gone to extraordinary lengths to show that the adventures are subordinated to the Ithakan narrative. Again, the proem establishes the relationship when it contrasts a hero who suffers but survives with his men who die because they resist his efforts to save them and eat the cattle of another.

L.'s reading of the reunion between Odysseus and Penelope seems designed to affirm the idea that only superficial differences separate H. from his modern readers. Yet in order to illustrate the mutual longing of husband and wife that "spans the whole epic", L. cites an important passage from Book 5 in which Kalypso finds Odysseus "sitting along the shore; his eyes | were never dried of their tears, since he passed his life | in lamentation for his homecoming

..... All day he sat on the rocky beach | and looked continuously out over the barren sea, shedding tears". Missing from the citation are verses 153b-55: Odysseus passed his life in lamentation ... "for the nymph was no longer pleasing to him. Yet to be sure he kept sleeping with her at night, even by necessity, a man unwilling with a woman who was". This omission, and its implications, epitomize my criticisms of this otherwise useful book.