

work of imagination. As against Jan Assmann's concept of cultural memory, he adopts the concept of homeostatic transformation, introduced by Jack Goody and Ian Watt in 1968 and further developed by Goody in his later publications.<sup>1</sup> According to Goody, homeostatic transformation, or a spontaneous process of adjusting the tradition to the society's contemporary circumstances, is the characteristic feature of non-literate societies. However, this ought not to be taken to mean that, as Kullmann seems to imply, the transformation of memory was total or that the events of the past were invented anew each time they were told or enacted. To support his thesis, Kullmann often refers to the work of the anthropologist Jan Vansina (see e.g. 29, 45, 47, 128). It should not be forgotten, however, that Vansina was one of the most unrelenting critics of Goody's claim for total homeostasis. Thus, in his *Oral Tradition as History* we can find such remarks as 'In short, there is congruence, but there is no total congruence of content with the concerns of the present. Continuous selection of intentional historical accounts does not operate perfectly. The presence of archaisms in various traditions gives homeostasis the lie' or 'Selectivity implies discarding certain information one has about the past and from that pool of information keeping only what is still significant in the present. However, the information that is retained, still comes from the past'.<sup>2</sup> As far as the present reviewer is concerned, such retention of pieces of historical information from the past still supplies a much more economical explanation for the numerous archaisms characteristic of oral traditions all over the world, including the one that culminated in the Homeric poems as we know them.

This is not to deny the importance of Kullmann's analysis of the historical background of Homer. This analysis is especially significant in view of the recent tendency towards an 'Anatolization' of the Trojan War: so much so that nowadays it is often treated as an exclusively Anatolian affair having more to do with the Hittites and their western subjects than with the later Greeks. Yet, as Kullmann reminds us, the only perspective that makes sense of the narrative of the Trojan War is that of the Greek civilization of the first millennium BCE. His placing of the Trojan narrative within the context of the historical experience of the Aeolian settlers of the Troad, which fits remarkably well with the Aeolian stage in the development of the Homeric tradition as postulated by many scholars, is especially stimulating. All in all, in this series of articles Kullmann makes a lasting contribution towards a sound reconstruction of the historical background of the myth of the Trojan War as reflected in the Homeric poems.

Margalit Finkelberg

Tel Aviv University

John Miles Foley (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Epic* (Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World), Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005. xxiv, 664 pages. ISBN 978-1-4051-0542-8.

Just like the secret cedar box with the bronze lock containing the *lapis lazuli* tablet on which the heroic deeds of Gilgamesh were written (as mentioned in the opening lines of the epic), so is the present volume of *Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World*, comprising 42 articles on epic literature, a treasure trove for teachers, scholars and students interested in the study of ancient epics and myths.

The editor made a wise decision in dedicating about a third of this massive book, nearly 200 pages, to deliberations on methodological issues, for in these aspects lie the real difficulties in this genre. Part I (9-212), accordingly, covers much pertinent ground: epic as genre (R.P. Martin), epics vs. myths (L. Edmunds), the performance of epics (M.S. Jensen), the orality and aurality of epics (J.M. Foley), reception and transmission of epic texts in antiquity (R. Lamberton), various physical media through which epics were transmitted (M.W. Haslam), translations of epics (R.H.

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. J. Goody, *The Power of the Written Tradition*, Washington (2000), 42-6.

<sup>2</sup> J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, Madison (1985), 121, 191. See also M. Finkelberg, *Greeks and Pre-Greeks. Aegean Prehistory and Greek Heroic Tradition*, Cambridge (2005), 10-11.

Armstrong), epics in the archaeological context (S. Sherratt), the historicity of epics (K.A. Raaflaub), the Indo-European context of epics (J.T. Katz), the literary construction of the epic hero (G. Nagy), and the role of gods (B. Louden) and of women (H.P. Foley) in epics.

Parts II, III, and IV examine in detail the great body of epic literature in the ancient Near East, in Greece and in Rome, respectively. The most problematic of these sections — as Foley states in his introduction (4) — is that of Near Eastern epics because this group includes many different and heterogeneous compositions stemming from cultures that are not necessarily interrelated. Nevertheless, the *Companion* takes this challenge well. This section presents first, a comprehensive overview of Near Eastern epic traditions (J.M. Sasson). Specific bodies of epic literature are examined next: the epics of Mesopotamia (S.B. Noegel), Hittite and Hurrian epics (G. Beckman), Ugaritic epics (N. Wyatt), Iranian epics (O.M. Davidson), concluding with what is from a methodological point of view perhaps the thorniest of all bodies of ancient epics: Biblical epics (S. Niditch).

Part II opens with a survey of the links between Near Eastern and Greek epics (W. Burkert). Subsequently, each of the cornerstones of ancient Greek epic is discussed separately: the Homeric oeuvres (M.W. Edwards and L.M. Slatkin), Hesiod (S. Nelson), Apollonius of Rhodes (D.P. Nelis), Quintus of Smyrna (A. James), and Nonnus (R. Shorrock). This part ends with a discussion of the relation between epic and other literary genres in the Greek world and a survey of the legacy of the Homeric epic in the post-Classical world (R.S. Garner and C. Dué).

The last part of this volume deals with Roman epic according to chronological considerations: its origins (J. Farrell), early Republic (S.M. Goldberg), Christian epics in Late Antiquity (D.E. Trout). Some poets are discussed separately: Lucretius (M.R. Gale), Virgil (M.C.J. Putnam), Ovid (C.E. Newlands), Lucan (S. Bartsch), Valerius Flaccus (A. Zissos), Statius (W.J. Dominik), Silius Italicus (R.D. Marks), and Claudian (J.H. Barnes). This part ends with a discussion of epic and its relation to other literary genres in the Roman world (R. Jenkyns), and of Virgil's legacy in the post-Classical era (C. Kallendorf).

An exhaustive bibliographical list recapitulating the references found in each chapter (589-650) and an index of names and terms (651-64) seal this volume. A random look at the index reveals that some of the names mentioned in the various articles are sadly missing (e.g. Ninsun, Thetis, and even Achilles [96], Ahiqar [295], Zaphon [296] and more). Clearly, since this work is not a lexicon, one cannot expect to find each divinity or geographical name in the index, yet some of the names that were omitted should have been included.

From the perspective of ancient Near Eastern studies, some of the articles in the *Companion* are especially illuminating. The unresolved issue of the temporal and geographical extent of the reception, dissemination and circulation of epics in Mesopotamia, notably of the Epic of Gilgamesh,<sup>1</sup> poses many problems and R. Lambertson's discussion ('Ancient Reception', 164-173) dealing with these topics in the ancient Greco-Roman world is most helpful. By the same token, because epic material in Mesopotamia was sometimes embedded in non-epic compositions, such as incantations<sup>2</sup> and royal inscriptions,<sup>3</sup> discussions of the interrelations between epic and other genres in Greek and Roman literature are of great interest (R.S. Garner, 'Epic and Other Genres in the Ancient Greek World' (386-96); R. Jenkyns, 'Epic and Other Genres in the Roman World'

<sup>1</sup> See N. Wasserman, 'The Distant Voice of Gilgamesh: The Circulation and Reception of the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic in Ancient Mesopotamia', forthcoming in *Archiv für Orientforschung*.

<sup>2</sup> A good example, one of many, is the incantations which contain a non-official creation scene; see N. Veldhuis, 'The Fly, the Worm, and the Chain', *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 24 (1993), 41ff. and the incantations on the cow of Sin, the Moon-god; see N. Veldhuis, *A Cow of Sin*, Groningen, 1991.

<sup>3</sup> A case in point is the cone of Ipiq-Ishtar, king of Malgium, a contemporary of Hammurabi of Babylon, which recounts an unknown mytho-epic story about the god Ea and his wife. See D.R. Frayne, *Old Babylonian Period (2003-1595 BC)* (The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Early Periods, 4), Toronto, 1990, 669-70.

(562-73). Equally illuminating is the discussion of the Mesopotamian and Levantine contribution to Greek epic (W. Burkert, 'Near Eastern Connections', 291-301). It is interesting to note in this context that Assyriologists, more than Classicists, tend to be skeptical about this assumed influx of literary motifs and borrowings from Mesopotamian literature to Greek epic. The main argument against these alleged borrowings is that literary parallels, even striking ones, are not by themselves a proof of direct borrowings. Moreover, supporting conditions, such as political influence or strong economical ties, do not necessarily mean transfer of literary compositions. Finally, and most importantly, it is broadly construed that cuneiform writing formed a cultural valve which did not allow wide transmission of literary oeuvres beyond the borders of the Fertile Crescent.<sup>4</sup>

These, however, are minor comments. On the whole, the *Companion's* wide selection of well-written essays offers the reader a full arsenal of methodological, historical and literary tools with which to attack the high walls of epic in antiquity.

Nathan Wasserman

Hebrew University of Jerusalem

David M. Schaps, *The Invention of Coinage and the Monetization of Ancient Greece*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004. 293 + xvii pages. ISBN 0-472-1133-3-X.

There are several recent studies on the development of money and the consequences of monetization in ancient Greece (L. Kurke, *Coins, Money, Games and Gold*, Princeton, 1999; R.A. Meadows and K. Shipton (eds.), *Money and its Uses in the Ancient Greek World*, Oxford, 2002; R.A.S. Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, Cambridge, 2004). Nevertheless, David Schaps' book will be most welcome by undergraduates, non-specialists and scholars of other disciplines. It offers a broad perspective on the development of money in archaic and classical Greece, has a clear hypothesis, and is a pleasant read. It has a clear agenda when suggesting that 'a survey of the monetization of a previously moneyless society demonstrates to us what the effects of this concept have been; what alternatives have existed, and what illusions and paradoxes it brings with it' (211). Indeed, the author hopes that a greater awareness of these matters may 'help us to live a life whose ideas of happiness are more carefully thought out, and in the end more satisfying, than the ideas that the monetized economy offers us on its own' (212).

When does the history of money begin in ancient Greece? Seaford (see above) spends twenty pages on this question, and Schaps (=S.) devotes a lengthy appendix to monetary objects before coinage. Yet he argues that only with the invention of coinage did the concept of money, as we have it, come about in the Western world. Of course, the first minting of coins in Asia Minor was not a revolutionary step in itself, nor was it recognized as such by contemporaries. Various items fulfilled monetary functions previously and so the underlying ideas of money, rooted in concepts of exchange, justice and reciprocity, had time to develop before the advent of coinage. But money as a recognizable phenomenon with clearly defined functions and meanings came into being only with coinage (15).

S. begins his argumentative story with a survey of money in Egypt, Babylonia and Assyria. In the Near East certain forms of money developed in the millennium before the invention of coinage, without ever functioning like modern money. In Egypt, for example, copper, silver and gold were used as standards of value in payment and exchange, but were not actually exchanged in trade. They were hoarded as stores of value, but not cut and formed in pieces of a standard weight. The four functions of money — medium of exchange, means of payment, standard of value and store of wealth — had not yet merged, and no single monetary item was a means by which wealth was calculated and quantified (42). In Mesopotamia, copper and silver were actually used in all

<sup>4</sup> See N. Wasserman, 'Review of "M.L. West, *The East Face of Helicon*"', *SCI XX* (2001), 261-8 and A.R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*, Oxford, 2003, 57.