# Performativity and Visualisation: A Critique of Mimesis in *Odysseus' Scar*

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**Abstract:** The representation of reality in the Homeric Odyssey has spurred many conflicting interpretations due to the question of its orality. The awareness of the oral tradition can be traced in the history of Homer criticism and it starts with the Analysts (19th century higher criticism) that sought to determine how fragments of earlier poems had been layered together and culminated with Milman Parry's (1928) discovery that the Homeric epic exhibits oral methods of composition (Ong). The oral quality of the text and the oral culture that produced it demanded a new type of criticism that shifted the focus from text as product to text as a transcript of a process, at the end of the last century (Rabel, Bakker). This type of criticism addressed issues of representation not in terms of sign—referent (a structuralist mode of reading), but in terms of action—model, as we will see. It also distances itself from the oral-formulaic theory that views the epic poetry of Homer as a set of formulae coupled with performance as improvisation; instead, it understands oral culture as a fundamentally different way to perceive the world in regards to heroic events of the past (kleos) in the memory of their previous performances. Such an oral-oriented reading also draws from the archaeology of mimesis as it appears in the pre-literate Greece, and subsequently problematises both ancient "narratological" approaches (Plato and Aristotle) and modern narratology (De Jong). The present paper will address two aspects of mimesis: 1) performativity, not only representation, imitation, but enactment, presentification (Spăriosu); and 2) visualisation, starting from Auerbach's stance that the Homeric world is "brightly and uniformly illuminated" and that "everything is visible" and placing this stance near or against oral-oriented criticism (Ong, Bakker).

**Keywords:** mimesis, performativity, visualisation, presentification, oral-orientied criticis

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**Impersonation and Representation (Plato, Aristotle)**

Narratological and fictionalist approaches are not exclusive to modern literary criticism; the ancients were equally concerned about the nature of narratives and the relationship between fiction and reality. In this sense, the polemic between Plato and Aristotle about what *mimesis* means (a first operational meaning being "imitation") is most revealing about how the ancients themselves treated fiction, generally, and how they went at great lengths to analyse who is the narrator and what are the mechanisms of narration in the Homeric texts in particular. Plato and Aristotle grasp different aspects of *mimesis*, which Robert Rabel identified as impersonation (Plato) and representation (Aristotle). As he argues,

> "Homer, like Plato, seems to believe that poets *impersonate* and in the process tell lies; at the same time, he also believes, like Aristotle, that they *represent* and through their representation convey important truths in their verse. [...] Homeric poetic practice involves the employment by the poet of a deceitful discourse of *impersonation*, a discourse that is nonetheless inextricably linked to his discourse of *representation*, the

> former of which (impersonation) attracted the attention and condemnation of Plato, and the latter of which (representation) was taken by Aristotle as a mark of Homer's genius."[1]

It is already well-known that in the Book 3 of *The Republic* Plato condemns the poets (*i.e.* the creators of fiction) for being irrational and arising passions, provoking laments[2] or laughter,[3] and for describing gods in unworthy ways.[4] He also condemns them for producing a third-grade imitation (since in the Platonic essentialist framework, they imitate reality, which is in turn an imitation of the Ideas), for not conveying the Truth, which is also the Good, the model: "we must surely prize truth most highly."[5] In this sense, mimesis means for Plato, indeed, a deceitful impersonation of the narrator that talks through a voice that it is not his own (in a direct speech, using a modern narratological term), thus the narrative being a genus term for either simple or the mimetic type: "everything that is said by fabulists or poets [is] a narration of past, present or future things," "they proceed either by pure narration or by a narrative that is effected through imitation, or by both."[6] Before going further, we need to confront what we gathered so far with Aristotle's view of *mimesis*, as it appears in *Poetics*. For the latter, narrative is a species of representation, since narrative is distinct from direct, dramatic discourse: "Tragedy is, then, a representation of an action that is heroic and complete and of a certain magnitude—by means of language enriched with all kinds of ornament, each used separately in the different parts of the play: it represents men in action and does not use narrative, and through pity and fear it effects relief to these and similar emotions."[7]

Another fundamental distinction from Plato's poetics is that Aristotle bounds *mimesis* to "relief" (*katharsis*), thus conferring a performative quality to imitation.[8] Moreover, unlike Plato equating imitation with deceive, Aristotle understands it as a "representation of life"[9]—Life "presents" itself to the artist as phenomena, which the artist in turn "re- presents," but not in the Platonic sense of imitation, but in the sense of performing, presenting reality by enacting it. Of course, reality is not split into the phenomenal and the ideal world for Aristotle, a distinction that the Socratic man introduced and that endured in the Western philosophy until the 19th century, thus when the artist re-presents reality through dramatic speech, he enacts reality with visible effects on his auditory (fear, pity and similar emotions). Aristotle confers to *katharsis* the central place in his theory of imitation: "[s]ince the representation is performed by living persons, it follows at once that one essential part of a tragedy is the spectacular effect."[10]

Plato makes the distinction between the poet speaking as himself and the poet impersonating others.[11] He then argues that Homer "tries as far as may be to makeus feel that not Homer is the speaker, but the priest, an old man."[12] The priest Plato is referring to is Chryses, but as Rabel argues, "Homer may be beginning his impersonating process even earlier than the first speech of Chryses, for in both poems Homer seems to advance the claim that the Muse serves the function of the narrator of

1. Robert Rabel, "Impersonation and Representation in Odyssey," The Classical World 93, no. 2 (1999): 171.
2. Plato, Republic, translated by Paul Shorey (Harvard University Press, 1935), 387e. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text.jsp?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0168.
3. Ibid., 388e.
4. Ibid., 388b-389a.
5. Ibid., 389b.
6. Ibid., 392d.
7. Aristotle. Poetics, translated by W.H. Fyfe (W. Heinemann, 1927), 1449b. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Aristot.%20Poet.
8. It is possible that Plato was also aware of the performative quality of what he calls "imitative narrative," and simply refuting it for not being suitable to the education of guardians in his utopist Republic: "For if we were right in what we were saying and falsehood is in very deed useless to gods, but to men useful as a remedy or a form of medicine, it is obvious that such a thing must be assigned to physicians and laymen should have nothing to do with it" (389b). Cf. Plato, Ion: "[I]t is not they [the poets] who utter these precious revelations while their mind is not within them, but it is the god himself who speaks through them to us" (534d).
9. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1447a.
10. Ibid., 1449b.
11. Plato, Republic, 393a-b.
12. Ibid., 393b.

the story"[13]: "The wrath sing, goddess, of Peleus' son, Achilles"[14], "Tell me, O Muse, of the man of many devices."[15] Both are instances of the poet invoking the muses, thus a tendency to obscure himself from the further narration, but in the second case, it can be argued that the poet is self-consciously a mediator of the poem or a co-narrator with the muse. Of course, this is where the formulaic criticism comes into play, since "Tell me, O Muse" and "sing, goddess" could be either reminiscences from early oral traditions that had to do with a ritualic function of poetry, or a later development in the oral epic tradition self- conscious of its fictionality—nevertheless, they are not to be taken literally since they could be a transcript of discursive formulae on which the poet improvises.[16] We will return to the alternative of the new oral-oriented criticism concerned with performativity in a moment, but for now it is important to retain Plato's affirmation that "if the poet should conceal himself nowhere, then his entire poetizing and narration would have been accomplished without imitation."[17] If imitation as impersonation is deceitful, then, according to Plato, the poet should speak only in his *propria persona*. This is highly contrasting with Aristotle's stance that:

> "Homer deserves praise for many things and especially for this, that alone of all poets he does not fail to understand what he ought to do himself. The poet should speak as seldom as possible in his own character, since he is not "representing" the story in that sense. Now the other poets play a part themselves throughout the poem and only occasionally "represent" a few things dramatically, but Homer after a brief prelude at once brings in a man or a woman or some other character, never without character, but all having character of their own."[18]

The contrasting views of *mimesis* (a concept that tries to capture the relation between fiction and reality) derive, of course, from different acceptations of truth. For Plato, there is the triad Truth-Good-God(s) that will endure in Western philosophy at least until the slowly immanentization of scientific truth starting with positivism. The poet should speak as himself in the Platonic framework since it is the only way he is made responsible for the truth of his utterances, which must be the truth of gods and the good for the utopian Republic. In this sense, this is both an essentialist (appealing to a metaphysical authority) and a functional (serving the community) form of truth. On the other hand, Aristotle extends the notion of truth to include the manifestation and the virtuality of truth: "Since the poet represents life, as a painter does or any other maker of likenesses, he must always represent one of three things—either things as they were or are; or *things as they are said and seem to be*; or *things as they should be*."[19]

It is not peculiar then that Aristotle regards poetry as the highest form of truth, sinceit incorporates what might happen: "poetry is something more scientific and serious than history, because poetry tends to give general truths while history gives particular facts."[20] Of course, here "what might happen" is in opposition with the historicity of "what happened," but it is also an easily recognisable alternative to the immutable truth of Plato. It is obvious now that in relation to reality (the truth) that fiction imitates, *mimesis* can acquire distance from reality (through impersonation) or it can contribute to reality (representation).

The Book 19 of the *Odyssey*—which includes the talk between Penelope and Odysseus in disguise, the washing, and the moment in which Eurycleia recognises Odysseu's scar and the text digresses to include the origin of the scar—uses both impersonation, *mimesis* in the narrow Platonic sense, and representation. The direct speech used in the exchange between Odysseus and Penelope about the dream or between Odysseus and Eurycleia regarding the moment of recognition, which anticipates the later *anagnorisis* between Odysseus and Penelope, are all instances of *mimesis* in the narrow

13. Rabel, "Impersonation," 173.
14. Homer, Iliad, trans. by A. T. Murray (Harvard University Press, 1924), 1.1. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0134:book=1:card=1.
15. Homer, Odissey, trans. by A. T. Murray (Harvard University Press, 1919), 1.1-5. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Hom.+Od.+1.1&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext% 3A1999.01.0136.
16. Robert Scholes, Fabulation and Metafiction (University of Illinois Press, 1979), 242.
17. Plato, Republic, 393c.
18. Aristotle, Poetics, 1460a.
19. Ibid., 1460b, my emphasis.
20. Ibid., 1451b.

Platonic sense, since the poet does not speak in his own voice. In digressing upon the origin of the scar (as with the catalogue of ships or the depiction of the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad*, Homer uses representation in the Aristotelian sense: the poet does not speak in his own character, nor through the voices of other characters, he seems to "represent" reality: "So she drew near and began to wash her lord, and straightway knew the scar of the wound which long ago a boar had dealt him with his white tusk, when Odysseus had gone to Parnassus to visit Autolycus and the sons of Autolycus..."[21]

The distinction between mimetic representation and impersonation is more intricate than the modern distinction between direct and indirect speech, since it implies, as we have seen, different relations with truth and different natures of narrativity. Direct and indirect speech also partly overlap in the ancient "narratology," since representation in the Aristotelian sense also includes the Muse as a dramatic character who tells the whole story of Odysseus. Here, representing reality separated from a character's perception has been explained by Erich Auerbach in terms of orderness and visualisation.

I will argue that while impersonation and representation are valuable insights into the meaning of mimesis in the Odyssey, there is also a third form of mimesis, more in touch with the archaeology of the term and its bound performativity. This position has common points with Auerbach's criticism and it also differs from it in acknowledging the oral tradition of Homer.

**Between Word and Deed**

Auerbach's famous reading of the digressive episode, "Odysseus' Scar," illuminates the position of the narrative in relation to truth, arguing that it comes from "the need of the Homeric style to leave nothing which it mentions half in darkness and unexternalized." He takes the subjective perception out of the narrative in this particular episode, stating that the story is not the subjective point of view of Eurycleia or Odysseus recalling the episode and internalising it, but a function of the Homeric narrative. If recalling would create a movement between past and present, "foreground" and "background," in the regime of the visible that prevails in this narrative "[a]ll procession of phenomena takes place in the foreground—that is, in a local and temporal present which is absolute," not subjective.[22]

Before going further in analysing Auerbach's stance in the light of the new discoveries regarding orality and thought processes (new oral-oriented criticism), it is necessarily to note that modern narratology does not agree with Auerbach's insistence on foreground and wholly externalised phenomena. Irene J. F. De Jong starts from the thesis that the main function of narrative fiction is precisely the capacity to show unspoken thoughts, that are ever-present in the Homeric Odyssey and thematised later in Joyce.[23] Recalling Peleus' words in the Iliad, that the archaic hero is a speaker of "word and deed,"[24] she argues that Auerbach's affirmation that "everything is known," everything is wholly externalised, is implausible, since Homer clearly makes the distinction between "word" and "deed," between what is said and what is done.

Drawing from narratological theories of Gennete and Bal, she turns to unspoken thought as a form of embedded focalisation, generally, "a situation in which a primary narrator-focalizer represents in the narrator-text the perceptions, thoughts, emotions or words (indirect speech) of characters," or, differently put, when characters do not express their thoughts, but they thoughts are externalised by the narrator. This could be the case with the scene narrating the origin of Odysseus's scar, if it were a scene of subjective remembrance, from the point of view of Eurycleia or the hero. However, I will argue thatthis is not the case. Even so, there are plenty examples of internal debate which is not externalised (voiced) by the character, but which is nevertheless made known to the reader: one of them is the internal conflict over whether to kill (pre-rational impulse) or to hit lightly (dictated by reason so as to not reveal his true identity, as Athena suggested).[25] There are similarities between modern narratological understanding of "externalising" thought, voicing it through direct embedded focalization or indirect speech(De Jong), and the ancient "narratology" that understands mimesis as impersonation of other characters by the poet (Plato).

21. Homer, *Iliad*, 19.392-465.
22. Erich Auerbach, "Odysseus' Scar." *Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by Willard R. Trask, (Princeton UP, 1953), 7.
23. Irene J. F. De Jong, "Beetween Word and Deed: Hidden Thoughts in the Odyssey." *Modern Critical Theory and Classical Literature*, ed. Irene J. F. De Jong, J. John Patrick Sullivam. (Brill, 1993), 27.
24. Homer, *Iliad*, 9.443.
25. Homer, *Odyssey*, 18.90-4.

De Jong uses the instances where Odysseus dissimulates to argue that "[t]he champion of unspoken thought is, of course, Odysseus himself."[26] To return back to "word and deed," there is a certain indeterminacy between what is said and what is implied, when, disguised as a stranger in the homeland of Ithaca, Odysseus replicated the sufferings he endured as a stranger in the large world—in short, "Odysseus' fictional self- representation represents a 'true' characterization of who he is."[27] Here the consensus is between modern narratology (Katz) and Aristotelian *mimesis*, with its emphasis on the poet being able to tell "general truths" disguised as fiction (see above). As with the critique of *mimesis* as impersonation or representation, the modern narratological approach has its own limitations when applying textual criteria on a fundamentally oral epic (an aspect that remains to be discussed below).

**Performativity and the Archaeology of *Mimesis***

Visualisation, as for Auerbach, is also a central concept for the new oral-oriented criticism (Bakker) that incorporates the paradox that "Homeric poetry is an oral tradition that has come down to us in the form of a written text."[28] It requires a new critical apparatus for dealing with this situation and in the process it reconsiders the concept of *mimesis* as it turns the focus from the text as product to the performative process of creating the discourse. What escapes Auerbach's criticism when dealing with visualisation becomes the main focus: the orality which produces this "foreground," this "uniformly illuminated" picture of the Homeric world.[29]

Why does orality matter so much? While structuralism rejected the idea that spoken and written language are distinct, with Saussure arguing that writing is spoken language in visible form, and launching a whole branch of criticism that worked within the framework of sign—referent, philologers as Walter J. Ong advocate for a fundamental distinction between spoken language and written language, in relation to consciousness. Literacy transforms consciousness, it produces a relation to text which to literates seems "natural" but which is impossible to conceptualize (a word that pertains to the regime of the literacy) before the mind has internalised the technology of writing. The "tightness" of the sign, the written word, has made conceptual distances and linearity possible through abstraction.[30]

The new oral-oriented criticism thus turns the focus on the performed discourse that is transcribed in the text and switches the framework from a sign—referent approach to an action—model mode of thinking, more in tone with the performativity of early discourses. Epic poetry becomes not only a system of formulae, but also "the desire to recreate the heroic events of the past," the "rumour" of the past (*kleos*),[31] thus turning the focus from a referent (a historical reality to be transcribed) to a model (a previous performance of this historicity in the oral tradition): "Yet when "performance" rather than "text" becomes the primary reality of the Greek epic tradition we may wonder what the consequences are for the concept of mimesis. In other words, what does it mean for Homeric poetry to represent reality when its own primary reality is an epic performance, which is modelled on a previous performance?"[32]

This is where pre-rational, pre-literate, archaic tones of *mimesis* come into play, literally, if we accept the fact that the history of the concept of play is inevitable bound tothe history of *mimesis*, before Plato and Aristotle conferring values of imitation and representation to the concept of *mimesis*.[33] As

26. De Jong, "Between Word and Deed," 30.

27. A. Marylin Katz, *Penelope's Renown: Meaning and Indeterminacy in the Odyssey* (Princeton Unviersity Press, 2014), 8.

28. Egbert J. Bakker, "Mimesis as Performance: Rereading Auerbach's First Chapter," *Poetics Today* 20, no. 1 (1999): 12.

29. "Auerbach [...] viewed the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (and the Old Testament) as "finished products," a conception of their style that may seem literate and textual, especially when one considers his silence on their origins, or on their functioning in the contexts for which they have been originally designed. Yet the substance of his vision squares strikingly with the critical paradigm that sees in textlessness the essence of Homeric poetry, locating the aesthetics of the absolute present in the production of epic verse." Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 14.

30. Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (Routledge, 2002), 5-17.

31. Bakker, "Mimesis," 16. *Cf.* Katz, which argues that part of Penelope's *kleos* is the association in her name with *metis* (which shows both her faithfulness and her intelligence, her capacity for devising and artifice). Katz, *Penelope's Renown*, 4.

32. Ibid., 16.

33. Mihai I. Spăriosu, "Jocul, puterea și mentalitatea occidentală," in *Resurecția lui Dionysos* (Univers, 1997), 25–26.

with the history of *agon* or *dynamis*,[34] there is a slow process of uprooting the word from its immediate concreteness and materiality and transforming it into an abstract notion once the rational mentality had prevailed. In the oral, pre-rational tradition, *mimesis* arises from a ritual, dramatic context, exhibiting a performative function that pertains to play.[35] This is consonant with other voices that recognise the centrality of the oral quality in the Homeric verses. The oral tradition is agonistically toned, *i.e.* pertaining to a pre-rational manifestation of power into play,[36] and participatory,[37] and within this tradition,

> "The discussion of mimesis in connection with performance, in fact, is inevitable insofar as the very word *mimesis* in Ancient Greek denotes an action, a performance. The substantive *mimesis* is an action noun formed from the verb *mimeisthai* (to represent or imitate). Moreover, this verb is in the middle voice, which means that its grammatical subject is necessarily affected by the action denoted: *Mimeisthai* is what people do, not what things are."[38]

Within this oral tradition, *mimesis* is not to be understood in terms of Platonic impersonation[5] or even the more inclusive Aristotelian representation, which are both rational forms of understanding fiction that must only be applied to pre-rational phenomena with extreme caution and understanding of their limitations. As we have seen, the Aristotelian *mimesis* comes closer to archaic forms of performativity, but only through a fictional self-consciousness of "that *represents* that and it has a spectacular effect," and not in pre-rational ritual *presentification*,[39] simulation, invocation, making present (making "visible," as we will see) as "that *is* that" in the sense that "that *acts* as that."

**Oral Culture and "Foreground" Visualisation**

As anticipated before, although Auerbach does not analyse the scene that presentsthe origin of Odysseus' Scar through its orality, he does engage with notions of perception and visualisation that have to do with an understanding of the world through the spoken word. I will follow Bakker's line of argument, starting from a passage from Homer that both Auerbach (silent about orality) and Bakker (a new oral-oriented, post-formulaic critic) allude to, and from the question that "If Homeric poetry is primarily concerned with the dynamic business of reenacting its own previous occurrences, [...] what are we to do with its compulsory preoccupation with concrete, externalized detail [...]?"[40] and analysing it in the light of the things discussed so far:

"Then about the boar there came the noise of the feet of men and dogs as they pressed on in the chase, and forth from his lair he came against them with bristling back and eyes flashing fire, and stood there at bay close before them. Then first of all Odysseus rushed on, holding his long spear on high in his stout hand, eager to smite him; but the boar was too quick for him and struck him above the knee, charging upon him sideways, and with his tusk tore a long gash in the flesh, but did not reach the bone of the man. But Odysseus with sure aim smote him on the right shoulder, and clear through went the point of the bright spear, and the boar fell in the dust with a cry, and his life flew from him."[41]

The first thing we notice is the "vividness" of the style, its picture-like quality. This sequence of narration it is not as much a temporal sequence, then it is a presentation of a sequel of elements as they appear spatially. This unusual presentation is both the insight of Auerbach that "all this procession of

34. Ibid., 14–5.
35. Ibid., 26.
36. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 43–5.
37. Ibid., 45–6.
38. Bakker, "Mimesis," 16.
39. Spăriosu, *Resurecția lui Dionysos,* 26.
40. Bakker, "Mimesis," 17. The present analysis differs from Bakker, see the argument above that Platonic mimetic impersonation is bound to deceit, and, in this regard, far from the idea of performativity. This is how Bakker interprets Plato's concept of impersonation: "Mimesis is used here to denote impersonation, 'becoming another,' and is applied to the passages in Homer that we would characterize as 'direct speech' or 'character's speech.' In these passages, according to Plato, the poet, Homer, becomes his character, assimilates himself to him or her—a scenario rejected by Plato for reasons that do not concern us here." Ibid., 17.
41. Homer, *Odyssey*, 19.444-54.

phenomena takes place in the foreground—that is, in a local and temporal present which is absolute"[42] and the last part of Bakker's analysis. The latter considers that the Homeric epic is an optic poetics[43] that has to do with the link between memory and visualisation. Mnemonics and formulas, as we know, are highly regarded in an oral culture, where, as Ong puts it, "you know what you can recall."[44] The fact that mnemonic organisation of language does not only give modes of expression (as oral-formulaic tradition would say) but also thought processes[45] is of even more interest for us. Even more surprising is that "[p]rotracted orality based though, even when not in formal verse, tends to be highly rhythmic, for rhythm aids recall, even physiologically," which would account for the ritualic performativity of oral epics.[46]

In the light of Ong's observations on memory and thought processes in an oral culture, we return to Bakker's argument. He turns to the mythical genealogy of the Muses, which are the daughters of Zeus and *Mnemosyne*, a lineage that, he argues, is of great importance for the Homeric poetics. The argument then turns to a study in cognitive psychology by David Rubin, which emphasises the fact that visualisation is crucial to memory: "[i]mages, or spatial relations between items, are easier to retain in memory than verbal, linear information."[47] This also reminds us of the "tightness" of the sign discussed by Ong, which forces abstraction in the orderly mind of the literate and contrasts with the spoken sound of the word that immediately sparks an image. The link between memory and visualisation is strong and pertains to an oral based mode of thinking which privileges vivid detail. While oral-formulaic criticism neglects this aspect, with its insistence on formal repetitions, Auerbach notes the notion of detail for detail's sake: "this 'real' world into which we are lured, exists for itself, contains nothing but itself."[48] As we already saw in Ong's observations, Bakker too notes that

> "The formulas and rhythmic patterns that are the hallmark of the Homeric style are not only the *expression* of the images in the poet's (performer's) mind, with features that facilitate their memorization; they are also indicative of the very manner in which the image is *perceived*, of how the poet mentally scans the picture of which the scene consists. The flow of Homeric discourse, in other words, provides evidence of cognitive processes."[49]

The plenary visualisation in the Homeric verses, the "brightly and uniformly illuminated" poetics that Auerbach discusses, is sustained by the empirical observation that "human vision is not capable of focusing on more than one detail at any single moment,"[50] Bakker argues. The structuring of Homeric verses in easily recognizable syntactic and semantic units mirrors this type of flow of consciousness, "shifting with each moment and each new verbalization" from a unit to another, from a detail that comes into sharp focus to another.[51] In this economy of visualisation, the coordinating conjunction "and" (the Greek particle *de*) facilitates the construction of the whole image by separating it into smaller units of imagery. It is perhaps late to adjoin Aristotle's stance about simultaneity in depiction of a scene in epic poetry, but he participates to the discussion, noting that "[e]pic has a special advantage which enables the lengths to be increased, because in tragedy it is not possible to represent several parts of the story as going on *simultaneously*."[52]

Once the fundamental shift that orality brings to thought processes and literary production is fully recognised, the focus turns from *mimesis* in the sense of a text referring to reality to a process of perceiving and performing reality, where the referent is primarily previous recollections (in the oral

42. Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 7.
43. Bakker, "Mimesis," 18.
44. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 33.
45. Ibid., 33.
46. Ibid., 34.
47. Bakker, "Mimesis," 19.
48. Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 13.
49. Bakker, "Mimesis," 21.
50. Ibid., 22. "It appears, then, that the workings of human consciousness provide a denominator common to the acts of looking at a picture and of verbalizing a visualization. The way in which people describe pictures from memory (visualizing them before the mind's eye and turning the spatial information of the image into linear, sequential speech) strongly resembles the way in which they examine the picturewhen they actually perceive it."
51. Ibid., 23-4.
52. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1459b, my emphasis.

culture synonymous with performings) of the heroic past. In visualising the reality it forms, the performance also mimics mental processes in the act of re-creation or presentification. The Muse is perfectly integrated in this logic as a function of the text that both covertly thematises the act of creation as remembrance, through the mythologic lineage, and overtly plays the function of the memory of past (*kleos*), through its participation in the act of performing the narrative, invoked by the poet.

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