BOOK REVIEWS

Margalit Finkelberg, *The Birth of Literary Fiction in Ancient Greece*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. 222 pp. ISBN 0-19-815095-4.

No account of the historical development of Greek poetics can be written without a preliminary elucidation of the Homeric concept of poetry. *The Birth of Literary Fiction in Ancient Greece* focuses on this concept in order to offer a dialectical history of the Greek theory of poetry from Homer to Aristotle. Its title reflects F.'s main thesis, namely that a traditional 'poetics of truth' found in the Homeric poems 'clashed with the new "poetics of fiction" at some point in the fifth century BC, and was eventually superseded by it' (26).

The volume, as stated in the Preface, is 'genetically related' to F.'s unpublished doctoral dissertation (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1985), although the genetic relation lies mainly in the theoretical basis and the methodology adopted in the first two chapters. Here F. presents a sharp dichotomy, very much within the framework of Structuralism, between 'poetics of truth' and 'poetics of fiction'. The rest of the book considers the possibilities that stand between the poles of this dichotomy, laying aside meta-language and syllogism-like style and expanding the realm of her inquiry. She engages in dialogue with various schools of scholarship, such as those dealing with oral poetry, Homeric psychology, the history of Greek art and South Slavic and Sanskrit poetry, in an attempt to explore the reasons why specific cultural choices were taken, and others not.

The introduction (Chapter 1) establishes the theoretical background and the methodology of the book. F. aims to overcome the very frustrating fact that Homeric statements referring to poetry can give rise to the most diverse conclusions, especially concerning the nature and role of divine inspiration. For this reason she chooses as a basis neither the Homeric texts on poetry nor the principles inferred from the Homeric poems themselves. Rather, her original approach is to infer Homer's view of poetry from 'the epic system of views' (29) which she reconstructs in Chapter 2 on the base of the criterion of responsibility. She explains in the introductory chapter that a distinction between two different concepts of responsibility for a work of art is what lies at the heart of two different poetics: a 'poetics of truth' and a 'poetics of fiction'. F. puts it first in general terms (18-27). Responsibility implies a source of poetry: external when the poet is thought of as inspired and internal when the poet himself is considered responsible. Responsibility also presupposes a concept of the essence of poetry: truth or plausibility. And it determines the ontological status of poetry: a message and a means to an end or a reality *sui generis*. Eventually, responsibility determines as either transcendental or immanent the criteria by which the poem is to be evaluated.

In Chapter 2 poetry is seen in the context of other human activities mentioned in the Homeric poems. These activities are classified according to motivation, i.e.,

non-responsibility (instincts, emotions, insight and heroic valour) and responsibility (sports, crafts, skills and practical wisdom). F. rises above the merely descriptive level by applying a semantic interpretation to this distributional analysis. She shows how activities motivated by non-responsibility are characterized by 'ignorance' and derived from 'giving', while activities motivated by responsibility are characterized by 'knowledge' and are derived from 'teaching'. On the assumption that 'one and the same activity can hardly have such contradictory characteristics as "ignorance" and "knowledge"' (46), F. defines a group of complex activities — martial activities, prophecy and poetry — that can be divided into simpler ones. In the case of poetry, while the ability to play the lyre, the knowledge of epic stories and proper presentation are all considered as lying within the realm of the poet's technical competence because they are characterized by 'knowledge' and 'teaching', the very act of 'singing' in performance, characterized by 'giving', is ascribed to the realm of the Muses' responsibility, and is seen as the essence of poetic activity. The conclusion is that 'poetry proper in Homer derives from inspiration' (60).

F.'s interpretations are sometimes arresting. For example, she cites *Od.* 22.345-9 (αὐτοδίδακτος δ' εἰμί, θεός δέ μοι ἐν φρεσὶν οἴμας / παντοίας ἐνέφυσεν) to reinforce her argument that 'the area of competence would stand for the technical and the area of ignorance for the improvisatory side of the poet's activity' (53). She makes the point by interpreting the words against their apparent meaning. Parallels to αὐτοδίδακτος plainly justify seeing it as belonging to the area of 'self-acting' and thus as standing 'for the improvisatory aspect of the poet's activity' (56). Yet assigning ἐμφύειν to the category of 'teaching' (57) is not indisputable — and F.'s careful phrasing certainly reflects this. Her argument runs as follows: 'Though it has no parallels in Homer, the verb *emphuein* clearly belongs to the series of terms, covered by the "teaching:giving" opposition, which designate the sources of human activities in Homer. The fact that its connotations lie in the sphere of natural growth seems to be compatible with Homer's understanding of learning as a gradual process of acquiring a given profession or property. The fact that in another Homeric context the object of the verb, namely *oimas*, is explicitly presented as a result of teaching, as well as the conclusion that the term *oime* stands for that side of the Homeric poet's activity in which he sees himself competent, also seems to make the association of *emphuein* with the "to teach" type of communication more plausible' (54-5). One might still insist that ἐνέφυσεν be understood literally, since it focuses on the very act of planting rather than of growing. Can one instance of οἴμη as object of διδάσκειν (*Od.* 8.481) rule out the possibility that the verb ἐμφύειν belongs to a different category of analysis in our passage? The construction of ἐν/ἐνὶ φρεσί(ν) with the aorist of a transitive verb (mostly τιθέναι, but also ἐμβάλλειν [*Il.* 19.88, *Od.* 19.10] and ἐμπνέειν [*Od.* 19.138]), is typical for the activities that F. associates with motivation by non-responsibility (36-7): μένος (*Il.* 21.145), θάρσος (*Od.* 6.140, 3.76-7) and ἄτη (*Il.* 19.88) (cf. also *Od.* 18.158 and 19.10), and for suggestions put by a god in someone's heart (*Od.* 14.227, 16.291, 19.138; with ἐπί in *Od.* 5.427, 21.1, 15.234; cf. J. Russo, M. Fernández-Galiano, and A. Heubeck (eds.), *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, vol. III, Oxford, 1992, 280-1). This linguistic pattern characteristic of activities distinguished by 'giving' seems to outweigh the other single instance of οἴμη in the Homeric poems (*Od.* 8.481) as the object of a verb of teaching. Thus F.'s challenging reading has not entirely refuted the equally plausible claim that ἐμφύειν belongs to the kind of activity characterized by 'giving'. '[T]he complex character of the poetic activity' (57) might in this case not be reducible to the binary oppositions at work.

In Chapters 3 to 5 F. analyses statements about poetry, specific performances of song and narrative in the Homeric poems, and formulas related to them. Chapter 3

examines the implications of divine inspiration for the ontological and teleological status of poetry. F. shows that the actual practice of oral poetry allows the poet freedom precisely in those areas where the Muses were held responsible. She concludes that 'no element was construed by the audience or the poet as the poet's "creation"' (70), and therefore the ontological status of poetry as a product of inspiration would be 'a firsthand account of events that really happened' (73) — an idea fitting Aristotle's definition of history rather than of poetry (73). This is confirmed by the analysis of the instances of the formula 'glories of men' (κλέα ἀνδρῶν) and similar expressions, which shows that events which determined the course of history were considered the subjects worth preserving in song. The analysis of the Sirens episode in *Od.* 17 allows for a distinction between pleasure, the specific effect of poetry in performance, and enchantment, produced only by new songs. Enchantment, defined as 'a ceaseless desire to hear directed towards the content of song' (91), even if mentioned in the Homeric poems only here with reference to the performance of a specific song (17.520-1), is taken as the ideal effect of poetry because it results directly from the song's essential function of imparting knowledge.

In Chapter 4, 'Song as artefact', F. shows that in the Homeric poems the 'poetics of fiction' was relevant not to poetry but to handicrafts. She defines creation by craftsmanship as 'the ability to produce things by means of an orderly transformation of natural objects which is alternative to the productive ability of nature' (110). Artefacts thus cannot be judged as either true or false (118) in respect to reality, and therefore 'Aristotle's definition of poetry is in accordance with Homer's idea of representation in the arts' (121). F. concludes that the concept of organic form, though suitable to the 'poetics of fiction', is alien to the 'poetics of truth', to which *parataxis* would be the only concept of form admissible.

Chapter 5 deals with the striking fact that Homer's epics do not seem to follow the poetics they profess. F. shows that the concept of poetry as a 'truthful account' in a 'catalogue-like sequence' (131) accounts for Hesiod, the Cycle and in general the practice of oral poetry (139), but not the Homeric poems. After analyzing the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* from the point of view of narrative F. concludes that 'the Homeric poems prove to be closer to Homer's concept of artefact than to his concept of song' (136). F. advances the idea that 'the Homeric tradition is a relatively late development within the epic tradition itself, a development which, probably as a result of the codification of the Homeric poems in the sixth century BC, simply had not had enough time to become fully aware of the new practices it was applying and to create an articulated poetics on its own' (140). Therefore, Homer's references to poetry would 'reflect a state of the epic different from that exemplified by his own poems' (141). These new practices and this state of epic are characterized by a narrative strategy which F. labels 'imitation' and defines as 'the invention of new episodes modeled on the traditional ones when no traditional episodes are available' (exemplified by the 're-enactment' of all the stages of the war in *Iliad* 1, and the invention of episodes in *Odyssey* 8). She finds references to these practices in the modification of the traditional formula 'I shall recount the truth' (ἀληθείην καταλέξω) to the metrically equivalent 'I shall recount plausible things' (ἐοικότα γὰρ καταλέξω) (*Od.* 4.235-9), and in the expression 'he uttered many lies which resembled truth' (ἴσκε

ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγων ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα, *Od.* 19.203). These last two cases can be seen as evidence for the Homeric concept of fiction. F., however, finds in them an indication that 'the new poetical practice applied in the Homeric tradition is beginning to rise to the poet's consciousness' (150). This is certainly a good example of how F. consistently advances her argument on the basis of conclusions reached deductively in the first two chapters. Some of the subsequent developments in her argument would be hard to accept if one did not accept her conclusions about inspiration in the Homeric epics.

Chapter 6 outlines the history of Greek poetics from Homer to Aristotle's *Poetics*. Here F. surveys the extent to which choral and elegiac poetry from the seventh and the sixth centuries BC share with epic poetry a common basis in inspiration by the Muses, while at the same time deviating from the tradition in their treatment of the idiom of the Muses in terms of knowledge (Archil. 1.2 West, Sol. 13.42 West) and in the idea of collaboration of the poet with the Muse (Stesich. 210 PMG). According to F., it is after radical changes in the fifth century BC, such as the emergence of the Sophistic movement and dramatic poetry, that Aristotle's category of *mimesis* emerges, freed from being seen as either true or false.

F.'s book is the kind of work which inspires thought even when one disagrees with her. Take, for example, her assertion that 'no invocations of the Muse are found ... in the iambic poems of Archilochus, Semonides, and Hipponax' (161). However, if we were to understand 'iambic poems' as a genre rather than a metre, we could point to such an invocation in a hexametrical fragment by Hipponax (128W)[1] which parodies the diction of traditional epic invocations to the Muse. Leaving aside the question whether the iambic poet believed in the Muses or not, two points are clear: first, in order to parody the invocation to the Muse he must have sufficiently internalized its codes, and secondly, he must write in a genre that allows irreverence about this literary device. This suggests that the traditional view of poetry does not govern archaic iambus the way it does the lyric and elegiac genres. Parody would thus be a stronger deviation from the traditional idiom of the Muse — stronger than its treatment in terms of knowledge or the idea of collaboration with the Muse.[2] Using F.'s terms I would suggest that iambic poetry moved a step further than lyric and elegy towards a 'poetics of fiction'.

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1 I agree with M.L. West, *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus* (1974), 30 that 'we are justified in classing it [Hippon. 128 West] as an iambus'. Polemon's claim (*ap.* Athen. 15.698b) that Hipponax must be called the εὑρετής of parody is similar to the scholiast's assertion that Homer was the first writer of Silloi, referring to the Thersites passage (Schol. ABT on B 212). In both cases the author of an earlier text displaying some of the qualities seen as typical of the genre is identified as its founder. For a survey of various interpretations of the fragment see E. Degani, *Studi su Ipponatte* (1984), 187ff. and his *Poesia parodica greca* (1982), 22ff.

2 The parody of invocation found in Archil. 117 West, the probably parodical reference to a μάντις in Archil. 25 West, and the use of the formulaic Μουσάων θεράπων in the *Margites* 1 West, seem to point in the same direction.

Further, critics will want to reconsider the role of writing in the emergence of the 'poetics of fiction' (cf. p. 166). There is reason to believe that a concept of the 'dead artefact', typologically opposed to the Homeric concept of the 'living artefact', emerged after the consolidation of the latter, for sculptures are described as lacking ψυχή and καρδίη in Hippocrates (*de victo* 1.21 = Heracl. DK C 2.21) and Democritus (DK B 195), while Pindar (*N.* 5.1-3) and Isocrates (9.73-74) refer to statues' lack of life and movement in order to enhance the value of their own arts. A similar dichotomy is found in the fifth and the fourth centuries BC with reference to writing. On the one hand, the new technology was much admired (Aesch. *PV* 459-461, Eur. *Palamedes* fr. 578N^2, Philemon fr. 10) as Daedalus' sculptures were (e.g. Eur. fr. 372, Diod. IV.76). However, when Alcidamas (*Soph.* 27-28) and Plato (*Phaedrus* 276) criticised the use of writing, they compared it to sculpture and painting precisely because these two art forms lack life and movement. Moreover, both used the word ποιητής derogatorily for writers of speeches — a word that, as F. shows, replaced the traditional ἀοιδός (176). It seems, therefore, that at some point in the fourth century BC writing was explicitly assimilated into the handicrafts and treated in terms of a 'dead artefact'. Should we think that this assimilation was facilitated by the new 'poetics of fiction'? Is it not possible that writing, or, rather, a specific reaction to written composition originating in the realms of oratory and philosophy, helped bring poetry into the sphere of craftsmanship and thus contributed to the emergence of the 'poetics of fiction'?

These are just two points of departure. Surely many varied discussions, debates and research will find their origin in F.'s masterful work. For the readers of this journal F.'s book gives full form to the arguments worked out in three articles previously published here, namely: 'Enchantment and Other Effects of Poetry in the Homeric *Odyssey*', 8-9 (1985-88), 1-10; 'How Could Achilles' Fame have been Lost?', 11 (1991-92), 22-37; and 'The Shield of Achilles, or Homer's View of Representation in Art', 13 (1994), 1-6.

The Birth of Literary Fiction in Ancient Greece is a significant contribution to classical scholarship because it challenges standard philological procedures with admirable philological skill. Finkelberg manages to combine the deductive approach of structuralism of her first two chapters with a reconstruction of the cultural context in which the Greek views of poetry developed. The book thus makes sense of Greek poetics as a historical process. It is this which makes it inspiring reading.

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Alain Martin and Oliver Primavesi, *L'Empédocle de Strasbourg (P.Strasb. gr. Inv. 1665-1666). Introduction, édition et commentaire.* B.N.U.S. Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1999. xii + 396 pp., vi planches. ISBN 3-11-015129-4.

A papyrus purchased by Otto Rubensohn in 1904 at Akhmin (Panopolis), folded and twisted into the shape of a funeral wreath (1f., 27-51), was sent to the Imperial Library at Strasburg where it remained 'under glass' (inventoried as nos. 1665 and