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Homer and Orality and Literacy in Ancient Greece

R.A. WHITAKER
Professor of Classics

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by
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OFTEN the implied audience of a Classics inaugural lecture is one that is assumed to be sceptical about, perhaps even unsympathetic to, the cultures of Greece and Rome. And so the inaugurand pleads for his subject and defends against attack the study of Greek and Latin, Ancient History and Classical Civilisation. My implied audience is rather different, since I take it for granted that by filling the Chair of Classics the University of Cape Town has expressed its confidence in the discipline and in its future. For that I thank the University. In my lecture, then, I shall not try, explicitly anyway, to justify the study of the Classics. Instead, as a professor should, I shall profess my own current area of interest in my discipline.

The questions I am interested in concern the Homeric epics, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. It is well known that these poems display features which seem strange and unfamiliar to modern readers, in particular numerous repetitions of phrases, lines, sometimes even whole passages. And this has prompted the much-debated question: just what sort of poems are the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and precisely how were they composed? These are just some of the problems making up the so-called "Homeric Question".

Now you might think that this is one of those rather tedious "in-house" controversies that could be of no possible concern to anyone outside the field of Classics. But that would be a mistake. In fact the debate about the Homeric Question has always been an open one, a point of intercommunication between the Classics and other disciplines. To cite just one instance: the theory of oral-formulaic composition - that is, the theory according to which the presence of a certain percentage of formulas in a text proves that it was orally composed - which was developed by Milman Parry and Albert Lord in an attempt to solve the Homeric Question, has been used in the analysis not just of Homer and ancient Greek poetry, but of poetry composed in over 100 different languages, including Xhosa.[1]

In the 20th century the Homeric Question has become the Oral Question. Nobody today would dispute that an oral tradition underlies the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and that these are, in some sense, oral poems. But what *is* still keenly debated is the extent to which orality entered into their composition. Was Homer an illiterate, fully oral poet? Or did he use writing to compose the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, though still maintaining an oral style? And closely connected with these questions

the further question: when exactly did alphabetic writing become available to the Greeks, and what were its effects?

These issues will be the subject of my lecture. We will look first, briefly, at what antiquity had to say on these points. Then we will trace the course of the debate in the modern period.[2] Here I shall distinguish between two trends. On the one hand, there is the approach of those we might call the "literary anthropologists" whose aim has been to try to place Homer and understand him within his cultural-historical context. On the other hand, there is the "technical-stylistic" approach, which has attempted to grasp what sort of poet Homer was through a close analysis of his language and style. (It will not always be possible, of course, to keep these two trends neatly separated.)

Finally, we will look at the present state of knowledge about Homer and orality and literacy in Ancient Greece, and at possible future lines of enquiry in this field. Throughout, a subtext of my lecture will be the central importance of interdisciplinary perspectives in the study of the Homeric-Oral Question. What the German classicist Joachim Latácz has said in a related connection applies very much here: "Although this question ... may first have been raised by Greek scholarship, ... Greek scholarship on its own has long since been incapable of answering it."[3]

ANTIQUITY

The Greeks and Romans, in general, did not regard the manner of composition of the Homeric epics as controversial. They appear to have assumed that Homer simply wrote out his poems, just as any contemporary poet would have done. However, first in the time of Cicero, more than 600 years after Homer, we hear of a different tradition, according to which the poems of Homer existed in a scattered, confused state for several centuries until they were somehow put in order, or edited, by Pisistratus, ruler of Athens in the sixth century B.C., or by his son, Hipparchus.[4]

This account is repeated several times in late antiquity and on into the Byzantine period. But there is one particular version of the tradition which I should like to quote. This is to be found in a passage in the writings of the first century A.D. Jewish priest and champion of Jewish religion and culture, Flavius Josephus. Josephus in a polemical work criticises the Greeks for their late development of writing, saying :

> Among the Greeks there is to be found no work that is agreed to be earlier than the poetry of Homer ... and they say that *even he* did not leave his poems in writing, but that they were clearly remembered and put together later from his songs....[5]

The idea of the late "putting together" of the Homeric epics is familiar enough. (It is the idea mentioned in the previous paragraph, of a Pisistratean "edition" of the poems, centuries after Homer.) But the notion that Homer himself did not use writing, but was an oral singer, is new and very striking. Nevertheless,

Josephus' assertion had no echo in antiquity, but remained to be taken up more than one-and-a-half thousand years later.

THE MODERN PERIOD

The "literary anthropological" approach

What we are concerned with here is the argument that the perceived differences between the poetry of Homer and modern literary poetry are due mainly to differences of cultural context. In particular we are concerned with the view that Homer, given the circumstances of his time, could not have used writing to compose his poems, but must have been an oral poet. Views of this sort were first advanced in the 18th century and were widely accepted in the 19th. In the 20th century the debate about Homer as an oral poet has become just part of a much wider debate concerning the characteristics of, and interaction between orality and literacy in general.

In the modern period, prior to the 18th century, critics had tended to judge the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in an essentially unhistorical way. They had measured the epics against "rules" derived from the critical works of Aristotle or Horace, or against contemporary norms of polite behaviour.[6] But increasingly through the 1700s we see the growth of a new phenomenon, the growth of a historical criticism of Homer.[7]

One of the most important documents of this new tendency is a book by the great 18th century traveller, Robert Wood, entitled *An Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer*, published in London in 1769.[8] Wood insists on the importance of an historical approach to one's subject. He writes, of the poetry of Homer, "we cannot do it justice without looking back to the times it describes; it is only from a knowledge of those early times that we improve a relish of its beauties, and fmd an apology for its faults" (*Essay*, p. 246). Wood applies this historical principle to the question of the epics' composition. Citing the passage of Josephus which I quoted earlier, Wood then puts forward the argument for which his *Essay* is most famous, namely, that the art of writing, though probably known to Greece at the time of Homer, was almost certainly not used by him; that Homer was, therefore, an illiterate poet who worked not from books but directly from Nature, and whose poems were put into written form only long after his death.

The historical method that Wood had insisted on also underlies a book published towards the end of the 18th century which can claim to be the most influential work of Homeric scholarship - perhaps even of classical scholarship - produced in modern times. This is the *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (*Introduction to Homer*) of 1795, by the German author, Friedrich Wolf.[9] As far as the composition of the Homeric epics is concerned, Wolf's argument is similar to that of Robert Wood, though supported by a much stronger framework of scholarship. Like most scholars of his day, Wolf placed Homer very early in the Greek tradition, about 950 B.C. - which is almost certainly two, or two-and-a-half, centuries too early. He debates at some length the question when exactly writing was introduced into Greece, expressing uncertainty on the point. But Wolf argues that

even if the alphabet was available to Homer he would not have used it; in the first place, writing materials for private purposes scarcely existed, and in the second place there was no literate reading public. Wolf expresses all this through a fine metaphor:

> If, as the only man of his time to have [writing] equipment [Homer] had completed the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in their uninterrupted sequence, they would... have resembled an enormous ship, constructed somewhere inland at the first beginnings of navigation; its maker would have had no access to winches and wooden rollers to push it forward, and therefore no access to the sea itself in which he could make some trial of his skill.[10]

In Wolf's view then, Homer, because of his historical circumstances, must have been an oral poet.

I indicated earlier that the study of the Homeric Question has always been, and remains, a field open to influences from many different quarters. The work of Robert Wood and Friedrich Wolf bears this out. Wood, although a great lover of the Classics and an enthusiastic traveller in classical lands, was by profession Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office. Wolf *was* a professional classicist. But it has very recently been shown that he derived the model for his reasoning about Homer not from his own discipline but from the work of a theologian, J.G. Eichhorn, whose *Einleitung ins alte Testament* (*Introduction to the Old Testament*) had appeared some 15 years earlier.[11]

The notion of Wood and Wolf that Homer was an oral poet seems strikingly modern. But it must be said that, whereas we now have a distinct, well-differentiated idea of what an oral poet is and how he actually operates, the 18th century Homerists had no such idea. They believed that the bard who recited poems without the aid of a text was reciting something that he had earlier *memorised* - either from prior composition in his own head, or from a performance by another bard. Wood, for example, finds it necessary to argue that it is difficult for us literates to conceive of the power of memory in an unlettered society; he remarks, rather ironically, but with some truth, that in such a society "the memory is loaded with nothing that is either useless or unintelligible; whereas modern education employs us chiefly in getting by heart, while we are young, what we forget before we are old" (*Essay* p. 260). In fact, to suppose that the oral poet operates chiefly by means of memory is, as we shall see, a misconception.

Many classical scholars in the 19th century accepted Wolf's theory of an oral Homer. But they did so for the most part passively, without trying to extend the theory or really to examine its implications. It was the work of scholars in other fields - Radlov's studies of Central Asian epic and Murko's researches among the South Slavs[12] - that would prove to be of greater importance for the understanding of the ancient Greek oral tradition.

I should like at this point to mention briefly a work of cultural anthropology that was published in Paris in 1924, *Le Style oral* (*The Oral Style*), by Marcel Jousse. This book had a considerable influence on the doyen of oral studies in the 20th century, Milman Parry, but it has subsequently been almost forgotten, at least in

the English-speaking world. Jousse developed a very general theory of what he called the "Psychology of Recitation" (what we might call the "psychology of oral poetic performance"). He tried to show that the balancing, repetitive style of oral poetry grows from deep psychic, and even physiological, roots within the human individual. Jousse deals with material from many different cultures, including Greece, and what he has to say is of great interest to the Homeric specialist.[13]

The most influential 20th century attempt to understand Homer within his unique cultural situation has been that of the American classicist, Eric Havelock. In a series of studies,[14] beginning with his *Preface to Plato*, Havelock has argued that, even after the adoption of the alphabet, Greece remained for centuries a culture dominated by oral modes of thought and communication. (In many ways this thesis is similar to the one advanced by Wolf in the 18th century.)

Within such a society, so Havelock argues, cultural values had to be orally encoded in memorable rhythmic form in order to be transmitted and retained. This, Havelock suggests, "is the genesis of the epic as it has subsisted in all oral cultures. It arises in response not to artistic impulse but to functional need. It constitutes a massive attempt at oral storage of cultural information for re-use."[15] Thus Homer was, in Havelock's view, a "tribal encyclopedist", his epics the living memory of his society.

Havelock's theses have been much criticised. (My own objection would be that he overemphasizes the didactic intent of the Homeric epics at the expense of their aesthetic function.) But in the end one cannot but agree with the judgment of Adam Parry, that "many of the criticisms [of Havelock's *Preface to Plato*] seem trivial in comparison with the energy and scope of the work itself."[16] Havelock's theories have exerted an influence well beyond the boundaries of the Classics, on the work of scholars such as Walter Ong, and the Cambridge anthropologist Jack Goody,[17] who has done so much to clarify the interface between orality and literacy.

The "technical-stylistic" approach

The literary anthropologists worked on the Homeric Question as it were from the outside inwards - from consideration of Homer's historical context to the conclusion that his poems were oral. The exponents of what I have called the "technical-stylistic" approach have worked in the opposite direction. This tendency can be traced already in the 19th and in the early 20th centuries, in the writings of German scholars such as Düntzer, Ellendt, Witte and others.[18] They studied intensively certain internal features of the Homeric epics, their poetic diction and style, showing how these had been shaped by the requirements of the epic hexameter metre; from which they concluded that Homer must have been in some way an oral poet. But this approach has been refined and extended to such a degree in the 20th century that the work of those early pioneers has been forgotten. The person chiefly responsible for this, the man with whose name the idea of an oral Homer has become inextricably linked, was the brilliant young American scholar, Milman Parry.[19]

At the start of his researches, in the 1920s, Parry had no conception that Homer might have been an oral poet; he was concerned only to prove that the diction of the Homeric epics was *traditional*, that is, that it could not, as a whole, have been the invention of one individual poet. What Parry studied was a peculiar feature of Homeric style, namely, the numerous noun-epithet formulas - expressions such as "the lord of men Agamemnon", "Zeus the cloud-gatherer", "wily Odysseus" - which are to be found everywhere in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, often repeated many times. What Parry discovered was that these noun-epithet combinations formed a tight system, characterized by two principles - *extension* (or abundance) and *thrift* (or economy). The system was *extensive* because, for any one character, say, Achilles, it had a whole range of epithets ("swift-footed", "godlike", "son of Peleus", etc.); but it was also *economical* because in that wide range of noun-epithet formulas for a single character there would be virtually no metrical duplicates. This was, then, a highly functional system. By contrast, an examination of the noun-epithet combinations in the later epic poets, Apollonius and Virgil, who were known to be non-traditional, individualistic authors, revealed no such system. Their usage in this respect was neither abundant nor economical. (In other words, important characters, like Apollonius' Jason, or Virgil's Aeneas, had very few repeated epithets attaching to them; and even among these few there were metrical doublets.)

So, Parry was compelled to the conclusion that Homer's diction must have been shaped over generations to meet the metrical demands of epic composition, and that Homer must, therefore, have been a *traditional* poet, very different from the sort of literary poets with whom we are most familiar.

Up to this point Parry had worked within the usual boundaries of classical scholarship. But in the second stage of his researches we see at work that process of cross-fertilization between disciplines which has often proved so fruitful in the history of scholarship. Parry now became aware of the work of the literary anthropologists. (From here on I will not be able to keep apart the two strands of Homeric scholarship I distinguished earlier, since they connect and intertwine in the later work of Parry and in the work of his followers.) Marcel Jousse's book, *The Oral Style* was published in Paris while Parry was completing his doctoral thesis there, and made a great impression on him. Parry seems to have been especially struck by the sharp distinction Jousse drew between an oral and a literate style.[20] Parry also at this time met Matija Murko, who had studied the oral poetic tradition of the South Slavs.

Impressed by the many clear similarities between, on the one hand the material gathered by such scholars and, on the other the Homeric epics, Parry hypothesized that Homer had been not only a traditional, but actually an *oral* poet. And he then went to Jugoslavia in the years 1933-1935 to test his hypothesis in what Jousse has called "the ethnic laboratory" - in this case, the still-living tradition of epic poetry composed by illiterate oral singers.

Milman Parry died very young, in 1935. But he lived long enough to be able to gather a vast collection of Serbo-Croatian oral songs, and to compare some of

this material with Homer. Since Parry's death his work has been continued by his colleague, Albert Lord.

Now we saw earlier that many scholars in the 18th and 19th centuries had believed that Homer was an oral poet. But they had no clear conception of how such a poet functioned, how he learned his craft, and in particular how he could compose poems, sometimes of considerable length, without the help of writing. (They thought vaguely in terms of memory.) It is precisely these points that Lord's book of 1960, *The Singer of Tales* deals with, drawing on a wealth of Jugoslav material. The great contribution made by this book is the idea of *composition in performance*. Lord proved that, in an oral milieu, every song, while traditional, is at the same time *a new creation*. The oral singer does not *memorise* his song; what he does is to *internalise* a kind of poetic language. Just as children pick up words and phrases which they can then bring out spontaneously in conversation, so the oral singer picks up, from listening to other singers, the short formulas and longer story-patterns or themes that he then combines, in performance, into a connected narrative.

Of all the Jugoslav heroic songs collected by Parry and later published by Lord, perhaps the most significant is the *Wedding of Meho, son of Smail*, sung by Avdo Medjedović.[21] This poem, more than 12 000 lines long, has finally proved conclusively (something that was always disputed before) that an illiterate poet can, purely orally, produce a unified poem of Homeric proportions. It has been proved too that a fully oral poet is quite capable of keeping firm control over a very lengthy narrative, and of maintaining subtle, psychologically convincing characterisation. The similarities in style and technique that Parry and Lord observed between, on the one hand, the Jugoslav heroic songs and, on the other, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, convinced them that Homer must have been a fully oral poet. This view has been widely accepted, but I must say that I have my doubts about it, for reasons that I will deal with in a moment.

CONCLUSION

Like all the most interesting scholarly questions those concerning Homer and the composition of his epics are unlikely ever to be finally resolved. But a degree of certainty has been achieved in some areas at least. And the Homeric Question would be formulated rather differently today from the way it was formulated by Wood or Wolf in the 18th century.

In the first place, there can be no doubt now that there lay behind the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* a rich and complex oral tradition stretching back many generations. This much is certain from the work of Parry and Lord. Secondly, the same two scholars have proved that an illiterate oral poet is quite capable of composing in performance a unified epic narrative at least as long as the *Odyssey*. Thirdly, we do now know that alphabetic writing was available in Greece at the time of Homer, that is, during the second half of the 8th century B.C.[22] Fourthly, it has become quite clear that in ancient Greece, just as in other societies, the mere coming of writing did not automatically and immediately create those modes of thought and communication that we associate with literacy. Nor was it the case

that literacy simply replaced orality. Rather, orality continued to operate, as it does in all societies, but now alongside literacy and in interaction with it.[23]

The outstanding question remains: how *did* Homer compose his epics - purely orally or with the aid of writing? My own belief is that the poet who composed the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* did so with the help of writing. What convinces me that this is so - and I hope this does not seem too paradoxical - is precisely the description that the oral theorists have given of the traditional oral epic. They insist that this type of poetry is above all else *traditional*: "*Oral poets who are not traditional do not exist*" is Lord's formulation.[24] Because of the pressure exerted by the technique of composition-in-performance the oral poet must rely, for the form and basic structure of his story, upon the tradition he has inherited. And in respect of its story-patterns the tradition is very conservative. Again, characteristic of the oral traditional epic is the primacy of narrative. Thus Lord writes of Avdo Medjedović, the greatest of the Jugoslav singers recorded by him and Parry: "With Avdo the song, the story itself and the telling of it, was paramount."[25]

Now if the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were indeed fully oral, and *therefore* traditional epics, they should display the same characteristics. But in fact they do not. The form, the structure of the story in both *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is strikingly individual. Already in antiquity Aristotle had noticed this and had contrasted the Homeric poems with other epics whose only form was provided by the linear sequence of the narrative.[26] In the *Iliad*, as is well known, the poet narrates the events of just a few weeks in the 10th year of the Trojan War, focusing on the anger of Achilles and its consequences. Without narrating directly such major elements of the tradition as the reasons for the war, the death of Achilles or the final sack of Troy, the poet yet manages to structure his tale so that it comprehends all these elements. (It thereby becomes a poem not just of Achilles, but of Troy.) The *Odyssey*, similarly, displays a structure that is at once compact yet comprehensive, weaving together separate story-lines and making much use of techniques of "flashback" and retrospective narrative.

Then again, although Homer *is* of course a superb narrator, he is not *primarily* interested in narrative; in neither the *Iliad* nor the *Odyssey* is "the story itself and the telling of it...paramount". The poet's deepest concern is rather with certain fundamental human issues, questions of heroism and achievement in the face of death, the relationship between man and the gods, the functioning of justice in human society. It is not the case that these issues are merely *implicit* in a dominating narrative: they actually have primacy, it is they that create and inform the narrative structure of the epics.

So, unless we assume that there was in archaic Greece a *tradition* of epics that subordinated narrative to other concerns and that displayed the very individual structure of an *Iliad* or *Odyssey* - an assumption I find very implausible - we must conclude that the Homeric epics are in important respects non-traditional and therefore non-oral. In other words, we must conclude that they were composed with the help of writing. It is my view that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are what has been termed "transitional" texts, transitional that is between oral and written.[27] The poet made use of the opportunity afforded by writing to create permanent

structures of some complexity. But of course he composed his written texts not to be *read* but to be *heard* by an audience finely attuned to the oral tradition. Hence the presence of the formulas and themes, all those elements that, in Homer's case, we should perhaps call "aural" rather than "oral".[28]

For the future, a lot of work still remains to be done on transitional texts. An exciting recent development here has been the establishment of an interdisciplinary research group at the University of Freiburg in West Germany, which is concentrating specifically on "Übergänge und Spannungsfelder zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit" ("Transitions and areas of interaction between Orality and Literacy"). The group has just begun to publish a series of books, under the general title "ScriptOralia",[29] which should throw a good deal of light on the mode of composition of the Homeric epics (among many other things).

Finally, I would suggest that we in South Africa are peculiarly well-placed to study this question. A great problem with those texts that are believed to be transitional and that are often compared with one another - such as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and medieval epics like *Beowulf* and the French *chansons de geste* - is that they lie so far in the past. We know next to nothing about the circumstances surrounding their composition and so, in debating whether they are "oral" or "literate", we inevitably become involved in much question-begging. But in South Africa, at present, transitional texts are being produced all around us, in circumstances that can be precisely controlled. Poets are composing for performance works designed to be heard rather than read; poems which, although they are written, draw heavily on the resources of traditional oral praise poetry. I am thinking especially of the poetry of worker poets such as Qabula, Hlatshwayo and Malange.[30] Study of texts such as these, which can be precisely placed on the oral-literate spectrum, could help to clarify the idea of a "transitional" text and thus to illuminate the obscure but ever-fascinating Homeric Question.

NOTES

1. This vast field is skilfully and concisely surveyed by John Miles Foley, *The Theory of Oral Composition, History and Methodology* (Bloomington 1988).
2. The history of the Homeric Question in both its ancient and modern forms has been written many times. Full-length accounts: G. Finsler, *Homer in der Neuzeit, von Dante bis Goethe* (Leipzig and Berlin 1912); J.L. Myres, *Homer and his Critics* (London 1958); the chapter by J.A. Davison in *A Companion to Homer*, ed. J. Wace and F. Stubbings (London 1962); Adam Parry's introduction to *The Making of Homeric Verse, the Collected Papers of Milman Parry* (Oxford 1971). For briefer versions see: R. Whitaker, "Oral and Literary Elements in Homer's Epics", in *Oral Tradition and Literacy*, ed. R. Whitaker and E. Sienaert (Durban 1986), pp. 18-25; A. Heubeck's "General Introduction" to *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, vol. 1 (Oxford 1988). A full bibliographical survey of the Homeric Question: A. Heubeck, *Die Homerische Frage* (Darmstadt 1974).
3. "Die Frage nach Umfang und Art von Vergangenheitsbewahrung in mündlicher Überlieferung *verdankt* sich zwar der Gräzistik ... kann aber längst

nich mehr allein von der Gräzistik beantwortet werden" (J. Latacz, "Zu Umfang und Art der Vergangenheitsbewahrung in der mündlichen Überlieferungsphase des griechischen Heldenepos", in *Vergangenheit in mündlicher Überlieferung*, ed. J. von Ungern-Sternberg and H. Reinau [Stuttgart 1988], pp. 153-183, quotation from p. 153).

4. Cicero, *de Oratore* 3. 34. 137.
5. Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1. 2. 12.
6. A detailed account of this type of criticism is given by Finsler (above, n. 2).
7. See Donald M. Foerster, *Homer in English Criticism, the Historical Approach in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven 1947, reprint 1969); K. Simonsuuri, *Homer's Original Genius, Eighteenth-century notions of the early Greek epic* (Cambridge 1979).
8. Foerster (pp. 95 f.) gives details of the complex publication history of Wood's *Essay*. The quotations in my text are from the second edition of 1775.
9. The original Latin text of the *Prolegomena* is most easily accessible in the edition of R. Peppmüller (Halle 1884, reprint Darmstadt 1963). An English translation by Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most and James Zetzel (Princeton 1985) has recently become available.
10. Ch. 26; English translation, p. 116.
11. Pointed out by Anthony Grafton in the Introduction to the English translation of Wolf, pp. 18-26.
12. On the work of Radlov and Murko see Foley (above, n. 1).
13. Jousse's major work is now available in English: *The Oral Style*, translated by Edgard Sienaert and Richard Whitaker (New York and London 1990).
14. E.A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Oxford 1963); *The Greek Concept of Justice* (Cambridge Mass. 1978); *The Literate Revolution in Greece and its Cultural Consequences* (Princeton 1982); his most recent views in "The Alphabetic Mind: a Gift of Greece to the Modern World", *Oral Tradition* 1 (1986) 134-149.
15. *The Greek Concept of Justice*, p. 29.
16. Adam Parry (above, n. 2), p. xlvi.
17. See especially Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word* (London 1982); Jack Goody, *The Interface between the Oral and the Written* (Cambridge 1987). Also representative of this trend is Bruno Gentili: see his *Poetry and its Public in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore 1988).
18. A selection of their writing can be found in J. Latacz (ed.), *Homer, Tradition und Neuerung* (Darmstadt 1979).
19. The evolution of Parry's thinking on Homer can be clearly traced in his *Collected Papers* (above, n. 2).
20. See, for example, Jousse (above, n. 13), pp. 70 f., 136.
21. Albert B. Lord (trans. and ed.), *The Wedding of Smailagič Meho*, Serbo-Croatian Heroic Songs, vol. 3 (Cambridge Mass. 1974).

22. On this question L.H. Jeffery, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* (Oxford 1961) still remains fundamental; see also A. Heubeck, "Schrift", in *Archaeologia Homerica*, part 10 (Göttingen 1979); and E. Pöhlmann, "Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit, Gestern und Heute", *Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft* 14 (1988) 7-20. The sensational bronze "Alphabettafel" published by A. Heubeck in *Würzburger Jahrb. f. d. Alt.* 12 (1986) 7-20 (see further Latacz [above, n. 3], p. 158) - which seemed to push back by as much as a century the date for the introduction of alphabetic writing into Greece - has now been proved by laboratory analysis to be a fake (oral communication from Prof. W. Kullman of Freiburg im Br., April 1990).
23. See Rosalind Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge 1989).
24. *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge Mass. 1960), p. 155 (his emphasis).
25. Lord, *Wedding* (above, n. 21), p. 10.
26. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1459 a 30.
27. This view was put forward by Maurice Bowra in his great *Heroic Poetry* (London 1964), pp. 233 ff., and it has been defended by a number of Continental scholars (see for example W. Schadewaldt, "Die epische Tradition" in Latacz [above, n. 18], pp. 529-539; W. Kullman, "Oral Poetry and Neoanalysis in Homeric Research", *Greek Roman & Byzantine Studies* 25 [1984] 307-323). But the idea that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are "transitional texts" is only now once more beginning to gain ground among scholars in the English-speaking world (for example, B. Fenik, *Homer and the Niebelungenlied* [Cambridge Mass. 1986], Preface).
28. See the paper by J.A. Russo, in B.A. Stolz and R.S. Shannon (eds.), *Oral Literature and the Formula* (Ann Arbor 1976), pp. 31-54.
29. Under the imprint of the Gunter Narr Verlag, Tübingen. Some 30 titles have been announced, covering every aspect of the orality-literacy interface, ancient, medieval and modern.
30. Published in the collection by Ari Sitas, *Black Mamba Rising* (2nd ed., Durban 1986).

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