

them. There were social, political, and economic obstacles to technological progress among the Greeks, as Vernant views it. *Technē* had to break away from magic and religion and, by the classical period, technical skills did become secularized. The ancients were less concerned with the manufacture of a product (*poiēsis*) than they were with its use (*chrēsis*), which defines the *eidos* that the manufacturer embodies in matter. Form (*eidos*) is what directs and governs the work which the worker brings into being. In Aristotelian terms, it is the final cause that determines the productive process as a whole, while the artisan is the efficient cause, together with his *technē* and his instruments. In this system, «The user, not the producer, possessed the knowledge of the form of the object made» (p. 294).

Vernant vividly shows us the development of the idea of the *psyche* from Homer's wraith to a category of personal identity — a new human dimension that was both an objective reality and a subjective inner experience. At the same time, he describes for us the Greek scientific revolution («a complete break with the past») and the development of the new philosophical thought that rejected the supernatural and the marvelous and the ambivalent character of earlier logic. Philosophy raised its own problems, constructed its own rationality, did not carry out experimentation, and utilized a kind of reason that had an impact on men but not on nature.

*Myth and Thought among the Greeks* will provide the basis for much lively discussion and further research. Even though the book contains some errors of fact (e.g., Prometheus and metallurgy on p. 244, the killing of Typho on p. 345), some questionable interpretations of Greek original sources, numerous omissions of accents and breathings in the citation of Greek words, even the printing of a zeta for a terminal sigma in every Greek word with a terminal sigma for the first forty-two pages of the book, these infelicities can perhaps be excused in a book reproduced directly from typescript because fundamentally this collection of essays is a substantial contribution to the interpretation of the classical Greek heritage.

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**Paolo Vivante, *The Epithets in Homer: A Study in Poetic Values*.** New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982. Pp. x + 222. Cloth. \$22.00.

The late Milman Parry's research certainly revolutionized the premises on which studies of Homer had previously been conducted and the impact of his work has certainly been felt well beyond classical studies. Paolo Vivante of McGill University in Montreal, already noted for his detailed and creative work on Homer, has applied the «principle of imaginative focus as characteristic of poetic expression» to Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in his latest book in a detailed analysis of Homer's noun-epithet phrases in which he finds «clusters the large body of discourse which brings out ideas of relation: cause and effect, reciprocity, narrative connection, swift transition, descriptive pointed-

ness» in which may be distinguished «a purely representational moment on the one hand and a relational one on the other. The epithets generally belong to the former; and they tend to be dropped out when the latter prevails. These two modes, however, constantly interpenetrate each other giving rise to innumerable complexities» (p. vii). Vivante's ultimate aim is to find a basically poetic reason for the occurrence of the epithets that is consistent with a comprehensive view of poetry. The formulaic language used by Homer is hardly ornamental but dynamic.

In his three part study (Part I: «The Epithets and Poetry»; Part II: «The Concrete Value of the Epithet»; and Part III: «Theories of the Epithet»), Vivante gives us what is probably the most in-depth study of the Homeric nounepithet ever made to date in language that is not always immediately understandable but in a way that is innovative and provocative. We are soon struck by the stress placed on the visual focus of the Homeric epithets. In Vivante's well chosen words: «The epithets keep us fixed to a certain object and, therefore, to the act, to the situation itself. No intrusive interest is allowed to interfere — no curiosity of description, no variety of episodes, no arbitrary effect. The situation is reduced to its core» (p. 14). In Part I it is demonstrated that the momentary and the typical, the particular and the general can be merged so that a moment of experience is seen in its essential and non-episodic nature, thus tending to become general and universal, so «the nounepithet phrases, at some crucial instance, merge the fleeting action with elementary reality» (p. 45). Repetitions are to be understood within the larger framework of larger recurrences, but Vivante insists that there is always a principle of focus at work which is a universally poetic representational principle. Vivante proclaims that «the representational, nonnarrative principle is most obvious in these repetitions and recurrences: an event presented once and for all as form... For it is the character of poetry to dwell most insistently on certain themes of experience, isolating them from the accidental or arbitrary course of things. The imagery revolves around a few points of focus» (p. 58). The author is able to examine qualities and identities, the epithet and Homeric poetry, narrative and representation, the epithets in dialogue, flagrant instances of the epithet, the epithet in narrative, and the repetition of the epithets before reaching his definitive conclusions. Outline, rhythm, cadence, form are clearly seen in the epithets which «tend to lose their episodic connotations and are made symbolic while remaining true to themselves» (*ibid*).

The discussion of the epithet becomes even more intensive and more specific in Part II of Vivante's book. The epithet in the sentence, the specifics of ship, horse, sea, earth, sky, and Zeus, persons, presence and absence of epithets, epithet and predicate, the meaning of the epithets, aspects of things, human dispositions, conclusions on meanings, and time are taken up in that order. It is noted that generally the epithet will suggest various degrees of focus, visualization, realization, while the lack of epithet (or the mere pronoun) will suggest different degrees of transition, connection, cause and effect, subordination, explanation. The notions of focus and concreteness are clarified and refined as the detailed analysis proceeds. Homeric epithets are shown to emphasize the concrete value of what they refer to. There can be various degrees of concreteness or abstraction within the same noun. Vivante rightly repeats over and over again that the Homeric epithet is not ornamental, and demonstrates it with numerous specific exam-

ples from the Homeric texts. The Homeric epithets are not predicates or pointed attributes. The epithet, according to Vivante, «intergrates a thing with a quality insofar as such a thing is visualized in a certain act or state of being, and this without any literal or pointed connection with the contents here expressed» (p. 109). Homeric epithets cannot be classified into abstract categories because their literal meanings are overlaid with a sense of form, configuration, and mode of being. In the case of human beings, these epithets are «figurative, visual, plastic, even where we might translate it as having a moral attribute» (p. 127) and their meaning self-contained and unobtrusive. The name and the epithet provide existential weight without coloring the dramatic and moral values of the action. Epithets affirm a thing's or person's existence and provide it with a dynamic, independent image. In Homer there is an abundance of epithets with a clear concentration of the action within a short period of time. The epithets, Vivante shows, are able to establish points of focus, arrest, and momentary suspense. Nowhere in the history of literature is there such a visual focus as extensive as in focus and so much of this is because of the Homeric epithets. A new sense of time was created by Homer, who captured acts and states in their realization rather than their description, each in its won cadence.

In Part III Vivante discusses definitions of the epithet, interpretations of the epithet, and aesthetic reflections. The Homeric epithet, he concludes, has long been misunderstood, even by Parryites. The epithet is concrete; it embodies and even centralizes the hero, when so used. «By highlighting the slightest object in its moment of emergence, an epithet impresses upon the occasion a sense of general existence; by receding and occurring elsewhere, it lets the same object subserve a larger purpose or design. The noun-epithet phrases thus introduce a purely contemplative moment. There is profound logic in their distribution and in the part the play...» (pp. 174-175).

No longer can students of Homer approach the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in the same way. Paolo Vivante's *The Epithets in Homer* shows us that Homer was an even more careful and more subtle author that we ever imagined, and that his use of the formulaic epithets was more than merely a special feature of oral poetry; it was an extremely pointed and effective poetic device used in a highly creative way. Though Vivante's book is not an easy one to read, it is well worth the time and effort because it shows us once again that a direct confrontation with the Homeric texts can yield positively exhilarating results.

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**W. Thomas MacCary, *Childlike Achilles: Ontogeny and Phylogeny in the «Iliad»*.** Illustrated by Abigail Camp. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982. Pp. xv + 276. Cloth. \$ 30.00.

The number of original books reinterpreting Homer in the last few years is reaching staggering proportions and the various new approaches suggested for