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Johannes Kakridis and Neoanalysis

Johannes Kakridis, the foremost Greek Homeric scholar of the twentieth century, achieved what very few scholars in any Humanistic discipline have been able to accomplish: he invented a method of research and interpretation, "Neoanalysis," that became highly influential in his own lifetime and that remains today, along with the oral poetics pioneered by Milman Parry, one of the two most fruitful and influential scholarly approaches to the study of Homeric poetry, especially the Iliad. Kakridis followed the analytical method of distinguishing Homer's sources and models, but did so with what he called "respect" for the "laws of poetic composition and with a mind free from the rationalism of the older scholars." Where the analysts detected a clumsy combination of pre-existing poems, Kakridis saw, as it were, the hand of the poet adapting traditional mythology, folklore, and epic for his own aesthetic purposes. He saw Neoanalysis as reconciling the work of analysts and unitarians; in this respect, *mutatis mutandis*, he resembled Parry, who considered that his demonstration of the traditional oral nature of Homeric epic made the analyst-unitarian dispute irrelevant. Kakridis was an exceptionally alert and sensitive student of Homeric poetry; many of his observations, such as his discovery of "the ascending scale of affection" motif and his treatment of the myth of Niobe in Iliad 24, have become standard even among scholars who would not consider themselves Neoanalysts. His emphasis on the study of modern Greek folktales and traditional popular songs as a way to understand Homeric adaptations of ancient folk-motifs gave his work special significance within Greece itself, as did his co-translations (with N. Kazantzakis) of the Iliad and Odyssey into the language and style of traditional popular song. While Parry and post-Parryan oralists have given insight into Homeric creativity at the stylistic level by increasing our understanding of the transformation and exploitation of traditional formulas and themes, Kakridis and other Neoanalysts have provided similar insights at the level of myth and narrative, where such reworking is equally important. In the contemporary world of Anglo-American Homeric scholarship, dominated by the oralist approach, Neoanalysis offers a still timely, complementary method of understanding features of Homeric epic that oral theory alone does not adequately address.