Transactions of the American Philological Association 122 (1992) 17–60

The 1991 Presidential Address
Chicago, Illinois

Homeric Questions

Gregory Nagy
Harvard University

The title of this address, and of the projected book that has already been taking shape around it, is marked by the word Questions, in the plural. It takes the place of the expected singular, along with a definite article, associated with that familiar phrase, "the Homeric Question." Today there is no agreement about what the Homeric Question might be. Not that any one way of formulating the question in the past was ever really sufficient. Who was Homer? When and where did Homer live? Was there a Homer? Is there one author of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, or are there different authors for each? Is there a succession of authors or even of redactors for each? Is there for that matter a unitary *Iliad*, a unitary *Odyssey*?

I choose *Homeric Questions* as my title both because I am convinced that the reality of the Homeric poems, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, cannot possibly be comprehended through any one Question and also because a plurality of questions can better recover the spirit of the Greek word *zêtêma*, meaning the kind of intellectual 'question' that engages opposing viewpoints. In Plato's usage, *zêtêma* refers to a question or inquiry of a philosophical nature. This is the word used in the title of Porphyry's *Homeric Questions*, a work that continues in a tradition that can be traced as far back as Aristotle. As Rudolf Pfeiffer writes, "probably over a long period of time Aristotle had drawn up for his lectures a list of 'difficulties' [*aporêmata* or *problêmata*] of interpretation in Homer with their respective 'solutions' [*luseis*]; this custom of *zêtêmata proballein* may have prospered at the symposia of intellectual circles" (69).

A number of quotations from Aristotle's work are preserved, mostly in Porphyry's *Homeric Questions*. In one of these, Aristotle is disputing the assertion, as found in Plato's *Republic* (319b), that it cannot be true that Achilles dragged the corpse of Hektor around the tomb of Patroklos; Aristotle contradicts this assertion by referring to a Thessalian custom, still prevalent, he says, in his own time, of dragging the corpses of murderers around the tombs of those they had murdered (fr. 166 Rose). As Pfeiffer goes on to say, "it is an example of the way [Aristotle] used the stupendous treasures of his collections

for the correct interpretation of the epic poet against less learned predecessors who had raised subjective moral arguments without being aware of historical facts" (70). Among the historical facts used by Aristotle is diction, *lexis*. For my own approach to Homeric Questions, diction is the primary empirical given.

I will come back to the topic of diction presently. For now let us continue with the account by Pfeiffer: "Although certain circles of the Alexandrine Museum seem to have adopted this 'method' of *zêtêmata*, which amused Ptolemaic kings and Roman emperors, as it had amused Athenian symposiasts, the great and serious grammarians disliked it as a more or less frivolous game. ...It was mainly continued by the philosophic schools, Peripatetics, Stoics, Neoplatonists, and by amateurs, until Porphyry (who died about A.D. 305) arranged his final collection of *Homêrika zêtêmata* in the grand style, in which he very probably still used Aristotle's original work" (70–71).

My title reaffirms the original Aristotelian seriousness of *Homêrika zêtêmata*, avoiding the accretive implications of frivolity. To this extent it matches the intense seriousness of scholarship in the period of the Renaissance and thereafter concerning the Homeric Question. But my title also affirms the need to pose the question in such a way that it will not presuppose the necessity of any single answer or solution, *lusis*. And even if a unified answer were to be achieved in the long run, the result is likely to be a blend achieved from a plurality of different voices, not the singular strain of a monotone edict emanating from the unquestioned authority of accepted scholarship to which some would assign the title of philology.

For purposes of my argument, I need to turn back to earlier understandings of the very idea of *philology*. I cite for example the report of Suetonius (*De grammaticis et rhetoribus* c. 10) that Eratosthenes of Cyrene, who succeeded the scholar–poet Apollonius of Rhodes as head of the Library of Alexandria, was the first scholar to formalize the term *philologos* in referring to his identity as a scholar, and that in so doing he was drawing attention to a *doctrina* that is *multiplex variaque*, a course of studies that is many–sided and composed of many different elements (Pfeiffer 158 n. 8).

The era of the great Library of Alexandria reflects a link between our new world of philology and the old world of the actual words, like the *ipsissima verba* of Homer, that are studied in philology. Those who presided over the words, as texts, were the Muses of *performance*: the very name of the Library of Alexandria was after all the Museum, the place of the Muses, and its head was officially a priest of the Muses, nominated by the king himself (Pfeiffer 96). The members of the Museum, which was part of the royal

compound, have been described as follows by Pfeiffer: "They had a carefree life: free meals, high salaries, no taxes to pay, very pleasant surroundings, good lodgings and servants. There was plenty of opportunity for quarrelling with each other" (97). One might say that the Museum itself was a formalization of nostalgia for the glory days when the Muses supposedly inspired the competitive performance of a poet. The importance of *performance* as the realization of the poetic art will become clear as the discussion proceeds.

Another head of the Alexandrian Library, Aristarchus of Samothrace, perhaps the most accomplished philologist of the Hellenistic era, was described by Panaetius of Rhodes (Athenaeus xiv 634c), a leading figure among the Stoics, as a *mantis* 'seer' when it came to understanding the words of poetry (Pfeiffer 232). In this concept of the seer we see again the nostalgia of philology for the Muses of inspired *performance*.

The beginnings of a split between *philology* and *performance*—a split that had led to this nostalgia, ongoing into our own time—are evident in an account of Herodotus which I have examined at length elsewhere (1990c), concerning two ominous disasters that befell the island of Chios, the reputed birthplace of Homer. In the earliest attested mention of schools in ancient Greece, Herodotus 6.27.2, the spotlight centers on an incident that occurred on the island of Chios around 496 B.C., where a roof collapsed on a group of 120 boys as they were being taught *grammata* 'letters'; only one boy survived. This disaster is explicitly described by Herodotus as an omen presaging the overall political disaster that was about to befall the whole community of Chios in the wake of the Ionian Revolt against the Persians (6.27.1), namely, the attack by Histiaios (6.26.1–2) and then the atrocities resulting from the occupation of the island by the Persians (6.31–32).

The disaster that befell the schoolboys at Chios is directly coupled by the narrative of Herodotus with another disaster, likewise presaging the overall political disaster about to befall all of Chios: at about the same time that the roof caved in on the boys studying their *grammata* 'letters' in school (again, 6.27.2), a *khoros* 'chorus' of 100 young men from Chios, officially sent to Delphi for a performance at a festival there, fell victim to a plague that killed 98 of them. Only two of the boys returned alive to Chios (*ibid.*).

In this account by Herodotus, then, we see two symmetrical disasters befalling the poetic traditions of a community, presaging a general political disaster befalling the community as a whole: first to be mentioned are the old-fashioned and élitist oral traditions of the chorus, to be followed by the newer and even more élitist written traditions of the school. In my earlier work, I

argued that the differentiation between the older and newer traditions, as we see it played out in the narrative of Herodotus, can be viewed as the beginnings of the crisis of philology, ongoing in our own time. It is as if the misfortune of the people of Chios had to be presaged separately, in both public and private sectors. The deaths of the chorus–boys affected the public at large, in that choruses were inclusive, to the extent that they represented the community at large. The deaths of the schoolboys, on the other hand, affected primarily the élite, in that schools were more exclusive, restricted to the rich and the powerful. For our own era, the scene of a disaster where the roof caves in on schoolboys learning their letters becomes all the more disturbing because schools are all we have left from the split between the more inclusive education of the chorus and the more exclusive education of the school. For us it is not just a scene: it is a primal scene. The crisis of philology, signaled initially by the split between chorus and school, deepens with the conceptual narrowing of *paideiâ* as education over the course of time.

The narrowing is signaled by exclusion. In the *Protagoras* of Plato (347c), we are witness to the idea that girl–musicians should be excluded from the company of good old boys at the symposium. Even as slave–girls, women lose the chance to contribute to, let alone benefit from, the new *paideiâ*. Meanwhile, the traditions of the old *paideiâ*, where aristocratic girls had once received their education in the form of choral training, becomes obsolete. Obsolete too, ironically, is the old *paideiâ* of boys, both in the chorus and in the schools. The new schools as ridiculed in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes seem to have lost the art of performing the "Classics," and the Classics have become written texts to be studied and emulated in writing. Gone forever, in the end, is the art of performing the lyrics of a master musician like Sophocles. Gone forever is the possibility of bringing such performances back to life, even if for just one more time, at occasions like the symposium. Gone forever, perhaps, is the art of actually *performing* a composition for any given occasion.

As I have said, the era of the Museum at Alexandria represents a grand humanistic effort to preserve, even as texts, the *ipsissima verba*. To that extent it also represents an attempt to reverse the narrowing of *paideiâ*. Our own hope lies in the capacity of philology, as also of schools, to continue to reverse such a pattern of narrowing, to recover a more integrated, integral, *paideiâ*. The symptom of a narrowed education can be described as the terminal prestige of arrested development, where schoolboys, instead of getting killed, "grow up to be the old boys of an exclusive confraternity that they call

philology, *their* philology."[1] The humanism of philology, which must surely counter such a narrow modern view, depends on its inclusiveness, its diversity of interests. I come back to the ancient scholarly ideal of a *doctrina* that is *multiplex variaque*, a course of studies that is many–sided and composed of many different elements. Such a course of studies, I argue, is essential for pursuing Homeric Questions, not to mention other Classical questions.

One small but troubling sign of narrowing, of a movement away from a course of studies that is ideally many–sided, is the way in which we contemporary Classics scholars—certainly not just Homerists—tend to use the words "right" and "wrong": this kind of value–judgment seems to operate on the assumption that the reader already accepts the argument being offered and rejects all others.[2] The implications are discouraging, because a cumulative plurality of scholars who say "I am right" and "you [plural] are wrong" suggests that most are wrong and only some if any are right. I propose to write instead, here and elsewhere, that I agree or disagree, without presupposing the ultimate judgment. Or, better, my arguments either converge with or diverge from those of others. I cannot presuppose that I am right, since even a "right" formulation may need to be reformulated in the future, but I along with all you my fellow Classicists should be wary of a style of criticism that seeks to reformulate our formulations in a style of one–upmanship, where the latest word pretends to be the last word.[3]

The idea of a *zêtêma* 'question' in the usage of those earliest scholars of Homeric poetry assumes an ongoing conflict of views in an ongoing debate of scholars. It is in that spirit of openendedness that I take up my own set of questions, Homeric Questions, making clear my disagreements as well as agreements with other scholars. My goal is to offer a set of answers, sine ira et studio, that must in the long run be tested by further questions.

The ideal in the academic discourse of my Homeric Questions is *respect* for the positive efforts of others, reserving polemics only against criticism that is explicitly intended to displace or exclude results and views. I hope to transcend the kind of internal battles in Classical scholarship where the

---

[1] Nagy 1992c.47. On the concept of *terminal prestige*, see McClary.

[2] For a lively analysis of a work on Homer that happens to be replete with pronouncements concerning "right" and "wrong" interpretations, see Lynn–George.

[3] Phillips makes the following remarks on the "scientific model" of Classical scholarship: "the most recent work becomes the most truthful, with the exceptions either of older views which agree with contemporary conceptualizations (hence becoming glimmerings of truth) or which through their apparent 'error' provide a point of departure for interpretational polemic or which offer compilations of data as yet not reedited. This ahistorical view of contemporary 'truth' makes classical studies akin to the natural sciences" (637).

intensity of contentiousness over the rights and wrongs of interpretation seems at times symptomatic of a specially virulent strain of *odium philologicum*, likely to shock even the most cynical specialist in other areas of the humanities. Such marked levels of contentiousness among Classicists may be excused as an indirect reflex of the agonistic striving towards the definition of value in ancient Hellenic poetics. Excuses should not distract, however, from a basic shortcoming that seems to result from such strife, which is, an avoidance of new or different methods for fear of being condemned as unorthodox. Such a pattern of avoidance can lead to narrow and consequently oversimplified approaches to complex problems. My goal is to apply a wide enough variety of inductive approaches to do justice to the complexity of the problems addressed.

Failure to apply a broad enough spectrum of empirical methods to a given question is oftentimes not recognized as a failure by the very ones who fail. Ironically, it is sometimes they who will blame newer scholars who may have succeeded in deploying a wider variety of approaches. It is as if the newcomers were rival heirs to a domain called philology. The blame can take the form of accusing newcomers of not having proved what they are seeking to prove. What the blamers may be thereby admitting, however unintentionally, is that they do not know how to use methods that others have found to advance their own arguments. In this connection I am reminded of Terry Eagleton's formulation, "hostility to theory usually means an opposition to other people's theories and an oblivion of one's own" (viii).

Yet another problem that can lead to a narrowing of resources in pursuing Homeric Questions has to do with a negative attitude towards the study of earlier stages of Greek literature, deriving from the inference that the further one goes back in time, the less one may really know. This attitude, as I find it articulated by some Classicists, comes dangerously close to shunning the study of older evidence on the grounds that there is not enough information to prove anything. In resisting such a stance, I take my inspiration from a philologist who studies Greek texts that are even older than the Homeric poems. I quote the words of John Chadwick, as he speaks about the Linear B tablets of the second millennium B.C.:

> "Some of my colleagues will doubtless think I have in places gone too far in reconstructing a pattern which will explain the documents. Here I can only say that some pattern must exist, for these are authentic, contemporary sources; and if the pattern I have proposed is the wrong one, I will cheerfully adopt a better one when it is offered. But what I do reject is the defeatist attitude which refuses even to devise a pattern, because all its details cannot be proved. The documents exist; therefore the circumstances existed which caused them to be written, and my

> experience has shown me that these are not altogether impossible to conjecture." (x)

In the case of the Homeric poems, it can be said even more forcefully: not only does the text exist but even the ultimate reception of the Homeric poems is historically attested, ready to be studied empirically. As I have already indicated, the primary given in my own work is the *lexis* or diction of the Homeric poems. What, then, is the primary question? For me it is vital that the evidence provided by the words, the *ipsissima verba*, reflects on the context in which the words were said, the actual *performance*. The essence of performing song and poetry, an essence permanently lost from the *paideiâ* that we have inherited from the ancient Greeks, is for me the primary question.

In choosing language and text as my primary empirical given, I hope to become part of a long continuum of philologists. In choosing *performance*, the occasion of performance, as my primary question, I go beyond philology in relying on two other disciplines. These disciplines are linguistics and anthropology.

In the case of linguistics, the problematic word *structuralism* tends to take pride of place in the discourse of Classicists, even displacing the very use of the term *linguistics*. Too much has been said about structuralism, both for and against, by those who are unfamiliar with the rudiments of descriptive linguistics. For one who was initially trained as a linguist and only later as a Classicist, the point is this: the observation that language is a structure is not a matter of theory, not someone's brilliant insight, but the cumulative result of inductive experience in descriptive linguistics.[4]

As for the second of the two disciplines that I propose to apply, anthropology, I should note simply that this discipline has as yet exerted so little influence in the field of Classics, with a few notable exceptions, that it is seldom mentioned even by those Classicists who are given to issuing admonitions against the intrusion of supposedly alien disciplines. Ironically, this field of anthropology has as much to benefit from the currently construed field of Classics as the other way around. We find ourselves in an era when the ethnographic evidence of living traditions is rapidly becoming extinct, where many thousands of years of cumulative human experience are becoming obliterated by less than a century or so of modern technological progress, and

[4]Cf. Householder and Nagy 737. Few studies in Homer apply linguistics with the degree of intellectual rigor and flair that this field requires. A notable exception is Miller 1982 and 1982b: the author reveals a thorough grounding in linguistic theory and praxis. Also Muellner 1976 and 1990.

where the need to reaffirm the humanistic value of tradition in the modern world apparently cannot be met by the members of endangered traditional societies, who are often in the forefront of embracing the very progress that threatens to obliterate their traditions. The field of Classics, which lends itself to the empirical study of tradition, seems ideally suited to articulate the value of tradition in other societies, whether or not these societies are closely comparable to the those of ancient Greece and Rome.

The primary Homeric question at hand, that of *performance,* is not only to be articulated in terms of linguistics and anthropology. It is also to be linked with the past research of two scholars whose training stemmed not directly from these two disciplines but from the Classics. It is essential that I invoke these two scholars, both deceased, as I approach the centerpiece of my Homeric Questions. Their names are Milman Parry and Albert Lord. On the occasion of delivering this my Presidential address at the December 1991 annual convention of the American Philological Association, I wish to stress what a humbling experience it is for me to be given an honor—and an opportunity—that others before me, who had their own Homeric Questions, would have deserved far more. In particular, I have in mind these two scholars, Milman Parry and Albert Lord, neither of whom was ever awarded such an honor by the American Philological Association. Parry died young, and there was little opportunity for the American Philological Association to recognize the lasting value of his contributions to the study of Homer and to the field of Classics in general. In the case of Albert Lord, Life Member of the American Philological Association, whose own important research continued his earlier work with his teacher, Milman Parry, I hope to honor his contributions to Classical Philology by way of my Homeric Questions, which are meant to serve as extensions of the questions that he had asked in his *Singer of Tales* (1960) and, shortly before his death, in *Epic Singers and Oral Tradition* (1991).

Parry and Lord studied *oral poetry*, and their work provides the key to the primary question of performance, as we are about to see. It can even be said that their work on oral poetry permanently changed the very nature of any Homeric Question.

The term *oral poetry* may not fully capture the concept behind it, in view of the semantic difficulties conjured up by both individual words, *oral* and *poetry*. Still, the composite term *oral poetry* has a historical validity in that both Parry and Lord had used it to designate the overall concept that they were developing. I propose to continue the use of this term, with the understanding that *oral* is not simply the opposite of *written* and that the *poetry* of *oral poetry* is meant in the broadest possible sense of the word, in that *poetry* in the context

of this expression is not necessarily to be distinguished from *singing* or *song*. If indeed *oral* is not to be understood simply as the opposite of *written*, it is even possible to speak of *oral literature*, a term actually used and defended by Albert Lord (1991.2–3, 16). Where I draw the line is the usage of "write" instead of "compose" as applied to figures like Homer. I shall have more to say about this usage presently.

I propose also to use the concept of *tradition* or *traditional* in conjunction with *oral poetry*, with a focus on the perception of tradition by the given society in which the given tradition operates, not on any perception by the outside observer who is looking in, as it were, on the given tradition. My approach to *tradition* is intended to avoid any situations where "the term is apparently also used (and manipulated?) in an emotive sense, not seldom linked with deeply felt and powerful academic, moral, or political values" (Finnegan 106). While a given tradition may be perceived in absolute terms within a given society, it can be analyzed in relative terms by the outside observer using empirical criteria: what may seem ancient and immutable to members of a given society can in fact be contemporary and ever–changing from the standpoint of empiricist observation.[5] Moreover, I recognize that tradition is not just an inherited system: as with language itself, tradition comes to life in the here–and–now of real people in real situations (N 1990.17 n. 2, with bibliography on the useful concepts of *parole* and *langue*).

I approach my Homeric Questions by applying the concept of oral traditional poetry to Homer. For this purpose, I find it essential to introduce an inventory of ten further concepts. Each of these ten concepts derives from the necessity of having to confront the reality of performance in oral poetry, either directly in living oral traditions or indirectly in texts that reveal clear traces of such traditions. The centrality of *performance* to the concept of oral poetry will become apparent as the discussion proceeds.

Some of the terms used in the inventory that follows are new ones for those who have not worked with oral poetry. Most of these concepts I have taken from the disciplines of linguistics and anthropology. Other terms that I use may be traditional for Classicists but still require some reassessment in terms of oral poetry.

---

[5]It is from this perspective that I have used the word *tradition* in my previous work as well, e.g. N 1990.57–61, 70–72. I therefore find the criticism of Peradotto 100 n. 2 unjustified. I would add the observation, made in my earlier work, that there can be different levels of rigidity or flexibility in different traditions, even in different phases of the same given tradition. Also, that there are situations where the empirical methods of disciplines such as linguistics can be applied to determine what aspects of a given tradition are older or newer.

1. Fieldwork

The fundamental empirical given for the study of oral poetry is the procedure of collecting evidence about the *performance* of living oral traditions as recorded, observed, and described in their native setting. Let us call this procedure fieldwork. "Although much talked about in negative criticism," Lord says in his Introduction to *Epic Singers and Oral Tradition*, "living oral–traditional literature is still not very well known, and I try over and over again in the course of this book to acquaint the reader with some of the best of what I have had the privilege to experience and to demonstrate the details of its excellence" (2). Lord spoke from experience, and this background of experience is fieldwork. It is this background that confers on him an authority that the vast majority of his critics who are Classicists utterly lack. Paradoxically, Lord's modesty about his experience in fieldwork, which is a salient feature of his scholarship, is matched by the arrogance displayed by those of his critics who at times seem to take a grim sort of pride in their unfamiliarity with non–Classical forms of poetry like the South Slavic oral traditions. It is as if such marvels of the so–called Western World as the Homeric poems should be rescued from those who truly understand the workings of oral traditions. Lord's *Epic Singers and Oral Tradition* lays claim, once and for all, to the legitimacy and importance of exploring the heritage of Western Literature in oral traditional literature.

2. Synchrony vs. Diachrony

The terms come from linguistics (cf. Ducrot and Todorov 1979.137–144). Fieldwork in the study of oral poetry as it is performed requires a synchronic perspective, for purposes of describing the actual system perpetuated by the tradition. When it comes to delving into the principles of organization underlying the tradition, that is, the reality of cultural continuity, the diachronic perspective is also needed. Techniques of linguistic reconstruction can help explain otherwise opaque aspects of the language as it is current in the tradition: that is to say, the diachronic approach is needed to supplement the synchronic, and vice versa.[6]

---

[6]N 1990b.20–21. To say about my diachronic approach that it "regards alleged etymologies from the distant linguistic past to be some kind of key to Homeric epic" (Taplin 116 n. 12) is to underrate the value of historical linguistics in the study of tradition: the purpose of connecting the etymology of a Homeric word with its current usage in the Homeric poems is to establish *a continuum of meaning within tradition*. An etymology may be a "key" to the diachronic explanation of some reality, as in the case of a cultural continuum, but it cannot be equated with some clever novelty in literary criticism. On *traditionality* as an instrument of meaning, see Slatkin.

3. Composition–in–Performance

The synchronic analysis of living oral traditions reveals that composition and performance are in varying degrees aspects of one process. The Homeric text, of and by itself, could never have revealed such a reality. The fundamental statement is by Lord (1960.28): "An oral poem is composed not *for* but *in* performance." Martin (231) defines performance as "authoritative self–presentation to an audience."

4. Diffusion

Only the diachronic perspective reveals this aspect of oral tradition, interactive with the aspects of composition and performance. Patterns of diffusion can be either centrifugal or centripetal. Further discussion below.

5. Theme

For purposes of this presentation, a working definition of *theme* is *a basic unit of content* (N 1990b.9 n. 10, following Lord 1960.68–98; for an altered working definition, see Lord 1991.26–27).

6. Formula

Another working definition: the *formula* is *a fixed phrase conditioned by the traditional themes of oral poetry* (N 1990b.29). The formula is to the form as the theme is to the content. This formulation presupposes that form and content conceptually overlap.

7. Economy (Thrift)

As Parry argues, Homeric language tends to be "free of phrases which, having the same metrical value *and expressing the same idea*, could replace one another" (1971 [1930].276, italics mine). This principle of **economy** or **thrift** is an observable reality only on the level of performance (Lord 1960.53).

8. Tradition vs. Innovation

To repeat, oral tradition comes to life in performance, and the here–and–now of each new performance is an opportunity for innovation, whether or not any such innovation is explicitly acknowledged in the tradition.

9. Unity and Organization

Related concepts: unitarians vs. analysts, neo–analysts.

In terms of oral poetics, the unity and organization of the Homeric poems is a *result* of the *performance* tradition itself, not a cause effected by a *composer* who is above tradition (N 1979.6–7).

10. Author and Text

In terms of oral poetics, authorship is determined by the authority of performance, and textuality, by the degree of a composition's invariability from performance to performance. The very concept of text can be derived metaphorically from the concept of composition–in–performance (N 1990.53).

In the wake of this inventory of ten concepts that I find essential for approaching my Homeric Questions, I also offer, before proceeding any further, a list of ten examples of usage that I find commonly being applied in misleading ways by some contemporary experts in Homeric poetry. My aim is not to quarrel with anyone in particular but rather to promote more precise usage concerning oral poetics in general. The sequence of the following ten examples of what strikes me as misleading usage corresponds roughly to the sequence of the preceding inventory of ten crucial concepts pertaining to oral poetics:

1. "Oral theory."

It is a major misunderstanding, I submit, to speak of "the oral theory" of Milman Parry or Albert Lord. Parry and Lord had investigated the *empirical reality* of oral poetry, as ascertained from the living traditions of South Slavic oral poetry as well as other living traditions. The existence of oral poetry is a fact, ascertained by way of **fieldwork**. The application of what we know inductively about oral poetry to the text of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, or to any other text, is not an attempt to prove a "theory" about oral poetry. If we are going to use the word *theory* at all in such a context, it would be more reasonable to say that Parry and Lord had various *theories* about the affinity of Homeric poetry with what we know about oral poetry.

2. "The world of Homer."

To say in Homeric criticism that the "world" or "world–view" that emerges from the structure of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is the construct of one man at one time and place, or however many men from however many different times and places, risks the flattening out of the process of oral poetic creation, which requires analysis in the dimensions of both **diachrony** and **synchrony**. This *caveat* is relevant to the question whether the overall perspective of Homeric poetry is grounded in, say, the eighth century B.C. More on which below.

3. "Homer + [verb]."

To say in Homeric criticism that "Homer does this" or "the poet intends that" can lead to problems. Not necessarily, but it can. Granted, such usage

corresponds to the spirit of conventional Greek references to the creation of Homeric poetry. Greek institutions tend to be traditionally retrojected, by the Greeks themselves, each to a proto–creator, a culture hero who is credited with the sum total of a given cultural institution (N 1990.55). The usage becomes risky for modern experts, however, when "Homer" becomes overly personalized, without regard for the traditional dynamics of **composition** and **performance**. *And* without regard for **synchrony** and **diachrony**.[7] To say that "Homer wrote" is the ultimate risk, on which more below at number 10. Suffice it here to add the formulation of Paul Zumthor: "Le poète est situé dans son langage plutôt que son langage en lui" (1972.68).

4. "Homer's poetry is artistically superior to all other poetry of his time."

The preeminence of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as the definitive epics of the Greeks is a historical fact, at least by the fifth century. Or, as can be argued, it is a historical eventuality. The attribution of their preeminence, however, to artistic superiority over other epics is merely an assumption. What little evidence we have about other epics comes from the fragments and ancient plot–outlines of the so–called Cycle. If the poetry of the Cycle were fully attested, it is quite possible that we would conclude that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are indeed artistically superior. The question, however, might still remain: by whose standards? The more basic question is not *why* but *how* the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* became preeminent. One available answer is based on the concept of greater **diffusion** for the epic traditions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in comparison to other epic traditions. More on which below.

5. "The formula made the poet say it that way."

Such a requirement of oral poetry is often assumed, without justification, by both proponents and opponents of the idea that Homeric poetry is based on oral poetry. I disagree. To assume that whatever is being meant in Homeric poetry is determined by such formal considerations as formula or meter (as when experts say that the formula or meter made the poet say this or that) is to misunderstand the relationship of form and content in oral poetics. Diachronically, the content—let us call it **theme**—determines the form, even if the form affects the content synchronically (N 1990b.18–35).

---

[7]Carey argues that, "in his approach to Greek literature in general, Nagy overemphasizes the tradition at the expense of the individual" (285). I would counterargue that my approach gives due credit to tradition in contexts where many contemporary Classicists overemphasize the individual poet at the expense of tradition.

6. "The meter made the poet say it that way."

This kind of reasoning has already been addressed at number 5. I have written at length about the relationship of formula and meter, and I repeat here only my central argument that formula shaped meter, from a diachronic point of view, rather than the other way around.

7. "The poet had only one way of saying it."

Once again, such a requirement of oral poetry is often assumed, without justification, by both proponents and opponents. But the principle of **economy** or **thrift** is a tendency, not a constant.[8]

8. "Homer had a new way of saying it."

A specific instance of number 3 above. Granted, to the extent that the performer controls or "owns" the performance in conjunction with the audience, the opportunity for innovation is there. Such innovation, however, takes place within the tradition, not beyond it. Given that performance itself is a key aspect of oral tradition, and that tradition comes to life in the context of performance and in the person of the performer, I disagree with those who concentrate so much on the person that they forget about the tradition in which that person performs—a tradition that can be empirically observed from the rules inherent even in the context of performance (N 1990.79). As in the case of number 3, the risk is to make "Homer" overly personalized, without regard for the traditional dynamics of **composition** and **performance**. *And* without regard for **synchrony** and **diachrony**.

9. "The poem is so obviously unified and organized that the poet must have become somehow emancipated from the oral tradition."

Such a reaction stems from descriptions of oral poetry in terms of *improvisation* (or *extemporization*)—terms that can easily be misunderstood. A most useful treatment of such terms, with vigorous criticism of a wide variety of misunderstandings, is the work of D. Gary Miller (5–8). His key argument is this: "Mental operations 'generate' as little as possible; they search for stored expressions of varying degrees of suitability to the speaker's goal" (7). Also valuable is his refutation of the following three common assumptions about "improvising oral poets" (90–91):

A. "Oral poets do not plan."

B. "Oral poetry is characterized by a 'loose', unorganized structure."

---

[8]N 1990b.24. See also Martin 8 n. 30, disputing Shive on the questions of economy and extension.

C. "An oral poet could not see the whole epic sequence in the beginning."

Refusing to consider the possibility that there are principles of unity and organization at work in a living oral tradition is symptomatic of a lack of appreciation for oral tradition itself, with emphasis on the word *tradition*. There is a common pattern of thinking that serves to compensate for this lack: it is manifested in the assumption that the poet must have somehow broken free of oral tradition. This assumption entails an unquestioning elevation of a reconstructed single individual to the rank of a genius or at least a transcendent author, who can then be given all or most of the credit for any observable principles of unity and organization.

10. "Homer wrote."

The most extreme version of the reaction described in number 9. This way of thinking, as I shall argue below, stems not only from a lack of first-hand knowledge about oral poetry. Those who make this claim, or those who simply make this assumption, have conceptualized authorship without having first thought through the historical realities of the era that produced Homeric poetry.

Having come to the end of this list of ten examples of what I consider misleading usage concerning oral poetics, I return to the primary question of my Homeric Questions, concerning *performance*. I also return to the central comparative insight of Milman Parry and Albert Lord, gleaned from their fieldwork in South Slavic oral epic traditions, that *composition* and *performance* are aspects of the same process in the making of Homeric poetry. Let us continue to call this process *composition-in-performance*.

Starting with the comparative evidence about composition-in-performance, I add the internal Greek evidence about the early diffusion of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in the archaic period of Greece, positing a model for the development of Homeric poetry that requires not two but three interacting aspects of production: *composition*, *performance*, and *diffusion* (N 1979.5–9).

My original reasons for concentrating on the role of diffusion in the development of Homeric poetry had to do with the need to reconcile the comparative insight of Parry and Lord about composition-in-performance with the historical reality of an integral and unified Homeric *text* inherited from the ancient world. How the concept of diffusion-in-performance helps account for Homeric textuality is a question that will be taken up in the discussion that follows. But first, let us consider some implications of the historical given, the survival of the Homeric text.

For some Classicists, the very nature of this written text has been a source of extreme skepticism concerning the validity of applying comparative insights about oral poetics. It is the opinion of not a few of these skeptics that the artistry, cohesiveness, and sheer monumentality of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* rule out the role of oral poetics—and supposedly prove that such marvels of artistic achievement must have required the technology of writing.[9] There are others who even go so far as to argue that Greek alphabetical writing was devised primarily for the purpose of writing down Homeric poetry.[10] Such attitudes toward Homeric poetry tend to be associated with a more general view, shared by some anthropologists, that writing is the basic prerequisite for a major breakthrough in human cognitive capacity, providing the key impetus toward creative thinking and critical judgment.[11] For such skeptics, then, oral poetry and literacy are clearly incompatible with each other. For other skeptics, oral poetry may not after all be incompatible with literacy, provided we may assume that the art of oral poetry became appropriated altogether by the art of written poetry: this way, we may allow for an oral heritage in the Homeric tradition, but whatever we admire as high art in this tradition must still be attributed to literate authorship.[12]

Either way, whether or not oral poetry is supposed to be compatible with literacy, both these lines of skeptical thinking avoid the comparative insight of Parry and Lord about composition-in-performance, and they assume either explicitly or implicitly that the technology of writing was key to the composition of the actual Homeric text. My own position is that there is no proof that the technology of alphabetic writing was needed for either the composition or the performance of the Homeric poems.

---

[9]A notable example is the son of Milman Parry: Adam Parry, "Have we Homer's *Iliad*?" (1966); for a critique, see Jensen 90–92. For further criticism of such views, cf. Taplin 36. I strongly disagree with Lloyd-Jones, esp. 56–57, whose arguments do not reckon with such counter-arguments as found in N 1990.1, with bibliography.

[10]E.g. Wade-Gery 11–14. For a critique of such arguments, see Harris 1989.45 n. 3, who also warns in particular against the "fallacy" of assuming "that early texts were not utilitarian because the earliest surviving texts are not." For an ambitious new attempt to connect Homer and the alphabet, see Powell.

[11]For an explicit formulation of this view by an anthropologist, see Goody 1977.37 (also Goody and Watt). For a critique of Goody's formulation, see Harris, who distances himself from "woolly and grandiose" conceptualizations of writing as the key to human rationality (40–42). For a further critique, see [Rosalind] Thomas 25.

[12]See for example Griffin xii–xiv. A variation on this kind of outlook is the notion of a mode of composition that is *transitional* between *oral* and *literate*. For a critique of this notion of a *transitional text*, with bibliography, see Jensen 89–92, expanding on the arguments of Lord 1960.129, 135–138, 154–156.

Given that the poetry of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* has indeed survived as a written text, Albert Lord (1953) had offered a solution for retaining the model of composition–in–performance by postulating that these poems had been dictated. There have been recent attempts to extend this dictation theory,[13] but they run into problems when it comes to explaining the early diffusion of what we now describe as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in archaic Greece on both sides of the Aegean—a process that some claim was already under way as early as the fourth quarter of the seventh century before our era.[14] Any pattern of diffusion, if indeed it is to be put at so early a date, can hardly be ascribed to a hypothetical proliferation of a plethora of manuscripts, in view of the existing physical limitations on materials available for writing down, let alone circulating, a composition of such monumental size as the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*,[15] not to mention the rudimentary status of writing as a technology in that period.[16]

One solution that has been proposed is to posit a situation where a single hypothetical dictated text becomes the prized possession of a special group of performers (West 1990.34). Although this solution offers some advantages in retaining the factor of performance, there are major difficulties that remain. For one thing, it leaves unexplained a basic question: how exactly was such a dictated text supposed to be used for the process of performance? How could a dictated text automatically become a script, a prompt, for the performer who dictated it, let alone for any other performer? Lord's theory of Homeric dictation does not leave room for the use of the dictated text as a mnemonic device for future performances by the singer who dictated it. Lord himself puts it this way: "Someone may suggest that it [= writing] would be a mnemonic device, but this too is unrealistic. The singer has no need of a mnemonic device in a manner of singing that was designed to fill his needs without such written aids" ([1953] 1991.44). Following Lord's reasoning, Raphael Sealey argues that "the singers would hardly feel the slightest

[13]See especially West 1990. Cf. also Janko 1982.191: "it is difficult to refuse the conclusion that the texts [= the Homeric epics] were fixed at the time when each was composed, whether by rote memorisation or by oral dictated texts."

[14]For a formulation of such an extent of diffusion, see West 1990.33. West 1988.152 sets the terminus post quem at about 630, apparently following the lead of Friis Johansen, who applies the testimony of archaic Greek art concerning narrative traditions that are comparable to what we find in the Homeric *Iliad*.

[15]For a realistic assessment of the available historical facts concerning the first 250–odd years of alphabetic literacy, see Harris 46–47, esp. 46: "for many generations, written texts were employed for a very limited range of purposes and by a very limited number of people." Cf. also Jensen 94.

[16]Again, Harris 46.

obligation to keep to the written text" (1957.329). Sealey goes on to reject the notion of such a written text, to which he refers as a hypothetical "bardic text": he argues that, if a composition like the *Iliad* had been preserved by way of "bardic texts" in the eighth century, then it would have been preserved "by inferior poets" (330). "But audiences would surely prefer better poets," he concludes, "and a poem preserved primarily in 'bardic texts' would be likely to perish for want of popularity." Reflecting on the observations made by Albert Lord about actual dictations taken in fieldwork from the South Slavic oral epic traditions, Minna Skafte Jensen argues along the same lines:

> ...there is no reason to think that later performances of the "same" songs [underwent an influence from] the dictation in any way differing from the influence exerted by other, previous performances of the poems. The idea that the ancient oral poet felt the written version to be a specially important thing, to be kept afterwards, seems to me to be culturally anachronistic, expressive of the literate person's overestimation of the importance of writing. (87)

I agree with Jensen's reasoning, at least as far as it applies to the eighth century, the period of Homeric dictation according to the dictation theory as we have seen it formulated so far. As we shall find, however, attitudes towards the technology of writing in later periods may well have changed, so that a written version, though not necessarily a dictated version, may indeed in the course of time come to be perceived as "as specially important thing."

It is not so much that the use of a text as a prompt for performance is unimaginable, *once such a text exists*. But an even more basic question is, how would such a hypothetical text be conceived in eighth–century Greece, that is, at the earliest stages in the history of this new technology of alphabetic writing? Also, how would we imagine that such a text ever achieved its status as text, starting from the very moment that dictation supposedly transformed a composition–in–performance into a transcript, as it were? I ask these questions because, in terms of current formulations of a dictation theory, the technology of alphabetic writing has to be invoked not only for the performance of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* but even for the ultimate composition of these poems, to the extent that dictation supposedly creates a basic text.

There are also problems with the very concept of a transcript, a script, or a prompt, supposedly coming into being in the eighth century. Let us consider the earliest attested uses of alphabetic writing in Greece during the first millennium, B.C.: starting with the eighth century, we see brief poetic utterances being inscribed in stone. On the basis of these early poetic inscriptions, it can be argued that writing was not used for the actual

composition of the utterances being inscribed: "it appears that the built–in mechanics of composition, which can be ascertained from the diction of the various attested epigrams, do not necessarily correspond to the various local patterns of spelling reflected by these epigrams" (N 1990.19 n. 7, with examples). In other words, it can be argued that writing was needed for the recording but not for the actual *composition* of early poetic inscriptions.

We may ask again: was writing needed for the *performance* of poetry? As I shall now argue, the language of the earliest inscribed utterances makes it clear that writing was being used as an *equivalent* to performance, not as a *means* for performance. It is evident from the language of the earliest inscriptions from the eighth century and thereafter, and the pattern holds all the way till 550 B.C. or so, that the speech–act of performance was thought to be inherent in the given inscription itself, which normally communicates in the first person, as if it were a talking object (Svenbro 1988.33–52). In this earliest attested phase of alphabetic writing, the inscription is not a transcript but a figurative performance, a speech–act that delivers its own message in the first person.[17] It is only after 550 B.C. or so that the language of the inscriptions begins to reveal lapses into a mode of talking that is not strictly inherent in the object inscribed, so that the generic inscription now verges on becoming a *transcript* of an utterance, poetic or otherwise, instead of being the equivalent of the utterance itself (Svenbro 48). By *transcript* I mean the writing down of a composition–in–performance not as a performance *per se* but as a potential aid to performance. And it is only in this later period, after 550 B.C. or so, that we begin to see examples of the use of writing for purposes of transcribing any given *composition* and controlling the circumstances of any given *performance*. Let us return to the subject of the earliest phases of Greek poetic inscriptions, starting with the eighth century B.C. For an ancient reader to read such inscriptions out loud is to participate passively in this *fait accompli*, in that the reader's voice is being lent to the speech–act which is in this case the very act of writing down the poetic utterance (Svenbro 53). To repeat, the Greek poetic inscription in the earliest period, before 550 B.C., is not conceived as a transcript of performance, of a short poem: it is rather conceived as a poem, because it is written down, and because this writing down is conceived as an authoritative equivalent to performance. To read the inscription out loud is to become part of the performance that is the writing down: it is to hear the writing itself, not any

[17]In one such inscription, CEG 286, the figurative voice of the inscribed letters promises that it "answers" the same thing to all men who ask their questions: the word used is *hupokrinomai* 'I answer.' See N 1990.168 n. 95.

live performance. The words of written inscriptions can therefore even be quoted in real live performance, as seems to be the case in the passage from the *Iliad* where Hektor is described as imagining the words that implicitly call out from what *sounds* like an imaginary epigram (*Iliad* VII 89–90; cf. N 1990.18–19 n. 7).

If indeed alphabetic writing was perceived as an equivalent to live performance already in the earliest stages of this technology in ancient Greece, and if indeed it continued to be so perceived down to 550 B.C. or so, then it is justifiable to doubt the hypothesis that writing had been used, *in its earliest phases*, as a medium for recording live performance. I would therefore wish to modify slightly the formulation "that the alphabet developed specifically or largely in order to record hexameter poetry" (Janko 1982.277 n. 3). To record epigraphical poetry: yes, maybe, but not necessarily to record epic poetry. Looking at the period before 550 B.C., we may well ask: why would live epic poetry have to be recorded in the first place? The fact that Homeric poetry was meant to be performed live, and that it continued to be performed live through the Classical period and beyond, remains the primary historical given. So we are still left, I maintain, without any internal Greek evidence to prove that the technology of alphabetic writing, as it existed during its earliest phases in the archaic Greek period, was necessary for the *performance* of the Homeric poems any more than it was necessary for their *composition.*

It is in this light that I offered, in my earlier work, a different solution to the historical problem of the Homeric text. My solution combined the comparative evidence about *composition* and *performance* in attested living oral poetic traditions with the internal evidence of ancient Greek testimony about the *diffusion* of Homeric poetry in the archaic period of Greece. The comparative evidence from living oral epic traditions helps corroborate the internal evidence about the ancient Greek circumstances of diffusion.[18]

Before we proceed, a few words of background are in order about the internal Greek evidence itself. I offer here a minimalist formulation of two basic concepts, "epic" and "Homer." For Classicists, the idea of "epic" is clear in its application, if not in its definition. Following the usage of authorities like Aristotle, we can easily distinguish the poetic art–form of *epopoiiâ* 'making of epic' (as at the beginning of Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1447a13) from such other poetic art–forms as *tragôidiâs poiêsis* 'making of tragedy'. The application of Homer's name to the authorship of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the prime examples

[18]There is a treasurehouse of examples from contemporary India collected in the volume edited by Blackburn *et al.* In a separate work, forthcoming, I offer an extensive comparative study of the Greek and Indian oral epic traditions.

of Greek epic, is also clear. True, the earliest attested references to *Homêros* attribute to him not only the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* but also the epics of the so–called Cycle, such as the *Cypria* (Pindar *fr.* 265 SM) and the *Little Iliad* (Herodotean *Life of Homer* 15, pp. 202–203 Allen). In fact, the very concept of *kuklos* meaning 'circle' or 'Cycle' stems from the ancient pre–Aristotelian tradition of applying the metaphor of cycle to the sum total of epic poetry, as if all of it were composed by Homer (Pfeiffer 73). By the time of Aristotle, however, the epics of the Cycle are conventionally assigned to distinct authors (*Poetics* 1459b1–7). Such eventual disruption in the semantics of the very concept of *Cycle* is not a matter of common knowledge among contemporary experts in Homer.

What made the differentiating of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* from all other epic poems decisive was the influence exerted by the scholars at the Library of Alexandria, particularly by the very first head of the Library, Zenodotus of Ephesus: "it was of the utmost importance for the whole future that the first of the great scholars...accepted the differentiation between these two poems as Homeric and the rest of epic narrative poetry as non–Homeric" (Pfeiffer 117). Though there were attempts to narrow down the Homeric corpus even further, as when scholars known as the "separators" or *khôrizontes* tried to separate the authorship of the *Odyssey* from that of the *Iliad* (Proclus p. 102.2–3 Allen), the Alexandrian verdict on Homer as the author of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* held firm in the ancient world. The "Homeric Question," as reformulated in the Renaissance and thereafter, must be viewed against this background; so also the comparative insights pioneered by Parry and Lord.

The progressive restriction of what exactly in Greek epic is to be attributed to Homer can be connected with the historical process that I have just highlighted, to wit, the relatively early diffusion of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* throughout the Greek–speaking world. In my earlier work I adduced archaeological evidence, as assembled by Anthony Snodgrass (1971.421, 435), pointing towards a trend of *pan–Hellenism* that becomes especially pronounced in archaic Greece in the eighth century before our era and thereafter. The epic tradition of Homer, as Snodgrass inferred from the early proliferation of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* was a reflex of this trend of pan–Hellenism (Snodgrass 1987.160, 165; also Morris 123). I extended Snodgrass's concept of pan–Hellenism setting it up "as a hermeneutic model to help explain the nature of Homeric poetry, in that one can envisage as aspects of a single process the ongoing recomposition and diffusion of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*" (N 1990.53). I had called this model for the text–fixation of Homeric tradition "evolutionary,"

without intending any Darwinian implications about progressive superiority (N 1981). This model is an alternative to the "dictation theory."

According to this evolutionary model, the process of composition–in–performance, which is a matter of *recomposition* in each performance, can be expected to be directly affected by the degree of *diffusion*, that is, the extent to which a given tradition of composition has a chance to be performed in a varying spectrum of narrower or broader social frameworks (N 1979.7–9). The wider the diffusion, the fewer opportunities for recomposition, so that the widest possible reception entails, teleologically, the strictest possible degree of adherence to a normative and unified version (N 1990.53–58).

I continue to describe as *text–fixation* or *textualization* the process whereby each composition–in–performance becomes progressively less changeable in the course of diffusion—with the proviso that we understand *text* here in a metaphorical sense (N 1990.53). The fixity of such a "text," of course, does not necessarily mean that the process of composition–in–performance, let us continue to call it recomposition, has been stopped altogether. So long as the oral tradition is alive, some degree of ongoing recomposition is still possible in each performance, even if the tradition itself proclaims its own absolute fixity. A case in point is the so–called "Invocation of the Bagre," a "hymn" sung among the LoDagaa of Northern Ghana (Goody 1972). It is clear that the expectation of both the audience and the reciters of the Bagre is that each performance be exactly like every other performance, but empirical observation shows that it is not. Reaching a size of up to 12,000 lines, the Bagre in fact exists in a variety of versions, and the differences among the versions can be considerable (Goody 1977.119).[19] In sum, the rate of retardation or acceleration of change in the process of composition–in–performance depends on the stage of evolution in which we happen to find any given living oral tradition (N 1990.53, 55, 60, 72, 73, 171).

In arguing for the notion of a single pan–Hellenic tradition of epic—let us call it Homer—as opposed to a plethora of local traditions, I stressed the relativity of the term *pan–Hellenic* from an empirical point of view:

> It should be clear that this notion of *pan–Hellenic* is absolute only from the standpoint of insiders to the tradition at a given time and place, and that it is relative from the standpoint of outsiders, such as ourselves, who are merely looking in on the tradition. Each new performance can claim to be the definitive pan–Hellenic tradition. Moreover, the degree of pan–

[19]This comparative evidence is applied to the question of Homeric poetry in Morris 84–85; see also 87 concerning the application of comparative evidence from the traditions of the Tiv in Nigeria.

> Hellenic synthesis in the content of a composition corresponds to the degree of diffusion in the performance of this composition. Because we are dealing with a relative concept, we may speak of the poetry of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, for example, as more pan–Hellenic than the poetry of the Epic Cycle. (1990.70–71)

In other words, I was arguing that the concept of pan–Hellenism is not at all incompatible with the factor of change.

A context for the final phase of an evolutionary model is a pan–Hellenic festival like the Panathenaia at Athens, which served as the formal setting, established by law, of seasonally–recurring performances of the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (cf. Lycurgus *Against Leokrates* 102). The Panathenaia, I argue, is a clear example of a distinct pattern of diffusion in oral traditions. As the comparative evidence of oral epic traditions in contemporary India shows, there is more than one way to visualize the actual process of diffusion. Besides the pattern of an ever–widening radius of proliferation, with no clearly defined center of diffusion, there is also a more specialized pattern that can be predicated on a functional center–point, bringing into play both centripetal and centrifugal forces (Blackburn). Such a center–point, which I would compare to the seasonally–recurring festival of the Panathenaia at Athens, can take the form of a centralized context for both the coming together of diverse audiences and the spreading outward of more unified traditions.[20]

The occasion of epic performance may also have an effect on the dimensions of composition. A distinct feature of oral poetic traditions is the potential for expansion or compression of a given topic, either way, where neither the relatively more expanded nor the relatively more compressed versions need necessarily be considered basic from the internal standpoint of the given tradition (N 1990b.55, following Lord 1960.25–27, 68–98, 99–123; cf. Svenbro 80 n. 20). The observation of this phenomenon in living oral epic traditions is of great importance for coming to terms with the Homeric tradition, where we find a great variety of compression as well as expansion of themes. Of these two features, expansion and compression, the more noticeable is of course expansion, in that the impact of an overall composition may keep getting augmented with its expansion, whereas any instances of compression, even if they happen to be miniature feats of artistic skill, will have to be *contained* within an expanding composition. In the aesthetics of Homeric poetry, multiple marvels of compression are fated to be contained by the singular marvel of ultimate expansion, such as the monumental composition of

[20]See also the remarks on the Panathenaia in N 1990.21–23, 28, 54; for more on pan–Hellenic festivals as a context for the performance of epic, cf. Taplin 39.

the *Iliad*.[21] It is much harder for us to appreciate compression, enclosed as it is within the expansive monumentality of the whole *Iliad*, the whole *Odyssey*.

Aside from instances of bravura in compression and expansion, however, we should also expect to find in living oral traditions the more ordinary levels of these phenomena, where the context of a given occasion leads to shortening or lengthening by default. Even in such default situations, however, it appears that relatively longer versions of a given epic performance tradition have more to say about their given occasion than do shorter versions. We have considerable evidence about the potential monumentality of Indian epic performance, in both size and scope, and how that monumentality is managed in terms of actual performance. A key element is the subdivision of monumental epic performance into performance segments—let us call them episodes:

> These performance segments are not, however, *evenly weighted*, like chapters. Certain episodes are more popular than others and are repeatedly performed; others are rarely heard and may even be unknown to certain singers. Furthermore, even when an epic story is well known to the audience, the complete story, from beginning to end, is rarely presented in performance—or even in a series of performances. (Blackburn and Flueckiger 11, italics mine)

I draw attention to the descriptive principle of *evenly weighted episodes*. In the Indian evidence, wherever this principle is not in effect, we see the kind of situation that could well be envisaged in an ancient Greek social setting *before* the onset of the final and definitive stages in the development of Homeric poetry. These final stages, I argue, are marked by the tightening-up of epic conventions, as for example in the case of the customary law in effect at Athens for the festival of the Panathenaia, where the performance of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by *rhapsôidoi* 'rhapsodes' was not allowed to favor some "episodes" over others,[22] in that the entire composition had to be performed by one rhapsode after another *in sequence* ("Plato" *Hipparchus* 228b and Diogenes Laertius 1.57; cf. N 1990.21, 23). Classicists conventionally refer to this customary law about Homeric performance as the *Panathenaic rule* (Sealey 1957.342–351). I suggest that the "Panathenaic rule" is a Greek reflex of a pattern of *equalized or even weighting*, indicative of a communalization of

[21] See Martin 196, 205, 206–230 (esp. 215 n. 11) on the "expansion aesthetic" of the *Iliad*. Martin refers to instances of compression in terms of "telescoping" (213, 215). For instances of contrasting expansion and compression, see Martin 34, 213, 215 (with n. 11), 216–219, 225.

[22] For more on the concept of Homeric "episodes," I cite the account of Aelian *Varia Historia* 13.14, as interpreted by Sealey 1957.344 and 351 n. 115.

repertoire.[23] It may even be possible that the division of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* each into twenty–four Books results from the cumulative formation of episodes in the process of even weighting.[24]

In order to find a historical setting for the writing down of such monumental compositions like the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the most obvious strategy might be to look for a stage in ancient Greek history when the technology of writing could produce a text, *in manuscript form*, that conferred a level of authority distinct from but equivalent to the authority conferred by an actual performance. As I have already argued, the opportunity for a text to become the equivalent of a performance already exists in the case of early poetic inscriptions from the eighth century B.C. onwards. But it is another matter, as we shall now see, in the case of manuscripts as distinct from inscriptions.

I have already argued that the speech–act of performance was thought to be inherent in any given poetic inscription, which normally communicates in the first person as if it were a talking object; further, that it is only after 550 B.C. or so that the language of the inscriptions begins to reveal lapses into a mode of talking that is not strictly inherent in the object inscribed. So it is only after 550 B.C. that the generic inscription begins to be viewed not as an utterance in its own right but as a *transcript* of an utterance, poetic or otherwise (Svenbro 48). I have already defined *transcript* as the writing down of a composition–in–performance not as a performance but as a potential aid to

---

[23]Once such a sequence of episodes becomes a tradition in its own right, it stands to reason that any cross–referencing from one episode of the sequence to another will also become a tradition. It is from a diachronic perspective that I find it useful to consider the phenomenon of Homeric cross–references, especially long–distance ones that happen to reach for hundreds or even thousands of lines: it is important to keep in mind that any such cross–reference that we admire in our two–dimensional text did not just happen one time in one performance—but presumably countless times in countless reperformances within the three–dimensional continuum of oral tradition. The rich resonance of any Homeric cross–reference must be appreciated for its history of iterability within the larger history of the performed narrative tradition that contains it.

[24][S.] West 39–40 accepts the possibility that the book–divisions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* reflect performance–units ordained by Hipparchus the Peisistratid; cf. also Janko 1992.31 n. 47 for a summary of her views. Taplin 285–293 argues that the book–divisions "do not go back to the formation of the poems" (285) and that they are relatively recent, probably the work of Aristarchus. Taplin's main line of argumentation is that he can find other possible episode–breaks, some that seem to him even more distinct than the breaks separating the presently constituted Books. What is needed to supplement this kind of discussion, I submit, is a diachronic perspective. What may be a performance break in one stage of the performance tradition may not be at another. What may be a three–part division in one stage of the tradition, which is what Taplin posits for the *Iliad*, may not necessarily be incompatible with a 24–part division at another stage. It is from a diachronic point of view that I emphasize the *cumulative* formation of episodes in the *process* of even weighting.

performance. And it is only in this later period, after 550 B.C. or so, that we begin to see examples of the use of writing in manuscripts. As we shall now see, some of these examples involve the use of a manuscript for purposes of a transcript, that is, in order to record any given *composition* and to control the circumstances of any given *performance*.

One such example comes from the era of Peisistratos and his sons, tyrants at Athens: from various reports, we see that this dynasty of the Peisistratids maintained political power at least in part by way of controlling poetry. One report in particular is worthy of mention here: according to Herodotus, the Peisistratids possessed manuscripts of oracular poetry, which they stored on the acropolis of Athens (5.90.2). As I have argued elsewhere, "the possession of poetry was a primary sign of the tyrant's wealth, power, and prestige" (N 1990.158). For Herodotus, the control of poetry by tyrants was a matter of *private* possession, a perversion of what should be the *public* possession of the polis. An example of public possession is evident in Herodotus' description of a consultation of the Oracle at Delphi that took place after the era of the tyrants, at a time when the Athenian state was already a democracy: we see from Herodotus' account of the consultation that there was a conventional procedure for the use of oracular poetry, and this procedure can be divided into three stages: 1), the poetry had to be transcribed by delegates that had been sent to Delphi in order to hear the actual delivery of the oracular poetic message; 2), the transcript had to be brought home from Delphi to the polis; and 3), the transcript, as a "script," had to be performed for the polis by the same delegates (7.142.1). This procedure stands in marked contrast to the practice of the Peisistratids, which is described by Herodotus as a usurpation of the public possession of poetry: to have private possession of poetry as a text is to control the occasion of its performance and the contents of its composition (N 1990.168).

It is, then, in this period of the Peisistratids that we may imagine a plausible historical occasion for the transcription of the Homeric poems in manuscript form. As we shall see, the plausibility seems enhanced by various reports from the ancient world about an event that some Classicists have described as the *Peisistratean recension* of the Homeric poems. Before we can take up the whole question of such a "recension," however, we must first examine further what exactly it means to speak of a *transcript* in the era of the Peisistratids and thereafter.

It is easiest to start with a negative consideration: a transcript is not the equivalent of a performance, though it may be an aid to performance. In other words, a transcript does not count as a speech–act. Aside from the testimony

that I have already considered from sources like Herodotus, there is also the evidence of pictures, in vase paintings, representing the use of manuscripts. As we examine the representations of people using manuscripts, that is, books or papyrus–rolls in these vase paintings, we can see that "books seem to have a mainly mnemonic role supplementing oral recitation" ([Rosalind] Thomas 21 n. 22).

There are, however, cases where something that was written in a manuscript form was indeed meant to be the equivalent of a performance. Even after 550 B.C. or so, in the era of manuscripts, there are clear traces of an impulse to recover the performative dimension by way of the written word, comparable to what we have seen in the era of the earlier Greek inscriptions before 550 B.C. or so. For example, in the case of Herodotus' own large–scale composition, the *Histories*, it is clear that the *writing down* of this composition in manuscript form was indeed meant to be the equivalent of a performance, a genuine speech–act. For Herodotus, to say "I write something" is deliberately made equivalent to saying "I say something" in solemn, public situations because whatever he is saying in this solemn way at the moment that the reader reads it *has already been written down.* In other words, whatever is staged as being said by the speaker of the *Histories* of Herodotus is predicated on the fact that it is already framed by the medium of writing, as if the staging itself were a creation of the writing. "I am saying this now in what I have written, therefore I am writing this now." The main difference between this kind of stance in early literature and similar effects in modern literature is that, for someone like Herodotus, the situations in the text where it is written "I write this now" instead of "I say this now" still match conventional situations in public life where one would normally say "I say this now." Thus, even as late as the second half of the fifth century, the era of Herodotus, the actual writing down of any given text could still be viewed as tantamount to the production of yet another performance, to the extent that the technology of writing could produce a text that conferred a level of authority parallel to the authority conferred by an actual performance. In the *Histories* of Herodotus, the written text is not only an equivalent to performance: it is considered the *authoritative* equivalent (N 1990.169, 217, 219).

By contrast, a transcript is not an equivalent to performance but merely a potential means to achieve performance. In this sense, a transcript in the era of the Peisistratids can be viewed as a potential "script." In what follows, I shall argue that whatever poetry might have been transcribed in this era still has to be defined in terms of oral poetics, that is, it has to be viewed as resulting from a fundamental interplay between the dimensions of composition and

performance. Further, I shall continue to argue that there is no evidence for assuming that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as compositions, *resulted* from the writing down of a text. The point remains that the writing down of a composition as text does not mean that writing was a prerequisite for the text's composition—*so long as the oral tradition that produced it continues to stay alive.* Moreover, the writing down of any kind of composition that could otherwise be produced in performance will not necessarily freeze the process of recomposition–in–performance (N 1990.19). There are numerous parallels in Western medieval literature, as we see for example in the following description, with reference to fifteenth–century English manuscript production: "the surviving manuscripts of a poem like *Beves of Hamptoun* make it clear that each act of copying was to a large extent an act of recomposition, and not an episode in a process of decomposition from an ideal form."[25] Paul Zumthor describes as *mouvance* the process whereby the act of composition, so long as this composition belongs to a living tradition of composition–in–performance, is regenerated in each act of copying (1984.160).

So the question is: if indeed a transcript could have been made of the Homeric poems in the era of the Peisistratids, how exactly are we to imagine the use of such a transcript? As a parallel to the pattern that we have seen reflected in the story of Herodotus, where the Peisistratids are described as establishing control over oracular poetry, we may suppose that they sought to control epic poetry as well. We shall return later to this aspect of the parallelism. The problem for now is, the parallelism cannot be extended in other respects. Oracular poetry is visibly occasional, responsive to the ad hoc requirements of time and place. The epic poetry of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* on the other hand, is distinctly non–occasional and at least seemingly unchanging, to be performed again and again on a seasonally recurring basis at formal occasions like the Feast of the Panathenaia. As I have already argued, the Homeric poems reveal a high degree of text–fixation or textualization, and again I am using the concept of *text* without the implication that writing is a prerequisite. So the question still remains: what use is there for a transcript of such a text?

Another way to approach the problem is to consider the textuality of the Homeric poems, even if no writing had been required to bring about this textuality, in terms of a later era when written texts were indeed the norm. Even in this later era, as we have seen, any written text that derives from an

[25]Pearsall 126–27. For medieval Irish parallels, see the discussion of [J. F.] Nagy 1986, esp. 289.

oral tradition can continue to enjoy the status of a recomposition–in–performance—so long as the oral tradition retains its performative authority. In such a later era, where written text and oral tradition coexist, the idea of a written text can become a primary metaphor for the authority of recomposition–in–performance. As I shall now argue, the very concept of a "Peisistratean recension" can be derived from such a metaphor.

The intrinsic applicability of *text* as metaphor for *recomposition–in–performance* helps explain a type of myth, attested in a wide variety of cultural contexts, where the evolution of a poetic tradition, moving slowly ahead in time until it reaches a relatively static phase, is reinterpreted by the myth as if it resulted from a single incident, pictured as the instantaneous recovery or even regeneration of a lost text, an archetype.

A particularly striking example is a myth about the making of the Book of Kings in the classical Persian epic tradition (N 1990.74 n. 110, following Davidson 111–127):

> According to Ferdowsi's *Shâhnâma* I 21.126–136, a noble vizier assembles *môbad*–s, wise men who are experts in the Law of Zoroaster, from all over the Empire, and each of these *môbad*–s brings with him a "fragment" of a long–lost Book of Kings that had been scattered to the winds; each of the experts is called upon to recite, in turn, his respective "fragment," and the vizier composes a book out of these recitations...The vizier reassembles the old book that had been disassembled, which in turn becomes the model for the *Shâhnâma* "Book of Kings" of Ferdowsi (*Shâhnâma* I 21.156–161). We see here paradoxically a myth about the synthesis of oral traditions that is articulated in terms of written traditions.

There is a comparable myth in Old Irish traditions, concerning the recovery of the "lost" *Cattle Raid of Cúailnge*.[26] There are also similar themes in Old French traditions. The work known as *Guiron le courtois*, for example, composed around 1235, lays the foundations for its authority by telling of the many French books that were produced from an archetypal translation of a mythical Latin book of the Holy Grail (Lathuillère 176–177; Huot 218–221).

Other examples abound. I cite two examples from the living oral traditions of India. In Telugu society, there is an aetiological myth explaining why the Palnâdu epic is now sung by untouchable Malas: "the epic, it is claimed, was first written by a Brahmin poet, torn into shreds, discarded, and then picked up by the present performers" (Blackburn 32 n. 25). Another

[26][J. F.] Nagy 1985.292–293. Cf. also 1983 and 1986 (esp. 284 and 289 in the latter article).

example comes from the Pâbûji oral epic tradition of Rajasthan: "a *bhopo* [folk–priest] of Pâbûji like Parbû will insist that the epic he performs 'really' derives from a big book composed by high–caste Câran poets and kept in Pâbûji's native village of Kolû: for him it is the written word that carries authority" (Smith 18).[27]

I have saved till now two examples from ancient Greece. Both examples involve myths, but in the second case the myth in question seems at first to be a report based on historical events. This is not the place to explore at length the role of myth as a reflex of institutional history in ancient Greece. For the moment, it is enough to say that both myths about to be examined concern the institutions of the respective communities to which they belong, and that the two communities in question are Sparta and Athens. Since the myths may not seem like myths at first sight, I will for the moment refer to both of them by way of the more neutral term "story."

The first story is from Sparta, centering on the topic of a disassembled book, scattered here and there throughout the Greek–speaking world, and then reassembled in a single incident, at one particular time and place, by a wise man credited with the juridical framework of his society, Lycurgus the lawgiver. According to this story, as reported by Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus* 4, Lycurgus brought to Sparta the Homeric poems, which he acquired from a lineage of epic performers called the Kreophyleioi, descended from Kreophylos of Samos. In archaic Sparta, it appears that the Kreophyleioi of Samos were more authoritative than the epic performers elsewhere credited with the transmission of Homeric poetry, the Homeridai of Chios: as Aristotle reports (*fr.* 611.10 Rose), the Homeric poems were introduced to Sparta by Lycurgus, who got them from the Kreophyleioi when he visited Samos.[28] With reference to the Homeric poems, Plutarch reports that Lycurgus, having received them from the Kreophyleioi, "had them written down" (ἐγράψατο), and that he then "assembled" them (*Lyc.* 4). What follows in Plutarch's account is worth citing verbatim: ἦν γάρ τις ἤδη δόξα τῶν ἐπῶν ἀμαυρὰ παρὰ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν, *ἐκέκτηντο* δὲ οὐ πολλοὶ μέρη τινά, *σποράδην* τῆς ποιήσεως, ὡς

[27]Smith observes (17–18): "it may be that the orality of these traditions is a strength rather than a weakness, for Hindu worship—including Vedic ritual—has always emphasized oral skills." Contrasting the "primary" orality of the Rajasthani epic traditions with the "secondary oral ability of the literate Brahmin who learns texts from a book," Smith concludes: "It is an intriguing paradox that the two widely–separated worlds of orality and literacy should each seek legitimacy by claiming characteristics belonging to the other" (18).

[28]Cf. Janko 1992.30 n. 45; see also 31 n. 50 for the possibility that the Aristotle story about Lycurgus in Samos goes back to the late sixth century. More on the Kreophyleioi of Samos, as rivals of the Homeridai of Chios, in N 1990.23, 74.

ἔτυχε, διαφερομένης· γνωρίμην δὲ αὐτὴν καὶ μάλιστα πρῶτος ἐποίησε Λυκοῦργος (for there was already a not–too–bright fame attached to these epics among the Greeks, and some of them *were in possession* [verb *kektêmai*] of some portions, since the poetry had been *scattered*, carried here and there by chance, and it was Lycurgus who was the first to make it [=the poetry] well–known).

In this passage, I have highlighted the word *kektêmai* 'possess' with reference to the "ownership" of Homeric poetry. The same word is used by Herodotus in referring to the "ownership" of oracular poetry on the part of the Peisistratids, the dynasty of tyrants at Athens (5.90.2). Elsewhere, Herodotus refers to the manipulation, by the Peisistratids, of oracular poetry with the help of one Onomakritos, described in this context as *diathetês* 'arranger' of this poetry (7.6.3; cf. N 1990.174).

This detail about a *diathetês* 'arranger' of poetry brings us to the second of the two ancient Greek examples of the kind of myth that we are presently considering. This second story is from Athens. Even more than the first story, it seems at first to be not a myth but a straightforward account of a historical *event*. As I shall argue presently, however, it can be explained as a myth that happens to account for a historical *process*. This myth, like others we have already examined, accounts for the evolution of a poetic tradition which, moving slowly ahead in time until it reaches a relatively static phase, is reinterpreted by the myth as if it resulted from a single incident, pictured as the instantaneous recovery or even regeneration of a lost text, an archetype. As I shall argue, what makes this myth more distinct than the others is that we know more about the historical circumstances of its ultimate political appropriation.

For now, a summary of the Athenian story will suffice. A certain Onomakritos, the same person whom we have just seen described by Herodotus as a *diathetês* 'arranger' of oracular poetry (7.6.3), was the member of a group of four men commissioned in the reign of Peisistratos to supervise the 'arranging' of the Homeric poems, which were before then 'scattered about' (διέθηκαν οὑτωσὶ *σποράδην* οὔσας τὸ πρίν: *Anecdota Graeca* 1.6 ed. Cramer). There is a convergent report in Aelian, *Varia Historia* 13.14, where the introduction of Homeric poetry to Sparta by Lycurgus the lawgiver is explicitly compared to a subsequent introduction of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to Athens by Peisistratos. The most explicit version of the story can be found in Cicero *De oratore* 3.137: Peisistratos, as one of the Seven Sages (*septem fuisse*

dicuntur uno tempore, qui sapientes et haberentur et vocarentur),[29] was supposedly so learned and eloquent that "he is said to be the first person ever to arrange the books of Homer, previously scattered about, in the order that we have today" (*qui primus Homeri libros confusos antea sic disposuisse dicitur, ut nunc habemus*). In these accounts of the supposedly original Athenian reception of Homeric poetry, reinforced by the story in "Plato" *Hipparchus* 228b claiming that it was Hipparchus, the son of Peisistratos, who introduced the Homeric poems to Athens, we confront the germ of the construct that has come to be known among Classicists as the "Peisistratean recension."[30]

On the basis of the other narrative traditions that we have examined concerning the topic of an archetypal text that disintegrates in the distant past only to become reintegrated at a later point by a sage who then gives it as a gift to his community, the story of a "Peisistratean recension" can be explained as a myth that bears clear signs of political appropriation by the Peisistratids. Particularly striking is the parallelism in the accounts of Plutarch and Cicero between Lycurgus, lawgiver of Sparta who gives his community the Homeric poems, and Peisistratos, described as one of the Seven Sages, who likewise gives his community of Athens the Homeric poems. Myths about lawgivers, whether they are historical figures or not, tend to reconstruct these figures as the originators of the sum total of customary law (N 1990.170, 368). Traditions about the Seven Sages, the most prominent of whom is Solon the lawgiver of Athens, are closely linked to those about lawgivers in general (N pp. 185–186, 226 n. 61, 243 n. 122, 333–334).

The distinction between historical tyrants on the one hand and mythical lawgivers or sages on the other is oftentimes blurred (N 185–186). In the account of Aelian, the parallelism between the lawgiver *par excellence* and the tyrant Peisistratos is explicit: just as Lycurgus gives the Homeric poems to Sparta, so also Peisistratos gives the Homeric poems to Athens. The parallelism may possibly be extended: just as Lycurgus is reputed to have brought the Homer performed by the Kreophyleioi of Samos to Sparta (Plutarch *Life of Lycurgus* 4), so also the Peisistratids perhaps took credit for bringing the Homer performed by the Homeridai of Chios to Athens.[31]

---

[29]There is emphasis on the idea that each of the Seven Sages except Thales had been head of state (Cicero *De oratore* 3.137: *hi omnes praeter Milesium Thalen civitatibus suis praefuerunt*).

[30]For a brief restatement and survey of primary information pertinent to the concept of a "Peisistratean recension," see Allen 225–238. For a most useful bibliography on the concept, see Janko 1992.29, whose own position is that "the text existed *before* [Peisistratos'] time." At 32, with bibliography, Janko brings up the suggestion of earlier scholars that the Peisistratean recension was a "theory" invented by the scholars of Pergamon.

[31]More on the parallelisms between the Kreophyleioi and Homeridai at N 1990.23, 74.

The Homeric poems took shape, according to the Athenian version of the story, in the context of what is now called the *Panathenaic rule,* where the performance of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by *rhapsôidoi* 'rhapsodes' was not allowed to favor some "episodes" over others, in that the entire composition had to be performed by one rhapsode after another *in sequence* ("Plato" *Hipparchus* 228b and Diogenes Laertius 1.57).[32] The "Panathenaic rule" is an ancient Greek analogue to what I have described in comparative terms of the Indian evidence as a communalization of repertoire. It is striking that this "Panathenaic rule" is attributed by Athenian sources *either* to the Peisistratids ("Plato" *Hipparchus* 228b) *or* to Solon himself (Diogenes Laertius 1.57). The parallelism linking Peisistratos with Solon, lawgiver of Athens, can be compared to the parallelism linking Peisistratos with Lycurgus, lawgiver of Sparta. Again we see a clear sign of appropriation of a myth by the Peisistratids.

The concept of a "Peisistratean recension" has been generally attacked or ignored by unitarians, supported by analysts (Jensen 128). Since such an event—and the concept of a recension requires that it be viewed as an event—supposedly took place in the middle of the sixth century, it is almost two centuries removed from the era conventionally assigned to Homer. The concept is therefore not congenial to those who see a need to recover the presence of a "text" composed by a Homer who lived in the eighth century—let us call them "unitarians"—since there is no way of bridging the gap between this "Homer" and a written text that supposedly first came into being only some two hundred years later. By contrast, "analysts" who do not care about singular authorship can choose to be indifferent about the prospect of moving the date of Homeric composition forward by two centuries, since they view this composition as a matter of patchwork in any case.

A unitarian like Davison (1963.225 and 220) assumes a "Panathenaic text," though he does not go so far as to accept the concept of a "Peisistratean recension." As for an analyst like Sealey (1957.351), his disbelief in a standard Alexandrian edition of Homer is matched by a disbelief in a standard Panathenaic edition: he goes only so far as to say that the Panathenaic version of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* could have been written down any time between 550 B.C. and 450 B.C. He connects the possibility of a more precise dating for any writing down of the text with the need to come up with a more precise dating for the rise of the book-trade in Athens. By implication, then, there is for him

[32]For the concept of Homeric "episodes," I cite again the account of Aelian *Varia Historia* 13.14, as interpreted by Sealey 1957.344 and 351 n. 115.

no standard Panathenaic archetype on which the manuscripts of the incipient book–trade are based. In terms of Sealey's model (349–50), I infer that any writing down of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in this period between 550 B.C. and 450 B.C. would amount to a mere transcript, not some standard of reference for future performances.

I find that my position is closest to that of Sealey, to the extent that I too see no proof for the existence of an archetypal Panathenaic manuscript of Homer. There is, however, room for positing an archetypal Panathenaic *form* for *performing* the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as embodied in a Greek development that we have already compared with similar developments attested in living oral traditions. That development is the *Panathenaic rule,* attributed either to the Peisistratids or to Solon himself ("Plato" *Hipparchus* 228b and Diogenes Laertius 1.57 respectively). A useful point of departure is the following formulation by Sealey:

> Now the work of Peisistratos and his sons amounts to this, that the episodes of Homeric story–telling were arranged in a constant order for rhapsodes to follow. This work could hardly be necessary, if the poems had already been reduced to writing and thus it furnishes one more argument against the hypothesis of an early writing–down of the poems. (349)

I disagree with Sealey's formulation to the extent that the arrangement of the narration is viewed here as a historical *event*, corresponding to an *event* in the story that told about the Peisistratids and how they produced a standard text of the Homeric poems. I propose instead an evolutionary model for both "events," that is, for both the arrangement of narration and the textualization of the poems.

It is clear, then, that my goal is not to revive the case for positing a "Peisistratean recension," where *recension* is obviously to be understood in the conventional sense of a critical revision that takes into account the basic available sources of a text. Rather, I propose to approach the problem in a different way by pointing out that the details of reports that have led to the very idea of a "Peisistratean recension" happen to match the details of myths that explain the composition, performance, and diffusion of epic. The emphasis of these myths on the ultimate unity or integrity of any given epic, as we see most dramatically illustrated in the classical Persian example, corresponds to the reality of a unified and integrated text, such as the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. It also corresponds to the reality of the customary law in effect at the Athenian festival of the Panathenaia, where it was ordained that the performance of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by *rhapsôidoi* 'rhapsodes' had to follow

the *sequence* of composition, and that the entire composition had to be performed by one rhapsode after another, likewise *in their own sequence.* Our two clear references to this customary law, "Plato" *Hipparchus* 228b and Diogenes Laertius 1.57, disagree about the identity of the initiator of this practice, the first source indicating the Peisistratids and the second, Solon the lawgiver. For our purposes, the question of determining the originator of this custom is irrelevant to the more basic question of the significance of the custom itself. The reality of this customary law, I submit, is a clear proof that unity or integrity of composition was itself a tradition, and was venerated as such.

If, then, the Peisistratean recension is a myth, whose myth is it? The answer is, surely, that the Peisistratids owned it, or, better, appropriated it as an instrument of propaganda for their dynasty. We may note that Cicero's account, which is most explicit about the recension, portrays the tyrant Peisistratos as one of the canonical Seven Sages in the context of crediting him with the arrangement of the Homeric poems. Other reports, as we have also seen, draw an explicit parallel between Peisistratos and a venerable lawmaker like Lycurgus of Sparta. In short, the historicity of the Peisistratean recension is to be found not in the actual story of the recension but in the appropriation of the story, the myth, as a source of propaganda for the Peisistratids.

It is in this context that I am ready to ask the question for the last time: when was it that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were recorded as written texts? On the basis of linguistic criteria, Richard Janko (1982.228–231) has proposed 750–725 B.C. and 743–713 B.C. as definitive dates for the text–fixation of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* respectively.[33] On the basis of historical and archaeological considerations, Ian Morris agrees (esp. 93, 104), to the extent that the contents of the Homeric poems may reflect a social context datable to the eighth century before our era. Both these assessments require the "dictation theory" for establishing such an early date. As I have already argued, however, the evidence of the earliest poetic inscriptions suggests that the very concept of a poetic transcript is not likely to have evolved until around 550 B.C.

I have made the claim here, given the strong parallelisms between a written text and certain patterns of evolution in oral poetic traditions, that text–fixation can be viewed as a process, not necessarily an event. Text–fixation becomes an event only when the text finally gets written down. But we have seen that there can be textuality—or better, textualization—without written text. I have been arguing further that the Homeric tradition of epic provides an

[33]Modified formulation in Janko 1992.19.

example of such textualization: in the process of evolution in composition, performance, and diffusion, the Homeric tradition of epic became increasingly less fluid and more stable in its patterns of recomposition, moving slowly ahead in time until it reached a relatively static phase (N 1990.52–81). We may refer to this static phase as the era of the *rhapsôidoi* 'rhapsodes' in line with the argumentation of Raphael Sealey (1957; cf. Jensen 96–106 and Ballabriga 28). The static phase could easily have lasted two centuries or so, spanning the time stretching from the later part of the eighth century, a point that we may call the *formative stage* in line with Ian Morris' observations, all the way to the second half of the sixth, a point that we may call the *definitive stage* in line with what appears to be the achievement of a near–textual status of the Homeric poems in the context of performance by rhapsodes at the Panathenaia (N 1990.80). The date for this achievement at the definitive stage is around 550 B.C.[34] My evolutionary model differs from that of G. S. Kirk (1962.88–98 and 1976.130–131), who posits a sequence of oral transmission starting with a monumental composer in the eighth century B.C., to be defined as an individual Homer, and proceeding from there into the historical period of sixth–century Athens.[35] Either model takes us down to 550 B.C. or so.[36]

This evolutionary model of Homeric poetry culminating in a static phase that lasts about two centuries, framed by a relatively *formative stage* in the later part of the eighth century and an increasingly *definitive stage* in the middle of the sixth, is comparable to the model that I have worked out for the body of poetry attributed to Theognis of Megara, where the external dating–criteria applied to the contents suggest a span of evolution exceeding a century and a half (N 1985.33–34). There are also other points of comparison. With reference to Hesiod, Archilochus, and Tyrtaeus, Stephanie West has dated the compositions attributed to all three before the last third of the seventh century, adding that "their precisely worded compositions could not long have survived their authors without a written record" (1988.34). I prefer to apply an evolutionary model to all three, noting the rhapsodic traditions explicitly attested in the case of Hesiod (N 1990.29 n. 66) and Archilochus (N pp. 25–26 and 363–364 n. 133); similar arguments can be made in the case of Tyrtaeus (N 1990b.269–275).

---

[34]I follow here, at least in part, the discussion of Sealey 1957 (see esp. 348).

[35]For a critique of Kirk's model, see Jensen 95, 113–114; I agree with her arguments against Kirk's "devolutionary" premise. Jensen's own model posits a dictation that was supposedly commissioned by the Peisistratids.

[36]Cf. Sealey 1990.133, who argues that "the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* do not have a date of composition. They came into being during a long period, which began well before the end of the Bronze Age and lasted into the sixth century or later."

The comparative evidence of living oral epic traditions goes a long way to show that unity or integrity results from the dynamic interaction of *composition*, *performance*, and *diffusion* in the making of epic. Such evidence, added to the internal evidence of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as texts, points to a holistic model for the making of Homeric poetry.

For my Homeric Questions, the key element in the triad of *composition*, *performance*, and *diffusion* has throughout been the second. Without performance, oral tradition is not oral. Without performance, tradition is no longer the same. Without performance, the very idea of Homer loses its integrity. More than that, the very essence of the Classics becomes incomplete.

My ideal, however, should be not only to reintroduce the vitality of performance, of oral tradition in general, to the conceptual framework of our field, the Classics. We must also be vigilant over tradition itself, all tradition. Earlier, I had argued that the field of Classics, which lends itself to the empirical study of tradition, seems ideally suited to articulate the value of tradition in other societies, whether or not these societies are closely comparable to those of ancient Greece and Rome, given that we live in an era when the ethnographic evidence of living traditions is rapidly becoming extinct, where many thousands of years of cumulative human experience are becoming obliterated by less than a century or so of modern technological progress. The rapid extinction of old living traditions by the same technological progress that points towards the less rapid but equally certain extinction of Nature itself is forcefully expressed in the poem of a native American:

> Self–portrait: microcosm, or, song of mixed–blood
> by Robert Conley (Hobson 1981.69)
>
> 1.
> In me the Cherokee
> wars against *yoneg* (white)
> I have college degrees (2)
> all major credit cards
> pay my bills on time each month
> on my wall is a photograph
> of the Great Spirit
>
> 2.
> Because the meat I eat
> comes wrapped in cellophane
> I do not understand
> the first facts of life

I have never drunk blood
and I hunt
with the channel selector
in front of my tv

3.
When I go to the supermarket
and buy some meat
pre–cut and wrapped
how do I apologize
to the spirit of the animal
whose meat I eat
and where shall I build my fires?

4.
My poems are my fires.
oh gods forgive me all
the things I've failed
to do. the things I should
have done. forgive the meat
I've used without a prayer
without apology forgive
the other prayers I haven't
said those times I should
but oh ye gods both great
and small I do not know
the ancient forms. my poems
are my fires and my prayers.

I see in this poem a legacy for American Classicists, a legacy emanating from a Native American outcry that carries a special meaning to all Americans. This poem is particularly apt because it is about principles, in the literal sense of first elements. It explores the value of going back in time in order to recover fundamental truths, even when it may not any longer be clear what it is that one is recovering. The key anxiety in the poem seems to be: *I do not know the ancient forms*. The forms are the ritual, the ritual is the performance, the performance is the song. So what can compensate for the ancient forms? The answer is to be found in the very use of tradition, or in what is somehow linked to tradition, which is the essence of poetry as the offshoot of performance. The ritual aspect of performance can best be symbolized in a primary form of ritual, sacrifice, and the essence of sacrifice

can best be symbolized in the fires of sacrifice.[37] The key solution to the anxiety is: *my poems are my fires.*

I link the quest of going back in time through the human experience, rescuing values in societies about to be extinguished, with the quest of rescuing Nature from the onslaught of technology and ideology. Or let us talk about nature as it connects with the human condition, calling it the environment.

I avoid using the word "primitive," especially with reference to small-scale societies that have in recent times been pushed to the brink of extinction by the advances of technology. A word like that implies that the given society has failed to keep up with Progress, as if there were just one direction in which all societies, all humanity, must be headed. As the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss has remarked, the endangered societies of our world seem to us to be at a standstill "not necessarily because they are so in fact, but because the line of their development has no meaning for us, and cannot be measured in terms of the criteria we employ" (Lévi-Strauss 23). He gives a striking analogy, an intuitive observation generalized from the experience of life:

> People of advanced years generally consider that history during their old age is stationary, in contrast to the cumulative history they saw being made when they were young. A period in which they are no longer actively concerned, when they have no part to play, has no real meaning for them; nothing happens, or what does happen seems to them to be unproductive of good; while their grandchildren throw themselves into the life of that same period with all the passionate enthusiasm which their elders have forgotten.

Today the environment itself is in danger, but the elders presiding over what they call "Western Civilization" may seem to be indifferent to the damage caused by the technology of this civilization. If we follow for a moment the line of thought suggested just now by Lévi-Strauss, we could say that the ancient world, the world of myth, is in fact still a young world when it comes to the experiencing of Nature. The Ancients, along with what is left of the so-called Primitives of today, see the world in a way that may yet rekindle our own passion for that experience.

This talk of passion brings us back to the assertion, *My poems are my fires.* Here is where the diachronic perspective is needed, with regard to cultures on the verge of becoming extinguished. Here is where philology is

[37]For the ritual aspects of performing song or poetry: N 1990.29–46; for variations on the theme of fire as a symbol of sacrifice and ritual in general: N 1990b.143–180.

needed, with regard to the poems. I mean philology in the broadest sense of the ancient term, as forcefully restated by Rudolf Pfeiffer:

> The Sophists had a predilection for compounds with *philo–*, and it may be due to them that we find *philologos* first in Plato...and once in a comedy of Alexis in the later fourth century...; it means [someone] fond of talk, dispute, dialectic in a wide and rather vague or ironical sense. But when Eratosthenes used it, or when the new Diegesis...to the first *Iambus* of Callimachus says that Hipponax coming from the dead calls *tous philologous eis to Parmeniônos kaloumenon Sarapideion*, the compound refers (according to Suetonius) to persons who are familiar with various branches of knowledge or even the whole of the *logos*. (159)

We come back to the report of Suetonius (*De grammaticis et rhetoribus* c. 10) that Eratosthenes was the first scholar to formalize this term *philologos* in referring to his identity as a scholar, and that in doing so he was drawing attention to a *doctrina* that is *multiplex variaque*, a course of studies that is many–sided and composed of many different elements. This ideal is built into the name of our organization, into our very identity as a group of scholars that is *multiplex variaque*. It is an ideal that is built into the city where we meet. More than that, it is an ideal that is built into the very country whose name is part of our name, the American Philological Association. In this particular moment in the history of our organization, when some of our members may be anguished at perhaps being made to feel that they do not really belong to the American Philological Association, this ideal of a doctrina that is many–sided and composed of many different elements needs to be reaffirmed. It is an ideal that we can reaffirm in the lingua franca of this country, the English language, if we use the Anglo–Saxon word *love* to recapture our shared longing for the Logos. I am thinking here of the way in which Gilbert Murray happened to use this word in his own Anglo–Saxon musings about philology (19):

> 'Wind, wind of the deep sea,' begins a chorus in the *Hecuba*...How slight the words are! Yet there is in them just that inexplicable beauty, that quick shiver of joy or longing which, as it was fresh then in a world whose very bone and iron have long since passed into dust, is fresh still and alive still; only harder to reach; more easy to forget, to disregard, to smother with irrelevancies; far more in danger of death. For, like certain other of the things of the spirit, *it will die if it is not loved.* [italics mine]

As we ponder the death of words, we may recollect the undying words of Phoenix in *Iliad* IX 527–528 as he introduces the story of the hero Meleagros to Achilles and the rest of the audience: μέμνημαι 'I remember [*mnê–*]':

μέμνημαι τόδε ἔργον ἐγὼ πάλαι οὔ τι νέον γε
ὡς ἦν· ἐν δ' ὑμῖν ἐρέω πάντεσσι *φίλοισι*

I remember, I do, this thing that happened a long time ago, not recently,
I remember how it was, and I will tell you, *loved ones* [*philoi*] that you
all are.

As Richard Martin argues, the Homeric notion of *speech–act* or *performance* is associated with such *narrating from memory* (Martin 44), which he describes as the rhetorical act of *recollection* (80).[38] This speech–act of recollection, which qualifies explicitly as a *mûthos* (as at *Iliad* I 273), is the act of *memnêmai* 'I remember.' The failure of any such speech–act is marked by the act of *lêth–* 'forgetting' (as with λήθεαι at *Iliad* IX 259),[39] which reminds us of the anxiety of *forgetting the forms* in the poem by the Native American.

In our passage from the *Iliad*, the accusative object τόδε ἔργον 'this thing that happened' following *memnêmai* 'I remember' makes clear that the act of remembering is not just perceptual. It is an active conjuring up, by the words themselves, of what is felt to be real. And the words in this passage from the *Iliad* take on their authority because those who do listen are presumed to be, all of them, *philoi* 'near and dear' or 'loved ones': ἐν δ' ὑμῖν ἐρέω πάντεσσι *φίλοισι*. The listeners are bound to the speaker of the word by their presumed love for him, presumably reciprocating his love for them. For us to be able to listen as well, to listen in, there has to be love of the word, in a word, philology.

When Achilles predicts in *Iliad* IX that the song about him will last for all time, unwilting forever, we may marvel at the fact that his prediction holds true—up till now. If we follow Gilbert Murray's reasoning, the word did not die, has not yet died, and will not die if it is indeed loved. Philology lives. Long live philology!

Works Cited

Allen, T. W., ed. 1912. *Homeri Opera* V (Hymns, Cycle, fragments, etc.). Oxford.

Ballabriga, A. 1990. "La Question Homérique: Pour une réouverture du débat." *REG* 103:16–29.

Blackburn, S. H. 1988. *Singing of Birth and Death: Texts in Performance*. Philadelphia.

[38]Martin adds, *ibid.*: "as a general rule, characters in the *Iliad* do not remember anything simply for the pleasure of memory. Recall has an exterior goal."

[39]Extensive discussion by Martin 77–88; of special interest is 78.

Blackburn, S. H., and Flueckiger, J. B. 1989. "Introduction." *OEI* 1–11.
Blackburn, S. H., Claus, P. J., Flueckiger, J. B., and Wadley, S. S., eds. 1989. *Oral Epics in India*. Berkeley and Los Angeles. Abbreviated as *OEI*.
Carey, C. 1992. Review of N 1990. *AJP* 113:283–86.
CEG. *See* Hansen 1983.
Chadwick, J. 1976. *The Mycenaean World*. Cambridge.
Chantraine, P. 1968, 1970, 1975, 1977, 1980. *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* I, II, III, IV–1, IV–2. Paris. Abbreviated as DELG.
Davidson, O. M. 1985. "The Crown–Bestower in the Iranian Book of Kings." *Acta Iranica, Hommages et Opera Minora* 10: *Papers in Honour of Professor Mary Boyce*, 61–148. Leiden.
Davison, J. A. 1955. "Peisistratus and Homer." *TAPA* 86:1–21.
1955b. "Quotations and Allusions in Early Greek Poetry." *Eranos* 53:125–140 = 1968:70–85.
1958. "Notes on the Panathenaia." *JHS* 78:23–41 = 1968:28–69.
1963. "The Transmission of the Text" / "The Homeric Question." *A Companion to Homer*, ed. A. J. B. Wace and F. H. Stubbings, 215–33 / 234–65. London.
1968. *From Archilochus to Pindar: Papers on Greek Literature of the Archaic Period*. London.
Ducrot, O., and Todorov, T. 1972. *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences du language*. Paris. = *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Sciences of Language*. Translated by C. Porter. Baltimore, 1979.
Eagleton, T. 1983. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Minneapolis.
Figueira, T. J., and Nagy, G., eds. 1985. *Theognis of Megara: Poetry and the Polis*. Baltimore.
Finnegan, R. 1991. "Tradition, But What Tradition and For Whom?" *Oral Tradition* 6:104-24.
Foley, J. M., ed. 1981. *Oral Traditional Literature: A Festschrift for Albert Bates Lord*. Columbus, Ohio.
Friis Johansen, K. 1967. *The Iliad in Early Greek Art*. Copenhagen.
Goody, J. R. 1977. *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*. Cambridge.
1972. *The Myth of the Bagre*. Oxford.
Goody, J., and Watt, I. 1968. "The Consequences of Literacy." In *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed. J. Goody, 27–68. Cambridge.
Griffin, J. 1980. *Homer on Life and Death*. Oxford.
Hainsworth, J. B., and Hatto, A. T., eds. 1989. *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry* II: *Characteristics and Techniques*. London.
Hansen, P. A., ed. 1983. *Carmina Epigraphica Graeca saeculorum viii–v a.Chr.n.* Berlin and New York.
Harris, W. V. 1989. *Ancient Literacy*. Cambridge, Mass.
Hobson, G., ed. 1981 [originally published 1979]. *The Remembered Earth: An Anthology of Contemporary Native American Literature*. Albuquerque.
Householder, F. W., and Nagy, G. 1972. "Greek." In *Current Trends in Linguistics* IX, ed. T. A. Sebeok, 735–816. The Hague.
Huot, S. 1991. "Chronicle, Lai, and Romance: Orality and Writing in the *Roman de Perceforest*." Doan and Pasternack 1991:203–223.
Jacoby, F., ed. 1923–. *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Leiden.
Janko, R. 1982. *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns: Diachronic Development in Epic Diction*. Cambridge.
1992. *The Iliad: A Commentary. Volume IV: Books 13–16*. Cambridge.
Jensen, M. Skafte 1980. *The Homeric Question and the Oral–Formulaic Theory*. Copenhagen.
Kirk, G. S. 1962. *The Songs of Homer*. Cambridge.

1976. *Homer and the Oral Tradition.* Cambridge.
Lathuillère, R. 1966. *Giron le courtois: Etude de la tradition manuscrite et analyse critique.* Geneva.
Lévi–Strauss, C. 1958. *Race and History.* Paris.
Lloyd–Jones, H. 1992. "Becoming Homer." *New York Review of Books* 39.5:52–57. Review of Lord 1991, *inter alia.*
Lord, A. B. 1938. "Homer and Huso II: Narrative Inconsistencies in Homer and Oral Poetry." *TAPA* 69:439–445.
1951. "Composition by Theme in Homer and Southslavic Epos." *TAPA* 82:71–80.
1953. "Homer's Originality: Oral Dictated Texts." *TAPA* 84:124–134. Rewritten, with minimal changes, in Lord 1991.38–48 (with an "Addendum 1990" at pp. 47–48).
1960. *The Singer of Tales.* Cambridge, Mass.
1990. "Perspectives on Recent Work on Oral Literature." Foley 1990:31–51; excerpted from *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 10 (1974) 1–21.
1990b. "Perspectives on Recent Work on the Oral Traditional Formula." Foley 1990:379–405; excerpted from *Oral Tradition* 1 (1986) 467–503.
1991. *Epic Singers and Oral Tradition.* Ithaca.
Lynn–George, M. 1982. Review of Griffin 1980. *JHS* 102:239–245.
Martin, R. P. 1989. *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the Iliad.* Ithaca.
McClary, S. 1989. "Terminal Prestige: The Case of Avant–Garde Music Composition." *Cultural Critique* 12:57–81.
Merkelbach, R. 1952. "Die pisistratische Redaktion der homerischen Gedichte." *RhM* 95:23–47.
Miller, A. M. 1986. *From Delos to Delphi: A Literary Study of the Homeric Hymn to Apollo.* Leiden.
Miller, D. G. 1982. *Improvisation, Typology, Culture, and "The New Orthodoxy": How Oral is Homer?* Washington, D.C.
1982b. *Homer and the Ionian Epic Tradition.* Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft 38. Innsbruck
Morris, I. 1986. "The Use and Abuse of Homer." *ClAnt* 5:81–136.
Muellner, L. 1976. *The Meaning of Homeric EYXOMAI through its Formulas.* Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft 13. Innsbruck.
1990. "The Simile of the Cranes and Pygmies: A Study of Homeric Metaphor." *HSCP* 93:59–101.
Murray, G. 1909. *The Interpretation of Ancient Greek Literature. An Inaugural Lecture Delivered Before the University of Oxford. January 27 1909.* Oxford.
MW. *See* Merkelbach and West 1967.
N. *See* Nagy, G.
Nagy, G. 1974. *Comparative Studies in Greek and Indic Meter.* Cambridge, Mass.
1979. *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry.* Baltimore.
1981. "An Evolutionary Model for the Text Fixation of Homeric Epos." Foley 1981:390–393.
1985. "Theognis and Megara: A Poet's Vision of His City." Figueira and Nagy 1985:22–81.
1988. Review of Shive 1987. *Phoenix* 42:364–66.
1990. *Pindar's Homer: The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past.* Baltimore.
1990b. *Greek Mythology and Poetics.* Ithaca. Reprinted 1992, with corrections.
1990c. "Death of a Schoolboy: The Early Greek Beginnings of a Crisis in Philology," *Comparative Literature Studies* 27 (1990) 37–48; reprinted in *On Philology*, ed. J. Ziolkowski, 37–48. University Park, Pennsylvania.

Nagy, J. F. 1983. "Close Encounters of the Traditional Kind in Medieval Irish Literature." *Celtic Folklore and Christianity: Studies in Memory of William W. Heist*, ed. P. K. Ford, 129–149. Santa Barbara.
1985. *The Wisdom of the Outlaw: The Boyhood Deeds of Finn in Gaelic Narrative Tradition*. Berkeley and Los Angeles.
1986. "Orality in Medieval Irish Narrative." *Oral Tradition* 1:272–301.
OEI. *See* Blackburn, Claus, Flueckiger, and Wadley 1989.
Parry, A. M. 1966. "Have we Homer's *Iliad*?" *YCS* 20:175–216. Reprinted in Parry, A. M. 1989. *The Language of Achilles and Other Papers*, 104–140. Oxford.
Parry, M. 1928. *L'épithète traditionnelle dans Homère: Essai sur un problème de style homérique*. Paris. Translated in Parry 1971:1–190.
1928b. *Les formules et la métrique d'Homère*. Paris. Translated in Parry 1971:191–234.
1971. *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*, ed. A. Parry. Oxford.
Pearsall, D. 1984. "Texts, Textual Criticism, and Fifteenth–Century Manuscript Production." *Fifteenth–Century Studies*, ed. R. F. Yeager, 121–36. Hamden.
Peradotto, J. 1990. *Man in the Middle Voice: Name and Narration in the Odyssey*. Princeton.
Pfeiffer, R. 1968. *History of Classical Scholarship: From the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age*. Oxford.
Phillips, C. R., III. 1989. "Classical Scholarship Against Its History." *AJP* 110:636–57.
Pozzi, D. C., and Wickersham, J. M., eds. 1991. *Myth and the Polis*. Ithaca.
Powell, B. B. 1991. *Homer and the Origin of the Greek Alphabet*. Cambridge.
Rubino, C. A., and Shelmerdine, C. W., eds. 1983. *Approaches to Homer*. Austin.
Sealey, R. 1957. "From Phemius to Ion." *REG* 70:312–55.
1990. *Women and Law in Classical Greece*. Chapel Hill.
Shive, D. M. 1987. *Naming Achilles*. New York and Oxford.
Slatkin, L. M. 1991. *The Power of Thetis: Allusion and Interpretation in the Iliad*. Berkeley and Los Angeles.
Smith, J. D. 1990. "Worlds Apart: Orality, Literacy, and the Rajasthani Folk–*Mahâbhârata*." *Oral Tradition* 5:3–19.
Snodgrass, A. M. 1971. The Dark Age of Greece: *An Archaeological Survey of the Eleventh to the Eighth Centuries*. Edinburgh.
1987. *An Archaeology of Greece: The Present State and Future Scope of a Discipline*. Berkeley and Los Angeles.
Svenbro, J. 1988. *Phrasikleia: Anthropologie de la lecture en Grèce ancienne*. Paris.
Taplin, O. 1992. *Homeric Soundings: The Shaping of the Iliad*. Oxford.
Thalmann, W. G. 1984. *Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Epic Poetry*. Baltimore.
Thomas, R[osalind]. 1989. *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens*. Cambridge.
Wade–Gery, H. T. 1952. *The Poet of the Iliad*. Cambridge.
West, M. L. 1988. "The Rise of the Greek Epic." *JHS* 108:151–72.
1990. "Archaische Heldendichtung: Singen und Schreiben," *Der Übergang von der Mündlichkeit zur Literatur bei den Griechen*, ed. W. Kullmann and M. Reichl, 33–50. Tübingen.
West, S. 1988. "The Transmission of the Text." In *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey. Introduction and Books i–viii*, ed. A. Heubeck, S. West, and J. B. Hainsworth, 33–48. Oxford.
Zumthor, P. 1972. *Essai de poétique médiévale*. Paris.
1983. *Introduction à la poésie orale*. Paris.
1984. *La Poésie de la Voix dans la civilisation médiévale*. Paris.