

## HOMER IN THE CITY OF ERASMUS

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HOMER: DER MYTHOS VON TROIA IN DICHTUNG UND KUNST, ANTIKENMUSEUM BASEL UND SAMMLUNG LUDWIG, 16 MARCH–17 AUGUST 2008, conception and organization by Peter Blome, Suzanne Greub, and Alfried Wiczorek; scholarly direction by Joachim Latacz.

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In 2001, an exhibition about Troy presented in three German museums provoked a controversy of epic proportions. *Troia–Traum und Wirklichkeit* was organized by the distinguished Homerist Joachim Latacz, together with the most recent excavator of Bronze Age Troy, the late Manfred Korfmann, and others.<sup>1</sup> It focused on the results of Korfmann's excavations since the early 1980s, the history of Troy in its Anatolian context, and the implications of the new excavations for our understanding of Homer and the Trojan War. Korfmann's views on the extent and importance of Late Bronze Age Troy—later championed by Latacz in a semipopular book that is also available in an English translation<sup>2</sup>—were challenged by his Tübingen colleague in ancient history, Frank Kolb, who questioned whether Troy was as large or as significant an urban center as Korfmann had claimed, and the whole thing escalated into what a recent volume calls *Der neue Streit um Troia*.<sup>3</sup>

Seven years later, Latacz, now professor emeritus of Greek at Basel (the chair once held

by Friedrich Nietzsche) serves as the guiding spirit of a far less incendiary sequel to the earlier show. Marshalling a large and diverse team of archaeologists, classicists, art historians, and museum curators—some of whom participated in the earlier project, most notably Peter Blome, director of Basel's Antikenmuseum—Latacz presents an encyclopedic review of "Everything You (or Your Students) Ever Wanted to Know About Homer" in a dizzyingly varied assortment of 230 objects: from Bronze and Iron Age artifacts, Attic vases, and Roman sculpture to Old Master paintings and Hollywood movie posters of the early 20th century. A sumptuous door-stopper of a catalogue provides concise scholarly entries on each object (something missing from the *Troia* catalogue), along with some 30 essays by prominent scholars summarizing the current state of our knowledge on every aspect of the Homeric epic poems, their historical and archaeological background, and their reception in art and literature down to the present day.

The installation, spread out over two floors of galleries on the lower level of the Antikenmuseum, is organized around four overarching themes: Homer and his time (i.e., the late eighth and early seventh centuries B.C.E., when the poet we call Homer is thought to have lived and worked); the "prehistory of Homeric poetry" (i.e., the Mycenaean period of the later second millennium B.C.E., when the epic poems are ostensibly set); Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; and the transmission and influence of Homeric epic from Roman times to the present. Entering the show, the visitor is immediately confronted by a phalanx of imaginary portraits of the blind poet Homer (fig. 1), mainly in busts and reliefs but also on

<sup>1</sup>Latacz 2001a.

<sup>2</sup>Latacz 2001b, 2004.

<sup>3</sup>Ulf 2003; cf. Jablonka and Rose 2004; Kolb 2004.



Fig. 1. Installation view of the exhibition section "Homer und seine Zeit": foreground, marble portrait head of Homer, ht. 39.7 cm, Roman copy of a Greek original of ca. 460 B.C.E.

coins. Here, one of the premises of the show is announced at the outset: in its desire to educate and inform, the exhibition mixes and juxtaposes every kind of object with democratic abandon. Antiquities are not privileged over derivative later works (e.g., a Wedgwood bust of Homer)<sup>4</sup> or originals over reproductions. When objects deemed essential for the didactic aims of the show could not be obtained (e.g., the Dipylon jug in Athens,<sup>5</sup> the Apotheosis of Homer relief in the British Museum,<sup>6</sup> the Hoby cups in Copenhagen,<sup>7</sup> sculptures from Sperlonga<sup>8</sup>), modern reproductions have been substituted. Since many equally famous pieces are here in the original, one needs to read the labels carefully, but that is clearly not the point. Large photograph murals on nearly every wall complement the objects, creating almost a sensory overload of experience, though never

really distracting from the carefully grouped and brilliantly lighted works of art.

The show, of course, draws heavily on the astonishing riches of its host institution, Basel's Antikenmuseum and Ludwig Collection, which is unique for building in a mere 50 years an encyclopedic collection that rivals the depth and quality of much older museums in Europe and North America. These are supplemented with international loans, all chosen with great care and thoughtfulness for artistic quality and educational value, drawn from more than 80 museums and collections throughout Europe. For example, a relatively small gallery devoted to artifacts of the eighth century B.C.E. ("Homer's time") and the Orientalizing period of the seventh century includes two astonishing works from the museums in Basel and Karlsruhe. This allows a comparison between the

<sup>4</sup> Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel, Antikensammlung, inv. no. N 144 (Latacz et al. 2008, 299, no. 13).

<sup>5</sup> Athens, National Museum, inv. no. 192 (2074) (Latacz et al. 2008, 320–21, no. 46).

<sup>6</sup> London, British Museum, inv. no. 2191 (Latacz

et al. 2008, 297–98, no. 11).

<sup>7</sup> Copenhagen, Danish National Museum, inv. nos. dfn. 9/20, dfn. 10/20 (Latacz et al. 2008, 385, no. 127).

<sup>8</sup> Sperlonga, Museo Archeologico Nazionale (Latacz et al. 2008, 414–15, no. 168).

Geometric-style bronze tripod cauldron of the eighth century (fig. 2)<sup>9</sup>—in which the three legs and bowl are fused into a single object—and the orientalizing model of a century later, with its separately worked, deep bowl; ornamented rim with three protomes of winged bulls' heads; and elaborate three-legged stand with bulls' hoofs for feet.<sup>10</sup> The Geometric tripod has been restored, with the addition of the lower legs and the two large, round handles, each topped by a small horse, in order to give the full effect of these impressive monuments that have been found in large numbers at Olympia. An unusual feature that does survive consists of the small bulls' heads attached to the insides of the legs, just below the join of legs to cauldron. This element had previously been attested only for the very earliest of such objects, dating to the ninth century, while the Basel example is dated to the mid eighth.<sup>11</sup> Along with the tripod cauldrons, there are a few choice Late Geometric vases and bronze horses, Nimrud ivories, an Urartian helmet, Phoenician silver bowls and a tridacna shell, early Etruscan bucchero, and a remarkable late eighth-century tomb complex from Eretria (iron sword and seal, bronze bowl). In short, these objects—some imported from the East, some made in Greece itself—provide a crash course in the explosion of artistic creativity that engulfed the Greek world in the century after the end of the Dark Ages.<sup>12</sup>

Eschewing a chronological presentation in favor of making thematic points, the next section ("Prehistory of Homeric Poetry") goes back in time to present a handful of Bronze Age objects that can be loosely connected to the Homeric poems (Linear B tablets, metal vessels, clay rhyta, a boar's tusk helmet)<sup>13</sup> and then suddenly moves forward to the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E., where several vases with symposium scenes (a Corinthian krater, two Attic cups, and a stamnos) are meant to represent the setting for the performance of Homer's poems.<sup>14</sup> For many visitors—especially those



Fig. 2. Greek bronze tripod cauldron, probably from a Corinthian workshop, ht. (with restorations) 100 cm, ca. 750 B.C.E. Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, inv. no. Ca 1 (after Latacz et al. 2008, no. 14; courtesy Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig).

unable read the German explanatory texts—this abrupt detour may be puzzling. But the vases themselves are splendid, and for the specialist, the four vases give a fascinating glimpse of the development of symposium iconography over a century and a half: bearded men sharing the klinai with their seminude hetairai on the Corinthian krater of ca. 600–575 B.C.E.;<sup>15</sup> two young male drinkers with a nude hetaira on an archaic cup by the Epeleios Painter of ca. 510 B.C.E.;<sup>16</sup> a gathering of five bearded men with one nude serving boy (but

<sup>9</sup> Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, inv. no. Ca 1 (Latacz et al. 2008, no. 14).

<sup>10</sup> Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum, inv. no. 80/8 (Latacz et al. 2008, 309–10, no. 28).

<sup>11</sup> See Papalexandrou (2005, 67–8), who speaks of these little bulls' heads as "a result of the need to put into effect the force inherent in the bull and his image."

<sup>12</sup> Latacz et al. 2008, 300–18.

<sup>13</sup> Latacz et al. 2008, 324–33.

<sup>14</sup> Latacz et al. 2008, 334–36.

<sup>15</sup> Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. E 629 (Latacz et al. 2008, 334, no. 66).

<sup>16</sup> Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, inv. no. Lu 35 (Latacz et al. 2008, 334–35, no. 67).

no women) on one side of the Late Archaic cup by Douris of ca. 480 B.C.E.,<sup>17</sup> and a pair of bearded and beardless male lovers sharing one couch on the High Classical stamnos of ca. 430 B.C.E. as they listen to a female *aulete* (aulos player), while a second youth and the nude slave boy exchange glances.<sup>18</sup>

In these early galleries, the sequence of photograph murals is also somewhat odd: Mycenae, the theater at Delphi, Troy's landscape, Grave Circle A at Mycenae, and the so-called Throne Room of the palace at Knossos shown in a famous watercolor reconstruction. They soon become more like colorful wallpaper than integral elements in the exhibition.

The transition from these preliminary galleries to the larger core of the show, on the lower level, is effected by way of some chairs and headphones. One can relax while listening to passages from Homer read in Greek and German and glance at a display case with older and newer editions of the bard's works, along with Latacz's new *Iliad* commentary.<sup>19</sup> One feels like a pupil in a *humanistisches* Gymnasium of Nietzsche's era, steeped in Greek and Latin from early childhood.

Most of the lower level is dedicated to a step-by-step retelling of the Trojan Cycle through the visual arts, from archaic Greek vases to adaptations in later Western art.<sup>20</sup> This large section is prefaced, appropriately enough, by the splendid dinos attributed to the Berlin Painter from the Antikenmuseum's collection, which ostensibly depicts Zeus' departure by chariot from Mount Olympus.<sup>21</sup> This episode, though not specifically recounted in surviving literary sources, is a convenient pretext for an extensive gathering of many Olympian gods who play such important roles as observers of, and occasionally participants in, the events of the Trojan War (fig. 3). The one enigmatic figure is a bearded man with no attribute other than a knotty staff and who looks more mortal than god. The catalogue entry, by Andrea Bignasca, suggests he could be a typical Athenian citizen

<sup>17</sup> Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum, inv. no. 70/395 (BAPD, no. 4704; Latacz et al. 2008, 335–36, no. 68; Weiss 1990, pls. 30–2).

<sup>18</sup> Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek, inv. no. 33.8 (2410) (Latacz et al. 2008, 336, no. 69).

<sup>19</sup> Latacz 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Much of the same ground, though without objects from periods later than antiquity, was covered in a recent exhibition in Munich (Wünsche 2006).



Fig. 3. Athenian red-figure dinos with a gathering of Olympian gods and perhaps Herakles, ht. 32.5 cm, ca. 480 B.C. Attributed to the Berlin Painter. Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, inv. no. Lu 39 (after Latacz et al. 2008, no. 70; courtesy Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig).

to whom the gods appear in a kind of epiphany. I had earlier argued that most such gatherings (*Götterversammlungen*) of the Olympian gods on Late Archaic vases are motivated by the introduction of Herakles to Olympus after his apotheosis,<sup>22</sup> and I wonder if this could indeed be the hero in the "civilian" dress that he sometimes dons in this period.

At this point in the exhibition, the name "Homer" becomes a convenient synonym for a much wider range of stories than those told in the two surviving epic poems attributed to Homer himself. To give some obvious examples: all the episodes treated in the first part

This is one of a series of thematic exhibitions showcasing the extensive holdings of Munich's Antikensammlungen and Glyptothek that are not loan exhibitions. The most recent one, on ancient Greek women (*Starke Frauen*), opened in June 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, inv. no. Lu 39 (BAPD, no. 308; Latacz et al. 2008, 338–39, no. 70).

<sup>22</sup> Shapiro 1989, 135–39.

of this section—the Judgment of Paris, Helen’s birth and her abduction from Sparta, the childhood of Achilles, and the death of Troilos at the hands of Achilles—took place well before the *Iliad* begins. Although told in now-lost parts of the Epic Cycle, they are necessary in the exhibition to set the scene for the *Iliad* episodes.

What is more surprising, however, is the grouping of objects in each of these sections. Literary and pedagogical considerations once again trump more conventional art historical principles. In most thematic exhibitions of ancient art of this kind, a small selection of post-Antique works of art would be reserved for a “coda” at the end of the installation, to illustrate the continuity, or the *Nachleben*, of the theme. Here, instead, each episode is represented by what looks like as disparate an assortment of examples as the organizers could find: for the Judgment of Paris, for example, Attic and South Italian vases, an Etruscan mirror, a woodcut, a painting by Lucas Cranach the Elder from the early 1500s, and another German painting of ca. 1600.<sup>23</sup> The next section, on Helen and Paris, is even more heterogeneous, moving from the famous Late Geometric bowl in London that may show the pair eloping in his ship, an Etruscan mirror, and an Attic black-figure cup to a woodcut after Raphael and an 18th-century German porcelain group.<sup>24</sup> Yet the exhibition does not seriously engage with the art historical question of how classical themes were reworked in later periods or in what form these myths reached artists of, say, the Northern Renaissance. This is reserved for the catalogue, while the viewer is left with remarkable juxtapositions that some will find amusing, others disorienting.

Although European paintings are relatively few in number throughout the show, they betray a local Swiss pride in favoring the work of Henry Fuseli (Johann Heinrich Füssli, 1741–1825) and Arnold Böcklin (1827–1901), as well as Old Masters of various nationalities

who, like the two works by Cranach, have come from the Kunstmuseum Basel, literally across the road. This eclectic technique makes for some extremely odd and jarring juxtapositions, such as the well-known Late Geometric oinochoe in Munich that may show Odysseus as the sole survivor of a shipwreck (Hom. *Od.* 12.420–25)<sup>25</sup> alongside the epic poem’s next episode: his rescue by the sea nymph Ino-Leukothea (Hom. *Od.* 5.333–50), as told in an eerie Fuseli painting of 1805–1810.<sup>26</sup>

But setting such odd combinations aside, the backbone of the show’s Homeric iconography is, not surprisingly, Greek (and especially Attic) vases. This is one of the great strengths of the collection of Basel’s Antikenmuseum, here supplemented by loans from all over Europe (but not the United States—the only loans from this country are the Hollywood movie posters from the Tampa, Florida, collector William Knight Zewadski and the video installation mentioned below).<sup>27</sup>

For anyone who has taught (or studied) Greek art, one of the great pleasures of the show is seeing so many much-loved textbook pieces in one space: the Late Geometric bowl just mentioned,<sup>28</sup> the Aristonothos krater from Rome with the blinding of Polyphemos,<sup>29</sup> the Chiusi skyphos with *Odyssey* scenes on both sides,<sup>30</sup> the Berlin Sosias cup with Achilles tending Patroklos’ wound,<sup>31</sup> the great skyphos by the Brygos Painter from Vienna with the ransom of Hektor,<sup>32</sup> and many others. For the specialist, an added pleasure is seeing some very fine pieces from out-of-the-way museums, such as an amphora by the Achilles Painter from Metaponto that depicts Paris delicately holding a bow and arrows and setting out for battle;<sup>33</sup> an unusual kantharos by the Eretria Painter from Gravina in Apulia with unique subjects on both sides (the unsuccessful embassy of Menelaos and Odysseus to Troy where they are received by the family

<sup>23</sup> Latacz et al. 2008, 339–46.

<sup>24</sup> Latacz et al. 2008, 347–50.

<sup>25</sup> Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek, inv. no. 8696 (Latacz et al. 2008, 410, no. 162).

<sup>26</sup> Latacz et al. 2008, 410–11.

<sup>27</sup> *Infra* n. 47.

<sup>28</sup> London, British Museum, inv. no. GR 1899.2-19.1 (Latacz et al. 2008, 348, no. 81).

<sup>29</sup> Rome, Musei Capitolini, inv. no. Castellani 172 (Latacz et al. 2008, 417, no. 170).

<sup>30</sup> Chiusi, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv.

no. 62705 (ARV<sup>2</sup>, 1300, no. 2; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 360; Latacz et al. 2008, 432–33, no. 192).

<sup>31</sup> Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Antikensammlung, inv. no. F 2278 (ARV<sup>2</sup>, 21, no. 1; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 154; Latacz et al. 2008, 372, no. 108).

<sup>32</sup> Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Antikensammlung, inv. no. IV 3710 (ARV<sup>2</sup>, 380, no. 171; *Beazley Addenda*<sup>2</sup> 227; Latacz et al. 2008, 384–85, no. 126).

<sup>33</sup> Metaponto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. no. 20113 (Latacz et al. 2008, 367–68, no. 102).

of Antenor, and Hektor and Paris departing for battle with Cassandra and Apollo<sup>34</sup>); and a number of little-known fragments from the collection of the late Herbert A. Cahn (a founding sponsor of the Antikenmuseum), such as a cup that may fairly be called the masterpiece of the Euaion Painter, with the story of Philoktetes, and (possibly) the contest for the arms of Achilles.<sup>35</sup>

One minor quibble: several vitrines in these spacious galleries are too close to the wall, making it impossible to see both sides of some of the vases. If one side is not directly related to the Homeric theme, it cannot be seen.<sup>36</sup> This even happens to one vase where both sides are relevant and surely form a kind of programmatic pair: the remarkable Basel stamnos attributed to the Triptolemos Painter (fig. 4) is displayed so that we see only the embassy to Achilles on the obverse but not the enigmatic reverse with two warriors fighting over a dead ram that seems to be labeled as Patroklos.<sup>37</sup> If, as Peter Blome tentatively suggests in the catalogue entry, the two warriors should be Achilles and Hektor after the death of Patroklos at the hands of Hektor, the scene on the reverse represents a direct response to the embassy on the other side of the vase. Whereas during the embassy, nothing could induce Achilles to rejoin the battle (symbolized by his abstracted pose and refusal to engage with Odysseus who sits opposite him), he has now done precisely that, moved to action by the death of his friend Patroklos. We need to turn to the catalogue for good juxtaposed images of the two sides of the stamnos, but elsewhere the catalogue inexplicably omits illustrations of the reverse of some vases, even when they pertain to the Homeric theme.<sup>38</sup> At times like this, the Basel show seems to be an art exhibition designed by a philologist.

The section on the *Odyssey* has, if anything, an even more shockingly miscellaneous assortment of objects than that on the *Iliad*, from the



Fig. 4. Athenian red-figure stamnos: top, the embassy to Achilles in book 9 of the *Iliad*; bottom, warriors fighting over a dead ram, ht. 35.6 cm, ca. 480 B.C. Attributed to the Triptolemos Painter. Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, inv. no. BS 477 (after Latacz et al. 2008, no. 104; courtesy Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig).

Late Geometric oinochoe with (perhaps) the shipwrecked Odysseus<sup>39</sup> to Böcklin's bizarrely droll take on the Sirens (1875).<sup>40</sup> An exhibition highlight is the remarkable Corinthian aryballos of ca. 590 B.C.E., with a very early and somewhat problematic version of the Sirens episode (fig. 5); it is also one of the treasures of Basel's own vase collection.<sup>41</sup> Here, the principal scene—Herakles and Iolaos fighting the Hydra under the watchful eye of Athena—takes up most of the surface of the vase, while the *Odyssey* scene is relegated to the handle zone.

<sup>34</sup> Gravina di Puglia, Fondazione Pomarici Santomasini, inv. no. Ta 177009 (BAPD, no. 8063; Latacz et al. 2008, 378–79, no. 117).

<sup>35</sup> Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, inv. no. HC 1738 (BAPD, no. 43268; Latacz et al. 2008, 395–96, no. 140).

<sup>36</sup> E.g., the Berlin Sosias cup (supra n. 31) is displayed so that one cannot see the magnificent assembly of gods on the exterior, which is always cited as the best visual parallel for Homer's gatherings on Mt. Olympus (e.g., Himmelmann 1998, 139–41).

<sup>37</sup> Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, inv. no. BS 477 (BAPD, no. 203796; Latacz et al. 2008, 369, no. 104).

<sup>38</sup> E.g., the Achilles Painter amphora (supra n. 33). The reverse shows a worried old man who must be Priam (Oakley 1997, pls. 7A, 7B).

<sup>39</sup> Supra n. 25.

<sup>40</sup> Latacz et al. 2008, 428, no. 186.

<sup>41</sup> Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, inv. no. BS 425 (Latacz et al. 2008, 426, no. 183).



Fig. 5. Corinthian aryballos: *left*, Herakles fighting the Hydra; *right*, Odysseus and the Sirens, ht. 14.5 cm, ca. 590 B.C.E. Basel, Antikenmuseum und Sammlung Ludwig, inv. no. BS 425 (after Latacz et al. 2008, no. 183; courtesy Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig).

The narrative continuity of these two seemingly unrelated pictures is difficult to explain: the one unmistakable Siren, hovering behind Athena, is placed far from the ship of Odysseus, while a menagerie of other creatures—two lizards, an owl, and a large bird that does not appear to be a Siren—is scattered over the vase. Amyx was not convinced of the interpretation,<sup>42</sup> though the towering figure astride the ship's mast who gestures with his arms could hardly be anyone other than Odysseus.

The large and very miscellaneous final section on transmission and reception loses some of the coherence of the earlier, more structured sections but has some individual treasures. It opens with one of the finest and best preserved of the *Tabulae Iliacae*, those remarkable marble slabs of the first century B.C.E. that combine large chunks of text summarizing episodes from the *Iliad* and other parts of the Epic Cycle with superimposed friezes of scenes in low relief, such as the bird's-eye view of the Sack of Troy on this example.<sup>43</sup> The transmission section features texts of Homer in every medium from papyri to codices, Byzantine and Western medieval illuminated manuscripts, and early printed books.<sup>44</sup> Three Daumier lithographs on

*Odyssey* themes from his *Histoire ancienne* series (1842) are charming,<sup>45</sup> while a cycle of four large quasi-abstract paintings by the contemporary German artist Sigmar Polke at the very end (*Der Traum des Menelaos I–IV*, 1982) is quite powerful.<sup>46</sup> A video installation by the Philadelphia artist Peter Rose, set in an empty parking garage, does not contribute much to the theme beyond its title, "Odysseus in Ithaca."<sup>47</sup>

The catalogue is destined to be a standard reference work long after the show (which has a second venue in Mannheim during the fall and winter of 2008–2009)<sup>48</sup> has closed. The contributors of essays include a stellar group of classicists from Germany (Hellmut Flashar, Bernd Seidensticker, Arbogast Schmitt, Anton Bierl) and beyond (Stephanie West, Martin West, Irene de Jong), as well as some equally distinguished archaeologists (Erika Simon, Wolf-Deitrich Niemeier). Latacz's inspiration is felt throughout but does not dominate as it did in the earlier exhibition and catalogue. Every conceivable topic in Homeric studies—philological, historical, iconographical—is addressed in one place or another, often by the scholars who have done the most in the past to bring us to the current state of our

<sup>42</sup> Amyx 1988, 1:180–81.

<sup>43</sup> Rome, Musei Capitolini, inv. no. 316 (Latacz et al. 2008, 440, no. 199).

<sup>44</sup> Latacz et al. 2008, 440–55.

<sup>45</sup> Latacz et al. 2008, 462–63, no. 226.

<sup>46</sup> Latacz et al. 2008, 467–71, no. 230.

<sup>47</sup> Latacz et al. 2008, 467, no. 229.

<sup>48</sup> Mannheim, Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen mit Curt Engelhorn-Zentrum, 13 September 2008–18 January 2009.

knowledge. Nevertheless, whole schools of Homeric scholarship, especially based in this country (Gregory Nagy, Richard Janko—only Nagy's *Pindar's Homer* and nothing of Janko is cited in the 21-page bibliography)<sup>49</sup> are not represented. But an exhibition catalogue is not the place to refight those battles.

No one will come away from this exhibition without being greatly enriched by the experience. One lesson of both the exhibition and the catalogue is that the subject of Homer and his influence is so vast and multifaceted that no single individual could master it all. It requires a collaboration of many specialists in archaeology and art history, philology, papyrology and text criticism, history, and mythology. The dream team assembled for this project represents the best that the German-speaking world of scholarship has to offer (with a thin veneer of internationalism provided by the Wests). An English translation of the catalogue would be an enormously valuable tool for a wide range of students and scholars but seems unlikely to happen, as the exhibition's only venues are Basel and Mannheim. The exclusively German labeling and wall texts are a little surprising in multilingual and cosmopolitan Basel, and the long passages from Homer scattered throughout the exhibition are probably more than even a German-speaking visitor can enjoy without devoting at least an entire day to the show. But the objects speak a universal language that should captivate visitors ranging from schoolchildren to scholars. It seems fitting that Basel, a great center of Renaissance humanism, should take the lead in putting Homer once again front and center in the Western tradition and in showing his enduring appeal to virtually every new generation of students and scholars.

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<sup>49</sup>Nagy 1990. E.g., Janko 1982; most recently, Nagy 2004.