

The Date of the Epic Cycle

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More than a century has elapsed since Wilamowitz¹⁾ (in characteristically pithy mode) sketched the linguistic evidence for supposing our scanty fragments of the Epic Cycle to be 'late'. His data were expanded and elaborated by Jacob Wackernagel,²⁾ and their position is in theory the current orthodoxy – it has certainly never been refuted. But in practice the inevitable conclusions as to dating have somehow failed to achieve any sort of general acceptance. It is symptomatic, for instance, that Jasper Griffin, at the start³⁾ of his important article on "The Epic Cycle and the uniqueness of Homer", should respectfully refer to Wackernagel's treatment but then at once follow Lesky⁴⁾ in placing "the composition of the Cyclic epics in general in the late seventh century", a dating quite at odds with Wackernagel's findings. Given this failure to achieve currency, a mere restatement of Wilamowitz and Wackernagel's case would not be altogether inappropriate. But in fact their arguments can be amplified, further evidence tending in the same direction can be added, and the whole question of what it is meant by linguistic "lateness" in epic can be given a more sophisticated analysis. I am

¹⁾ *Homerische Untersuchungen* (Berlin, 1884) p.366. Hereafter 'Wilamowitz'.

²⁾ *Sprachliche Untersuchungen zu Homer* (Göttingen, 1916) pp.178 ff., esp. 181 ff. Hereafter 'Wackernagel'. The findings of Wilamowitz and Wackernagel are accepted, for instance, in Rzach's useful entry s.v. 'Kyklos' in *RE* 11 (1922) 2347 ff. See also Dihle inf. cit. [n. 35] p.148 f. etc.

³⁾ *JHS* 97 (1977) p. 39 n. 9. A striking instance of the dangers attendant upon ignoring the arguments of Wilamowitz and Wackernagel is presented by Walter Burkert's comments in *I poemi epici rapsodici non omerici e la tradizione orale* (Padua 1981) pp.41 ff.; cf. his *Die orientalisierende Epoche in der gr. Religion und Literatur* (*Sitzb. d. Heidelberger Akad. d. Wiss. phil.-hist. Kl. 1* ((1984)) pp.99 ff.). He detects a contradiction between his theory that "the Seven against Thebes" originated after c.750 B.C. in "the epic transposition of a purification ritual of ultimately Babylonian origin" and what he takes to be the evidence of an earlier date for the *Thebais* which its "formulaic technique" supplies. Provided one clearly defines and distinguishes the key terms "formulaic", "oral" and "early" there need be no such contradiction (see further below p.99).

⁴⁾ *Geschichte der gr. Lit.*³ (1971) 104 \cong *History of Greek Literature* p.82.

aware of no modern study that assembles all the relevant material in full. My forthcoming commentaries on the remains of the Epic Cycle will deal with the individual cases *ad loc.*, but a compendious collection of the data may be found useful and is the only way in which the cumulative impact of the evidence can emerge clearly. In what follows, then, I present and assess solely the *linguistic* evidence for lateness,⁵⁾ proceeding through the Cycle poem by poem and drawing on the text as printed in my *Epicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*.⁶⁾ Since the incidence of 'late' words must loom large in the final analysis, I carefully specify for each epic the number and size of directly cited fragments. All other comment I keep to the barest minimum: the numerous incidental complexities and problems will be treated in the commentaries mentioned above.

Titanomachia

3 direct quotations (fr. 5, 6, 8) amounting to 5 hexameters.

In *fr. 6* (on the achievements of Chiron the centaur as a discoverer of benefits for humanity) the last two words (*σχῆματ' Ὀλύμπου*) were identified as a 'late' feature by Wilamowitz.⁷⁾ Going into slightly more detail, Olof Gigon⁸⁾ has observed that *σχῆμα* does not appear elsewhere until the fifth century, and then largely in scientific authors. The observation retains its value even in the face of the

⁵⁾ I exclude from present consideration other attempts at relative dating of a strictly non-linguistic kind (e.g. Wilamowitz's notion (*Sappho und Simonides* (Berlin, 1913) p.120 n.1) that the accusatives in *Oedipodia* fr.1 are "ganz schlecht aus dem Vokativ [in Theogn. 1117 = 1365] ... gemacht: hier ist das Epos jünger, nicht notwendig als diese Verse, aber wohl als diese Wendung in einem erotischen Trinkverse").

⁶⁾ Göttingen 1988. The reasons for ignoring Bernabé's Teubner edition can be found set out in my review *CR* 39 (1989) 4 ff. In the present context its solemn (yet simultaneously ludicrous) dating of the *Thebais* to the eighth century B.C., the *Cypria* to the seventh (and so on) renders it particularly useless. On the poems rightly to include in the Cycle see my remarks in *NGG* 2 (1986) 96 f.

⁷⁾ P. 366 n. 45.

⁸⁾ In *Der Kampf der Götter und Titanen* (Olten/Lausanne, 1961) p. IXX (sic). His further inference that the fragment is a spurious invention spun out of *Il.* 11. 832 f. is quite unnecessary, especially in view of the numerous 'late' linguistic features from other cyclic epics which we are shortly to consider.

uncertainty as to the exact meaning of the phrase thus constituted.⁹⁾ Note, however, that *σήματ'* has been canvassed as an emendation.

Oedipodia

1 direct quotation (fr. 1) of 2 lines' scope. No evidence.

Thebais

4 direct quotations (frr. 1–3, 6^A) amounting to 16 hexameters. In *fr. 1* the absence of digamma at the start of the second word in the phrase *ἔνθεν ἄνακτες* was claimed as a sign of “lateness” by Wilamowitz,¹⁰⁾ a claim implicitly rejected by Wackernagel,¹¹⁾ rightly: *Lfgre* lists 17 epic examples s. v. *ἄναξ* (M 4 (col. 782)). It is, however, difficult to supply an early epic parallel for this mode of referring to the Seven against Thebes (cf. *Lfgre* sup. cit. C 4 (col. 790)).

In *fr. 2.3 Κάδμοιο θεόφρονος* –υυ-- | presents us with “a compound unique in the epic tradition” and “a clear departure from the thrift of the oral epic. The standard laudatory epithet for this position in the verse is *δαίφρονος* (28 × in Homer)”, according to G. S. Kirk.¹²⁾ In *fr. 2.4* with *δέπας ἠδέος οἴνου* the last two words present a double absence of digamma, taken as a sign of “lateness” by Wilamowitz¹³⁾ and Bethe.¹⁴⁾ In the following line *φράσθη* has the signs of being a relatively recent development.¹⁵⁾ In *fr. 2.6 μέγα οἱ κακὸν ἔμπεσε θυμῷ* looks like a conflation of “two distinct formular applications of *ἔμπεσε*: an emotion ‘falls upon’ the spirit, an evil ‘falls upon’ a house”.¹⁶⁾ In the present case an evil falls upon Oedipus’ spirit, in a phrase difficult to parallel. The next line’s *METAM-*

⁹⁾ The likeliest interpretation sees a reference to the heaven’s stars or constellations.

¹⁰⁾ P. 366 n. 45.

¹¹⁾ As witness its absence from the discussion of “late” features in Wackernagel p. 181 and n. 2.

¹²⁾ *YCS* 20 (1966) 169 = *Homer and the Oral Tradition* (Cambridge, 1976) p. 195.

¹³⁾ P. 366 n. 45.

¹⁴⁾ *Thebanische Heldenlieder* (Leipzig, 1891) p. 40 n. 45. For Homeric instances of *ἠδύς* and *οἴνος* sans digamma see Chantraine, *Grammaire Homérique* 1 (Paris, 1958) 145 and 151. Most are easily amended away.

¹⁵⁾ See Chantraine (sup. cit. [n. 14]) p. 405 f.

¹⁶⁾ Kirk (sup. cit. [n. 12]) p. 169 f. = p. 195 f.

ΦΟΤΕΡΟΙΣΙ is obscure and puzzling: it was taken (*μεταμφοτέροισι*) as an alternative to *συναμφοτέροισι* by Wilamowitz¹⁷⁾ and Wackernagel¹⁸⁾ who therefore deemed it 'late' because of the equivalence of *μετά* with *σύν* thus implied (an equivalence unknown to early epic¹⁹⁾) and the relative lateness of *συναμφοτέροι* itself.²⁰⁾ However, this interpretation is not the only possible²¹⁾ and emendations (e.g. Herwerden's *έοῖσιν έπ' άμφοτέροισιν*) can be found which will remove the difficulty. In fr. 2.10 (as in *Il.* 12.211 and *Od.* 15.379) the short alpha in *άεί*, was regarded as an atticism by Wackernagel,²²⁾ who is supported by Shipp²³⁾ ("if Ionic it is late, as *αιεί* persists into the inscriptions ... and is usual in MSS of Herodotus").

In fr. 3.3 the form *εὔκτο* has been greeted both as a genuine archaism²⁴⁾ and as a late neologism.²⁵⁾ The issue is too problematic to be considered here, so this potential piece of evidence must be set aside. *Δι βασιλῆι* in the next line, however, is a *prima facie* index of lateness.²⁶⁾

¹⁷⁾ P. 366 n. 45.

¹⁸⁾ P. 181 n. 2.

¹⁹⁾ See further Ed. Schwyzer, *Gr. Gr.* 2.481 ff.

²⁰⁾ Not found until the fifth century according to Wackernagel: but cf. Theogn. 820.

²¹⁾ The interpretation is taken one step further by Leumann, *Homerische Wörter* (Basel, 1950) p. 94 n. 56 who supposes *μεταμφοτέροι* to be a late creation out of a misunderstanding of such instances of *tnesis* as *μετ' άμφοτέροισιν έειπεν* (*Il.* 3.85 = 7.66).

²²⁾ P. 164.

²³⁾ *Studies in the Language of Homer*² (Cambridge, 1972) p. 49 meeting the counterarguments of Chantraine (sup. cit. [n. 14]) p. 167.

²⁴⁾ So Wackernagel p. 173, and, with new morphological evidence, J. Narten, in: *Pratidānam ... studies presented to F. B. J. Kuiper ...* (The Hague - Paris 1968) p. 11 f.; for further bibliography and discussion see, e.g. R. Schmitt, *Dichtung und Dichtersprache in indogermanischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1967) p. 261 f. For a certain instance of "altes Sprachgut" in cyclic epic see *Il. Parv.* fr. 6.4.

²⁵⁾ So, e.g., O. Szemerényi, *Syncope in Greek and Indo-European and the Nature of Indo-European Accent* (Naples, 1964) p. 176 and n. 4 taking it as an artificial imperfect or aorist and citing as analogies *δέκτο* aorist of *δέχομαι*, *λέκτο* of *λέχομαι*.

²⁶⁾ Briefly noted by Wackernagel p. 181 n. 2. See Fraenkel on Aesch. Ag. 355 (2.186 f.) and Richardson on *H. H. Dem.* 358 for fuller discussion. The earliest parallels are Hes. *Th.* 886 *Ζεύς δέ θεῶν βασιλεύς* (but here there is a strongly predicative sense: see West *ad loc.*), *Op.* 668, *Th.* 923, fr. 308.1 MW (cf. Alcaeus' use of the phrase *Κρονίδαις βασιλεύς* (frr. 38^{A9}, 296^{A3}, 387 LP)).

Epigoni

1 direct quotation (fr.1) equivalent to one hexameter. No evidence.

Cypria

10 direct quotations (frr. 1, 4–7, 13, 15, 24–6) adding up to 46½ hexameters. *Fr. 1* is particularly rich in “late” linguistic features, though it may constitute a special case (see below p.98) and is sufficiently corrupt and/or lacunose to make us cautious in our assessments. But the neuter forms *πλάτος* in 1.2 and *βάρος* in 1.6 look (as Wackernagel²⁷) argued) like fifth century developments (though Homer has *εὔρος, πάχος, τάχος*). Likewise the short form of the dative plural at *ἐν πυκιναῖς πραπίδεσσι* (1.3) is strongly suggestive of lateness.²⁸) *Ἰλιακοῖο* in 1.5 is a further oddity: words ending in *-ιακος* do, as Wackernagel²⁹) observed, occur now and then in Homer,³⁰) but adjectives with such an ending in *-ιακος* do not appear until the fifth century with *Πηλουσιακός* (Hdt. 2.15.4), *Σουνιακός* (Hdt. 4.99.4) or *Δηλιακός, Διακός* etc. in Thucydides (3.104.5, 7.27.1 etc.). The absence of digamma will not, therefore, surprise. As for *κενώσειεν* in the following line, Homer only has the form *κεινός*, as Wackernagel again pointed out.³¹) One could cite further, less conclusive, evidence, but this should suffice.

In *fr. 4.3 φοροῦσ'* may be an Atticism with its contraction to *ου* (Ionic contracts to *ευ*)³²) but Schneidewin conjectured *φορεῦσ'* and the word has been emended in other ways. Similar caution must be extended to the Attic dative *ἀμβροσσίαις* at 4.5 and *κεφαλαῖσιν* in fr. 5.3 since (as Wackernagel³³) saw) they need not derive from the actual author of the *Cypria* (Meineke conjectured *κεφαληῖσιν* in the latter place).

Fr. 7.3 (from the description of Zeus' pursuit of Nemesis) presents us with the phrase *Ζηνὶ θεῶν βασιλῆι*: see above on *Thebais* fr.3.3

²⁷) P. 182.

²⁸) See R. Janko, *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns* (Cambridge, 1982) pp. 54 ff.

²⁹) P. 182.

³⁰) See E. Risch, *Wortbildung d. homerischen Sprache*² (Berlin, 1974) p. 163 f.

³¹) P. 182 f. *Od.* 22.249 (*καὶ δὴ οἱ Μέντωρ μὲν ἔβη κενὰ εὐγμᾶτα εἰπῶν*) is no counter-example (cf. Wackernagel p. 182 n. 1): *κενέ'* conii. Bentley, *κείν'* Hermann.

³²) Cf. Shipp (sup. cit. [n. 23]) p. 10.

³³) P. 183.

for this as a likely index of lateness.³⁴⁾ *αἰδοῖ* at the end of line 5 was taken as a similar piece of evidence by Wilamowitz³⁵⁾ and the contracted form is indeed unHomeric and late (cf. *Lfgre* s. V. (279.O)).³⁶⁾ The phrase *ἀτρύγετον μέλαν ὕδωρ* in 1.6 received the same treatment from Wilamowitz³⁷⁾: the extension of the first epithet from *πόντος*, *πέλαγος*, or *ἄλς* to *ὕδωρ* is unusual, as is its association with the additional adjective *μέλαν*. Indeed, as Dihle says,³⁸⁾ the whole phrase with its “Epitheta – Häufung einen späten Eindruck macht”. *ἔξορόθυνεν* (1.9) is a verb that only recurs in Quintus of Smyrna.³⁹⁾

Fr. 13.3 διεδέρκετο νῆσον ἅπασαν: as Dihle observes,⁴⁰⁾ though *δέρομαι* may be in a state of metamorphosis from intransitive to transitive at *Il.* 13.86, the present, purely transitive compound form is a further indication of lateness. The phrase continues *νῆσον ... Πέλοπος*, and these words point in the same direction.⁴¹⁾ Wackernagel in particular observed⁴²⁾ how genitival phrases like the present or *νῆσος Ἡελίοιο* have relatively recent origins in comparison to adjectival constructions such as *Αἰολίῃ νῆσος*. The absence from Homer of any such collocation as *νῆσος Πέλοπος* was noted in antiquity (cf. *Σ Il.* 9.246 = Hes. fr. 189 MW). The word which according to the paradosis stood before *Πέλοπος* in our fragment was *Τανταλίδου*, “der einzige auf -ου auslautende Genetiv eines solchen Wortes in der ganzen alt-epischen Poesie außer *Βορέου*.”⁴³⁾ Another late feature? The ease with which it can be changed to the *Τανταλίδεω* recommended by Schneidewin and Ribbeck should perhaps urge us to caution.

³⁴⁾ The counterarguments of Kullmann, *Die Quellen des Ilias* (*Hermes Einzelschr.* 14 (1960)) p. 49f. are unconvincing in the extreme.

³⁵⁾ P. 366 n. 45. Cf. A. Dihle, *Homer-Probleme* (Opladen, 1970) p. 148.

³⁶⁾ Note that the lexicon's entry has accidentally interchanged our example and that of Hes. fr. 204.82 MW. The only Homeric passage where such a contraction is metrically guaranteed is *Od.* 20.171 (*αἰδοῦς μοῖραν*).

³⁷⁾ P. 366 f. n. 45.

³⁸⁾ Sup. cit. [n. 35] p. 148 f.

³⁹⁾ See F. Vian, *Recherches sur les Posthomériques de Quintus de Smyrne* (Paris, 1959), p. 91, who observes that these later instances, unlike ours, involve a figurative sense.

⁴⁰⁾ Sup. cit. (n. 35) p. 149.

⁴¹⁾ So Wilamowitz p. 367 n. 45.

⁴²⁾ *Vorlesungen über Syntax* 2.69. Cf. E. Risch, *I. F.* 59 (1949) 265 f. = *Kl. Schr.* p. 82 f.

⁴³⁾ W. Ribbeck, *Rh. Mus.* 33 (1878) 460. Even *Βορέου* is open to doubt (see West on Hes. *Th.* 870).

Aethiopsis

There is no directly quoted fragment of this poem⁴⁴⁾ and therefore no evidence.

Ilias Parva

7 direct quotations (fr. 1–2, 4–6, 11 and 20) adding up to 26 hexameters.⁴⁵⁾

Fr. 1.1 (and therefore the whole epic) began *Ἰλιον ἀείδω* ... Of the long alpha Schulze confessed⁴⁶⁾ “unde hauserunt ‘cyclici’ ... ignorare me fateor”, though one can cite parallels of sorts⁴⁷⁾ from early literature.

In *fr. 4.2 νυκτὸς ἐκείνης* the latter word is “a very recent arrival” in Homer (to quote Janko⁴⁸⁾), removable by adopting Schneidewin’s *νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ*. In *fr. 5* the post-Homeric nature of the extension of the verb *ἀστράπτει* to the effect made by a metal like gold is noted by *LfgreE* s.v. (1451.38): cf. the entry s.v. (*ἀ*)στεροπή B (1443. 32 ff.) and (1444. 29 ff.). The closest parallels are in Eur. *Phoen.* 110f. and Soph. *O. C.* 1067 (though cf. *Od.* 4. 72 ff. (*χαλκοῦ ... στεροπήν*)). In *fr. 6.1* the paradosis presents us with the reflexive pronoun *οὔ* and we have to try to decide whether this is the poet’s Atticism or whether he originally intended *οἷ*, *εὔ*, *vel sim.*⁴⁹⁾

⁴⁴⁾ *ὡς οἷ γ’ἀμφίεπον κτλ.* (*fragmentum spurium* (p. 48 of EGF)) is no counter-example: see Wilamowitz p. 373 etc.

⁴⁵⁾ Counting fr. 20. 6–11 (attributed to Simias by Σ Eur. *Andr.* 14) but excluding *fragmenta spuria* 2–3 (lines credited (or credited by conjecture) to ‘Lesches’ by Plut. *conv. sept. sap.* 153^E and Athen. 73^E).

⁴⁶⁾ *Quaestiones Epicae* (Gütersloh, 1892) p. 384 f.

⁴⁷⁾ The unaugmented first syllable of this verb is long at *Od.* 17. 519 where it stands at the start of the verse and at *HH* 12.1 where it occupies the same position as in *Il Parv.* fr. 1. Other early instances collected by Schulze (sup. cit. n. 46) and Beazley, *AJA* 52 (1948) 336 f.

⁴⁸⁾ Sup. cit. (n. 28) p. 237.

⁴⁹⁾ Nitzsch emended to *οἷ*, described by Wackernagel as an “anstößige Stellung von *οἷ*”, though he acknowledged there to be a few Homeric parallels (see in particular *Od.* 1. 88 f.).

Fr. 11^A consists of a single hexameter, the second half of which (λαμπρὰ δ'ἔπέτελλε σελήνη) displays two Attic features,⁵⁰) rho followed by alpha, nu followed by eta. In the longest fragment of our poem (20) Ἀγχίσαο ... ἵπποδάμοιο at line 9 is taken by Dihle⁵¹) as a token of lateness, contravening as it does “den strengen Verteilungsregeln des Epithetons in den homerischen Epen”. The possibility that the line was composed by Simias, however, must not be forgotten,⁵²) and the same consideration needs to be born in mind in noting the oddity⁵³) of epic τε following a relative when the action is not habitual which we encounter in 1.7.

Iliupersis

Only 1 citational fragment (1) of 8 lines' length. At 1.5 the phrase ἀκριβέα πάντα is too problematic and ambiguous to be thoroughly analysed here, but what can be said is that the author of a detailed study⁵⁴) of the word and its underlying concept has concluded that its occurrence here dates the epic to the sixth century at the very earliest.

Nosti

3 direct citations (frr. 6–8)⁵⁵) constituting 5½ hexameters. No evidence.

⁵⁰) See West's commentary on Hesiod's *Theogony* (Oxford, 1966) p.81, Edwards, *The Language of Hesiod* (Oxford, 1971) p.102f. As quoted by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 1.104.1 = fr. 11^B) the line has an additional Attic form (μεσάτα for μέσση); but since he gives the rest of the line in Aeolic or Doric form (cf. West sup. cit. p.80 n.2) his evidence is best regarded with suspicion.

⁵¹) Sup. cit. (n.35) p.148.

⁵²) See n.45 above.

⁵³) Noted by Ruijgh, *Autour de 'τε Ἐπίκη'* (Amsterdam, 1971) p.916.

⁵⁴) D.Kurz, *Ἀκριβεία. Das Ideal der Exaktheit bei den Griechen bis Aristoteles* (Göttingen, 1970) p.63 (cf. F.Heinimann, *Mus. Helv.* 32 (1975) p.184 n.7). ἀκριβής does not occur in Homer and the same is true of two other adjectives that crop up in this same context within the *Iliupersis*' fragment: ἄσκοπος used passively (for the active cf. *Il.* 24, 157) and ἀναλθής.

⁵⁵) Including fr.8, which is attributed to the *Ἀτρειδῶν Νόστοι*.

Telegonia

No directly cited fragments and therefore no evidence.

Such is the evidence of the available fragments.⁵⁶⁾ What precisely is one to make of it? Wackernagel himself concluded that while the fragments of the *Thebais* and *Iliupersis*⁵⁷⁾ contain almost nothing that is linguistically post-Homeric, the *Cypria* and the *Ilias Parva* contain a good many such features. Fr.1 of the *Cypria* as we saw (above p.93) is particularly rich in them, some of them without parallel before the fifth century, some of them Attic in form. Since fr.1 of the *Cypria* seems to be part of a proem to the work as a whole, Wackernagel deduced that it cannot be explained or excused as a later addition, and consequently assigned the whole of the *Cypria* to an Attic context not long before 500 B.C.

Now a number of qualifications and reservations need to be made here. In the first place, since the *Cypria* and the *Ilias Parva* are represented by a relatively large quantity of direct citations (10 and 7 respectively) and the *Thebais* and *Iliupersis* by a relatively small (4 and 1), the negative evidence for the earlier dating of the latter pair is hardly very impressive. Besides, some linguistic evidence from the *Thebais* and *Iliupersis* which is suggestive of lateness (*ἀκριβής* in fr. of the latter, for instance, and *Δὶ βασιλῆι* in fr.3.3 of the former)

⁵⁶⁾ One may cite here the observation of Schulze (sup. cit. [n.46]) p.102 n.1 and Wackernagel p.171 and n.1 that the phrase *δούρ(ε)ιος ἵππος* (variously attested, especially in Proclus' summary of the *Ilias Parva* (EGF p.52f.) and Apollod. ep. 5.14 on the making of the woodenhorse) looks to be of more recent origin (deriving as it does from **δορF-ειος*) than the Homeric equivalent *δουράτεος* (found at *Od.* 8.493 and 512) and Wackernagel's guess that it occurred in a cyclic epic (*Aethiopsis* or *Ilias Parva*). J.T. Hooker, however, reminds me that the adjectival formant *-ειος* (like *-εος*) is well attested in Mycenaean.

⁵⁷⁾ He actually says (p.181) *Thebais* and *Aethiopsis*. But at the very most the *Aethiopsis* could only boast two extant hexameters (and in fact not even that: see above n.44) and Wackernagel must be following Kinkel's edition which misleadingly (but not altogether idiotically) attributes to the *Aethiopsis* the 8 lines which in my (and most other) editions are assigned to the *Iliupersis*. Even then there is (in the use of the phrase *ἀκριβέα πάντα*) an index of lateness not considered by Wackernagel: see n.54 above.

was not fully (or at all) taken into account by Wackernagel. The contrast between the two pairs of epics is not, then, anything like so clear-cut.

As for the *Cypria*, the agglomeration of 'late' features in fr. 1 is indeed striking, but perhaps Wackernagel's interpretation of its status as proem is not the only one available for us. It is not merely that "the preface is usually the last part of his book which an author writes."⁵⁸) For quite independent reasons the *Cypria's* proem has been regarded as an attempt to impose a rather spurious unity upon a pre-existing epic, a view that would neatly explain the late linguistic features of fr. 1 without entailing a similarly late date for the rest of the poem. Furthermore, the *Cypria* itself may well be a rather special case: its main (apparent) function as a hold-all for the complete story of the Trojan War would be perfectly compatible with a later origin for this poem than for the other components of the Cycle. A late date for the *Cypria* need not entail anything about the other cyclic epics.

On the other hand, the general lack of unity in these other epics (a lack already perceived in antiquity⁵⁹), their frequent status as attempts to fill in the gaps left by Homer's poems, is further compatible with late dating. A nice analogy for this dating of mythologically compendious epics devoid of any real artistic unity comes with the recent placing of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* in an Attic ambience of about 560–520 B.C.⁶⁰) In the case of the Epic Cycle, it is indeed remarkable just how many late linguistic features and Attic forms are thrown up by so minute a sampling of directly cited verses, and how those two epics with the largest number of directly cited fragments (*Cypria* and *Ilias Parva*) exhibit the largest number of such forms and features. Admittedly these fragments are frequently corrupt, and there is some scope for uncertainty as to whether Atticisms and modernisms are not the fruit of corruption (*φοροῦσ'* and *Τανταλίδου* from the *Cypria*, for instance (above

⁵⁸) J. Diggle, *CR* 31 (1971) 180, à propos of the problems associated with the prologue of Euripides' *IA*.

⁵⁹) See Aristotle's *Poetics* 1459^A 37 ff. = *Cypria* T 13 = *Ilias Parva* T 5.

⁶⁰) So M. L. West, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women* (Oxford, 1985) pp. 130 ff.: his reasons include two linguistic features, the metrically guaranteed *οὔσαν* at fr. 204. 91, and *γλωθρῶν* for *βλωθρῶν* *ib.* 124. A date of c. 580–570 B. C. is preferred by J. R. March, *The Creative Poet* (*BICS Suppl.* 49 (1987)) pp. 157 ff.

p.93 f.)). But when all such allowances have been made, there remains a solid core of suggestive linguistic features whose evidence cannot be ignored, especially given the dearth of any objective counter-evidence. The argument that the *Thebais*, *Cypria* and *Ilias Parva* can be shown to be early because oral and shown to be oral because of their formulaic technique⁶¹⁾ is invalid on both counts,⁶²⁾ and we saw above an indication that the *Thebais* and *Ilias Parva* departed in their system of formulae from Homeric thrift (pp. 91 and 96). The fragments of the Epic Cycle may be closer in their formular style to Homer than to the allusive adaptation of Homeric phraseology found in Panyassis,⁶³⁾ but no-one is arguing that they are as late as Herodotus' uncle. Indeed, no-one is arguing (I hope) that all the poems of the Epic Cycle need to be dated to

⁶¹⁾ J.A. Notopoulos, "Studies in Early Greek Oral Poetry", *HSCP* 68 (1964) 28 ff., by an analysis of *Thebais* fr. 2, *Cypria* fr. 7 and *Ilias Parva* fr. 20, supposes he has proved that their "solidly formulaic texture, exhibited also in all the smaller fragments, constitutes the *sine qua non* test of the oral character of these early epics"; but his statement (p. 28) that "almost 100 per cent of the verses [from the 3 fragments just mentioned] exhibit formulae, ready-made or created by analogy to pre-existing systems" shows just how ill-defined his idea of a 'formula' is. (His lists (p. 72 f.) of formular parallels are so carelessly thrown together that, for instance, two phrases from *Cypria* fr. 7 are included in the evidence for the formulaic character of ... *Cypria* fr. 7!).

⁶²⁾ For some sane comments on the distinction between formulaic and oral composition see Kirk (sup. cit. [n. 12]) pp. 155 ff. esp. 169 ff. = pp. 183 ff. esp. 195 ff., Lloyd-Jones, "Remarks on the Homeric Question", in *History and Imagination: essays in honour of H. R. Trevor-Roper* (London 1981) pp. 19 ff., West, "Is the 'Works and Days' an oral poem?" in *I poemi epici rapsodici* etc. (cited above n. 3) pp. 53 ff., Janko (sup. cit. [n. 28]) General Index s.v. 'formula, definition of', and 'orality, criteria for'. There is a very useful up-to-date survey of these issues in Ø. Andersen's article "Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit im frühen Griechentum", *Antike und Abendland* 33 (1987) 29 ff. Add to his references A. Johnston, "The extent and use of literacy: the archeological evidence", in R. Hägg (ed.), *The Greek Renaissance of the Eighth Century B. C.: Tradition and Innovation* (Stockholm, 1983) pp. 63 ff. and the recent general study by J. Goody, *The Interface between the written and the oral* (Cambridge, 1987).

⁶³⁾ The distinction is Burkert's (sup. cit. [n. 3]) p. 37. He also contrasts the *Thebais*' "unreflected (*sic*) use of 'Homeric' formulaic technique" with the totally unHomeric style of the *Meropis* (*Supp. Hell* fr. 903 A). But if the *Meropis* is in fact an archaic composition (as argued by (*inter alios*) Lloyd-Jones, *Atti del XVII Congresso Internazionale di Papirologia* (Naples, 1984), pp. 145 ff.) the need for caution in inferring date from formular technique (or lack of it) is all the greater.

the same period. But Wackernagel's dating of the *final* version of the *Cypria* to shortly before 500 B. C. is hard to refute, and there is no strong evidence⁶⁴) for dating the final version⁶⁵) of any other cyclic epic a very great deal earlier.

⁶⁴) The evidence of visual art (depictions of legends known to have been retold in the Cycle) is sometimes called in aid as *terminus ad quem* (so e.g. Lesky (sup. cit. [n. 4]), and Dihle (sup. cit. [n. 35]) pp. 149 ff.). But I agree with R. M. Cook, *BABESCH* 58 (1983) 6: "it seems to me doubly dangerous to infer from art the date at which any particular epic was composed or widely circulated." Such evidence cannot tell against the objective criteria supplied by the language of the poems themselves. As for the undeniably early and primitive material present in these works, and the vexed question of the relationship with Homer, Lesky's solution is the most persuasive: "It should again be emphasised that the material in them was much older, and that the cycle arose from a later re-handling, under Homeric influence, of traditional themes" (similarly e.g. Burkert in *The Greek Renaissance of the eighth century B. C.* (cited above n. 62) p. 62).

⁶⁵) For a similar contrast between sixth century text and contents that may have evolved from eighth century material see the case of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* as analysed by West (sup. cit. [n. 60]). Cf. Lesky's remarks as cited in the previous note. For an up-to-date and subtle treatment of the meaning of 'late' as applied in this article to linguistic features see Janko (sup. cit. [n. 28]). General Index s.v. "innovation, linguistic".