1

A NONCE-WORD IN THE *ILIAD*

'My own father', Achilles says to Priam in the last book of the *Iliad*, 'was a rich man
and a powerful one. He was king of the Myrmidons, and he had a divine wife. But
even so the gods gave him evils too. He had no family, only one son, and that son
a παναώριος one. I do not look after him in his old age, but am far away, sitting here
in Troy, inflicting misery on you and your children.'[1]

The problem I propose to discuss is the meaning of παναώριος. The word is unique
to this passage, and the standard translation 'of all-untimely fate' or 'doomed to die
young'[2] is open to many objections. I shall argue that by describing himself as
'untimely' what Achilles means is that he is someone who is always doing the wrong
thing at the wrong time, a misfit. It may seem a petty point, hardly worth the long
argument that will be needed to establish it. But it has consequences for our judgement
of the *Iliad* as a whole. If the one interpretation is correct, then Homer is content to
repeat his effects without regard to the situation of his characters, which in any other
author we would call careless writing. On the other interpretation he is capable of
focusing down to quite detailed nuances. The question is not therefore one of
lexicology alone but also of literary criticism.

The translation 'all-untimely doomed' has warrant from antiquity. Leaf quotes a
scholium παντελῶς ἄωρον ἀποθανούμενον, and the word ἀωρία is used by a scholiast
at 1.505 to refer to the fate by which Achilles was to die early. Nevertheless the warrant
is not very strong. It does not for instance have the backing of Herodian, who explains
παναώριος as τὸν κατὰ πάντα ἄωρον, 'altogether untimely', without any mention
of death or fate, nor of Eustathius, who has a similar gloss τὸν πάντη ἄωρον. Moreover
Eustathius adds an interesting comment. He remarks (with disapproval) that
παναώριος is a triple compound of a type more appropriate to the language of comedy
but of which Homer has three further examples – δυσαριστοτόκεια, πανάποτμος,
δυσάμμορος. Eustathius makes the same point on two or three separate occasions,[3]
and one gets the impression that it was something of a commonplace of Homeric
criticism. This could explain how the other interpretation of παναώριος arose. Once
having been grouped with these epithets because of the similarity of its make-up, it
could easily have become associated with them in meaning too. For there was little
in the way of solid argument to go on. παναώριος occurs only here in classical Greek
literature, and when in the sixth century A.D. Paulus Silentiarius used it to describe
a premature wrinkle, we can be fairly confident that it was not an independent use
at all but a conscious reminiscence of Homeric language.

However, though there are not solid arguments there are pointers of several different
kinds.

The first and most obvious is context. 'Soon-to-die' is not appropriate to the situ-
ation as Achilles describes it. To say 'Peleus had only one child, me, and I am doomed

[1] *Il.* 24.535-42.

[2] Among the translators and commentators who make παναώριος carry the meaning 'doomed
to die young' are Alexander Pope, Leaf, Munro, Mazon, Rieu, Macleod, and Willcock.
Lattimore is the only translator I have found to notice that there is no mention of fate in the
Greek. However, it is not clear what his rendering 'but a single all-untimely child he had' is
supposed to mean since 'untimely' is not used of persons in normal English.

[3] Eustathius 1130.24, 1277.42, 1412.42.

to an early death, so that I am not looking after him now that he is old' is a *non sequitur*. The fact that he is soon to die in the future does not in any way stop Achilles looking after Peleus in the present. If Achilles had been intending to refer to his future death by πανάώριος he ought to have continued with different tenses and said 'I *shall* not look after him when he *becomes* old'. But if 'untimely' means 'mis-timing' the sentence is perfectly logical. 'Now that my father is old', Achilles will be saying, 'I ought to be tending him at home, not fighting here.'

A second pointer is the social situation as it is envisaged in the scene. For Achilles to harp on, or even to mention, his own destiny in self-commiseration would be tactless. It is not for him at this of all moments to ask for Priam's sympathy. It would be more appropriate for him to apologise. But he cannot apologise convincingly. He had intended to kill Hector and he was proud of himself for having done so. It would have been false hypocrisy as well as an insult to the memory of Patroclus to pretend otherwise. However, what he can truthfully do is to blame himself for having come to Troy in the first place, and if we understand πανάώριος as self-denigration and not as a complaint against destiny, then this will be exactly what he does.

The third pointer is the word itself – or it would be if we could be confident that the word conveyed its natural meaning to Homer's audience. However, this is an assumption which in the present state of things cannot be taken for granted. All the emphasis of Homeric scholarship is on Greek epic diction as something essentially *sui generis*. But though there is undoubtedly an element of *Kunstsprache* in Homer, and though the numerous fixed formulae which occur in the poems may imply a preceding tradition of oral poetry, neither of these factors does anything to explain the outstanding feature of the Homeric epics, their originality.[4] This originality is most obvious in regard to their content, but its existence is a warning that we cannot rule out *a priori* the possibility that their language may have been original too in the same sense that the language of other poets is. If so, then the unique πανάώριος may have been a new word – and if it was, then the audience will have had to interpret it as such. They will not have had memory to guide them. Now the meaning 'short-lived' or 'doomed to die early' can only be seriously defended if πανάώριος came coated with a patina of previous associations, a known synonym for μινυνθάδιος and ὠκύμορος. For it is counter-intuitive and not at all what one would expect from the etymology of the word. It therefore becomes important to know whether πανάώριος is likely to have been an old word or a new one. This is a difficult question to answer objectively, and I am afraid it will take a rather lengthy excursus.

Homer has been called unique for different reasons at different periods of history. In our time the most fashionable reasons have been either that he was the first poet who could write or the last one who could not.[5] However, the truth is that we do not know what made him unique for his contemporaries. The thing that above all makes him unique for us is simply that he comes at the beginning. We cannot place him, as we can place all other poets, in a historical context. We do not know what his raw material was either in the matter of story or in the matter of language. We cannot detect parodies, nuances, ambiguities, and ironies, as we can with poets whose *milieu* is more or less familiar. Indeed we can only understand him at all because of our knowledge of later Greek. When that fails us, all we can normally do (since the light

[4] The best introduction to the theory of the oral composition of the Homeric poems is a book edited by J. Latacz, *Homer: Tradition und Neuerung* (Darmstadt, 1979). It is an anthology of essays and articles and includes a full bibliography.

[5] On the oral Homer see Latacz (previous note); on Homer and the alphabet see G. P. Goold, *TAPhA* 91 (1960), 272–91, and H. T. Wade-Gery, *The Poet of the Iliad* (Cambridge, 1952).

shed by Indo-European philology is at best flickering) is to try to draw inferences from his own usage in other passages. This was Aristarchus' method, and it is the only sound one. But in the case of παναώριος it too fails us. The word does not recur. However, there are other words in the *Iliad* that are found once and once only, and it may be possible to shed light on them as a class.

In what follows I shall use the label *hapax* to mean a word that occurs only once in an author. A word that occurs only once in the whole of the literature we possess I shall call an absolute *hapax*. By 'word' I shall mean what a maker of dictionaries would consider a separate word, not the kind of different inflectional form or spelling variant that is counted as a separate word by the great majority of concordance-making modern computers. Thus, to illustrate with an English example, 'brighten' and 'circumvent' will be Shakespearian *hapaxes* despite the fact that Shakespeare uses 'bright' and 'circumvention', but 'chestnuts' and 'zwaggered' will not be, for he uses 'chestnut' in the singular and 'swaggered' spelled with an *s*. On the other hand Shakespeare's words 'muster-file' and 'sin-concealing' will count as absolute *hapaxes* since *OED*, the fullest available dictionary, does not cite any other occurrences of them.

The first and most obvious remark we can make about *hapaxes* as a class is that they are not at all unusual. In Shakespeare they number about four and a half thousand. That is 40 or 45% of his whole vocabulary, if we estimate this as between ten and twelve thousand words. In Marlowe, an author with a much smaller *corpus* and a total vocabulary of only some five thousand words, the proportion of *hapaxes* approaches 50%. Nor are the words themselves necessarily unusual. I have just cited a very ordinary one, 'brighten', from Shakespeare, and one could add examples by the hundred from 'contest' and 'dankish' to 'low-spirited' and 'wishful'. The same goes for Marlowe. He has only one 'vineyard', one 'isthmus', one 'liquor'. It is not 'needful' to list more – they abound 'wherever' one looks, though one is 'indebted' to the concordances of Ule and Spevack for making it possible to check that these common words are indeed used only once by each author.[6] But there is a sub-class of *hapax* words which are far from common. That is compounds, for instance 'candle-cases', 'marriage-blessing', 'self-glorious' in Shakespeare; 'sword-girt', 'flint-breasted', and 'unrevenging' in Marlowe. These we may suspect of being made up for the occasion, nonce-words as *OED* calls them. Finally there is a class of everyday words which we can well understand being used only once since they refer to things that the poet may well not have much occasion to talk about, such as 'gorse' in Shakespeare or 'hoy' (a kind of ferry or packet-boat) in Marlowe.

To turn now to an inflected language and to the ancient world. Ovid, an author with a large *corpus* and a reputation for being repetitive, has some fifteen hundred *hapaxes*, and one can easily quote examples of all three types. *Absolvo, aliquot, balneum* are very ordinary words; *admugio, anguipes*, and *resaevio* look like coinages; *acanthus, amentum, tapete* refer to things which he may have had only one occasion to mention. Ovid's total vocabulary is about six and a half thousand, so that *hapaxes* make up something over twenty per cent of it. Next, so as to take an author that was as different from Ovid as Marlowe was from Shakespeare, we may look at Virgil. We shall find

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[6] L. Ule, *Concordance to the Works of Christopher Marlowe* (Hildesheim/New York, 1979) and Marvin Spevack, *A Complete and Systematic Concordance to the Works of Shakespeare* (Hildesheim, 1968–70).

My estimates of *hapaxes* and of total vocabularies for all the authors I mention are calculated from samples, and though I have taken care to make the samples as unbiased as possible the results are necessarily approximate. To make this clear and to prevent any illusion of pseudo-scientific exactness I have presented them in very round figures.

that from a total of some seven thousand different words about eleven hundred, that is to say 15%, are *hapaxes*. Again there are examples of all three of our types; *abicio, argumentum, brumalis*; *addenseo, bellipotens, bimembris*; *aconitum, aquor, bufo*.

We have now sketched in a kind of landscape against which to set the pattern of *hapaxes* in Greek poets. We shall look at Euripides, Sophocles, and the *Odyssey*, before turning to the *Iliad* itself.

The pattern is much the same. *Hapaxes* are frequent – 37% of the total vocabulary in Euripides, 22% in Sophocles, 33% in the *Odyssey* – and include all three types. For example in Euripides ἄκληρος, ἀλλοῖος, βοηθέω are *hapaxes* that are commonplace words; so too are κατάδηλος, μέτρον, τράπεζα in Sophocles, and ἀναμιμνήσκω, συλλέγω, τίμιος in the *Odyssey*. At the other end of the spectrum there are plenty that seem to be nonce-words, that is to say tailor-made for their position, like ἀθυρόγλωσσος for the demagogue in *Orestes*, ὠμοκρατής to describe the hero in *Ajax*, and πανάπαλος for the gilded young man that Athena disguises herself as in the thirteenth book of the *Odyssey*. There are also, as we would expect, *hapaxes* of the special-reference type, for instance βαλβίς in *Medea*, θεωρία in *Oedipus at Colonus*, συβόσιον in the *Odyssey*.

We now have a profile against which we can match the *Iliad*, and it turns out to match very well. *Hapaxes* constitute some 35% of its total vocabulary. This is well within the normal range. We cannot be quite so definite about the categories they fall into as we have no independent evidence to measure Homer's language by. But it is hard to believe that words like ἀριθμέω, ἱμείρω, ταχυτής were not in colloquial use, that ἀμετροεπής, βαρβαρόφωνος, πολύπλαγκτος were not coined in order to describe Thersites, the Carians, and winds at sea respectively, or that βότρυς, δελφίς, καλύπτρη were not regular words that the poet happened to use only once because he happened to have only one occasion to refer to a bunch of grapes, a dolphin, and a veil. In short there is nothing to surprise us about the internal aspect of the *hapaxes* in the *Iliad*. They behave just like the *hapaxes* in other authors.

We may now turn to what I may call the external aspect of *hapaxes* – the proportion between those that are absolute and those that are used either before or after the author concerned. Let us begin with the latter. Confining ourselves to the ancient world, we shall find that the great majority of authors' *hapaxes* are employed in later literature, the proportions varying from 70 to 95%. The figure for the *Iliad* is 85%, that is to say in the middle of the expected range and confirming our impression that there is nothing abnormal about Iliadic *hapaxes*.

But the class of *hapaxes* which particularly interests us, the class to which πανάωριος belongs, is that of *hapaxes* that are not re-employed. What we want to discover is whether these are in the nature of ageing actors, taking their final bow before retiring from the linguistic scene altogether, or whether they are special creations that were not taken up and remained nonce-words. We must therefore inspect the class of author's *hapaxes* that were not used subsequently. If most of them appeared in earlier literature, then clearly the 'final bow' theory is correct. But it turns out not so. Over three quarters of the *hapaxes* in Sophocles and Euripides that do not occur subsequently do not occur previously either: they are absolute *hapaxes*. Examples are διαφοιβάζω, ἐπαμαξεύω; ἀνασπαράσσω, ἀνόροφος. In Ovid, Virgil, and the *Odyssey* the proportion is still higher. In fact the verdict of my samples is *nem. con.*: all the author's *hapaxes* that do not recur later are absolute *hapaxes*. Examples are *aerifer, sonabilis*; *advelo, bilix*; ἀμφιτρομέω, ἐπεντανύω. An absolute *hapax*, it is obvious, is likely to be a special coinage, or nonce-word, especially if it is particularly apt to its

context. But we can now go further than this. We have seen that the odds are strongly in favour, by more than three to one, of any *hapax* that is not re-used being an absolute one. In normal circumstances of course this is a useless constatation. We do not need to estimate chances when we can use our eyes and look to see if previous authors have used the word. But in the case of the *Iliad* we cannot use our eyes. The poets who lived before Agamemnon are buried in night. So our principle becomes useful. It enables us to identify a class of words, non-recurring Iliadic *hapaxes*, which are likely not to have existed in pre-Iliadic poetry but to have been nonce-words coined by the *Iliad* itself.[7]

This principle can obviously be employed over a wider field than we had in mind when we began our enquiry. For a list of the words Homer created should give us some new insights into his poetic personality. But our immediate purpose is less ambitious. It is simply to assess the chances in relation to the one word παναώριος, whether it is likely to be new or old. And we have come to a positive conclusion. The chances strongly favour its having been a new word.

Our conclusion that παναώριος is likely to have been a special coinage was reached because of its status as an absolute *hapax* in classical Greek literature. It can be re-enforced by considerations arising from the specific nature of the word itself. παναώριος is a compound word, created with formants which were clearly productive in the Homeric period (as are *un-* or *–wise* in modern English in contrast to the no longer productive *with-* of 'withstand' or 'withdraw'). The first of them, alpha privative, is as frequent in archaic as it is in later Greek. So is the final one, the termination -ιος: there are ninety-five examples of it appended to consonant stems in the *Iliad* alone, eight of which (e.g. ἀνδράγριος; ἐπινεφρίδιος) are absolute *hapaxes* and therefore likely according to our principle to have been Iliadic coinages. Furthermore the *Odyssey* has thirty-five examples that do not occur in the *Iliad*, and this suggests that the formant was still productive when the *Odyssey* was composed. The third formant, the prefixed παν-, is obviously of a different and more specialised type. Nevertheless it is not infrequent. The *Iliad* employs it in fifteen words, of which eight are *hapax* and two (πανάποτμος, πανύστατος) virtually so since although they occur twice the second occurrence is in the same context and within a few lines of the first. Of these ten, four (πάναιθος, πανάποτμος, παναφῆλιξ, πανόψιος) are absolute *hapaxes*, occurring in no other Greek author, and two others may count as such since they are only found again in Byzantine authors (πάναγρος and παναώριος itself). Statistically, then, if our principle is correct, these are likely to be Iliadic coinages. Contextually they strike one as apposite and original, some, such as παναφῆλιξ of the orphan's plight in 22.490, outstandingly so. Moreover six of these παν- compounds occur only in the final books of the *Iliad*, and this is most easily understood as the result of a temporary inclination of the poet's mind – especially as it is in precisely these examples that the force of the παν- is intensive (e.g. πανάποτμος 'all-unhappy') instead of quantitative (e.g. πανημέριος 'all-day').[8]

[7] It is of course possible for words that are first attested in a particular author not to have been invented by him but to be anonymous creations of the time. Who first said super-giant or interface? Nobody knows. However, words of this fashionable kind are likely to recur in more than one author. Thus some commonplace words (e.g. ἀναφορά and ἀναπληρῶ) and some technical ones (e.g. ἁμαξοπληθής, ἀναίρω, ἀναμοχλεύω) are first found in Euripides, where they are *hapaxes*, but the fact that all of them are freely used afterwards, the former in all kinds of writers and the latter in technical ones (Aeneas Tacticus and Galen), makes it unlikely that the creation of any of these words was due to Euripides himself.

[8] The transition from a quantitative to an intensive force of the παν- in these compounds is noticed by Manu Leumann, *Homerische Wörter* (Basel, 1950), 105.

It is now legitimate for us to bring into account the etymological meaning of
παναώριος. For being a new word, the audience cannot have recognised it, but must
have deduced its meaning from internal clues. The formants, as we have seen, were
all in current use. The παν- would have been understood as readily as we understand
a prefix like mini- or micro- even in a word we may have never heard before like
'mini-trumpet' or 'micro-kitchenette'. It might even have conveyed a slightly modern
or colloquial flavour just as these English formants have been doing for the last twenty
years or so. The alpha privative would have presented no problem either. Nor would
the -ιος termination, though this will not have given much semantic help. It was
evidently just a way of turning a word into an adjective, and left the possibilities of
meaning wide open. Thus ὄλβιος meant 'possessing ὄλβος', 'wealthy', but δήμιος
meant 'possessed by the δῆμος', 'public' – just as in English 'chunky' means
'composed of chunks' whereas 'hearty' does not mean 'composed of hearts' but
possessing a vigorous one. Thus the alpha reversed the meaning, the παν- intensified
it, the -ιος made it adjectival, but none of them did anything to say what it was. This
must have been done entirely by the stem, ὡρ-, the meaning of which is fortunately
beyond doubt. It is 'season' – though not quite the same as the English 'season', which
embraces the concept of duration ('a long season') as well as that of fitness ('a right
season'). The Greek noun can only mean the latter. The same goes for the negatived
forms, ἄωρος, ἀώριος, ἀωρία, ἀωρί. They always denote the wrongness, not the
shortness of the time. The Homeric poems do not have any instance of them,[9] but
there are fifty or so citations from later literature in Liddell and Scott and their verdict
on the point is unanimous. The contexts can be divided into those where the reference
is to death and those where it is not. In the latter, which predominate, the word is
neutral as to what the wrongness of the time consists in. It may be too early (ten
instances), too late (four instances), or simply inappropriate (eleven instances) –
especially when it is an ungodly hour of night (eight instances). Therefore when it refers
to death (sixteen instances in LSJ), it is clearly this reference and not any force inherent
in the word itself which makes it mean 'too soon'.

There is only one piece of evidence that can be used on the other side. This is a
special use of ἄωρος to refer to a prematurely dead corpse attested in a magical papyrus
and (perhaps) in a comic fragment.[10] Both seem a long way from Homer. But even
if we were to stretch the evidence backwards and suppose that the word could have
had the same connotation several hundred years earlier, the connotation is still wrong
for the context. The -αώριος part of the word would mean 'prematurely dead', not
'soon-to-die'. And with the παν- included the case is still worse. 'Altogether premature'
does not fit the bill at all. Even supposing for a moment that it could refer to somebody
who was going to die in the future and not to somebody who was already dead, it
would have to refer to a death in infancy or at least in childhood. It could not
conceivably be suitable for Achilles, even if Achilles was only eighteen when he went
to Troy as van Leeuwen thought.[11]

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[9] It is generally considered by etymologists that ἄωροι, used to describe Scylla's feet in Od.
12.89, is derived not from ὥρη 'season', but from a different root altogether.

[10] P. Mag. Par. 1.342 and 1.2867. In Apollodorus Comicus, fr. 4 (Kock iii. 289) it is likely
that the notion of death was introduced in the previous dialogue and was not dependent on the
bare word ἄωρος.

[11] See van Leeuwen's commentary at Il. 1.352. On our passage (24.540) van Leeuwen has a
strange note – 'Prorsus adhuc immaturum. Mente addendum: et mox moriturum'. This indicates
that he is not comfortable with the normal interpretation, but his comment hardly helps. All
babies are immature when they are born, which must be why he puts in the adhuc. But it is not
credible that παναώριος could mean 'who is still immature now that he is a young man'; nor,
even if it could, would the remark be relevant in the context.

The pointers that we have examined therefore all point in the same direction, and there can no longer be any doubt about the meaning of παναώριος. The logic of what Achilles is saying, the social context is which he is saying it, and semantic analysis of the word itself combine to rule out the interpretation 'soon-to-die', and to favour that of Herodian and Eustathius 'untimely-in-all-things'. We may now consider the matter in a wider perspective.

First the notion of παναώριος. The various uneasy periphrases that I have been forced to resort to show that the word is not readily to be rendered into English. We have several words, 'clumsy', 'awkward', 'gauche', for a person who habitually fails to match his action to his desire, and several more, 'tactless', 'insensitive', 'inconsiderate', for the person who fails to respect the feelings of others. But we have no word for the person who is clumsy and tactless in regard to time or clumsy and tactless in regard to place. Greek has ἄκαιρος for the first and ἄτοπος for the second.[12] These are exact parallels to ἄωρος and ἀώριος.[13] Achilles therefore in condemning himself as παναώριος is using a conceptual framework which was thoroughly Greek.

Next the character of Achilles. The question here is whether he had personal responsibility for his fate or whether it was predestined. To take παναώριος as Leaf did and as modern translators do implies the latter. But when Achilles tells Odysseus in the embassy scene (9.410–5) that he has two alternatives granted him, either a short life in glory or a long life in obscurity, he assumes that he has the choice. And that he is right in this assumption is confirmed by Thetis after Patroclus' death. For when Thetis hears him swear vengeance on Hector she tells him that he will now be ὠκύμορος, 'quick-to-die', since his fate is next after Hector's. The assumption is that his options were open till that moment but are now closed. From this point on Homer exploits the atmosphere of impending doom. Achilles' death is prophesied by his horse (18.417), and by the dying Hector (22.359). It gives Achilles a moment of desperation when he is in danger of being drowned in the river – he fears that he will be cheated by the gods and die before getting his revenge on Hector (21.277). It is mentioned at Patroclus' funeral: Achilles cuts off the hair that he had planned to dedicate to the river Spercheius on his return home and sacrifices it on the pyre since there will now be no home-coming for him (23.150). Thetis romantically mourns his imminent death to her attendants at the bottom of the sea (24.85–6), and (less romantically to our taste) comforts Achilles in his tent by suggesting that as he has so little time left to live he should find a girl to sleep with (24.130–2). These passages enhance the stature of Achilles and create an atmosphere of significance for the climax of the poem. But they do not undercut its human foundations. For they all occur in privileged circumstances. Achilles is alone with his goddess mother or his divine horse or the dying Hector or the body of Patroclus. No other mortal shares the knowledge any more than any other mortal sees Athena restraining Achilles in the quarrel scene (1.198), or Aphrodite rescuing Paris in the duel (3.449–50). The sealing of Achilles'

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[12] Theophrastus devotes a whole character-sketch to the man who is ἄκαιρος. For ἄτοπος of persons see Plato, *Symp.* 215a, *Rep.* 493c; Isocrates 12.149; and (probably) Menander's *Heniochos*, where a character states that the main thing is to avoid the ἄτοπον. Unfortunately in this example we cannot be sure that the masculine τὸν ἄτοπον really refers to a person and not to a thing.

[13] Both can qualify persons by way of character description, as too can the positive ὡραῖος (e.g. Aratus 1075, the 'punctual' farmer). μὴ ὥρασι is used as if it were an adjective by Aristophanes in the *Lysistrata* (391), and again in the same play (1037) as an adverbial phrase. Whatever now-lost topical point may underlie this, it is clear from the locative form that the phrase itself must have been an old one; and if the phrase was old, so too must be the attitude to ἀωρία implied by it.

fate is on the same level of reality as these divine interventions. It would be quite contrary to Homer's practice for Priam, another human being and one who had no particular concern with Achilles' personal fate, to be given foreknowledge of it. Yet this is what would be implied if πανάώριος meant doomed to die young.[14]

It seems unlikely that Homer would have broken his normal rules in this way, especially when there is nothing exceptional about the alternative. Achilles often indulges in self-pity and self-depreciation. He is 'never given his fair share' (1.163, 167). He is 'of no value in the eyes of Zeus' (1.354). He 'suffers like a mother-bird who wears herself out selflessly bringing back food for her young' (9.323). He 'sits by the ships, a useless burden on the earth' (18.104).

It is therefore in accord with Achilles' character as we see it elsewhere in the *Iliad* for him to run himself down by calling himself πανάώριος in the sense of a misfit or failure, whereas it is not in accord with his understanding of his situation as we hear it in the poem for him to say that when he was born he was already predestined to die early.

Finally, our image of Homer. The simple observation that a third of Homer's vocabulary, two thousand words out of six thousand, are author's *hapaxes* is hard to reconcile with the theory of a guslar-Homer who could never sing anything that he had not sung before and who composed his verses entirely by re-shuffling pre-existent formulae.[15] The further argument, derived from the similarity of behaviour between Homer's *hapaxes* and those of other poets, that several hundred of them are likely to be special creations, means, if it is sound, that Homer was as much concerned with the individual word as other poets and prepared to coin a new one if he felt it necessary. Moreover, to judge from the example of πανάώριος, the nonce-words he created could be colloquial in tone. This suggests that his language was not as remote from that of everyday use as some theories of epic diction would have us believe.

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[14] Our knowledge of how the plot is going to develop may make us see Achilles' passionate complaint to his mother after the quarrel (352) that he is μινυνθάδιος ('short-lived') as a presentiment of early death, but in the immediate context it is clear that μινυνθάδιος is pointing the contrast between the brief life of Achilles as a human being and the immortality of his goddess mother, not between that of Achilles and other men. Of course when shortly afterwards Thetis is pleading with Zeus she can legitimately be made to call Achilles ὠκυμορώτατος ἄλλων ('bound to die earlier than anybody else') because this is a conversation between gods.

[15] Milman Parry of course knew that there were unique lines in Homer, and tried (*HSCP* 41 [1930], 133–4 = Latacz 228) to reconcile them with his general theory by claiming that if we had tens of thousands more Homeric verses we should find that the unique words and phrases of our present text were really parts of established formulae. The more modern method of explaining them, pioneered in *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), 95 ff. by Parry's pupil, Albert Lord, but much developed by others, is to redefine formula to mean not a fixed set of words but a fixed metrical or syntactical pattern into which words new or old can be fitted as the poet wishes. The first solution is bizarre, tantamount to saying that though the theory is not supported by the existing evidence it would be supported by new evidence if only it were to come to hand. The other is self-cancelling – it makes the alleged process of oral composition indistinguishable from any other: for the way that we all, whether literate or illiterate, talk and write is precisely by fitting words to pre-existing patterns of syntax and rhythm.