2) See also the instructive chapter on ‘Foreknowledge’ in A. Maria van Erp Taalman Kip, Reader and Spectator. Problems in the Interpretation of Greek Tragedy (Amsterdam 1990), 21-41.


The main point of this study is that the meaning of μίμησις “can roughly be rendered as ‘non-discursive representation through images’ ” (70), in German bildende Darstellung and that too often the Greek term is still being translated by ‘imitation’. To do so is wrong, for Nachahmung (similarly ‘imitation’) is preponderantly being used in connection with external, visible objects, whereas “im Begriffsinhalt des griechischen Wortes μίμησις […], keine Angabe darüber enthalten ist, ob sich die Wiedergabe auf Konkretes oder aber auf Unsinnliches bezieht” (23). In modern languages (German, English, French and Dutch are meant) no word is completely identical in meaning with μίμησις and, accordingly K. gives main categories of translation to render the Greek word μετασχημα in German and, occasionally in other languages: widerspiegeln (A), nachahmen (B) and darstellen (C). In category A the subject mostly is impersonal, the object some abstract thing and the act of reflecting is an unconscious one, in category B someone consciously imitates a concrete thing, a person, whereas category C concerns cases of intentional representation of abstract objects (20-1, cf. 70). K. warns against identifying these three modes of translation with the meaning of the Greek word (22). She first discusses 33 passages from non-Platonic texts containing forms of μετασχημα, μίμησις etc. under the three headings (25-42) and then goes on to do the same for 48 Platonic passages (43-67). In both
parts of her study K. comes to the same results: the meaning of μήμησις can be sufficiently defined as bildliche Darstellung.

As the subtitle indicates, this word study has been initiated in order to solve problems in the interpretations of Plato's theory of art, especially poetry. The view that to Plato poetry is a mere imitation of the outside world is persistent but wrong and scholars have been led to this view by the narrow interpretation of the Greek word. K. intends to reconsider Plato's theory of art in a follow up study.

In most cases K.'s interpretation is right, in so far as the connotation of Nachahmung, viz. imitating external aspects, is often not to the point and translations like Darstellung or Widerspiegelung give a better sense. But this result is not new at all for e.g. already LSJ s.v. start with 'imitate, represent, portray' as translations of the main sense of μμείθθαι and see W. J. Verdenius, Mnem. 36 (1983), 56. However, the step from the categories of translation to the Begriffsinhalt of bildliche Darstellung gets no explicit justification at all, notwithstanding the statement in note 38 that "nicht gewisse Übersetzungen, sondern der Begriffsinhalt des griechischen Wortes μήμης zur Debatte steht". K. is more concerned with her view that the Greek μμείθθαι is neither originally nor in actual usage restricted to imitation of concrete objects. But it is somewhat naive to conclude from several acceptable translations to the basic meaning of a word. In fact, K.'s argument is completely circular and therefore deficient. She intends to prove that bildliche Darstellung is the main meaning of μήμης, concedes that this meaning will often not do as a translation and observes that in actual usage μμείθθαι can be adequately translated in three ways (19-21). Under these headings both non-Platonic and Platonic passages are discussed, specifically as to the best translation of μμείθθαι, and at the end of both discussions (41 and 65) K. states that the discussion of the examples intends to make acceptable the view that the Begriffsinhalt of μήμης, "mit 'bildhafter Darstellung' oder 'anschaulichem Ausdruck' verhältnismässig zutreffend umschrieben ist" (41) or that "Die Behauptung scheint berechtigt, dass μήμης in den Dialogen Platon's die einheitliche Bedeutung 'bildhafte Darstellung' hat' (65). By neglecting to look at more or less similar expressions, e.g. ἀπεικάζειν, ἀφομισοῦν, ζηλοῦν, K. omits to build in any means of verification/falsification of her views. She shows no awareness of the Greek view that works of art are the result of an act of reproduction (cf. Verdenius, Mnem. 36 (1983), 54-5). To