The Date of the *Iliad*

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It is still widely assumed that the *Iliad* was composed sometime in the middle or the latter part of the eighth century. I have always maintained that it belongs in the second or third quarter of the seventh[1]. In recent years the lower dating has gained new adherents and been reinforced with new arguments, some of which would appear difficult to refute. In this paper I shall briefly summarize these arguments and then add another which, if it is found persuasive, will provide a precise *terminus post quem* for the poem: 688, or perhaps 678.

I suspect that most of those who subscribe to an eighth-century dating do so because most *other* people do; they have always been led to believe that this was the approved opinion, and they are unaware of the grounds for revising it. The relatively restricted number of scholars who have arrived at it (or at any rate sought to justify it) by a process of reasoning seem to have been moved principally by the following factors and considerations[2].

1. The Greeks always thought of Homer as one of their oldest known poets, and from the Alexandrian period to modern times there was an established tradition of regarding him as absolutely the oldest[3]. Verbal parallels between the Homeric poems and Hesiod or the early elegiac or melic poets were, accordingly, automatically interpreted as echoes of Homer in his successors, and the presence of all these supposed echoes of Homer appeared to confirm his priority. In some cases there was good reason to conclude that an elegist or melodist was using diction adapted from heroic epic; but all too often epic was treated as synonymous with extant epic, i.e. with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In the last two generations there has been a much greater awareness that

1 *Hesiod. Theogony* (Oxford 1966) 46 with n. 2; *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford 1971) 205 n. 2.

2 As representatives of such scholars I nominate W. Schadewaldt, *Von Homers Welt und Werk*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart 1959) 93–96; G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge 1962) 282–287, and *The Iliad. A Commentary*, i: Books 1–4 (Cambridge 1985) 3f.; A. Lesky, *Homeros* (Stuttgart 1967) 7 = *RE* Suppl. xi. 693; A. Heubeck, *Die homerische Frage* (Darmstadt 1974) 213–228; J. Latacz, *Homer. Der erste Dichter des Abendlands*, 2nd ed. (Munich/Zurich 1989) 75–85; B. B. Powell, *Homer and the Origin of the Greek Alphabet* (Cambridge 1991) 187–220.

3 Before the late fourth century BC, however, Homer seems generally to have been put after Hesiod, if not as his contemporary: see my *Hesiod. Theogony*, 40 and 47, adding the Simonides apophthegm from Gnom. Vat. gr. 1144 (*FGrHist* 8 F 6; D. A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric*, iii. 366), Σιμωνίδης τὸν Ἡσίοδον κηπουρὸν ἔλεγε, τὸν δὲ Ὅμηρον στεφανηπλόκον, τὸν μὲν ὡς φυτεύσαντα τὰς περὶ θεῶν καὶ ἡρώων μυθολογίας, τὸν δὲ ὡς ἐξ αὐτῶν συμπλέξαντα τὸν Ἰλιάδος καὶ Ὀδυσσείας στέφανον.

there existed in the early Archaic period a broad current of oral epic, and that only in exceptional cases can phraseology known to us from Homer be assumed to have been unique to Homer. Yet the attitudes formed over centuries are slow to change.

Ancient notions of Homer's relative or absolute chronology are in fact devoid of probative value. When they had some evidence, ancient scholars were adept at drawing chronological conclusions, but in the case of Homer they had nothing to get hold of; they did not know when he lived any more than they knew where. The ancient datings cover the entire span from the Trojan War to the mid seventh century; some made Homer a contemporary of Gyges and Archilochus[4]. It cannot therefore be argued that so low a dating is incompatible with ancient ideas on the subject.

2. The Cyclic poems in particular have almost always been taken to be collectively later than the *Iliad*, even though the poet of the *Iliad* is obviously familiar with much of the material that they contained. The assumption that they are younger is certainly right in some cases, such as the *Cypria* and *Telegony*, though it cannot be proved for all. An eighth-century date for the *Iliad* is then inferred on the basis of wholly unreliable datings for the Cyclic poems[5]: *ignotum per ignotius.* Artistic representations of some episodes that were treated in the Cycle appear from the late eighth century onwards, and it is sometimes argued that these presuppose the Cyclic poems, which themselves presuppose the *Iliad*[6]. Utterly fallacious. We know that the *stories* are pre-Iliadic; it is only the particular written poems known to later antiquity that we can say are post-Iliadic, and there is no way of tying the representations to those particular texts.

3. Linguistic studies have repeatedly shown that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are less 'modern', by various criteria, than the poems of Hesiod and the longer Homeric Hymns[7]. That they were actually composed earlier has been too

4 See F. Jacoby, *Das Marmor Parium* (Berlin 1904) 154–157. The seventh-century dating was perhaps maintained by no less a historian than Theopompus (*FGrHist* 115 F 205), who placed Homer 500 years after the Trojan War; but we do not know when he dated the war. Euphorion (*FHG* iii. 72 fr. 1) explicitly put Homer in the time of Gyges, and Tatian (*Ad Graecos* 31) offers a multiple synchronism: Homer = Archilochus = Gyges = 500 years after the Trojan War = Ol. 23 (688/5). Strabo (1.2.9, cf. 1.1.10, 3.2.12) refers to οἱ χρονογράφοι for the placing of Homer at or slightly after the time of the Cimmerian invasion of Asia Minor. Gyges died fighting the Cimmerians *c.* 652, and Callinus refers to their impending attack as a contemporary.

5 For example Latacz (above n. 2), 80, 'etwa ab 650'. Kirk (1962, 286; 1985, 4) and Powell (above n. 2), 218, imagine that the *Suda* date for Arctinus (γεγονὼς κατὰ τὴν ὑ' Ὀλυμπιάδα = 744/1) is a basis for argument.

6 Schadewaldt (above n. 2), 93; R. Kannicht, *Classical Antiquity* 1 (1982) 79–86.

7 For example, A. Severyns, *Homère*, ii: *Le poète et son œuvre* (Brussels 1946) 68f., 88–92; A. Hoekstra, *Mnemosyne* 10 (1957) 201–212; F. Krafft, *Vergleichende Untersuchungen zu Homer und Hesiod* (Göttingen 1963); G. P. Edwards, *The Language of Hesiod in its Traditional Context* (Oxford 1971); especially R. Janko, *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns. Diachronic Development in Epic Diction* (Cambridge 1982).

readily inferred. It has to be borne in mind that what are being measured are the choices consciously or unconsciously made by different poets, working in different local traditions, speaking different local dialects, and with different degrees of training and differing personal sensitivities, between alternative forms available within the current Ionian poetic language. These alternatives appear to us as older or newer, more traditional or less, but they did not necessarily appear to the poets in these terms[8]. The major determinant of the quantity of younger forms in a given poet is the extent to which his language diverges from the formulaic, and this depends on many other factors apart from his date.

4. There is good archaeological evidence for a new preoccupation with the heroic past in the second half of the eighth century. Indeed, there seems to have been an eruption of interest in it around 750, no doubt reflecting the spread of Ionian epic[9]. Some writers have leapt to the conclusion that it was the appearance of one great poet – Homer, of course – that sparked this off[10]: a good example of the fatal tendency, once one has a certain set of presuppositions (such as an eighth-century Homer), to slot loose bits of information into them in the hope of strengthening the structure. There may well have been some excellent epic poets around 750, who knows? But there is no reason why we should assume the *Iliad* to have come at the beginning of that new phase of the tradition rather than from its maturity.

Another example of the same tendency is to see the 'Nestor's cup' inscription from Pithecusae, dated *c.* 735–720, as an allusion to the passage in the *Iliad* describing a special, huge goblet belonging to Nestor, which only he can easily lift when it is full[11]. It is no doubt an allusion to some such description in some epic poem in which Nestor appeared. But as the vessel described in the *Iliad* has its closest analogues in objects of the Bronze Age[12], and the motif of the mighty goblet is paralleled in Ugaritic poetry current in the fourteenth century[13], the scene is almost certainly traditional. There is no reason to think that it was an invention of the *Iliad* poet's. Therefore the Pithecusae epigram has no bearing on his date.

8 Cf. my remarks in *Gnomon* 35 (1963) 11f.; *CR* 15 (1965) 159; *Hesiod. Theogony*, 91, 99, 177; *CR* 23 (1973) 20.

9 See, for example, A. M. Snodgrass, *The Dark Age of Greece* (Edinburgh 1971) 192–194, 397f.; *Archaic Greece* (London 1980) 38–40, 68–78; J. N. Coldstream, *JHS* 96 (1976) 8–17 and *Geometric Greece* (London 1977) 341–357; M. L. West, *JHS* 108 (1988) 151.

10 J. M. Cook, *BSA* 48 (1953) 33 and in *Γέρας Ἀντωνίου Κεραμοπούλλου* (Athens 1953) 117f.; R. Hampe, *Gymnasium* 63 (1956) 20; Heubeck, op. cit., 225; J. N. Coldstream, *Geometric Greece*, 342; Kirk (1985) 4.

11 *CEG* 454 (with the correction, *CEG* ii p. 304); *Il.* 11.632–637; Heubeck, 223f.; Kirk (1985) 4; Latacz, 80–82; Powell, 208f. (see above n. 2).

12 B. Hainsworth in the Cambridge Iliad commentary, ad loc., with literature.

13 Baal epic, *KTU* 1.3 i 10ff., 'He gave a cup into his hand, | a goblet into both his hands, | a great jar, mighty to behold, | a cask (worthy) of men of the heavens, | a holy cup, no woman can look on it, | a goblet, no goddess can regard it.'

5. We sometimes encounter the argument that Kirk formulates thus: 'It seems inconceivable that either of the great poems could have been constructed as late as the generation of Archilochus without far more being known about their composer or composers than antiquity could discover about Homer'[14]. No doubt these two poets were well enough known in their own time in the areas in which they were active. But we cannot assume that the diffusion of their poems, which were written texts that other rhapsodes adopted, was accompanied by an equal diffusion of oral information about their personal particulars, in an age long before the rise of an interest in biography, literary gossip, or the cult of the artistic personality. It should be remembered that the ancients had practically no biographical information about any seventh- or sixth-century poet beyond what could be inferred from their works.

None of these arguments provides an adequate basis for dating the *Iliad* before 700; nor do I know of any other argument that might. Let us apply a rather more rigorous standard of evidence, and look for a real *terminus ante quem* that will bear a load and not collapse at a touch.

Are there, for example, any lines in seventh-century poetry which clearly reflect, not just epic of the Homeric kind, but the *Iliad* specifically? There is a passage in Tyrtaeus (10.21–28) that certainly stands in a close relationship with one in the *Iliad* (22.66–76), and Tyrtaeus may have drawn upon an epic model for it. But as I have remarked before[15], the sentiments did not appear first in the *Iliad*: 'lines whose original purpose was clearly to encourage young men to fight to the death (as in Tyrtaeus) cannot have been invented for Priam's passionate appeal to Hector *not* to fight.' The Homeric poet has taken an existing piece of martial protreptic (not from Tyrtaeus, necessarily) and misused it.

The situation is similar with Mimnermus' comparison of human lives to leaves (2.1–4), which has often been claimed as an imitation of the famous lines in Glaucus' speech to Diomedes at *Il.* 6.146–149[16]. This poignant piece of popular philosophy, which has parallels in the Old Testament (*Ps.* 103.15f., *Isa.* 40.6f., etc.), was clearly not invented for that context in the *Iliad*, because it does not fit it; it is a quite irrelevant answer to Diomedes' question 'Who are you?', and it is dragged in for its own sake, the word γενεή serving as the sole connection.

No, for a text that clearly presupposes the *Iliad* we must come down to Alcaeus, fr. 44.6–8, a brief fragment which refers to Achilles calling upon Thetis, and Thetis supplicating Zeus to [turn aside] her son's wrath. This not only corresponds to events in *Iliad* 1 but implies the whole framework of the

14 Kirk (1962) 286f.

15 *CR* 20 (1970) 150.

16 The latest commentator, Archibald Allen (*The Fragments of Mimnermus*, Stuttgart 1993, 41), is rightly cautious. The elegy in which *Il.* 6.146 is quoted verbatim from a Χῖος ἀνήρ is now known definitely not to be the work of the seventh-century Semonides of Amorgos but of Simonides of Ceos (eleg. 19 W.^{2}).

epic: Zeus' response to Thetis' prayer will grant the Trojans increased success in battle until the Greeks are forced to plead with Achilles for his assistance[17].

That the first reliable literary echo of the *Iliad* is so late is not of much consequence for the dating of the epic. We do not possess a great quantity of poetry from before Sappho's and Alcaeus' time, apart from the Homeric poems themselves, and it may be chance that what survives does not offer us an earlier foothold, even though it does give us a couple of plausible echoes of Hesiod[18]. The evidence of early Greek art may be thought more significant. The detailed studies by K. Friis Johansen[19] and K. Fittschen[20] yielded the remarkable result that although representations of scenes from the Trojan War (the Judgment of Paris, Achilles' fight with Memnon(?), the recovery of Achilles' body, the suicide of Ajax, the Wooden Horse, the death of Astyanax, Menelaus' meeting with Helen) are to be found from about 700 onward, there are no scenes unequivocally based on the *Iliad* before about 625.

> Als wirklich gesicherte Darstellungen aus der Ilias können also nur 5 Vasenbilder gelten, die alle dem letzten Viertel des 7. Jhs. angehören[21].

Of course, this need not mean that the *Iliad* was only composed around 630; but it is very hard to reconcile with the idea that it had been known and admired above all other poems since 730 or 750.

17 D. Meyerhoff, *Traditioneller Stoff und individuelle Gestaltung. Untersuchungen zu Alkaios und Sappho* (Hildesheim 1984) 46–53. M. Skafte Jensen, *The Homeric Question and the Oral-formulaic Theory* (Copenhagen 1980) 102f., is hypersceptical.

18 Tyrt. 12. 43 ≈ *Op.* 291; Sem. 6 ≈ *Op.* 702f.; then Alc. 347 ≈ *Op.* 582–587.

19 *The Iliad in Early Greek Art* (Copenhagen 1967), a thorough revision of his *Iliaden i tidlig græsk Kunst* (Copenhagen 1934).

20 *Untersuchungen zum Beginn der Sagendarstellungen bei den Griechen* (Berlin 1969), esp. 169–185.

21 Fittschen, 177. He considers two possible earlier representations. (a) A Cycladic relief amphora from Thebes, Boston 99506, of the second quarter of the seventh century, shows a procession of women carrying something on their heads and led by a woman with a sceptre. Following Hampe, he takes the object carried to be a cloth, so that the procession might be that of the Trojan women who offer a robe to Athena in *Il.* 6.286ff. But it is surely not a cloth but a hard-edged rectangular object, *scil.* a chest (Friis Johansen, 272–275). (b) A 'Melian' neck amphora from Rheneia in the Myconos museum, of the mid seventh century, shows a naked man receiving armour from a robed female figure. They are assumed to be Achilles and Thetis, but it remains uncertain whether the context is that of *Il.* 19.3–13 or Achilles' original departure for Troy (Friis Johansen, 104–122). – Karl Schefold, *Götter- und Heldensagen der Griechen in der früh- und hocharchaischen Kunst* (Munich 1993) 138–143, refers further to: (a) An Attic Geometric pot, Louvre CA 2509, *c.* 740, taken to be (a pre-Homeric version of) the duel between Ajax and Hector, with exchange of arms. The interpretation of the scene is very uncertain. (b) A bronze statuette of a warrior, Athens 12831, *c.* 700. It has been suggested that it represents Achilles, but this seems quite arbitrary. (c) An Attic pithos, Athens 17762, *c.* 680, showing a warrior riding in a chariot, and facing him a woman, who is said to be holding a baby, though I cannot make out the baby. This is taken to be Hector and Andromache, but it might simply be a generic scene. Schefold himself (143) thinks that the Iliad 'erst nach 580 ihre überlieferte Fassung erhalten hat'. – Powell, 210f., lists two further items, neither of which there is good reason to connect with the *Iliad.*

So we have a *terminus ante quem* for the poem of *c.* 630. What about the *terminus post quem*?

1. Firstly, whereas there are no places in which Hesiod seems to me to show the influence of the *Iliad*, there are several in which the contrary is plausible.

(i) In *Il.* 8.16 Zeus threatens to throw any god who disobeys him into Tartarus, τόσσον ἔνερθ' Ἀΐδεω ὅσον οὐρανός ἐστ' ἀπὸ γαίης. Epic poets did not routinely have occasion to describe the location of Tartarus, and the line is clearly related to Hes. *Th.* 720, where Tartarus is said to be τόσσον ἔνερθ' ὑπὸ γῆς ὅσον οὐρανός ἐστ' ἀπὸ γαίης. Hesiod's three-storey version, corresponding to the traditional division of the cosmos into heaven, earth, and underworld, is surely prior; the four-storey version in the *Iliad* passage is derivative, an attempt to out-do Hesiod.

(ii) The list of Trojan rivers in *Il.* 12.20–22 is related to Hesiod's catalogue of rivers at *Th.* 337–345; only one of them, the Karesos, does not appear there. I now think that Hesiod did not get these names from epic narrative about Troy: only the Scamander and Simoeis have a traditional place in such narrative, and the Granikos and Aisepos lie far to the east of Troy, more than half-way to Cyzicus. They all belong in a larger group that Hesiod presumably learned of from his father, the erstwhile sailor based at Cyme: they occupy the gap between the Aeolian Hermos, Kaikos, and Euenos (*Th.* 343, 345) and the Bithynian Sangarios and Parthenios (344)[22]. It looks as though the Iliad poet has drawn on this specifically Hesiodic list.

(iii) The list of Nereids in *Il.* 18.39–49 is likewise not drawn from the heroic poet's traditional repertory but inspired by the longer list in *Th.* 240–262 and largely stocked from it. Zenodotus and Aristarchus were so struck by the Ἡσιόδειος χαρακτήρ of the passage that they athetized it.

(iv) The poet describes the girl robots made by Hephaestus at *Il.* 18.419f. thus:

> τῆις ἐν μὲν νόος ἐστὶ μετὰ φρεσίν, ἐν δὲ καὶ αὐδή
> καὶ σθένος, ἀθανάτων δὲ θεῶν ἄπο ἔργα ἴσασιν.

This seems to be adapted from Hesiod's account of the making of Pandora at *Op.* 61–64, where Zeus commands Hephaestus to knead earth with water,

> ἐν δ' ἀνθρώπου θέμεν αὐδήν
> καὶ σθένος, ἀθανάτηις δὲ θεῆις εἰς ὦπα εἴσκειν,
> παρθενικῆς καλὸν εἶδος ἐπήρατον· αὐτὰρ Ἀθήνην
> ἔργα διδασκῆσαι, πολυδαίδαλον ἱστὸν ὑφαίνειν.

Pandora, a living woman fashioned from clay, learns her ἔργα from Athena, but how could goddesses teach anything to Hephaestus' mechanical robots,

22 I was wrong in my commentary not to identify the Euenos with the one flowing into the Gulf of Adramyttium, which, like the Troad, would have been well known at Cyme.

which are made of gold and not alive but merely ζωῆισι νεήνισιν εἰοικυῖαι (418)? Surely he should have endowed them with all necessary skills himself.

(v) The Hesiodic phrase μινύϑουσι δὲ οἶκοι, 'and house(hold)s diminish' (*Op.* 245, cf. 325), recurs at *Il.* 17.738, awkwardly applied to houses that are on fire.

(vi) Hesiod attended funeral games organized by the sons of Amphidamas (*Op.* 654–656). Shortly before Patroclus' funeral and the associated games, the hero's ghost refers to a childhood brawl in which he had killed a boy; and so that the unfortunate child shall not be without an identity, the poet calls him 'the son of Amphidamas' (*Il.* 23.87). I suggest that, because he had games already on his mind, the name floated into his consciousness from Hesiod.

2. The weaponry and combat tactics described in the *Iliad* have recently been subjected to a searching reappraisal by H. van Wees. He finds a whole series of features characteristic of the first half of the seventh century and in most cases less appropriate to an earlier date: the dominance of the spear as against the sword and the bow; the alternation of paired throwing spears with single thrusting spears; bell-corslets (first *c.* 720); Corinthian-type helmets (first *c.* 720); bronze greaves (if these are not a Mycenaean reminiscence); single-grip bronze-faced shields; infantry tactics. I refer to his article for the detailed arguments, which cannot be set out here[23].

In one respect I would push the case a little further than he does. He is not convinced that the passages often interpreted as referring to hoplite phalanx formation, 13.126–135 (cf. 152), 15.618–622, and 16.211–217, really do so. It seems to me that he is too concerned to reconcile these passages with the general picture of the fighting. The poet here is going out of his way to convey the idea of the linked phalanx, or, to be more exact, the bunching up later known as πύκνωσις or συνασπισμός, which is one of the formations used by the classical phalanx in defensive mode[24]. There are many other references in the *Iliad* to organized φάλαγγες or στίχες. Phalanx formation is first illustrated in art on Protocorinthian vases of 650–630. The kind of language used by Tyrtaeus 11.31–33,

> καὶ πόδα πὰρ ποδὶ ϑεὶς καὶ ἐπ' ἀσπίδος ἀσπίδ' ἐρείσας,
> ἐν δὲ λόφον τε λόφωι καὶ κυνέην κυνέηι
> καὶ στέρνον στέρνωι πεπλημένος ἀνδρὶ μαχέσϑω,

where the juxtaposed feet, shields, etc., are those of the warrior and his adversary, is adapted in the *Iliad* passages to the new order of battle:

> φράξαντες δόρυ δουρί, σάκος σάκεϊ προϑελύμνωι·
> ἀσπὶς ἄρ' ἀσπίδ' ἔρειδε, κόρυς κόρυν, ἀνέρα δ' ἀνήρ·

23 *Greece and Rome* 41 (1994) 1–18 and 131–155, esp. 138–146.

24 See J. Latacz, *Kampfparänese, Kampfdarstellung und Kampfwirklichkeit in der Ilias, bei Kallinos und Tyrtaios* (Munich 1977) 63–66.

ψαῦον δ' ἱππόκομοι κόρυθες λαμπροῖσι φάλοισι
νευόντων, ὡς πυκνοὶ ἐφέστασαν ἀλλήλοισιν.

The polyptota now describe the intimate proximity of each man to his neighbour in the line.

3. Further seventh-century elements may be found here and there in individual passages. The Gorgon on Agamemnon's shield at 11.36f. is a device first attested as a shield blazon around 680–670 and not uncommon thereafter[25]. The two verses could be removed without leaving a scar, and have been criticized on the ground that the Gorgon is in competition with the central boss described in 35[26]. She is certainly an untraditional embellishment, applied by the poet perhaps to an unsuitable form of shield; but she is in keeping with the exotic character of the rest of Agamemnon's equipment in this passage, the cuirass from Cyprus with its three arching serpents, and the shield-strap with its three-headed serpent. There is no sufficient ground for denying her to the poet of the Iliad.

4. The elaborate decoration of the Shield of Achilles, with its scenes of battles, cities, and so forth, has been compared with the bronze votive shields from the Idaean cave, which run from the mid eighth to well into the seventh century, and with Cypro-Phoenician metal dishes and bowls of the period 710–675[27]. The latter offer the closer parallels. The Cretan shields bear elaborate scenes of action, but they concentrate in a limited way on animal friezes and hunting scenes. The Phoenician bowls have a greater variety of theme, inspired by Assyrian palace reliefs: they show buildings and cities, including one under attack from an enemy army, men riding on horseback or in chariots, and country landscapes as the background to dramatic action. In one instance the whole circular composition is enclosed by a serpent, which seems analogous to the stream of Oceanus that encloses the scenes on Achilles' shield. When one looks at reproductions of these marvellous artefacts it is difficult to avoid the conviction that the poet of the *Iliad* must have gazed on something very much like them. At 23.741–747 he actually refers to a silver crater of outstanding beauty, fashioned by Σιδόνες πολυδαίδαλοι and brought across the sea by Phoenician sailors; Achilles offers it as first prize in the foot-race[28].

5. In the Embassy Achilles declares that he would not accept Agamemnon's gifts even if he were to offer ten or twenty times as much,

25 W. Burkert, *Wien. St.* 89 (1976) 19 n. 42.

26 H. L. Lorimer, *Homer and the Monuments* (London 1950) 190f.

27 See M. W. Edwards in the Cambridge Iliad commentary, v. 203–206 with illustrations and literature; for the Cretan shields, J. N. Coldstream, *Geometric Greece*, 286–288; for the Phoenician bowls, G. Markoe, *Phoenician Bronze and Silver Bowls from Cyprus and the Mediterranean* (Berlin 1985). The most relevant are those of Markoe's period III (op. cit., 151f.; for the dating to 710–675, ibid. 154f.).

28 Cf. *Od.* 4.615–619 = 15.115–119.

οὐδ' ὅσ' ἐς Ὀρχομενὸν ποτινίσεται, οὐδ' ὅσα Θήβας
Αἰγυπτίας, ὅθι πλεῖστα δόμοις ἐν κτήματα κεῖται,
αἵ θ' ἑκατόμπυλοί εἰσι, διηκόσιοι δ' ἀν' ἑκάστας
ἀνέρες ἐξοιχνέουσι σὺν ἵπποισιν καὶ ὄχεσφιν

(9.381–384). Walter Burkert has shown convincingly that lines 382–384 cannot be dismissed as an interpolation, and that the passage (the only mention of Egypt in the *Iliad*) cannot plausibly be accounted for as a memory of the glory of Egyptian Thebes back in the fourteenth century. The only serious alternative is that it refers to the restored wealth and power of that city in the XXVth Dynasty, between 715 and 663[29]. Burkert further points out that the rumour of Thebes' splendour may have rippled most strongly to the Aegean world not while the city flourished but when it fell to Assurbanipal in 663 and its stores of gold, silver, jewels, and other precious booty were all carted away to Nineveh.

> Man stelle sich vor, wie dieser einzigartige Beutezug seinen langen Weg von Oberägypten über Sinai, Palästina, Syrien bis zum Euphrat und Tigris zog ... der ganzen vorderorientalischen 'Welt' wurde in diesem Jahr demonstriert, was das für eine Stadt gewesen war, die der König von Assyrien eingenommen hatte: die reichste Stadt der Welt[30].

The impression made by its fall is attested also by the prophet Nahum, 3. 8–10. It is even possible, as Burkert suggests, that Greeks took part in the sack as mercenaries in Assurbanipal's army.

This arresting hypothesis would give us the year 663 as the *terminus post quem* for the *Iliad*. It is tempting to let oneself be carried away by Burkert's vivid screenplay. However, it must be admitted that the fame of Thebes' wealth might have percolated to Greece before that date, while it actually existed. In that case we should still probably not wish to go back before 700; the last twenty years or so of Thebes' prosperity would be the likeliest time.

6. It is, of course, always to Near Eastern history that we must look if we want any precise dates in this period. I wish to suggest that another spectacular Assyrian triumph has left an identifiable echo elsewhere in the *Iliad*, giving us a further, slightly earlier but perhaps somewhat firmer *terminus post quem* for the poem.

When the Achaeans build the wall and ditch round their camp, Poseidon is indignant because they have given the gods no hecatombs, and he is afraid that their wall will be more famous in future than the walls of Troy which he

29 W. Burkert, "Das hunderttorige Theben", *Wien. Stud.* 89 (1976) 5–21. It is generally agreed that 381 is an older line which the poet has taken over, and that it originally referred to Boeotian Thebes (so too Burkert, 8). I suspect that it had stood in a similar context in the story of Meleager, who likewise refused a princely gift (9.576ff.), and in whose time Thebes still flourished, as it no longer did in Achilles'.

30 Op. cit., 17f. E. R. Dodds in the printed handouts for his Oxford Homer lectures *c.* 1958 put the mention of Egyptian Thebes under the heading 'Homer's knowledge of Egypt – Mycenaean (Lorimer)?', but added '(Could also be due to an archaising poet who had heard of its recent destruction)'.

and Apollo have built. Zeus tells him not to worry: after the end of the war he may break the thing down, disperse it into the sea, and cover the site over again with the sands of the beach (7.442–464). In a digression at the beginning of book 12 the poet looks ahead to the time when that was carried out. After the fall of the city and the departure of the Achaeans, he says, Poseidon and Apollo diverted all the rivers of the Troad against the wall for nine days, while Zeus made the rain pour down without stopping. Poseidon 'led the way' with his trident in hand, dug out all the stone and timber parts of the structure into the waves, levelled the site, and covered it with the sands (12.17–33).

The passage was described by Leaf as 'so patently late that it has not escaped the remarks of the most careless critics'[31]. We may agree that it is 'late' in the sense of untraditional. The whole theme of the fortification wall and ditch round the Achaean camp has the appearance of being not an inherited element in the story but an invention of the *Iliad* poet himself. But it is fully integrated into the poem; an *Iliad* without it would not be the *Iliad* we are studying[32]. Its postwar demolition is an essential part of the invention. It was of this that Aristotle observed that ὁ πλάσας ποιητὴς ἠφάνισεν. The two passages about the destruction by Poseidon in books 7 and 12 guarantee each other. As Von der Mühll wrote, 'beide Stellen passen so zueinander, daß sie demselben Dichter, also dem Iliasdichter, gehören müssen'[33].

I believe that this novel story of a flood in the Troad, introduced by the *Iliad* poet, shows Assyrian connections at two levels, mythical and historical. Firstly it appears to owe some of its features to the Mesopotamian tradition of a universal flood. The main sources for the myth are the two classic Babylonian epics, *Atraḫasīs* and *Gilgamesh*. Both of these poems go back well into the second millennium but were still being copied and read in seventh-century Assyria. Both have points of contact with the *Iliad*, but the Gilgamesh epic in particular has, directly or indirectly, exercised a powerful and extensive influence on the Greek poem, as many scholars have acknowledged[34]. The *Iliad* poet must have been acquainted with something much like it, and it is therefore likely that he was acquainted with the flood story which occupies a substantial portion of Tablet XI of the Nineveh version.

31 W. Leaf, *The Iliad*, 2nd ed. (London 1900–02) i. 524.

32 Cf. E. Bethe, *Homer. Dichtung und Sage*, i: *Ilias* (Leipzig 1914) 120–143; M. L. West, "The Achaean Wall", *CR* 19 (1969) 255–260.

33 Aristot. fr. 162 ap. Strab. 13.1.36; P. Von der Mühll, *Kritisches Hypomnema zur Ilias* (Basel 1952) 204.

34 F. Dirlmeier, *Rh. Mus.* 98 (1955) 18–37 = *Ausgew. Schr.* (Heidelberg 1970) 55–67; Á. Szabó, *Acta antiqua* 4 (1956) 55–108; T. B. L. Webster, *Minos* 4 (1956) 104–116 and *From Mycenae to Homer* (London 1958) 82; H. Petriconi in A. S. Crisafulli (ed.), *Linguistic and Literary Studies in Honor of Helmut A. Hatzfeld* (Washington 1964) 329–342; G. K. Gresseth, *CJ* 70.4 (1975) 1–18; J. R. Wilson, *Échos du monde classique* 30 (1986) 25–41; M. Reichel, "Gräzistische Bemerkungen zur Struktur des Gilgamesch-Epos" in B. Brogyanyi and R. Lipp (edd.), *Historical Philology: Greek, Latin and Romance* (Current Issues in Linguistic Theory, 87), Amsterdam/Philadelphia 1992, 187–208; M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon* (Oxford 1996/7) ch. 7.

The points which the Trojan flood in *Iliad* 12 has in common with the Babylonian flood are as follows. Both are caused by gods, in anger at the activities of men. There are many days of continuous rain, nine in the *Iliad*, six in the Babylonian account. Poseidon 'leading the way' with his trident recalls *Gilg.* XI 99–102,

> Shullat and Hanish were marching in front,
> the (god's) throne-bearers were marching over mountain and land;
> Erragal was tearing out the mooring-posts,
> Ninurta was marching, he opened the weirs.

The final state of the site in the *Iliad* (12.30, λεῖα δ' ἐποίησεν) may be compared with *Gilg.* XI 134, 'the flood-plain was level as a roof'. It is also relevant that this is the one Homeric passage in which the heroes are referred to as the ἡμίθεοι, the Half-gods (23), implying the Hesiodic idea that the Trojan War marked the end of a distinct historical era in which the earth was populated by a breed of men different from ourselves. The association of this era-close with a deluge may be significant, since in Mesopotamian as well as biblical traditions the Flood marked the principal dividing-point between mythical eras[35].

The second level of connection with Assyria relates to historical realities and leads us towards a dating. Where did the poet get the notion of diverting rivers against a wall to wash it away? This could never be a natural idea in Greece, where most rivers were of modest size and walls were of stone, not mud brick. The concept belongs in the land where there was no stone and no timber: Mesopotamia.

I submit that the inspiration was provided by a specific, unique, sensational occasion on which river waters were brought into a city for the express purpose of carrying its structures away so that people of the future should find no trace of it. The king responsible was Sennacherib; the city was none other than Babylon, which he captured on the first day of Kislīmu (November/December) in 689 BC. In his inscriptions he records how, after burning the city, he tore down its walls, temples, and ziggurats and threw them in the Araḫtu, a channel connecting with the Euphrates. Further:

> In the midst of that city I dug canals, and levelled their earth in the waters. I destroyed the outlines of its foundations, and made it more level than the Flood did. So that in after days the site of that city and of the gods' houses should not be identifiable, I dissolved it in the waters and turned it into a flood-plain.
>
> So that the site of that city should [not be id]entifiable, I tore up its ground and caused it to be carried down the Euphrates to the sea; its soil went all the way to Dilmun (Bahrein)[36].

35 R. Scodel, *HSCP* 86 (1982) 33–50; cf. H. W. Singor, *Hermes* 120 (1992) 402.

36 III R 14. 50–54 and *KAH* ii. 122.36–39 in D. D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib* (Chicago 1924) 83f., 137f.; H. D. Galter, *Studia Orientalia* 55 (1984) 164f., 169. For the archaeological evidence of the destruction, which was not as total as the inscriptions imply, see Grant Frame, *Babylonia 689–627 B.C. A Political History* (Istanbul 1992) 55f.

It had always been customary for vanquished cities to be looted and burned, but the scale and manner of this Assyrian endeavour to erase the ancient enemy capital from the map were unprecedented. Babylon was destined to lie ruined and largely deserted for eleven years.

We have two viewpoints on the matter: one from Sennacherib's inscriptions, the other from those of his son and successor Esarhaddon, who adopted a different policy towards Babylonia and rebuilt the devastated city. He began the work of restoring it in 678 or 677 and continued through the decade. His account of what had befallen Babylon begins with a description of how wickedness had come to prevail in Sumer and Akkad.

> Then Marduk, chief of the gods, became furious, and devised evil to level the land and destroy its people. The Araḫtu, a river of inundation, a raging flood, a wild swell, a powerful tide, a replica of the deluge, was brought in; it sent its waters through the city, its dwellings, its cult places, and made it a wilderness. The gods and goddesses who dwelt within it flew away like birds and went up to heaven; the people who dwelt there fled to another place and took refuge in an unknown land[37].

Marduk had originally 'written down' seventy years as the time that Babylon should remain waste. But when Esarhaddon became king, the god's merciful heart calmed down, and he 'inverted' the number, that is, he changed it from 𒐗𒐐 (1.10 = 70) to 𒐐𒐗 (10.1 = 11), and ordained the resettlement of the city after eleven years. Encouraged by consistently good omens and assured that this was the gods' will, Esarhaddon set to work. The first step was to clear the site of the vegetation that had overgrown it and to fill in the canals that Sennacherib had dug across it.

> I mobilized my whole work-force and the entire land of Karduniaš (Babylon). They felled the trees and marsh reeds with axes and tore out the roots. I removed the water of the Euphrates from within it, and directed it to its former course[38].

Later, as he records how he restored the temples and images of the gods, Esarhaddon attributes the removal of the excess water to these deities themselves:

> The gods and goddesses who dwelt within it, who had carried away the waters of overflow (dam-breach) and cloudburst – their appearance had turned dark: I renovated them from their sadly ruined state[39].

There are two significant differences of perspective between the Sennacherib and Esarhaddon inscriptions. Firstly, Esarhaddon avoids naming his father as the one responsible for the destruction: he represents it as the consequence of the gods' anger with Babylon. Secondly, whereas both kings refer to the mythical Flood as a term of comparison, it is Esarhaddon who develops the

37 R. Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien* (Graz 1956) 13f., Episodes 5ff.
38 Ibid. 19, Episode 18.
39 Ibid. 23, Episode 32.

theme more vividly. Sennacherib only compares the final effect with that caused by the Flood; he does not liken his canals to the mythical cataclysm. It is Esarhaddon who portrays the diverted water as 'a river of inundation, a raging flood, a wild swell, a powerful tide, a replica of the deluge'.

If we now turn back to the Iliadic account of the destruction of the Achaean wall, we see that it is not based merely on the rumour of a distant event. It reflects both Sennacherib's and Esarhaddon's official propaganda concerning that event. In some respects it shows a closer relationship to Sennacherib's account, in others to Esarhaddon's:

Destruction due to gods' displeasure:	E.
River waters channelled into site:	S., E.
Raging flood washed everything away:	E.
Foundations torn up and turned into the water:	S.
Débris washed out to sea:	S.
Site left level:	S.
Purpose: to deny posterity knowledge of the place:	S.
River(s) returned (by gods) to original bed:	E.

Moreover, the passage shows an amalgamation of the royal propaganda with elements drawn from the literary Flood myth to which both monarchs allude.

This amalgam can have only one origin: Assyrian court poetry. We know that there was a tradition of such poetry under the Neo-Assyrian kings. We have fragments of poems celebrating military exploits of Sargon II and Assurbanipal[40]. It is a reasonable assumption that Sennacherib's triumph over Babylon was also celebrated in a poem or poems. A few years later, when Esarhaddon put his stamp on the situation, the poetic version will have been revised to reflect his view of events, but it would not be surprising if it still preserved elements of Sennacherib's. Perhaps Esarhaddon's emphasis on divine agency and on the deluge theme reflects what the poet or poets had already made out of the affair.

We cannot say what line of communication may have run between Assyrian court poetry of the early seventh century and the creator of the *Iliad*. But the hypothesis that such a line existed glows brighter in the light of the several quasi-Homeric narrative motifs and devices that we find in the account of a battle in another Sennacherib inscription, the Chicago Prism, which contains the final version of his Annals and dates from 689. In his eighth campaign in 691 BC he found himself opposed by an alliance of the Elamite and Babylonian armies. At this point the style of the narrative becomes markedly more expansive and rhetorical or poetic; one may suspect that a poem underlies it[41]. There is a catalogue of the enemy's allies, amounting to 24 contingents. Then we read:

40 A. Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea* (State Archives of Assyria, iii, Helsinki 1989) 47–53.

41 Chicago Prism, v. 43ff., ed. R. Borger, *Babylonisch-assyrische Lesestücke* (2nd ed., Rome 1979) i. 83f.

> The gathering (of Elamite and Babylonian troops) joined up; like the onset of a swarm of locusts in springtime [cf. *Il.* 2.469–473, 21.12] they were rising up against me all together to do battle. The dust from their feet covered the face of the broad heavens like a heavy storm in severe cold weather [cf. *Il.* 3.10–14]. They had established their line before me at Halulê on the bank of the Tigris; they had seized the approach to my watering-place, and were sharpening their weapons. As for me, to Assur, Sîn, Shamash, Bel, Nabû, Nergal, Ishtar of Nineveh, Ishtar of Arbela, the gods in whom I trust, I prayed for success over the mighty foe. They at once heard my prayers [ἔκλυον αὐδῆς] and came to my aid. I raged like a lion [λέων ὥς]. I put on my corslet; my helmet, emblem of battle, I placed on my head [cf. *Il.* 3.332, 336, etc.]; my excellent battle-chariot, which flattens the foe, I hastily mounted in my heart's fury. The strong bow which Assur gave me I seized in my hands; the arrow that cuts off lives I grasped in my palm. Against the whole army of the evil enemy I gave forth a savage shout like a storm, I roared like Adad [cf. *Il.* 18.215–224].

He goes on to describe how he attacked the enemy like the onset of a raging storm and defeated them.

> I made their blood run down on the broad earth like an inundation; my galloping steeds, my chariot-team, were plunging into the streams of their blood as into a river; the wheels of my battle-chariot, which lays low the wicked and the evil, were bathed in blood and guts [cf. *Il.* 11.531–537, 20.498–502].

The narrative continues with mutilation and stripping of the dead. The kings of Elam and Babylon and the princes in league with them flee in their chariots across the corpses of their own troops 'like young doves pursued' [cf. *Il.* 21.493].

We have quantities of Assyrian royal annals from earlier centuries, and there is nothing to compare with this dramatic account, though some of the similes are anticipated (armies compared to locusts; warriors like lions; enemy fleeing like birds). Burkert's tentative suggestion ('one might even toy with the idea') that 'some Greek singer had arrived in Assyria together with the mercenaries, and that he composed this song on the battle of Halule which so much pleased the king that it was incorporated in the official annals', will not, I imagine, recommend itself to many. What we are seeing is rather the development of a native Assyrian tradition. The new motif of the blood-spattered chariot-wheels[42] is entirely in the spirit of Assyrian bloodthirstiness. Soon afterwards, perhaps, it found its way into Greek epic by the same route as the account of the flooding of Babylon.

If this highly specific line of transmission is admitted – did an Assyrian poet somehow make his way to the West, learn Greek, become a Greek poet? – it offers a tempting solution to the problem of how the *Iliad* poet (and his follower, the *Odyssey* poet) arrived at such a close acquaintance as they apparently had with the Gilgamesh epic and perhaps other Akkadian poems. But influences from oriental poetry certainly affected Greece on a wide front over

42 Compared with the Homeric parallels by H. Wirth, *Homer und Babylon* (Freiburg im Breisgau 1921) 149f.; W. Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution. Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Cambridge, Mass. 1992) 118f.

many centuries, and we should not seek to attribute too much to a single contact.

Now, what conclusion is to be drawn regarding the date of the *Iliad*? A basic *terminus post quem* must be the destruction of Babylon, 689 BC, or, to be practical, 688, since Babylon fell into Sennacherib's hands late in 689 and the demolition works must have occupied many weeks or months. But we must allow a little time for the poetic mythologizing of the event. And if Poseidon's and Apollo's restoration of the Trojan rivers to their former beds should reflect the beginning of Esarhaddon's operations at Babylon ('I removed the water of the Euphrates from within it, and directed it to its former course') we shall have to come down to 678/7. After all, that was the moment – after the river had been returned to its former channel and the site levelled up, but before any significant rebuilding had been done – when the situation corresponded most closely to what is described in the *Iliad*. At that point an Assyrian poet, surveying the scene at Babylon or hearing a report of it, and echoing something of Sennacherib's propaganda and something of Esarhaddon's, might have told the tale on some such lines as these:

> The gods were angry with Babylon on account of its great misdeeds, and resolved to destroy it so completely that men of the future should not be able to identify its outlines. They brought the waters of the Euphrates against it with the force of the mythical Flood; Adad gathered his storm-clouds, and the rain fell in torrents for days on end; Assur marched ahead, and dug the foundations of the buildings out into the river to be carried away seawards. The place became a flood-plain, a wilderness. Afterwards, at the intercession of Esarhaddon, the great king, the gods' anger abated; the waters were returned to their original courses and the ground levelled.

A final observation. The event that provides the model for the *Iliad* passage is the destruction of a great city. A poet preoccupied with the Trojan War may initially have toyed with the notion of adapting it to the destruction of Ilios itself. But that was clearly impossible; anyone familiar with the site, as our poet clearly was[43], knew that it had not been levelled and that the walls built by Poseidon and Apollo still stood. He therefore displaced the operation to his

43 I believe in fact that the *Iliad* was largely or wholly composed at Ilios, and that it has its title from its early currency there, just as the titles of the epics *Cypria*, *Phocais*, *Naupactica* reflect their local origins and their attributions to a Cypriot, Phocaean, and Naupactian poet respectively. As I sat amid the ruins of Troy on a beautifully clear day in September 1994 and surveyed the landscape – the Dardanelles, Imbros with Samothrace towering behind it, Tenedos, and a very obvious Batieia on the horizon, halfway to the hidden beach of Beşik Bay – the conviction grew stronger: *he composed it here*. *Il.* 20.307f. clearly alludes to rulers in the Ilios of the poet's own time who claim descent from Aeneas; they will have been his patrons. Schadewaldt (above n. 2), 95, assumes without justification that this 'Dardanian' dynasty could only last till about 700, when he supposes that Aeolian settlers first arrived. It now seems that Dardanians and Greeks must have mingled there from the tenth century: see D. Hertel, *Studia Troica* 1 (1991) 131–144.
I speak of 'the poet' because I have also come to take seriously the view that 'Homer' was a fictitious person, the imagined ancestor of the Homeridai. But that is another story.

Achaean camp, of which there was indeed no sign on the ground. This explains why the gods are made to employ what seem such extreme measures, the diversion of many rivers and a nine-day deluge, merely to dispose of an abandoned fortress.

We now have an accumulation of arguments for a seventh-century *Iliad*. We have a *terminus post quem* of 688 or 678, and a *terminus ante quem* of *c.* 630. If Burkert's Theban scenario is accepted, the upper date is brought down to 663. It may in any case be felt that a date in the 680s or 670s would be too high in view of the Gorgon on Agamemnon's shield, the developed state of phalanx tactics, and the continuing absence of artistic representations based on the *Iliad*. On the other hand, a date in the 630s might be judged implausibly low for a poet in whose mind the demolition of Babylon and the wealth of Thebes were still vivid images. That leaves us with the period between 670 and 640 as the most likely time for the composition of the poem, with perhaps a preference for the decade 660–650.

This brings us well into (if not past) the reign of Gyges and close to the time of Archilochus, which is where Euphorion and others put Homer. Burkert pertinently asks whether literary history really requires a great gap between Homer on the one hand and Callinus, Tyrtaeus, and Archilochus on the other[44]. The answer is, as he suggests, that it does not. I do not see that it requires any gap at all.

By the same token, if all these poets (and also Semonides?) belong approximately in the same generation, one wonders whether literary history will continue to be comfortable with a Hesiod isolated from them by a thirty- or forty-year gap, or with a Eumelus dated if anything even earlier. Eumelus is said to have 'overlapped' (ἐπιβεβληκέναι) with Archias the founder of Syracuse, but we do not know how long Archias lived or the basis for the statement. The chronographers' datings of Eumelus to 764/1 or 744/1 are of no more value than their datings of Arctinus, Cinaethon, or Lesches. Pausanias' belief that the Messenians' Prosodion to Delos, attributed to Eumelus, pre-dated the first Messenian War, may have been mistaken: it is doubtful whether Delos enjoyed such national importance in the eighth century, and the emphasis on liberty in the fragment which Pausanias quotes from the song (*PMG* 696) rather suits the time of the revolt from Sparta *c.* 660[45].

As regards Hesiod, the chronology that I have used in the past allowed for a *Theogony* that might be as early as 730 and a *Works and Days* that might be as late as 660 but was more likely to be no later than 690. The reckoning was based on acceptance of Plutarch's connection of the Amphidamas of *Op.* 654 with the Lelantine War, and on a dating of that shadowy conflict to the period

44 *Wien. Stud.* 89 (1976) 19.

45 Clem. *Strom.* 1.21.131.8 = Eumel. test. 2 Bernabé (*Poetae Epici Graeci*, i, Leipzig 1987, 106); Eusebius, Cyril, Jerome, see ibid., test. 3–5; Paus. 4.4.1, 33.2 = test. 7–8.

730–700[46]. It has to be admitted that these are unreliable premises, and if it were thought advantageous to downdate the two poems to (say) 680–670, I should see no serious obstacle.

Certainly, the Greeks may have started to record poetry in writing by the second half of the eighth century. From the layout of the 'Nestor's cup' epigram, with its three verses each written on a separate line, it has been inferred that its inscriber was familiar with books of verse in which that convention was already followed, as it always was later for stichic verse[47]. But perhaps it was not until the first half of the seventh century that any texts achieved sufficiently wide circulation to survive into the Classical period.

46 *Hesiod. Theogony* (above n. 1) 41–46.

47 H. R. Immerwahr, *Attic Script. A Survey* (Oxford 1990) 18f.