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HOMER AND MODERN LITERARY CRITICAL DISCOURSE

by  
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of the requirements for the degree of  
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IOANNAE VXORI CARISSIMAE

## PREFACE

This essay had its inception in a summer (1971) of preparations for the instruction of a course on ancient epic. My reading at that time awakened me to wide divergences of opinion on matters which are crucial not only to the writing of competent literary history, but also to the successful coördination of reader and poem in the dynamic affiliation that is literary criticism. Equal portions of fascination and vexation have since propelled me through a course of research elected in the first place to enlarge my field of vision and to trace to their origins various methodological premises of Homeric criticism. Part I ("Chronicle") purports to be a reasonably detailed diagnostic review of trends in criticism since the framing of the historicist manifesto, an event I associate with the commencement of "modern" critical discourse.

Homeric scholarship is highly fissionable, and I have striven to control and delineate rather than exhaust, even so at risk of becoming one of those "young people drenched, dizzied, and bedevilled by criticism to a point at which primary literary experience is no longer possible" (C. S. Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism, p. 129). I



have found it difficult to close my ears to the siren voices of the legions of Homerica who inhabit the Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library. Still, if the propositions I have forwarded in Part II ("Critique") were to have force, they would have to be set against the background of a fairly complete history of criticism in Homer studies. I can only hope that the annalistic tone of chapters I-V is redeemed by a higher degree of relevance in chapters VI-IX.

To the extent that this (perhaps overly) ambitious effort to introduce a modicum of theoretical precision into the awesome enterprise of Homeric criticism has not altogether miscarried by reason of its temerity, I am beholden to the members of my doctoral committee. Each has graciously tolerated my ill-managed writing schedule.

To Professors Else and Witke I must acknowledge a special debt of gratitude. In this, as in all my academic endeavors at Michigan, they have been vigilant in criticism and lavish in allocation of time for discussions from which I have profited immeasurably. And this at a time when many more important duties were competing for their attention.

The dedication of these pages to my wife is a poor return on a large and selfless investment of love, patience, and unfailing encouragement.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Periodical literature, Sitzungsberichte, etc. are abbreviated in conformity with standard practice: viz., L'Année philologique and the MLA International Bibliography. The following collections of scholarly disiecta membra are cited frequently and shortened accordingly:

- CH    A Companion to Homer, ed. A. J. B. Wace and F. H. Stubbings (London, 1962).
- LBH   The Language and Background of Homer: Some Recent Studies and Controversies, ed. G. S. Kirk (New York, 1964).
- MHV   The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry, ed. A. Parry (Oxford, 1971).

PART I

CHRONICLE: THE PAST 300 YEARS,  
LIABILITIES AND ASSETS

## CHAPTER I

### FROM ABSOLUTISM TO HISTORICISM: 1660-1795

Il n'y a jamais eu au monde un homme  
nommé Homère.

Charles Perrault 1693

Vix mihi quisquam irasci et succensere  
gravius poterit, quam ipse facio mihi.

Friedrich August Wolf 1794

Perhaps the most important and certainly the most disputed single concept in the appraisal of Homeric artistry is that of unity. The exaltation of unity is of course already apparent in the earliest systematic formulation of a theoretical canon resting upon purely aesthetic concerns. Aristotle's Poetics exhibits in this regard a curious, though not inexplicable, ambivalence toward Homer. Literary theory cannot evolve in vacuo; Aristotle's argument often proceeds by the selection and comparison of exempla. And Homer is, until the final chapter of the Poetics, a supreme exemplar of unified and logically continuous composition:

One can hardly avoid feeling that Homer showed god-like genius . . . , namely in the fact that although the Trojan War had a beginning and an end, he did not undertake to compose it as a whole either. For the plot would have been bound to turn out too long and

not easy to encompass at a glance, or, if it held to some measurable length, to become entangled with the diversity of its events. Instead, he singled out one part of the whole and used many of the others as episodes: the Catalogue of Ships, for example, and other episodes with which he separates the parts of his composition. The other poets compose their work around a single person or around a single period, that is, a single action with many parts: so, for example, the author of the Cypria and the Little Iliad. Hence, from Iliad and Odyssey one tragedy each can be made, or two and no more, but many from the Cypria and from the Little Iliad.<sup>1</sup>

But when Aristotle turns, in chapter 26, to the generic comparison of epic and tragedy, a different estimation results. The structural or cohesive limitations of epic are placed in an unflattering light by the contrast with tragedy. Despite his sincere admiration for holy Homer, Aristotle remains unswervingly committed to the principles of criticism he has enunciated and developed in the Poetics; the palm goes to tragedy for the artistic resources which are realized so powerfully in a drama like the Oedipus Tyrannus. The epic by its very nature--and not through any fault of its most illustrious practitioner<sup>2</sup>--simply cannot attain the same apogee of aesthetic excellence. Having established his evaluative criteria, with unity of composition foremost among them, Aristotle passes judgment with force and tact:

The imitation produced by the epic poets is less unified (a sign of this: several tragedies come from one epic imitation), so that if they do produce a unified plot it either (1), if briefly presented, seems curtailed or, (2), if it follows the length of the norm, watery; I mean if the poem is put together out of a number of actions, as the Iliad has a number of component parts which also have size in themselves, and yet it is constructed

as well as possible, that is, is as nearly an imitation of a single action as an epic can be.<sup>3</sup>

While there is an undeniable discrepancy between this passage and the one quoted above, the argument is not undermined. For Homer, by comparison with the cyclic epics, or the Heracleids and Theseids decried in 1451a16-29, is a paragon of unity in composition; but by comparison with tragedy of the best sort, the Iliad is only "as nearly an imitation of a single action as an epic can be." It is the genre and not the individual poet that is found deficient. Even so, given his loving reverence of Homer, one can well imagine that the results of the synkrisis cost Aristotle a certain discomfiture. But he does not vacillate. His judgment is consistent with the central thesis of the Poetics.

I draw attention to this at the outset because modern Homeric scholarship and literary criticism have been conducted, understandably, on the authority of the Aristotelian master principles of unity and continuity. Those who have brought the inheritance of such presuppositions to a serious investigation of artistic merit in the Iliad and the Odyssey have frequently found them wanting. Homeric criticism is in large measure the record of the various reactions and explanations which this unsettling but persistent recognition has elicited. The recurring problem is one of proper evaluation. And it is in the dissolution of the pseudo-Aristotelian absolutist

criticism of the neoclassical period that the seeds of modern Homeric scholarship, that is to say of the historicist approach, are to be found.

French writers of the seventeenth century were preoccupied with the formulation of authoritative rules governing the composition of epic.<sup>4</sup> All went forward in a rarefied atmosphere of high abstraction. In the prevailing spirit of super-heated formalism, Le Bossu could produce, in his Traité du poëme épique (Paris, 1675), a "definitive" recipe for the "correct" epic.

By far the greater bulk, and the whole vertebration and solid substance, of his argument are devoted to Epic in the Abstract. Design, definition, and parts; good fables and bad fables; episodes; the biology, so to speak, of the Action, the narration, the manners and characters, not forgetting the Machines, and at least something on the Thoughts and Expression--which have about one-ninth of the whole. In short, if we have not exactly Epic in vacuo, we have it as a dried preparation. The complexity, anti-sensuousness, and dispassionate character of it are almost abashing; one feels at the end that, to hanker after an actual poem, be it Iliad or Orlando, has something sinful--something of the lust of the flesh.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, the neoclassical canon of poetics laid heavy stress on the didactic function of epic poetry, and Horace (Ars Poetica 391-407) was commonly, if not altogether justifiably, cited as authority for the moral and patriotic motives of the genre. It was on this score as well as that of the immalleable dictates of the Regelzwang that the elements of epic poetry were prescribed or proscribed by men like Boileau-Despréaux, Pierre Mambrun, and René Rapin, to name a few.<sup>6</sup> It is not my intention to survey the names and issues of the critical imbroglio known as



the Battle of Ancients and Moderns<sup>7</sup>--I would simply point out that the arguments of the participants on both sides contained the seminal element which led to its supersession: the appeal to historical perspective.

Those who sought to denigrate the ancient epics for their supposed moral improprieties and artistic indecorum emphasized the "barbarism" of their time of composition, the "primitive" aspects of their performance, and even the possibility of multiple authorship.

Charles Perrault, comparing Homer and Virgil, writes in 1693:

Autant que ceux du premier, quoy qu'admirables en certains endroits, me paroissent pleins de grossièreté, de puérilité, & d'extravagance; autant ceux du dernier me semblent remplis de finesse, de gravité, & de raison: ce qui vient que de la différence des temps où ils ont écrit, & de ce que Virgile est plus moderne qu'Homère de huit ou neuf cens ans.<sup>8</sup>

Even Rapin, who holds Homer in the highest regard, finds fault with the representation of Odysseus spending "so long a time in the dalliances of his Prostitute Calypso"<sup>9</sup> and of Nausicaa "too far Indulging her own Curiosity at the Sight of a Person in such desperate Circumstances."<sup>10</sup> Early in the eighteenth century, the whole question was vigorously (not to say rancorously) debated in the treatises and counter-treatises of A. Houdar de La Motte and Madame A. Dacier.<sup>11</sup> Typical of the more destructive criticism is this passage from Pierre Bayle's influential Dictionnaire historique et critique:

Au reste, le trainement de ce cadavre, les discours qu'Achille tint à Hector prêt à expirer, la liberté

qu'il accorda à qui voulut d'insulter & de frapper ce corps mort, cette âme vénale, qui se laissa enfin persuader, à force de riches présens, de rendre à Priam le corps de son fils, sont des choses si éloignées, je ne dirai pas de la vertu héroïque, mais de la générosité la plus commune, qu'il faut nécessairement juger, ou qu'Homère n'avait aucune idée de l'Héroïsme, ou qu'il n'a eu dessein que de peindre le caractère d'un brutal.<sup>12</sup>

As for notions of Homeric performance, Richard Bentley's often-cited statement is as succinct as it is apologetic in tone:

He wrote a sequel of Songs and Rhapsodies, to be sung by himself for small earnings and good cheer, at Festivals and other days of Merriment; the Ilias he made for the men and the Odysseis for the other Sex. These loose songs were not connected together in the form of an epic poem till Pisistratus' time about 500 years after.<sup>13</sup>

In light of this fable convenue, it is easier to understand Bernard de Fontenelle's condescending assertion, in his Digression sur les anciens et les modernes (Paris, 1688), of the disadvantages of epic composition before the advent of enlightened codification of rules and regulations for such composition.

But still more irreverent ideas were in the air. Perrault argued that "il n'y a jamais eu au monde un homme nommé Homère," or, if there had been, "Homère n'a eu d'autre intention que d'écrire la guerre des Grecs contre les Troyens . . . ; le tout par pièces et par morceaux indépendans les uns des autres."<sup>14</sup> He cites as precedent for such a contemption Francois Hédelin, Abbé d'Aubignac.

D'Aubignac's Conjectures académiques ou dissertation

sur l'Illiade was written before 1665, though not published until 1715 at Paris, some forty years after the Abbé's death. The work occupies a position of importance out of all proportion to the minimal critical and scholarly abilities of its author.<sup>15</sup> But the fact is that it anticipates by more than 100 years some of the most central axioms of Wolf's Prolegomena ad Homerum. For d'Aubignac believed that "rhapsodists" composed the songs about Troy which were only eventually gathered together to form the epics as we now have them. He further believed that the sutures in the narrative were discernible and that many discrete poems could be isolated (for example, the aristeia of Agamemnon, the Patrocleia, the ransom of Hector, the cave of Calypso, the Cyclops, etc.).<sup>16</sup> The dialectal mélange, repetitions, and inconsistencies were noted as marks of disunity. His statement of the implications for Homeric artistry is not favorable. Milman Parry was to observe that

it is significant that it was a contemporary of Corneille and Racine who was first shocked by the literary form of the Homeric poems. To a mind habituated to the classical conception of literature of the time with its rigid sense of form, its exclusion of all which was not strictly relevant, Homer when regarded frankly, must have been the most slovenly of poets.<sup>17</sup>

But Homer's defenders were also insisting on historical perspective--with the purpose of mitigation rather than condemnation. Abbé Jean Baptiste Dubos, in his Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture

(Paris, 1719), made an essential theoretical and methodological breakthrough by accentuating the conditioning factors of the age of which an epic poem was the product and the expression.<sup>18</sup> The obligation to rid oneself of the aesthetic presuppositions and mandates of one's own time and to attempt the re-creation of the far more spontaneous response of the original audience--this duty was to be discharged with pleasure by those imbued with the "return-to-nature" impulse which became so prevalent later in the eighteenth century and which is commonly associated with the name Jean Jacques Rousseau. Liberation from the over-stringent and desiccating neoclassical "legislation" was attained gradually but resolutely in this century.

Thomas Blackwell's Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer (London, 1735; 2nd ed. 1736) is a prime testament of the new historicist approach. It begins a line which can be traced through Herder and Wood and Heyne to F. A. Wolf himself. The Enquiry both denied the inalienable validity of the pseudo-Aristotelian rules and infused into Homeric studies a potent and wholly relativistic theory of poetry. Indeed, Blackwell, a cultural environmentalist, prefigures the exponents of twentieth-century behavioral psychology. He argues not only that the Iliad and the Odyssey necessarily reflect the particular morality and customs of a specific historical moment, but that the poems are themselves direct products of that cultural

milieu: "Every kind of Writing, but especially the Poetic, depends upon the Manners of the Age when it is produced."<sup>19</sup> The preëminence of Homeric art is thus a result of "the united Influence of the happiest CLIMATE, the most natural MANNERS, the boldest LANGUAGE, and the most expressive RELIGION: When these were applied to so rich a Subject as the War between Greece and Troy, they produced the ILIAD and ODYSSEY."<sup>20</sup> It was to the happy conjunction of external, temporal influences rather than to the genius of an individual that the brilliance of the poetry was due.

Further, the critic is repeatedly advised to project himself back into the frame of mind of those who had been enraptured by the Bard himself. As D. M. Foerster remarks, "for the first time a Homeric critic was trying to show not merely how the age in general had affected the Iliad and Odyssey but how the poet had suited these poems to the taste of his audience!"<sup>21</sup>

Though Blackwell's work is flawed by a naïve faith in historical data and by the presumption of the absolute supremacy of Homer, his emphasis on due valuation of the historical conditions, the social and spiritual environment of the creative act was to have a lasting and salubrious effect on subsequent critical endeavors.

From Blackwell onward, the overarching concern of Homeric studies was to be the accurate reconstruction of the actual historical circumstances of the creation of the Iliad and the Odyssey. Legitimate evaluation of the

poems could not take place, it was now maintained, without precise information about such matters as their mode of presentation, the expectations and responses of their first auditors, and the relation of the Ur-poems to the texts which have come down to us. The paucity of reliable ancient testimony indicated the need for the utmost rigor and discipline in the assessment of all kinds of evidence, both external and internal.

The next great milestone in the development of Homeric scholarship is Robert Wood's Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer, published at London in 1775, though privately printed as early as 1769. The most significant contribution of the book is its chapter on "Homer's Language and Learning" (pp. 237-92), in which the author faces squarely the question "How far the use of Writing was known to Homer."<sup>22</sup> Wood carefully scrutinizes the poems for such knowledge and, finding only the "Symbolical, Hieroglyphical, or Picture Description" at Iliad 6.168, draws his conclusion ex silentio, though with some caution: "Though I will not conclude, that Homer did not know that which is not taken notice of in his writings (a manner of reasoning which has been carried too far upon other occasions<sup>23</sup>); yet I cannot help thinking, his silence on this head of some weight."<sup>24</sup> Ancient reports of a sixth-century B.C. compilation-edition of previously scattered songs had been cited by various critics from Camerarius (1538) to Bentley (1713),<sup>25</sup> but Wood lent

greater credibility to the notion by his argument for Homeric illiteracy and by his notice of the parallel with Ossian:<sup>26</sup>

If then . . . we suppose that Homer left no written copy of his works, the account we find of them in ancient writers becomes more probable. It is generally supposed that Lycurgus brought them from Ionia into Greece, where they were known before only by scraps and detached pieces.<sup>27</sup>

Diogenes Laertius attributes the merit of this performance to Solon: Cicero gives it to Pisistratus;<sup>28</sup> and Plato to Hipparchus: and they may possibly have been all concerned in it. But there would have been no occasion for each of these persons to have sought so diligently for the parts of these poems, and to have arranged them so carefully, if there had been a complete copy. If therefore the Spartan Lawgiver, and the other personages committed to writing, and introduced into Greece, what had been before only sung by the Rhapsodists of Ionia, just as some curious fragments of ancient poetry have been lately collected in the northern parts of this island, their reduction to order in Greece was a work of taste and judgment: and those great names which we have mentioned might claim the same merit in regard to Homer, that the ingenious Editor of Fingal is entitled to from Ossian.<sup>29</sup>

In light of Blackwell's remarks on the "naturalness" of Homer,<sup>30</sup> and of the "return-to-nature" movement of the late eighteenth century, Wood's achievement in drawing attention to the usefulness of contemporary evidence of "primitive" poetry seems an expression of a Zeitgeist. In any event, the Homer-Ossian analogy marked the beginning of a lasting tradition of comparative literary analysis in Homeric criticism.

The works of both Blackwell and Wood were warmly received in the Germany of Herder, Heyne, and the Olympian Wolf. The Enquiry was translated into German by J. H. Voss in 1776 and had been favorably noticed earlier in

the writings of J. G. Herder, as for example in his "Über die neuere deutsche Litteratur" (1767) with its stress on the need for appropriate historical perspective in all literary criticism.<sup>31</sup>

Wood's Essay entered the mainstream of German scholarship with electrifying rapidity. Even before the publication of the second (definitive) English edition in 1775, the limited edition of 1769 had come into the hands of Christian Heyne who gave it high praise in a review in the Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen for 1770: "Noch niemanden haben wir gesehen, der so tief in den Geist Homers eingedrungen wäre."<sup>32</sup>

Friedrich August Wolf (1759-1824), who had finished his studies at Göttingen in 1779 and whose Prolegomena ad Homerum<sup>33</sup> appeared at Halle in 1795, read both Blackwell and Wood. His high estimation of their work is evident from a letter to Heyne (6 January 1796) referring to "Blackwells und Woods bessere Begriffe vom Homer" and remarking that "hätte Wood länger gelebt, und hätte er die ganze Materie, in die er einen der geistreichsten Blicke that, von allen Seite als Alterthumsforscher und Kritiker beleuchten können; sicher wäre für uns beide hier wenig zu thun."<sup>34</sup>

It was Wolf's achievement to bring an unprecedented degree of scholarly acumen to the consideration of problems which had previously been handled only in a relatively unsystematic fashion; Robert Wood was not, after all, a



classical philologist. As a consequence, Wolf's thesis retains, nearly 200 years later, an undeniable cogency and its primary tenets are the bedrock of modern Homer studies. No analytical historiography of subsequent developments can afford to dispense with an intimate acquaintance with these essentials of Wolfian doctrine: first, oral composition circa 950 B.C. with oral transmission thereafter; second, reduction to written form around 550 B.C. and subsequent interpolation by diaskauastai; third, unification a result of Pisistratean editing, not Homeric artistry; and fourth, multiple authorship. That is, the authentically Homeric portions of our texts are only a (proportionately large) nucleus: "At nonne omnibus erit manifestum . . . totas rhapsodias inesse quae Homeri non sunt, id est eius, a quo maior pars et priorum rhapsodiarum series deducta est?"<sup>35</sup> With clairvoyant insight, Wolf foresaw the insurmountable difficulties which would beset any attempt to detect the ipsissima verba:

Quoniam certum est, tam in Iliade quam in Odyssea orsam telam et deducta aliquatenus fila esse a vate qui princeps ad canendum accesserat . . . forsitan ne probabiliter quidem demonstrari poterit, a quibus locis potissimum nova subtemina et limbi procedant: at id tamen, ni fallor, poterit effici, ut liquido appareat Homero nihil praeter maiorem partem carminum tribuendam esse, reliqua Homeridis, praescripta lineamenta persequentibus.<sup>36</sup>

The theory put forward so forcefully by Wolf cost him, as it has cost every Homeric scholar since, a good deal in peace of mind:

Quoties . . . penitus immergor in illum veluti  
prono et liquido alveo decurrentem tenorem actionum  
et narrationum: quoties animadverto ac reputo mecum  
quam in universum aestimanti unus his carminibus  
insit color . . . vix mihi quisquam irasci et suc-  
censere gravius poterit, quam ipse facio mihi.<sup>37</sup>

It is precisely such distress that has perpetuated and invigorated the issues of the Prolegomena. For from Wolf to Milman Parry and even beyond, there is little in Homeric studies that cannot be identified as refinement, modification, or rejection of Wolf's argument. And in every case, the inquiry has dealt with the matter of perspective: how does one determine the true mode of existence of the poems and the proper method of their explication and appraisal? The latter issue has been consistently and unquestioningly made to depend upon the former. During the nineteenth century, the processes of evaluative criticism were suspended in deference to the first duty of classical philology--the establishment of reliable texts, the reclamation of the exact words of the author as nearly as human perspicacity and ingenuity can effect it. In the case of Homer, a unique combination of hazy or nonexistent external information and puzzling or conflicting internal phenomena has so far prolonged the enterprise as to render it self-defeating. As the annals of scholarship in Germany alone testify, prodigious industry could not by itself bring an adequate solution.

## Notes (Chapter I):

Epigraphs: C. Perrault, Parallèle des anciens et des modernes, en ce qui regarde les arts et les sciences, II (Paris, 1693), p. 23; F. A. Wolf, Homeri et Homeridarum Opera et Reliquiae (Halle, 1794), p. xxii.

<sup>1</sup> Poetics 1459a30-b7, in Gerald F. Else, trans., Aristotle: Poetics (Ann Arbor, 1967), pp. 62-63.

<sup>2</sup> G. F. Else, Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), pp. 648, 650:  
"The conduct of the argument here betrays a certain embarrassment: naturally, since it implies a criticism of Homer. . . . the critique of Homer is not-- Aristotle carefully keeps it from being--the main business of the passage. . . . He wants to prove the superiority of tragedy without allowing his ideal poet to be involved in the defeat of his genre."

<sup>3</sup> Poetics 1462b3-b12, in Else (1967), pp. 74-75.

<sup>4</sup> See J. Duchesne, Histoire des poèmes épiques français du 17<sup>e</sup> siècle (Paris, 1870).

<sup>5</sup> G. Saintsbury, A History of Criticism . . . , II (Edinburgh & London, 1912), pp. 314-15; cf. C. M. Gayley and B. P. Kurtz, Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism: Lyric, Epic, and Allied Forms of Poetry (Boston, 1920), p. 539: "Formal criticism appears at its best in Boileau, and in its extreme (not seldom of absurdity) in Le Bossu."

<sup>6</sup> N. Boileau-Despréaux, L'Art poétique (Paris, 1674); P. Mambrun, De Poemate Epico (Paris, 1652); R. Rapin, The Whole Critical Works of Monsieur Rapin, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London, 1716).

<sup>7</sup> See H. Rigault, Histoire de la querelle des anciens et des modernes (Paris, 1856); G. Finsler, Homer in der Neuzeit: Von Dante bis Goethe (Leipzig, 1912), pp. 180-201.

<sup>8</sup> Parallèle des anciens et des modernes, II (Paris, 1693), pp. 86-87.

<sup>9</sup> R. Rapin, Observations on the Poems of Homer and Virgil, trans. J. Davies (London, n.d.), p. 55.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Gayley and Kurtz, Methods and Materials, p. 491.

<sup>11</sup> See La Motte's Discours sur Homère prefixed to his translation of the Iliad (Paris, 1714), rpt. in Oeuvres de Monsieur Houdar de La Motte, II (Paris, 1754), pp. 1-137, and Réflexions sur la critique (Paris, 1715); see Madame Dacier, Des Causes de la corruption du goût (Paris, 1714), and, on her debate with La Motte, P. Mazon, Madame Dacier et les traductions d'Homère en France, The Zaharoff Lecture for 1935 (Oxford, 1936), pp. 14-17.

<sup>12</sup> Dictionnaire, I (Amsterdam, 1730), p. 58, n.

<sup>13</sup> Remarks upon a Late Discourse of Free-Thinking: in a Letter to F. H., D. D. (London, 1713), p. 18 = A. Dyce, ed., The Works of Bentley, III (London, 1838), p. 304.

<sup>14</sup> Parallèle, II, pp. 23, 32.

<sup>15</sup> D'Aubignac's twentieth-century editor, V. Magnien (Paris, 1925), has shown that he did not read Homer in the original, and Adam Parry, in the introduction to The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry (Oxford, 1971; hereafter cited as MHV), p. xii, n. 1, notes that "a glance at almost any page shows that he had no understanding of Homeric art whatever."

<sup>16</sup> See Conjectures académiques . . . , p. 46.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted from lecture notes in MHV, p. xii.

<sup>18</sup> See Gayley and Kurtz, p. 550.

<sup>19</sup> Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer, p. 70. Blackwell's book is hard to come by; see important excerpts in G. M. Miller, The Historical Point of View in English Literary Criticism from 1570-1770 (Heidelberg, 1913; rpt. Amsterdam, 1967); S. Elledge, Eighteenth Century Critical Essays, I (Ithaca, 1961), pp. 432-47; G. W. Chapman, ed., Literary Criticism in England, 1660-1800 (New York, 1966), pp. 269-71.

<sup>20</sup> Enquiry, p. 345.

<sup>21</sup> Homer in English Criticism: The Historical Approach in the Eighteenth Century (New Haven, 1947), p. 35.

<sup>22</sup> Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer, p. 248.

<sup>23</sup> As it was to be again in, e.g., the first chapter of Bruno Snell's Entdeckung des Geistes (Hamburg, 1948; 3rd ed. 1955).

<sup>24</sup> Essay, p. 251.

<sup>25</sup> See J. A. Davison, "Peisistratus and Homer," TAPA, 86 (1955), 1-21; G. S. Kirk, The Songs of Homer (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 306-12.

<sup>26</sup> Hugh Blair's two-volume edition of The Works of Ossian, translated by James Macpherson, had appeared at London in 1765.

<sup>27</sup> For the ancient tradition on Lycurgus and Homer, see R. C. Jebb, Homer: An Introduction to the Iliad and the Odyssey (Glasgow, 1887), p. 115, n. 1.

<sup>28</sup> De Oratore 3.34.137: "Primus Homeri libros confusos antea sic disposuisse dicitur ut nunc habemus."

<sup>29</sup> Essay, pp. 278-79.

<sup>30</sup> The Enquiry is cited three times in Wood's Essay (1775): pp. 99, n., 117, 295-96.

<sup>31</sup> See Sämmtliche Werke, ed. B. Suphan (33 vols.: Berlin, 1877-1913), II, p. 289; Herder was a prime mover in the increasing enthusiasm for "primitive" folk-poetry: "Über Ossian und die Lieder alter Völker" (1773), "Stimmen der Völker in Liedern" (1778-79), "Über Homer und Ossian" (1795).

<sup>32</sup> As reprinted in C. F. Michaelis, trans., Robert Woods Versuch über das Originalgenie des Homers aus dem Englischen (Frankfort-am-Main, 1773; 2nd ed. 1778), pp. 6-7; originally in GGA, (1770), 257-70.

<sup>33</sup> Full title: Prolegomena ad Homerum sive de Operum Homericorum Prisca et Genuina Forma Variisque Mutationibus et Probabili Ratione Emendandi.

<sup>34</sup> R. Peppmüller, ed., Prolegomena ad Homerum, 3rd ed. (Halle, 1884), pp. 286, 276-77.

<sup>35</sup> Prolegomena ad Homerum (1795), p. cxxxv.

<sup>36</sup> Homeri et Homeridarum Opera et Reliquiae (Halle, 1794), p. xxviii.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. xxii.

## CHAPTER II

### ANALYTICAL HEGEMONY: 1795-1900

On the . . . question of the origin of the Homeric poems, whatever there may be to retrench in Wolf's arguments, his main proposition has maintained itself unshaken. His views have been continually gaining ground; and . . . we may safely say that no scholar will again find himself able to embrace the unitarian hypothesis.

Mark Pattison 1865

I feel convinced that every British reader will agree with me in attributing great part of this Titanic exhibition of fruitless learning to a peculiar vice in the German intellect, analogous to that curious professional subtlety so often observed in legal minds, which makes them incapable of dealing with broad questions, and of moving popular assemblies. Much learning has made them, not exactly mad, but super-subtle, curious, captious, and impracticable. They are like men, if we may imagine such, with microscopic eyes, who see the mites crawling so gigantically through the mass, that they lose all stomach for the cheese.

John Stuart Blackie 1866

By 1850 there had emerged three main currents of historicist criticism, two Analytical and one Unitarian. The purely aesthetic, ahistorical approach was not to reappear with any vitality, at least in the scholarly world, until the early twentieth century.

Circulation of Wolf's views was accelerated by Heyne's Bemerkungen zum 24. Gesang der Ilias (Leipzig,

1802)<sup>1</sup> and by W. Müller's popularizing Homerische Vorschule (Leipzig, 1824; 2nd ed. 1836). But the theory did not remain static, and two rival schools subjected it to refinement, or at any rate to alteration. Their differences are concisely portrayed by Jebb: "One bent has been to make the first poet of the series less influential than Wolf did: this is represented by Lachmann. The other bent has been to make him still more influential: this is represented by Hermann."<sup>2</sup> In general, "die Lachmannianer" or proponents of Kleinliedertheorie tend to see the Iliad and the Odyssey reaching their present shape only after a sixth-century conflation-edition of previously independent, short songs. "Die Hermannianer" or proponents of Kerntheorie, on the other hand, see the poems in something like their substantial form very early in a process of accretion and rearrangement.

The more extreme faction of Liedertheorie was founded by the great Lucretian scholar Karl Lachmann who, according to J. E. Sandys,

was the true founder of a strict and methodical system of textual criticism. . . . His aim in all was, firstly, the determination of the earliest form of the text, so far as it could be ascertained with the aid of MSS, or quotations; and, secondly, the restoration of the original form by means of careful emendation.<sup>3</sup>

Such a man was unlikely to be daunted by Wolf's diffidence about the reconstitution of the Einzellieder, the embryonic songs from which the great epics were, on this



view, eventually stitched together. Lachmann had already, in 1816, performed just such surgery on the Middle High German Nibelungenlied, isolating twenty primitive lays.<sup>4</sup> In Betrachtungen über Homers Ilias presented to the Berlin Academy in 1837 (on Bks. 1-10) and 1841 (on Bks. 11-24),<sup>5</sup> the Iliad was broken down in a similar manner into eighteen constituents. Discrepancies both of detail and of general spirit were adduced as justification for the dissolution.

But scientific exactitude in such endeavors is embarrassingly elusive, and "die Lachmannianer" are given to (sometimes widely) divergent restorations of the original poem. Witness the Iliadis Carmina XVI Restituta (Turin, 1861) edited by Hermann Köchly, who

with more of valour than discretion, put in type a text of the Iliad upon Wolfian principles, in which, by the ejection of the line containing the Διὸς Βουλὴ of the Exordium and by other similar operations, the Iliad falls asunder into sixteen independent lays.

The influence of this school, we are inclined to think, cannot in the nature of things be permanent. It might have been otherwise if the Köchly doctrine had been confirmatory of the Lachmann, so as to exhibit the same cleavage of strata as prevailing in the structure of the poems; but when each leading champion exhibits sections of his own, and there is no real unanimity in the Wolfian camp . . . it is not likely that the extreme section of the school will be in the end victorious.<sup>6</sup>

And indeed this particular branch of Analytical criticism did experience atrophy.

The "nucleus" theory, both in Germany and elsewhere, attracted many more adherents than its competing sect. Its inception can be dated to the Dissertatio de Inter-

polationibus Homeri delivered at Leipzig in March 1832 by Lachmann's teacher, Gottfried Hermann.<sup>7</sup> The Dissertatio was written in response to the anti-Wolfian arguments of G. W. Nitzsch.<sup>8</sup> Nitzsch, with K. O. Müller,<sup>9</sup> believed that the Iliad and the Odyssey had assumed their distinctive structures long before any sixth-century edition, earlier in fact than the date of the cyclic poets, then thought to be the eighth century.<sup>10</sup> Hermann saw that the initial formulation of Liedertheorie was vulnerable to such an argument and that modifications would accordingly have to be made. He therefore proposed an "Ur-Ilias" and an "Ur-Odyssee"--both of consummate artistry if of short scope--undergoing a lengthy process of enlargement (Latin "coniunctio" and "conglutinatio") down to about 800 B.C. Homer was placed very early in the tradition and credited with a carefully designed and capacious epic plan within which subsequent expansions and alterations could be accommodated. But Hermann could not subscribe to the notion of a single mind orchestrating the entire poem as we have it. Disconcerting inconcinnities obstructed such an act of faith; traces of accretions and major modifications of the "original" nucleus encouraged disbelief.<sup>11</sup> As the following remarks on Iliad Bks. 8 and 13 show, Hermann sought to buttress Wolf's deductions from external data by tenacious exposure of malfunction in the inner workings of the poem:

Nisi admirabilis illa Homericorum carminum suavitas  
lectorum animos quasi incantationibus quibusdam captos

teneret,<sup>12</sup> non tam facile delitescerent, quae accuratius considerata et pugnare inter se et multo minus apte quam quis iure postulet composita esse apparere necesse est. Id ostendam eorum exemplo, quae in libris XIII. XIV. XV. enarrantur. In principio libri XIII. Iuppiter, neutri exercitui ullum deorum opitulaturum putans, sedet in Ida, Thraciam prospectans. Cur vero id putat Iuppiter, aut quae eius tanta stultitia est, ut nunc, Graecis in summum discrimen coniectis, qui iis favent deos non credat vel maxime auxilio venturos? Absit ut id sapientissimo poetae in mentem venisse adducamur. Non poterat illud credere Iuppiter, nisi modo absterruisset ab isto consilio deos. Vbi autem id fecit? Eo loco, quo si fecit, fatendum est factum esse ineptissime, tum quia nunc, sive legitur Ilias, sive recitatur, obliti sunt et legentes et audientes, tum quia postquam factum est nihil curarunt dii, sed satis securi medio se immiscuerunt proelio: fecit in principio libri VIII. Iam coniungat aliquis VIII. 1-51. cum XIII. 4. seqq. Emergere, opinor, Homerum ex Homero sentiet, quaeque divulsa ineptissima erant, coniuncta fieri aptissima. Iam etiam non mirabimur, quae VIII. 350-484. leguntur, quae perinepta essent, si praegressa esset gravis illa Iovis comminatio. Non occulte enim Iuno et Minerva curru relinquunt Olympum Graecis opem laturae, quas per Iridem revocat Iuppiter, relicta Ida (v. 438) in Olympum reversus. In X. autem libro Minerva Vlixem ab nocturna expeditione salvum reducit. Porro Iuppiter ille, qui libro VIII. dictus est in Olympum abisse, in principio XIII. libri praeter expectationem in Ida sedens conspicitur, ubi eum videt et adit Iuno libro XIV. 153. seqq. Hae perversitates evanescent omnes, si, uti diximus, VIII. libri initium, ubi v. 47. seqq. ex Olympo ad Idam accedit Iuppiter, ibique in Gargaro considit, cum initio XIII. coniungitur.<sup>13</sup>

I have quoted Hermann at some length because it was precisely this sort of anatomical investigation that was to be so assiduously repeated throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. A staggering industry has been expended in the service of an idée fixe--the plurality of authorship of the Iliad and the Odyssey.

The Kern theorists are more nearly the direct inheritors and perpetuators of Wolf's legacy than the Kleine Lieder wing founded by Lachmann; that is, development and

exfoliation around a pre-existing Homeric core rather than a comparatively late editorial act of collection.

Perhaps the most advanced and intricate statement of the Entwicklungshypothese<sup>14</sup> is to be found in the first section, "De Carminibus Iliadis Separandis et Ordinandis," of Wilhelm Christ's Prolegomena to his edition of the Iliad.<sup>15</sup> Christ disassembles the Iliad to reveal 1) an "old" Iliad, 2) amplifications by the original poet, 3) those of a later poet, still before 800 B.C., and 4) the additions of rhapsodes (Homeridae) in the eighth and seventh centuries. The whole was intended to be a continuous sequence of forty lays, though these were not installed as a written text until Pisistratus. This is an effort to combine the views of Lachmann and Hermann, postulating a skeletal poem early on, enlarged over a period of time, but not finalized in a written version till quite late. All this is meticulously charted in the "Carmina Iliadis Secundum Temporum Ordinem Digesta."<sup>16</sup> The textual evidence (verbal similarities) for the chronological relations of the various lays is impressively arrayed.

This infinitely careful and scholarly scissors work is the apex of a theory intuited by d'Aubignac, adumbrated by Wolf, and patiently, not to say obsessively, systematized by a half century of scholars from Hermann onward. But the lavish expenditure of intellectual energy in Analytical criticism was to continue unabated,

though no universally acceptable stratification--Christ's or anyone else's--was to gain predominance.

As regards the Odyssey, Adolph Kirchhoff's Composition der Odyssee: Gesammelte Aufsätze (Berlin, 1869)<sup>17</sup> put interpretation of the poem on the same track as Iliadic research. Kirchhoff saw our poem as having descended from an older redaction consisting of a Nostos-poem (Bks. 5-7, 9, 11, 13.1-184) onto which an Ithacan sequel (Bks. 13.185-14; 16-23.296), not previously self-sufficient, had been grafted sometime before 800 B.C. Then, about 660 B.C., a third hand added other epical materials (the Telemachy, and Bks. 8, 10, 12, 15, 23.297-24). This reconstruction was to be prominent, if somewhat modified, in the work of several later scholars, most notably Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff.

The importance of Wilamowitz's contributions in this area can hardly be overemphasized. The long life of the master philologist and critic bridged two centuries, and his work on Homer insured the continuation of Analytical criticism from the nineteenth on into the twentieth. The first half of Homerische Untersuchungen (Berlin, 1884)<sup>18</sup> deals with "Die Composition der Odyssee" (pp. 3-232). Wilamowitz enters the fray on the side of Kirchhoff,<sup>19</sup> who had found strong opposition in B. Niese's Entwicklung der homerischen Poesie (Berlin, 1882). He pushes further speculation about the stages of conglutination (Bearbeitung) and interpolation. An "Ur-Odyssey"

(Bks. 5-14, and parts of 16-18)--now a familiar concept in Homeric scholarship--is resolved into poems themselves either originally free-standing or excerpted from other epics not now susceptible of reconstruction. The Ur-poem was, sometime about 650 B.C., fused with other epic matter, including the Telemachy, by

ein gering begabter Flickpoet, der so weit er irgend konnte seine Vorlagen beibehielt, und auch wo er scheinbar selbständig dichtete, in den Motiven und in den Formeln in Wahrheit nur fremdes Gut verwandte; verhältnismässig selten unterzog er sich der Mühe seine Vorlage statt zurechtzuschneiden zu überarbeiten. Er lebte schwerlich vor der zweiten Hälfte des siebenten Jahrhunderts und zwar in Mutterlande. Die Bearbeitung ist also nicht älter als Archilochos, jünger als Hesiodos.<sup>20</sup>

Two things are remarkable in Wilamowitz's book: first, the depth of erudition, and, second, the self-confidence in pronouncements upon poetic value or lack thereof.<sup>21</sup> Homerische Untersuchungen, like its successor Die Ilias und Homer (Berlin, 1916), inspired the Unitarian "resurgents" in the twentieth century. For Wilamowitz does not shrink from overt statement of an evaluative criticism which, in the preceding Analysts, had been only an implicit, secondary concern. Though it was a product of dissatisfaction with the results of absolutist appraisals in the neoclassical period, the complicated mechanism of historicist criticism had not been expressly geared for judicial endeavors. The attempt to attain agreement on a purely descriptive plane as to method of composition both suppressed and misdirected the energies of

evaluative criticism. Wilamowitz made the inherent explicit; Homer was replaced by a "Flickpoet" of indifferent skill whose composite version had been subject to still further pollution and mismanagement by "Be-arbeiter" and interpolator alike.

Concurrent advances in Sprachwissenschaft in the period of Analytical suzerainty provided new linguistic tools for textual criticism. The digamma had been discovered in the previous century by Bentley who felt that metrical neglect of the sound was a sure sign of corruption.<sup>22</sup> But, as careful examination of the text was later to show,<sup>23</sup> Homer's usage vacillates and categorical restoration is no answer. Metrical irregularities are not always rectified and are often occasioned by reintroduction of the letter. Nor is there any pattern of neglect and observance that might supply grounds for excision or stratigraphic labelling--the Kunstsprache is too homogenized. Still, efforts toward a linguistically and historically valid text of the "original" poem went forward apace. Diachronic analysis relied upon what were believed to be the linguistic traits of the Aeolic dialect, thought to be that of the oldest stratum of the poems.

In 1858, Immanuel Bekker, a devoted and favorite student of Wolf,<sup>24</sup> produced the Carmina Homerica with digamma restored.<sup>25</sup> This was a forerunner of the still more ambitious Aeolic texts of August Fick.<sup>26</sup> Fick believed

with Kirchhoff in multiple authorship and in the existence of discernible chronological layers in the poems.<sup>27</sup> His method of proving this linguistically was predicated on the theory of an Ionic transcription, by Cynaethus of Chios, late in the sixth century of a poem that had previously been purely Aeolic. These dating criteria emerge: 1) passages which are Aeolic in character or admit retro-scription into Aeolic are likely to have been parts of the Ur-poem; 2) passages which do not submit to "Aeolizing" are originally of Ionic provenance and therefore later in the evolution, perhaps as late as Cynaethus. Very old and Aeolic, less old and Ionic, recent and Ionic--these three categories correspond roughly to the three phases (composition, amplification, interpolation) of Kirchhoff's proposal.

Fick's texts were not greeted with approval.<sup>28</sup> Apart from difficulties involved in certain identification of Aeolic versus Ionic, the historical improbability of an uncontested wholesale Ionic transcription by fiat in the late sixth century is insurmountable.<sup>29</sup> But, as Jebb remarks, "apart from that hypothesis, . . . he has done good service in promoting a closer study of the Homeric dialect."<sup>30</sup> And indeed it was in the saner endeavor of descriptive, synchronic analysis of the Dichtersprache that linguistics and stylistics were to implement a revolution of Wolfian magnitude in the writings of Milman Parry.



Though Germany had reared and nurtured Analytical criticism, and was to remain its headquarters, it did not monopolize it. Hermann's argument was given compelling restatement in the second of the twelve volumes in George Grote's monumental History of Greece (London, 1846); it was further solidified in the writings of Geddes, Jebb (more cautiously), and Leaf.

Grote presented with the utmost clarity the issues which were being debated by the opponents and various adherents of Wolfian theory. He shows deep intimacy with the works of Wolf, Nitzsch, Welcker, Hermann, Lachmann, K. O. Müller, and others. His sanity of judgment leaves little doubt that he favored the theory that was, given the state of Altertumswissenschaft in 1846, the only logical choice. The persuasiveness of his argumentation brought English scholarship very quickly to a position that was attained only slowly and painfully in Germany.

First, Grote dismantles the radical thesis of Lachmann, arguing chiefly from historical and psychological probabilities:

If we imagine that Solon, with all his contemporaries and predecessors, knew nothing about any aggregate Iliad, but was accustomed to read and hear only those sixteen distinct epical pieces into which Lachmann would dissect the Iliad, each of the sixteen bearing a separate name of its own--no compilation then for the first time made by the friends of Peisistratus could have effaced the established habit, and planted itself in the general convictions of Greece as the primitive Homeric production. Had the sixteen pieces remained disunited and individualized down to the time

of Peisistratus, they would in all probability have continued so ever afterwards; nor could the extensive changes and transpositions which (according to Lachmann's theory) were required to melt them down into our present Iliad, have obtained at that late period universal acceptance. Assuming it to be true that such changes and transpositions did really take place, they must at least be referred to a period greatly earlier than Peisistratus or Solon.<sup>31</sup>

He goes on to maintain, against Nitzsch et al., the likelihood of expansion of an Achilleid into an Iliad, with aggregation in no way implying artistic inferiority:

The Iliad . . . presents the appearance of a house built upon a plan comparatively narrow and subsequently enlarged by successive additions. The first book, together with the eighth, and the books from the eleventh to the twenty-second inclusive, seem to form the primary organisation of the poem, then properly an Achilleis: the twenty-third and twenty-fourth books are, perhaps, additions at the tail of this primitive poem, which still leave it nothing more than an enlarged Achilleis. But the books from the second to the seventh inclusive, together with the tenth, are of wider and more comprehensive character, and convert the poem from an Achilleis into an Iliad. The primitive frontispiece, inscribed with the anger of Achilles and its direct consequences, yet remains, after it has ceased to be coextensive with the poem. The parts added, however, are not necessarily inferior in merit to the original poem: so far is this from being the case, that amongst them are comprehended some of the noblest efforts of the Grecian epic.<sup>32</sup>

Grote's refreshingly even-handed discussion has the distinct advantage of avoiding the manifestly insupportable conclusion that only what is most ancient is good in the epic and that detectable sutures are tantamount to "wretched patchwork."

In gauging reaction to any development in the history of the Homeric Question, one must always distinguish between general opinion and that of the pro-

fessional classicist.<sup>33</sup> Grote's transplantation of German ideas onto British soil was not initially applauded.

Henry Hallam's letter (7 December 1846) to Grote shortly after publication of the History may be taken as typical of the response of the interested non-classicist:

There is one point of importance on which I do not share all your opinions. I am glad to perceive that you are not a Wolfian. Homer's body is not to be torn by wolves, like those of some whom he describes. Yet you go too far, in my judgment, about the double authorship. Like the German critics, you hardly assign enough to aesthetic considerations. If the 'Iliad' be one of the greatest works of human genius--if, moreover, a striking unity of style is manifest in the two portions which you separate--is it agreeable to any experience that we should suppose two poets, so great and so similar, to have appeared nearly in the same age? Nor is it necessary, even on your hypothesis, since it is quite conceivable that Homer may have enlarged his original poem--an alternative which you put, though you seem to favour the other. And a reason might be alleged for his doing so. The Achilleis, as you call it, sacrifices, in some measure, the national glory to that of one man. It might be found expedient to soothe the Greek hearer by exhibiting Diomed, Ajax, and Agamemnon in their due proportion. It has always struck me that the early books were designed by Homer in this Hellenic spirit; they manifest the real superiority of the Greeks till Zeus threw his might into the scale. . . . But whether they were an afterthought, as you suggest, or part of the original conception, I do not determine.<sup>34</sup>

Others, however, were more than willing to so determine. In the first volume of his Homer and the Iliad (Edinburgh, 1866), John Stuart Blackie launched a vehement attack on the (in his view) insidious Wolfianism that had, in Grote, begun to pervert "the general uncorrupted instinct of the English mind."<sup>35</sup> He beats the moribund horse of Kleinliedertheorie, and allows that

"Charles Konrad William Lachmann . . . , if judged only by his 'Considerations on the Iliad,' . . . might be mistaken for a minute pedant."<sup>36</sup> In general, the "troublesome" passages in the poems are set down to a perverse Teutonic propensity for nit-picking.<sup>37</sup> As for Grote's theory of kernel and enlargement, this is no more than a misconception of a universal phenomenon of poetic composition:

Nothing is more common, even in modern times, than for an author to extend his plan as he proceeds in his work. . . . If, therefore, the objections advanced by Mr. Grote against the ninth book should lead any one to suppose that it could not have been part of the original Achilleid, the most obvious way to account for the supposed want of more definite allusion to it in later books, is to suppose that the books of Mr. Grote's Achilleid were first composed by the minstrel, and the ninth book afterward added to bring out more strongly the haughty and inexorable character of the hero.<sup>38</sup>

Despite his prejudices, Blackie did advocate a salutary adjustment of attitude: epic poetry is not a geometrical or algebraic demonstration.<sup>39</sup> His appeal is to common sense: "[Grote's] scepticism . . . is . . . a decided declaration of war against all literary authority, and all poetic instinct, and all the common sense of common men in the matter of the Homeric poetry."<sup>40</sup>

But Blackie's Unitarian sympathies were to remain an anomaly in nineteenth-century English scholarship. In 1878, William Geddes produced his Problem of the Homeric Poems (London) with the intention of supporting

Mr. Grote's view regarding the composite structure of the Iliad as the only one scientifically tenable.

That there is a double authorship in that poem, an Achilleid within the Iliad, forming its kernel, and by a different author from that of the surrounding integumenta, I believe the facts not only indicate but demonstrate, and I may claim to have brought out new confirmations of the soundness of Mr. Grote's views and of the acuteness of his critical divination.<sup>41</sup>

Geddes argues from hints ("Local Mint-marks") in the text for an Achilleid of Thessalian provenance, adducing "Prominence of the Horse," "Silvan Scenery," "Olympus as a Mountain," among other things (chap. XVIII). This was later enlarged by an Ionian poet, to be identified with Homer, the author of the Odyssey; here again, corroborative "Mint-marks" are indicated. Thus the strata detected by Grote are assigned such labels as "Thessalian" and "Ulyssean."

Still more influential, however, was Richard Claverhouse Jebb's minor masterpiece, Homer: An Introduction to the Iliad and the Odyssey (Glasgow, 1887). The chapter on "The Homeric Question" (pp. 103-74) is still far the best synoptic discussion of the issues which fueled the engine of Homeric scholarship in the period up to the late nineteenth century. After a masterful survey of opinion (pp. 103-55), Jebb presents his own well-considered estimate of probabilities. This is effectually a combination of the views of Grote and Geddes: a "primary" Iliad of Thessalian origin (ca. 1100-1000 B.C.) plus enlargements made after the migration down to about the eighth century. Jebb differs from Geddes in assigning Homer as author of the earlier,

European version--the "nucleus" Achilleid. A similar evolution is proposed for the Odyssey, though

the latter, in its present form, is far more thoroughly and characteristically Ionian. One cause of this may be that the original 'Return of Odysseus'--native to Greece Proper--bore a much less important relation to the final Ionian form of the poem than the primary Thessalian Iliad bore to the Ionian enlargement.<sup>42</sup>

Jebb makes no firm assertions as to the common authorship of the epics beyond stating that "it may be taken as certain that the poet of the primary Iliad had no share in the authorship of the Odyssey"<sup>43</sup>--this follows from his thesis on mainland versus Ionian composition. He is aware that his disintegrating and separatist conclusions fly in the face of "the popular impression" of the artistry and integrity of the Iliad and the Odyssey, but he could not help yielding to the results of the vigorous and microscopic examinations which were the hallmark of Literaturwissenschaft as practiced by the professional scholar. His sanction of the "nucleus-and-enlargement" thesis went a long way toward establishing it in England, as it had long been in Germany, as a fact of life for the serious student of Homer.

Walter Leaf was, like Jebb, a former fellow of Trinity College. His contributions were designed for a wide range of readers. The two-volume edition of the Iliad appeared at London in 1886-88 (2nd ed. 1900-1902) and was aimed at the serious scholar. The Companion to the Iliad (London, 1892), on the other hand, was intended,

as its subtitle--For English Readers--indicates, for the Greekless but interested segment of Homer's modern audience. The commentary is keyed to the Lang-Leaf-Myers translation. Then in 1895-98 there appeared his two-volume school edition, The Iliad of Homer (London), done with M. A. Bayfield. "Leaf-Bayfield" was to be a durable pedagogical instrument indeed; it has yet to be adequately superseded.

Leaf's views are given abbreviated expression in the introductions to these various works,<sup>44</sup> but the principal vehicle of his argument is the mass of notes to individual words, passages, and books. These deal not with explication of literary artistry so much as with the detection and classification of "difficulties" in the poem; Leaf is quite deliberate in his emphases:

The notes deal to a great extent, perhaps it may seem disproportionately, with the weaknesses which are to be found in the Iliad. But it must be remembered that for the beauties the text must in the end speak for itself. Those who cannot enjoy the Iliad without a commentary will certainly not be made to enjoy it by any number of laudatory appreciations. The complete aesthetic appreciation of the Iliad is the business of the essayist, not of the commentator; and my own feeling is that an honest recognition of difficulties and weaknesses is likely to be more helpful to the learner than indiscriminate adulation.<sup>45</sup>

Leaf's Iliad is essentially three-strata poem. The "central story," the "Mēnis," is more restricted than Grote's Achilleid and comprises Bks. 1, 11, 16, 19, 20 (353-end), and 22. A second stratum enlarges the first by the addition chiefly of aristeiai: Bks. 2-7, Menelaus,

Diomedes, Ajax; 13, Idomeneus; 17, Menelaus. The third stratum consists of "individual poems:" Bks. 9, the Embassy to Achilles (with 8 as "connecting narrative"); 12, the Capture of the Achaean Wall; 14-15, the Deception of Zeus; 18, the Shield of Achilles; 23, the Funeral Games of Patroclus; 24, the Ransom of Hector, together with "certain subordinate poems:" Bks. 2, the Catalogue of Ships; 10, the Doloneia; 20, Achilles vs. Aeneas; 21, Achilles vs. Scamander, Theomachy.

The date of the first two strata is put before the Dorian invasion (ca. 1000 B.C. by Leaf's reckoning). That is, they are both mainland productions though not by the same author:

It is difficult to suppose that the poet of the  $\text{M}\eta\text{v}\iota\text{c}$  is the author of the Second Stratum; he would scarcely be likely to alter so fundamentally, and (especially in respect of the interference of the gods in the human action) with so different a spirit, the character of his own story.<sup>46</sup>

The third stratum is post-migration: "The whole of it, with the exception of some minor interpolations, may well be the work of Aeolian successors of the Achaean bards, and have come into being in the first two centuries of the period of colonization, to speak roughly, between 1000 and 800 B.C."<sup>47</sup>

Firm belief in this particular fragmentation of the poem suffuses the notes to individual books as Leaf adjudicates pontifically on the status of various portions of the poem, ascribing each to its proper place in



his scheme of compositional plateaux.<sup>48</sup>

But again, as in Jebb, we find a distinction between naïve aesthetic appreciation and scientific inquiry. Leaf is almost apologetic in his efforts to maintain that speculation about composite authorship does not speak to the question of artistic excellence.<sup>49</sup>

The dawning of historical perspectivism in the eighteenth century had culminated in Wolf's Prolegomena. If his basic tenets were not completely unprecedented, they were posited and substantiated with a scholarly acumen and cogency of argumentation which were in themselves a revolution in literary history. Wolf's theory, purified and consolidated in the crucible of a century of further (largely German) investigation, is precipitated in the commentaries of Leaf as a habit of thought. "Analysis" had by 1900 been restricted exclusively to its etymological denotation. The entire period had been given over to purely historical concerns. External testimony and internal evidence were assembled, weighed, and sifted to fit into a deductive procedure directed toward irrefutably accurate reconstruction of the facts of composition.

Because of the prehistoric time frame of the composition and the relatively limited attainments in linguistics and archaeology, a totally satisfactory solution remained elusive and, finally, illusory. As for evaluative criticism or judiciary aesthetic inter-

pretation, there could be no time for indulgence in these, not for the scholar, not when the plain historical facts of creation were not yet firmly in hand. Without these, Leaf implies, assessment of artistic merit must be an exercise in belles lettres, an amateur pastime, not the business of a man of learning and science--his duty was clearly elsewhere. The scholar had tasted the fruit of historical perspectivism and could not go home again. In Wolf's self-reprobaton, in Blackie's charges of German "atheism," in Jebb's and Leaf's self-conscious apologetics, it is manifest that the coming of knowledge, of a scientific methodology, meant the concomitant loss of the innocence of the naïve, uninitiated recipient of the gifts of Homer. Wilamowitz was the most fearless in acceptance of the consequences of the fall. Where Leaf speaks of "weakness," Wilamowitz speaks of "wretched patchwork." Each was fully aware, as every Analyst must have been, of the critical implications of their labors in the field of Literaturwissenschaft. While there was an occasional hint of guilt-feelings or, less frequently, an impassioned denunciation by a defender of the faith, the scholarly fraternity was steadfast in its commitment to scientific precision and to the acceptance of the results which its pursuit might bring. With the arrogance of an elite society of highly trained initiates, they looked with condescension on the efforts of their remote dilettantish relatives who placed the poems above

the facts of composition, evaluation above history.

But the days of Analytical sovereignty were numbered. A movement infrangibly dedicated to the poems as works of art was now, after a century of suppression, ready for resurrection.

## Notes (Chapter II):

Epigraphs: M. Pattison, "F. A. Wolf," North British Review (June 1865); rpt. in H. Nettleship, ed., Essays by the Late Mark Pattison, I (Oxford, 1889), p. 382; J. S. Blackie, Homer and the Iliad, I: Homeric Dissertations (Edinburgh, 1866), p. 244.

<sup>1</sup> It should be pointed out that Heyne and Wolf were involved in an unpleasant debate about the true originator of the very similar opinions expressed in their written works; see (favorable to Heyne) Gayley and Kurtz, Methods and Materials, p. 584, and (favorable to Wolf) J. E. Sandys, A History of Classical Scholarship, III (Cambridge, 1908), pp. 41-42, D. M. Foerster, Homer in English Criticism, pp. 112-13, and esp. Essays by the Late Mark Pattison, pp. 387-91, also pp. 343-51 on unassuaged ill-will dating to the years (1777-79) when Wolf was attending and not attending the lectures of Heyne at Göttingen in his capacity as Europe's first "Student of Philology."

<sup>2</sup> Homer: An Introduction, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> History of Classical Scholarship, III, pp. 130-31; one may compare as well the tribute of Moritz Haupt who succeeded Lachmann at Berlin in 1854--C. Belger, Moritz Haupt als akademischer Lehrer (Berlin, 1879), p. 43:

"Die erste Rede, die er in Berlin hielt, handelte 'de Lachmanno critico'; in ihr stellte er Lachmann als das Ideal eines Kritikers hin und gab am Ende zusammenfassend die allgemeinen Züge dieses Bildes: 'In critica arte qui cum Lachmanno comparari possint, paucos et fuisse et futuros esse existumo. Sed subtilitatem eius in cogitando, sed laboris adsiduitatem, sed in necessariis diligentiam inutiliumque contemptionem, denique constantissimum illud veritatis studium et imitari possumus omnes et discipulos ut imitentur, instituere. Id me sedulo facturum esse promitto.'"

<sup>4</sup> Über die ursprüngliche Gestalt des Gedichts von der Nibelungen Noth (Berlin, 1816), rpt. in Kleine Schriften zur Deutschen Philologie, ed. K. Müllenhoff, I (Berlin, 1876; rpt. 1969), pp. 1-80. For a succinct statement of recent opinion about "The Genesis of the Poem," see Appendix 4 in The Nibelungenlied; trans. A. T. Hatto (Baltimore, 1965; rev. 1969).

<sup>5</sup> The Betrachtungen were subsequently published in editions by M. Haupt (Berlin, 1847; 2nd ed. 1865; 3rd ed. 1874).

<sup>6</sup> W. D. Geddes, The Problem of the Homeric Poems (London, 1878), pp. 13-14.

<sup>7</sup> Hermann's papers on Homer are gathered in his Opuscula: Dissertatio de Interpolationibus Homeri, Opuscula, V (Leipzig, 1834), pp. 52-77; Über Homer und die Fragmente der Sappho, Opuscula, VI.1 (1835), pp. 70-141; De Iteratis apud Homerum, Opuscula, VIII (1840), pp. 11-23.

<sup>8</sup> Hermann cites specifically Nitzsch, De Historia Homeri Maximeque de Scriptorum Carminum Aetate Melemata (Hanover, 1830-37; suppl. Kiel, 1837-39), and Erklärende Anmerkungen zu Homers Odyssee, I-XII, II (Hanover, 1831).

<sup>9</sup> Müller, in his review of Nitzsch's Indagandae per Homeri Odysseam Interpolationis Praeparatio (Kiel, 1828), showed excessive optimism in this opinion: "Uns nun den Epigonen jener alten Homerischen Streiter, erscheint diese ganze aesthetische Ansicht roh, äusserlich, atomistisch; eine andere, die organische Entwicklung, hat im Stillen den Platz erobert," Kleine deutsche Schriften, ed. E. Müller, I (Breslau, 1847), p. 399; the review appeared originally in GGA, (1828), 1817-20.

<sup>10</sup> Nitzsch's contention gained substance from the findings of the magisterial two-volume study by Friedrich G. Welcker, Der epische Cyclus oder die homerischen Dichter, 2 vols. (Bonn, 1835, 1849; 2nd. ed. 1865, 1882).

<sup>11</sup> Hermann's definition of "interpolation" covered both insertion and relocation of material; Jebb, p. 120, n. 1, quotes the following from Hermann's 1806 edition of the Hymns: "Interpolationem autem dico non modo quam nunc plerique intelligunt, quae est in adiectione novorum versuum, sed quam antiqui appellabant, cuius est omnino rem veterem nova specie induere" (p. viii).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. the words of Wolf ("quoties . . . penitus immergor . . .") quoted above, p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> Opuscula, V, pp. 63-64.

<sup>14</sup> See W. Schmid, Geschichte der griechischen Literatur, I.1 (Leipzig, 1929), pp. 135-37.

<sup>15</sup> Homeri Iliadis Carmina Seiuncta Discreta Emendata, Prolegomenis et Apparatu Critico Instructa, I (Leipzig, 1884), pp. 1-96.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 57-78.

<sup>17</sup> See also his Homerische Odyssee und ihre Entstehung (Berlin, 1859; 2nd ed. 1879).

<sup>18</sup> Volume 7 in the series Philologische Untersuchungen, ed. A. Kiessling and U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf.

<sup>19</sup> Homerische Untersuchungen, p. 3: "Meines Erachtens Kirchhoffs Arbeiten die Grundlage für die Analyse der Odyssee sind und bleiben."

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>21</sup> J. A. Davison, "The Homeric Question," in A Companion to Homer, ed. A. J. B. Wace and F. H. Stubbings (London, 1962; hereafter cited as CH), p. 252: "Wilamowitz distributed his censures on Redactor, Bearbeiter, and interpolators with a really staggering confidence alike in the linguistic, historical, and textual evidence for the date of given passages and in the soundness of his own judgement of their poetical value."

<sup>22</sup> Wherever the text resisted metrically the re-introduction of the letter, and this was not infrequent, Bentley, with characteristic boldness, emended. For the story of his discovery of the lost letter and the shortcomings of his technique of restoration/emendation, see R. C. Jebb, Bentley (London, 1882; rpt. 1909), pp. 146-49. "Extracts from Bentley's MS [at Trinity College, Cambridge] on the Digamma" are in an appendix to sect. 110 of J. W. Donaldson, The New Cratylus, or Contributions Toward a More Accurate Knowledge of the Greek Language (London, 1839; 3rd ed. 1859), pp. 219-25. See also A. Shewan, "The Digamma in Homeric Criticism," REH, 2 (1932), 3-9; rpt. in Homeric Essays (Oxford, 1935), pp. 351-56.

<sup>23</sup> See D. B. Monro, A Grammar of the Homeric Dialect (Oxford, 1882; 2nd ed. 1891), sects. 398-99.

<sup>24</sup> See Pattison, Essays, pp. 396-97.

<sup>25</sup> Two vols. (Bonn, 1858); see also "Zur Lehre vom Digamma" (1857), in Homerische Blätter: Beilage zu dessen Carmina Homerica, I (Bonn, 1863), pp. 133-37. On earlier attempts to restore the digamma, see Monro, sect. 390, note.

<sup>26</sup> Die homerische Odyssee in der ursprünglichen Sprachform wiederhergestellt (Göttingen, 1883), Die homerische Ilias nach ihrer Entstehung betrachtet und in der ursprünglichen Sprachform wiederhergestellt (Göttingen, 1886).

<sup>27</sup> See Fick's Odyssey, pp. 34-36: "Die altäolischen Bestände der Odyssee."

<sup>28</sup> For reference to unfavorable reviews by Christ, Cauer, and Hinrichs, see Jebb, p. 146, n. 1.

<sup>29</sup> See Jebb, p. 145.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 146, n. 1.

<sup>31</sup> History of Greece, II (London, 1846; 3rd ed. 1851), p. 214.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>33</sup> M. L. Clarke, George Grote: A Biography (London, 1962), pp. 110-11:

"Grote's views on the Homeric question were not acceptable to the general English public. Friendly critics such as Cornewall Lewis, Milman, Hallam and John Mill were unconvinced, and took particular exception to his depreciation of Iliad IX; even Mill, whose thought, on ancient Greece at any rate, ran very much on the same lines as Grote's, maintained in opposition to him the unity and single authorship of the Homeric poems. In the world of scholarship, however, Grote's general theory has been widely accepted. Of those who reject the unity of the Iliad the majority since his day have held that it grew from an original nucleus dealing with the wrath of Achilles--Grote's Achilleid. The hypothesis of a smaller work subsequently enlarged was not a complete novelty--Hermann had postulated an Ur-Ilias--but Grote's precise and forcible formulation of it gives him an important place in the history of the Homeric question, and it is an indication of his greatness that this theory, which of itself would have made a minor reputation in the world of scholarship, should have been put forward incidentally in the course of a general history of Greece."

<sup>34</sup> Harriet Grote, The Personal Life of George Grote . . . , 2nd ed. (London, 1873), p. 167.

<sup>35</sup> Homeric Dissertations, p. 245. This worthy Scotsman also finds occasion to explain, on pp. 262-63, that "Edinburgh . . . is a more beautiful city than London."

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 227, n. 1.      <sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 249-50.      <sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp. 256-57.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>41</sup> The Problem of the Homeric Poems, p. iv.

<sup>42</sup> Homer: An Introduction, p. 171.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>44</sup> See Iliad, I (1886), pp. xxii-xxvi, 2nd ed. (1900), pp. xlii-xliii; II (1888), pp. ix-xii, 2nd ed. (1902), pp. ix-xiv; Companion, pp. 1-49, esp. 17 ff.; Iliad (1895), pp. xv-xxiii.

<sup>45</sup> Companion, p. xi.

<sup>46</sup> Iliad (1895), p. xx.      <sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. xxii-xxiii.

<sup>48</sup> See, e.g., the discussion of Bk. 9 in Companion, pp. 170-73, or in Iliad (1895), pp. 445-46.

<sup>49</sup> See, e.g., Companion, pp. 17-18.



### CHAPTER III

#### UNITARIAN RESURGENCE: 1900-1930

As efforts on the old lines become fewer and weaker, the positive declarations in favor of unity become stronger and more frequent. The Volksgeist and the Redactor are forgotten, and criticism works on a higher plane.

Alexander Shewan 1912

With very few exceptions (for example, the decipherment of Linear B), thunderbolt transformations do not occur in Homeric scholarship. In writing a history of the progress of criticism, it is necessary, in the interests of brevity, clarity, and intelligibility, to tender an admittedly curtailed, simplified digest. As a corrective to oversimplification, however, this chapter--"Unitarian Resurgence"--must begin with an indication of the indomitable nature of the incumbent counterview.

The conviction of multiple authorship of the Iliad and, to a lesser extent, of the Odyssey has not been extirpated in the twentieth century, only attenuated. In 1901, Carl Robert's Studien zur Ilias (Berlin) applied newly acquired archaeological controls to Analytical breakdown of the epic. Improving on the overly simplistic

conclusions of the pioneer work of Wolfgang Reichel,<sup>1</sup> Robert brings into play the crucial distinction between "mykenische und ionische Waffen" (= early and late, respectively). Friedrich Bechtel supplies corroborating linguistic inquiry and still another Aeolic "praesumptive *Uriliad*" sees the light.<sup>2</sup>

Individual books continue to be impugned;<sup>3</sup> investigators, like Jack Horner with his Christmas pie, persist in extracting nuclei.<sup>4</sup> And in the space of a decade, two of the most eminent Hellenists of their respective countries make ex cathedra pronouncements on the *Iliad*: Gilbert Murray in his Rise of the Greek Epic (Oxford, 1907)<sup>5</sup> and Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff in his Ilias und Homer (Berlin, 1916).

Professor Murray proceeds from the assumption that multiple authorship is no longer in need of proof, merely asserting in his preface that "among English scholars I agree most closely with Dr. Leaf, and may say that I accept his work as a basis. For the rest, I follow generally in the main tradition of Wolf, Lachmann, Kirchhoff, Wilamowitz."<sup>6</sup> He is thus free to reveal and scrutinize subtler hints of the poem's evolutionary history, the traits of a "traditional book." Notable among these are various expurgations of "unseemly" aspects of heroic life (torture, human sacrifice, etc.)--a censorship intended to bring the poem into greater compatibility with the idealizing "Homeric Spirit."

This gradual ethical amelioration is part of a larger process of artistic enrichment which is intrinsic to "the nature and standards of a traditional book." Murray saw, as other Analysts had not, that accomplished artistry and composite authorship are not mutually exclusive: "What we really know is not a man but a poem; let us focus our thoughts upon that and try to understand its greatness. I believe we shall find among the causes of that greatness something nobler and more august than the genius of any individual man."<sup>7</sup> That is, not only inconsistencies large (the problematic Embassy) and small (inapposite similes or epithets) or deficiencies of characterization ("Achilles . . . is not a very sympathetic hero"<sup>8</sup>), but also the many acclaimed marvels of poetic excellence can be better appreciated and understood in light of the distinctively traditional nature of the epic:

Each successive poet did not assert himself against the tradition, but gave himself up to the tradition, and added to its greatness and beauty all that was in him.

The intensity of imagination which makes the Iliad alive is not, it seems to me, the imagination of any one man. It means not that one man of genius created a wonder and passed away. It means that generation after generation of poets, trained in the same schools and a more or less continuous and similar life, steeped themselves to the lips in the spirit of this great poetry. They lived in the Epic saga and by it and for it. Great as it was, for many centuries they continued to build it up yet greater.<sup>9</sup>

Hence the quest for nuclear ipsissima verba is quite beside the point. Judgment of quality and valid

interpretation require, in Murray's view, a clear understanding of "traditional" poetry.

Wilamowitz, on the other hand, is still, in 1916, looking for the elusive plum--the authentic Kern embedded in the larger aggregate. This can be disengaged by the discovery and differentiation of stylistic individualities in the Iliad:

Am allerspätsten habe ich das sehen gelernt, worauf ich nun den höchsten Wert lege, den Unterschied des Stiles, des künstlerischen Wollens und Könnens, also die verschiedenen dichterischen Individuen. Das ist also das Gegenteil von einheitlicher homerischer oder gar Volkspoesie. Wie wenig steckt von solche Beobachtungen in meinem Buche über die Odyssee; es sind aber seine besten Partien, wo derlei bemerkt ist. Daraus nehme ich ab, dass erst lange Vertrautheit mit dem Objekte die Fähigkeit verleiht, Individuelles zu bemerken. Ein Anfänger kann es nicht wohl leisten. Wer es nicht bemerkt, wird es leugnen. Das schreckt mich nicht. Ich hoffe und erwarte, dass die Wissenschaft gerade auf meinem Wege über mich hinauskommen wird.<sup>10</sup>

All it requires is a steady and experienced hand.

Wilamowitz's findings in Die Ilias und Homer, by contrast with those of Homerische Untersuchungen written some thirty years earlier, tend to attribute to Homer more credit for the undeniable artistry of the poetry. He envisages a poet, born in the first half of the eighth century, assembling from earlier lays, themselves based on pre-existing materials, an Iliad comprising Bks. 1-7.321, 11-15.591, 16-23.256. This is in principle a neo-analytical view of the mythical (not to say whimsical) "Ur-Ilias," a poem later modified and enlarged to constitute the Iliad familiar to readers of the past two and

one-half millennia. Thus Wilamowitz sees Iliad 8 serving to facilitate the insertion of Bks. 9 and 10.<sup>11</sup>

Like Murray, he finds a supreme poetic skill in the Iliad, but unlike him he insists on assigning that skill in large proportion to some individual whose hand can be detected by the expert critic--it is all a matter of style and sensitivity to style.

Both men make concessions to the "aesthetic" branch of higher criticism, long acknowledged only with chilly sufferance by scholars. This is not to say that either will countenance the notion of unified composition, but both have rejected the contention that (relative) certainty of plural authorship dictates unfavorable appraisal of poetic achievement. But their confidence in asserting the Analytical dogma could not but alienate the staunch members of the Unitarian party.

Belief in single authorship had demonstrated a remarkable will to survive in the scholarship of the nineteenth century, but it was never the flourishing faith of the educated non-classicist. We have seen (above, p. 23) that Gregor Nitzsch was, by 1830, raising serious objections to Wolf's theory. The main line of defense was constructed on the analogy with other epic traditions. Primitive or "popular" poetry seemed to hold forth a solution to the mystery of composition of the great Greek epics. The most important and systematic of Nitzsch's works is his Beiträge zur Geschichte der

epischen Poesie der Griechen (Leipzig, 1862). Here he argues for stadial development of popular or "national" epic, with culmination induced by a single inventive genius:

Drei stufen: Volkssage, kleinere Einzellieder und auf Grund dieser dann erst grössere Gebilde, bemessen nach dem innewohnenden Motiv der Bewegung, beseelt nach dem Phantasieglauben des Volksgeistes, den der ausführende Dichter theilt, und den er erst in Charakteren der Helden und Götter, und bei den Wechselwirkungen zwischen Menschen- und Götterwelt die Handlung zur recht lebensvollen Anschaulichkeit ausprägt.<sup>12</sup>

Folk-psychology and folk-poetry in relation to epic composition were subjects of papers in the Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft during the next twenty years or so. H. Steinthal maintained that

folk poetry has no independent existence of its own, but is entirely dependent upon the vicissitudes of the development of the folk. There are three forms or stages of epic composition: (1) the isolated form,-- separate songs each celebrating a particular incident; (2) the agglutinative form,--a group of songs celebrating the various deeds of a single hero, e.g., the romances; (3) the organic form,--a great cycle built by the communal spirit, with organic relation of parts, interdependent members, unity of development, etc.<sup>13</sup>

Against this view of autochthonous epic, Julius Krohn, a Finnish scholar, argued for the improbability of a unified epic without the impress of a synthesizing and creative artist.<sup>14</sup>

Then, in 1891, Domenico Comparetti, in his Kalevala o la poesia tradizionale dei Finni: studio storico-critico sulle origini delle grandi epopee nazionali (Rome), definitively exploded the Lönnrot-Pisistratus analogies

which had so endeared the Kalevala to the "small song" theorists in Homeric studies. In his introduction to the English edition of the book, Andrew Lang applauds Comparetti:

He does not rely on an unproved hypothesis, but goes straight to the facts. . . . Would it be possible . . . for a Fick, a Lachmann, a Kirchhoff or a Leaf to put his finger on the joints of the songs stitched together in the Kalevala, or to discover the original poem of say 4000 lines, and then to discriminate the various accretions of several successive ages, as the modern critics do in the case of the Homeric poems? Comparetti proves that either of these analytical processes would be impossible. . . . No critical ingenuity could disengage these component parts of the Kalevala as they exist in actual fact. No critical ingenuity could correctly discern the additions and modifications by which Lönnrot, in this century, made the Kalevala. . . . We must, therefore, distrust critical analysis where it rests (in Homeric and often in Biblical criticism) on the critic's own idea of what, in accordance with his theory, ought to be the case.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, there is more than distrust in Comparetti's attitude toward the disintegrators:

For a long time past grammarians, classical or otherwise, have engaged in conjectural, anatomical dissections of the Homeric poems and other national epics . . . . We are already tired of the restless analysis which, impatient of its own sterility, has for so long occupied itself in making, unmaking, remaking; unconvinced that its want of solid foundations, its insufficient and ill-applied criteria, render it perpetually futile. Its student is often struck with wonder at the degree of intellectual short-sightedness to which the exaggerated, exclusive habit of the analytical method leads: at the kind of man-microscope it produces, capable of seeing atoms, molecules, cells, but not organic bodies and totalities, capable of observing the mote and seeing it highly magnified, but blind to the beam and its importance.<sup>16</sup>

Comparetti's book attests an intimate acquaintance with the Finnish materials and a lavish expenditure of

scholarly energy, even to the extent of "four visits to that excellent hyperborean people." It is given over, of course, almost entirely to discussion of the Kalevala and other Finnish poetry and myth, but its conclusions in respect to the analogy with Homeric poetry are not to be taken lightly; they are the cornerstone of a conviction of the qualitative difference of the Iliad and the Odyssey from purely "popular" poetry.

We have here shown, from the observations to which the Kalevala has led us, how devoid of foundation is the theory, under whatever form it presents itself, which sees in the ancient poems . . . nothing but songs mechanically joined together; and hence authorises the decomposition of these poems into the elements from which they are supposed to be built up. Any attempt at decomposing organic poems that do not present a variety of written redactions, sets out from a principle that is arbitrary, is carried through with insufficient criteria, is and will ever be barren, fruitless toil.<sup>17</sup>

Lang and others were later to assert the literary excellence of Homer with a vigor renewed by Comparetti's apparent disarmament of the Analytical comparatists.

Andrew Lang was the true harbinger of the new Unitarian movement; his contributions to Homeric scholarship have the distinction of recouping some measure of respectability for literary criticism. It is true of course that Matthew Arnold's writings on Homer were high tribute to the art of the ancient poet and indeed masterpieces of criticism in themselves, but they did not confront the Analyst position on its own ground. This was the purpose of Lang's Homer and the Epic (London, 1893).



There is about much of Lang's work, as about that of Unitarians of the next thirty years, an air of militancy. "We plead for wider and more generous views of the Iliad and the Odyssey, for a study of poetry as poetry, not as a dubious clause in a Bill, or a doubtful statement by an historian."<sup>18</sup> Two entire chapters (IV & V) of Homer and the Epic are devoted to "Criticism of Wolf" and of various sub-categories of "Wolfism," now seen as a kind of intellectual lycanthropy. Throughout the book, refutation of Grote, Leaf, Kirchhoff, Fick, Wilamowitz, and others is a primary objective. The effect is of an extended diatribe.

The case for the defense of Homer was founded on aesthetic principles. Thus in regard to the troublesome Ninth Book, Lang, though the problematic duals and the curious role of Phoenix make him "suspect that something has been lost, or that much interesting matter has been abruptly introduced," asserts that

to our mind the book is necessary as an exposition of the character of Achilles, and also because, if it is to go, we must make many excisions in later books at our private pleasure and fantasy. Do the linguistic and geographic objections, such as they are, outweigh the completion of the character of Achilles and the necessity for arbitrary excisions?"<sup>19</sup>

Lang was to return to the Homeric Question in two works devoted to proving archaeologically the reflection of a single cultural milieu in the poems. But his greatest achievement was to have given Homer the benefit of a doubt.

On one point he was emphatic, the obvious and heinous fallacy of neglecting the poet's audience. The lays were often criticized as if they had been composed for a modern highbrow gathering, and not, as they were in fact, purely for the pleasure of lords and ladies. The poet must bow to modern taste and satisfy the modern "analytical reader." It all reminded Lang of the elderly gentleman who posed beside an old Greek statue of Aphrodite in what he considered to be a preferable attitude.

Best of all perhaps was his merciless exposure of the doubleness and contradictoriness of the methodology. He showed by numerous instances that the ways of late Interpolators and Harmonizers, now "piously conservative" of the old ways, now "impudently radical in pushing the new," were past understanding.<sup>20</sup>

It must have been with considerable personal gratification that Lang wrote in 1910:

The reaction against the suggestion of Wolf, against a critical tradition of a century's standing, has begun in earnest. . . . If the views of the reaction, of the believers in Homeric unity . . . are to prevail, the opposing ideas must be assailed, and if possible confuted.<sup>21</sup>

A man of his word, Lang included a long appendix on "The Supposed Expurgations of Homer" in his World of Homer.

Enrollment in the school of unity increased rapidly in the first quarter of this century; to name only a few of the most prominent members: F. Blass, Engelbert Drerup, Dietrich Müllder, and Carl Rothe in Germany;<sup>22</sup> G. Bertrin, M. Bréal, L. Laurand, and A. van Gennep in France;<sup>23</sup> J. van Leeuwen in Holland;<sup>24</sup> D. B. Monro, John Sheppard, and Alexander Shewan in England;<sup>25</sup> Samuel Bassett and John Scott in America.<sup>26</sup>

Battle was engaged in reviews, as Murray's Rise of

the Greek Epic and Wilamowitz's Ilias und Homer both met stiff resistance.<sup>27</sup> And individual books were fought for with heroic fervor. Iliad 5 in the very heart of the "Iliadic enlargement" of the Achilleid-nucleus was defended by Drerup,<sup>28</sup> while the mighty Wilamowitz's view of Iliad 8 was challenged by Alexander Shewan.<sup>29</sup>

But it was the latter's defense of the long-denounced Tenth Book that most genuinely embodies the spirit of the new movement:

Destructive criticism has scored many supposed successes by determined and exhaustive polemics against particular books or episodes of the poems. . . . The Doloneia now lies buried below a cairn heaped up to keep its unclean spirit out of the Homeric world, and every passer by adds a boulder or a pebble. They have even made for him who gave it being this cruel epitaph, nihil quod tetigit non iniquavit.

This is a sad state of things to one who has always doubted whether the Doloneia is as bad as it is generally painted, and who is now to argue that it is in every way worthy of a place in the Iliad, and as ancient as any other part of that poem.<sup>30</sup>

The elaborate brief for the Doloneia, with its examination of interpolation, emendation, linguistic phenomena, characterization, and realia, constantly widens into an indictment of the "destructive" critics.<sup>31</sup> Shewan's review of "Recent Homeric Literature" in the following year strikes a note of triumph: "The Liederjagd and Kerntheorie are now 'creeds outworn.' Saner principles have won the day . . . . Destructive criticism had gone too far . . . . The supineness of the Unitarians has proved fatal encouragement."<sup>32</sup>

Still, it was not till the 1920's that the Unitarian position was fully consolidated. E. R. Dodds has seen a post-war Zeitgeist at work:

The exhilarating conviction that for several generations the best scholars in Europe had been playing the wrong game dawned on the public mind with surprising suddenness shortly after the First World War. It may be surmised that the reasons for so abrupt a change lay in part outside the field of Homeric scholarship. There is evidence that in some quarters resentments left behind by the war were not without influence; Homeric analysis was in the main a German achievement, and the arrogance of some of its exponents was felt to be typical of the German mind. But the basic causes certainly lay deeper. . . .

The unitarian reaction was . . . to some extent a manifestation of the Zeitgeist. It was announced almost simultaneously by J. A. Scott in America, by Sheppard in England, and by Drerup in Germany.<sup>33</sup>

The three authors mentioned by Dodds are actually the foremost, not the first, proponents of the new movement. Though their aims were quite similar, their procedures are very dissimilar.

Drerup's Homerproblem in der Gegenwart (Würzburg, 1921), after an initial chapter surveying the evolution of Homeric scholarship from Petrarch through the nineteenth century, addresses itself to a wide range of Homeric problems: "Homer und die Volksepik," "Homer und die Sprachwissenschaft," "Homer und die Archäologie," "Der Anschauungsrealismus in Geographie und Topographie," "Der Mythizismus," "Der Historizismus," "Der rationalistische Kritizismus." Throughout, Drerup is intent on demonstrating the originality of Homer. He even suggests that the Trojan War may be largely poetic fabrication:

Wie aber in der Nibelungensage der Zug der Burgunden ins Hunnenland, der im Mittelpunkt des Nibelungenepos steht, als eine poetische Fiktion sich darstellt, um verschiedene Sagenkreise miteinander zu verbinden, so könnte auch Troja, das sicher schon im Gesichtskreise der Mykenäer lag, durch eine poetische Erfindung in die griechische Sage einbezogen worden sein, zumal wenn dort schon, etwa an die prähistorischen Tumuli anknüpfend, eine kriegerische Lokalsage sich gebildet hatte. Das wäre um so eher denkbar, wenn die Troas zur mykenischen Zeit schon griechischer Herrschaft unterstand. Nach Analogien der Volksepik könnte auch irgend ein nebensächliches Ereignis der griechischen Stammesgeschichte, das nach Troja hinüberwies, zu einem sagengeschichtlichen Zentrum geworden sein und die bedeutendsten Helden der Sage an sich herangezogen haben.<sup>34</sup>

In a concluding chapter on poetic technique, he employs aesthetic interpretation to discern a single creative mind at work in the poetry. Subtlety of psychological detail and happy disposition of episodes are among the hallmarks of that mind. A consistency of ethical tenor as well points to the existence of a primordial written text from the hand of The Poet himself,<sup>35</sup> Homer imposing his own will in the invention and organization of his materials.<sup>36</sup>

Drerup tacks his course against the prevailing winds of German Analytical exegesis. Das Homerproblem in der Gegenwart is abundantly equipped with footnote references to help us appreciate his orientation--that is, his extreme Unitarianism.

Drerup's book is dedicated to Joseph Schrijnen and John A. Scott. The latter's Unity of Homer (Berkeley, 1921) is the first volume in the Sather Lecture series which was to include Bassett's Poetry of Homer (Berkeley,

1938) and Page's History and the Homeric Iliad (Berkeley, 1959). Scott's devotion to unity is combined with an inflammatory disparagement of Analytical scholarship:

Wilamowitz cannot reconstruct an original poem out of the existing Iliad, since he regards the present poem as for the most part the work of blunderers and blockheads, men who removed the old and the noble poetry and then substituted inferior verses of their own or of others for the great poetry of the original. These better parts were all lost as soon as they were removed, no one has ever quoted or referred to them, and this greatest of all losses was never suspected until discovered by the great critic in our own day. Wilamowitz has been able to give an outline of much of the better and nobler Iliad, but has modestly refrained from writing in full that greater poem which he regards as alone worthy of the world's mightiest poet. It is well to observe, however, that Homer has long been regarded as the greatest of all poets not because of the poem which Wilamowitz imagines, but because of the Iliad and the Odyssey which we actually have. Homer's reputation depends on no hypothetical creation but on poetry now existing.<sup>37</sup>

Though Scott discusses many of the major sources of grist for the Analytical mill--antiquities and kindred matters,<sup>38</sup> contradictions, characterizations--, his most compelling chapter is that on "Linguistic Arguments." Exposure of the faults of statistical studies seeking to prove, for example, the "Odyssean" flavor of the Doloneia or the increased incidence of the definite article in the Odyssey brings us back to the burning issue:

Homer has not been given a chance and most students who have done work on Homer have been directed to find errors and contradictions where none exist. These disintegrating arguments, based on false statistics, have been wax in the ears of nearly all students of Homer. Their ears have never had a chance to catch the music of his songs; they have been as deaf to the voice of Homer as were the companions of Odysseus to the voice of the Sirens.

The linguistic attack on Homer, the most serious that could be devised, has entirely failed to create a presumption of diverse authorship. Instead, this attack has made it most improbable that two poems of such great length could show such practical identity of language, unless they were the creation of a single poet.<sup>39</sup>

A good half of Scott's book is pure literary criticism--detailed explication of the profound art of the Greek epics, the action and characterization, gods and men, scale and design. Professor J. T. Sheppard's Pattern of the Iliad (London, 1922) is an even more single-minded effort to escape from profitless scholarly wrangling and bitter polemics and to redirect critical energies to the task of appreciation of the poems themselves. Thus scholarly impedimenta are altogether foregone; footnotes refer exclusively to the Iliad. Homer, not the disputes of Higher Criticism, is the focus throughout.

The first object of this book is to assist the reader to enjoy the poetry of Homer. . . . It takes the "Iliad" as a completed work of art, and, without asking how it got its present shape, tries to show clearly what shape in fact it has.

The Homeric Question wanes and waxes. Homer's poetry remains. . . .

The purpose of the present book, at any rate, is not controversy, but appreciation of the pleasant things which Homer gives us.<sup>40</sup>

The Pattern of the Iliad is a running commentary on the progression of the narrative--of the logic and rhythm of the story. Each element in the poem is resolutely shown to fit decorously into the overarching pattern. Organization is in three "movements" with strategically

placed "interludes" in Book 10 (Dolon) and Book 18 (the Shield). We may quote Sheppard's remarks on the perennially suspect Iliad 10 to illustrate his commitment to the poem as a poem:

He wants an episode, clearly designed as an interlude, though not quite irrelevant to the main theme, a decorative panel, marking the point at which the introductory series is completed and the tragic sequel is about to begin. Achilles has made his fatal choice. The knot is tied. The development of the tragedy will begin when Agamemnon takes the field. Between the two great movements the poet has set the lay of Dolon.<sup>41</sup>

The remark of Gilbert Murray--"I can find no true 'unitarian' left except Drerup"--in the preface to the fourth edition (1934) of his Rise of the Greek Epic is symptomatic of the insularity of the opposing camps at this time. For Murray need only have looked so far as New College (where he had taught before moving to Christ Church and the Regius Professorship in 1908) in his own Oxford University to have found C. M. Bowra, author of Tradition and Design in the Iliad (Oxford, 1930).

Bowra was alive to the excesses of both factions--the Analytical and the Unitarian--and intended to formulate more valid criteria for the assessment of "traditional" poetry. Bowra had the advantage, uncommon among classical scholars, of being in touch with recent developments in critical theory outside the narrow circuit of philological research. His crucial preliminary chapter "Tradition and Design" owes much, it seems to me, to an



important little essay by T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," first published in 1919. Eliot maintains the debt of every great poet to tradition, a debt that in no way diminishes originality. We are, in our critical endeavors, disabled by

out tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles any one else. In these aspects or parts of his work we pretend to find what is individual, what is the peculiar essence of the man. We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors; we endeavor to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed. Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously. . . . No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism.<sup>42</sup>

The significance of these statements in the context of Homeric criticism is enormous. Homer's ancestry cannot be confidently determined; the dead poets who constitute the tradition can only be inferred from the Iliad and the Odyssey. The Analysts had long floundered in the attempt to establish stages of evolution. Bowra, though he does engage in a certain amount of discrimination between "the traditional heritage and the uses to which the poet puts it," is cautious and far from doctrinaire. We should not expect certainty in the resurrection of Homer's poetic forebears; rather we should readjust our

conception of originality to include innovative control of thoroughly conventional medium and subject matter:

Homer, like Shakespeare, used a well-worn form and made it miraculously his own. In the end the great poet does not care if the form he uses has been used before or not. What matters is what he makes of it, and what Homer made of the epic tradition of narrative has always been clear even to those who fail to understand how the thing happened.

This simple distinction between a poet's tradition and his use of it has too often been neglected in Homeric criticism, and the result has been lamentable for the study of the poem.<sup>43</sup>

The period 1900-1930 witnessed a salutary rearrangement of priorities in Homeric scholarship. I refer chiefly to the installation of literary criticism as a serious and honorable activity; a place had been regained for aesthetic interpretation unbiased by historical considerations. Science and history had long supplanted evaluative criticism as the proper functions of scholarship. Critics of the nineteenth century had, in their dedication to "scientific" method, ended by attacking poems whose brilliance and depth were obvious to any unprejudiced and sensitive reader. It is a testimony to an inordinate disjunction in intellectual history that the same year saw the publication of Hermann Köchly's Iliadis Carmina XVI Restituta and the delivery of Matthew Arnold's lectures On Translating Homer.<sup>44</sup> In retrospect, one cannot but concur with Housman's estimate:

When it comes to literary criticism, heap up in one scale all the literary criticism that the whole nation of professed scholars ever wrote, and drop into the other the thin green volume of Matthew Arnold's Lectures on Translating Homer, which has long been

out of print because the British public does not care to read it, and the first scale, as Milton says, will straight fly up and kick the beam.<sup>45</sup>

The twentieth-century resurgence of Unitarian criticism had in its favor a commitment to reality. Again and again, we are encouraged to deal with facts--with the realities of the Iliad and the Odyssey as they exist for us in the present. They are, however they may have come to be, works of art of the very highest order. Their aesthetic impact on a modern audience is a real phenomenon and is susceptible of illumination. This is the role of criticism as Arnold and Lang and Shewan, Drerup, Scott, and Sheppard conceived and practiced it. The whole Analytical edifice had served only to obscure our appreciation of the poetry, to de-sensitize us by manifold extra-literary concerns--foremost among them the reconstruction of history by scientific means. Wolf's admitted displeasure with his own theory was shared and intensified by all readers who could not escape the feeling that the poems simply would not yield their enduring value and beauty to the probe and scalpel of the historicist method.

Bowra's work occupies a pivotal position in all this. It reminds us of the need for perspective, or rather of the need for multiple perspectives. Of course we should be concerned first and last with the poems as we have them. But we must also purify our experience of them, we must eliminate conditioning factors which may

distort our perception. We cannot and should not "think backwards," but we will not achieve proper evaluation without some notion of the environment and motivations which attended the creation of the Iliad and the Odyssey. Meaning and beauty accrue to the epics as we succeed in occupying different vantage points. For Bowra, the analogy of other heroic poems often provides useful leverage in getting at the more complete comprehension of the mode of existence of the Greek epics. More accurate descriptive terminology emerges from such comparison.

It was for Milman Parry to demonstrate that comparative study of a genre could, if pursued with sufficient insight and logic, reopen a perspective which the relentless passage of time had seemingly closed off permanently. Moreover, his findings and their implications for evaluative criticism were to lead him into direct confrontation with the now firmly entrenched Unitarian school.

## Notes (Chapter III):

Epigraph: A. Shewan, "Recent Homeric Literature," CP, 7 (1912), 193.

<sup>1</sup> Über homerische Waffen (Vienna, 1894; 2nd ed. 1901).

<sup>2</sup> For criticism of the collaborative effort of Robert and Bechtel, see M. P. Nilsson, Homer and Mycenae (London, 1933), pp. 20, 168-69; and on Reichel, see J. L. Myres, Homer and His Critics, ed. Dorothea H. F. Gray (London, 1958), pp. 172-77.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., W. Deecke, De Hectoris et Aiakis Certamine Singulari (Göttingen, 1906); E. Bethe, "Hektors Abschied," ASG, 27 (1909), 411-42; U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, "Ueber das  $\theta$  der Ilias," SPAW, 21 (1910), 372-402.

<sup>4</sup> F. M. Stawell, Homer and the Iliad: An Essay to Determine the Scope and Character of the Original Poem (London, 1909); A. Fick, Die Entstehung der Odyssee und die Versabzählung in den griechischen Epen (Göttingen, 1910); O. Seeck, Zur Entstehung der Ilias (Strassburg, 1918).

<sup>5</sup> 2nd ed. 1911, 3rd 1924, 4th 1934--the book had its germination in the Gardiner Lane Lectures delivered by Murray at Harvard in 1907.

<sup>6</sup> Rise of the Greek Epic, 4th ed., p. xvii.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.    <sup>8</sup> *Ib.*, p. 242.    <sup>9</sup> *Ib.*, p. 256.

<sup>10</sup> Die Ilias und Homer (Berlin, 1916), p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> The 1910 paper on Iliad 8 (see above, note <sup>3</sup>) was absorbed into the first chapter of Die Ilias und Homer, pp. 26-59.

<sup>12</sup> Beiträge, p. 62; cf. K. O. Müller, A History of the Literature of Ancient Greece, ed. J. W. Donaldson, I (London, 1840), pp. 67-68:

"To remove from this collection of various actions, conditions, and feelings any substantial part, as not necessarily belonging to it, would in fact be to dismember a living whole, the parts of which would necessarily lose their vitality. As in an organic

body life does not dwell in one single point, but requires a union of certain systems and members, so the internal connexion of the Iliad rests on the union of certain parts; and neither the interesting introduction describing the defeat of the Greeks up to the burning of the ship of Protesilaus, nor the final pacification of the anger of Achilles, could be spared from the Iliad, when the fruitful seed of such a poem had once been sown in the soul of Homer, and had begun to develop its growth. . . . It is clear that a design manifested itself at an early period to make this poem complete in itself, so that all the subjects, descriptions, and actions, which could alone give an interest to a poem on the entire war, might find a place within the limits of this composition. For this purpose it is not improbable that many lays of earlier bards, who had sung single adventures of the Trojan war, were laid under contribution, and that the finest parts of them were adopted into the new poem; it being the natural course of popular poetry propagated by oral tradition, to treat the best thoughts of previous poets as common property, and to give them a new life by working them up in a different context."

<sup>13</sup> Summary of "Das Epos," ZVS, 5 (1868), 1-57 in Gayley and Kurtz, Methods and Materials, p. 658; cf. Steinthal, "Ueber Homer und insbesondere die Odyssee," ZVS, 7 (1871), 1-88.

<sup>14</sup> "Die Entstehung der einheitlichen Epen im allgemeinen," ZVS, 18 (1888), 59-68.

<sup>15</sup> D. P. A. Comparetti, The Traditional Poetry of the Finns, trans. Isabella M. Anderton (London, 1898), pp. xiii-xiv.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. v-vi. <sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 358-59.

<sup>18</sup> Homer and the Epic, p. viii. <sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>20</sup> A. Shewan, Andrew Lang's Work for Homer, Andrew Lang Lecture 1928 (London, 1929), p. 6; pp. 10-27 of this lecture are extracted in Shewan, Homeric Essays, pp. 228-41.

<sup>21</sup> The World of Homer (London, 1910), p. xiii.

<sup>22</sup> See F. Blass, Die Interpolationen in der Odyssee (Halle, 1904); E. Drerup, Das fünfte Buch der Ilias: Grundlagen einer homerischen Poetik (Paderborn, 1913),

Homerische Poetik, I: Das Homerproblem in der Gegenwart, Prinzipien und Methoden der Homererklärung (Würzburg, 1921); D. Mulder, Die Ilias und ihre Quellen (Berlin, 1910); C. Rothe, Die Ilias als Dichtung (Paderborn, 1910), Die Odyssee als Dichtung (Paderborn, 1914). On the importance of Mulder's book, see J. A. Davison, "The Homeric Question," in CH, pp. 254-58.

<sup>23</sup> See G. Bertrin, La Question homérique (Paris, 1898); Michel Bréal, Pour mieux connaître Homère (Paris, 1906); L. Laurand, A propos d'Homère: Progrès et recul de la critique (Paris, 1913); A. van Gennep, La Question d'Homère (Paris, 1909).

<sup>24</sup> See J. van Leeuwen, "Homerica," Mnemosyne, 37 (1909), 224-28; 38 (1910), 337-94; 39 (1911), 330-68; 40 (1912), 63-128; also Commentationes Homericae (Leiden, 1911).

<sup>25</sup> See the voluminous appendices in D. B. Monro's edition of Odyssey: Books XIII-XXIV (Oxford, 1901), pp. 289-502; J. T. Sheppard, The Pattern of the Iliad (London, 1922); A. Shewan, The Lay of Dolon: Some Notes on Its Language, Verse, and Contents, with Remarks by the way on the Canons and Methods of Homeric Criticism (London, 1911).

<sup>26</sup> For S. E. Bassett, see principally The Poetry of Homer (Berkeley, 1938), and numerous earlier articles as, e.g., "The Structural Similarity of Iliad and Odyssey as Revealed in the Treatment of the Hero's Fate," CJ, 14 (1919), 557-63, and "The Three Threads of the Plot of the Iliad," TAPA, 53 (1922), 52-62; J. A. Scott, The Unity of Homer (Berkeley, 1921), and earlier papers.

<sup>27</sup> On Murray, see D. Mulder in BPW, 29 (1909), 225-30, and Paul Shorey in CP, 6 (1911), 238-40: "Prof. Murray has not only studied and utilized with consummate literary skill the suggestions of Cauer, Robert, Leaf, Bréal, and the rest, but he has read Matthew Arnold and Mr. Andrew Lang, and is aware that he cannot prove anything. Unfortunately, he forgets this when he enters upon the detailed disintegrating analysis of the poems, and so permits himself an ingenuity of caviling hypercriticism that even Robert might envy" (p. 239).

On Wilamowitz, see S. E. Bassett in CW, 14 (1921), 110-12. Cf. also J. A. Scott on Fick's Entstehung der Odyssee in CP, 6 (1911), 236-38; and M. Bréal on Robert's Studien zur Ilias in JS, n.s. 1 (1903), 139-46.

28 Das fünfte Buch der Ilias.

29 "Wilamowitz on Ө," CP, 6 (1911), 37-47; rpt. in Homeric Essays, pp. 357-68.

30 The Lay of Dolon, pp. vii-viii. A recent doctoral dissertation has tested the formulaicity of Bk. 10 against that of a (supposedly) older Bk. and come to conclusions strikingly similar to Shewan's; C. W. Querbach, "A Formulaic Analysis of Books Ten and Sixteen of the Iliad," 3 vols. (diss. Michigan, 1970), I, pp. 10-11:

"The question of the authorship of the various portions of the chosen corpus was given serious consideration. It was hoped that the findings would shed some light on the widely held belief that Book Ten was not composed by the same poet as Book Sixteen, or, for that matter, that Book Sixteen was not wholly the work of one poet. This, however, did not prove to be the case. The overall formulaic usage was found to be quite similar, with a great many formulas, and especially formulaic systems, common to both books. Only a small number of formulas were found to be unique to one book or the other, and many of these could be accounted for by uniqueness of subject matter. If basic differences in formulaic usage could not be substantiated in such widely variant materials as these, it seemed pointless to attempt to isolate formulaic differences in the more subtle variations of text noted by students of the Homeric Problem."

31 See The Lay of Dolon, pp. 215-16, 220.

32 CP, 7 (1912), 191.

33 "Homer," in Fifty Years of Classical Scholarship, ed. M. Platnauer (Oxford, 1954), pp. 8-9 = The Language and Background of Homer: Some Recent Studies and Controversies, ed. G. S. Kirk (New York, 1964; hereafter cited as LBH), pp. 8-9.

34 Das Homerproblem in der Gegenwart, pp. 274-75.

35 See Drerup, p. 404.

36 See esp. Drerup, pp. 404-22: "Der poetische Stoff und poetische Idee."



37 The Unity of Homer, pp. 80-81.

38 At one place (pp. 106-109) it is demonstrated, with the help of a certain Professor Fox, "director of the Dearborn Astronomical Observatory," that Od. 5.272 ff. had been unjustly attacked because "Finsler and Wilamowitz assumed that Odysseus was a contemporary sailing in the latitude of Berlin!"

39 The Unity of Homer, p. 105.

40 The Pattern of the Iliad, pp. vii-viii.

41 Ibid., p. 83.

42 T. S. Eliot, Selected Essays (New York, 1932), pp. 3-5.

43 C. M. Bowra, Tradition and Design in the Iliad (Oxford, 1930), p. 271.

44 Three lectures delivered at Oxford 3 November 1860, 8 December 1860, 26 January 1861, and published at London in 1861; a fourth lecture ("Last Words") was delivered 30 November 1861 and published in 1862. All in R. H. Super, ed., The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold, I: On the Classical Tradition (Ann Arbor, 1960), pp. 97-216.

45 From Housman's Introductory Lecture delivered at University College London on 3 October 1892, in John Carter, ed., A. E. Housman: Selected Prose (Cambridge, 1961), p. 15. For a similar judgment, see Scott, The Unity of Homer, p. 77.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MILMAN PARRY: 1928-1935

We shall find . . . that . . . failure to see the difference between written and oral verse was the greatest single obstacle to our understanding of Homer, we shall cease to be puzzled by much, we shall no longer look for much that Homer would never have thought of saying, and above all, we shall find that many, if not most of the questions we were asking, were not the right ones to ask.

Milman Parry 1930

He considered literature itself the richest and most sensitive of human institutions--not a two-dimensional page in a book, but a rounded organism comprising the people by and for whom it was created. He foresaw the possibility of establishing a physiology of literature, of investigating the way it works, the necessities which call it into being, the circumstances under which it flourishes.

Harry Levin 1937

Two names: Friedrich August Wolf and Milman Parry. There is no third to set beside these. Each brought to the study of the Homeric poems an acuity of vision and an intellectual capacity adequate to surmount the difficulties and perplexities which had plagued their predecessors and contemporaries. Wolf's reasoning was for a century improved and modified, occasionally challenged, but never conclusively superseded. To the extent

that twentieth-century inquiry has made any real progress beyond disintegrative Analysis, we are indebted not so much to the homiletics of the champions of unity as to the suasive insight of Milman Parry.

It is not my purpose to present more than a curt epitome of Parry's celebrated investigations. Concise and eloquent appreciations of these are readily available.<sup>1</sup> It is more imperative in the present context to stress his links with antecedent scholarship and his collision with the ascendant trend in literary criticism in his day. The shock of that collision has not yet subsided.

Linguistic study of the Iliad and the Odyssey, though it never succeeded in definitive stratigraphy, had compiled a valuable store of data and, by 1900 or so, begun to redirect its energies toward purely synchronic analysis. If the texts of Bekker, Fick, and Robert (with Bechtel) were undercut by theoretical predispositions as to the origin of the poems, they paralleled and often promoted inquiries aiming not at reconstruction but simply at fuller awareness of the nuances of diction and meter. Parry is explicit in naming these scholar-forebears of oral theory.<sup>2</sup> Düntzer, Ellendt, and Hinrichs were already, in the later nineteenth century, beginning to account for morphological and dialectal peculiarities as features of a hexametric poetic language of long lineage.<sup>3</sup> This was further confirmed in the important writings of Kurt Witte,<sup>4</sup> who, with K. Meister,<sup>5</sup> is

Parry's most immediate creditor. Witte's examination of the dialect mixture led him to conclude that diachronic analysis was fundamentally misguided. The true solution lay rather in the notion of an artificial language that had come into existence under the pressure of verse-form.

Ehe die Sprache des griechischen Epos die uns vorliegende Gestalt erhielt, hat es einer jahrhundertelangen Kunstübung bedurft. Wenn es nun auch gelingt, die Geschichte eines bestimmten Lautes, einer bestimmten sprachlichen Erscheinung während dieser Zeit zu zeichnen; wenn ferner die letzten Ausläufer einer solchen Entwicklung glücklich noch hinabreichen bis in die Zeit des Werdens der uns erhaltenen Epen: so wird schliesslich das verfügbare Material für eine Schichtung des H. in jüngere und ältere Partien doch nicht ausreichen. Für diesen Zweck genügt nicht die eine oder andere willkürlich gewählte Erscheinung; vielmehr sind alle sprachlichen Erscheinungen heranzuziehen, die bei H. irgendwie eine Entwicklung erkennen lassen, gleichviel ob sie der Lautlehre, Formenlehre oder Syntax angehören. Mit anderen Worten: der Weg zu einer künftigen H.-Analyse führt über eine Sprachgeschichte des griechischen Epos, deren Verfasser sich zu der das Verständnis der epischen Literatursprache überhaupt eröffnenden Grundanschauung bekennen wird: dass die Sprache der Homerischen Gedichte ein Gebilde des epischen Verses ist . . . . 6

The Kunstsprache on display in the Homeric epics is the product of a long evolution; dialectal fossils embedded in it are not proof of the gradual development of any single poetic text. The entire vocabulary and syntax existed as a simultaneous order of forms drawn from the living languages of many times and places. It was metrical exigency that preserved, for example, such Aeolic characteristics as dative plural in -εσσυ,<sup>7</sup> genitive singular in -οιο,<sup>8</sup> patronymica in -τός,<sup>9</sup> apocope of prepositions,<sup>10</sup> infinitives in -μεναι and so forth.

After various aberrations in the nineteenth century, such as Fick's retranslation of both poems into Aeolic, we have slowly but surely come to see that the epic language was a Kunstsprache, with laws and a life of its own. It was never actually spoken by anyone at any time in the long history of the Greek language; it existed only for purposes of epic song. . . . It has . . . elements from several dialects, but in a mixture which is unhistorical because it is dictated above all by the needs of the verse. Within this mixture some elements can be distinguished as older . . . , and some as younger . . . . But the fatal fact about the epic Kunstsprache is that older and younger linguistic phenomena within it cannot be separated into clean strata; they are merged in an indissoluble unity in this immortal language which never, in the usual sense, lived.<sup>11</sup>

Witte saw that rhythmical suitability had also led to the selection and retention of formulae--word combinations especially apt for use at some specific position in the hexameter line. This too was the fruit of long development.

Such strands of argument, particularly Düntzer on ornamental epithet and Witte on formula and Kunstsprache,<sup>12</sup> were seized upon by Parry and interwoven with statistical evidence to produce a landmark of Homeric scholarship--his University of Paris Docteur-es-Lettres thesis, L'Épithète traditionnelle dans Homère: Essai sur un problème de style homérique (Paris, 1928).

This book, together with the supplementary thesis, Les Formules et la métrique d'Homère (Paris, 1928), is the cornerstone of his theory and a masterpiece of synchronic explication of the dynamics of an artificial language. Rote lists of repetitions in Homer had long been possible thanks to the lavish expenditure of energy

(and eyesight) on concordances and on the Parallel-Homer by Carl Schmidt.<sup>13</sup> Parry's unique contribution was the demonstration of economy (or thrift) and scope (or length) in the systems of repetition. His selection of noun-epithet constructions was well made to bring out these qualities. The many charts and tables in L'Épithète traditionnelle and elsewhere in the collected papers furnish validation of his description of the traditional poetic language:

What length and thrift of a system of formulas are can be best explained by describing one of the most striking cases in Homer, that of a system of noun-epithet formulas for gods and heroes, in the nominative. All the chief characters of the Iliad and the Odyssey, if their names can be fitted into the last half of the verse along with an epithet, have a noun-epithet formula in the nominative, beginning with a simple consonant, which fills the verse between the trochaic caesura of the third foot and the verse-end: for instance, πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς. It is the number of different formulas of this type, well above fifty, which makes the length of this system. But besides that there are in only a very few cases more than one such formula for a single character, though many of them are used very often, as πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς which is found 38 times, θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη 50 times, Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων 23 times. To be exact, in a list of 37 characters who have formulas of this type, which includes all those having any importance in the poems, there are only three names which have a second formula which could replace the first.<sup>14</sup>

Parry is unflinchingly forthright in stating the inevitable conclusion: "The character of this language reveals that it is a work beyond the powers of a single man, or even of a single generation of poets; consequently we know that we are in the presence of a stylistic element which is the product of a tradition and which every bard

of Homer's time must have used."<sup>15</sup>

This seemed to many to sound the death-knell for the sublimely inventive organizing poet whose genius had been so resolutely defended by the Unitarians. The notion of a "traditional book" had posed, in the work of Gilbert Murray, a serious threat to conventional ideas of organic composition. Now that Parry had brought the whole issue out of the haze of generalization down to the level of scientific clarity, the poet's voice seemed to be transmuted into the voice of Tradition, of untold numbers of dead poets who had cooperated in the fabrication of a wondrously efficient artificial language.

It was only after writing his French thèses that Parry became convinced that he was describing the characteristics of an oral style.<sup>16</sup> His article on enjambment in 1929 contains his first assertion of the likelihood of oral composition of the Homeric poems. The distinctively paratactic quality of versification, witnessed in the much lower incidence of necessary enjambment in Homer than in Apollonius Rhodius or Virgil, is attributed to the demands of improvisation:

Homer was ever pushed on to use unperiodic enjambment. Oral verse-making by its speed must be chiefly carried on in an adding style. The Singer has not time for the nice balances and contrasts of unhurried thought: he must order his words in such a way that they leave him much freedom to end the sentence or draw it out as the story and the needs of the verse demand.<sup>17</sup>

But it is not till the two Harvard Studies papers in

1930 and 1932 that the full implications of orality are explored.<sup>18</sup> Parry does not shrink from carrying the results of his empirical studies into the realm of literary evaluation. As we have seen, the high estimation of Homeric artistry in the Unitarian view was founded upon assertions of creativity and imaginative facility. Such a view was in direct contradiction to the testimony patiently assembled by Parry's tenacious probing of the Homeric style:

We should not seek in the Iliad and in the Odyssey for Homer's own style. The poet is thinking in terms of the formulas. Unlike the poets who wrote, he can put into verse only those ideas which are to be found in the phrases which are on his tongue, or at the most he will express ideas so like those of the traditional formulas that he himself would not know them apart. At no time is he seeking words for an idea which has never before found expression, so that the question of originality in style means nothing to him.<sup>19</sup>

Before turning to the second phase of Parry's achievement, I must emphasize the gravity of this infringement by oral theory on the field of literary criticism. In 1935, George M. Calhoun, an eminent Hellenist and Parry's onetime teacher at Berkeley,<sup>20</sup> published in Classical Philology a paper entitled "The Art of Formula in Homer--ΕΝΕΑ ΠΤΕΡΟΕΝΤΑ." In this he attempted to show that the expression "winged words" was used to connote a particular facet of the human spirit:

We observe . . . that the scenes in which the formula appears several times are evidently quite animated, and the characters in a state of heightened emotion. This at once suggests the possibility that we have been entirely wrong in taking the line to be



merely one among a number of indiscriminate formulas for speech, used by chance or the poet's whim. If the instances just considered be found to represent the general usage of the poems, our ideas with regard to the meaning of ἔπειτα πρὸς ἐντα will need to be fundamentally revised, and our impressions of certain characters and episodes correspondingly modified. . . .

It is an interesting, and, I may add, enjoyable, experience to go through the poems and note how uniformly this supposedly colorless tag is associated with emotional reactions or with tense situations, and how completely it covers the whole range of human feeling, from mild amusement and quiet satisfaction to hot anger or desperate fear.<sup>21</sup>

This of course flew in the face of all that Parry had so painstakingly tried to verify as the qualities of a traditional medium.<sup>22</sup> It was at the same time typical of the criticism practiced by the best Unitarians.<sup>23</sup>

Parry's reply, published posthumously in the same journal in 1937, struck a swift blow at the specific explication and, more important, at the interpretive presupposition underlying it. First, as regards motivation for use of the formula, Parry writes of Odyssey 5.172:

He has just given the name of Odysseus in the verse before, and could not do so again. It is the same in all the other ἔπειτα πρὸς ἐντα verses in the Iliad and the Odyssey: the hearer already has the speaker in mind as the natural subject of the sentence which introduces the speech, and there is no place for the second use of the name. Only in some five or six cases, where subordinate clauses with another subject have come between, might we again use the name without spoiling the style. Of course, if Homer had some other whole verse or verses without πρὸς ἐντα in them whereby he could say "and he said", there would be no purpose in pointing this out; but there is no other verse. If he wishes to express this idea in just the length of a verse, he is bound to use the words ἔπειτα πρὸς ἐντα. On the other hand, the phrase is never found in the same verse with the name of a character.<sup>24</sup>

This accords well with all that Parry had proved regarding

economy and scope; it rings true with the very voice of simplicity. But Parry was fully awake, as he had been all along, to the larger consequences of such small victories:

The issue at stake here is one which probably stands beyond such minute arguing. It seems to me to be the whole issue of whether we should read Homer as we read written poetry, which is for us the natural form of poetry, or whether we should not rather try to gain for our reading the sense of style which is proper to oral song.<sup>25</sup>

Conventional literary criticism, as it had been resuscitated by the Unitarians, would have to cope in some way with just this question.

Parry's directions for the acquisition of an appropriate "sense of style" bring us to the second phase of his remarkably full, if all too brief, career.

Comparative literature had been a vital branch of modern Homeric scholarship ever since its inception in the eighteenth century. Professor Jebb provides a convenient survey of various non-classical poetries which had, at one time or another by 1887, been laid under contribution to analogical speculation.<sup>26</sup> A little later, Andrew Lang showed himself a sagacious and cautious exponent of analogy, finding enlightening parallels between the Iliad and the Chanson de Roland.<sup>27</sup> W. P. Ker in Epic and Romance (London, 1897) and H. M. Chadwick in his Heroic Age (Cambridge, 1912) wrote different but complementary studies which gave students of epic a far more detailed picture of the premises, social and intel-

lectual, of the genre which C. M. Bowra would call "heroic poetry." Indeed, as early as his Tradition and Design in the Iliad (Oxford, 1930), Bowra had fruitfully employed analogy with other "primitive" epics to illuminate the artistry of Homer. And, in 1932, the first volume of the Chadwicks' compendious Growth of Literature (Cambridge) began an unprecedented synoptic survey of the world's repository of primitive poetry.

With the publication of Parry's second Harvard Studies article, the case for oral composition had been impressively consolidated on the internal linguistic and stylistic evidence of the Homeric epics. At this juncture, Parry recognized that he must test his structure of theory against the record of a living oral poetry. Only in this way could the all-important question of valid interpretation be properly answered.<sup>28</sup> His choice of Yugoslav epic was prompted by the work of Mathias Murko of the University of Prague; he had attended Parry's doctoral defense, probably at the invitation of Antoine Meillet.<sup>29</sup>

In 1933 and again in 1934-35, Parry made extensive field studies in Yugoslavia,<sup>30</sup> overcoming very considerable linguistic and managerial barriers.

There were no rules laid down for Parry's investigation. He had to learn the language, which meant getting to know a good deal of dialect; to choose his assistants; and to evolve the best methods of approaching singers and prevailing on them to sing. The recording equipment, involving aluminium discs, he had built by a firm in Waterbury, Conn., and for

power he depended on the battery of his Ford V-8 (1934), which he brought over to Yugoslavia with him. Banditry was not uncommon in the inland valleys, and an air of risk and adventure always accompanied Parry's several trips into the interior.<sup>31</sup>

The results of his efforts, just in terms of quantity, are imposing: some 13,000 Serbocroatian texts, including some 3,500 phonograph discs.<sup>32</sup>

As an example of the stunning corroborating evidence Parry found for his purely clinical stylistic analyses, we may take his paper on "Whole Formulaic Verses in Greek and Southslavic Heroic Song," written shortly after his first trip to Yugoslavia.<sup>33</sup> In this, he applies, for the first time in the comparative study of epic, a scientific method of measurement and calculation to the clarification of general notions of similarity between Homer and a palpably oral poetry.

When one hears the Southern Slavs sing their tales he has the overwhelming feeling that, in some way, he is hearing Homer. . . . When the hearer looks closely to see why he should seem to be hearing Homer he finds precise reasons: he is ever hearing the same ideas that Homer expresses, and is hearing them expressed in phrases which are rhythmically the same, and which are grouped in the same order. . . . In both the poetries we find the same idea being stated in just the length of a verse, or in the part of the verse which stretches just from one of the rhythmic breaks to one of the verse ends.<sup>34</sup>

No mere impressionism then, but rather substantiation by analogy of a deduction made four years earlier in the paper on enjambment. There for the first time Parry had accounted for the existence of a specific stylistic trait, isolated by statistical study, by the contention

of oral provenance (see above, p. 76). Now he could support that contention with the authority of actual observation of the practices of a living oral poetry:

The diction of Southslavic heroic poetry we know to be oral and traditional. The diction of Greek heroic poetry, which has those features which in the Southslavic poetry are due to that traditional and oral nature, such as the feature of the whole formulaic verses which we have looked at in these pages, must therefore also be oral and traditional.<sup>35</sup>

The potentials of this kind of comparative study are immense. In the tragically abbreviated remainder of Parry's life, he indicated in tantalizingly brief pieces--a review of Walter Arend's Typischen Scenen bei Homer, an abstract of a proposed TAPA article, and some pages of a projected book<sup>36</sup>--some of the directions his investigation would have gone. We can be sure that elucidation of Homeric artistry would have been his ultimate goal in his comparative work.<sup>37</sup>

While Parry's Collected Papers run to 464 pages in the Oxford omnibus volume, they do not provide any extended statements of the philosophical bases of his thought. They are in large proportion given over to demonstration, to the compilation of evidence and the framing of airtight argumentation on the basis of that evidence. But an address delivered before the Board of Overseers of Harvard College, together with some extracts from his unpublished Ćor Huso: A Study of Southslavic Song, makes it clear that his work was entirely a product of an unwavering intellectual allegiance to science and

the historical method. "The Historical Method in Literary Criticism" reverts to the statement of Ernest Renan which had been the epigraph to L'Épithète traditionnelle:

How can we seize the physiognomy and the originality of early literatures if we do not enter into the moral and intimate life of a people, if we do not place ourselves at the very point in humanity which it occupied, in order to see and to feel with it, if we do not watch it live, or rather if we do not live for a while with it?<sup>38</sup>

Milman Parry's commitment to right understanding of Homeric poetry is predicated on historical perspective. His attack on Calhoun's construction of the "winged words" formula is a direct result of that predication. First through the deductive method of his stylistic inquiries, their scientific rigor and thoroughgoing statistics, and second through the unprecedented precision of his comparative forays, he insisted on the attainment of a goal which had eluded scholars since Wolf--the recapture of the true mode of existence of the Iliad and the Odyssey. Wolf had postulated the oral genesis of Homeric poetry. Nearly a century and a half later, Parry was bringing home with implacable force the full implications of oral provenance. He required in particular that certain aesthetic criteria be ruled inapplicable and that critics begin to address themselves to explication of an art which was toto caelo different from that for which their interpretive apparatus had been developed. That such a radical alteration was indispensable, he seemed to prove by removing a

hitherto impenetrable barrier of time; the careful examination of a modern equivalent for an irreclaimably lost ancient situation yielded results which 200 years of historical reconstructionism had sought in vain. The responsibilities of literary criticism were dramatically increased. Terms such as "originality," "creativity," "unity," "structure," must either be very carefully recast and redefined or altogether excised from the vocabulary of a critical instrument designed to interpret and judge oral poetry.

And so, another great upheaval.

## Notes (Chapter IV):

Epigraphs: M. Parry, "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making. I. Homer and Homeric Style," HSCP, 41 (1930), 77 = MHV, p. 269; H. Levin, "Portrait of a Homeric Scholar," CJ, 32 (1937), 262.

<sup>1</sup> See sound discussion of Parry's early work in M. P. Nilsson, Homer and Mycenae, pp. 179-83, and in the review of the two theses by Pierre Chantraine in RPh, 3 (1929), 294-300:

"Il est depuis longtemps acquis que la langue épique est tout entière déterminée par la contrainte de l'hexamètre dactylique. Ce caractère a été mis en évidence par les articles de K. Witte et de M. Meillet, par le livre de M. K. Meister, die homerische Kunstsprache. Mais la métrique n'a pas seulement régi la structure linguistique des poèmes, elle en a commandé aussi la forme littéraire. Elle a conduit à la constitution d'un style traditionnelle. Le grand mérite de M. M. Parry est d'avoir donné de ce fait une démonstration définitive, à la suite d'une enquête méthodique à laquelle les statistiques donnent un fondement inébranlable." (p. 294.)

Devoted to Parry's Yugoslav phase is Albert Lord's "Homer, Parry, and Huxo," AJA, 52 (1948), 34-44 = MHV, pp. 465-78. Adam Parry's introduction to MHV (pp. ix-lxii) is a masterly summary of his father's work and its impact on Homeric scholarship. For sensitive and tough-minded criticism of MHV by two of the foremost recent oral theoreticians, see Joseph Russo's review-article "The Meaning of Oral Poetry. The Collected Papers of Milman Parry: A Critical Re-assessment," QUCC, 12 (1971), 27-39, and William Whallon's review in CL, 24 (1972), 359-62.

Less tough-minded, indeed often soft-headed, is a publication of the Center for the Study of Oral Literature at Harvard: David E. Bynum, "Four Generations of Oral Literary Studies at Harvard University," 37 pp. (Cambridge, Mass., 1974; preprint from the Harvard Library Bulletin, 22 [1974]). Sections on Francis James Child, George Lyman Kittredge, and Milman Parry are followed by a self-adulatory report on "The Present Generation" in which, among other pieces of good news, is conveyed the important information that

"the professional cinema and television script-writer who recently wanted to attend a popular Harvard course on oral narrative is only one of many people who have realized that as the visual effects and spoken words of electronic media increasingly displace printed matter in everyday cultural communication, there is much of practical utility to be learned from a previous age when all cultural expression was necessarily oral."



Apart from four excellent portrait plates (pp. 8, 11, 19, & 27) there is little to recommend the article for the wider extramural circulation the Center for the Study of Oral Literature has given it.

<sup>2</sup> See L'Épithète traditionnelle, pp. 5-6 = MHV, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> H. Düntzer, Homerische Abhandlungen (Leipzig, 1872); J.-E. Ellendt, Ueber den Einfluss des Metrums auf Wortbildung und Wortverbindung (Königsberg, 1861), Drei homerische Abhandlungen (Leipzig, 1864); G. Hinrichs, De Homericæ elocutionis vestigiis Aeolicis (Berlin, 1875). MHV, p. 5, note 2 refers also to works by P. Thouvenin, F. Sommer, E. Drerup, and V. Bérard.

<sup>4</sup> K. Witte, Singular und Plural: Forschungen über Form und Geschichte der griechischen Poesie (Leipzig, 1907); an important series of twelve articles was printed under the general heading "Zur homerischen Sprache" in Glotta, 1 (1909), 132-45; 2 (1910), 8-22; and 3 (1912), 105-53, 388-93. See, in addition, "Homerische Sprach- und Versgeschichte. Die Entstehung der ionischen Langzeile," Glotta, 4 (1913), 1-21; "Die Vokalkontraktion bei Homer," Glotta, 4 (1913), 209-42; "Zur homerischen Sprach- und Verstechnik," IF, 32 (1913), 148-50; "Wort- und Versrhythmus bei Homer," RhM, 68 (1913), 217-38; "Über die Kasusausgänge -olo und -ou, -olo und -olc, -not und -nc im griechischen Epos," Glotta, 5 (1914), 8-47; "Zur Frage der Kolismen bei Homer: Der Dative des Plurals der dritten Deklination," Glotta, 5 (1914), 48-56; "Homeros: B) Sprache," in RE, 8 (1913), 2213-47.

<sup>5</sup> Die homerische Kunstsprache (Leipzig, 1921).

<sup>6</sup> K. Witte, "Homeros: B) Sprache," in RE, 8 (1913), 2239; see also MHV, pp. 7-8.

<sup>7</sup> See Witte above, note 134.

<sup>8</sup> See Witte above, note 134, and in RE, 8: 2219-20, 2233.

<sup>9</sup> See Nilsson, Homer and Mycenae, p. 164.

<sup>10</sup> See Nilsson, p. 165.

<sup>11</sup> Gerald F. Else, "Homer and the Homeric Problem," UCCS (Semple Lectures), 1 (1967), 331. Cf. Nilsson,

p. 173:

"The epic technique was learnt and inherited by the minstrels with all its paraphernalia, and they drew on the amassed store of centuries in composing their songs. In this way the old elements were incorporated indissolubly even into the most recent songs. In regard to language the same comparison is appropriate which was used in regard to archaeological elements. The Homeric poems are not to be compared with a site of excavation in which more recent strata, characterized by more recent objects, are distinguished from earlier strata, characterized by earlier objects, but they are to be compared with a dough which has been rehandled and kneaded constantly, not without adding new elements. The oldest elements may in this way have been incorporated into the latest songs. This is the more true in regard to language, because the epic technique formed a peculiar language which the minstrels used constantly."

<sup>12</sup> H. Düntzer, Homerische Abhandlungen (Leipzig, 1872), pp. 507-16--see MHV, pp. 124-26; K. Witte, "Zur Entstehung homerischer Formeln," Glotta, 1 (1909), 140-45, "Zur Flexion homerischer Formeln," "Der Einfluss des Verses auf die Bildung von Komposita," Glotta, 3 (1912), 110-17, 120-29.

<sup>13</sup> C. E. Schmidt, Parallel-Homer oder Index aller homerischen Iterati in lexikalischer Anordnung (Göttingen, 1885); Benedetto Marzullo has recently revised and enlarged G. L. Prendergast, A Complete Concordance to the Iliad of Homer (London, 1875; new ed. Darmstadt, 1962) and H. Dunbar, A Complete Concordance to the Odyssey and Hymns of Homer to which is Added a Concordance to the Parallel Passages in the Iliad, Odyssey, and Hymns (Oxford, 1880; new ed. Hildesheim, 1962). Dunbar's preface contains this plea for indulgence:

"Whatever omissions or misplaced accents, breathings, or iotas subscript may be met with, the author trusts that his excuse for such errors may be accepted by an indulgent public, when he states that the writing of one thousand five hundred and sixty pages, or about sixty-two thousand four hundred lines of closely-written Greek MS. has somewhat weakened and impaired his eyesight" (p. iv).

MHV, pp. 26-27, note 1 refers also to A. Gehring, Index Homericus (Leipzig, 1891), and H. Ebeling, Lexicon Homericum, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1885-88).

<sup>14</sup> MHV, pp. 276-77.      <sup>15</sup> MHV, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> See MHV, pp. xxx-xxxi.

17 "The Distinctive Character of Enjambement in Homeric Verse," TAPA, 60 (1929), 215 = MHV, p. 262.

18 See MHV, p. 317. 19 MHV, p. 324.

20 See MHV, pp. xxii-xxiii.

21 CP, 30 (1935), 217, 223.

22 Ibid., p. 216, note 1 takes issue with statements in two of Parry's articles.

23 No less a Unitarian than J. T. Sheppard was at this time producing very similar interpretations of stock epithets, finding subtle literary intentions in their selection and deployment; see "Zeus-Loved Achilles: A Contribution to the Study of Stock Epithets in Homer's Iliad," JHS, 55 (1935), 113-23, and "Great-Hearted Odysseus: A Contribution to the Study of Stock Epithets in Homer's Odyssey," JHS, 56 (1936), 36-47. Similar analysis of some epithets in Iliad 1 in Sheppard's Pattern of the Iliad is pointed to by Parry in L'Épithète traditionnelle as an example of the misinterpretation which could have been avoided by a familiarity with the work of Düntzer; see MHV, pp. 125-26.

24 "About Winged Words," CP, 32 (1937), 59 = MHV, pp. 414-15.

25 Ibid., pp. 62-63 = MHV, p. 418.

26 Homer: An Introduction, pp. 131-36.

27 Homer and the Epic, pp. 404-12.

28 See, e.g., the foreword to Ćor Rušo: A Study of Southslavic Song = MHV, pp. 439-41.

29 Loc. cit., and pp. xxiii-xxiv.

30 See MHV, pp. xxxiv-xli. 31 MHV, p. xxxvi.

32 MHV, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.

33 TAPA, 64 (1933), 179-97 = MHV, pp. 376-90.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 182 = MHV, p. 378. Cf. H. Levin, "Portrait of a Homeric Scholar," CJ, 32 (1937), 265:

"The moment he cherished most occurred toward the end of one of his earliest days in the Serbian hills, during the summer of 1933. They had settled at an inland village and at length come across a gouslar, the first epic poet Parry had ever known, an old man who claimed to have been a warrior in youth and to have cut off six heads. All afternoon he sang to them about his battles. At sunset he put down his gousle and they made him repeat a number of his verses. Parry, very tired, sat munching an apple and watching the singer's grizzled head and dirty neck bob up and down over the shoulder of Nikola, the Herzegovinan scribe, in a last ray of sunlight. 'I suppose,' he would say, in recalling the incident, with crisp voice and half-closed eyes, 'that was the closest I ever got to Homer.'"

<sup>35</sup> TAPA, 64 (1933), 195 = MHV, p. 389; cf. Cor Huso in MHV, p. 440.

<sup>36</sup> MHV, pp. 404-7, 420, 469-73.

<sup>37</sup> See MHV, p. xli.

<sup>38</sup> "The Historical Method in Literary Criticism," Harvard Alumni Bulletin, 38 (1936), 778 = MHV, p. 409.

## CHAPTER V

### AFTERMATH: APPRAISING OPTIONS

Parry's exposition must be followed with extreme attention. Even so, it will probably not prove completely intelligible to any but the professional scholar. His work--only a few pamphlets in all--will not be read, like that of Scott, by the general student of literature. But whether or not it is read at all, its truth abides almost as surely as Euclid's demonstrations abide whether or not anyone chooses to retrace their close-knit reasoning.

Rhys Carpenter 1946

The most important assault made on Homer's creativeness in recent years is the work of Milman Parry, who may be called the Darwin of Homeric studies. As Darwin seemed to many to have removed the finger of God from the creation of the world and of man, so Milman Parry has seemed to some to remove the creative poet from the Iliad and Odyssey.

H. T. Wade-Gery 1952

In the years since Milman Parry, and especially in the last twenty-five years, the theory of oral composition has been a central preoccupation of Homeric scholarship in the English-speaking world. The purpose of this chapter will be to record the advances which have been made by proponents of the theory and the impingement it has had upon the consciences of literary critics and, more generally, upon the minds of all interested

readers of Homer. It is a record of careful consolidation and salutary revision as well as of counter-argument and (sometimes vehement) rejection. Parry, like Wolf before him, has sharpened the issues of a conflict that revolves around the genesis and nature of the first and most revered poetic documents in European literature. To some he has seemed to diminish the achievement of a great poet or, at any rate, to exclude from it many of the qualities we have long been used to think prerequisite for literary excellence. Assimilation of oral theory into practical criticism has been a goal for some, a threat to others.

This is not to say that the concerns of Higher Criticism as it was before Parry have altogether disappeared from the scene. Paul Mazon in his Introduction à l'Illiade (Paris, 1948) offers a version of the "kernel" and speculates on authorship of segments which were added subsequently. In England and America, old fashioned Analysis is now almost unheard of--with one notable exception. Denys Page, a scholar with a strong grasp of every facet of Homeric scholarship--archaeology, history, linguistics, oral theory, textual and literary criticism--has produced two very forcefully argued attacks on unity. The Homeric Odyssey (Oxford, 1955) affirms not only multiplicity of authorship, but also absolute ignorance of the Iliad on the part of the Odyssey-poet(s)! This on the basis of telling variations in traditional

vocabulary:

The evidence strongly suggests not only that these two poems were largely created by persons possessed of two divergent stocks of phrases, but also that they were transmitted to posterity by persons whose own language developed differently or at different paces, or who differed at least in respect of what was deemed admissible in Epic verse. The Odyssey has so much that the Iliad must have used if it was known; the Iliad has so much that the Odyssey must have used if it was known. The differences cannot be explained in terms of the priority in time of the one poem over the other: they point clearly enough to the conclusion that the two poems were composed and transmitted in separate regions of Hellas.<sup>1</sup>

This, like all Analytical arguments, is subject to debate, and a German scholar, A. Heubeck, has shown in his Odyssee-Dichter und die Ilias (Erlangen, 1954) that the Odyssey-poet used the Iliad as a model for the development of such narrative tactics as "paradeigma style," "double-threaded transition," "overlapping arrangement." Page's appendix on "Multiple Authorship in the Iliad" in his volume of Sather Lectures, History and the Homeric Iliad (Berkeley, 1959), is much more persuasive, if somewhat over-confident: "We have here [the Embassy to Achilles], in the very heart and soul of the poem, in one of the great masterpieces of all Greek literature, irrefutable proof of multiple authorship." Page is distressingly convincing in restating the old Analytical case "--a case never yet refuted, fatal to certain fashionable theories of the present about the making of the Iliad."<sup>2</sup> And yet, even in the very heartland of Analysis, Wolfgang Schadewaldt, Karl Reinhardt, and most

recently F. Eichhorn have written detailed briefs for unity on the basis of subtle and intricate use of cross-references, foreshadowing, and other structurally cohesive narrative devices.<sup>3</sup>

Professor Schadewaldt has also contributed to the institution of a popular Unitarian endeavor, the "Geometric Analogy." As scholars (Wilamowitz among them) began to reach consensus on an eighth-century floruit for Homer, the monumental amphorae and kraters from the Kerameikos cemetery at Athens acquired a new significance as creations contemporaneous with the Homeric epics. In 1923, A. Stählin wrote an important article for Philologus seeking to demonstrate a Zeitgeist presiding--ut pictura poesis--over compositions in both media.<sup>4</sup> In 1932, John Linton Myres wrote the first of four papers which were to carry the analogy to the brink of obsession.<sup>5</sup> In the 1940's, Schadewaldt's use of the analogy as a dating criterion<sup>6</sup> lent it considerable authority and, in the precise studies of W. A. A. van Otterlo, found corroboration in independently conducted investigations of the small-scale articulation of the narrative.<sup>7</sup> Such pervasive devices as ring composition were valuable evidence of affinity with the urge for geometric symmetry so blatantly indulged on the great funeral vases. Professor Cedric Whitman's book, Homer and the Heroic Tradition (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), is perhaps the most fruitful, certainly the most thorough, effort to interrelate archaeology and



poetry within a literary critical context. Symmetry implies a coördinating mind and the Geometric Analogy has served the Unitarians well. Still, it is a weapon that is liable to wound the hand that wields it too enthusiastically.<sup>8</sup>

It would be a gross misrepresentation to name Schadewaldt, Reinhardt, Heubeck, and Eichhorn without emphasizing that the old Analytical sect, so predominantly German for so many years, was not defunct but simply reformed.<sup>9</sup> The new creed is called neo-analysis and it is already incipient in Wilamowitz's Ilias und Homer (Berlin, 1916) where Homer is placed somewhere midway in an evolution from various pre-Homeric materials through to interpolations large and small of a (more or less) recognizably late date. The neo-analysts, like their nineteenth-century progenitors, look for discrepancies and "seams" but with the intention of reconstituting a Vorgeschichte--a prehistory filled with poems which were subsequently modified and absorbed into the Iliad and the Odyssey.<sup>10</sup> This resurrecting of Homer's creditors is an activity common outside German-speaking scholarship as well.<sup>11</sup> It somewhat resembles the habitual reclamation of Greek New Comedies from their interment in Plautine or Terentian "contaminations." "Studies of classical literature may be divided into two classes: studies of literary works that exist and studies of literary works that are nonexistent."<sup>12</sup> Given the

admittedly irrecoverable nature of the pre-Homeric source material, neoanalysis often seems as pointless as it is over-confident.<sup>13</sup> Still, as an attempt to repopulate the presbyterion of Tradition, it is in keeping with the oral theorists' insistence on the primacy of convention in orally composed poems. Though there is no extant text to prove the direct reliance of Homer on a Meleagergedicht or some other prototype, intrinsic stylistic analysis and extrinsic comparative studies lead to the same unavoidable conclusion. Let us confront it now in the work of Parry's continuators: Albert Lord, James Notopoulos, and, in a more general way, C. M. Bowra.

Parry himself did not live long enough after making his monumental collection to think out his theory in detail, let alone to develop it and present it to the learned world in completeness. Working from the clues that he left, I have tried to build an edifice of which he might approve.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, for example, Parry's abstract, "Homer and Huso: I. The Singer's Rests in Greek and Southslavic Heroic Songs," in TAPA, 66 (1935), xlvii is fleshed out in Lord's paper of the same title in TAPA, 67 (1936), 106-13. The parallels between Yugoslav and Homeric verse-making, touched upon intermittently in Parry's unpublished Cor Huso,<sup>15</sup> are fully expounded in Lord's papers and especially in his Singer of Tales (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), volume 24 in the Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature series. The very title of the book (earlier dissertation: Harvard 1949)

indicates Professor Lord's intention to pay homage to his dead master through fulfillment of his legacy.

The Singer of Tales provides a fascinating report from "the living laboratory of Yugoslav epic." The bulk of discussion centers on the apprenticeship and maturation of the singer--the various stages in his progress toward graduation to professional (actually semi-professional) status. The compositional devices of formula and theme are treated and the crucial identity of performance and composition is brought home. Lord particularly emphasizes the fluidity of tradition, the complete absence of textual fixity, and the innocence of the unlettered guslar of such concepts as "syllable," "line," or even "word." The variable factor of audience stability and its effects on a song are explained; we are given insights into the evaluative criteria of a critical audience--the importance of, for example, the singer's facility in "ornamentation," in elaboration of a given "multiform." In chapters on Homer and various medieval poems of possible oral origin, Lord draws conclusions about correct appreciation.<sup>16</sup>

Harry Levin has observed that "the Parry-Lord theory, like the epic itself, is the product of an imaginative collaboration."<sup>17</sup> Professor Lord's own discrete contributions to oral theory focus on two subjects: thematic composition, and the oral dictated text.<sup>18</sup>

Themes had been studied under the rubric of "typical

scenes" by Walter Arend; they include such often-repeated actions as arming, eating, sailing, oath-taking, etc.

Parry, in his review of Die typischen Scenen bei Homer (Berlin, 1933), had qualified his praise of Arend's work ("his not finding falsely subtle meanings in the repetitions") by suggesting that the typical scenes might better be accounted for by reference to a rich oral tradition which provided the singer with the means to improvise such scenes around core elements attended by greater or lesser adornment, as the poet deemed suitable.<sup>19</sup>

Lord was to show that just as the line-by-line progression of the narrative was dependent on the instinctive placement of interacting formulae, so too the scene-by-scene progression could be understood to depend on placement and interaction of themes and, on a more expansive scale, complexes of themes.<sup>20</sup> A kind of gravitational pull induced a consistently reiterated disposition of the stuff of tradition:

These complexes are held together internally both by the logic of the narrative and by the consequent force of habitual association. Logic and habit are strong forces, particularly when fortified by a balancing of elements in recognizable patterns. . . . The habit is hidden, but felt. It arises from the depths of the tradition through the workings of the traditional processes to inevitable expression. . . . In our investigation of composition by theme this hidden tension of essences must be taken into consideration. We are apparently dealing here with a strong force that keeps certain themes together. It is deeply embedded in the tradition; the singer probably imbibes it intuitively at a very early stage of his career. It pervades his material and the tradition.<sup>21</sup>

Parry's work on stylistics had aimed at proving the all-pervasiveness of formulae in Homer--something that had been asserted by his mentor Antoine Meillet.<sup>22</sup> Van Gennep had found a parallel for this extensive formulaicity in Serbian epic,<sup>23</sup> and Parry's own work in Yugoslavia seemed to confirm it. Now Lord was arguing, also on the analogy with Serbocroatian poetry, that larger verbal aggregates exhibited the same relative fixity and that the entire song could be thought of as a sequence of "multiforms"--more or less elaborated<sup>24</sup>--each summoning to mind other themes or complexes. From the capacious reservoir of the singer's memory, the verbal matter of tradition, from formulaic combines to large thematic clusters, issued forth in verses and songs whose shape was determined by a kind of genetic imprint. Thus, further inroads were being made on the already diminished circuit of individual genius and the tradition was being credited with organizational accomplishments on all levels. The resources of the tradition, functioning within the context of variable audience stability, gave the song its shape.

But what of its size? Could a parallel to the Homeric Grossepos be found in the Yugoslav "laboratory"? What circumstances are conducive to the production and preservation of such a poem? For Lord and others who had worked at the recording of oral poems, the answer was close at hand.

In a deliberate effort to induce the performance of a poem of the approximate length of a Homeric epic, Parry engaged Avdo Mededović--perhaps the most skilled singer of tales he encountered--to sing the longest and finest song he possibly could. The results were two weeks of singing (at four hours per day) with a week's intermission for voice recuperation, and a poem, "The Wedding of Smailagić Meho," of some 12,000 lines. The quality of this poem has been variously estimated; its sheer length shows that the size of the Homeric epics is not beyond the ability of an unlettered singer.<sup>25</sup> And so the theoretical supposition of oral composition of the Iliad and the Odyssey is given added credibility. In 1953, Lord formulated the logically contingent consequences of the analogy: the Homeric poems are in fact oral dictated texts. An eighth-century Milman Parry had taken advantage of the newly domesticated Phoenician alphabet to transcribe the work of a consummate genius. The great length of the epics and their qualitative superiority as well are due to the optimum conditions of performance, chiefly an eager and encouraging audience:

The chief advantage to the singer of this manner of composition is that it affords him time to think of his lines and of his song. His small audience is stable. This is an opportunity for the singer to show his best, not as a performer, but as a storyteller and poet. He can ornament his song as fully as he wishes and is capable; he can develop his tale with completeness, he can dwell lovingly on passages which in normal performance he would often be forced to shorten because of the pressure of time or because of the restlessness of the audi-

ence. The very length of the Homeric poems is the best proof that they are products of the moment of dictation rather than that of singing. The leisureliness of their tempo, the fullness of their telling, are also indications of this method.<sup>26</sup>

This theory rehabilitated the notion of ipsissima verba. Though the tradition was fluid and any one song was never exactly repeated, we need no longer resign ourselves to the idea of mutation and pollution of the Iliad or the Odyssey during a period of oral transmission down to the last half of the sixth century. By Lord's theory, the rhapsodes could have had access to an authentic transcription obtained in the eighth century just as Avdo's had been in 1935. In addition, the sharp stylistic distinction between poems of unlettered singers and literary productions--perhaps the most essential element in the Yugoslav analogy--was not jeopardized by the need for postulating a literate or semi-literate poet in order to adequately account for the organizational and artistic skill manifest in the Iliad and the Odyssey. The singer's mind was orderly and he was limited in his artistic range only by the circumstances of recitation, not by his illiteracy.

Sir Maurice Bowra prided himself on being "one of the first Englishmen to grasp the importance of Parry's work."<sup>27</sup> Still, it is evident, on reading through Bowra's work on Homer over a span of some thirty years, that he only gradually came to understand and accept the full import of Parry's contributions. They are not cited in

Tradition and Design in the Iliad (Oxford, 1930) or From Virgil to Milton (London, 1945), though the latter clearly shows signs of familiarity with Parry's work on epithet and formula. Bowra's paper on "The Comparative Study of Homer"<sup>28</sup> and (intermittently) his Heroic Poetry (London, 1952) contain significant notices of Parry, but the author none the less insists on a semi-literate poet at the least. It is only in the Andrew Lang Lecture for 1955, Homer and His Forerunners (Edinburgh), that he subscribes wholeheartedly to a poet whose work is thoroughly oral, and follows Lord (without referring to him) in positing an eighth-century dictated text.<sup>29</sup>

But Bowra's most enduring achievement is likely to be his sagacious discrimination of generic differences within the large category of epic poetry. Here his sensitivity to style, his omnivorous knowledge of world literature, and his exhaustive descriptions of the qualities and contents of "heroic poetry" are most remarkable. Heroic Poetry combines the merits of a compendium (à la Chadwick) with those of astute aesthetic interpretation (as in Tradition and Design twenty-two years earlier). But the bare bones of Bowra's theoretical premises are best displayed in the first chapter of his From Virgil to Milton--a useful and concise summary of the distinctive attributes of the two species of epic poetry. Though similar ground was effectively covered in C. S. Lewis's Preface to Paradise Lost (Oxford,



1942), Bowra improves on Lewis by demanding and suggesting less misleading technical terminology; that is, "oral" and "written" rather than "primary" and "secondary" or (worse) "authentic" and "artificial."<sup>30</sup> We have to do with differences of kind, not with gradations of sophistication or craftsmanship within a single homogeneous genre:

The distinction is of origins and character, not of quality and worth. Indeed when a class of poetry falls into two kinds in this way, each will have its champions, and it is impossible to decide between them or to say that the one is right and the other wrong. For each kind has grown in its own way and provides its own special delight.<sup>31</sup>

Bowra has gone far toward enforcing a sane, unprejudiced view of a body of poetry that is sui generis and not to be subjected to the application of inappropriate critical dogma.

But both Bowra and Lewis, while they have succeeded in alerting the student of epic to this generic diversity, have also, quite unintentionally, fostered the false impression that the work of aesthetic revaluation is done. Both men have in fact provided only the indispensable prolegomena, neither has confronted the issue of reformation of critical procedure, of a methodology which would be free from the misconceptions inherent in a literary bias. When it comes to evaluation, they have not, in spite of their familiarity with oral theory, gone much beyond Arnoldian terminology.

James Notopoulos, in the years 1938-64, made

important corroborating contributions to oral theory.<sup>32</sup> His particular interest was in modern Greek and Cretan oral poetry; his results tend to support and supplement those of Lord. But, in addition to refining the terms of the analogy, he has insisted on the framing of a new canon of judicial criticism based on a full recognition of the generic traits of oral poetry: the conventional, Aristotelian approach to Homer has been rendered anachronistic by experimentation in the living laboratory.<sup>33</sup>

Before discussing the "hard Parryist" position of Notopoulos, it will be useful to offer a brief seismographic report on the tremors which shook the literary critical establishment in the twenty-five years immediately after Parry.

In 1938, Samuel Bassett, in his Poetry of Homer (Berkeley; undelivered Sather Lectures, published posthumously), attacked Parry for

reviving the nineteenth-century hypothesis that Homer was not, at least in ideas and diction, a great creative poet, but rather the last of a long series of ever-inferior bards. In fact, Parry's hypothesis is a restatement of Herder's theory of Homer the Volksdichter. Parry found external evidence for his theory in the methods of composition used by the South-Slavic guslars. This is not direct evidence, but analogy, which is convincing in proportion to the importance of the elements present in the two objects of comparison. South-Slavic folk poetry lacks the most important element: it produced no Homer. History has provided us with another analogy. It has shown us that every work of poetic art comparable in greatness to the Iliad and Odyssey bears the stamp of a single great creative mind. The analogy of Homer to the great historic poets is greater. Since we cannot know,

we choose the greater parallel. All the great creators of literature are alike in one respect: they take the old and make of it the new, in ideas and language, in incidents, characters, and action; and they add and invent out of their imagination. We must believe that Homer was no exception.<sup>34</sup>

This anticipates eloquently the most potent arguments of those who have seen Parry's writings as a serious threat to Homer as artist. In fact, The Poetry of Homer is an extended defense of Homeric originality by explication de texte; it is the first in a long line of polemics which would seek to retain for Homer the inventiveness which was so sacrosanct a quality in the evaluative vocabulary of traditional literary criticism.<sup>35</sup>

Many critics simply would not relinquish the notion of a literate composer; the idea of unlettered composition carried pejorative connotations. W. C. Greene, in his 1951 article, "The Spoken and the Written Word,"<sup>36</sup> finds subtle poetic intention in the verbal usages of Homer and marks of literate verse-making in the large-scale pattern of his poems--their "supreme organization." This last had always been a favorite Unitarian emphasis, and now, when the individual poet seemed threatened with submersion in the tradition, grand design was again the focus of attention. A corollary of the argument from divine architecture was the indispensability of writing. In the years immediately before Lord's paper on "Oral Dictated Texts," Greene theorized that Homer must have had recourse at the least to written aids

(notes, etc.) and Bowra speculated that an oral bard in the eighth century had utilized writing to good advantage in composing poetry which transcended the limitations of improvisation:

Behind him lie centuries of oral performance, largely improvised, with all its wealth of formulae adapted to an exacting metre; these he knows and uses fully. But if he also knows writing and is able to commit his poems to it, he is enabled to give a far greater precision and care to what he says than any improvising poet ever can. Since it is almost impossible to believe that the Iliad and Odyssey were ever improvised, and the richness of their poetry suggests some reliance on writing, we may see in them examples of what happens when writing comes to help the oral bard.<sup>37</sup>

In 1952, H. T. Wade-Gery, in The Poet of the Iliad (Cambridge), assembled the evidence for the introduction of writing in Greece and proposed, against Milman Parry "the Darwin of Homeric Studies," that the Iliad was a great poem because its author had employed a "new device" which had been invented expressly for the notation of Greek verse:

Most scholars will now agree that Greek literacy, and the Iliad, are of about the same date, and I have conjectured that the Iliad is what it is because of the impact upon an oral technique of a brand-new literacy invented by the Greeks themselves. . . .

The formulas are (as Parry says) devices for oral verse-making in a very exacting sort of verse. Homer's achievement was, I believe, to reduce this oral technique to writing. . . .

The Iliad . . . , for its scale and its organic structure, demanded this new device.<sup>38</sup>

The alphabet had implemented the poet's ambition "to make a poem which was beyond the limits of oral composition."<sup>39</sup> Wade-Gery only just allowed for the

possibility of oral recitation and immediate transcription.<sup>40</sup> It was, as we have seen, left to Lord to provide corroboration from the living laboratory.

Lord's work thus averted a serious objection to oral theory; Bowra's Homer and His Forerunners underwrites an oral dictated Homer. The new doctrine was winning converts rapidly and zealots were pressing home the message it held for Unitarian "naïve" criticism.

A pair of papers by F. M. Combellack placed a sobering emphasis on the limitations of standard critical exegesis; Parry had seemed to invalidate literary criticism by showing that the Iliad and the Odyssey were not literary at all. "One result of Milman Parry's work on the Homeric style has been to remove from the literary study of the Homeric poems an entire area of normal literary criticism."<sup>41</sup> As for the detection of "deliberate artistic purpose" in the use of formula language:

The difficulty is not that Parry's work has proved that there is no artistry in these features of Homer's style, but that he has removed all possibility of any certitude or even reasonable confidence in the criticism of such features of Homeric style and has thus put this side of Homeric criticism into a situation wholly different from similar criticism of, say, Sophocles or Shakespeare. The hard fact is that in this post-Parry era critics are no longer in a position to distinguish the passages in which Homer is merely using a convenient formula from those in which he has consciously and cunningly chosen le not juste. For all that any critic of Homer can show, the occasional highly appropriate word may, like the occasional highly inappropriate one, be purely coincidental--part of the law of averages, if you like, in the use of the formula style.<sup>42</sup>

"Hard facts" to be sure, but at the same time no

very useful or rigorous alternative critical procedure had been systematically codified to fill the void. James Notopoulos's attempt to do just this culminated in his 1962 C. N. Jackson Lectures. The third of these, entitled "Toward a Poetics of Early Greek Oral Poetry," speaks directly to Calhoun, Bassett, Wade-Gery, and Combellack; we may take it as a definitive statement of the prerequisites for meaningful interpretation of oral artistry.

Oral poetry when it becomes a text . . . loses much of its magic; it loses even more when we evaluate it with the principles of literary criticism which ignore the forces at work in oral poetry. . . .

Much of the traditional criticism must be discarded and replaced by insights arising from a study of oral poetics. . . . Much of the Homeric Question is the product of trying to adjust a poem to a preconceived mentality that is an obstacle to understanding older literature. An oral poetics demands a transformation from a bookish mentality to one which apprehends books merely as modes of preservation of oral poetry. Only with that transformation will the mist be clarified.<sup>43</sup>

Notopoulos supplies a prescriptive decalogue for true believers<sup>44</sup> and shows himself to be fully cognizant of the dangers of an irrevocable break with the criteria of literary evaluation as it had been practiced by those whose first allegiance had been to the poems themselves.

In fact, Notopoulos vacillates between insistence on analysis which is totally consonant with the findings of "field workers" and concession to the aesthetic appreciations of the Unitarians.<sup>45</sup> At one moment he asserts that

Lord has shown that the most distinctive claim to individuality in the Yugoslav poetry is architecture. This must constitute the keystone in our oral poetics for it gives us in the realm of technique the greatest evidence for individuality

while observing that

recent studies of the Homeric formulae show that many of them exhibit dramatic qualities in their context. They are more than mere metrical fillers, and perform in their contexts the role of le mot juste

and calling for

the study of the relationship of the formulaic technique to human characterization. . . . to see . . . to what extent characterization is confined to action and to what extent the poet can penetrate by means of the formulaic style into the inner state of mind.<sup>46</sup>

Notopoulos's Jackson Lectures are much the most level-headed prolegomena to criticism which have issued from the comparative study of epic; still, they hang fire in the endeavor to have it both ways, they do not succeed in making clear-cut theoretical discriminations which could resolve the accelerating conflict between those who see Homer first as singer and those who see him first as artist. Reading the arguments of both camps can lead to a kind of schizophrenia. The oral theorists, following Parry, have made their most impressive gains in statistical studies of style, and especially of the minutiae of style: epithet and other short formulae systems. But equally convincing studies of large-scale composition leave one in doubt whether Homer's artistry is after all very different from that of any first magnitude literate

poet. Professor Else describes the enigma:

Parry's first and real triumph was won out of the Iliad and Odyssey themselves. It dealt with formulas in the strictest sense, the noun-epithet and verb-predicate combinations which fill a part of a line. These are the blocks out of which the building is built. The method loses rigor in proportion as it leaves that level and climbs to larger units, where the "economy" is less and less strict. The unresolved question is whether this is not inherent in the method; or, to put it another way, whether as we go on from formulae to formulaic lines to themes to episodes to songs to longer poems, the specific difference between oral composition and its alleged contrary, literary (or literate) composition, do not begin to fade away. How different is Homer from Vergil or Milton (also an oral poet, by the way, in Paradise Lost) when it comes to marshalling the major elements in his grand design?<sup>47</sup>

Since 1960 or so, we have witnessed a sustained effort on the part of a new generation of critics to move out from the security of the "divine architecture" thesis to an attack on the fronts where hard Parryism has long dominated--epithet, formula, theme.

One approach has been to illustrate Homer's struggle with his traditional medium, the exertion of his own will against the conservative inertia of the inherited Dichtersprache. Adam Parry's early paper "The Language of Achilles"<sup>48</sup> maintains that the characterization of Achilles led the poet to deliberate "misuse" of the traditional language in order to cope with the expression of feelings for which it had developed no vocabulary. Achilles' disillusionment in the Ninth Book is expressed in spite of and, indeed, through the distortion of a language that reflects exclusively the assumptions of



heroic society (exemplified by Sarpedon in Book 12).

A reconsideration of the epithet systems has led some scholars, notably William Whallon and M. W. M. Pope,<sup>49</sup> to soften Parry's hard line on metrical utility and to undertake a rapprochement that would find both metrical and literary intentions in the use of epithets.

Neither the metrical nor the literary function of the epithets is a diriment impediment to the other. On the narrow shelf of masterpieces the Iliad and the Odyssey stand unique for having been composed without writing, and the explanation of their development in an oral tradition is a problem insoluble by reference to works of a genetically different nature. Extensive influence of form upon content can perhaps not be found elsewhere, and yet must be accepted as an important process in the evolution of the Homeric poems. The epic matter influenced the language and was at the same time influenced by the language. And the final result is that epithetic formulas like swift-footed Achilles make possible a recurrence of themes in a manner that is unknown in other poetry and of the highest literary value.<sup>50</sup>

*direct?*

This is no reversion to the naïve Unitarian view (à la Calhoun or Sheppard), but rather a sincere effort to build a vehicle for criticism that will neither betray our commitment to Homeric artistry nor neglect the tangible gains of the perspective opened by oral theory.

Re-appraisal of oral theory in all departments has been a healthy reaction. For example, the stylistic technique of composition by formula has been very minutely re-examined.<sup>51</sup> Flexibility and modification have been detected on the most basic levels of verse-making, and Parry's familiar tables and marked texts have been shown to be too lapidary. The poet exerts a subtle and

voluntary control over the formulaic Kunstsprache. Further, the whole concept of "formula" per se has been tested against enlightening redefinitions.<sup>52</sup>

The validity of the Yugoslav comparative studies has not gone unchallenged. Geoffrey Kirk in England and, in America, Milman Parry's lamented son, Adam, have questioned the strength of the parallels that zealous "field workers" ("lab technicians"?) have pressed.<sup>53</sup> Is there, for example, sufficient qualitative similarity in the two poetries? Is Avdo Međedović a viable modern surrogate for Homer? Does an analogy have any claim to conclusive insights into a situation that obtained almost three millennia ago?

In the 1966 volume of Yale Classical Studies, devoted to Homeric studies, Adam Parry and Anne Amory (later Anne Amory Parry) contributed papers that sought to move from a thorough familiarity with oral theory to the construction of a practicable critical methodology. Mrs. Amory's paper is a perceptive disclosure of an elaborate pattern of imagery turning on the symbols of horn and ivory and having its epicenter in the famous interview between Penelope and Odysseus in Odyssey 19:

I suggest that the Odyssey shows considerable artistry in the disposition of some decorative passages which were in themselves probably entirely traditional and incidental . . . . Many of the horn and ivory passages are connected with each other; they center around and reflect some light on the gates of horn and ivory passage; they enhance and decorate two major themes of the poem; finally, they seem to be adapted to a vision of the

opposite but complementary natures of Odysseus and Penelope.<sup>54</sup>

She is fully aware of the theoretical assumptions that underlie such an analysis and justifies them in a spirited and forthright attack on insidious tendencies in recent Homeric scholarship:

Even if we believe that Homer was an illiterate bard working entirely within an oral tradition, we do not have to deny him control over his material to the extent that some recent critics seem inclined to do, for some of the current uneasiness about the degree of art which we may impute to an oral poet rests on false premises.<sup>55</sup>

The title of Albert Lord's rebuttal, "Homer as Oral Poet,"<sup>56</sup> does not suggest so much as pontificate. This long paper is actually an (unfavorable) review of the Yale Studies volume. On pages 34-46, Mrs. Amory's article is pilloried as an example of irresponsibly "subjective" criticism. Lord proposes to reveal a forced argument by a correction in perspective: "Let us review the scenes in order, as the singer presented them, and try to see them through the eyes of an oral tradition."<sup>57</sup> Privileged with vision through the eyes of the now anthropomorphosed tradition, we find that there are in fact no subtle, literary associations at work in the use of ivory and horn by the poet. Rather, each such usage is a specific instance, a "multiform," of a traditional theme; not an intricate concatenation of symbolic resonances, but merely recurrence of a common thematic element. Amory is accused of overingenuity in reading

powerful subterranean meanings of a non-traditional sort into the poetry:

Penelope is prepared by the goddess for her entrance into the hall where Odysseus is and where he will see her for the first time in twenty years. She is made "whiter than carved ivory" (18.196). One misses the beauty of the scene, and, I believe, its real import, if one tries to force it into some imaginary pattern of various subtly--indeed, too subtly--differentiated kinds of "truth."<sup>58</sup>

Lord concludes with a plea for proper understanding of oral poetics.<sup>59</sup>

This elicited a withering volley of return fire. The title of Anne Amory Parry's last contribution, "Homer as Artist," does not suggest so much as allude and contravene. The article is a rejoinder to Lord's various objections to specific readings or interpretations in her Yale Studies paper. But more importantly, it enlarges into a consideration of the vexed issue of orality and valid literary criticism. Advising against a too confident reliance on the Yugoslav analogy, she writes:

It is false to assume that Homer could have done only what Yugoslav bards do. Since we have Homer alone to represent the Greek heroic oral tradition, the only thing we can be sure of is that whatever artistic merits are visible in Homer must have been within the powers of the poet (or poets) who composed the Iliad and Odyssey. If we judge that such artistic effects are not within the scope of an ordinary oral tradition, then it is more sensible to conclude that Homer surpassed his tradition than to assert that the artistry that has made men admire and read Homer for hundreds of centuries [sic] cannot really be present in Homer because such artistry is unlikely to have been traditional.<sup>60</sup>

As for the alleged obsolescence of literary criticism:

We cannot justly say that the canons of written

literature are entirely useless in dealing with oral poetry. All narrative poetry presents characters, recounts actions, describes a world, implies values, and so on. At a certain level it makes no difference to a critical interpretation whether a poem is written or oral. . . .<sup>61</sup>

The debate at times verges on unpleasant and needless vituperation:

If we read Homer with an imperfect command of Greek and through a veil of other oral poetry, paying little attention to what precisely is present in the particular Iliad and Odyssey which we possess, then indeed we can only talk inanely about undefined "traditional meanings."<sup>62</sup>

Homeric criticism in 1974 is in a state of total flux. An unprecedented industry is expended on all aspects of research; we know more today about the historical and archaeological record, about linguistics and the dynamics of the traditional Kunstsprache, about various non-classical oral poetries,<sup>63</sup> than ever before. And yet there is no real progress toward the overarching goal--a coherent and acceptable critical methodology with which to undertake legitimate interpretation of the Iliad and the Odyssey.

This is more than just a matter of variation in estimates of artistic value, of "casual, sentimental, and prejudiced value-judgments, and . . . the literary chit-chat which makes the reputations of poets boom and crash in an imaginary stock exchange."<sup>64</sup> We are not embroiled in a contest of differing subjective analyses; we are faced with fundamental issues of a theoretical nature, issues that have not hitherto been brought to

the foreground of our endeavors. As the ramifications of our vastly increasing empirical knowledge become more evident and more urgent, literary criticism is forced again and again to self-examination and to reconsideration of its role as a profitable intellectual activity. In what follows, I shall attempt to reconsider, against the background of this history of Homer studies, the effects of scholarship on criticism and, in the process, to introduce clarifications derived from developments in literary theory outside the orbit of classical philology.

## Notes (Chapter V):

Epigraphs: R. Carpenter, Folk Tale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epics (Berkeley, 1946), p. 6; H. T. Wade-Gery, The Poet of the Iliad (Cambridge, 1952), pp. 38-39.

<sup>1</sup> D. L. Page, The Homeric Odyssey (Oxford, 1955), p. 157. Page's argument is of course largely ex silentio: since the Odyssey's allusions to the Trojan War exclude patently Iliadic material, we can safely assume ignorance of the Iliad. This is dangerous; it has certain affinities with discussions by Hermann Fränkel and Bruno Snell of eccentricities or deficiencies in the Homeric conception of the self; see Dichtung und Philosophie des des frühen Griechentums: Eine Geschichte der griechischen Literatur von Homer bis Pindar (New York, 1951; 2nd ed. 1962), pp. 83 ff., and chaps. 1 & 2 in Die Entdeckung des Geistes (Hamburg, 1948; 3rd ed. 1955; Eng. tr. 1953). For criticism of Fränkel and Snell, see Hugh Lloyd-Jones, The Justice of Zeus (Berkeley, 1971), pp. 9 ff. Page seems to me to beg two questions: 1) "can we confidently write an inventory of the poet's creative imagination?", and 2) "can we know his motives for selection and suppression of material"?

<sup>2</sup> History and the Homeric Iliad (Berkeley, 1959), pp. 300, vi.

<sup>3</sup> W. Schadewaldt, Iliasstudien (Leipzig, 1938); K. Reinhardt, Tradition und Geist (Göttingen, 1960), Die Ilias und ihr Dichter, ed. U. Hölscher (Göttingen, 1961); F. Eichhorn, Homers Odyssee: Ein Führer durch die Dichtung (Göttingen, 1965).

<sup>4</sup> "Geometrischer Stil in der Ilias," Philologus, 78 (1923), 280-301.

<sup>5</sup> "The Last Book of the 'Iliad'," JHS, 52 (1932), 264-96; cf. "Homeric Art," ABSA, 45 (1950), 229-60, "The Pattern of the Odyssey," JHS, 72 (1952), 1-19, "The Structure of the Iliad, Illustrated by the Speeches," JHS, 74 (1954), 122-41.

<sup>6</sup> "Homer und sein Jahrhundert" (1942), in Von Homers Welt und Werk: Aufsätze und Auslegungen zur homerischen Frage (Stuttgart, 1944; 4th ed. 1965), pp. 87-129 (esp. pp. 115-22).

<sup>7</sup> Untersuchungen über Begriff, Anwendung, und Entstehung der griechischen Ringkomposition (Amsterdam, 1944), "Eine merkwürdige Kompositionsform der älteren griechischen Literatur," Mnemosyne, 12 (1945), 192-207, De ringcompositie als opbouwprincipe in de epische gedichten van Homerus (Amsterdam, 1948).

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., the cautionary observations of W. den Boer, "Le Rôle de l'art et de l'histoire dans les études homériques contemporaines," AC, 17 (1948), 25-37, and G. S. Kirk, The Songs of Homer (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 263-65.

<sup>9</sup> Though unrepentant "old" Analysis has been a dead horse with a persistent kick; see J. A. Davison, "The Homeric Question," in CH, p. 252 and esp. note 49; also Kirk, Songs of Homer, pp. 228 ff.

<sup>10</sup> H. Pestalozzi, Die Achilleis als Quelle der Ilias (Erlenbach-Zurich, 1945); E. Howald, Der Dichter der Ilias (Erlenbach-Zurich, 1946); G. Jachmann, Homerische Einzellieder (1949; rpt. Darmstadt, 1968); W. Kullmann, Die Quellen der Ilias (Troischer Sagenkreis) (Wiesbaden, 1960); G. Schoeck, Ilias und Aithiopis: kyklische Motive in homerischer Brechung (Zurich, 1961); W. Theiler, "Ilias und Odyssee in der Verflechtung ihres Entstehens," MH, 19 (1962), 1-27, rpt. in Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur (Berlin, 1970), pp. 91-123.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., A. Severyns, "Le 'lai de Méléagre' dans Homère," in Miscellanea J. Gessler (Duerne, 1948), pp. 1132-35; J. T. Kakridis, Homeric Researches (Lund, 1949); B. Fenik, "Iliad X" and the "Rhesus:" The Myth (Brussels, 1964).

<sup>12</sup> J. A. Russo, rev. of Greek Epic Poetry: From Eumelos to Panyassis, by G. L. Huxley, AJP, 93 (1972), 621.

<sup>13</sup> F. M. Combellack, in his review of Howald (above, note 10), speaks of "Homeric scholarship's familiar fairy-land, peopled by the Meleagergedicht, the Zorngedicht, the Memnongedicht, and other fabulous creatures," CP, 44 (1949), 54; similarly, H. T. Wade-Gery, The Poet of the Iliad, p. 80, n. 90:

"The remarkable thesis of Pestalozzi . . . elaborated by Howald . . . is that the Aithiopis (or something very like it) was earlier than the Iliad and served as its model. I cannot follow the argument, which (so far as I see) is mainly from taste, and would



prove equally that Dryden's All for Love was the model for Antony and Cleopatra, as being more symmetrical and grander."

<sup>14</sup> Albert B. Lord, The Singer of Tales (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p. 12; for an annotated bibliography of Lord's writings on Homeric subjects, see my "Homeric Originality: A Survey," CW, 66 (1973), items 14-22 (pp. 261-63).

<sup>15</sup> Extracted in MHV, pp. 437-64.

<sup>16</sup> The Singer of Tales, p. 156:  
"It is not in the psychology of the oral poet to concern himself with stability of form, since stability of meaning and story already exist for him. Oral communication is not 'inaccurate and shifting' until you have the idea that a given form, one given performance, is worth fixing. And this idea may come readily to the 'creative artist' who is self-consciously creating something which he is accustomed to think of as his very own, but it is a large order for the oral poet who is intent upon preserving a meaningful traditional song. We must not suddenly endow the oral poet with the mentality of the developed literary artist in a written tradition, with his sense of ownership."

<sup>17</sup> Preface to The Singer of Tales.

<sup>18</sup> See, besides Singer of Tales, "Composition by Theme in Homer and Southslavic Epos," TAPA, 82 (1951), 71-80, and "Homer's Originality: Oral Dictated Texts," TAPA, 84 (1953), 124-34 = LBH, pp. 68-78.

<sup>19</sup> M. Parry, review of Die typischen Szenen bei Homer, by Walter Arend, CP, 31 (1936), 357-60 = MHV, pp. 404-7.

<sup>20</sup> Thus Bowra categorizes the repeated theme as a variety of formula; see "The Comparative Study of Homer," AJA, 54 (1950), 185, Heroic Poetry, p. 222, and "Style," in CH, pp. 30 f. Prof. J. I. Armstrong, "The Arming Motif in the Iliad," AJP, 79 (1958), 337-54, refers to theme as "long formula."

<sup>21</sup> The Singer of Tales, pp. 96-98; cf. "Oral Dictated Texts," 127-28 (= 71-72).

22 Les Origines indo-européennes des mètres grecs (Paris, 1923), p. 61.

23 La Question d'Homère (Paris, 1909), p. 52:  
 "Les poésies des guslars sont une juxtaposition de clichés, relativement peu nombreux et qu'il suffit de posséder. Le développement de chacun de ces clichés se fait automatiquement, suivant des règles fixes. Seul leur ordre peut varier. Un bon guslar est celui qui joue de ses clichés comme nous avec des cartes, qui les ordonne diversement suivant le parti qu'il en veut tirer."

24 The variability of thematic elaboration is well illustrated in the appendices of The Singer of Tales, esp. pp. 226-65.

25 See Bowra, Heroic Poetry, pp. 351-54.

26 "Oral Dictated Texts," 132-33 (= 76-77); cf. Bowra, "The Comparative Study of Homer," AJA, 54 (1950), 192. Very different conclusions about the quality of dictated texts are reached in the appendix on "Some Irish Analogies" in G. L. Huxley, Greek Epic Poetry: From Eumelos to Panyassis (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), esp. p. 194:

"In view of the fashionable theory that Homer dictated, Irish evidence for oral dictated texts is of particular interest. Dictation, far from enabling an Irish oral poet or story teller to dwell in loving detail at leisure on all parts of a story, caused both reciter and scribe to weary rapidly. The ninth-century story of Cano, son of Gartnían, begins with elaborate detail, but soon the detail is lost and the descriptions are hinted at. Later still, the incidents are given in summary, and all artistry is lost. The reason for this is surely that the reciter wearied quickly, because he had not the sympathy of the audience to urge him on, nor could his pace be adapted to that of the increasingly weary scribe. A similar problem would have arisen if the poet had been writing: he would still have lacked an audience to encourage him to high artistic achievement. In short, a literate or dictating poet is unlikely, to judge from Irish conditions, in an oral tradition to produce poetry of the highest quality."

27 Memories 1898-1939 (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), p. 322.

- 28 AJA, 54 (1950), 184-92.
- 29 Cf. "Style," in CH, pp. 36-37.
- 30 See From Virgil to Milton (London, 1945), pp. 1-5; cf. Lord, The Singer of Tales, pp. 5-7.
- 31 From Virgil to Milton, pp. 5-6.
- 32 For an exhaustive bibliography of Notopoulos's work on oral poetry, see E. R. Haymes, A Bibliography of Studies Relating to Parry's and Lord's Oral Theory (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), pp. 30-32.
- 33 See esp. Notopoulos, "Parataxis in Homer: A New Approach to Homeric Literary Criticism," TAPA, 80 (1949), 1-23; cf. B. A. van Groningen, "Elements inorganiques dans la composition de l'Iliade et de l'Odyssée," REH, 5 (1935), 3-24.
- 34 The Poetry of Homer (Berkeley, 1938), p. 18.
- 35 Cf. T. S. Eliot, above p. 62.
- 36 HSCP, 55 (1951), 23-59, esp. sect. II.
- 37 Heroic Poetry, p. 240.
- 38 The Poet of the Iliad, pp. 38-40.
- 39 Ibid., pp. 13-14.      40 Ibid., p. 11.
- 41 "Milman Parry and Homeric Artistry," CL, 11 (1959), 193; cf. "Contemporary Unitarians and Homeric Originality," AJP, 71 (1950), 337-64.
- 42 Ibid., 208.
- 43 "Studies in Early Greek Oral Poetry," HSCP, 68 (1964), 48-50.
- 44 Ibid., 50-51.
- 45 I.e., hard line Unitarians à la Shewan or Scott.

- 46 "Studies in Early Greek Oral Poetry," 64-65.
- 47 "Homer and the Homeric Problem," UCCS (Semple Lectures), 1 (1967), 337-38.
- 48 TAPA, 87 (1956), 1-7 = LBH, pp. 48-54.
- 49 W. Whallon, "The Homeric Epithets," YCS, 17 (1961), 97-142, and Formula, Character, and Context: Studies in Homeric, Old English, and Old Testament Poetry (Washington, 1969); M. W. M. Pope, "Athena's Development in Homeric Epic," AJP, 81 (1960), 113-35.
- 50 Whallon, "The Homeric Epithets," 142.
- 51 See, e.g., J. B. Hainsworth's chapter on "Composition with Formulae," in The Flexibility of the Homeric Formula (Oxford, 1968), pp. 1-22.
- 52 See Appendix: "The Formula."
- 53 See G. S. Kirk, "Homer and Modern Oral Poetry: Some Confusions," CQ, 10 (1960), 271-81 = LBH, pp. 79-89, and chapter 4, "The Oral Poet and His Methods," in The Songs of Homer, pp. 55-101; also A. Parry, "Have We Homer's Iliad?" YCS, 20 (1966), 177-216.
- 54 "The Gates of Horn and Ivory," YCS, 20 (1966), 56.
- 55 Ibid., 36.
- 56 HSCP, 72 (1968), 1-46. 57 Ibid., 43.
- 58 Loc. cit. 59 Ibid., 46.
- 60 "Homer as Artist," CQ, 21 (1971), 6.
- 61 Ibid., 13-14. 62 Loc. cit.
- 63 See "The Haymes Bibliography," above note 32.
- 64 Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton, 1957), p. 18.

## PART II

### CRITIQUE: DEFINITIONS AND DIRECTIVES

## CHAPTER VI

### THE OBJECTIVES OF LITERARY CRITICISM

The only truthful and right thing to do is to make this judgment as objective as possible, to do what every scientist and scholar does: to isolate his object, in our case, the literary work of art, to contemplate it intently, to analyze, to interpret, and finally to evaluate it by criteria derived from, verified by, buttressed by, as wide a knowledge, as close an observation, as keen a sensibility, as honest a judgment as we can command.

René Wellek 1960

Modern critical discourse about the Iliad and the Odyssey has gone forward chiefly by hypothesis and experimentation. The poems have been tested for quality and coherence; the probabilities of their genesis and original mode of existence have been posited and weighed; their effects on their audience have been described with eloquent fervor by appeal both to intuition and to the (apparent) categories of objective interpretation. These first monuments of European literature have always commanded respectful attention and the exertion of explanatory and evaluative commentary, even from the most hostile members of their audience. Primacy of position in the canon of epic poetry has been a prerogative won in the arena of unremitting critical scrutiny and

appraisal. But criticism has often been forestalled by an internal dissension that might have been avoided by a conscientious examination of theoretical presuppositions and governing principles. Critical discourse has, with great good faith and industry, addressed itself to what seemed the most urgent and insistent issues of interpretation. Unfortunately, its history is colored by an often fanatical partisanship more contributory to obsession and retrogression than to advancement. In the heat of thesis and counter-thesis, too little attention has been paid to the conscious construction of an adequate framework of theoretical tenets of the most fundamental sort. The result has been the subjugation of literary criticism to the motives of scholarly activities that are centrifugal in orientation, activities that lead away from the Homeric poems, not toward fuller appreciation of them.

Twentieth-century critical theory, as formulated outside the realm of Alttertumswissenschaft, has profitably engaged in an effort to evolve a descriptive terminology conducive to a healthful equilibrium and consistent sense of direction in interpretive and judicial endeavors. In general, a heightened awareness of aesthetic orientation and a sharpened definition of critical procedures and objectives have resulted. My purpose in this chapter will be to import into the context of Homeric criticism some of this wholesome precision both in nomenclature and

methodology. We may begin with a statement of the duties proper to literary criticism as a distinct, self-sufficient discipline. I do not intend to dictate or interdict ex cathedra, but simply to provide a generous and large ascription of function and purpose. Three obligations may preliminarily isolated: understanding, interpretation (or explication), and evaluation.

1. "A word sequence means nothing in particular until somebody either means something by it or understands something from it."<sup>1</sup> The poetic text, like every other use of language, must be confronted in the first instance as the communication of a determinate literal meaning. I offer this as a pragmatic axiom. Certain poems may well defy the assignment of any one semantic import as the "determinate literal meaning." Lyric poetry in particular is often distressingly unsubmitive in this regard; and the fact of the matter may be that (say) a given Pindaric ode or Catullan meditative lyric or Anglo-Saxon elegy or Rimbaudian illumination ("le dérèglement de tous les sens") or what have you is not by its nature reducible to a consistent prose paraphrase.<sup>2</sup> This is not generally the case with narrative or didactic poetry. Still, the difference is one of degree only, and I would emphasize that, for the purpose of literary critical exegesis, we cannot well dispense with the assumption that the poem carries some ascertainable elemental meaning, whether or not such an assumption has



any phenomenological basis in fact. Before more subtle and more sensitive instruments of intellectual "reception" can be gainfully brought into play, we must work to remove any obstacles that stand in the way of the bare apprehension of what is being said.

In a purely mundane sense, the poem is coextensive with the sequence of signs inscribed on paper or some other more or less apt material. Physical perishability and the vicissitudes of transcription and transmission pose an all too tangible threat. It is met by the science of textual criticism, of paleography and emendation. The plausible filling of lacunae, the rectification of corruptions and scribal irregularities--these noble tasks are expressive of high reverence for the correct representation of the poet's words. "Textual criticism is a science, and, since it comprises recension and emendation, it is also an art. It is the science of discovering error in texts and the art of removing it."<sup>3</sup>

But a more constant and pervasive threat to proper understanding of literal meaning is posed by the absence of a shared lexical and grammatical basis sufficient to insure accurate "reproducibility" or "re-cognition"<sup>4</sup> of a specific meaning. Thus, for example, the variations in denotation and connotation which words within the English language have undergone since the Elizabethan period have jeopardized our correct understanding of many lines in Shakespeare. Philological expertise is

needed to assist us in avoiding misconstructions due to semantic changes in the language. How much more expertise is needed to guard against misconstruction of verbal meaning in a text written not only in a foreign language but also in a "dead" language. On the level of individual words, we are faced with bapax legomena whose significance can only be guessed from their context. Thus, Homeric "glosses," especially in the case of ornamental epithets, defy confident definition even if they recur several times.<sup>5</sup>

Further, the attributes and peculiarities of the linguistic sub-category of artificial or poetic language will have to be identified and allowed for. Is the Kunst-sprache conservative and archaizing? or does it admit and promote neologism? To what degree has the artist evolved and employed a personal or eccentric poetic idiom or iconography or mythology (as, for example, in Blake's greater prophetic works)?

In dealing with such questions, literary criticism aims at facilitation of understanding the surface meaning of a given linguistic artifact; it benefits the central activity of all literary response--right comprehension.

I have owed, and must continue to owe, far more to editors, textual critics, commentators, and lexicographers than to anyone else. Find out what the author actually wrote and what the hard words meant and what the allusions were to, and you have done far more for me than a hundred new interpretations or assessments could ever do.<sup>6</sup>

Lewis's high estimation will be seconded by anyone who has used, for example, Stanford's Odyssey, Fraenkel's

Agamemnon, Jebb's Sophocles, Dodds's Bacchae, Else's Poetics, Ashmore's Terence, Leonard and Smith's Lucretius, Merrill's Catullus, Austin's Aeneid (I, II, IV), Klaeber's Beowulf or the Columbia Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, Robinson's Chaucer, Harrison's Shakespeare, Hughes's Milton, or Erdman and Bloom's Blake. Philology is criticism's strongest ally, and their collaboration in works such as these brings high profits.

In spite of the sometimes formidable difficulties of construing the literal surface meaning of a text, differences of opinion on this level are seldom irresolvable. Thus, though translations of Homer may vary widely in their success in reproducing the qualities immortalized in the words of Matthew Arnold,<sup>7</sup> they do tend to reflect a consensus on the score of the poet's simple verbal meaning. As for the detection and illumination of the full implications of that meaning, of the deeper significations of the plain linguistic fact, that is altogether another matter.

2. The poetic text does not merely transmit a determinate verbal meaning pure and simple. Once consensus, or something like it, has been reached regarding the literal sense of a text, a more demanding, sometimes more rewarding, certainly more perilous phase of aesthetic engagement can begin.<sup>8</sup> For the (more or less) indisputable surface meaning of a poem does not exist in a vacuum; the

verbal envelope does not only convey meaning, it enriches and enlarges it by constituting a value-charged context. The poem is not exclusively utilitarian mechanism; its aim goes beyond the efficient transfer of information from speaker to audience. I. A. Richards, for example, distinguishes four kinds of meaning: sense (what is said), feeling (attitude of the speaker in respect to what is said), tone (attitude of the speaker to his listener), and intention (the speaker's purpose in speaking).<sup>9</sup>

However we may want to modify this particular categorization, it is manifest that a poem is not just a vehicle--it is a system of values, it signifies on many levels. The better to attune us to the full import of a text, literary criticism has developed an array of interpretive instruments. Tools such as, on one plane, metrical analysis or explication of metaphorical sound-values can lead to a fuller appreciation of the richness of texture and its reinforcement of meaning.<sup>10</sup> On another plane, we may probe syntactic arrangements and sentence rhythms (for example, "golden line" Latin hexameters or paratactic "variation" in Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse), tropes (simile, metaphor, metonymy, personification, hyperbole, etc.) and rhetorical schemes (antimetabole, auxesis, anadiplosis, ploc, etc.). Still other tools are adapted to the study of imagery and symbolism, of informing and inspiriting mythic archetypes. Characterization, plot structure, grand design--all the

internal phenomena of the text are susceptible of illumination by the application of the specialized utensils of literary critical exegesis. The ultimate goal is expansion and betterment of our experience of a work of art.

But other evidence besides internal components may be enlisted in the service of explication. Historical and biographical research are neglected at the risk of severe analytical distortion and anachronistic criticism. If the poet and his original audience shared a common linguistic convention, they can be reasonably supposed to have participated in a common Weltanschauung as well. An important duty of the well-tempered interpreter will be the reconstruction of that world-view. What, as nearly as we can determine, were the intellectual furnishings, the mental habits and sophistications of the author and his audience? Those who engage in "extrinsic" analysis will work at building reliable models of, for example, the Homeric Spirit, the Roman Mind, the Audience of Beowulf, the Elizabethan World Picture, the Seventeenth Century Reader, the (Eighteenth Century English) Augustan World, and so on. This is not an area in which absolute certainty or even high probability is accessible; still, the history of ideas or geistesgeschichtlich categories of inquiry will figure as an indispensable ancillary discipline.<sup>11</sup> And, mutatis mutandis, the biography of an individual artist will, on this view, supplement

intrinsic analysis by alerting it to possible causal explanations of a poem's particular shape and meaning, its excellences and deficiencies. Pushed to an extreme, the work can become a prime document in the formation of a "psychograph" (as in Freud's study of Leonardo da Vinci).

I do not mean to belabor an obvious distinction between two large classes of evidence, intrinsic and extrinsic, by re-writing Wellek and Warren's Theory of Literature. I would simply draw attention to the multiplicity of contexts and evidence within which and against which the significance of a work of art may be profitably unfolded. Chapter VII will dramatize the complications and hindrances which can result from the unnecessary collision of two main critical modes. Here I only emphasize the heuristic motive of all interpretation that can make any claim to validity. The objective of all literary critical discourse must be the actualization of the aesthetic potential of a work of art by the heightening of the reader's sensitivity to the full significance of that work within some more or less delimited environment of evidential testimony. Though the contexts of literary interpretation can be expected to vary and overlap, it must maintain an infrangible commitment to the work of art or falsify its own credentials as a vital and needed enterprise.

3. It is only from the full possession and reasoned

ordering of all kinds of data, however remotely relevant to the critical act, that equitable and trustworthy evaluation can emerge. But first we must ask ourselves whether evaluation ought to be included among the objectives of literary critical discourse: is it either an attainable or desirable goal? It has been persuasively argued by C. S. Lewis, among others, that literary criticism is warranted only in so far as it promotes full appreciation of the specific work:

The criticism which pronounces on the merits of books; . . . evaluations, and devaluations . . . stands or falls by its power to multiply, safeguard, or prolong those moments when a good reader is reading well a good book and the value of literature thus exists in actu. . . .

Can I say with certainty that any evaluative criticism has ever actually helped me to understand and appreciate any great work of literature or any part of one?<sup>12</sup>

On this view, value judgments deter and interfere with the all-important receptivity that is the proper condition of the right reader, leading Lewis to suggest that "a ten or twenty years' abstinence both from the reading and from the writing of evaluative criticism might do us all a great deal of good."<sup>13</sup> But, in fact, Lewis himself is fully capable of making the very discriminations he deplores as gratuitous and unenlightening. Whence comes the "good book" or the "great work of literature" he speaks of? Whence the ability to "draw a line between mere 'commercial trash,' thrillers, pornography, short stories in the women's magazines, etc., and what may be called 'polite' or 'adult' or 'real' or 'serious' "

literature"?<sup>14</sup>

It is of course the besetting affliction of evaluative critical discourse that judgments vary with conditions outside the control of any artist and certainly outside the aesthetic entity he creates; psychological make-up and personal taste will predispose the critic, as will the judicial criteria sanctioned by his own historical moment. Often enough such factors obstruct or distort our response to poetic art, but this does not mean that correct assessment is altogether impossible or that we should forego dedication to the achievement of valuations which will support, and be supported by, sensitive and enlightened reading. The very act of interpretation, as an appraisal of significance, is an incipient form of evaluation. The line between the two spheres is much finer than Lewis indicates; the descriptive terminology used in critical explication is tantamount to a glossary of judicial discourse, and properly so. If, while proceeding as best we can with disinterested and purely heuristic elucidation, we describe a poetic fabrication as coherent, self-consistent, and well-apportioned or as incoherent, self-disruptive, and ill-ordered, have we not moved into the realm of critical judgment? And if we have sustained our description by continual reference to specific examples, to lucid or garbled syntax, to adroit or clumsy use of figurative language, to psychologically viable and life-



like characters or to shallow and stereotypical androids, etc., have we not engaged in the preliminaries of a plausible reckoning of the intrinsic merit of a given work?

A wholly satisfactory answer to such questions is not easily obtained. Interpretive description and consequently evaluative judgment fluctuate with the personal proclivities and aversions of a given critic; taste is an inescapable variable. Should the critic trust his own intuitions and judge accordingly? Or should he look for a more disciplined methodology, one that promises a greater degree of objectivity? The bifurcation of literary scholarship on this head will be the subject of chapter VII. I insist here on the fact that value judgment is in the marrow of the critic, whether his interest is in textual criticism (weighing the merits of alternative readings), or in interpretive exegesis on one or more levels ascending to the ideal perception of an artistic entity in the whole range of its significance.<sup>15</sup>

In fact, the three objectives I have striven to isolate--understanding, interpretation, and evaluation--are thoroughly interinvolved. Further, they are not static "goals" so much as continually ongoing processes. Ascertainment of literal semantic import shades over inevitably, if imperceptibly, into the detailed exposition of resonances of meaning as it occupies a

unique and value-saturated context. And, however closely one familiarizes oneself with the dynamics of a work of art, statements of opinion are an important aspect of our total response, one that is irrepressible in any event. To inhabit the world of the poem is to acquire convictions or at least impressions about the quality of life within that environment. The assertion of those convictions or impressions is a natural and legitimate critical reflex. Thus, though I have intentionally exaggerated the distinctions among the objectives of literary criticism, we can see that they share a common impulse--they are centripetally directed toward the work as a structure of words.

Bearing this in mind, we will recognize that literary criticism within the larger context of Homeric scholarship has led a severely curtailed and retarded existence. Its function and proper sphere of influence have not been clearly defined, nor has its claim to legitimacy as an independent and useful intellectual endeavor been recognized.

The primary focus of Homer studies in the past 300 years has been history, not poetry. The Achilleid, the "mainland" epic generally, the oral dictated autograph text, the brotherhood of Homeridae, the Pisistratean recension, the (fifth-century?) Ionic transcription--none of these is the Iliad or the Odyssey. Each is a hypothesis in the service of which various types of

evidence may be conscripted. When scholarship occupies itself with speculation about Bronze Age warfare or social customs, about Linear A or Linear B or (for that matter) the Phaistos Disk, about the fall of Troy VII A or the Dorian Invasion, it is "Mycenology"<sup>16</sup> not literary criticism. This is self-evident and it is no sin; the Homeric poems may be fittingly relegated to a peripheral position in such frames of reference (with due respect for the Mycenaean political topography of the Catalogue of Ships, the Boar's-tusk helmet of the Doloneia, Nestor's ← Cup in Iliad 11, etc.). But when the two predominant counter-balancing schools of Higher Criticism employ the epics chiefly as evidence for the existence of one or more than one poet living beyond the reach of more reliable (and more conventional) historical investigation, we may rightly protest an unhealthy disequilibrium. Both the Analysts and the Unitarians have accepted a fatal proposition--that the Homeric poems should be studied in the first place as testaments of the causal factors which led to their creation.

On the level of literal understanding, consider the venerable "Leaf and Bayfield." The eighty-year-old commentary has endured on the merits of its sound line-by-line explications of sense and syntax; but along with these has endured the three- (or four-, or five-) strata poem-compilation in which early and late are discerned for the edification of those who may be innocent of the

"fact" of multiple authorship. Of course books like Sheppard's Pattern of the Iliad (London, 1922) and E. T. Owen's Story of the Iliad as Told in the Iliad (Toronto, 1946) go some way to mitigate the centrifugal pull of Leaf and Bayfield, but the old line Analysts (Wilamowitz, Mazon, Page et al.) together with their neo-analyst cousins (see pp. 94-95) continue to deflect literary criticism from its first responsibility.

Critical discourse in Homer studies has not been so eager "to multiply, safeguard, or prolong those moments when a good reader is reading well a good book" as to draw the eyes and minds of potentially good readers to other times and places, to extra-literary speculation and argumentation. All the debilitating expenditure of critical energies has been in the interest of furthering historical hypotheses. Wilamowitz is perhaps the culmination of misguided multi-disciplinary expertise. Linguistics, archaeology, history, textual criticism, and not least a profound literary sensibility--all were pressed into the service of an illusion.

If the Unitarians had more respect for the rights of the work of art, they nevertheless tacitly admitted the Analysts' assumption that proper understanding and interpretation of the poems could and should aim at accurate reconstruction of history. Still, their insistence on recognition of the inherent worth of the poems as poems was refreshingly commonsensical. And in

this respect they were indeed a manifestation of a Zeitgeist, though not the post-World War, anti-German Zeitgeist suggested by Dodds (see p. 57). Rene Wellek's paper, "The Revolt Against Positivism in Recent European Literary Scholarship," describes a revolution in the history of ideas and in literary criticism:

In Europe, especially since the first World War, there has been a revolt against the methods of literary study as practiced in the second half of the nineteenth century: against the mere accumulation of unrelated facts, and against the underlying assumption that literature should be explained by the methods of the natural sciences, by causality, by such external determining forces as are formulated in Taine's famous slogan of race, milieu, moment.<sup>17</sup>

The Unitarian reaction in the early decades of this century was an example of a common phenomenon--the pendulum swing of intellectual fashion. A century and more of "destructive" Analysis had reduced the poems to ill-managed dig sites and the role of literary criticism to ancilla to historical conjecture. Men like Drerup and Shewan, Sheppard and Scott, had just begun to redress the balance when Milman Parry revitalized the discredited methodology by a remarkable series of studies combining airtight stylistic analysis with irresistibly logical comparative criticism. Oral theory dealt a crushing blow to the "naïve" Unitarians. For, though it did not exclude the possibility of unified composition--nay, promoted it--it endowed Tradition with powers and prerogatives which made it overshadow any individual

singer. Further, it demanded, and continues to demand, that its version of Homer's biography be assimilated into a radically new critical procedure; the call for a "new poetics," first sent out by Parry and dutifully reiterated by Lord and Notopoulos, has seemed to require the renunciation of an interpretive apparatus that might serve Homer as well as it has other poets.

The underlying issue is one of procedures and methods, their antipathy and compatibility, or their peaceful coexistence.

## Notes (Chapter VI):

Epigraph: R. Wellek, "Literary Theory, Criticism, and History" (1960), in Concepts of Criticism, ed. S. G. Nichols (New Haven, 1963), p. 17.

<sup>1</sup> E. D. Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation (New Haven, 1967), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> See the very sensible chapter on "The Heresy of Paraphrase" in C. Brooks, The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry (New York, 1947), pp. 192-214.

<sup>3</sup> A. E. Housman, "The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism" (1922), in A. E. Housman: Selected Prose, ed. J. Carter (Cambridge, 1961), p. 131.

<sup>4</sup> I borrow these terms from Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation, pp. 31-44.

<sup>5</sup> See M. Parry, "The Homeric Gloss: A Study in Word-sense," TAPA, 59 (1928), 233-47 = MHV, pp. 240-50; also M. P. Nilsson, Homer and Mycenae, pp. 181-82.

<sup>6</sup> C. S. Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism (Cambridge, 1961), p. 121.

<sup>7</sup> On Translating Homer, lecture III, ad init. = R. H. Super, ed., On the Classical Tradition, p. 141: "Homer is rapid in his movement, Homer is plain in his words and style, Homer is simple in his ideas, Homer is noble in his manner."

<sup>8</sup> I do not mean to suggest that the immediately accessible "surface value" of a text is insignificant or merely superficial; R. Peacock, Criticism and Personal Taste (Oxford, 1972), p. 47:

"Many, even most, works make a predominant effect which is fulfilled as we complete the reading, and to apprehend it we do not need to stare at the details. For many this main effect is a sufficient pleasure, and there is in reality no obligation on any one individual to search beyond it with many of the works he may read."

Cf. C. S. Brown, "Difficulty and Surface Value," in The Disciplines of Criticism: Essays in Literary Theory, Interpretation, and History, ed. P. Demetz et al. (New Haven, 1968), pp. 43-56.

<sup>9</sup> Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment (London, 1929), pp. 173-81.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. W. F. Jackson Knight, Accentual Symmetry in Vergil (Oxford, 1939; rpt. 1950), and R. Jakobson and L. G. Jones, Shakespeare's Verbal Art in Th'Expençe of Spirit (The Hague, 1970).

<sup>11</sup> This is not to say that intellectual history cannot be an end in itself, as it is in, for example, the writings of Johan Huizinga; in the case of very ancient civilizations, the surviving literary monuments will bulk large as documentary evidence: see Thorkild Jacobsen on the Enuma Elish and the Gilgamesh epic in Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man, ed. H. Frankfort et al. (1946; rpt. Baltimore, 1949), pp. 182-99, 223-27.

<sup>12</sup> An Experiment in Criticism, pp. 120-21.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 129. <sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>15</sup> See R. Wellek and A. Warren, Theory of Literature (New York, 1949; 3rd ed. 1956), pp. 238-51.

<sup>16</sup> A field that comprises archaeology, history, epigraphy, art history, linguistics and many other departments; the discipline has its own scholarly journals as well, e.g., Kadmos: Zeitschrift für vor- und früh-griechischen Epigraphik (Berlin) and Studi Miceni ed Egeo-Anatolici (Rome).

<sup>17</sup> 1946; in Concepts of Criticism, p. 256.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE CONTEXTS OF INTERPRETATION: A DEBATE

Since the great mass of great literature belongs to the past, adequate criticism must grow out of historical knowledge, cultural and linguistic, as well as out of intuitive insight. Every work must be understood on its own terms as the product of a particular mind in a particular setting, and that mind and setting must be re-created through all the resources that learning and the historical imagination can muster--not excluding the author's intention, if that is known.

Douglas Bush 1964

I insist that to treat . . . poems . . . primarily as poems is a proper emphasis, and very much worth doing. For we have gone to school to the anthropologists and the cultural historians assiduously, and we have learned their lesson almost too well.

Cleanth Brooks 1947

The history of Homeric criticism in the past 300 years is the record of a competition between two procedural systems. Chapter VI has attempted, by its consideration of the objectives of literary criticism, to disengage some of the beliefs which motivate the proponents of each method and to expose those types of exegesis which can make no real claim to be "literary" at all. In the interest of highlighting the principal theoretical differences of the rival procedures, I

shall here stage a debate between hypothetical representatives of each. These learned personages will be, like Mary Shelley's modern Prometheus, composite beings. Though such an exercise lends itself to caricature, I trust that the reader of Part I will recognize the simulacra of real combatants, their enduring conflicts and living controversies. Contestant "A" will speak on behalf of the historicist-positivist critical philosophy; "B" will speak for the proponents of semantic autonomy ("the poem is the only admissible evidence for its own significance").

A: Let me begin by asserting my devotion to the ideal of appropriate response to the work of art. It is my belief that a reasoned and scientific appraisal of all the historical testimony that human erudition can assemble is an indispensable prerequisite for proper appreciation of a poem and that such an appraisal brings us as close as we can get to an objectively justifiable critical posture.

Every poem is the creation of a human intellect. The more we can learn about that intellect, the better we will be able to account for the meaning and effect of the literary artifact. The mind is not a tabula rasa-- it is rather a malleable and impressionable force field. It does not simply generate ex nihilo. By a careful and considered sifting of historical data, we can reconstitute

for ourselves the cultural matrix of the poem. This must be our ultimate goal. If we fail to attain a reliable notion of the author's intellectual make-up and of the aesthetic sensibilities and expectations of his audience, we will invariably lapse into inane speculation and fruitless impressionism. The most compelling criteria must be 1) what the poem was intended to do, and 2) what effect it can be expected to have had in fact. The conditioning factors of social and spiritual life, of political and religious institutions, of technical and scientific attainments, of the whole physical and intellectual atmosphere of the moment of creation will need to be included in any valid interpretation of a work of art. In short, though we may of course react spontaneously to a poem, that uneducated reaction cannot approach valid interpretation until it has been shaped and purified by the historians, the anthropologists, the archaeologists, the social historians, the biographers, and all those investigators whose aim is to supply us with an undistorted and unmuddled perspective on a moment in time. We must learn to respond as we should.

B: Let me also begin by asserting my devotion to appropriate response. It is my belief that such a response is dictated by the poem and the poem alone. It provides all the evidence needed to achieve valid interpretation; we must listen to the poetry, and objectivity must be thought of as an attribute of correct ordering

and assessment of internal evidence. An interpretation is valid and objective in the degree to which it bases its statements on the fullest possible accounting of intrinsic phenomena.

Every poem exists only as an event in the mind of its perceiver. The better we account for the peculiar effects of a work of art within that context, the closer we approximate just interpretation. In this search we must never allow ourselves to be distracted from the task of fully appreciating the poem as a poem. It exists as an ontologically independent entity, neither delimited by the conditioning forces of any one time nor properly answerable to the cultural matrix from which it issued, or indeed to any other cultural matrix. We must see the work sub specie aeternitatis.

A: If I may interrupt, I must say that it seems to me that you have opened the Pandora's box of an anarchic plurality of "readings." The effects of the poem within the context you have described cannot be accounted for correctly without admitting that the perceiver apprehends it through the conceptual lattice peculiar to his own psychic constitution and no one else's. His perspective is necessarily different from any other and his interpretations, if grounded upon a one-to-one solipsistic reaction to the work, can have no real validity for any other recipient of the poem. The only binding normative principle to which the question of validity can be

referred is authorial intention.

B: But to say that is to foredoom the whole enterprise. It is quite manifest that we can never adequately represent the intentions of the author, even with his help. The poet himself is no infallible guide to motivation, for he can no more recapture exactly a past moment in his stream of consciousness than can anyone else. Consider also the fact of unconscious motivations; surely in a post-Freudian world, we should not be too gullible in accepting statements of intention (when they are available at all) as incontrovertible. Further, even if we could confidently itemize all the facets of authorial intention, we would only needlessly impoverish a poem by excluding meanings which have been plausibly discerned and supported but for which there is no historical documentation. It is true that subjectivity will have to be coped with, but it may well be a blessing. We are not utterly incapable of distinguishing good readings from bad--the poem itself will support or erode a given interpretation; the democracy of readings you foresee is no real threat. How well a critic activates the potential values of a structure of words, how much of the internal phenomena is made operative by a given analysis--these will be our "objective" criteria.

A: Your position seems to me to threaten the work of art with violation by the intrusion of values which exist only in the mind of an avowed impressionist.

B: And yours seems to retreat from the central occupation of the critic--open-minded and direct experience--to a theory of causality that is comfortable in its apparent objectivity but is fatally limited in its outlook.

A: We seem to have reached an impasse. Let us turn from theoretical abstraction to the annals of applied criticism. It will be my purpose to demonstrate that our understanding of the Iliad and the Odyssey has gained most from those investigations which best utilize the historical data which alone can enable us to regain a lost perspective.

The first flowering of the historicist persuasion was the rebellion of Blackwell and Wood, and earlier (if to a lesser degree) Bentley, against the arbitrary and didactic judgments of the neoclassicists--d'Aubignac, Rapin, Perrault et al. The Homeric epics gained immeasurably from the recognition that they were not answerable to anachronistic judicial criteria. To test the epics against a potpourri of Aristotle, Horace, renaissance literary theory, and seventeenth-century French moral codes was a typical result of the critical irresponsibility that cried out for a new, scientific approach. Wolf capped a period of ferment by weighing the available ancient testimony and arriving at a hypothesis that fit those facts and seemed equally to fit the facts of the poems themselves. The Analytical scholars were as successful and influential as they were in the nineteenth

century precisely because their hypotheses, discrepant as they may have been in matters of detail, best interlocked with the historical and textual data. Milman Parry's achievement was to bring to light a more serviceable hypothesis, one that superseded the old Analytical theories and antiquated their differences of opinion by better accounting for the distinctive internal characteristics of the epics and adducing a modern, observable situation as an exact parallel to the lost moment of creation in antiquity. Oral theory holds forth the hope of correct interpretation because it best answers the questions of causality and mode of existence.

B: I must protest that you pass too quickly over the excesses of nineteenth-century scholarship. The notion that a chain of argument linked by hypotheses can expect to achieve an irrefutable causal explanation for a poem is simply wrong-headed. The Analysts in fact looked not at the Iliad but through it to Kleine Lieder, to an Ur-Ilias, a Meleagergedicht, a Thessalian poem and an Ionian revision, an Aeolic core and Ionic accretions, a sixth-century Athenian standard edition. The question is one of location; where precisely is the verbal art? If you locate it in the aftermath of the Ionian migration, or in the Athens of the Panathenaea in the sixth century, or in the Alexandria of Aristarchus, you will have involved yourself in a historical inquiry of a perfectly legitimate sort. But, for the purposes of literary critical

discourse, you will have perversely ignored the fact that the Iliad exists here and now. To speculate about the reactions of an eighth-century audience may well be a useful and fascinating activity--within the context of intellectual history. But, however much factual information you may bring in support of your speculations, they will in no way contravene the reactions of the modern reader as he confronts the poem in the present.

The Unitarians were right to insist that we jettison the excess baggage of scholarly inquiry. Preconceptions about authorship and signs of authorship in the poetry could only impede and interrupt the sacred relation between poem and perceiver. John Sheppard, for example, saw that the Iliad had not been properly evaluated purely on its own intrinsic merits. He wisely avoided engagement in the polemics of scholarship and devoted his book to critical exegesis pure and simple. Such hardihood has been rare in the years since Parry. There have been only three significant works in English which have ventured to indulge in unadulterated literary criticism: Bowra's Tradition and Design in the Iliad, Bassett's Poetry of Homer, and (sporadically) Cedric Whitman's Homer and the Heroic Tradition. The victories of the historicists--most recently Parry and his disciples--have been won at the expense of literary criticism.

While, in literary theory at large in this century, New Criticism was gaining an unprecedented liberty from



the old positivist methodology, the hardy souls who attempted to treat the Homeric poems as poems were forced to an almost paranoid circumspection by the imperious historicists. While T. S. Eliot and I. A. Richards, William Empson, Cleanth Brooks, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, W. K. Wimsatt and others were securing a new respectability for the autonomous work of art and for the critical procedures that recognized it as such, Calhoun and Bassett, Greene and Whitman, and most recently the Adam Parrys were struggling against a theory that would devalue the poems of Homer and the achievement of their creator.

A: It seems to me that we might learn a different lesson from the career of New Criticism. For it has been notoriously guilty of misrepresentation through over-elaborate contextual analyses, the detection of super-subtle verbal "paradoxes" and "ambiguities" and these not just in Metaphysical poetry. Empson in particular is an outstanding offender. If human reason can be relied upon to expose over-ingenuity, the interpretations of those who have ignored the circumstances of composition will not for long hold our attention. No oral poet could afford, in the heat of improvisation (as it has been scientifically studied in the Balkan laboratories), to engage in the premeditation necessary to create the patterns of imagery and the symbolic resonances that naïve critics have seen in the poems of Homer. The poet's artistic ambit was circumscribed by his hexameter lan-

guage and the nature of his vehicle--the spoken word. The text is only falsified by over-reading.

B: The text is falsified by those who have succumbed to the intentional fallacy. Do you really wish to take it upon yourself to limit Homer's purposes to those you have seen in operation in Yugoslavia?

A: I see no other way to guard the poems against gross misinterpretation. Without the controls provided us by the Yugoslav analogy (and others like it), we would be left without any compelling objective criteria with which to separate impressionistic and undisciplined impositions of meaning from historically plausible interpretation.

B: Your idolatry of historical plausibility is something I cannot condone. My interest is in the here and now, in the realities of poetic art and aesthetic response in the twentieth century and in a context that cannot and should not be transposed with some hypothetical and ultimately illusory ancient situation. The Iliad can never again be in situ.

A: You have renounced the quest for true knowledge.

B: You have closed your eyes to the source of that knowledge.

## Notes (Chapter VII):

Epigraphs: D. Bush, "Literary History and Literary Criticism," in Literary History and Literary Criticism: ACTA of the Ninth Congress International Federation for Modern Languages and Literature, ed. L. Edel et al. (New York, 1964), p. 8; C. Brooks, The Well Wrought Urn, p. 215.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF CRITICAL JUDGMENT

Once we have reckoned the values held by our critics, their conflicts do not seem irreconcilable; their likes and dislikes seem to fit consistently into the pattern established by the interplay between their respective positions and the work at hand.

Harry Levin 1955

The debate in the preceding chapter is a distillate of many confrontations: Nitzsch vs. Wolf, Blackie vs. Grote, Lang vs. Kirchhoff, Shewan vs. Wilamowitz, Parry vs. Calhoun, Lord vs. Amory, to cite only a few of the more obvious realizations of the Gestalt. The accusations leveled by each side are of the greatest consequence for the discipline of literary criticism; they center on misreading and misrepresentation, false characterization and unfounded value judgment--miscarriages of the objectives of critical discourse. Are such charges adjudicable? What must be our guiding principles in such adjudications? The ultimate standard in any literary study must be the furtherance of the three aims: understanding, interpretation, and evaluation.

Each methodology claims to base its judgments on certain crucial and determinate sets of evidence. The

first task in self-justification will thus be the demonstration that one constellation of evidence is more compelling, more embracing, than another. The act of criticism consists in the framing of a structure of evidence within which the work of art will emit a configuration of significance. An alteration in the body of evidence or in the relative weight given any piece of evidence will induce a concomitant change in the configuration of significance. To put it in other, simpler, words, what you receive from a poem correlates directly with what you bring to it.

A further point on evidence. The data, both intrinsic and extrinsic, available to the critic are infinite. Any combination or hierarchic arrangement of evidence will occur not spontaneously, but through the will of the critic; he will search for a hypothesis that will best harmonize and interrelate the evidence available to him. The cogency of his interpretation depends in large measure on his ability to reveal configurations of significance within the work of art by confronting it with an interpretive hypothesis sustained at every point by the evidence he has collected and sifted. The true test of an interpretation is its adequacy: how effectively does it activate the significance of a text? How convincingly does it support itself by reference to relevant data?

Here, we have come to the crux of the matter: there

is no such thing as a wholly adequate interpretation. The work of art is incorrigibly polysemantic. Meaning cannot be exhausted by the application of interpretive hypotheses. We may only closer approximate full sig- adv. nificance. In this regard, we must embrace and foster a plurality of procedures. Critical controversies have too often indulged in hopelessly skew argumentation. If methodologies are grounded upon different dispositions and organizations of the same data, then their proponents may to some purpose engage in debate as to relative merits. If, on the other hand, two methodologies proceed from bodies of evidence that are quite dissimilar in composition, then they have no real cause for disagreement.

For fear my argument lose itself in theoretical rarefaction, I will fasten it to real issues in Homeric criticism. Let us consider an episode that has been the focus of especially heated discussion--the Embassy to Achilles. Iliad 9 contains some of the most memorable, brilliantly conceived and wrought scenes in all epic poetry. But, at the same time, it is the occasion for some glaring narrative inconcinnities.

It will be remembered that the Embassy consists of three principal agents--Phoenix, Ajax, and Odysseus--and that Phoenix is, at one point, expressly appointed leader of the mission:

Thereupon the Gerenian horseman Nestor answered him:

"Son of Atreus, most lordly and king of men, Agamemnon,  
 none could scorn any longer these gifts you offer to  
 Achilleus  
 the king. Come, let us choose and send some men, who  
 in all speed  
 will go to the shelter of Achilleus, the son of Peleus;  
 or come, the men on whom my eye falls, let these  
 take the duty.  
 First of all let Phoinix, beloved of Zeus, be their  
 leader,  
 and after him take Aias the great, and brilliant  
 Odysseus,  
 and of the heralds let Odios and Eurybates go with  
 them.  
 Bring also water for their hands, and bid them keep  
 words of good omen,  
 so we may pray to Zeus, son of Kronos, if he will  
 have pity."  
 So he spoke, and the word he spoke was pleasing  
 to all of them.

Il. 9.162-73 (trans. Lattimore)

Well and good. But in lines 182-99, only Ajax and  
 Odysseus actually go to Achilles, so far as we can tell  
 from the grammar and sense of the lines; the dual case-  
 ending is used at least eight (perhaps nine) times in a  
 space of eighteen verses and Odysseus is explicitly  
 referred to as leader of the expedition.

Now these two came forward, as brilliant Odysseus  
 led them.

τὼ δὲ βάτην προτέρω, ἡγεῖτο δὲ δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς.

Il. 9.192

The philologists have taught us that the supposition that  
 the duals simply indicate plurality is insupportable; and,  
 in any event, they do seem to apply to only two people,  
 for Phoenix does not reappear until the delivery of the  
 speeches, including his own carefully wrought appeal with  
 its long paradeigma (Meleager).

Other anomalies arise as we read beyond Iliad 9. The Embassy seems, at several places later in the Iliad, never to have taken place at all. In Book 11, Achilles says to Patroclus:

"Son of Menoitios, you who delight my heart, o  
great one,  
now I think the Achaians will come to my knees and  
stay there  
in supplication, for a need past endurance has come  
to them."

Il. 11.607-9

Later, in Iliad 16.83-86, he appears to look forward to restitution and compensation which have in reality already been offered. Let us examine some interpretive hypotheses.

1. Perhaps the most obvious explanation is multiple authorship. Within the context of a powerful Analytical tradition, it would be quite natural to add to the constellation of evidence the narrative anomalies centering in and around Iliad 9. Unity of composition is a tenable opinion only at the price of imagining an intermittently amnesiac poet who could, on the one hand, compose Book 8 to insure proper motivation for the decision to petition Achilles in 9, frame three speeches of consummate artistry and psychological verisimilitude, and, on the other, temporarily "mislay" Phoenix, the most important ambassador, and later forget with Achilles (and everyone else) that any Embassy has ever occurred. The hypothesis of multiple authorship fits the internal evidence more adequately.<sup>1</sup>

2. The Unitarians attempt to rebut the Analysts



by reading between the lines and sending Phoenix ahead to Achilles before the Embassy proper; he is allowed a status that pre-empts his role as ambassador. As for the seeming lapses of memory in Books 11 and 16, they are typical of a stylistic trait in Homeric verse--the propensity to concentrate on the immediate narrative moment to the exclusion of any strong concern for consistency between widely separated parts of the narrative. As in the case of Pylaemenes slain (Il. 5.576-79) and redivivus (Il. 13.656-59), we have to do not with a damning irregularity due to inept conflation or revision, but with a stylistic tendency peculiar to recitational performance.<sup>2</sup> This hypothesis fits the evidence of Homer himself as displayed in his poetry; we need not bring into the picture any external data (as, for example, the ancient testimonia to multiple authorship [Cicero, Josephus et al.] assembled by Wolf and others).

3. Oral theory can supply a hypothesis that will make numbers 1 and 2 obsolete. The inconsistencies set down to plurality of composition or stylistic "proclivity" are in reality due to the exigencies of oral improvisation. It is to be expected that slips will occur in a performance of some 15,000 verses in length. The poet could no more mentally grasp the entire poem as a simultaneous fabric than could his audience--such a grasp could only begin to be approximated with the advent of writing. Only then would inconsistencies be recognized as such.

Further, the poet's formular and thematic usage--an indispensable quality of the singer's art--sometimes betrayed him into following certain well-established syntactic and grammatical Gestalten even in circumstances where they were inapposite and perhaps downright disruptive. Thus it will be noticed that two heralds, Odios and Eurybates, accompany the three principal ambassadors (see Il. 9.170) in the Embassy episode. It is their presence that evoked the troublesome duals. For the bard succumbed to the gravitational pull of a familiar type-scene, a well-entrenched multiform of a theme we can observe appropriately articulated in, for example, Iliad 1.318-48 where two heralds--Talthybios and Eurybates--are sent to fetch Briseis. The singer has in Iliad 9 fallen into a comfortable narrative habit, one of many that were essential to his craft. Moreover, this hypothesis is supported by the discovery of similar phenomena (inconsistency arising from ill-adjustment of thematic material) in modern Yugoslav practice.<sup>3</sup>

4. Still another hypothesis results from the combination of the evidence adduced both by those who analyze aesthetic impact alone and those who work in the field of comparative oral poetics. On such a basis, we may argue that the poet has not been betrayed by his traditional medium, but that he has used it cunningly to his own advantage. He has in fact intended the Embassy in Book 9 to recall the earlier one in Book 1 and so to

effect an important suggestion by the resultant juxtaposition. Though the duals are somewhat jarring in the context of the Embassy to Achilles, they serve to promote an awareness of a connection between the scenes in 9 and in 1. The disgrace of Achilles in the earlier scene is pointedly recalled in Iliad 9, where the circumstances have changed so drastically. The underlying irony is brought to the foreground by the carefully contrived echo.<sup>4</sup> By this hypothesis, the Embassy to Achilles gains another dimension of significance. Not only is the evidence bearing on causation efficiently handled, but the internal data is made efficacious rather than just anomalous.

None of these four interpretations is susceptible of positive verification. Each has proponents who are very learned and sensitive students of Homer, and each is self-consistent within the evidential context it inhabits. As with the more abstract collision of critical philosophies I have dramatized in chapter VII, there can be no absolute ascription of validity to one rather than another interpretation. Each is limited to suggesting rather than dictating a particular reading. Literary criticism is not an exact science and our inclination to favor one reading over another is a function of psychological factors which can never be completely disclosed. We may sense that our experience of a work of art is enlarged or constricted by the adoption of a given interpretive viewpoint, without being able to account objec-

tively for that sensation.

None of the four readings necessarily excludes the others. It is true of course that discrete conclusions are reached as to proper interpretation and (implicitly) evaluation, but each hypothesis is calculated to interlock with a unique set of data, preselected and weighed for relevance to the critical context. For the Analyst, it will be essential that his conclusions about aesthetic effect mesh smoothly with the evidence relating to causality (viz., authorial motives and audience expectations). This is true of the oral theorist and the Unitarian as well, though the latter places greater stress on internal data. The fourth hypothesis emphasizes evidence bearing on reception rather than inception of the aesthetic facts. If these various vantage points are discrepant, they are not for that obstructed by any of the others. So with the philosophical positions I have mimicked in chapter VII.

Our metacritical judgments must avoid impoverishment of the poem by restricting the avenues of approach to it. This is a different thing from indiscriminately granting all readings an equal footing. We shall need to exercise our own common sense in awarding precedence to one of two or more competing hypotheses which are avowedly designed to encompass the same body of evidence. But if two speculative instruments are intended for use within different evidential perimeters, it is pointless

to play the one off against the other. We may well prefer to adopt one as more useful generally or more enlightening within some special context of criticism, but we should recognize that choice as an act of predilection proceeding from a personal, subjective experience--a unique aesthetic response.

My own predispositions (innate or acquired) guide my decisions. Since my choice cannot be justified by appeal to an objective critical code, I must not succumb to a combative intolerance. The very existence of diverging procedures and critical conclusions should be the occasion for a happy realization that the work of art is eternally vital and polyvalent. In the case of Homer, this recognition has been thwarted too long by the internal strife in the community of his critics.

## Notes (Chapter VIII):

Epigraph: H. Levin, "Art as Knowledge" (1955), in Contexts of Criticism (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), p. 35.

<sup>1</sup> This interpretation approximates that of W. Leaf, The Iliad, I (2nd ed. London, 1900), p. 384 (ad 9.168); E. Bethe, Homer: Dichtung und Sage, I: Ilias (Leipzig, 1914), pp. 73-77; and esp. D. Page, History and the Homeric Iliad, pp. 297-315.

<sup>2</sup> For this interpretive line, see C. Rothe, Die Ilias als Dichtung, pp. 229-31; C. M. Bowra, Tradition and Design in the Iliad, pp. 97-101; W. Schadewaldt, Iliasstudien, pp. 137-38; C. M. Bowra, "Composition," in CH, pp. 47-51; G. S. Kirk, The Songs of Homer, pp. 212-15.

<sup>3</sup> See A. B. Lord, "Homer and Huxo II: Narrative Inconsistencies in Homer and Oral Poetry," TAPA, 69 (1938), 439-45, and The Singer of Tales, pp. 159-69; F. M. Combellack, "Some Formulary Illogicalities in Homer," TAPA, 96 (1965), 41-56; J. B. Hainsworth, The Flexibility of the Homeric Formula, p. 14; D. M. Gunn, "Narrative Inconsistency and the Oral Dictated Text in the Homeric Epic," AJP, 91 (1970), 192-203.

<sup>4</sup> See C. P. Segal, "The Embassy and the Duals of Iliad 9.182-98," GRBS, 9 (1968), 101-14, following Franz Boll.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION: TOWARD RAPPROCHEMENT

Either death or transfiguration: the work of art never remains what it was when it was born; it does not if it dries up in consequence of the disappearance of the kind of taste which inspired it, neither does it if it gets transmitted, because then it takes on new aspects while adapting itself to new times.

Mario Praz 1964

In chapters VI-VIII, I have been at pains to make some differentiations among various modes of critical perception. My intention has been to found these distinctions upon definitions essential to that demarcation of scope and purpose without which literary criticism is vulnerable to chronic misdirection and ultimately to loss of identity. Methods which only use the poems as means to some extra-literary end (e.g., knowledge of the late Bronze Age) have been excluded; the first qualification is convergence of critical energies on the work of art. That this is not a self-evident proposition is apparent from a consideration of many treatises which have passed, and continue to pass, as "literary criticism" in Homer studies.

Concentration on the intrinsic evidence of the

epics, to the exclusion of all other testimony, is not only impossible but undesirable. The artistic fact necessarily inhabits a larger context of facts, and, as I have tried to emphasize, that larger context is generated and structured by the recipient of the poems. It is this circumstance that offers the occasion for literary critical discourse. With the critic rests the heavy responsibility of exercising a sagacious and properly motivated control over the central activity, what C. S. Lewis calls "Reader Meets Text."

This essay cannot be concluded in good conscience until I have attempted to resolve a dispute that has been, since Milman Parry, at the heart of literary critical discourse, often causing severe arrhythmia and conducting not at all to the general well-being of the discipline. No very effective prescription for cure has yet been written.

Those who adhere most intransigently to the theory of oral composition of the Iliad and the Odyssey have maintained that when reader meets text he must carry with him a clear notion of the situation of original performance. He must devote all his critical ability to the imaginative reproduction of that primal performance, however much the effort taxes the resources of his intellectual flexibility. If he is unable to recognize the distinctive features of an oral style, he will run the risk of falsifying the poems and grievously miscon-



struing their configurations of meaning.

This position is an uncompromising one and it has long been thought to threaten Homer with submersion in the amorphous and protean Tradition. In literary critical biography, individual human beings are far more satisfying and attractive (not to say manageable) subjects than aggregations, even when our mental portraits of the former are indistinct and faded. But this is beside the more pressing issue--the status of the artistic fact itself. Oral theory has seemed to depreciate the poetry by limiting its significance to that which it can reasonably be supposed to have had as a structure of spoken words. An oral communication has about it certain obvious and undeniable temporal limitations. It is evanescent both for the speaker and the listener; the winged words do not linger for lavish attention. In any continuous outpouring of verbal expression, there will be relatively little time for premeditation and concomitantly small opportunity to "load" the words with meaning beyond their surface value. Nor would the listener have the time to disengage and mentally articulate any such deeper levels of meaning. All of these points can be readily granted without threatening the poems of Homer as we know them with devaluation.

In the past twenty years or so, scholars have increasingly come to embrace the notion of a Greek oral poetics and of the origination of our Iliad and Odyssey

in that poetics. Parry's arguments from style and from comparative epic continue to win adherents (even among Germans, notably Albin Lesky). But, whatever decision we may reach on this head, it is of course beyond sane debate that our Homer exists as a written (or printed) text. How he came to be so written is now, and may always be, a matter of conjecture and dispute rather than certainty. But it is a matter that can wisely be left to the historians, the archaeologists, and the students of ancient technology (viz., to Misses Lorimer and Jeffrey, to H. T. Wade-Gery, F. H. Stubbings et al.). For the literary critic, the effect is of far greater moment than the cause.

All the hue and cry about oral poetics has arisen precisely because it is possible to approach any given text from many different angles. Because the Homeric poems have changed vehicles from spoken to written word, they have ipsissimo facto a dual ontology. They are, on the one hand, in all likelihood, a "frozen section" of a living and mutable oral tradition. We may very well be able to condition ourselves to respond to them in a manner consonant with what is known about the context of an oral recitation, and we may thereby win for ourselves a more realistic appreciation of the motives and intentions of the singer and how they are reflected in the poetry, as well as of the determinate aesthetic event which was experienced by the original audience.

But, on the other hand, the poems of Homer are no more oral for us than is the Aeneid. Pushed to its logical conclusion, oral theory requires us to listen to the poem once and only once, without any more pauses than normally occur in the singing of long narrative poems (in Yugoslavia or wherever).

The plain fact is that the context within which we experience the poems cannot be honestly exchanged for the ancient, non-literary context. This means that the Homeric epics have for us, as they have had for all who have known a fixed text, meanings and values they could have had neither for their composer not for their original <sup>not</sup> hearers. The fact that we can, for example, verify our impressions or associations of images or scenes simply by leafing through pages to the relevant minim or tract of narrative gives us access to levels of meaning which may well lack any correlative levels of intent.

We have come back to the issue of evidential relevance, and I may conclude by reiterating my plea for an invigorating ecumenism of critical perceptions. Because one critic places a high premium on absolute fidelity to authorial intent while a second advises an extreme deference to the intuitions and sensibilities of the twentieth-century reader, that difference in belief is no warrant for mutual intolerance. Quarrels about matters of faith are indulged at the expense of the one true god--the poetry itself.

## Notes (Chapter IX):

Epigraph: M. Praz, "Historical and Evaluative Criticism," in Literary History and Literary Criticism, p. 74.

## APPENDIX

### THE FORMULA

1. M. Parry, "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making. I. Homer and Homeric Style," HSCP, 41 (1930), 73-147 = MHV, pp. 266-324.
2. E. G. O'Neill, Jr., "The Localization of Metrical Word-Types in the Greek Hexameter," YCS, 8 (1942), 103-78.
3. H. N. Porter, "The Early Greek Hexameter," YCS, 12 (1951), 1-63.
4. A. B. Lord, The Singer of Tales (Cambridge, Mass., 1960).
5. A. B. Lord, "Homer and Other Epic Poetry," in CH, pp. 179-214.
6. G. S. Kirk, The Songs of Homer (Cambridge, 1962).
7. J. A. Notopoulos, "The Homeric Hymns as Oral Poetry: A Study of the Post-Homeric Oral Tradition," AJP, 83 (1962), 337-68.
8. J. A. Russo, "A Closer Look at Homeric Formulas," TAPA, 94 (1963), 235-47.
9. J. B. Hainsworth, "Structure and Content in Epic Formulae: The Question of the Unique Expression," CQ, 14 (1964), 155-64.
10. A. Hoekstra, Homeric Modifications of Formulaic Prototypes: Studies in the Development of Greek Epic Diction (Amsterdam, 1965).
11. W. W. Minton, "The Fallacy of the Structural Formula," TAPA, 96 (1965), 241-53.
12. J. A. Russo, "The Structural Formula in Homeric Verse," YCS, 20 (1966), 217-40.
13. J. B. Hainsworth, The Flexibility of the Homeric Formula (Oxford, 1968).

--- Parry's basic definition of the formula: "A group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea" (item 1: 80).

--- Expansion of the definition:

We have thus brought into the category of formulas not only the repeated expressions, but those which are of the same type as the others. In the two passages analyzed above [Il. 1.1-25 & Od. 1.1-25] I marked with a broken line only those formulas which were like others in rhythm, in parts of speech, and in one important word; but there are more general types of formulas, and one could make no greater mistake than to limit the formulaic element to what is underlined (1: 133).

Further, "one often finds the same verse-pattern where the words are different" (1: 133). E.g., τεύχε κύνεσσιν is like δῶκεν ἑταίρῳ.

--- Lord's theory of the formula by analogy: item 4, chap. 3 passim, and pp. 141-43, 291-92; also item 5, p. 188:

The core of the formulaic technique and of its resulting structure is formed by the metrical and syntactic patterns; these patterns have been established by the most common formulae over the years, and the most common formulae at any given time reflect and set the tone of these patterns. The formulaic technique of oral composition enables the singer to compose secondary formulae for the less common ideas within the rhythms of these patterns and by analogy with the more common formulae.

--- Notopoulos says that Κύνθιον ὄχθον (Hom. Hymn. Ap. 17) is a line-ending "formula by analogy to a system with a pattern of --υ υ--υ" (7: 356, n. 59).

--- G. S. Kirk suggests that "even single words have definite formular tendencies, since they gravitate

strongly to certain positions in the verse according to their metrical value" (6: 67).

--- Russo combines the findings of O'Neill and Porter with this expanded definition of the formula; result, formula = metrical-grammatical unit. Specific words or phrases are simply reifications of certain abstract patterns or shapes ("shadows of formulas") which are confined to specific slots (occasionally only one). Some examples of formulae and their pattern-notations (after O'Neill & Porter) as set forth by Russo are:

ἐτελείετο βουλή	$\begin{array}{c c} \text{V} & 10 \\ \text{VV} - \text{VV} & \end{array} \left  \begin{array}{c} \text{N} & 12 \\ - & - \end{array} \right.$
διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε	$\begin{array}{c c} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} - \text{VV} - & \end{array} \left  \begin{array}{c} \text{V} & 12 \\ \text{VV} - & \text{V} \end{array} \right.$
ἐλώρια	$\begin{array}{c c} \text{N} & 8 \\ \text{V} - & \text{VV} \end{array}$

N.B. single-word formulae are quite admissible.

--- Revisionists Hainsworth and Hoekstra are troubled by the all-inclusive systems which result from the expanded definition of the formula. Hainsworth:

The vice of the extension of the term "formula" to cover structural features in the epic diction is that unless it is hedged about by more conditions than are visible in the practice of present-day Homeric scholarship the statement that the epics are nine-tenths formulae is likely to be vacuously, and so uselessly, true. The formula must be defined in such a way that if the poet had created a phrase, a novel and original expression, we could allow ourselves to say so. Otherwise Homer will be formulaic only because we have prevented ourselves calling him anything else (9: 157),

Hoekstra observes that general verse-patterns "can be shown to exist even in the Hymns of Callimachus and they

are apparently inherent in the hexameter itself, whether formulaic or non-formulaic, whether oral or written" (10: 12). As for single-word formulae, "since all Greek hexameter poetry from Homer to Theocritus shows 'preferred' positions for definite metrical word-types, as has been proved by O'Neill, this kind of 'formulaic analysis' is virtually a reductio ad absurdum of the theory" (10: 14). We must not indiscriminately apply the criterion of metrical and syntactic patterns.

--- Minton, unlike Hainsworth and Hoekstra, addresses himself specifically to Russo. He selects several metrical-grammatical patterns and seeks particular realizations in a 1000-line sampling of Homer and a 1000-line sampling of Apollonius Rhodius. He finds that "there is indeed no way of proving that in the early hexameter such 'structural' phrase-types are not part and parcel of the language and art of oral composition; the only thing that must be made clear is that they are not peculiar to it" (11: 253).

--- Russo (12) attempts to 'meet Hainsworth's objection by asserting that an expression which is indeed unique and original may nevertheless fit into a pattern of grammatical and metrical word-types. He intimates that structural patterns are more pervasive in Homer than in Apollonius Rhodius (see p. 224, n. 14), apparently unaware of Minton's findings. Appended is a list of common "structural formulas."



--- Hainsworth (13) offers an important revision of oral theory by a microscopic study of formulaic flexibility, of mobility, modification, expansion, and separation. The formulaic infrastructure of the hexameter is shown to be more variable than had been thought under hard Parryist ground rules.

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