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**SUPPLEMENTING HOMER.
CREATIVITY AND CONJECTURE IN ANCIENT HOMERIC CRITICISM**

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**A DISSERTATION
PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY
OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE
BY THE DEPARTMENT OF
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NOVEMBER 2001

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Abstract

This dissertation examines a way of reading Homer in antiquity that I call Homeric *supplementation*, which involved the imagination of motives, events, places, and circumstances that had been left out of Homer's text. My purpose is to demonstrate the prevalence of this creative filling-in of the Homeric world in antiquity, describe its mechanics, trace its origins, outline the intellectual culture which fostered it, and analyze how readers elaborated on its principles. I hope to show that Homeric criticism could be a productive, inventive endeavor.

I consider a wide range of 'readers' (historians, orators, geographers, and poetic critics), but several concepts unite their approaches toward Homer: their privileging of verisimilitude and probability, their tendency to think of Homeric epic in terms of 'problems', and their interest in conjecture and inference. Chapter One provides an overview of Homeric criticism, concentrating on the concerns with the plausibility and coherence of Homeric narrative that justified supplementing Homer on these grounds; Aristotle's *Poetics* 25 and *Homeric Problems* are primary texts.

In Chapter Two I examine the methods of *archaiologia*, or the study of the distant past, whose practitioners (e.g., Thucydides) also attempted to supplement Homer, albeit on the grounds that his world coincided with the historical world of the heroes. Herodotus' excursus on Helen in Egypt illustrates how supplementation was employed even when Homer was judged *wrong*.

Through a study of Strabo's *Geography*, Chapter Three examines an important methodological element of reading Homer: the need to imagine Homer's personality and compositional methods to justify reading his poetry for detailed information.

Strabo both fashions a Homer and develops of compositional theory which are part of his larger project to reconnect to a lost heroic age.

Dio Chrysostom's *Chryseïs* and *Trojan Oration* are the focus of Chapters Four and Five. In one, Dio speculatively reconstructs Chryseïs' personality from the scanty Homeric evidence, while he rewrites heroic history in the other (Troy won; Hector killed Achilles) by reading Homer 'against the grain'. Dio fully exploits the possibilities inherent in Homeric supplementation, and exemplifies the creativity, playfulness, and sophistication that ancient readers of Homer brought to his text.

Introduction

**“CRAVING FOR MAXIMAL WORLDS”
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PLUTARCH**

How many philologists, who do not believe in the historicity of Trimalchio...confuse fiction and reality no less and force Petronius...to compete with real life. They wish to determine the exact season of Trimalchio's banquet and resolve textual contradictions in which fruits from different seasons are placed together.

—Paul Veyne¹

One of the vignettes in the fifth book of Plutarch's *Table Talk* treats a celebrated problem in ancient Homeric criticism: the phrase found at *Iliad* 9.203: “mix the wine stronger” (ζωρότερον δὲ κέραιε). At this point in the epic, Odysseus, Phoenix and Ajax, as we recall, have arrived at Achilles' tent to convey Agamemnon's offer of reparations. Along with other preparations, Achilles orders Patroclus to “mix stronger wine” for his guests, “because they are most dear” to him. To the symposiasts participating in Plutarch's dinner conversation, if ζωρότερον was taken to mean, as it normally did, “stronger” (i.e., more unmixed (ἀκρατότερον)), Achilles would appear ridiculous (γελοῖος) and “in an awkward position (ἐν ἀτόπῳ τινί),” since unmixed wine was associated with drunkenness.² To resolve the problem, they have recourse to

¹ Veyne (1988), 98.

² 677e. As Plutarch notes, Zoilus of Amphipolis, the notorious fourth century B.C.E. Homeric critic, had been among the first to raise this objection.

the popular ancient “solution from the diction” (λύσις ἐκ τῆς λεξέως).³ Recognizing that Homer’s language reflected archaic usage, one could bypass a difficulty in sense by positing, usually via etymological or philological maneuvering, that the word or phrase in question had meant something different in Homer’s time. Could ζωρότερον have signified something more appropriate than “stronger”? Niceratus glosses the phrase as “mix the wine *warmer*”; Sosicles as “mix the *well-mixed* wine” (adding that Homer often uses the comparative interchangeably with the positive); Antipater as “mix the *older* [more aged] wine”; and Plutarch himself adds the possibility (though he doesn’t believe it) “mix the wine *faster*.”⁴

At this juncture, however, Plutarch interjects a different kind of solution that represents, albeit in a somewhat restricted fashion, the more inventive way of reading Homer which is the focus of this dissertation. Rather than changing the definition of the problematic word, Plutarch instead tries to find a context in which Achilles’ allegedly inappropriate remark might be rendered more explicable. In doing so he transforms the problem into an opportunity to imagine circumstances and motivations not explicitly mentioned by Homer.

For Plutarch, Achilles made his request because he “knew that older men like Phoenix and Odysseus prefer their wine strong rather than watery.” (677F) Moreover,

³ See Combellack (1987).

⁴ This was also Aristotle’s solution in the *Poetics* (1461a14-16): “And again “mix it stronger” may mean not undiluted as for drunkards but quicker (τὸ ζωρότερον δὲ κέραιε οὐ τὸ ἄκρατον ὡς οἰνόφλυξιν ἀλλὰ τὸ θᾶπτον).” See Lucas (1968), *ad loc.*, who notes, “there appears no justification for any sense other than ‘stronger’.” The same series of solutions are given in Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists* 10.6.423e. For more in-depth discussion of the Homeric passage and meaning of ζωρότερον, see the bibliography in Fuhrmann’s (ed.) (1978) note on 677e.

as a student of Chiron and thus experienced in dietary matters,⁵ Achilles believed that a weaker, milder wine was appropriate for himself and Patroclus, since they were idle from battle and whiling away the time on the beach, while a much stronger mixture of wine was required for men weary from combat. Furthermore, the same logic also explains why Achilles' horses are depicted (uniquely) eating parsley (σέλινον) at *Iliad* 2.775; Achilles chose this light dietary measure as appropriate for horses that are experiencing an unaccustomed idleness.⁶

None of this 'knowledge', none of these motives, is ever explicitly attributed to Achilles in the *Iliad*; Homer never explains why Achilles wants to serve stronger wine to his guests (nor for that matter why his horses are eating parsley). Presented with this motivational lack in the Homeric account, the other symposiasts eliminate it by redefining a word; Plutarch, however, fills in the gap with his own reconstruction of Achilles' motivations. All of a sudden, at the end of Plutarch's answer, rather than the dead end of a lexical correction, we are presented with an expansion and elaboration of the Homeric narrative; we know a little bit more about Homer's world than we did before.

Homeric Supplementation

This brief example only deals with a single line, but it represents a very common way of reading Homer in antiquity that I call Homeric *supplementation*. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine this process of creative filling-in of the Homeric world, demonstrate its prevalence, describe its mechanics, trace its origins, outline the

⁵ Thinking no doubt of *Iliad* 11.830-2.

⁶ Plutarch also hypothesizes that Achilles was never much of a wine-drinker (φίλοινος) even before his refusal to fight.

intellectual culture which fostered it, and analyze how individual readers followed and elaborated on its principles. These include Aristotle, Herodotus, Thucydides, Libanius, and Strabo, but the central author examined is Dio Chrysostom, who in his short dialogue *Chryseīs* and the *tour de force Trojan Oration*, best exploits the creative possibilities inherent in this method of reading Homer in the playful, sophisticated, and intentionally perverse fashion so characteristic of his discourse.

By creatively filling-in the gaps and indeterminacies within the poetry, these ancient readers systematically imagined motives, events, places, and states of affairs that were left out of Homer's text, and endeavored to reconstruct the narrative world of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in all of its topographical, psychological, and plot-specific detail. The vast majority of these readings, like Plutarch's, arise from hints and traces imagined to inhere within the Homeric text itself, usually through the intentional subtlety of the poet. The results display considerable variation in tone and sophistication, but point to a shared interest on the part of ancient readers in exploring what Homer left unspoken, and reconstituting it in their own writing.

Perhaps the best description of this interpretative activity is provided by James Kugel in his study of a type of ancient Jewish exegesis he calls *narrative expansion*, which proceeds by "actually *expanding the narrative content* of the biblical text, boldly asserting that...other words or actions not specified in the text actually accompanied what is specified." Such readings operated under the assumption that biblical stories were "fundamentally elliptical":

the narrative was believed to say much in a few words and often to omit essential details, leaving a number of details to be filled in by the interpreter ...[this] seem[s] to have generated an extraordinary amount of "filling-in" ...Any little item ...an apparently unnecessary repetition, a logical inconsistency, an unusual grammatical form, a no longer under-

stood word or phrase—could generate a wealth of additions to the narrative, for interpreters tended to regard all such things as opportunities, nay, *invitations*, issued by the Bible itself, to create some new bit of action or dialogue.”⁷

Despite the considerable differences between biblical and Homeric exegesis, Kugel’s characterization could work equally well for the latter, illustrating a formal similarity in approach that underlay both activities, whatever their variance in content.⁸ For Homeric narrative supplementation also invariably took its cue from problems encountered in the text—moments when a reader experienced a brief short-circuit in the narrative flow. And as we saw in Plutarch, the necessity to solve such problems could function as an impetus to the reader’s imaginative reconstruction. In the grammatical field, Homer’s silences were theorized explicitly as intentional—the term *κατὰ τὸ σιωπώμενον* referred to instances where Homer, in his pursuit of *συντομία*, or concision, had left out certain actions or events that were meant to be supplied by his audience.⁹

While the scholia usually employ the device *κατὰ τὸ σιωπώμενον* only in limited circumstances, the same logic informs a wide variety of approaches to Homer. In *Table Talk* Plutarch supplied a *motivation* conspicuously missing from the narrative, but careful readers of Homer grappled with all sorts of different narrative gaps and ellip-

⁷ Kugel (1994), 6-7. Kamesar (1994b), 55, describes the “well-known feature” of the narrative *aggada* as the practice “by which biblical passages are expanded and elaborated via additional narrative.” He also notes their connection to problems.

⁸ I don’t want to press the similarities too far. Homer was not the “Bible of the Greeks”; the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, however central and canonical to Greek culture, were not in possession of scriptural status. Greek states did not use Homer as the basis of their law or religion, and as a result the reading, understanding, and interpreting of his epics, though essential and important to the intellectual elite, never held the position such activity did in ancient Jewish and Christian society.

⁹ See the more extended discussion in Chapter 4, section III.

ses. Another passage from Plutarch, this time from his *Theseus*, illustrates some of the activity engendered by another confusing Homeric line.

They say that Aethra, Theseus' mother, who had been captured [at Aphidnae], was carried off to Sparta and from there to Troy along with Helen, and that Homer witnesses to this (μαρτυρεῖν Ὀμηρον) when he says that Helen was attended by: "Aethra, the daughter of Pittheus, and ox-eyed Clymene." (Αἴθρη Πιτθῆος θυγάτηρ. Κλυμένη τε βοῶπις) Other people, however, reject this verse as spurious (τοῦτο τὸ ἔπος διαβάλλουσι), as well as the story (μυθολογίαν) of Munychos, who some say was the illegitimate child of Laodice and Demophoön, and whom Aethra helped to bring up at Troy. On the other hand, Ister, in the thirteenth book of his *Atthis* [*FGrH* 334 F 7], tells a peculiar and quite different story (ἴδιον δέ τινα καὶ παρηλλαγμένον ὅλως λόγον) about Aethra. Some claim, he says, that Paris was defeated in battle by Achilles and Patroclus on the banks of the river Spercheios [in Thessaly], but that Hector captured and plundered the city of Troezen and carried off Aethra, who had been left there. But this seems a very unlikely tale (ἀλλὰ τοῦτο μὲν ἔχει πολλὴν ἀλογίαν). (34)

The quoted line (*Il.* 3.144) represents the only mention of this Aethra, daughter of Pittheus, servant of Helen, in the *Iliad*. Strictly speaking, nothing suggests that this was the same Aethra who was the mother of Theseus in Greek legendary tradition¹⁰, but since Homer often alludes to other myths in oblique fashion, the inference seems reasonable. The question then becomes: how did Theseus' mother become Helen's servant? In the absence of any Homeric explanation, a set of circumstances had to be imagined to make the narrative complete; here the reference is to the legend of Helen's abduction by Theseus, and her subsequent retrieval (and Aethra's capture) by her brothers, the Dioscuri.¹¹ But Ister's fantastic alternate history shows that there were other reconstructions that fought for recognition as well.

¹⁰ In fact, the scholia (ad *Il.* 3.144) claim that this Aethra was a different woman who had the same name (and less probably, a father with the same name as well).

¹¹ Here is not the place to decide whether the Theseus-Helen story predates the *Iliad*, whether it was invented to explain this line, whether this line was interpolated

In this case, critics felt authorized to supplement the Homeric account on the grounds that it was alluding to an event belonging to the network of heroic stories understood to form the backdrop to Homer's poetry. The rationale for reconstruction is different from that of Plutarch's in *Table Talk*, and reflects to some degree the instantiation of the problems respectively in literary-critical and historiographical discourse. Yet both readings assume the existence of a coherent and theoretically complete world which Homer only partially describes in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In the face of a problem caused by this partial description, one was warranted to delve into the unspoken Homeric universe and bring to light what Homer had no doubt always had in mind.

The focus of this kind of reading on problematic lines or sections of Homeric text is one of the reasons I use the term supplementation to describe it, rather than Kugel's expansion, or a similar word like elaboration.¹² The readers I examine never simply add on to Homeric narrative indiscriminately, but always in response to difficulties encountered in the sense of the story. The act of supplementing, of adding onto, the narrative is thus undertaken to render Homer complete by filling in what he has left unsaid, but can only do so on the grounds that what is being restored was always im-

into the Homeric text in order to insert a mention of Theseus, or whether this is simply a different Aethra. West brackets the line in his new Teubner *Iliad*, and Kirk (1985), s.v. 3.144, leans toward interpolation.

¹² For more obvious reasons, I avoid terms like Frances Young's (1997), 206-14, "deductive exegesis" or Buffière's (1956), 228, "historical exegesis." The process is by no means 'deductive' in a technical sense, nor is it exclusively concerned with historical inquiry in the modern sense (although if we take it in the ancient sense of *historia* as 'narrative' it has some merit). Scodel's (1999), 19-21, "naturalization" (filling in gaps in verisimilitude) works well for her objectives, but doesn't get across the inventive aspect of such interpretation.

manent in the text.¹³ In this way, the impetus to supplement the text derives from the faith in Homer's theoretical completeness; the reader has to complete and render comprehensible what was always already whole.¹⁴

Innovation

To modern sensibilities, ancient readers of Homer tend to be overscrupulous and overinvested readers; they ask questions about the tiniest details, notice the most obscure inconsistencies, wonder about the seemingly most insignificant sections of the text. To make it worse, when they answer these questions by imagining likely 'off-stage' action or other unmentioned aspects of the Homeric world, they go beyond the "limits of interpretation"; they don't "respect the text." No modern commentary on the *Iliad* mentions Plutarch's supplemental resolution of the 'mix the wine stronger' problem, even though many dutifully record the incorrect etymological explanations offered by his friends. To a modern literary critic these readings are misreadings, and their creators are, in Umberto Eco's pithy formulation, "fussy readers" who are not "Model ones" because they "are craving for maximal worlds," which, alas, fiction cannot provide.¹⁵

¹³ Culler (1982), 103: "The supplement is an inessential extra, added to something complete in itself, but the supplement is added in order to complete, to compensate for a lack in what was supposed to be complete in itself."

¹⁴ In a way, this sort of reading is an extension of the basic paradox of commentary itself. Foucault (1972), 221: "[commentary] gives us the opportunity to say something other than the text itself, but on the condition that it is the text itself which is uttered, and in some ways, finalised." Commentary's function, in this sense, is to communicate what was already there; it becomes a way to create while claiming only to explain.

¹⁵ Eco (1990), 82. The concept of the Model, Ideal, or Implied Reader who is in some way fashioned and recoverable through the text can be seen as an attempt to control the variety of response to texts and form some sort of consensus about interpretation.

In one sense, however, Homeric supplementation, which creatively fills in the blank spaces in Homer, could be seen as an extension of what all readers do when confronted with the incompleteness of texts. After all, reader-oriented critics from Roland Barthes to Wolfgang Iser have spotlighted the reader's exploitation of narrative gaps to stimulate the imagination.¹⁶ Peter Schwenger reminds us that Vladimir Nabokov urged his students to imagine Fanny Price's eyes and hair in *Mansfield Park* (neither of which Jane Austen ever describes). But concerns for judging the validity of certain interpretations over others has put a damper on such inquiries. "For Nabokov this kind of filling-in of fictional worlds was a necessary part of the full reading experience. For most literary critics it was anathema, posing a real threat to any discipline with claims to rigor."¹⁷

Ancient readers, however, interacted with Homer in a cultural and intellectual context very different from today's critical climate, and we ought to shift the standards of how to read 'properly' accordingly. As Plutarch's *Table Talk* so well illustrates, interpretation could and often did constitute a social activity; problems were proposed and eruditely and wittily solved in competition with one's fellow guests.¹⁸ Moreover, in Plutarch's world determining the "right" answer was not as important as coming up with a persuasive or boldly original one. In a society as tradition-bound as that of the

¹⁶ E.g., Barthes (1977); Iser (1978), 169: "the gaps function as a kind of pivot on which the whole text-reader relationship revolves." "By impeding textual coherence, the blanks transform themselves into stimuli for acts of ideation." (194)

¹⁷ Schwenger (1999), 1. His own book is part of the recent interest in literary visualization, whether of authors or readers; see his brief overview, 2, and also Scarry (1999).

¹⁸ See Chapter One, Section II. Slater (1982) boldly proposed that Alexandrian criticism derived from symposiastic discussion and competition; see Blank and Dyck (1984) for a rebuttal. Nevertheless, literary and philosophical problem solving is one of the distinctive elements of Greek intellectual culture.

ancient Greeks, bravura readings of ancient canonical texts were one of the few ways to exercise and demonstrate one's ingenuity or learning, and often this entailed the creative reading of Homeric silences.

In this way, ancient Homeric interpretation is perhaps comparable *mutatis mutandis* with Greek and Roman poetry,¹⁹ which generates much of its meaning and pleasure from its interaction with, citation of, or departure from, previous canonical poems.²⁰ In certain cases poets are obviously filling in Homer's gaps; in *Aeneid* 3 Vergil is "writing in the margins" of the *Odyssey* with his invention of Achaemenides, one of Odysseus' men left behind on Polyphemus' island and rescued by Aeneas several months later. The Penelope epistle in Ovid's *Heroides* (1) works within the interstices of the literary tradition, and its effect, like many of the letters, relies upon a eruditely detailed knowledge of its Odyssean intertext.²¹

Poets are praised for this ability to "comment" on previous poems and for their skill in deploying their erudition to this end. After all, they were Homeric readers too, and they indulge, as our readers do, in the pastime of wondering about Homer's world and imagining what was happening in its blank spaces. The difference is that critics, unlike poets, are explicit about which lines they are reading, their reasoning process, and their conclusions. Perhaps we ought occasionally to look at Homeric criticism

¹⁹ Much of this paragraph arose from conversation with Stephen Hinds.

²⁰ See Scodel (1999) who sees tragedians as scrupulously attempting to avoid problems of motivation and verisimilitude in their new versions of traditional myths. On Latin poets' interaction with tradition, see Hinds (1998). In more general terms, Genette (1997) is an insightful and entertaining overview of the whole range of "hypertextuality": parodies, rewritings, reconceptualizations of previous texts.

²¹ Duncan Kennedy (1984) argues that the letter is set at a precise moment in the *Odyssey*. By attending closely to Ovid's suggestions, the reader is meant to realize that Penelope is actually going to unknowingly give the letter, addressed to Odysseus, to the disguised Odysseus.

through the same lens as we do poetry, rather than as ‘scholarship’ bound to eternal rules of objectivity and hermeneutics. The point is not that interpretation lacked seriousness or rigor, but that it had a playful and inventive side as well that deserves, in its turn, to be taken seriously.

Another important contextual consideration affecting our understanding of how ancient readers read Homer is the existence of a fairly expansive idea of what constituted ‘reasonable’ inference. The considerable influence of speculative and conjectural arts such as divination, astrology, and medicine, which operated according to rather loose principles of correspondence and causality, no doubt affected the range of what readers of Homer could plausibly infer from his text.²² Plutarch, in his inexhaustible wisdom, provides us with another appropriate example.

When Demetrius, a noted *grammatikos*, says, near the beginning of *On the Decline of Oracles*, that it is “ridiculous to draw great conclusions from small data (γελοῖον εἶναι ἀπὸ μικρῶν πραγμάτων οὕτω μεγάλα),” Cleombrotus argues that such a stance is unacceptable, since it would “result in taking away the demonstration of many facts and the prognostication of many others.” To drive his point home, he shows that Demetrius’ fellow *grammatikoi* also accept that “small things are signs (σεμεῖα) of great.”

You [grammarians] demonstrate that the heroes of old shaved their bodies with a razor, because you encounter the word “razor” (ξυρόν) in Homer; that they lent money at interest because Homer says somewhere that “a debt is owing (ὀφέλλεσθαι), not recent nor small,” (*Od.* 3.367-8) the assumption being that ὀφέλλεσθαι means “accumulating” (αὔξεσθαι). And when Homer speaks of the night as “swift” (θοήν) (e.g., *Il.* 10.394) you cling to the expression with great satisfaction and

²² See Manetti (1987). For the most evocative description of a world imbued with such ideas, see Foucault (1970), ch.1: “The Prose of the World.”

say that it means that the Earth's shadow is conical, being caused by a spherical body.²³

The significance of these examples lies in their citation as indisputably valid interpretations, since the argument depends on their universal acceptance as instances of 'small things being signs of great.' For some ancient readers at least, interpretations such as these, which seem questionable today, were perfectly legitimate, and linked to criteria of inference and conjecture slightly divergent from our own.

Homer's Readers on their own Terms

These considerations suggest that ancient readers of Homer had their own standards of reading Homer (which were not uniform either), and I want to emphasize that this dissertation is about those readers, and is committed to the idea that they and their interpretations are worth examining on their own terms.

This may seem self-evident, but few studies of ancient Homeric criticism or readers have been interested primarily in the readers themselves. For instance, studies of ancient critical response to Homer are often conducted as a means of gaining insight into Homeric *poetry* itself. The reasoning is that the scholiasts with their relative temporal proximity to Homer and better command of Greek might have noticed things we have not, or else that such comments make up part of the ancient poets' intellectual context, and can therefore help us better understand their objectives.²⁴

²³ Plutarch, *On the Decline of Oracles* 3 = 410c-e. The last point is that the word "swift" can also mean "sharp"; if the night is sharp, that means that the Earth casts a conical shadow, which means that Homer knew that the Earth was spherical.

²⁴ A school of thought often associated with Francis Cairns and Malcolm Heath, but practiced less systematically by many scholars.

Likewise, much of the work on the Alexandrian's critical methods stems from modern scholars' interest in the Homeric *text*.²⁵ The critics' readings are only relevant because we need to know how to evaluate their editorial interventions, so that we can judge whether they can be of assistance in our own efforts to reconstitute the text.²⁶

These areas of research are important, but they both have as their ultimate objective a better understanding, not of Homer's readers, but of Homeric poetry (or ancient poetry in general) or the Homeric text. As a result they view readings of Homer in an instrumental fashion, as historical data, and explore this material in very restricted fashion.

A different problem, that of virtual omission, exists in the very area where one would expect this material to be studied: the field of ancient literary criticism. But the central category on which modern criticism is based—the existence of an autonomous body of 'literature' with its own rules or criteria of judgement—was only recognized by a small minority, if that, of ancient writers.²⁷ This incompatibility between ancient and modern ways of treating poetry has had an unfortunate effect on the study of Homeric criticism. For instance, surveys of Archaic and Classical literary criticism concentrate on theories about poetry—*mimêsis*, poetic inspiration, *psuchagôgia*—and give the im-

²⁵ Much of the older work on Homeric reception in general was dominated by the objective of determining whether a certain author's quotations of Homer, and their correlation (or lack thereof) with our own text, could provide any insight into the state of the Homeric text. So e.g., Labarbe (1949), Bouquiaux-Simon (1958).

²⁶ The debate over whether the Alexandrians' variant readings were simply conjectures, or based on the collation of manuscripts, is the prime example. For an overview, see Montanari (1998).

²⁷ The remark by Pfeiffer (1968), 16, that the Sophists' "aim was not to interpret poetry for its own sake," could be applied to virtually everyone who wrote on Homer before Aristotle (and indeed many of those who wrote afterwards). So Havelock (1963), 29-30 on Plato: "This is a way of looking at poetry which in effect refuses to discuss it as poetry in our sense at all. It refuses to allow that it may be an art with its own rules rather than a source of information and a system of indoctrination."

pression that we possess virtually no interpretation of specific poetic passages except for sections of Aristophanes' *Frogs* and Plato's *Protagoras* (neither of which concern Homer), until we reach Aristotle's *Poetics* in the late fourth century.²⁸

But there is a considerable body of Homeric interpretation that survives from this period—in historians, rhetoricians, and philosophers, among others. Much of this criticism is admittedly not what we would characterize as 'literary'; each treats Homeric poetry in the context of other matters: history, theology, linguistics, etc., and not *qua* poetry, that is, not as literature.²⁹ Naturally, because the scope of the surveys is restricted to scholarly inquiry or commentary on literature, such non-literary interpretations are excluded, or only merit a passing mention.

Again, there are valid reasons for this approach. The unfortunate result, however, is that one might easily be led to believe that this narrow sample of criticism was all that existed in antiquity. The much broader range of interpretive techniques and concerns—engaging with and reading Homer in the light of extra-literary interests—is effaced, with the result that modern conceptions of ancient poetic interpretation are heavily distorted. Surely it is significant that, despite intellectuals' lack of interest in poetry *per se*, they felt that the interpretation of Homer was of serious importance for ethics, rhetoric, history, etc. While such readings are indeed part of the history of these other intellectual fields, they also, taken as a whole, constitute a different, and as

²⁸ Atkins (1934), Grube (1965), Kennedy (1989).

²⁹ Pfeiffer (1968), 16, has claimed that pre-Alexandrian poetic criticism (i.e., prior to the 3rd century B.C.E.) as an autonomous field of scholarship did not exist; any critical activity that took poetry as its subject belongs instead "to the history of poetry, historiography, philosophy, or pedagogy." Lamberton (1992), vii-viii offers a slightly different critique of Pfeiffer's work as well as the philological tradition which it traces and represents. See also Bravo (1971) for a critique of both Pfeiffer and Felix Jacoby for splitting the ancient practice of erudite scholarship into its historiographical and philological elements, and treating them independently of each other.

yet insufficiently explored, area of inquiry that is vital for an understanding of ancient intellectual culture.³⁰ Such a history would not only concentrate on locating the elements of modern literary criticism evident in the ancient world, but rather seek answers to broader questions: Why did the Greeks read Homer? What did the poems mean to them? How, in short, did they read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*?³¹

Summary of Chapters

These are large questions, and this study represents one step toward answering them. Because the reading of Homer recognized no disciplinary boundaries (which were, in any case, rather porous in antiquity), this dissertation will touch on a variety of topics—Homeric scholia, Polybian historiography, the rhetorical *progymnasmata*—and one thing I hope to demonstrate in passing is the interconnectedness of the ‘knowledge projects’ in these different fields.³² But the focus will remain on the texts of Dio Chrysostom, Strabo, and their predecessors.

Chapters One and Two concentrate on the Classical period and examine how Homer was read from two slightly different viewpoints. Chapter One begins with an overview of Homeric criticism, concentrating on the authority his poetry commanded and the influence this had on interpretation. Within this variety of reading practices, I

³⁰ This state of affairs is in marked contrast to that in the study of ancient Jewish and Christian intellectual history, which is dominated by issues of the reading, interpretation, and exegesis of the Bible (e.g., Young (1997), Clark (1999)). Ironically, because Christian (Jewish to a lesser extent) exegetical practice was so deeply indebted to Greek and Roman modes of reading, some of the best scholarship on the latter has been conducted as background to the reading practices, of, for example, Origen, or other patristic authors (e.g., Neuschäfer (1987); Schäublin’s (1974) discussion of the ‘problems’ genre, not yet really treated by classicists).

³¹ Lamberton (1992), viii, speaks of the essays in *Homer’s Ancient Readers* as part of a “history of the meaning of those poems” that has yet to be written, and his book (1986) on the Neoplatonists should be mentioned as well.

highlight the frequent concern with the plausibility, verisimilitude, and internal coherence of Homeric narrative. I devote space particularly to Aristotle's *Poetics* (especially Chapter 25) and his *Homeric Problems*. The objective is to delineate a general attitude toward Homer that imagined his poetry as representing a coherent, probable universe, and felt justified in supplementing Homer on these grounds.

But the world depicted in Homer was the heroic world, which the Greeks considered historical. Because Homer represented some of the only evidence for that world, any investigator of heroic times had to read Homer, and in their desire for information, such readers often supplemented his narrative by a process similar to the critics in Chapter One. In Chapter Two I examine the presuppositions and methods of *archaiologia*, or the study of the distant past, in order to understand why the two so easily overlapped. After discussing the widespread ancient interest in heroic matters, I look at how a set of concepts and tools were employed to extract historical information from legends and poetry; here again we witness an emphasis on the 'probable', but this time connected with the nascent art of sign inference. The chapter concludes with a glance at Herodotus' excursus on Helen in Egypt, which illustrates well how reading Homer could result in a curious blend of poetic and historical criticism.

Strabo's *Geography*, written roughly at the beginning of the Roman Empire, includes some of the most thorough theoretical musings on how to read Homer that we possess. In fact, he interprets Homer so often as to defy a comprehensive treatment; I therefore concentrate on his fashioning of a Homer in order to ground his interpretative practice, and fit it into his larger project. To supplement Homer, one needs to establish how and why Homer wrote his poetry. Strabo provides us with an extremely

³² For this term and sentiment, see Poovey (1997), 5.

detailed construction of Homer as a diligent and accurate historian who unfortunately, due to historical circumstances (prose not having yet been invented), wrote in poetry, with all the falsehood and myths such a practice entails. In order to read Homer's lines to reconstruct the heroic age, Strabo develops a theory of Homeric composition that will negotiate the conflicting elements of poetry and history that exist in Homer's text.

From the earnest appeals of Strabo, I turn to the elusive Dio Chrysostom and use two of his works, *Chryseïs* and the *Trojan Oration*, as illustrations of the possibilities inherent in Homeric supplementation. They correspond nicely to the first two Plutarchan examples—in one, Dio imagines Chryseïs' motivations, ethical choices, and prudent personality traits from the (self-admittedly scanty) evidence in Homer, while in the *Trojan* he rewrites heroic history (Troy won; Hector killed Achilles) through an engaging reading of Homer 'against the grain'. While these chapters will continually touch upon issues brought up in the first three chapters, especially historiography and Homeric 'problems', the central focus, aside from the close reading of the two texts, will be on the role of rhetoric, with its interest in arguments from probability, virtuoso impersonation, and inference. Because Dio so elegantly manipulates and subverts all of these precepts, these two chapters best exemplify the creativity, playfulness, and sophistication that ancient readers of Homer brought to his text.

Chapter One

LAWS OF IMPROBABILITY

PROBLEMS WITH HOMER FROM ZOÏLUS TO ARISTOTLE

I HOW TO READ HOMER

Throughout antiquity, Homer was, to paraphrase Dio Chrysostom, “the beginning, middle, and end” of culture.¹ Even a passing familiarity with any Greek literature—from poetry to philosophy to oratory—makes this clear: Homer is cited, quoted, and alluded to by writer after writer, in any number of different contexts, whether to illustrate a point, offer a paradigmatic example, or simply provide a general air of learned reference. Homer’s central position in the Greek educational system doubtless contributed much to this fact,² but that role was itself due to the tremendous moral, theological, historical, and aesthetic authority Homer’s work commanded within Greek culture; as Anthony Long notes, “all Greek literature and art, and just about all Greek philosophy, resonates against the background of Homer.”³

¹ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 18.8: “Ὅμηρος δὲ καὶ πρῶτος καὶ μέσος καὶ ὕστατος.

² See Marrou (1956), 163ff., Bonner (1977), 212-49, and for a broader context Verdenius (1970). The material evidence on which such claims are made are conveniently catalogued in Debut (1986), 263-66 and 271 and Criboire (1997); further evaluations: Davison (1956), Ibrahim (1976-77), and Criboire (1996).

³ Long (1992), 44. So Buffière (1956), 10, with others, calls Homer the “Bible des Grecs”; see his rather disappointing discussion, 10-13.

Despite his acknowledged importance, the sheer ubiquity of Homeric references in ancient writing has discouraged any large-scale attempt to chart his reception;⁴ while his impact is treated in surveys of particular areas of ancient intellectual life (literary criticism, poetic intertextuality, textual scholarship, etc.), and with regard to individual authors, only Félix Buffière's *Les mythes d'Homère*, which is now almost fifty years old, even tries to examine the ways of reading Homer that cut across such disciplinary divides.⁵ Of course, a truly comprehensive treatment would be virtually impossible due to the amount of material, but the lack of an overall perspective has made it difficult to identify some of the broader principles that inform readings of Homer.⁶ My purpose here is to outline the basic assumptions under which Homeric poetry was read in antiquity and the form in which discussions of the topic took place, and then to introduce the centrality of probability or plausibility as a criterion of reading Homer.⁷ I begin with an overview of the practice as we see it in the 6th-4th centuries B.C.E. The more restricted scope has the benefit of clarity and familiarity, and in any case, despite

⁴ As Lamberton (1992), vii, n.1, notes, "For the ancient reception of Homer, even general discussion of the influence of the epics is lacking, though admittedly the task would be so enormous that it would require writing a history of Greek and Latin literature from the perspective of Homeric influence." For brief attempts see Richardson (1993) and Lamberton (1997).

⁵ Buffière (1956). Cf. the book-length studies of Labarbe (1949) and Vicaire (1960) on Plato, Kahles (1976) on Strabo, Bouquiaux-Simon (1968) on Lucian, Kindstrand (1973) on Aristides, Dio, and Maximus of Tyre, and Lamberton (1986) on the Neoplatonists.

⁶ A similar situation applies to the study of ancient literary criticism; Classen (1995), 517, points out that surveys of the subject are nearly always diachronic, and make it difficult to identify common ways of reading that remain constant throughout antiquity. Verdenius (1983) is a recent attempt to rectify this deficiency; cf. Russell (1981), which tries to combine the two approaches.

⁷ Probably the best introduction to the myriad ways in which ancient scholars reacted to epic poetry, and one to which I am deeply indebted, is Feeney (1991), 5-56.

the explosion in material after Aristotle, the paradigms for reading Homer remain remarkably stable throughout the rest of antiquity.⁸

The Source of Knowledge

By and large, readers of Homeric poetry in the 6th-4th centuries B.C.E., understood it as, in Eric Havelock's formulation, "a metrical encyclopedia," that is, a source of wisdom and knowledge about all aspects of the world—history, ethics, science, τέχνηαι, religion, etc.⁹ Thus, when ancient critics discuss specific passages of Homer, they are primarily concerned with content, whether this springs from theological, moral, or historical cares. In the Classical period poets were considered conveyers of wisdom, and Homer—whether due to the belief in his divinity, his antiquity, or his singular ability—was the pre-eminent poet, and hence, "the wisest of all Greeks."¹⁰ This belief, however, went far beyond the idea that Homer had composed the most profound and insightful poetry; rather it meant that his poetry was the ultimate authority concerning "all crafts, all human affairs concerned with virtue and vice, and all about the gods as

⁸ A comprehensive treatment of Classical Homeric criticism does not exist—Nicholas Richardson's ten page survey in *Homer's Ancient Readers* remains, despite its brevity, the best general account available at present: Richardson (1992). Richardson has included this piece in the introduction to his Cambridge commentary on *Iliad* 21-24 (Richardson (1993)), extending the coverage superficially into the Hellenistic and Imperial eras. Even this survey gives rather short shrift to the 4th century B.C.E.—see Apfel (1938) for a more detailed consideration, supplemented by the relevant parts of Podlecki (1969) on the Peripatetics. Mehmel (1956) is a highly selective and cursory treatment, and Buffière's (1956) standard reference concentrates primarily on the more copious evidence of later periods (and is, in any case, arranged topically, rendering diachronic analysis difficult).

⁹ Havelock (1963), 29. The first five chapters of this book are devoted to proving this thesis. See also Murray (1995), 17-9 and Verdenius (1970).

¹⁰ Heraclitus DK 22 B 56. Similar formulations: Aeschines, *Against Timarchus* 1.142; Isocrates, *Against the Sophists* 13.2; Plato, *Alcibiades 2* 147b; Xenophon,

well.”¹¹ On the one hand, Homer’s poetry functioned as a storehouse of technical, practical, and even scientific knowledge—Niceratus, in Xenophon’s *Symposium*, can claim to have learned the τέχναι of household management, politics, generalship, kingship, and chariot-racing from his study of Homer, while the rhapsode Ion, in the Platonic dialogue named after him, asserts that he knows the arts of rhetoric and generalship from Homer, and even Heraclitus considers Homer as an ἀστρολόγος from the line in the *Iliad* (18.251) which mentions that Polydamas “was companion to Hector, and born on the same night with him.”¹²

More fundamentally, however, Homer was also thought to have consciously set forth in his poetry a set of moral rules which could serve as guidelines for ethical conduct. Homer’s heroes were understood as models for human behavior, their actions as *exempla*, and his work as a whole as embodying a fundamentally pedagogical purpose; he was “the poet who educated Greece” and was to be read “in order to learn how to manage and educate people.”¹³ This conception of Homer as not only the source, but

Memorabilia 1.4.3. On Homer’s divinity, see *Frogs* 1034, θεῖος “Ὅμηρος; *Certamen* 214, 309, 338 Allen.

¹¹ Plato, *Republic* 598e. See similar thoughts at Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.4.2-3.

¹² Xenophon, *Symposium* 4.6-7; Plato, *Ion* 540b-e; Heraclitus DK 22 B 105 (Kranz (1934), 116-7 considers this genuine; but see Kirk (1970), 158-9 for doubts; the further question of whether the fragment is a rebuke or praise is similarly unresolved.). See also Anaxagoras DK 59 A 97-8 (nature of water); Aristophanes, *Frogs* 1034ff. and Plato, *Laws* 706e-707a (military instruction); Plato, *Cratylus* 391c-d (correctness of names); Plato, *Theaetetus* 152e, 153d, and 180c-d (cosmology).

¹³ Plato, *Republic* 606e. Cf. Niceratus again, in Xenophon, *Symposium* 3.5: “My father was anxious to see me develop into a good man, and as a means to this end he compelled me to memorize all of Homer.” Poets as a class were often felt to have intrinsically possessed an educative intention in antiquity: cf. Lycurgus, *Against Leocrates* 102; Plato, *Phaedrus* 245a. Homer’s status as educator is discussed by Marrou (1956) 9-13, Verdenius (1970) and Howie (1995), who remain concerned with whether or not Homer had a consciously pedagogical purpose; For the best treatment from a literary critical perspective, see Pohlenz (1920), 149-56. Cf. Robb (1994), following Havelock (1963), who makes the convincing argument that, with the lack of

also the teacher of ethical knowledge, found reinforcement in the fact that his work was at the center of Greek education, one of the primary purposes of which, in the Classical period, was the formation of moral character.¹⁴

A great deal of the discussion of Homeric poetry in the Classical period takes its morally instructive thrust for granted.¹⁵ Anaxagoras, according to Favorinus, was “the first to have said that Homer’s poetry is about virtue and vice,” and works such as Gorgias’ *Helen* and *Palamedes*, various of the thirteen treatises on Homeric topics attributed to Antisthenes,¹⁶ Hippias’ *Troikos logos*, and Alcidamas’ *Mouseion* all take for granted a widespread ethical interest in the Homeric heroes. Occasionally Homer’s intentionality is made explicit—for instance, Hippias in Plato’s *Hippias Minor* claims that Homer consciously *made* Achilles the ‘best and bravest’, Nestor the ‘wisest’ and Odysseus the ‘wiliest’ of those who went to Troy.¹⁷ Differentiating the precise methods involved in such treatments, whether they consist of simply drawing a moral lesson

formal schooling, for all intents and purposes, the majority of Greeks in the Classical period *did* learn everything from Homer, via rhapsodic performance.

¹⁴ Even the elementary skills of reading were learned via passages from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and the subsequent stages of primary and secondary education retained Homer as their focal point. See Marrou (1956), 162-75; Verdenius (1970), 6-7. Cf. Plato, *Protagoras* 325e-326c. For evidence of Homer’s pedagogical prominence in the 6th century, see Xenophanes (DK 21 B 10): “since everyone has learned according to Homer from the beginning.” (ἐξ ἀρχῆς καθ’ Ὀμηρον ἐπεὶ μεμαθήκασι πάντες). Leshner (1992), 81-2 .

¹⁵ To some extent, *all* poetry was understood to have moral and technical instruction as part of its purpose. The one thing that Aeschylus and Euripides agree upon and take for granted in Aristophanes’ depiction of their debate (*Frogs* 1005-1330) is that poetry’s goal is to ‘make men better.’ See the first half of Pohlenz (1920) for a convincing demonstration of this fact; more summarily, cf. Dover (1993).

¹⁶ Anaxagoras DK 59 A 1 = Diog. Laert. II.11; Gorgias: 39, 44 Radermacher; Antisthenes (see Dümmler (1882), 16-39), extant works: *Ajax* and *Odysseus* (14, 15 Caizzi); titles (see 1 Caizzi = Diog. Laert. VI.15-18).

¹⁷ Plato, *Hippias Minor* 364c. The dialogue, which centers around Socrates’ question to Hippias of whether Achilles or Odysseus is the better man, is another prime

from a Homeric episode, allegorizing Homeric characters as abstract moral qualities, or using Homeric themes as vehicles for the expression of a particular thinker's ideas, is less important for our purposes than recognizing the fact that all of these possibilities presuppose the belief that Homer lent himself to be read from an ethical perspective.¹⁸

Authority, Interpretation, Contestation

While such a conception of Homer clearly accounts for the frequency with which he is cited to lend an air of authority or illustrate a point, the fundamental understanding of his poetry as a 'guide to life' had a profound effect on the practice of interpretation as well. When a philosopher, rhetor, or historian offered a reading of a Homeric passage or episode, he was addressing how the formidable authority Homer wielded might affect his argument.¹⁹ Plato's and Xenophon's dialogues, for instance,

example of the moral color that many discussions of Homer featured. See Giuliano (1995) on the criticism of Odysseus in this dialogue.

¹⁸ There is also the fact that when one is dealing with fragmentary evidence that almost always does not reveal the *purpose* of a given interpretation, but only the interpretation itself, it becomes very difficult to ascertain what the motivations of the author of the given reading were. In the case of the moral interpretation of Homer, there has been much debate over, for example, whether Antisthenes practiced moral allegory or simply drew moral lessons from Homer. (Moral lessons: Tate (1953) and Kindstrand (1973), 131; moral allegory: Höistad (1951); aporetic: Caizzi (1966), 109-10 and Richardson (1975); Laurenti (1962) and Pépin (1993) treat the problem in a much more nuanced and sophisticated fashion). If, however, we grant that virtually everyone in antiquity believed that Homer had a conscious moral purpose in writing his poetry, the difference between these two activities becomes less important.

¹⁹ Cf. Aeschines' *Against Timarchus* 141ff., where the orator quotes Homeric lines he claims sanction same-sex relationships, in order to justify his similar youthful behavior. On the general use of Homer and other poetry in Athenian lawcourts, see Dorjahn (1927) and Ford (1999).

offer several examples of Socrates' supporting an ethical or philosophical point through ingenious readings of Homer designed for this purpose.²⁰

In one such case from the *Memorabilia*, Xenophon defends Socrates from accusations stemming from the latter's frequent use of an allegedly anti-democratic passage from the *Iliad* (2.180ff.): in order to quell an impending rebellion caused by Agamemnon's 'test' of the Greek forces, Odysseus gently persuades the "men of importance" with speech, but hits the "commoners" with Agamemnon's scepter and chastises them severely. In quoting this passage approvingly, Socrates was thought to be espousing anti-democratic beliefs—advocating the harsh treatment of commoners. Xenophon, however, claims that Socrates was praising Odysseus' rough treatment, not of commoners, but of those who were "of no account in either war or counsel", the phrase Odysseus uses to address those earlier called "commoners" by Homer. What Socrates thought, according to Xenophon, was that "those who render no service either by word or deed...ought to be stopped," regardless of their social status.²¹

Without passing judgment on the plausibility of Socrates' reading,²² two striking things about it need to be highlighted here. The reading has very little to do with the meaning of the passage in the context of the rest of the poem, but only with the abstracted moral or political point that Homer meant to convey in writing it. In addition, Socrates' citation of the lines, and his rather tortuous reading of them, have

²⁰ Nussbaum (1990), 123-5; Murray (1995), 18 n.41.

²¹ Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.2.58-59. Cf. Xen., *Symposium* 8.28-31; Plato, *Alcibiades* 2.147b. See Ford (1999) for another reading of this passage.

²² This Socratic interpretation of Homer, as well as those in the previous note, puts his famous interpretation of Simonides' poem at *Protagoras* 338e-347b in a different light. Most (1994) has convincingly argued that Socrates felt that this type of interpretation was legitimate, and not simply ridiculous, as many commentators on the

arisen only in the context of using the text to support what we would regard as a political point: about the proper treatment of ‘commoners’ or ‘men of no account’. In such a case, the exegesis of a passage is the product of understanding Homer as a knowledgeable authority on political behavior.²³

The basic presupposition—that one’s argument was bolstered by demonstrating that Homer had expressed a similar opinion, and that one could interpret those words to better accommodate the point—lies behind other readings which reach deeper into the text and elicit an often far less literal idea of what Homer meant. One gets the sense, for instance, that the notorious equation of Homeric heroes with heavenly bodies attributed to Metrodorus of Lampsacus developed from some such process. Here, Hector represents the moon, Achilles the sun, Helen the earth, etc.²⁴ Since the context is missing, it is unclear whether Metrodorus is trying to incorporate Homeric poetry into his own vision of the universe, or simply reading the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* through the lens of this cosmological conception, but in any case his attempt was by no means unique. In fact some of the earliest Homeric critics use similar allegorical methods to assimilate Homeric poetry to their own philosophical systems, to uphold, implicitly or explicitly, Homer’s claims to wisdom and use his authority on their behalf:²⁵ the sixth-century philosopher Pherecydes of Syros read *Iliad* 15.18 as a description of the origi-

Protagoras passage have assumed; the existence of parallel passages of Homeric interpretation is another piece of evidence in its favor.

²³ A similar anti-democratic use of Homer appears in Theophrastus’ portrait of the oligarchical man: “Of the poems of Homer there is one single line he has made his own: ‘From many rulers no good comes; let one man rule’ (Il. 2.204).” *Characters* 26. For some later examples, see Buffière (1956), 345-7.

²⁴ DK 61 A 3-4. On Metrodorus, see most recently Hammerstaedt (1998). See Richardson (1975), 69 for possible conjectures as to how Metrodorus developed these correlations from the Homeric poems.

nal state of matter,²⁶ and a bit later Theagenes of Rhegium apparently interpreted the *Battle of the Gods* at *Iliad* 20.67 as a struggle between abstract physical elements.²⁷ From the way Socrates refers to analogous theories in Plato's *Theaetetus*, it seems that such activity was familiar enough, and his close contemporary Democritus was not averse to the practice: "Some think that the Sun is Zeus, others, with Democritus, that the vapor on which the sun feeds is ambrosia."²⁸ To say, with Rudolf Pfeiffer, that Democritus "was not really concerned with...the interpretation of Homer...but with his own philosophical doctrines,"²⁹ is to miss the point; very few Greeks were interested in the interpretation of Homer *per se*, and most readings of the epics were likewise oriented toward relating Homer's words to whatever field of inquiry the interpreter was investigating.

Readings such as Xenophon's are perhaps not as far from the allegorists' as might appear on first glance. The term ὑπόνοια—'under-sense'—which appears in discus-

²⁵ Overviews of allegory in this period, see Weinstock (1926); Tate (1929), (1930) and (1934); Buffière (1956), 123-36; Pépin (1976).

²⁶ Pherecydes' date is uncertain, but almost definitely sixth century (Kirk, Raven & Schofield (1983), 50, and *ibid.*, 50-71 for the best account of Pherecydes' thought); Tate (1927) has convincingly argued that a fragment of Pherecydes (DK 7 B 5 = Origen, *Contra Celsum* VI 42) is an allegorical interpretation of Homer, and thus the earliest example of extant Homeric criticism.

²⁷ Theagenes is considered contemporary with the reign of Cambyses (529-22 B.C.E.) by Tatian (DK 8 1). A scholion (DK 8 2) on the *Battle of the Gods* in *Iliad* 20 mentions Theagenes in the context of a clearly allegorical interpretation of the scene, but does not directly mention what his doctrine was, other than stating that this type of defense "is really old and goes back to Theagenes of Rhegium, the first to write on Homer." Other fragments (DK 8 3-4) show Theagenes concerned with Homeric language. For consideration of the allegorical fragment, see Pfeiffer (1968), 9-11; Feeney (1991), 8-11; on Theagenes in general, Svenbro (1976), ch. 3, and Rispoli (1980) with earlier bibliography therein.

²⁸ DK 68 B 25, referring to *Od.* 12.62; cf. Plato, *Theaetetus* 153d (Homer's golden chain as an allegory of the motion of the heavenly cycles and the sun), Plato, *Theaetetus* 152e (Ocean as "flux and change").

²⁹ Pfeiffer (1968), 43. For Democritus' Homeric criticism, see Philippson (1929).

sions of Homeric interpretation in Xenophon (*Symp.* 3.6) and Plato (*Rep.* 378d), has traditionally been understood as the Classical term for what later was called ἀλληγορία,³⁰ but Richardson has pointed out that ὑπόνοια “could have a wider range of meaning...and include any interpretation which disregarded the obvious literal sense of a passage in favour of a more subtle way of taking the words.”³¹ Whether one subscribed to Protagoras’ notion that the philosophers of old had to disguise their philosophical teachings in the guise of poetry, or simply held that poets ‘spoke in riddles’ and did not intend to reveal everything to a first time listener, a belief arose that “the poets had expressed profound truths in symbolic/mystical terms” that could be teased out through a close reading.³² Individual critics might differ about the precise nature of these truths, but they shared the idea that there was more to Homer than met the eye.

The authority of Homeric poetry, then, became the impetus for its interpretation, particularly for those who sought its support for their own claims. For others, however, this same authority inevitably inspired competition and contestation. In a society such as Classical Greece, whose values and ways of looking at the world had been undergoing rapid and significant development since the original era of Homeric epic, the poet’s ideas about the gods, morality, and even matters such as diet and medicine

³⁰ Plutarch, *How the Young Man Should Study Poetry* 19e: “By forcibly distorting these stories through what used to be called ὑπόνοια but are nowadays called ἀλληγορία ...”

³¹ Richardson (1975), 67. On the much-discussed question of the relationship between the terms ἀλληγορία and ὑπόνοια see Buffière (1956), 45-8; Pépin (1976), 85-92; Perret (1982); Montanari (1987a).

³² Cf. Protagoras’ well-known claim that “the craft of the sophist is an ancient one, but that its practitioners in ancient times, for fear of giving offence, adopted the subterfuge of disguising it as some other craft, as Homer and Hesiod and Simonides did

were increasingly out of sync. These changes opened up a space for intellectuals to contest the widespread claims to Homer's universal knowledge, in favor of their own view of the world. For instance, Xenophanes' well-known complaints about Homer's immoral depiction of the gods, and Heraclitus' declaration that "Homer deserves to be expelled from the [poetic] contests and thrashed,"³³ are signs of early philosophical discontent with the Homeric worldview. As Jonathan Tate demonstrated many years ago, these early critics "are reacting to a conception of Homer as authoritative and wisest and knowledgeable about the gods;" they, after all, had most likely *learned* philosophy through Homer, and thus felt themselves to be "competing with Homer and Hesiod in their own field."³⁴ To speculate on theology or cosmology, it was necessary, or at least useful, to engage Homer and stake out a position in relation to his perceived wisdom. A particularly good example is Heraclitus' specific attack on *Iliad* 18.107 ("May strife perish from among gods and men"), which the philosopher felt was inconsistent with his belief that "all things are happening by strife and necessity."³⁵

The situation was much the same a century or so later: Plato's *Ion* depicts Socrates questioning Homer's ability to pass on technical knowledge as well as moral and theological precepts. And as Havelock so convincingly outlined, Plato's famous attack on Homer in the *Republic* presupposes that poetry's status as a source of authoritative

with poetry..." (Plato, *Protagoras* 316d-e); Socrates: "the ancients...concealed their meaning from the masses with the help of poetry..." (Plato, *Theaetetus* 180c-d).

³³ Xenophanes DK 21 B 11 (also B 12); Heraclitus DK 22 B 42 (tr. Graf (1993), 179). It is interesting to note that alongside the censorious fragments of these two notorious critics, we have in each case an acknowledgement of Homer's wisdom: Xenophanes' acknowledgement that "all have learned from Homer ἐξ ἀρχῆς" (21 B 10, see above n. 14) and Heraclitus' that Homer "was the wisest of all the Greeks" (22 B 56).

³⁴ Tate (1934), 105. Cf. Tate (1929), 142 and Long (1992), 44-5. See Tate (1927) on Pherecydes in this regard.

wisdom and moral instruction was taken for granted, and hence had to be painstakingly proven illegitimate. These well-known criticisms of Homer are, then, just as strong testimony to his pre-eminent position as source of wisdom and consummate educator as are the employment of Homeric passages and lines in support of various philosophical or technical claims (and the interest in exploring his work for hidden meanings). In a cultural situation where Homeric poetry dominated educational and intellectual practice, attackers and defenders of Homer shared a common starting point.³⁶

Problems and Solutions

A striking feature of these classical readings of Homer is their fragmentary, detail-oriented nature. Other than general attacks on Homeric depictions of the divine, nearly every act of reading Homer that I have mentioned focuses on a single poetic passage or line; for instance, Socrates' reading of Homer concentrated on one passage, abstracted from its context, and even when a series of points is made, as in Plato's *Ion*, they are based on scattered quotations with no relation to each other. Since the main point of citing Homer was usually to bolster one's position or undermine the poet's, and not to pursue a sustained analysis of the poems themselves, we shouldn't be too

³⁵ Heraclitus DK 22 A 22 and B 62B; see Kirk (1970), 238-44. Cf. B 57, where he attacks Hesiod's conception of night and day.

³⁶ One should not, however, fall into the trap of assuming that the "battle over Homer" took the shape of a modern academic debate, with a series of authors responding to criticisms or claims made by previous authors. Such a method imposes a strictly linear form to what surely was a much more complicated process. To begin with, there is very little evidence that early philosophers would have had the opportunity to have read the work of their predecessors (see Harris (1987), 63-4.).

surprised.³⁷ In such an environment, it seems natural that particular readings of Homeric passages or lines, whatever their original purpose, would become grouped together around the passages which they discussed, and by the fourth century we begin to hear about books of ‘problems’ (προβλήματα, ἀπορήματα, or ζητήματα) and ‘solutions’ (λύσεις) which collected the various criticisms of Homer, and the numerous interpretations and explanations proposed to resolve them.³⁸ Zoilus of Amphipolis, the 4th century writer who would later become known as ‘Ομηρομάστιξ—“the whipper of Homer,” wrote nine books *Against the Poetry of Homer* (Κατὰ τῆς Ὀμήρου ποιήσεως) which gathered censures of Homer in one convenient collection,³⁹ while Aristotle’s six books of *Homeric Problems* was probably the first systematic treatise devoted both to collecting ‘problems’ and then ‘solving’ them.⁴⁰

One suspects, however, that such work represented the formalization of an activity which was widely practiced much earlier, and which had provided the structure for most discussion of Homer. After all, what was the Socratic interpretation of Homer discussed above if not the rather ingenious ‘solution’ to an anti-democratic ‘problem’

³⁷ Another factor was the frequent practice of citing poetry and exploring meaning without regard to context. See Dover (1993), 16: “To classical scholars the Greeks seem to have been curiously indifferent to the context of a poetic line or phrase.” Aristotle and Homeric critics after him, however, do differentiate between when a character says something, or when the poet does so in his own voice; one could solve problems in this way, via the λύσις ἐκ τοῦ προσώπου. But quoting lines out of context remained fairly standard practice throughout antiquity.

³⁸ The best overview remains Gudeman (1927); Kamesar (1993), 82-96 is useful as well, despite its focus on Jerome. Cf. Lehrs (1882), 197-221; Carroll (1895), 10-17; Lucas (1968), 232-4; Pfeiffer (1968), 69ff.; 190ff. For an illuminating treatment emphasizing the issues of narrative credibility that I focus on later, see Scodel (1999), 175-83.

³⁹ Fragments of the nine books: *FGrH* 71 and Friedländer (1895), who also has a general discussion of Zoilus. Referred to as Ὀμηρομάστιξ in *FGrH* 71 F 9. The most comprehensive account is Gärtner (1978); cf. Lehrs (1882), 200-4, and Apfel (1938), 250-2.

in the *Iliad*? It is not hard to imagine situations, in the highly polemic and agonistic environment of Greek intellectual culture, where discussion might center around similar ‘problems’ that were ‘set forth’—προβállω—and where different participants would try their hand at solving them.⁴¹ One might even venture to suggest that virtually all Homeric interpretation was conceived of in a problem/solution framework, even it did not always take that precise form. After all, any critique of Homer, whatever the context, is by nature a ‘problem’ to those who maintain Homer’s infallibility, and allegorical, moral, or other interpretations, even if not originally intended to counter critiques, could gradually be appropriated by others as solutions. In any case, the vast majority of Homeric criticism we see in the Classical period can be fit quite easily into a conceptual framework that saw Homeric poetry in these terms.⁴²

Many of the problems found in Zoilus and Aristotle deal with the sort of moral and theological difficulties that we saw examples of earlier: in fact, among the few remaining fragments of Zoilus’ work, two are identical with Platonic critiques from *Republic 2*—Achilles’ tears at Patroclus’ death, and the gods’ laughing at Hephaestus’ disability. Aristotle solves similar problems such as the alleged “inappropriateness” of Odysseus’ throwing off his cloak in *Iliad* 2.183, or another Platonic criticism—Achilles’

⁴⁰ Fragments of Aristotle’s *Homeric Problems*: fr. 142-79 Rose. See Hintenlang (1961).

⁴¹ Cf. Plato’s *Protagoras* 338e-347b, where a contradiction in Simonides’ *Ode to Scopus* is put forward by Protagoras, and resolved in various fashions by Socrates and others present.

⁴² ‘Problems and solutions’ were also an important branch of philosophical writing, e.g., Aristotle’s *Problems* (see Gudeman (1927)). Certainly, as we will see in later chapters, learned discussion of problems—literary, scientific, historical, or philosophical—was an extremely popular form of intellectual discourse in the Hellenistic and Imperial eras.

dragging of Hector around Troy.⁴³ But the majority of the difficulties with Homer that have been preserved are of a different variety.⁴⁴ Zoïlus, for instance, revels in pointing out Homeric absurdities such as Idas' decision to get out of his chariot to flee on foot, rather than fleeing in the chariot itself (surely a quicker means of escape), or impossibilities; he writes glibly that if Diomedes really had fire blazing from his shoulders, no doubt he would have been badly burned.⁴⁵ Examples taken from the *Homeric Problems* show that other critics had also zeroed in on passages that did not seem to make empirical or psychological sense, lacked consistency, or simply contradicted other passages. They asked: "Why does Homer, having said that the sun sees and hears all things, portray him as needing a messenger?", "How could a third of the night remain, if, as Homer says, *more* than two parts of the night have already passed?" or "Why is Paris, tired from battle, so energetically eager to go to bed with Helen?"⁴⁶

Although they might seem rather trivial and pedantic to modern Homeric scholars, such problems were taken seriously enough to inspire a host of responses. Like the problems themselves, these solutions approached the text in a variety of ways. For example, one popular problem involved Nestor's cup, which "Another had with difficulty

⁴³ Fr. 143, 166 Rose. Plato had questioned the morality of the second example in *Republic* 2 (391a), and Aristotle refers to his anthropological solution (such is the practice in his time in Thessaly) again in *Poetics* 25.

⁴⁴ One could add Sophistic cavils concerning Homer's misuse of language, like Protagoras' censure of the opening lines of the *Iliad* as constituting an (improper) command rather than a (proper) request to a divinity (DK 80 A 29)

⁴⁵ F 8 (*Il.* 5.20), F 7 (*Il.* 5.4-7). Note the laconic F 15: "Zoïlus laughs at this story: "Did the Fates sit or stand in the scales?" It seems *de rigueur* to dismiss Zoïlus' activity as pedantic hairsplitting, but many of his criticisms are paralleled, or taken seriously, by 'respectable' intellectuals: so F 11, where disapproval of Achilles' crying at Patroclus' death is registered concurs with Plato's view at *Rep.* 388a, and F 6, where the opinion that Homer soloecized at *Il.* 1.129 is shared by Chrysippus the Stoic philosopher. Aristotle himself answers F 4 and 5 in the *Poetics*.

⁴⁶ All from the fragments of Aristotle's *Homeric Questions*: F 149, 161, 150.

moved from the table when it was full, but Nestor the old man raised it without labor.” (*Il.* 11.636-7) Among the responses were a sort of moral allegorical reading—Homer was metaphorically indicating that Nestor held his liquor well; a solution reached by imaginatively supplementing the narrative—as a heavy drinker Nestor’s arm muscles were more well-developed because he was accustomed to lift the cup frequently; and a philologically inspired reinterpretation—the comparison is actually between Nestor and another old man, rather than ‘others’ in general.⁴⁷

This example illustrates how the diversity and heterogeneity of solutions matched those of the problems; a moral problem could be solved by a textual solution, while an improbability could be explained through Homer’s ethical purpose. But it also demonstrates how important it was to account for even the smallest possible Homeric mistake, and that any implausible element in the narrative could be grounds for charging Homer with an error. In fact the problems that survive from the Classical period show how much attention was paid to the minutiae of narrative credibility and consistency even then, and such concern would only increase in later antiquity. Now, this concern for verisimilitude, coherence, and continuity in Homer’s depiction of his world draws our attention to another aspect of Homeric poetry that was affected by his authority—its instantiation in a narrative that was perceived to be a representation of a world and people which corresponded in most of its details to the world inhabited by the Greeks themselves. Just as with the other aspects of Homer, however, the poet’s

⁴⁷ Solutions: Antisthenes F 55 Caizzi; Asclepiades of Myrlea *apud* Athenaeus 11.493b; Aristotle *apud* Porphyry sch. ad. *Il.* 11.636. See the rest of the Porphyry scholion for the solutions of Stesimbrotus of Thasos (*FGrH* 107 F 23) and Glaucón, both early 4th century writers, and the Athenaeus passage for a lengthy and incredibly detailed summary of Asclepiades’ arguments in his book *On Nestor’s Cup*. Scodel (1999), 234-5, has a discussion of this problem.

position within Greek society precluded a simple dismissal of these questions and concerns as beneath notice. These improbabilities could not simply be *mistakes*, as they would be with all other poets. To understand better this concern for probability and the important role it played in reading Homer, I want to turn to Aristotle.

II ARISTOTLE AND HOMERIC IMPROBABILITY

Probability (εἰκός) is one of the central concepts of the *Poetics*.⁴⁸ Aristotle first mentions it at the end of chapter 7, where he asserts that the plot's optimal magnitude is that in which, "a change from misfortune to good fortune, or vice versa, can come about by a sequence of events in accordance with probability or necessity (κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκάϊον)." (1451a12-14) Over the next few chapters this "cardinal principle of 'necessity and probability',"⁴⁹ is invoked repeatedly—probability "distinguishes [the poet] from the historian (9.1-3); it determines his construction of the incidents of the plot (7.2, 8.3, 9.11-12, 10.4, 11.1); it controls his development of character and thought (15.10, 9.5); and...it is responsible for the best recognitions (16.11)."⁵⁰

Probability and Consistency

The centrality of probability to Aristotle's understanding of poetry is nowhere better exemplified than in *Poetics* 9. There Aristotle defines the function of the poet as "the telling not of things that have happened, but of things that may happen (οὐ τὸ τὰ

⁴⁸ Gastaldi (1989); Belfiore (1992), 111: "the most important structuring principle governing the tragic plot." Εἰκὸς is also among the foundational concepts of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*: see Grimaldi (1972), 106ff. For discussions of probability in the *Poetics* (with reference to the *Rhetoric* as well), see Belfiore, 119-31, Halliwell (1986), 99-106, Eden (1986).

⁴⁹ Halliwell (1986), 99.

γενόμενα λέγειν...ἀλλ' οἷα ἂν γένοιτο), i.e., that are possible in accordance with probability or necessity (καὶ δυνατὰ κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον).” (1451a36-8) While history deals with the particular, poetry speaks of universals, and “a universal is the sort of thing that a certain kind of person may well say or do in accordance with probability or necessity (ἔστιν δὲ καθόλου μὲν, τῷ ποιῶ τὰ ποῖα ἅττα συμβαίνει λέγειν ἢ πράττειν κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον).” (1451b8-9) Although Aristotle nearly always pairs probability with necessity, Stephen Halliwell has convincingly shown that, the latter represents a more intensified, if less useful, version of the former; in any case, probability is clearly the more important member of the two.⁵¹ By probability Aristotle is referring primarily to the movement of the plot—“the causal connections between components of the dramatic sequence of events.” The poet’s skill lies in his arrangement of actions and characters so that events follow a probable narrative logic. This is why Aristotle is quick to note that poets can treat historical material, as long as they arrange this material in a sequence of events, and not with episodic plots, “in which there is neither probability nor necessity that the episodes follow each other (ἐπεισόδια μετ’ ἄλληλα οὔτ’ εἰκὸς οὔτ’ ἀνάγκη εἶναι).”⁵²

This privileging of narrative coherence and consistency explains Aristotle’s insistence on excluding the improbable or irrational from narratives; as he says of plot resolutions, “there should be nothing improbable in the incidents (ἄλογον δὲ μηδὲν εἶναι ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν).” (54b6). He is particularly aware of how an audience’s recognition of errors in plausibility can ruin a work, and emphasizes the need for poets

⁵⁰ Eden (1986), 19.

⁵¹ Halliwell (1986), 99-106.

to visualize (πρὸ ὀμμάτων τιθέμενον) their plots and scenes in order to avoid contradictions (τὰ ὑπεναντία).

An indication of this is the [contradiction] for which Carcinus was criticized (ἐπετιμᾶτο). His Amphiarus comes up out of a shrine; this would have been missed by anyone not seeing it (ὁ μὴ ὀρῶντα ἐλάνθανεν). But [the play] failed on stage, as the spectators were upset about it (ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς σκηνῆς ἐξέπεσεν δυσχερανάντων τοῦτο τῶν θεατῶν). (1455a26-9; tr. Janko)

Although no one can be sure of the precise error, Aristotle is pointing out some sort of contradiction between Amphiarus' action on stage and something else occurring onstage at the same time.⁵³ This sensitivity to narrative coherence and plausibility, and to the potential loss of power that an error in maintaining the narrative illusion could produce is on display again in chapter 24, where Aristotle insists that "stories should not be constructed from irrational parts (τοὺς τε λόγους μὴ συνίστασθαι ἐκ μερῶν ἀλόγων), but above all should contain nothing irrational (ἀλλὰ μάλιστα μὲν μηδὲν ἔχειν ἄλογον); otherwise it should be outside the plot-structure (εἰ δὲ μή, ἔξω τοῦ μυθεύματος)." (1460a27-9) He complains about the "person who comes to Mysia from Tegea without speaking in the *Mysians*" and presumably about the anachronism of the celebration of the Pythian games in Sophocles' *Electra*. These irrationalities should have been situated outside the plot (ἔξω τοῦ μυθεύματος), and if the plots depend on them, then they should not have been constructed in the first place. Probability or plausibility, then, is privileged in two different ways: the poet should depict characters and events "according to probability," not only to properly bring out

⁵² In general, the concept of εἰκὸς has two dimensions: an objective one which refers to probability with respect to reality, and a subjective probability based on what seems likely to an audience.

the universal character of poetry, but also because audiences want their stories to maintain plausibility as well, and poets risk not attaining their ends by the inclusion of implausibilities—an unsurprising fact in light of the insistence on verisimilitude displayed in the criticisms of Homer's narrative we have seen earlier. If we turn to *Poetics* 25, which treats the questions raised about epic and their solutions, we can see how relevant these ideas were to Aristotle's reading of Homer.⁵⁴

Poetics 25 and the Homeric Problems

Aristotle establishes five categories of Homeric ἐπιτιμήματα, or 'censures'—five different bases on which Homer was criticized. Either the poet has represented things that are ἀδύνατα (impossible), ἀλογα (unreasonable), ὑπεναντία (contradictory), βλαβερὰ (harmful), or παρὰ τὴν ὀρθότητα τὴν κατὰ τέχνην (according to the correctness of [another] τέχνη).⁵⁵ The first three of these center around problems of probability or consistency and utilize the same terminology that Aristotle has been using throughout the *Poetics* to characterize what he wants excluded from the plot, and what can ruin a poem.⁵⁶ This confluence of vocabulary indicates that Aristotle took such criticisms seriously—for him a poem cannot be well-constructed if it admits impossible, improbable, or contradictory elements, and if such things are found in

⁵³ See Else (1967), s.v. ch.17 for some hypotheses.

⁵⁴ Probably the most difficult chapter in the *Poetics*. See especially Carroll (1895), Rosenmeyer (1973), and von Fritz (1976), and Huxley (1979) on historically oriented issues. On Aristotle's Homeric criticism in the *Poetics*, see Gallavotti (1969) and Hogan (1973), and on his use of quotation, Howes (1895) and Hinman (1935).

⁵⁵ 1461b22.

⁵⁶ Of these, the fourth probably refers to moralizing criticisms of Homer such as Plato's, while the fifth are attacks on Homer's technical knowledge, like the painter's error of the type Aristotle had discussed earlier—representing a horse with both right legs thrown forward.

Homer, then Aristotle feels he has to solve them, to somehow explain away the difficulties.

This apologetic stance toward Homer reflects a tendency that runs throughout the *Poetics*, particularly when Aristotle judges tragedy better than epic in chapter 26. But in chapter 24, Aristotle had already found excuses for Homer's improbable episodes. While he had criticized Carcinus' error involving Amphiaraus for its "contradictions" (τὰ ὑπεναντία), Aristotle finds a way to justify a similar Homeric mistake; the scene where Achilles pursues Hector around the walls of Troy "would appear laughable on stage (ἐπὶ σκηνῆς ὄντα γελοῖα ἂν φανείη)," but it "escapes notice in epic (ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἔπεσιν λαυθάνει)."⁵⁷ So also, at the end of 24, he admits that there are improbabilities in the Phaeacian beach scene in the *Odyssey* scene, but adds that they are tolerable because of Homer's special qualities of embellishment; "he makes the oddity disappear (ἀφανίζει...τὸ ἄτοπον)." (1460b2) In both these examples, Homer turns out to be an exception to Aristotle's advice to exclude the improbable. Rather than seeing these statements as instances of Aristotle's stepping back from his overzealous promotion of probability, perhaps we should understand them as attempts to account for why Homer, whom even Aristotle acknowledges as the greatest Greek poet, doesn't always adhere to Aristotle's strictures of proper poetic composition. Here again, a theoretical stance runs up against the authoritative status of Homer; discrepancies need to be explained. The solutions to Homeric problems offered in chapter 25 function in a similar fashion, and they are given even greater urgency because many of the censures were formulated in terms—ἀδύνατα, ἄλογα, ὑπεναντία—which high-

⁵⁷ Of course, as Scodel (1999), 9 notes, "Aristotle himself noticed that the Pursuit was irrational...so he cannot mean that it always goes unnoticed."

lighted the issue of probability and plausibility that Aristotle himself took rather seriously.

There has been a tendency, however, to downplay the seriousness with which Aristotle treats these Homeric problems. This is because *Poetics* 25 is where he comes closest to developing a theory of fiction in which he suggests that poetry should not be judged by the standards of any other art than itself, and formulates a nascent idea of poetic license which might circumvent the trivial and hairsplitting problems that Zoilus and others had discovered in Homeric poetry. Near the beginning of chapter 25, Aristotle runs through some basic principles by which Homeric errors might be defended. Although he stresses that impossibilities (ἀδυνατα) should be avoided, they might be construed as “correct, if [they] attain the end of the art itself...if in this way it makes either that part or the poem or another part, more astonishing.”⁵⁸ Other errors are only incidental: painting a female deer with horns is not an error in painting (in the art itself) but only a chance error in a different field (κατ’ ἄλλο συμβεβηκός). Finally, he proposes that “if the poet is criticized [for representing something] which is not true (ἐὰν ἐπιτιμᾶται ὅτι οὐκ ἀληθῆ),” then one could argue that “perhaps [he is representing them] as they should be (ἀλλ’ ἴσως ὥς δεῖ), like Sophocles” or “it may be on the grounds that people say [it is] so (ὅτι οὕτω φασίν), e.g., the stories of the gods.” (60b32-5) These solutions suggest a number of different ways in which poets are not bound to a strict idea of truth, and hence seem particularly designed to dismiss the myriad problems surrounding Homer as beside the point.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ 1460b24-6: ἀλλ’ ὀρθῶς ἔχει, εἰ τυγχάνει τοῦ τέλους τοῦ αὐτῆς...εἰ οὕτως ἐκπληκτικώτερον ἢ αὐτὸ ἢ ἄλλο ποιεῖ μέρος. The pursuit of Hector by Achilles is adduced as an example.

⁵⁹ Note the summary in Richardson (1994), 18.

But there are some problems. Halliwell notes that some of these solutions seem to contradict Aristotle's earlier insistence on probability and necessity; all of a sudden, Aristotle seems to admit improbable and impossible events on an idealistic "things as they should be" basis, or even more perplexingly, on the grounds that they accord with most people's beliefs, or simply because the errors are not proper to poetry *per se*. That these new solutions lack a firm basis in Aristotle's argument is borne out by the interesting fact that, despite explicitly defining these appeals to poetic license as potential solutions, Aristotle rarely employs them to solve anything.

For instance, a famous problem centered on the scene where Aeneas throws his spear at Achilles' newly forged shield in *Iliad* 20. In Homer's description, the spear could not penetrate the shield; Aeneas could only "drive the spear through two folds, but there were three left still, since Hephaestus had made five folds on it, two of bronze on the outside, and on the inside two of tin, and between them the single gold, and in this the ash spear was held fast (ἔσχετο)." (*Il.* 20.268-72) What was the difficulty? As D.W. Lucas lucidly explains, "it is natural to assume that the layer of gold was not put in the middle of the five where it would have been invisible. But if it was where one would expect, on the outside, how could it stop a spear which had already passed through the bronze?"⁶⁰ Aristotle doesn't provide a specific solution, but only indicates the proper method which would lead to one—"we ought to consider how many meanings the word might have in the phrase in question."⁶¹ In his commentary on this passage, Lucas discusses a variety of ways one could solve this problem before

⁶⁰ Lucas (1968), 246. *Poetics* 1461a31-5.

⁶¹ Aristotle's solution was probably to understand ἔσχετο as ἐκωλύθη, a reading which Lucas (1968), 247, connects with Aristarchus' understanding that "the gold ef-

backing away, a bit self-consciously, from his interpretative zeal: "it is perhaps idle to speculate on the structure of the divine shield, which was rather surprisingly damaged by mortal assault...But who was the cobbler who stitched the bag of the winds?" Lucas' invocation of Eratosthenes' famous *bon mot* on poetic license only draws attention to the fact that Aristotle, however, did *not* choose to invoke the poetic license defense in order to solve this problem, even though it appears to be a prime candidate for dismissal on such grounds. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle solves nearly all the problems, obscure and nitpicking as they are, with reference to comparative ethnography (contemporary Thessalian practice parallels Homeric weapons management) or diction (modifying accentuation, archaic meanings no longer current); the solutions arguing that poets can represent things "as is generally believed" or "as they should be," are never applied to Homer.

The same pattern holds true in the *Homeric Problems*; among nearly forty solutions of Homeric problems, Aristotle only has recourse to a version of the so-called 'poetic license' defense twice.⁶² The relatively infrequent use of this device suggests that problems accusing Homer of improbability or inconsistency could not usually be dismissed by an appeal to nascent notions of poetic license or by admonishing critics as merely obsessed with unimportant minutiae. Poets were understood to have constructed a world of sorts which was expected to maintain consistency and probability; Homer's world, as the product of the greatest poet of Greece blessed with virtually in-

fectively checked the impetus of the spear even though it went through two more layers."

⁶² As can be clearly seen from Hintenlang (1961), who groups the fragments of the *Homeric Problems* according to their corresponding "solution type" in *Poetics* 25.

fallible compositional skill, had to be consistent and plausible—here as elsewhere Homer’s authority was challenged and defended.

Supplementation of Narrative

Aristotle’s legacy to the Alexandrian critics and Hellenistic Homeric scholarship in general consisted primarily of this insistence on “narrative plausibility and credibility and the techniques by which these are achieved.”⁶³ The conviction in Homer’s seamless construction of his fictional world would reach its apogee with the second century B.C.E. Homeric scholar Aristarchus of Samothrace, who held that Homer had composed φιλοτεχνῶς, that is, with consummate artistry and consistency.⁶⁴ Often, his solution to criticisms of improbable and contradictory passages and lines was to athe- tize, or declare them spurious.⁶⁵ After all, what better way to retain Homeric infalli- bility than by hypothesizing that Homer had never composed the lines in question? This radical response did not, as is well known, have substantial effect on the Homeric text in antiquity, and, as the scholia show, inspired defenses and explanations of the passages in question by readers with a more forgiving or inventive attitude to Homeric inconsistencies. But it shows that Aristarchus shared with other solvers a belief in the Homeric world as probable and consistent; he even wrote a monograph Περὶ τοῦ

⁶³ Richardson (1994), 24. Aristotle’s influence on later Homeric criticism, long considered minor, has been properly emphasized by, among others, Nickau (1977), 134ff. (on Zenodotus, *Poetics* 25, and the *Homeric Problems*), the invaluable work of Meijering (1987) (on Aristotelian terms in the scholia), and Richardson (1994).

⁶⁴ See Schenkeveld (1970) defending Aristarchus’ methods from those like van der Valk (1949) and (1963-4), who claimed that atheteses were on an entirely subjective, often moralizing basis. But see Lundon (1998) for modifications to Schenkeveld.

⁶⁵ Of course, many scholars argue that Aristarchus based his decisions on manu- script evidence; on this intensely (and endlessly) debated issue, see Montanari (1998)

ναυστάθμου which tried to reconstruct the arrangement of the Greek ships on the beach as depicted in *Iliad* 14, based on the few hints that Homer provides.⁶⁶

The assumption that the Homeric world was a consistently constructed one, expected to maintain norms of plausibility, could lead to two broadly identifiable ways of coping with inconsistencies. One could always simply eliminate the problem changing the terms of the discussion: declare the line spurious or an interpolation, or as Aristotle likes to do, historicize and claim that a given custom or word meant something different in Homer's day. For instance, Aristotle justifies the seemingly foolish practice of sticking spears vertically into the ground for storage by adducing Thessalian practice in his own day, and renders the question of why Apollo kills the mules (innocent beasts) first in *Iliad* 1 moot by understanding the word οὐρῆας (mules) as actually meaning οὐρους (guards).⁶⁷

Alternatively, mulling over a problem in narrative continuity might permit one to begin imagining the details and aspects of the world that Homer didn't feel the need to mention explicitly. Often these forays could turn a formerly incoherent set of actions into a smooth plausible episode. Less frequently, but tellingly, Aristotle engages in the nascent stages of this sort of reading. To the well-known question of why Helen was ignorant of her brothers' whereabouts in *Iliad* 3, Aristotle suggests that "perhaps she was prevented by Alexander from meeting any of the prisoners; or [maybe Homer did this] so that her ἦθος would appear better and she not seem busybody-ish (ἢ ὅπως τὸ

for a recent overview and bibliography, reacting to the important interventions of van Thiel (1997).

⁶⁶ For a recent treatment, see Porter (1992).

⁶⁷ Thessalian spears: 1461a1-4, an example of a solution based on "how things were." Mules=guards: 1461a10. Not a very satisfactory solution, since, as Aristarchus

ἦθος βελτίων φανῆ καὶ μὴ πολυπραγμονοῦσα).”⁶⁸ This pair of solutions, unsatisfactory as they might seem, both depend on a reconstruction of a plausible offstage supplement to the explicit details of the narrative. Aristotle surmises a situation where Alexander, fearful of Helen’s reaction to her brothers’ death, doesn’t allow her to receive this information; conversely, in the second solution, he even proposes that Homer purposely depicted her as ignorant so as to suggest that she hadn’t even asked anyone about her brothers despite her curiosity—in order to emphasize her propriety.

Another longer example concerns Calchas’ prophecy at Aulis, retold by Odysseus in *Iliad* 2. A portentous event had occurred: a snake made its way up to a nest full of birds, proceeded to eat all eight baby birds as well as their mother, and then turned to stone. This ominous episode was duly interpreted by Calchas, but it struck readers as odd that he only interpreted the consumption of the birds, and not the petrification. “For what is ἄτοπον about birds being eaten by a snake or about the fact that there were eight of them? But about the turning into stone, which was a great thing, he says nothing.”⁶⁹ For Aristotle this striking absence can be explained by conjecturing Calchas’ motives for silence. The lithification must be a sign of the slowness of the upcoming war, which Calchas had consciously left out, for fear of disturbing the Greeks. “For he was likely to have supposed it, even if he didn’t say it.” (εἰκὸς γὰρ ἦν ὑπολαβεῖν καὶ εἰ μὴ τις ἔλεγε). Something that was out of place—ἄτοπον—has enabled a gradual supplementation or expansion of the story.

had noted, it still leaves the dogs who were also killed first along with the mules. In general, Aristotle’s solutions by *lexis* are not usually persuasive to modern readers.

⁶⁸ F 147 Rose. *Iliad* 3.236-44. For a fuller discussion of this crux, and Dio’s exploitation of it, see Chapter 5, *Absent Brothers, Errant Mothers*, below.

⁶⁹ F 145.4-6 Rose. The same criticism, among others, is made in Cicero’s *De divinatione* 2.30.65.

Contrasting this supplemental reading of Homer with the more restrictive lexical and historicizing variety, Ruth Scodel notes that “this type of interpretation opens the stories and gives the interpreter power over them; it makes explicit as interpretation what the poets had always had to do in order to make the stories new.”⁷⁰ Aristotle may not often have ventured into this interpretative territory, but he shared with more adventurous readers their enabling presuppositions—a deeply held conviction in Homeric poetry’s concern to portray a coherent and plausible world, and the urge to defend the poet from those who pointed out his alleged failures in this department.

⁷⁰ Scodel (1999), 183.

Chapter Two

THE ART OF CONJECTURE

HERODOTUS, THUCYDIDES AND HOMERIC *ARCHAIOLOGIA*

The gods have immediate knowledge of invisible and mortal things,
but men must conjecture.

—Alcmaeon of Croton¹

I THUCYDIDES' *ARCHAEOLOGY*

Perhaps the best Classical example of Homeric supplementation is found not in Aristotle's *Poetics*, nor in any other discussion devoted to poetry, but in the work of the historian Thucydides. This chapter is devoted to explaining why.

To demonstrate his bold claim that the events of the distant past, as well as more recent historical eras, were “not great either in wars or in other respects,”² Thucydides outlines a sweeping account of the development of Greek civilization from its origins as a primitive nomadic society all the way down to the period immediately preceding the Peloponnesian War. The *Archaeology*, as this excursus has come to be called, takes a harsh, pessimistic view of this process: Greece was weak because of disunity and a lack of financial resources, and these deficiencies were only recently overcome

¹ 24 B 1 DK: *περὶ τῶν ἀφανέων, περὶ τῶν θνητῶν σαφήνεια μὲν θεοὶ ἔχοντι, ὡς δ' ἀνθρώποις τεκμαίρεσθαι.*

² Thuc. 1.1.3: *τὰ γὰρ πρὸ αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ ἔτι παλαιότερα...οὐ μεγάλα...οὔτε κατὰ τοὺς πολέμους οὔτε ἐς τὰ ἄλλα.* Translations are taken from Lattimore (1998), occasionally in slightly modified form.

with the development of sea-power and the concomitant ability to exert control over other regions' resources. The themes introduced here—self-interest, the domination of the weak by the strong, civil strife—will reverberate throughout the rest of Thucydides' work.³

The *Archaeology*, however, is also a demonstration of Thucydides' historical method, where he shows how a careful attention to detail, and reading “from the τεκμήρια (indications, evidence) I have come to trust (ἐκ δὲ τεκμηρίων ὧν...μοι πιστεῦσαι ξυμβαίνει),” can produce the best possible reconstruction of the distant past, taking into account, of course, the difficulty of acquiring knowledge about times so long ago.⁴ At the end of the *Archaeology* he concludes confidently:

In light of the τεκμήρια I have cited (ἐκ δὲ τῶν ειρημένων τεκμηρίων), however, no one would go wrong in supposing that the early events I have related happened much in that way (ὅμως τοιαῦτα ἂν τις νομίζων μάλιστα ἅ διήλθον οὐχ ἀμαρτάνοι)...regarding my discoveries from the clearest possible signs (ηὐρησθαι δὲ ἡγησάμενος ἐκ τῶν ἐπιφανεστάτων σημείων) as adequate for what concerns antiquity (ὡς παλαιὰ εἶναι ἀποχρώντως). (1.21.1)

These strong claims for the veracity of the *Archaeology* are juxtaposed to equally vehement polemics against other treatments of the periods in question. He derides those who “accept all stories of ancient times in an uncritical way (ἀβασανίστως),”⁵

³ General discussions of the *Archaeology* from which this discussion draws: Täubler (1927); de Romilly (1967), ch. 4; Hunter (1982), ch. 1; Connor (1984), 20-32.

⁴ 1.1: In the *Archaeology*, Thucydides follows a significantly different approach than in his treatment of contemporary events. Rather than proclaiming the truth univocally from on high, as is his practice elsewhere, Thucydides here takes the time to reveal his sources of evidence and justify his statements by argument. The few times he does so in his main narrative are also often in excurses on the distant past, such as his discussion of early Athens in 2.15-17.

⁵ Thuc. 1.20.1-3, listing two examples discussed by Herodotus (6.57.5; 9.53.2). Cf. Hornblower (1991) *ad* 1.20.3.

and similarly asserts the superiority of his reconstruction over “what the poets have sung, embellishing their subject matter to make it more impressive, or the λογογράφοι have composed, whose compilations are aimed at entertainment rather than truth and whose subject matter is unprovable.”⁶ The *Archaeology*, on the other hand has been recently called “an unsentimental and unheroic view of the past,” emphasizing cold hard reality over mythic fantasies, impersonal processes of development over individual actors, “far removed from the myths and commonplaces of epideictic oratory and popular history.”⁷

It is perhaps surprising then to discover that one of Thucydides’ vaunted τεκμήρια is Homeric poetry, to which he frequently refers as a source of information and corroborating evidence for his claims about the Trojan War.⁸ For instance, to prove that Agamemnon’s power was due to a strong navy, he says at 1.9.4: “For Agamemnon obviously brought with him the greatest number of ships and in addition supplied the Arcadians, as Homer has clearly stated, if he is good enough evidence (ὡς Ὅμηρος τοῦτο δεδήλωκεν, εἴ τω ἰκανὸς τεκμηριῶσαι).” Additionally, he infers from the Homeric line “Of many islands and all Argos king,” that Agamemnon must have had a strong navy; after all, how could he have ruled “many islands” without one? Thucydides’ detailed knowledge of Homer is remarkable; his first supposition refers natu-

⁶ Thuc. 1.21.1, tr. Woodman (1988), 8: καὶ οὔτε ὡς ποιηταὶ ὑμνήκασιν περὶ αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὸ μείζον κοσμοῦντες μᾶλλον πιστεύων, οὔτε ὡς λογογράφοι ξυνέθεσαν ἐπὶ τὸ προσαγωγότερον τῇ ἀκροάσει ἢ ἀληθέστερον, ὄντα ἀνεξέλεγκτα καὶ τὰ πολλὰ ὑπὸ χρόνου αὐτῶν ἀπίστως ἐπὶ τὸ μυθῶδες ἐκνευικηκότα.

⁷ Connor (1984), 26-7.

⁸ My account draws heavily from Hunter (1982), ch. 1, despite her slightly different emphasis, and Verdin (1977) although I disagree with his conclusions on Thucydides’ use of poetry, particularly his overvaluation of Thucydides’ disavowals of poetry’s ac-

rally to the hundred ships attributed to Agamemnon in the *Catalogue of Ships* (*Il.* 2.576), but he has not forgotten that in lines 2.610-14 Homer adds that Agamemnon had given sixty more to the Arcadians, who were not a sea-faring people. His second arises from a single line in the description of Agamemnon's scepter at 2.108, the significance of which is not immediately apparent, and which Thucydides has to carefully explain. He has apparently given the matter considerable thought.

Thucydides' erudition gets an even more impressive display a little later on at 1.10.3-5 when he attempts to demonstrate that the Greek force sent against Troy was far smaller than overseas expeditions of the fifth century. To accomplish this, he engages in an intricate calculation of how many men went on the Trojan expedition, based on the *Catalogue of Ships* in *Iliad* 2. He first adds up the ships listed by Homer (1,200), but to figure out the total number of men, he has to know how many men were on each ship, and Homer only supplies this information twice: there are 120 men on each Boeotian ship, and 50 on those of Philoctetes.⁹ Thucydides assumes that Homer, by only providing these two figures, meant to give the largest and smallest amount of men per ship; the middle point between these would then be the average number of men per ship for the whole force. To counter potential objections that all the men on board might not necessarily have been soldiers, but cooks, or support staff, or slaves, he reminds readers of the line (*Il.* 2.720) where Homer mentions that *all* the rowers on Philoctetes' ships were also archers. And after all, Thucydides adds, it was unlikely that there was anyone on board who was not a sailor, since the ships were so

curacy. Other useful studies of this section of the *Archaeology* are Gomme (1945), s.v. 1.9-11; de Romilly (1967), 244-303 passim; and Biraschi (1989), ch. 3.

⁹ The total number of ships is actually 1186, as Verdin (1977), 74 points out. Boeotian ships at *Il.* 2.510; Philoctetes at 2.719.

small, and they had to carry so much equipment. Finally, he concludes: "If we therefore calculate the numbers by taking an average of the biggest and smallest ships, they will not appear great, considering that this was a force representing the united effort of all Greece."¹⁰

Again Thucydides has examined the *Iliad* with an incredibly sharp eye for detail and historical information. But more significant for our purposes are the presuppositions that make his reading possible. Thucydides not only takes the historicity of people like Agamemnon and Philoctetes for granted, but believes that he can use individual lines of the *Iliad* as evidence for very specific historical claims regarding Greek society at the time of the Trojan War—that Agamemnon ruled over Argos and many islands, that there were 120 people on each Boeotian ship, that all the rowers in Philoctetes' boats were also archers.¹¹ Furthermore, Thucydides even feels justified in reading between the lines, and inferring from the text to facts that Homer does not explicitly make evident, e.g., the number of soldiers on the Trojan expedition. He imagines the Homeric world down to its details by extrapolating what the ships must have been like, the make-up of the crews; later on he will even look into the logistics of the siege of Troy. And all this despite his belief that Homer lived well after the Trojan

¹⁰ 1.10.5. Thucydides does not give the total amount, but the problem is, as Gomme (1945), 114 puts it, that the total would be "102,000, or allowing for some poetic exaggeration, say 70,000-80,000—a very large number for an overseas expedition, and much larger than any that sailed in the Peloponnesian War." Others have argued that Thucydides is emphasizing how small a number it is for the *entire* force of Greece (de Romilly (1967), 248, n.2)

¹¹ Thucydides is certainly reading the past in light of his understanding of the present; his emphases on sea-power, rule by fear, and the importance of money for warfare certainly fit far better into a fifth century context than a Homeric one, and will preoccupy him throughout the rest of his work. But there is little reason to doubt that he believed in an unchanging continuity of human motivations and behavior uniting

War, his scorn for poetic exaggerations, and his occasional disclaimers concerning Homeric authority—“if we can have complete confidence in Homer’s figures,” or “if it is suitable to conjecture from Homer.”¹² In fact, in Thucydides’ view, Homer has even hinted that such inferences are the proper way to interact with the text; the poet provided only limited information (the numbers of sailors) with the express purpose of allowing the reader to conjecture the rest.

What exactly is the object of Thucydides’ inquiry? He believes he has conjectured historical data from Homeric poetry, but in practice, his results are obtained by filling in the gaps of Homeric narrative. The unstated dictum is, of course, that there is an almost direct correspondence between Homeric poetry and the historical reality it depicts. As a result, for Thucydides, determining the number of Greek ships is simultaneously an elucidation of the *Iliad* and the discovery of historical truth; these two activities amount to the same thing. In other words, Homeric supplementation becomes not only a method of imaginatively solving problems, but also one of producing knowledge about the distant past.

the past and the present, or that he felt that he could demonstrate this very fact from Homeric evidence as well.

¹² Thuc. 1.3: “Homer, though he was born much later than the Trojan War (“Ὁμηρος· πολλῶν γὰρ ὕστερον ἔτι καὶ τῶν Τρωικῶν γενόμενος).” Disclaimers: 1.10.3, 1.9.4. Much has been made of these disavowals; Verdin (1977) uses them to claim that Thucydides did not really trust in Homeric evidence. But as Howie (1998), 95, points out, Thucydides’ “argumentation depends on two arbitrary assumptions: that the Catalog is basically true; and that the Trojan War did last as long as tradition said.” The level of detailed argument with which Thucydides analyzes Homer suggests that such caveats were probably *pro forma*; in 3.104 when Thucydides uses the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, which he considers written by Homer, as evidence for ancient festivals at Delos, he expresses no doubt whatsoever.

Real Heroes

This situation requires, of course, the belief that the narrative world of Homeric poetry was coincident with the actual world of the heroic age. In accepting this Thucydides was not unique. Nearly every Greek intellectual in antiquity believed that the world evoked by Homer was, in its basic core and often even in its details, utterly real. How else to explain Polybius speculating on the precise course of Odysseus' wanderings, Pausanias examining, at Aulis, the bronze floor of Agamemnon's tent and a piece of the plane tree mentioned by Homer (*Il.* 2.305ff.), or Strabo comparing the topography of the Peloponnese to the text of the *Odyssey* to discover where Nestor's Pylos was located?¹³

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, moreover, were situated within a much more extensive web of stories and traditions concerning the Greek heroes in general; Homer himself alludes to such episodes as the Argonautic expedition, the labors of Heracles, and the hunt for the Calydonian boar.¹⁴ The heterogeneous body of stories that we know today as heroic myth was produced by the continuous telling, re-telling, and elaborating of these tales throughout antiquity, whether orally—by nurses, parents, performers—or in written texts—poetry, oratory, philosophy, history.¹⁵ The characters and events in these stories, just as those of Homeric epic, were not considered *mythic*, but une-

¹³ Polybius 34; Pausanias 9.19.5; Strabo 8.3.26-9.

¹⁴ Homer, *Odyssey* 12.70; Heracles' exploits are mentioned frequently in Homer; *Iliad* 9.529-99. The evidence of vase painting, apparently quite uninfluenced by the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, points to the existence of a large body of non-Homeric tradition about the heroic age in the Archaic period, beginning ca. 700 B.C.E. See Burkert (1987), 46-7 for a brief summary, and Snodgrass (1998) for a more in-depth study.

¹⁵ See Buxton (1994), ch. 2-3 for an account of the various performance and textual contexts of myth-telling.

quivocally *historical*.¹⁶ As Carlo Brillante puts it, the Greeks “imagined their heroes as men who had actually lived, inhabiting the same cities and regions in which they themselves, several centuries later, continued to reside.”¹⁷ No Greek writer expresses doubts about the existence of Perseus, Minos, or even minor figures such as Protesilaus.

Should we be surprised by such an attitude? After all, ancient Greeks and Romans lived in a world suffused with what they believed were traces of their legendary past: one could see a papyrus letter in Lycia written by Sarpedon, Agamemnon’s scepter in Chaeronea, the tusks of the Calydonian boar in Beneventum, the anchor of the Argo at the mouth of the Phasis; a list of similar relics could go on and on.¹⁸ The precise locations of heroic activity were carefully preserved, marked out, and displayed to tourists and travelers: from the banal—the stone in Salamis where Telamon sat as he watched Ajax sail off to Aulis; to the tragic—the spot on the Athenian acropolis from which Aegeus leaped into the sea; to the bizarre—the temple of “Spying Aphrodite” from which

¹⁶ The modern ‘*invention*,’ in Marcel Detienne’s terms, of Greek mythology, has made it easy to forget that the Greeks themselves had no similar term; in antiquity the word *μῦθος*, far from referring to a definable set of stories, shifts its semantic realm immensely over the course of time and only rarely approximates something like “traditional tale.” See Detienne (1986) and Calame (1996a), ch. 1.

¹⁷ Brillante (1990), 94. So Graf (1993), 121-3. Other good expositions: Walbank (1960); Strasburger (1972), 16-20; Piérart (1983); Veyne (1988); Feeney (1991), 252-62; Dowden (1992), 39-56; Green (1997), 36-45.

¹⁸ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 4.53; Pausanias 9.40.6; Procopius, *Gothic Wars* 1.15; Arrian, *Periplus of the Black Sea* 11. Some other material relics: the inscription found in Aeniae said to have been written by Heracles (Ps.-Aristotle, *On Marvellous Things Heard* 843b); the folding-chair made by Daedalus on the Acropolis at Athens (Paus. 1.27.1), the spear of Achilles at Phaselis, and the sword of Memnon at Nicomedia (Paus. 3.3.8). On this topic see above all the exhaustive account of Friedländer (1907-13), 367-80, on whom Casson (1974), 229-61 is highly dependent. Forsdyke (1956), chs. 2-3 is an accessible (but undocumented) description; cf. Hunt (1984).

Phaedra used to watch Hippolytus exercise in the nude.¹⁹ And of course, the heroes themselves, in their tombs, or else as the dedicatees of cults, remained to be visited, venerated, and worshipped.²⁰

This panoply of physical artifacts and monuments—what Christian Jacob has called the “indigenous museum” of the ancients—permitted a tangible encounter with the past, a guarantee of a very direct experience of the heroic ‘real’.²¹ The sheer proliferation of such material is also a testament to the important place that these figures and their exploits held in Greek and Roman society, but this importance itself depended on the fact that they were ‘historical’, and in turn rendered disbelief difficult. The same could be said of ancient political and intellectual discourse. For instance, the genealogical scholarship that had blossomed since the late sixth century B.C.E. in authors such as Hecataeus of Miletus and Hellanicus of Lesbos²² outlined heroic kinship-relations, thereby imposing a semblance of order on what had been the chaotic mass of tradition. In some cases, they drew the lines of descent down to contemporary periods, responding to the needs of aristocratic families and individuals to trace their

¹⁹ Pausanias 1.35; 2.32: Ἀφροδίτη κατασκοπή.

²⁰ Wickersham (1993), 142: “We should accept that they [the Greeks] believed their myths because they were constantly encountering them in sacred, socially supported contexts...the concrete omnipresence of shrines, rituals, and their pertinent myths...” For some specific case studies of the relation of hero cults and the legendary Homeric past in the Hellenistic period, see Alcock (1997). Note the discovery of giant bones, which were often believed to be heroic skeletons: e.g., Herodotus I. 67-8; Phlegon of Tralles, *On Marvels* 11-19; Philostratus, *Heroicus* 137-40. See Mayor (2000).

²¹ Jacob (1980).

²² The account of 5th century legendary genealogical practice in Thomas (1989), 173-95 is by far the best treatment of the subject available; she notes rightly that the topic has not been very well studied, although note the interesting treatment of Jacob (1994). For a good introduction see Graf (1993), 125-31.

ancestry back to a legendary predecessor.²³ Spurred by similar exigencies, local historians from Xanthus of Lydia in the fifth century B.C.E. to Telephus of Pergamum in the second C.E. elucidated the heroic origins and traditions of their native cities.²⁴ Moreover, these creations of coherent heroic 'family trees' and civic genealogies functioned as yet another *effet du réel* in the conception of the legendary past; once descent relations had been established, relative chronologies involving heroes and noteworthy events could be synchronized, and the heroic age seemed that much more *real*, that much more significant.

The importance of establishing links to the past can be witnessed by the practice of citing heroic precedent in political disputes throughout antiquity; the squabble between Megara and Athens over the island of Salamis in the 6th century B.C.E. turned on an interpretation of a line in the *Iliad*.²⁵ Such arguments were intended to be persuasive: Herodotus shows us the Spartan and Athenian envoys, each trying to convince Gelon of Syracuse to join them before the Persian Wars, referring to the great deeds of their heroic forefathers.²⁶ On a more quotidian level, the heroic world in-

²³ So in the case of Pherecydes of Athens and the Philaid genealogy; see Thomas (1989), 161-73. Her point, though, that in general aristocratic families were primarily concerned with the original heroic ancestor and the most recent generations, and not so much the intervening genealogy, is well taken: 156-8.

²⁴ As Swain (1996), 77 points out, "civic classicism depended to a large extent on the industry of intellectuals," whether this meant resident antiquarians ready to produce documentation of heroic ancestry, or the researches of scholars in general, whose material would be transmitted across the Greek-speaking world.

²⁵ For a recent account see Higbie (1997); the ancient argument also is of great importance to the history of the Homeric text.

²⁶ Higbie (1997). Cf. Welles (1966), 14-16 on Isocrates' appeals to the heroic age in his speeches. This topic is an enormous one; the manipulation of the mythic traditions to legitimate the claims of individuals or cities in the Classical period is well known—e.g., Athens and Theseus (on which see Calame (1996b)). For some uses of Homer in this regard, see Richardson (1985), 27. For later periods, see Swain (1996), ch. 3, Jones (1999).

truded quite explicitly into ancient social life—from public art to religious practices and ritual, as a source of *paradeigmata* in philosophical discourses, rhetorical displays, and moral diatribes,²⁷ and as the subject-matter of the epic and tragic poetry which formed the backbone of the Greek and Roman educational system.

The heroic age had left visible, tangible traces; it had a relative chronology and had taken place in identifiable locales; unbroken lines of descent linked it to contemporary Greek society, and it formed the subject matter of an authoritative poetic and religious tradition.²⁸ Facing such self-evident indications of historicity, a Greek or Roman, whether living in Classical Athens, Hellenistic Alexandria, or Imperial Ephesus, would be hard-pressed to categorically disavow heroic reality. Denying the previous existence of the heroes and their exploits would have been tantamount to rejecting the possibility of knowing anything about Greek civilization prior to the seventh century; for a culture to whom origins and antiquity were so important, this would have been almost unimaginable.²⁹

²⁷ See Buxton (1994), 171-3.

²⁸ See Humphreys (1997), 217 for a brief but evocative description of the Greek world's relation to the past as constituted by "a certain convergence of nostalgia, local history, erudition (both historical and poetic), and attachment to ritual."

²⁹ This reverence for the past was a dominant feature of Greek society throughout antiquity; it manifests itself in the search for the 'first inventor' of various skills and tools, the conservatism of the literary tradition, the constant feelings of decline expressed even from the earliest periods (Hesiod, Homer), the appeals to former golden eras and great ancestors, the interest in the earliest civilization of men, the passion for aetiologies—for determining the *origins* of present customs, peoples, words. See Buxton (1994), 177, Bickerman (1952) and van Groningen (1953), ch. 1.

II ARCHAIOLOGIA, OR, THE FASCINATION WITH HEROES³⁰

Of course, to assert a general belief in the existence and historicity of the heroic age is not the same as asserting that heroic tales were unconditionally true in every detail. The poetic narratives, local stories, and oral tradition which formed the source material for this period were clearly recognized as contradictory and heterogeneous by authors as early as Hesiod and Hecataeus. The difficulty involved in making sense of them, combined with the significant importance of heroic material to the cultural, intellectual, and political aspects of Greek life, meant that the heroic age quickly became the object of serious and sustained inquiry, the subject matter of what we will call, for ease of reference, ἀρχαιολογία, or the study of the distant past.³¹

Greek historiography had begun as the study of heroic genealogy in the late sixth century with Acusilaus of Argos and Hecataeus and retained this orientation for some time: we know of at least fourteen authors from the fifth to the early fourth centuries B.C.E. who wrote works exclusively concerned with heroic genealogies and events that took place in the heroic era.³² This was not easy work; as Rosalind Thomas has remarked, it “involved putting into order a great mass of often confused and contradic-

³⁰ This section’s need to outline a seemingly basic point—that there was a great deal of ancient scholarly interest in the heroic past—is defended in Appendix One. It would be easy to believe the opposite based on the scant attention modern historians have paid it.

³¹ In this, I follow Jacoby, Momigliano (1950/1966), Bickerman (1952), et al. Early attestations: Hippias of Elis: “the genealogies of heroes and men, and...how cities were founded in ancient times, and in a word, ἀρχαιολογία.” (*Hipp. Maior* 285d = *FGrH* 6 T 3) and the 5th century historian Antiochus of Syracuse (*FGrH* 555 F 2). For later references, such as Dionysius of Halicarnassus’ Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἀρχαιολογία, and Josephus’ Ἰουδαϊκὴ Ἀρχαιολογία, see Momigliano (1950/1966), 30-1.

³² *FGrH* 1-14 (Alte Genealogie): Hecataeus of Miletus, Acusilaus of Argos, Pherecydes of Athens, Hellanicus of Lesbos, Damastes of Sigeum, Hippias of Elis, Polus of Acragas, Simonides of Ceos, Anaximander of Miletus, and Andron of Halicarnassus.

tory material...the genealogists collected together this information and produced in a systematic manner a version that was at least consistent with itself, a stupendous task."³³ And although comprehensive studies of heroic genealogy stop appearing by the mid-fourth century B.C.E., one should not infer from this that scholarly interest in the heroic age suffered a similar fate.³⁴ In fact, the sheer range and number of ancient works that address problems of the legendary past (even if they are not solely devoted to them) is remarkable.³⁵

Writers of local history, which dealt with particular cities or regions, and universal history, which covered the entire known world, devoted a significant part of their work to the heroic age. Like authors of ethnographic and geographic treatises, these historians often felt obligated to discuss the origins and earliest history of the peoples they described with reference to the Greek heroic age, in order to map them onto a recognizable paradigm.³⁶ Erudite work on the foundations of cities (κτίσεις), ethnic customs (νόμιμα), political systems (πολιτεῖαι), religious practices, 'inventions' (περὶ

³³ Thomas (1989), 182. Cf. Green (1997), 43-4 against Buxton's (1994) claim that Greek mythology tolerated plurality. The genealogists' compendia were immensely important to individual groups or cities that sought verifiable connections to prominent legendary heroes.

³⁴ Emphasized by Jacoby (1909), who, in his influential theory of the development of Greek historiography, stated that the genealogical tradition ended ca. 400 B.C.E. with Hellanicus, whose canonical account of heroic genealogy and chronology rendered further work superfluous. Followed by Fornara (1983), 12.

³⁵ From the Classical period alone, we can include the *Kulturgeschichte* of Democritus (see Cole (1986)) and Dicaearchus of Messene's *Life of Greece* (F 47-66 Wehrli), as well as Plato's *Laws* III (see Weil (1959)). *Political constitutions*: fragments of Aristotle's collection of some 130 'constitutions'. *Local historians*: Xanthus of Lydia, Ion of Chios, Charon of Lampsacus, Deiochus, Antiochus of Syracuse, Philistus, Androtion, Cleidemus, and Phanodemus (the last three all from Athens). *Universal historians*: Ephorus, Anaximenes of Lampsacus, and Zoilus of Amphipolis. *Ethnographers*: Scylax and Ctesias of Cnidus. *Antiquarian writers*: Heraclides Ponticus, Critias, Herodorus of Heraclea, and Hippias of Elis.

³⁶ Bickerman (1952) remains the fundamental study.

εὐρημάτων),³⁷ etc., were especially concerned with the earliest periods of human history. The immense richness and variety of this material is well represented in the second century C.E. by Pausanias' *Periegesis of Greece*; every city, every grove, statue, river seems to have a story behind it, connecting it to an event at the origins of Greek society.³⁸

Perhaps more significantly, the importance of the heroic age meant that even non-historical texts participate in *archaiologia*; whether the treatise concerned cosmology, natural history, medicine, or politics, authors often manage to discover an interesting new perspective on the heroic world offered by their research. Plato offers a developmental theory of heroic civilization in *Laws*, Athenaeus devotes much of Book One of his *Deipnosophists* to delineating heroic lifestyle, and Artemidorus of Daldis, in his *Interpretation of Dreams*, explains the story of Endymion and Selene by recasting the youth as a devotee of astronomy particularly interested in lunar activity.³⁹ Historical interest in the distant past appears in poetry well before the earliest prose historians, and continues into the early fifth century.⁴⁰ Epic and tragedy concentrate almost ex-

³⁷ Kleingünther (1939) and Thraede (1962).

³⁸ Veyne (1988) conveys this best; see also Jacob (1980).

³⁹ Aristotle, *Meteorologica* 352a-b; Athenaeus *Deipnosophists* I.8e-26c; Artemidorus, *Interpretation of Dreams* 4.97.

⁴⁰ Eumelus of Corinth, Panyassis, and Xenophanes wrote κτίσεις, a work of Seimonides of Amorgos was later known as Ἀρχαιολογία τῶν Σαμίων, Epimenides of Crete and Evgammon of Cyrene wrote genealogical poetry, and an interest in historical matters can be seen in Archilochus, Mimnermus, Callinus, and Xenophanes. Lasserre (1976) is fundamental on this topic, although significantly anticipated by Mazzarino (1966), 21-52. Cf. Fowler (1996), 65, and the compact summary of Strasburger (1972), 37-8. On foundation poetry, see Dougherty (1993); for Eumelus, Panyassis, and other early epic poets, see Huxley (1969).

clusively on the heroic period.⁴¹ To get an idea of the vast array of ancient writers who could express opinions on such topics, one only need glance at a section of the scholia to Dionysius Thrax which lists various answers to the question of who invented the Greek alphabet. The anonymous scholiast cites the opinions of fourteen different authors, ranging from the familiar, such as Aeschylus, Euripides, and Aristotle, to the less well-known, like Anaximander of Miletus and Apollodorus of Athens, to the utterly obscure—Phyllis of Delos and Dosiades the Cretan.⁴²

The Problem of the Past

For modern historians, however, most of this investigative activity was in vain; Moses Finley notes that “the classical Greeks knew little about their history before 650 B.C....and what they thought they knew was a jumble of fact and fiction.”⁴³ To some extent, the Greeks realized this as well; since history based on eyewitness testimony had only begun with Herodotus in the mid-fifth century, it was obvious that no really reliable narrative accounts existed for the distant past.

The primary source for earlier times was poetry, which, while considered to be based on historical events, was thought to have been distorted and exaggerated (although less so in Homer’s case). Other stories, or *logoi*, were available—local traditions or generally known legends, whether oral (gathered through inquiry) or written

⁴¹ See especially Easterling (1985) on the tragedians’ concern for recreating the past. Tragedy often became difficult to separate from heroic history in post-Classical eras; see the arguments for their overlap in Giovannini (1943) and Walbank (1960).

⁴² *Grammatici Graeci*, vol. 1.3, p. 183, 1ff. Hilgard. Ephorus, Herodotus, Pythodorus, Hecataeus of Miletus, Anticleides of Athens, Stesichorus, and Mnaseas round out the group; candidates for τῶν στοιχείων εὐρετῆς include Palamedes, Danaus, Cadmos, Hermes, Prometheus, the Egyptians, and the Phoenicians.

⁴³ Finley (1986), 18.

(compiled from previous historians)—but their origin was often impossible to verify.⁴⁴ The writing of *archaiologia*, for the historian, often simply meant recording these *logoi* as he had received them; he relates a local tradition, explains what a certain monument commemorates, offers a summary of what a poet has sung. The fragments of early historians of *archaiologia* such as Acusilaus of Argos, Pherecydes of Athens, et al., as well as those of the Atthidographers in the fourth century, suggest that they devoted much of their work to the basic recording of such stories, possibly choosing between variant versions of a single tale, but rarely intruding into their work to offer critical judgment.⁴⁵ Thucydides does this occasionally,⁴⁶ Herodotus frequently, although both tend to distance themselves from the stories they relate by explicitly refusing to pass judgment on their veracity.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *Logoi* would include not only everything we call ‘myths’, but any story in circulation about the heroic age, even if only told in a single locality, or known to a few.

⁴⁵ Tozzi (1967) has shown how dependent Acusilaus is on Hesiod for the theogonic section of his work (cf. Clement of Alexandria’s remark that “the historiographers Eumelus and Acusilaus turned the poems of Hesiod into prose” (*FGrH* 2 F 5)), but uses more variants and generally becomes less restricted as he discusses the heroic age. Cf. Mazzarino (1966), 55ff. The important article by Fowler (1996) differentiates Herodotus from his predecessors and contemporaries primarily on the basis of the historian’s intrusion into his own text.

⁴⁶ For instance in the ‘*Sicilian Archaeology*’ regarding the Cyclops and the Laestrygonians: “I cannot say what kind of people these were or where they came from, or where they went in the end. On these points we must be content with what the poets have said and what anyone else may happen to know.” (6.2) Pearson (1942) has noted that there are several passages in which Thucydides is talking about the legendary past, or legendary geography, where his style and vocabulary become much more Herodotean, and certainly his manner and thought in the *Sicilian Archaeology* are quite different from those in the *Archaeology*.

⁴⁷ Cf. the famous comment at 7.152.3: “As for myself, although it is my business to set down that which is told me, to believe it is none at all of my business. This I ask the reader to hold true for the whole of my history...” Note that this statement refers in the immediate context to the conduct of the Argives during the Persian Wars, demonstrating that *logoi* about very recent history are included.

They inserted these disclaimers for good reason. The unreliability of such tales was notorious; they invariably contained activity that could not reasonably be vouched for: metamorphoses, uncanny phenomena, superhuman feats, not to mention lapses in logical and psychological credibility. To go beyond a mere retelling of such stories required evaluative methods and the application of reasoning—*γνώμη*, in Herodotus' term—by means of which the historian could gain some knowledge about the heroic past. To outline the basic parameters of this approach, I want to turn again to the Classical period, and focus on Herodotus and Thucydides, the only authors writing about the distant past in which demonstrations of historical method are preserved.⁴⁸ The similarity in their approach, however, and the close connection it shares with interpretive techniques developing in other areas, such as rhetoric and medicine, suggest that Herodotus and Thucydides are more than likely adequate representatives of how *archaiologia* was practiced in the 5th and 4th centuries. Even between these two, however, there were no systematized methods, no standard procedure. What we have instead are a set of interpretive tools that enabled *archaiological* inquiry—*τεκμήρια*, *σημεῖα*, *μαρτύρια* ('indications'), and *τὸ εἰκός* (the 'probable' or the 'likely')—but that could be deployed in different configurations depending on the historian.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ For the majority of other early historians, only fragments remain, and any argumentation or explicit discussions that might have existed has not usually survived. Exceptions are Plato *Laws* III (which does depend heavily on *εἰκός*-reasoning, see Weil (1959), 29) and Palaephatus' *On Unbelievable Tales*, which represents an extremely interesting, and fundamentally different, approach to the legendary past than that outlined here.

⁴⁹ See Butti de Lima (1996), ch. 5 for a good account of *τεκμήρια* and *εἰκός* in Herodotus and Thucydides. He sees them as general historiographical tools, however, while I adhere to the more standard view that they are characteristic of *archaiologia* as opposed to ancient political/contemporary historiography.

Signs, Probability, Evidence

As an instrument for assessing the veracity of *logoi*, the concept of τὸ εἰκός, or 'the probable', became central for *archaiologia*.⁵⁰ Reasoning by εἰκός involved applying "a probabilistic estimate (not quantified) to questions at some remove from experience...and appeals, necessarily, to antecedently established notions of what is likely or unlikely to happen in some familiar realm."⁵¹ Such a method was extremely valuable because it focused solely on the content of *logoi*; as a result, the historian could critically examine stories without recourse to any other information. In Herodotus, the procedure frequently involves asserting that a story is not εἰκός, explaining why, and then rejecting the story either outright, or else in favor of a more likely alternative. Herodotus' standard of 'probability' accords with his idea of physical and psychological plausibility; he rejects stories of a diver who swam two miles underwater, of bottomless springs, of a human Heracles' killing hundreds of Egyptians, and he doubts the story of the Samian exiles defeating Polycrates because they sought Spartan assistance after the battle, an act that would not have made much sense if they had won the

⁵⁰ Of course, εἰκός was central to rhetorical argumentation; Corax and Tisias are supposed to have established the argument from εἰκός in their rhetorical handbooks in the early fifth century (Plato, *Phaedrus* 267a-b; Aristotle *Rhetoric* 2.24.11), but some notion of probability is evident even in Homer (see Lloyd (1966), 424). The first definite uses of the term are in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* and Euripides' *Pasiphae* (see Gagarin (1990)). In general, see Kennedy (1963). The connection of Homeric supplementation and rhetoric will be addressed in Chapters 4 and 5.

⁵¹ Hussey (1995), 534. In evaluating ancient historians' use of εἰκός, we should not forget that "it is doubtful whether 'our' (late twentieth-century Western) notion of 'ordinary experience' corresponds at all closely or unambiguously" to that of the ancients' (Ibid.) So also de Sanctis (1933) and Fertonani (1952), who point out that Hecataeus, who has long been seen as inaugurating a 'rationalizing' method that attempted to reduce all myths to 'probable' versions in accord with εἰκός, and then is criticized for not living up to his claims, might simply have had a different notion of what counted as 'probable.'

fight.⁵² Τὸ εἰκός, as these examples show, was a flexible, subjective, instrument, applicable to a wide range of situations.

Evaluation of *logoi* via εἰκός-reasoning was quite useful, but *archaiologia* also involved more than discerning merely which stories to believe and reject. Historians of *archaiologia*, with no eyewitness testimony for their subject matter, faced a domain, the distant past, that would always remain intrinsically unavailable to direct perception or experience, even at secondhand—the poetic tales and traditional stories handed down orally never purported to be eyewitness accounts.⁵³ To access this realm, the historian had to pursue a more indirect route: conjecture. *Archaiologia*, like other disciplines that sought knowledge of imperceptible realms—divination, medicine, physiognomy, natural philosophy⁵⁴—relied predominantly on what Carlo Ginzburg has called the “conjectural paradigm,” a type of knowledge that “requires the minute examination of the real, however trivial, to uncover traces of events about which the observer cannot directly experience.”⁵⁵ The historian of the distant past scanned available data for any clues, traces, or vestiges that would allow some sort of entry way into the past—some way, as Herodotus says, “to conjecture (τεκμαιρόμενος) from visible

⁵² Hdt. 8.8; 2.28; 2.45; 3.45. On Herodotus and εἰκός, see Corcella (1984) and Darbo-Peschanski (1987).

⁵³ Verdin (1971), 230-1 summarizes the importance of eyewitnessing and direct testimony to Herodotus. This emerges clearly in Herodotus’ dealings with the Egyptian priests; as long as he is reassured that the story he is being told can be traced back to someone who witnessed the events, no matter how long ago, he feels secure in the veracity of the story.

⁵⁴ See Schuhl (1953) for an overview and Manetti (1993) on sign-inference in antiquity; Diller (1932) looks at the ‘semeiotische Methode’ of historiography in the light of Hippocratic medical procedure. Lateiner (1986) discusses ties between medicine and Herodotus; for Thucydides, see Weidauer (1954) and Rechenauer (1991).

⁵⁵ Ginzburg (1983); similar is Detienne & Vernant’s (1978) notion of *metis*, ‘cunning intelligence’. See Manetti (1994).

things to those unknown.”⁵⁶ These ‘visible things’, indiscriminately referred to as τεκμήρια, σημεῖα, and μαρτύρια, became the means by which the historian could “span the temporal distance between past and present through inductive reasoning.”⁵⁷

The importance of this type of thought is nowhere more evident than in Thucydides’ *Archaeology*.⁵⁸ As we saw earlier, he puts considerable emphasis on his ability to draw conclusions on the basis of τεκμήρια; So elsewhere Thucydides infers that before Theseus’ time, Athens comprised only the southern part of the present city and the Acropolis from the τεκμήριον that nearly all the temples are located in these areas; the Carian graves unearthed during the purification of Delos are μαρτύρια, literally ‘witnesses’, that Delos had been colonized by Carians; and Homer signals (τεκμηριοῖ) that the name ‘Hellas’ was not in use in his day by his failure to use the term ‘Hellenic’ to describe the Greek forces.⁵⁹ In this sense, τεκμήρια, σημεῖα, and μαρτύρια function literally as ‘evidence’, not in the sense of ‘proofs’, but as ‘evident’ phenomena, signs that allowed the historian to gain a foothold into the distant past by enabling a

⁵⁶ 2.33.2: καὶ ὡς ἐγὼ συμβάλλομαι τοῖσι ἐμφανέσι τὰ μὴ γινωσκόμενα τεκμαιρόμενος. Dewald (1993), 57, sees Herodotus as trying “to read correctly the traces of meaning contained in tangible things.” Cf. the fascinating fragment from Euripides’ *Phoenix*: τὰ ἀφάνη τεκμηρίοισιν εἰκότως ἀλίσκεται (F 811).

⁵⁷ Butti de Lima (1996), 139. Cf. Gernet (1981), 344: “*Tekmêrion* refers to the “visible” as a sign, in the sense that it allows one to pass from one domain to another by rational inference.” Herodotus and Thucydides use the words τεκμήρια, σημεῖα, and μαρτύρια interchangeably, and such unsystematic use of terms for ‘signs’ is characteristic of the Classical period. As Lloyd (1966), 425-30 has shown, the words were part of a “rich vocabulary which was developed in the fifth and sixth centuries” (426) reflecting the growing interest in both sign-inference and the use of evidence.

⁵⁸ See Täubler (1927), 103-7; de Romilly (1967), 242-3; Butti de Lima (1996), 143-51.

⁵⁹ Thuc. 2.15.4, 1.8.1, 1.3.3. Similarly Herodotus (1.57) conjectures (τεκμαιρόμενος) that the ancient Pelasgians spoke a non-Greek language from the fact that their descendants in the Hellespont “have a language of their own in common, which is not the language of their neighbors.”

process of inference.⁶⁰ Τεκμήρια could take many forms: physical objects, proverbs, poetic passages, the cultural vestiges of past customs preserved by contemporary peoples,⁶¹ inscriptions. But in each case, the τεκμήριον, as a perceptible vestige that maintains some link to the distant past, allows the historian to move from the known into the unknown; however provisionally, it opens up the possibility of knowledge.⁶²

The new claims produced by inference from τεκμήρια could in turn be supported by appeals to εικός, which here performs a justificatory function rather than an evaluative one. A good example is Thucydides' attempt to distinguish the Odrysian king Teres from the more famous king Tereus, who married Pandion's daughter Procne from Athens.⁶³ First he infers from the poets that Tereus lived in Daulis,⁶⁴ a completely different part of Thrace than Odrysia. To support this reading, Thucydides appends an argument from probability: "It is probable (εικός) that Pandion in contracting an alliance for his daughter would consider the advantages of mutual assis-

⁶⁰ Connor (1984), 28: "*Tekmêria* are not "proofs" of incontrovertible evidence, but "indications"—facts or observations that point in a certain direction." Herodotus occasionally uses τεκμήρια as evidence to support Egyptian stories over Greeks; here τεκμήρια have an evaluative function. Cf. his remarks at 2.43.2 on his many τεκμήρια regarding whether the Egyptians or the Greeks first named the god Heracles.

⁶¹ As Thucydides says, "one could point to a number of other instances where the manners of the ancient Hellenic world are very similar to the manners of foreigners today." (1.6) Aristotle indulges in the same analogical practice; cf. his remarks on the Thracians' use of spear butt-spikes to explain Homeric practice at *Poetics* 25. 1461a2 and his *Homeric Problems* F 160 Rose. Cf. F 158 Rose for another example.

⁶² Thucydides, as we noted above, explicitly argues from evidence in excurses on the distant past, and his use of the terms we are discussing is restricted to these instances as well.

⁶³ Cf. Thuc. 1.10.3.

⁶⁴ In Thucydides' day, Daulis was in Phocis, but used to be a part of Thrace. His τεκμήριον (he does not use the term) is the fact that 'the poets' refer to the nightingale as the 'Daulian bird'; the relevance of this was that, according to the myth, Procne was metamorphosed into a nightingale. Thucydides presumably infers that the poetic epithet must refer to Procne's residing in Daulis while she was married to Tereus.

tance, and would prefer a match at the above moderate distance [from Daulis to Athens] to the journey of many days which separates Athens from the Odrysians.”

(2.29.2)

Conversely, a *logos* that was considered not εἰκός could be brought back to the realm of the probable by skillful use of τεκμήρια. Herodotus has heard two stories about the foundation of the oracle at Dodona. (2.54-7) The Egyptian version says that Phoenician pirates kidnapped two women connected with the temple of Zeus (Ammon) at Thebes in Egypt, selling one in Libya, and the other in Greece, where each founded an oracle to Zeus. The Dodonaeans, however, tell a different story: two black doves flew from Egypt, one to Libya, the other to Dodona. In each place, the dove told the people with a human voice to establish an oracle of Zeus. Herodotus considers doves speaking human language incredible, but rather than rejecting the Greek account, he realizes that the first story is the evidence by which he can interpret the second. The woman arriving in Greece was called a ‘dove’ because to the natives her foreign speech sounded like a bird’s (ἔδοκεον δέ σφι ὁμοίως ὄρνισι φθέγγεσθαι), and those who said she was black are signifying (σημαίνουσι) that she was Egyptian. When she learned Greek, this ‘dove’ spoke with “human voice (ἄνθρωπηίη φωνῇ).” A new story emerges: the woman was working as a slave and built a shrine to Zeus, “for it was probable (ὥσπερ ἦν οἰκός) that she would remember the god whom she had served in Egypt.” When she learned Greek, she established an oracle near the shrine she had built, and explained to the inhabitants that her sister had been sold to the Libyans. Aldo Corcella describes this remarkable example of Herodotean reasoning well: “A fabulous and strange account, different from the norm of physical phe-

nomena, is led back to the sphere of possibility through an interpretation.”⁶⁵ Here the reliance on εικός has not resulted in skepticism, but in an explanation, and a narrative richer in detail and plausibility.⁶⁶

Archaiologia and Reading Homer

The skillful employment of τεκμήρια and εικός thus gave the historian important tools for critically examining and investigating the distant past. These conjectural methods are what distinguish *archaiologia* from political contemporary history, which depended on and so heavily privileged eyewitness testimony. But there was a limit to the scope such inferential methods, at least for Herodotus and Thucydides, could lend to their inquiries.⁶⁷ Signs, evidence, and probability permitted engagement with the distant past beyond the recording of *logoi*, producing new and interesting details and clarifying episodes of the heroic age, but they could not enable a systematic inquiry apart from those *logoi*.

One small section of the heroic age, however—the Trojan War and the νόστος of Odysseus—was covered by a continuous narrative account. Moreover, because this

⁶⁵ Corcella (1984), 94. Cf. 4.31 on feathers in Scythia interpreted as snow.

⁶⁶ Cf. Hecataeus' reinterpretations of Geryon (*FGrH* 1 F 26) and the κύων 'Αιδού (F 27). I am purposely avoiding the term 'rationalization' that is so often used to describe the method employed in both the Dodona example and Hecataeus. 'Rationalization' seems to be a convenient umbrella term permitting a variety of different approaches to the distant past to be dismissed with one fell swoop. The only in-depth studies have been Wipprecht (1902) and (1908), and Nestle (1942), which are rather dated.

⁶⁷ Both Herodotus and Thucydides realize the limitations of inference and reasoning from probability; Herodotus relates any number of instances where physical objects are not what they seem (cf. Dewald (1993), Verdin (1971), 238), and Thucydides famously warns against the danger of inferring a city's former power on the basis of its material remains (1.10). On the ancient conception of 'strong' and 'weak' signs in reference to Herodotus and Thucydides, see Manetti (1994), 27-30.

account was composed by Homer, the most revered figure in Greek culture, it possessed an authority as historical material comparable with its status in ethics or poetics. The strength of this authority can be seen in the *Archaeology*, where, as Anna Maria Biraschi has shown,⁶⁸ Thucydides systematically privileges Homeric information over all other sources, to the extent that he defends Homer's picture of a powerful Mycenae against the evidence of the rather pitiful state of its visible remains in the fifth century.⁶⁹

For these events, then, Homer provided plentiful material on which to practice *archaiological* methods of reading; by the proper use of εἰκός, τεκμήρια, and a sensitive eye for detail, the historian could reconstruct the heroic world from the text of Homer. Moreover, Homeric poetry particularly lent itself to reading practices privileging εἰκός and consistency. The Homeric narrative is situated in a precise space and time, possesses a clear chronology, demonstrates an advanced understanding by the characters themselves of their own historical positioning, and shows a careful concern for representing the world in a naturalistic fashion.

The historians of the distant past could produce knowledge about the heroic age by reading Homer, and reaching into the historical reality hinted at and alluded to implicitly in his text.⁷⁰ Like narrative criticism of Homer, *archaiologia* relied heavily on

⁶⁸ Biraschi (1989), 116. This is not to say, of course, that Thucydides approached Homer acritically; he is careful to acknowledge the possibility of poetic exaggeration, and one suspects that certain passages, like the *Catalogue of Ships* were considered more reliable than the dramatic scenes. Nevertheless, when Thucydides does use Homer, he does so down to the last detail.

⁶⁹ On what Thucydides might have seen, and how he probably misinterpreted it, see Cook (1955).

⁷⁰ For example Acusilaus F 39 conjectures a story of Aphrodite's motives throughout the Trojan War from *Il.* 3.307 on Aeneas' descendants future rule of Troy, and F 43 derives a tale of Ithaca's founding by Ithacus and Neritus from *Od.* 20.207.

probability, and privileged narrative consistency and coherence, and possibility—not, however, because they thought that Homer was a consummate artist (although they probably thought this too), but because they thought he was depicting a real world, which, obviously had to be just as consistent and probable as a poetic narrative. Despite their different ideas about Homer and his poetry, both these historians and the critics ended up working at the same task—imagining and supplementing the world Homer depicts in his poems.

III HERODOTUS ON HELEN OF TROY

At the beginning of this chapter, we saw how Thucydides' conjectural reading of Homer produced a more complete picture of the Trojan expedition. But Thucydides accepted nearly every detail of the Homeric narrative; the conceit was that even the most innocuous lines might retain some correspondence to historical reality. This silent acceptance of Homer's authority as a reliable witness of the heroic age accords well with Homer's general canonical status. But the inconsistencies and implausibilities noticed by Zoilus and his intellectual kindred could also cause some doubt among historians about Homer's accuracy, or, in a more forgiving light, about the reality that the poet was trying to depict.

Occasionally a historian could even come across an equally authoritative source that disagreed with Homer; how would one reconcile the accounts, or decide which one to choose? In such circumstances the pull of Homeric authority against the adherence to εἰκός, could produce odd results. One paradigmatic example, which will have great influence, is the remarkable excursus on Helen of Troy that Herodotus pro-

vides in Book 2 of his *Histories*.⁷¹ Paradoxically, Herodotus' presents his *alternative* narrative as a supplementation of the Homeric account, filling in gaps, and structuring his argument around problematic points in the text where Homer actively encourages imaginative inference.

Fantasies of Helen

Herodotus, in the course of a chronological account of Egyptian kings, informs us that after Pheros, the son of Sesostris, the kingship fell to a native of Memphis who was called Proteus in Greek. Even in Herodotus' time, we learn, a sanctuary at Memphis sacred to Proteus existed, within which stood a temple dedicated to Aphrodite the Foreigner (Ξείνης). The strange epithet 'foreigner' piques Herodotus' curiosity; in all his travels, he has never come across a circumstance in which Aphrodite was called by such a name. Perhaps there has been a mix-up? Herodotus is familiar with stories placing Helen in Egypt at the time of Proteus;⁷² might Aphrodite the Foreigner actually be Helen? To test his hypothesis, he asks the Egyptian priests at the temple what they know about Helen; it turns out to be quite a lot. According to them, Paris, on his way back to Troy with Helen, had been forced to stop at the Canopic mouth of the Nile due to bad weather, and some of his slaves, learning of a nearby temple of Heracles where runaway slaves could receive sanctuary, took the opportunity to flee and take

⁷¹ Important treatments of this famous excursus are Erbse (1961), 24-6, Neville (1977), Hunter (1982), 50-61, Lloyd (1988), 43-52, Farinelli (1995). Cf. the interesting discussion of Ligota (1982), 9-11.

⁷² For the complicated history of previous versions of the Helen story, including Hecataeus, Stesichorus, and Hesiod, see Lloyd (1988), 46-7. Euripides' *Helen* shows remarkable similarities to Herodotus' story; see Austin (1994) for a survey of Helen's portrayals in this tradition. Dio will consciously echo this tradition in the *Trojan Oration* (see Ch. 5).

refuge there. Through a series of events, King Proteus became involved. When he learned of Paris' betrayal of Menelaus' hospitality, he was appalled and decided to keep Helen and the rest of the stolen property until such time as Menelaus returned to collect them. Paris was forced to leave the country immediately.

At this point, Herodotus pauses to assess the story. Clearly the assertion that Paris returned to Troy without Helen did not accord with events in the *Iliad*. But Herodotus, rather than choose one over the other, accepts the Egyptian version, but then claims that Homer also knew of this alternate story about Paris, although he preferred the version he used as "better suited"—εὐπρεπῆς—to epic poetry. (δοκέει δέ μοι καὶ Ὅμηρος τὸν λόγον τοῦτον πυθέσθαι· ἀλλ' οὐ γὰρ ὁμοίως ἐς τὴν ἐποποιίην εὐπρεπῆς ἦν τῷ ἐτέρῳ τῷ περ ἐχρήσατο, ἐκῶν μετῆκε αὐτόν.) Homer, Herodotus continues, has made it clear that he knew the other tradition (δηλώσας ὡς καὶ τοῦτον ἐπίσταιτο τὸν λόγον); as evidence, he quotes a passage from the *Iliad* that places Paris in Sidon (in Phoenicia) and two from the *Odyssey*; one that refers to gifts that Helen received in Egypt, and another that has Menelaus in Egypt on his return from Troy. Incidentally, Herodotus mentions that the *Iliad* passage proves (ἐν τούτοισι τοῖσι ἔπεισι δηλοῖ) that the *Cypria* was not composed by Homer, since in that poem Paris and Helen reach Troy in three days with no layover in Sidon.⁷³

⁷³ In the fifth century, Homer was believed to have composed a number of other poems besides the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; as we saw, Thucydides thought that he wrote the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*. Aristotle restricted Homeric authorship to the two epics and the *Margites*, now lost. The other poems of the epic cycle, which filled in the rest of the Trojan legend not covered by the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, were attributed to various authors in antiquity, and sometimes to Homer. This passage is often referred to by modern scholars as an indication of Herodotus' critical acumen, since scholars now do not believe the *Cypria* was by Homer. Even if his conclusion happens to accord with modern opinion, however, Herodotus' argument may be incorrect; in Proclus' summary of the *Cypria*, Paris does go to Sidon. Neville (1977), following earlier scholars, believes that this was a later interpolation inserted to remedy the error

Now, the Egyptian version of events brings up a rather serious problem that Herodotus puts to the priests: if Helen was not at Troy, what exactly was the Trojan War about? The priests tell Herodotus, on the authority of Menelaus himself, that the Greeks had gone to Troy, looking for and demanding Helen. The Trojans, naturally, told them that she was in Egypt with Proteus. Thinking that they were being ridiculed, the Greeks beseiged the city, and finally took Troy after ten hard-fought years. At this point, they realized that the Trojans had been telling the truth after all, and Menelaus was dispatched to Egypt to retrieve Helen and the rest of his stolen property, where he found them safe and sound. Menelaus, however, was unable to sail home because of contrary winds, and in an egregious display of ingratitude, sacrificed two Egyptian children as offerings to the gods; naturally the Egyptians became angry and pursued him as he sailed off to Libya, but he eventually managed to escape.

Herodotus now evaluates the story, and declares that he agrees with it. His reasons for acceptance are based on arguments against the traditional version deployed in an extended display of εἰκός reasoning based primarily on psychological improbability:

If Helen had been in Ilion, then she would have been given back to the Greeks, whether Alexander (Paris) was willing or not. Surely neither Priam, nor those nearest to him, were so crazy, as to be willing to risk themselves, their children, and the city just so that Alexander could be with Helen. Even if they were so inclined in the beginning, when not only many of the Trojans were slain in fighting against the Greeks, but also two or three or even more of the sons of Priam himself died in every battle (if the poets are to be believed), in this turn of events, even if Helen had been Priam's own wife, I expect that he would have given her back to the Greeks, in an attempt to escape from the misfortunes at hand. Nor was Alexander even heir to the throne, in which case matters might have been in his hands since Priam was old, but Hector, who was

pointed out by Herodotus, but this is just a guess. Cf. Lloyd (1988), s.v. 2.117 = 50-1; Hunter (1982), 55-6, n.8

an older and a better man than Alexander, was going to receive the royal power at Priam's death, and would not have acquiesced in his brother's wrongdoing, especially when that brother was the cause of great calamity to Hector himself and all the rest of the Trojans.

The Egyptian story must, then, be correct. The Trojans did not have Helen, and tried to convince the Greeks of this fact, but the Greeks would not believe them. On this view, the whole Trojan War was the result of a rather ridiculous misunderstanding, or at least an unreasonable refusal on the part of the Greeks to believe the truth, and to account for this, Herodotus can only have recourse to divine intervention: it happened "in order that their utter destruction might plainly prove to mankind that great sins meet with great punishments at the hands of the gods."⁷⁴

Explaining Herodotus

Herodotus' remarkable excursus is, along with Thucydides' treatment of Homer in the *Archaeology*, one of the most detailed examples of a Homeric reading from the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. It is a curious and complex passage, where Herodotus elicits suspiciously 'Greek-sounding' stories from Egyptian priests, quotes obscure passages from Homer, offers passing judgments on ascriptions of epic poetry, and

⁷⁴ 2.120.5: ἀλλ' οὐ γὰρ εἶχον Ἑλένην ἀποδοῦναι, οὐδὲ λέγουσι αὐτοῖσι τὴν ἀληθείην ἐπίστευον οἱ Ἕλληνες, ὥς μὲν ἐγὼ γνώμην ἀποφαίνομαι, τοῦ δαιμονίου παρασκευάζοντος, ὅκως πανωλεθρὴ ἀπολόμενοι καταφανὲς τοῦτο τοῖσι ἀνθρώποισι ποιήσωσι, ὥς τῶν μεγάλων ἀδικημάτων μεγάλαι εἰσὶ καὶ αἰτιμωρίαι παρὰ τῶν θεῶν. καὶ ταῦτα μὲν τῇ ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ εἶρηται. This passage is obscure; it is unclear whether the destruction, sins and punishments refer to those suffered by the Trojans or the Greeks. The destruction would seem to be that of Troy, but the sins seem to refer to the refusal of the Greeks to believe the Trojans. In any case the closest named antecedent would be the Greeks, mentioned earlier in the same sentence. Perhaps, as Lloyd (1988), 52 seems to assume, Herodotus means *both* the Trojans and the Greeks; in the latter case the destruction would refer to the calamities that befell the Greeks after or during their return home.

combines extended logical reasoning with theories of divine retribution, all for the purpose of proving a story which seems to modern readers more incredible than the one it is meant to replace. Looked at through the lens of *archaiologia* and Homeric criticism, however, Herodotus' excursus may be seen as an exemplary synthesis of the methods and presuppositions of Homeric supplementation.

As Catherine Darbo-Peschanski has pointed out, Herodotus has formulated his inquiry into Helen around a problem that excites his curiosity: the peculiar epithet Aphrodite $\xiείνη$.⁷⁵ This tendency to structure inquiry and reasoning around objects or situations that seem strange, or out of place, produces the characteristic flow of Herodotean narrative, where a string of leisurely told stories and facts will suddenly be interrupted by a detailed argumentative digression establishing an apparently minor point. But it also corresponds both to the procedure of *archaiological* investigation, where occasionally the appearance of something peculiar can be read as a $\sigma\eta\muείον$ that permits interpretation and inquiry, and the $\acute{\alpha}\tauο\piία$, $\acute{\alpha}\lambdaογία$, or $\tauὸ \acute{\alpha}\piί\thetaανον$ that leads a reader to formulate a Homeric problem.⁷⁶

The curiosity engendered by the problem leads Herodotus to a discovery of a convincing *logos*: that Helen had been in Egypt during the Trojan War. Most studies of the next passage, where he discusses Homer's relation to the Egyptian story, have tended to concentrate on Herodotus' hypothesis that Homer chose his version because it was more $\epsilonύ\pi\rho\epsilon\piής$ than the Egyptian one, because such a formulation clearly implies that different standards of judging appropriateness exist for poetry and history.⁷⁷ But what is particularly unusual about the Herodotean passage is not that he informs

⁷⁵ Darbo-Peschanski (1987), 127-8.

⁷⁶ See Dewald (1993) on Herodotus' reading of objects.

us that Homer used the version he did because it better suited epic, but that Herodotus feels it necessary to prove that Homer *knew the true version as well*. Furthermore, Herodotus insists that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* contain traces by means of which a careful reader could prove that Homer knew the true story. There could be no more striking display of the influence of Homeric authority, or of the belief in his all-encompassing knowledge than this assumption. Herodotus had already accounted for Homer's deviation from the Egyptian tradition, why does he insist on showing that Homer was aware of it? And how can Herodotus expect to demonstrate this from a reading of his poetry?

Herodotus cites three passages: *Il.* 6.289ff., where Homer mentions that Paris had stopped at Sidon on his way back to Troy with Helen; *Od.* 4.227-30 where Helen is said to have received drugs from Polydamna, wife of Thôn in Egypt, and finally *Od.* 4.351-2 where Menelaus explains that he was held in Egypt because of poor winds. He explains the relevance of only the first citation, and rather unsatisfactorily: Syria borders on Egypt, the Phoenicians rule Sidon, and the Phoenicians live in Syria. To many scholars these passages do not seem to prove anything, and reflect poorly on Herodotus' reasoning ability: the first does not mention Egypt, and the other two are mentioned in the context of Menelaus and Helen's trip *back* from Troy, and in any case do not discuss Paris.⁷⁸ Caterina Farinelli, however, in a recent treatment of these pas-

⁷⁷ Ligota (1982), and the works cited by Farinelli (1995), 25.

⁷⁸ Lloyd (1988), 50: "As the text stands, H. loses as much credit as he gains." Herodotus' failure to explain the relevance of the second two passages, as well as their apparent lack of significance to his point have led many editors to consider them interpolations (e.g., C. Hude in the OCT) despite the univocality of the manuscript tradition. Others have thought that they belong elsewhere in the text (e.g., at 2.119) or else were marginal notations that Herodotus was thinking about inserting later (Legend (1936), 142 n.2). See Farinelli (1995), 7-10 for a history of the controversy,

sages, has outlined a clear chain of reasoning and relevance between them.⁷⁹ The first passage establishes only that Paris wandered on his travels with Helen, and establishes a proximity of this travel to Egypt. Farinelli shows that the second passage, though situated in between Menelaus' accounts of his journey to Egypt, strongly suggest that a different stay in Egypt is being referred to; neither Polydamna nor Thon are mentioned elsewhere. If Helen was in Egypt at some time other than on her return from Troy, the logical time would be on her voyage over there with Paris. Finally the third passage involves a situation—Menelaus stranded in Egypt—which will be echoed in the second part of the priests' account; Farinelli notes that in Homer there is no explanation offered as to why he was there.⁸⁰

Like the other Homeric critics of his time, Herodotus here displays a remarkably close knowledge of Homer. He has located the only mention of Sidon in the entire *Iliad*; and managed to call attention to two other ambiguities in the *Odyssey* concerning Helen, Egypt, and Menelaus. When did Helen get those drugs from Polydamna and

which seems to have been won by those favoring interpolation. I, however, follow Farinelli in believing the passages genuine, on which see the following note.

⁷⁹ Farinelli (1995), 12-19. Her account of course, is completely speculative, as is any attempt to reconstruct an ancient author's process of reasoning. Nevertheless, although interpolation is an attractive explanation of a rather elliptical and confusing section, one should not forget that a surprisingly large amount of Herodotus' discussion of Helen is rather unclear and riddled with logical lacunae: e.g., his failure to explain precisely how Helen was transformed into Aphrodite the Foreigner, his not particularly enlightening explanation of the relevance of the Sidon passage, and his concluding remarks about the gods meting out justice for crimes, when he has just mentioned both Greek and Trojan crimes. If someone can, as Farinelli has, demonstrate that the passages actually do possess some unity and logic, and furthermore fit smoothly with the way Herodotus views Homer, the burden of proof for the possibility of interpolation has shifted onto those who favor it.

⁸⁰ Herodotus is suggesting that Homer had Menelaus stop off at Egypt on the way back because he was hinting at the 'real' story; he couldn't mention that he was there to get Helen, of course, but why else include the trip at all? There is also an implicit

Thon? Why was Menelaus in Egypt anyway? Modern commentators, in dismissing the relevance of these citations, have forgotten that Herodotus is not claiming to have found unambiguous Homeric passages where Homer explicitly mentions elements of the Egyptian version; any such passage would clearly contradict Homer's main narrative. What Herodotus is looking for is much more subtle—certain elements in the text, “even if well hidden, and recounted so as not to alter narrative coherence”⁸¹ that are slightly out of place, that do not quite fit, but maintain a correspondence, even a minimal one, to the Egyptian version. These τεκμήρια that Homer has left in the text allow interpreters like Herodotus, so accustomed to scanning visible objects and *logoi* for clues of the distant past, to demonstrate the extent of Homer's knowledge.

The priests' account of the Trojan War and the Helen myth solves another notable Homeric 'problem' that turns on a question of psychological verisimilitude: the curious unwillingness of the Trojans to surrender Helen in the face of a powerful force. Here, Herodotus, in one of his lengthiest arguments from εἰκός, shows the improbability of the traditional story from every possible angle; a story that posits Helen's presence at Troy and the Trojans' refusal to surrender her simply cannot be true. But despite his attack on the improbability of the Homeric account, Herodotus actually *accepts* everything in the *Iliad* except the presence of Helen. Most commentators on this passage have concluded that the range of negative arguments effectively demolishes the Homeric account,⁸² but in fact they depend on the Homeric version being correct. The arguments make no sense unless events proceeded as portrayed in the

connection between King Proteus and the shape-shifting divinity Proteus whom Menelaus has to wrestle during his stay in Egypt.

⁸¹ Farinelli (1995), 18.

Iliad; the Greeks attacked, battles raged, Trojans (even Priam's sons) died, etc. After all, the Egyptian version is in essence exactly the same as the traditional Greek narrative that Herodotus is arguing against, with the single exception of Helen. Here again, as in Herodotus' discussion of the doves at Dodona, two *logoi* are being reconciled.

The entire Herodotean excursus demonstrates how the authority of Homeric poetry, so central to the practice of Homeric interpretation, can radically affect the practice of *archaiologia*. Even in a situation where an author has a clearly alternate version of events from an authoritative external source—Egyptian priests—Homer's version is not rejected. In fact, if we examine the excursus as a whole, we can see that, far from positioning himself against Homer, and rejecting his story as history, Herodotus' new account does everything possible to reconcile the Egyptian version with Homer's. On the one hand, it corrects what many had felt was a rather improbable element of the whole episode—why the Trojans did not simply give Helen back; it transforms the shape-shifter Proteus into an ordinary king; it explains the Thôn mentioned in the *Odyssey*; it accommodates lines in Homer that do not accord properly with a simple journey of Paris' back to Troy; and it even smooths the story of Paris and later of Menelaus into the larger narratives, filling in details rather than contradicting them. Herodotus can have his cake and eat it too: he adjusts Homer's version of events, but avoids criticism by demonstrating how Homer showed that he was aware of the true story all along.

⁸² Neville (1977), 7: "we must conclude that Herodotus almost totally rejected the story as told by Homer."

Paradigms, and the Future

Virginia Hunter, in her analysis of Herodotus and Thucydides' study of the distant past, notes that "the intellectual tools of the historian open to them, whether sources and the evidence or data such sources afford, or logic and argumentation, are virtually identical."⁸³ What I have tried to show is that these tools utilized by ancient historians in their examination of physical objects, ethnic customs, local traditions, etc.—tools including εἰκός-reasoning, identification of τεκμήρια and inference enabled by those signs, attention to detail—are also remarkably similar to those developed and used by ancient scholars to interpret Homer. This overlap between the interpretive methods of disciplines traditionally understood as separate—history and poetic criticism—reflects how significantly the understanding of the heroic age and Homeric poetry were inextricably intertwined.

Herodotus' discussion of Helen is a good example of how all these methodological instruments and investigative principles are naturally and effortlessly harnessed for the purposes of tackling a set of Homeric and historical problems. Thucydides' treatment of the Homeric world in his *Archaeology* does much the same, and each represents, despite their historical concerns, a particular paradigm of reading Homer that will prove highly influential in later periods. Thucydides accepts Homer's account as his anchorage point, and uses it to build a richer picture of the heroic world (albeit one that is remarkably similar to his view of the fifth century), combing carefully for signs and information by which he can infer and imagining situations and details not covered by Homer. His procedure depends on a 'return' to Homer, as the most authori-

⁸³ Hunter (1982), 93.

tative source about the heroic world, on the basis of which such judgments can be made.

Herodotus, on the other hand, prefers another story he has learned on eminent authority to the Homeric account; and removes Helen, surely one of the Homeric epic's most significant elements. To combat Homer's authority, however, one had to explain why he would write an incorrect story; Herodotus goes further: he proves that Homer actually knew the story. He does this, like Thucydides, by recourse to the same close reading, identification of signs, and inferential reasoning that characterize so much of Homeric criticism and *archaiologia*. No matter whether the ultimate goal was to create a space for one's own Trojan story, or else to supplement and nuance the Homeric account, in order to write the history of the heroic age one began from the ground of Homer.

The significance of both the Trojan War and the νόστοι for Greek, and later Roman, self-definition and historical identity spawned⁸⁴ an enormous amount of erudite work in antiquity. In the fifth century alone we know of at least four treatises entirely devoted to the topic.⁸⁵ Similar works— Νόστοι, Τρωικά, learned historical and geographical commentaries—only multiply in later centuries;⁸⁶ we even read about a fe-

⁸⁴ The νόστοι, stories about the heroes' voyages back home from Troy, were perhaps even more important in this regard; through these tales, even cities distant from the main action of the Trojan War could provide themselves with a heroic pedigree, whether by having a hero found their city in his wanderings, or a similar connection. The significance of the story of Rome's Trojan origins has been extensively studied; e.g., Gruen (1992), ch. 1

⁸⁵ Τρωικά: Hellanicus *FGrH* 4 F 23-31; 138-56, Pherecydes *FGrH* 3 F 136-44. Περὶ γονέων καὶ προγόνων τῶν εἰς Ἴλιον στρατευσαμένων Damastes *FGrH* 5. Γενεαλογία τῶν ἐπὶ Ἴλιον στρατευσάντων Ἑλλήνων καὶ βαρβάρων Polus: *FGrH* 6

⁸⁶ Νόστοι: Anticleides of Athens, Lysimachus of Alexandria, and Plesimachus; Τρωικά: Metrodorus of Chios, Palaephatus, Abas, Sisyphus of Cos, Theodorus of Il-

male scholar, Hestiaea of Alexandria, “who wrote a work on Homer’s *Iliad*” and identified the “plain now to be seen in front of the present Ilium as a later deposit of the rivers.”⁸⁷

But concurrently with these historically oriented works, an ever increasing flood of learned poetic scholarship and criticism began appearing as well. The perceived distance between the heroic age depicted in Homeric poetry and later periods made it necessary for the ancient grammarians and philologists who studied poetic literature to be responsible for this ‘historical’ part (τὸ ἱστορικόν) as well, since later readers of Homer required learned explanation of heroic references to properly understand the texts.⁸⁸

The grammarians could offer more ‘substantive’ contributions: in the second century C.E., the Homeric critic Apion described the precise game Penelope’s suitors were playing in *Od.* 1.107; earlier, the noted grammarian Dionysius Thrax had constructed a model of Nestor’s cup described at *Il.* 11.632-5; and long lists of Homeric historical puzzles, such as the respective ages of Achilles and Patroclus, or what kind of bolt Eurycleia used in *Od.* 1.441 to lock Telemachus’ bedroom door, can be found in Seneca, Plutarch, Aulus Gellius and Athenaeus.⁸⁹ If at the same time, historical writers were

ium, and Hegesianax of Alexandria Troas; Commentaries: Aristonicus of Alexandria’s *On the Wanderings of Menelaus*, Apollodorus of Athens’ commentary *On the Catalogue of Ships*, and Demetrius of Scepsis’ *On the Trojan Catalogue*.

⁸⁷ Strabo 13.1.36. Female prose writers are rarely attested in antiquity, yet when they are cited, as in this Strabo example, there seems to be no indication that the case is exceptional.

⁸⁸ See above all Sext. Emp. *Adv. Math.* I.248-69.

⁸⁹ Athenaeus 1.16f – 17b; *ibid.*, 11.489a; Seneca, *Letters* 88.7; Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 14.6. One notes the notorious obsession of the Emperor Tiberius for such matters: Suet. *Tib.* 70. This interest in details of the Homeric world was no doubt influenced to a large degree by the ancient educational system’s emphasis on the minutiae of Homeric poetry: e.g., the question and answer drills on Homer—Who were

trying to ascertain which towns Achilles had captured, or the names of Odysseus' men who had been eaten by Scylla, it is no wonder that the two enterprises were rarely differentiated. Often in fact the same people wrote erudite works on both poetic and *archaiological* subjects.⁹⁰ Aristotle is the obvious example, but many other Peripatetics followed his lead, like Demetrius of Phalerum and Duris of Samos.⁹¹ Since both approached the same material—the Homeric text—with similar methods of reading, a blurring of boundaries was inevitable; were Apion and Dionysius Thrax claiming to have discovered the *actual* game the *historical* suitors were playing, or to have reconstructed the *actual* cup of the *real* Nestor? Or was it simply the game or cup Homer most likely had in mind when he was telling the story? One suspects that it never occurred to them to even ask the question. Once the 'information' had become part of the exegetical tradition, however, the practical result was systematic overlap and cross-pollination whether the conclusions had been reached by those concerned with elucidating the text or by those scanning it for historical information. In the following three chapters, we will be looking at some of the products of these diverse engagements with the expanded world of Homeric criticism.

Hector's brothers? See generally Marrou (1956), 166-9; Bonner (1977), 237-9; Clarke (1971), 24; Kaster (1984).

⁹⁰ See Bravo (1971) which takes Pfeiffer and Jacoby to task for artificially separating erudite research into philological and historiographical camps.

⁹¹ Among Demetrius' writings are *Homerica*, *On Homer*, *Homeric Solutions* (F 190-3 Wehrli), and *Posthomerica* (F 207 Wehrli). Duris of Samos is the well-known Hellenistic historiography (notorious as an alleged proponent of 'tragic history'), but he also wrote a *Homeric Problems* (FGrH 76 F 88-91). On the Peripatetics work on Homer, see Podlecki (1969).

Chapter Three

HOMERIC OBSESSIONS

STRABO'S THEORY OF POETRY AND HISTORY

I say this because I am comparing present conditions with those described by Homer; for it is necessary to compare them with those [in Homer] because of the fame of the poet and because of our familiarity with him from our childhood, since each of us believes that we have not successfully treated any subject at hand until there remains in our treatment nothing that conflicts with what the poet says on the same subject, such confidence do we have in his words.¹

—Strabo, *Geography* 8.3.3

I STRABO AS LITERARY THEORIST AND HOMERIC GEOGRAPHER

Strabo of Amaseia wrote his *Geography* near the beginning of the common era, some four hundred years after Herodotus, and three hundred after Aristotle. As the epigraph demonstrates, however, Homer's authority had not diminished in the intervening period. Strabo's *Geography* is suffused with a profound, nearly obsessive interest in Homer. Homer is mentioned in the *Geography's* opening paragraph, and nearly the entire first book is taken up with discussions of Homer's geographical knowledge. The books on Greece (7-9) and northwestern Asia Minor (12-13) are basi-

¹ λέγω δὲ ταῦτα συμβάλλων τὰ τε νῦν καὶ τὰ ὑφ' Ὀμήρου λεγόμενα· ἀνάγκη γὰρ ἀντεξετάζεσθαι ταῦτα ἐκείνοις διὰ τὴν τοῦ ποιητοῦ δόξαν καὶ συντροφίαν πρὸς ἡμᾶς, τότε νομίζοντος ἐκάστου κατορθοῦσθαι τὴν παροῦσαν πρόθεσιν, ὅταν ἢ μηδὲν ἀντιπίπτον τοῖς οὕτω σφόδρα πιστευθεῖσι περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν λόγοις.

cally commentaries to the Catalogues of the Greeks and Trojans in *Iliad* 2. Overall, Strabo quotes Homer over 700 times in his 17 books.² The *Geography* is a treasure trove of Homeric criticism; as opposed to what we've seen in the previous chapters, Strabo provides us both with a reconstruction of the Homeric world on a vast scale as well as an explicit and painstakingly detailed theorization of how he conducts that reconstruction. In this chapter we will concentrate on the theoretical parts of his discourse, and only glance briefly at his myriad visions of the heroic age.

"The Swan-Song of Hellenism"

To see how far we have come since the days of Thucydides and Herodotus, let us observe Strabo spending five pages discussing the three lines from *Odyssey* 1 which mention the "Ethiopians divided in two...some in the east and some in the west."³ We learn that Aristarchus had accused Homer of being ignorant of Ethiopia, Crates had offered a typically complicated cosmological solution (emending lines in the bargain), Ephorus had identified the western Ethiopians as Moroccans, while Posidonius had conversely posited the eastern ones as Indians. Strabo himself thinks that the Ethiopians are split in two by either the Nile or the Persian Gulf. By the time he is done, Strabo has discussed, among other things, textual criticism, African topography, astronomy, archaic history, Attic tragedy, and historical linguistics.⁴

² So Sihler (1881), 4, estimating from Meineke's index. For a full catalogue and brief discussion of Strabo's Homeric citations, see the useful study of Kahles (1976).

³ Using the pages in Casaubon's edition (C) as a guide = Strabo 1.2.24-8.

⁴ The problem was popular; it is discussed in Pausanias 1.33.3 Sch. Ad Od. 1.27-8 and Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* 5.43. For a fairly comprehensive catalog of the various theories see Ramin (1979), 73-80. The tradition of dual Ethiopias had a long poetic afterlife as well; Nadeau (1970) examines references in Vergil, Lucan, Statius, Seneca, and Juvenal.

As the Ethiopian example shows, Strabo's attitude was not anomalous. In fact, the *Geography* is valuable precisely because it offers us much more than a single idiosyncratic perspective on Homeric interpretation. Strabo exposes us to a panorama of learned hypotheses cited from a range of prominent intellectual figures: Aristarchus, Posidonius, Crates, Polybius, Eratosthenes, Callimachus, Hipparchus, and Asclepiades of Myrlea, among others. Moreover, these discussions demonstrate the extremely high level of intricacy and ingenuity with which Homeric matters were now discussed. Paradoxically, it appears that the acquisition of the more accurate scientific knowledge (for which the Hellenistic period is well-known) led not to a devaluation of Homer's scientific 'wisdom', but an increase in the level of detail with which his rather laconic lines could be interpreted. The augmented historical and geographical knowledge of Iberia and northwest Africa, for instance, rather than rendering Homer's vague references to the western Ethiopians obsolete, actually provide more material for his interpreters, just as a knowledge of meridians and the movement of the sun across the spherical earth allowed Crates to invest Homer's lines (once emended) with a complicated cosmological significance.

Strabo was from Pontus in northern Asia Minor, but he had strong connections to Rome. His name is Roman; Pontus was brought under Roman rule during his lifetime; he spent considerable time in Rome (possibly writing the *Geography* there) and he has nothing but praise for her empire.⁵ As "a perfect reflection," in Katherine Clarke's words, "of the first-century phenomenon of great geographical complexity whereby intellectuals from various parts of Asia Minor were given a Greek education

⁵ On the vexed questions of Strabo's date, the composition of the *Geography*, and other aspects of his life, see Lasserre (1969), Lindsay (1997b) and now the relevant sections of Clarke (1999b), Engels (1999), and Dueck (2000).

in the coastal cities and brought that mixture of outlooks both physically to Rome and conceptually to their accounts of its Empire,"⁶ Strabo has inspired interest in his connections, politically and ideologically to Rome.⁷ But as Clarke notes, he is situated intellectually within a predominantly Greek tradition (with which, of course, educated Romans were moderately to fully conversant).⁸ His familiarity with a wide range of Greek writers, and his concomitantly narrow knowledge of Roman ones, point to a world of discourse acclimated to the cities of the East,⁹ where he had been educated under several different teachers, including Aristodemus of Nysa, a famous Homeric scholar (he claimed that Homer was a Roman) whose father had studied with Aristarchus and whose mother was the daughter of Posidonius.¹⁰

We should also remind ourselves that *Geography* is a rather misrepresentative translation of the Greek title, which connotes something more expansive than the

⁶ Clarke (1997), 109. For Greek intellectuals in Rome at this time, see Bowersock (1965), ch.4. and Crawford (1978).

⁷ For instance, see Emilio Gabba's ((1982a) and (1982b)) influential interpretation of Strabo's use of Homer as part of the classicist revival fostered by Augustus and exemplified in the work of Dionysius of Halicarnassus.

⁸ As François Lasserre (1982) has pointed out, aside from his appreciation of Rome's dominion and organization, Strabo shows very little interest in Rome throughout his work.

⁹ Clarke (1997) has shown how the term καθ' ἑμᾶς is used in the context of Strabo's lists of famous intellectuals who hail from Asia Minor. "While he centres the world that he describes on the city of Rome...for *himself*, there is an additional, maybe even alternative, location in Asia Minor and its intellectual circles." (108)

¹⁰ On Aristodemus' Homeric criticism (mentioned at 14.1.48), see Dubuisson (1987) and Heath (1998). Other colleagues or teachers include the Peripatetics Tyrannio (12.3.16) and Xenarchus (14.5.4), and the Stoic Boethus with whom, however, he studied Aristotle (16.2.24). Strabo also knew Posidonius (7 F 60) and was a friend of the Stoic Athenodorus of Tarsus (16.4.21). For a convenient overview of Strabo's intellectual education and affiliations, see Dueck (2000), 8-15, and Lindsay (1997a), 296-8, who rightly emphasizes Strabo's eclecticism. On the influences of various philosophical schools on Strabo's thought, see Dueck (2000), 62-9; more specifically Aly (1964) on early Peripatetic doctrine in Strabo, and Aujac (1983) on Strabonian notions that betray Stoic influences.

English.¹¹ In its wide scope, love of the obscure and particular, variety, and engagement with Greek tradition, Strabo's work bears comparison to Herodotus' *Histories*, another spatially organized hodge-podge of Greek knowledge and alien wisdom. For W.W. Tarn (1927), one of Strabo's few admirers, the *Geography* "is the swan-song of Hellenism; through his eyes we survey that world as a whole as it passed away." (236)

Homeric Geographies

Strabo's deep concern for Homer and the heroic age, while perhaps receiving an inordinate amount of space in the *Geography*, is not entirely out of keeping with the genre.¹² Geographical problems had always been an essential part of Homeric criticism, and conversely, a concern for identifying the cities, regions, and peoples of the heroic age had formed an integral part of geographical inquiry from its earliest stages. In a recent article, Francesco Prontera has outlined the development of this "*esegesi di geografia omerica*" and the widespread interest in "a geography that...is concerned to show the mythic and historical memories of places."¹³ In the previous chapter I attempted to give some sense of how material remains, physical objects, and genealogical descent could function in antiquity as powerful tangible links to the heroic past, and how important these connections were to particular cities, regions, or families. Similarly, a continuity of location between an area where a celebrated event had taken place, or an illustrious hero had been born, formed an important part of the self-identity of ancient Greek cities from Southern Italy and North Africa to Asia Minor.

¹¹ On the notion of geography as literary genre, see Prontera (1984).

¹² For treatments of Strabo's use of Homer *qua* geographer, see Bunbury (1883), ch.1-2, Neumann (1886), Bidder (1889), and Berger (1903), 533-8.

¹³ Prontera (1993), 387.

Strabo's work, like that of Pausanias, is littered with examples; often, as in the case of the cities of Southern Italy, he virtually restricts his commentary to such legendary details: Metapontium "was said to have been founded by the Pylians who sailed from Troy with Nestor;" the Neaethus river got its name from the fact that the Trojan slave women burned the Greek ships near that place; the city Siris, no longer in existence in Strabo's day, was settled by the Trojans, as testified by the wooden image of Trojan Athena that is set up there.¹⁴ What else needs to be said? Historical geography mapped the space and topography of the various sites and cities of the heroic age, primarily by identifying and clarifying the locations and modern counterparts of no longer existent places and towns; here as elsewhere, Homeric poetry provided the starting-point for any investigation.

This privileged position had a solid pragmatic basis. Homer provides a wealth of place-names and topographical markers; the *Iliad* in particular is filled with such geographical indicators, most notably in the catalogues of Greek and Trojan forces that make up much of its second book. Because, many of these cities, regions, or peoples went by names (e.g., Pylos, Phthia, Caucones) that did not directly correspond to those recognized in the Classical period and later, the process of identifying and locating Homeric place names became an integral part of Homeric criticism. Through the wanderings of Odysseus, Menelaus, and others returning from Troy, connections could be established to nearly every region of the Mediterranean, and thus take on a global significance, especially for the inhabitants of areas far removed from Greece

¹⁴ Strabo 6.1.15; 6.1.12; 6.1.14.

and the Troad.¹⁵ And as Prontera notes, identifications of Homeric sites and peoples with their 'real' counterparts—e.g., Scheria with Kerkyra, the Hippemolgi with the Scythians—are taken for granted in authors as early as Hesiod, Herodotus, and Thucydides.¹⁶

In the Hellenistic period, the level of this discourse increases drastically—questions that previously might have been dealt with in passing, or in digressions, became the subjects of more systematic studies. By the 2nd century B.C.E., when Apollodorus of Athens and Demetrius of Scepsis wrote their massive commentaries on the *Catalogue of Ships* and the *Trojan Catalogue* respectively, the sheer amount of research on Homeric geography had increased to the point that all of the information, taken together, virtually constituted a complete picture of the heroic Mediterranean.¹⁷ What had begun as isolated inquiry into Homeric geographical problems, or simply curiosity about the heroic identification of one's own city had progressed to the point of providing a basis for "reconstructing the political geography of Greece in the heroic age."¹⁸ As Prontera puts it, "the systematic confrontation between epic toponymy and present conditions gave rise to a series of observations that in sum are a historical topography of the Greek world using the conceptual and heuristic tools inherited from classical *archaiologia*."

¹⁵ In fact, questions about Homeric geography appear quite frequently in early prose, e.g., Hecataeus: *FGrH* 1 F 75, 199; Pherecydes: 3 F 136-44. For a more extensive list, see Prontera (1993), 388 n. 1.

¹⁶ Thucydides correlates known sites with Homeric ones in 1.25.4, 3.88.1, 4.24.5, and 6.2.1.

¹⁷ Scholars suspect that Strabo depended heavily on these authors for his own discussions of Greece and the Troad. For Demetrius, see Gaede (1880) and Schwartz (1901).

¹⁸ Prontera (1993), 394.

Strabo and Literary Criticism

Strabo was fully embedded within this tradition of geographical discourse, and indeed much of what we know about it is preserved in his work. Even more importantly, his work contains an extensive series of remarks concerning the precise principles according to which he extracts information from Homeric poetry. These allow us to explore the connections of this exegetical practice to other types of poetic criticism and statements of historiographical method. Furthermore, Strabo goes on to provide innumerable examples of his principles at work (a fact often overlooked) in the form of exhaustive and complex discussions of Homeric geographical arcana, that shed light on the relationship of his theory to his practice. Any attempt to understand how Homer was interpreted historically in post-Classical Mediterranean culture needs to grapple with the *Geography*.

Strabo's contributions to poetic criticism, however, have only rarely been of interest to scholars.¹⁹ Rather his legacy seems marked by a consistent failure to take his contribution to poetic and Homeric criticism seriously, despite the length and detail with which he presents them. Strabo's thoughts may not be completely original, but they offer a full statement of a mainstream approach to Homeric poetry that has not been well preserved elsewhere, and that makes his omission or cursory treatment in literary surveys rather surprising.²⁰ When Strabo's use and interpretation of Homer is addressed, it is invariably examined solely in the context of the issue of poetry's function, which he discusses in the *Prolegomena*. Strabo vehemently attacks Eratosthe-

¹⁹ Aujac (1966), (1969); Schenkeveld (1976), and Biraschi (1984), (1986), (1988), (1992).

nes' assertion that poetry 'aimed at entertainment (ψυχαγωγία) and not at instruction (διδασκαλία).' Strabo's own position, that poetry is a mixture of the two, is far more traditional.²¹ This difference of opinion carries over into their attitudes toward Homer's knowledge of geography—Eratosthenes claims that one shouldn't look for accuracy from Homer, and Strabo insists that one can. From a modern viewpoint, Eratosthenes' acknowledgement of a poetry that is not answerable to the strictures of historical or geographical reality is reassuring, because it accords with modern conceptions of literature, and Strabo's behavior is easily dismissible as that of a 'Homeric fundamentalist.' But such a cursory treatment of the debate masks its far greater level of sophistication, a situation made worse by the tendency (Biraschi (1984) is a notable exception) to examine this discussion on its own, bereft of both the *Prolegomena's* larger argumentative context of which it is an integral part, and of the use of Homeric poetry as evidence that is scattered throughout the periegetic portions of the *Geography*. If Strabo's *Geography* should be viewed from a Greek as well as Roman perspective, then his remarks on poetry, history and Homer can only be properly understood as part of his discussion of geography as a whole.

Plan

The so-called *Prolegomena*, the customary term for the first two books of the *Geography*, deals with a number of issues that are preliminary to the region-by-region description of the world that begins in Book 3, with Iberia and ends in Book 17, with

²⁰ So he receives a paragraph in the *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* (Kennedy (1989)), two sentences in Grube (1965), 128; a mention in Russell (1981), and a single reference in Pfeiffer (1968), 166.

²¹ It is paralleled, for instance, in the famous lines of Horace (*Ars Poetica* 332-3): *aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae/ aut simul et iucunda et idonea dicere vitae*.

India. These include long discussions of the configuration of the earth, the extent and nature of the inhabited world, the philosophical and political utility of geography, and a long defense of Homer's geographical knowledge. My purpose in the rest of this chapter is to show how deeply this last element, which occupies roughly half of the entire *Prolegomena*, is connected to Strabo's notion of geography as a whole; how, in effect, his thoughts concerning Homer, Homeric poetry, myth, history, politics, and geography, are all fully integrated and interrelated parts in his conception of his project. Strabo's lines of argument, however, are often quite hard to follow; his rhetorical style is not always linear, and he is prone to extensive digressions, especially polemical ones, that interrupt the flow of his explanations. This makes it easy to misunderstand the text, or overemphasize certain parts of it without taking the full force of the argument into consideration. For this reason, I try to move slowly through it.

In the first two sections (II-III), I show how Strabo's defense of Homer's geographical knowledge is deeply tied in to his larger geographical project, which is concerned as much with the ancient memory and past traditions of places as it is with contemporary details. Since Homer is the primary source and evidence for much of the time period that is so important to Strabo, his reliability must be secured at all costs, and we will also see the extent to which Strabo's ideas about Homer and poetry are informed by historiography. The subsequent two sections (IV-V) address Strabo's theory of how Homer composed his poetry. The first section will be devoted to piecing this together from his scattered remarks, while the second will discuss the famous debate with Eratosthenes mentioned above from the perspective of the rest of the chapter.

II HOMER, THE ἀρχηγέτης τῆς γεωγραφικῆς ἐμπειρίας

“For the moment, let what I have said suffice to prove that Homer founded the art of geography.”

—Strabo, *Geography* 1.1.11

That the best geographer is also a philosopher

Strabo devotes the first section (1.1) of his *Geography* to proving the thesis that he proposes in his opening sentence: “We believe that, if anything else is the business of the philosopher, so also is the science of geography...”²² The three reasons he provides for this belief are that: (1) every famous geographer has been a philosopher, from Homer, Anaximander and Hecataeus, to Eudoxus, Ephorus, Eratosthenes, Polybius and Posidonius; (2) “πολυμάθεια, which alone makes it possible to undertake this type of work, belongs to none other than the one that has examined (ἐπιβλέποντος) things, both human and divine—the knowledge of which they call philosophy (ὡνπερ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιστήμην φασίν)”; and finally, (3) “the ὠφέλεια ποικίλη—multi-faceted usefulness—[of geography]...presupposes the same man [i.e., the philosopher], the one who reflects upon the art of life (τὸν φροντίζοντα τῆς περὶ τὸν βίου τέχνης), that is, of εὐδαιμονία.” Now by Strabo’s time, the term φιλόσοφος referred generally to a cultured person with pretensions to high intellectual achievement. Through his use of the term Strabo is weaving the geographer into the wider intellectual firmament and establishing a set of interrelations between the geographical sphere and the wider “philosophical” one of which it was a part that he will go on to develop at some length.

First of all there is the historical fact that every prominent geographer in the past has also been counted as a philosopher. Secondly, geography requires πολυμάθεια, which is only possessed by someone familiar with philosophy; only a philosopher can, in this definition, be a geographer at all. Finally, geography aims at a goal—ὠφέλεια ποικίλη—that likewise can only be achieved through knowledge of a philosophical nature—that concerning the art of life, or happiness. Strabo, however, is not suggesting that philosophy and geography share the same goals and requirements—that they are in fact, the same thing. Rather, the requirements and goals of geography can only be fulfilled by practices that happen to be the province of the philosopher—wide learning and a concern for the ‘art of life’. Geography is thus seen as a subset of philosophy, a notion that accords with Strabo’s first point, in which all geographers have been philosophers (but not vice versa). But conversely, in the process of formulating this relationship, Strabo shapes his own particular model of the philosopher; πολυμάθεια and knowledge τῆς περὶ τὸν βίον τέχνης become not only prerequisites of geography, but are posited as constituting the prime attributes of philosophy and learning as well. Philosophy itself is understood only in terms recognizable as part of the γεωγραφικὴ τέχνη, and, as we shall see, this mutually defining relationship between geography and philosophy is of considerable importance, not only for grasping Strabo’s conception of geography, but of Homer as well.

After this succinct formulation of the philosophical nature of γεωγραφική, Strabo proceeds to expand on each of his three claims for the remaining 12 pages of the section (C 2-13; 1.1.2-23); paragraphs 2-11 pursue arguments aimed at establishing that

²² Τῆς τοῦ φιλοσόφου πραγματείας εἶναι νομίζομεν, εἴπερ ἄλλην τινά, καὶ τὴν γεωγραφικὴν. ἦν νῦν προηγήμεθα ἐπισκοπεῖν.

Homer was the first geographer, 12-16 are devoted to more precisely outlining the range of knowledge that constitutes πολυμάθεια, while 17-23 emphasize Strabo's understanding of geography as essentially utilitarian and pragmatic.²³ Treatments of these important methodological chapters tend to concentrate on the second two sections; the part on Homer, despite its length (6 pages, the same amount dedicated to πολυμάθεια and ὠφέλεια combined), seems at first glance to have little to do with Strabo's larger argument. Nevertheless the portrait of Homer developed in this section is critically entwined with Strabo's deeper ideas about geography and philosophy, as well as being essential for understanding the methodological bases for his use of Homer throughout the *Geography*. For Strabo, Homer is not only the first geographer, but also his worthiest predecessor, the one who best pursues the model of philosophical and useful geography that Strabo diligently endeavors to define. But as Strabo makes his way through his opening chapters, this portrait of the political and philosophical geographer, begins to bear a striking resemblance to that which ancient writers often associate with an *historian*. Homer ultimately emerges from Strabo's account as an exemplary and conscientious historian *avant la lettre*—one who has preserved the best evidence for the geographical and historical condition of the heroic age.

The Founder of Geography

Strabo opens his discussion with characteristic straightforwardness:

“I say that both I and those before me, one of whom was Hipparchus himself, correctly regard Homer as **the founder of the practice of**

²³ See Aujac (1969), 4-11 for a diagrammed breakdown of Strabo's argument in the *Prolegomena*, (i.e., books 1-2).

geography (ἀρχηγέτης τῆς γεωγραφικῆς ἐμπειρίας); for Homer has surpassed everyone, ancient and modern, not only in the excellence of his poetry (ἐν τῇ κατὰ τὴν ποίησιν ἀρετῇ), but also, I might say, **in his experience of all that pertains to public life** (τῇ κατὰ τὸν βίον ἐμπειρία τὸν πολιτικόν). And this experience made him **busy himself** (ἐσπούδασεν) **not only about public affairs** (περὶ τὰς πράξεις) **to the end that he might learn** (γνοίη) **of as many of them as possible and give an account of them** (παραδώσει) **to those who came after him, but also the things about places** (τὰ περὶ τοὺς τόπους), both on an individual basis and with regard to the whole οἰκουμένη, both land and sea. **For otherwise he would not have gone** (ἀφίκετο) **to its farthest borders**, encompassing the whole of it in his description (τῇ μνήμῃ κύκλῳ περιιών).” (1.1.2)

In the next eight chapters, Strabo shows that Homeric poetry does in fact include mentions of virtually the whole οἰκουμένη. The ingenious interpretations of Homeric poetry that Strabo provides in this section to establish rather obscure points, such as the poet’s knowledge of Iberia (which Homer in fact does not mention by name), or that “by the terms ἄρκτος and ἄμαξια he means τὸν ἀρκτικόν (the northern polar zone),”²⁴ (1.1.16) sometimes make it easy to lose sight of Strabo’s larger argument. The lengthy and arcane discussions are not simply chosen at random. Rather, Strabo methodically demonstrates that Homer “knows and clearly describes the remote ends (τὰ ἔσχατα) of the οἰκουμένη, what surrounds it (τὰ κύκλῳ), as well as the regions around the Mediterranean Sea.” (1.1.10) The trouble is, of course, that while Homer “names some of the countries (τῶν χωρίων τὰ μὲν ὠνόμαζε), he hints at others with signs (τὰ δὲ ὑπηνίπτετο τεκμηρίοις τισί),” (1.1.3) and to bring him into concor-

²⁴ A problem also solved by Aristotle, *Poetics* 1461a20; Lucas (1968) ad loc.: “[Homer’s] statement that the Bear alone of all the constellations never sets gave much trouble to ancient critics...Aristotle...suggests that the Bear is called the ‘only’ constellation because it is by far the most important of those that do not set.”

dance with the picture of the world in Strabo's time requires considerable space and effort.²⁵

But demonstrating Homer's knowledge of cities, nations, and topography was not enough to satisfy the claim that Homer was the ἀρχηγέτης of geography. Strabo sees the poet in terms of the philosophical concepts with which he had just defined the ideal geographer, and so his characterization of Homer underscores not just the poet's knowledge, but how and why Homer came to desire and obtain that knowledge. Only as an embodiment of those virtues proper to geography can Homer rightly be called its "founder."

First of all, Strabo performs the crucial step of separating Homer's role as a poet from his experience of life—his ἀρετὴ κατὰ τὴν ποιήσιν from his ἢ κατὰ τὸν βίον ἐμπειρία τὸν πολιτικόν. With poetry bracketed, Strabo concentrates on Homer's other virtues: he is a man well-versed in the political life, who is keen to investigate 'public affairs' (περὶ τὰς πράξεις) in order both to learn about as many of them as possible and to pass his knowledge down to future generations. And of course, included among the things to be learned are geographical matters (τὰ περὶ τοὺς τόπους) understood in the broadest sense. The Homer we see fleshed out here is not an inventive poet or raconteur, but a learned, intrepid explorer—he has "busied himself" about 'deeds' and 'places' and "gone to the farthest borders of the world." Taken together, Homer's interests and motivations as imagined by Strabo accord remarkably

²⁵ See Aujac (1966), 20-26 for a succinct overview of this section. Many of the discussions here are relatively abbreviated versions of the in-depth defenses of Homeric geographical knowledge that will appear in 1.2. Strabo briefly runs through some problems in this section that he will elaborate in greater detail later, such as the Ethiopians divided in two, the tides, the location of the Cimmerians in Homer, the identity of the Erembians, the question of Iberia, etc.

well with those of the ideal geographer outlined just a paragraph earlier. Homer possessed πολυμάθεια, sought to learn as much as possible about public affairs and places and, most significantly, aimed to transmit this knowledge to posterity. Like the ideal geographer and the philosopher, then, Homer has “investigated all things,” and “concerned himself with the art of life.” As Germaine Aujac has asked, ““Does Homer not represent, according to this definition, the geographer *par excellence*, even if he has not elaborated a systematic geography?”²⁶

Homer: φιλειδήμων καὶ φιλέκδημος

Strabo’s initial portrait of Homer emphasizes three qualities which will be reiterated and further elaborated in the course of his discussion: his ἐμπειρία, or experience, of life, his eagerness to learn, and his willingness to travel far distances to obtain information. In 1.1.10, for instance, Strabo points to Homer’s alleged description of the tides as “another proof of the same zealous curiosity (τῆς αὐτῆς φιλοπραγμοσύνης),” that he had alluded to a few pages before. Again, at 1.2.29, Strabo speaks of the poet’s “love of learning (τὸ φιλειδημον),” coupling it this time with his “love of travel (τὸ φιλέκδημον)”; both are attributes “to which all those who have written about Homer’s life bear witness (μαρτυροῦσιν ὅσοι τὸν βίον ἀναγράφουσι),²⁷ and of which many examples (παραδείγματα) may be found in the poems themselves.”

²⁶ Aujac (1966), 34. In general, my account has much in common with Aujac’s overview of Strabo’s picture of Homer (34-6).

²⁷ For the *Vitae Homeri*, see Allen’s *Homeri Opera*, vol. V. The *Vitae* do indeed ‘bear witness’ to Homer’s travels; see Aujac (1969), 197. The Herodotean life, for example, refers to Homer’s travels for learning and mentions his stay on Ithaca, where he learned about Odysseus from Mentor, whom he repayed by portraying him in the *Odyssey*. The *Vita* ascribed to Proclus, not mentioned by Aujac, even goes so far as to

A sample of these παραδείγματα appear at 1.1.16. As evidence for the benefit to be gained from an extensive knowledge of “terrestrial knowledge” (ἡ ἐπίγειος ἱστορία)²⁸, Strabo asserts the authority of ‘ancient memory’ (ἡ παλαιὰ μνήμη):

the poets show that the wisest (φρονιμωτάτους) heroes were those who visited many places and wandered (τούς ἀποδημήσαντας πολ-
λαχοῦ καὶ πλανηθέντας); for they hold it as a great thing to have “seen the cities and known the minds of many men (πολλῶν ἀνθρώπων ἰδεῖν ἄστεα καὶ νόον γνῶναι).” (*Od.* 1.3)

So Nestor, according to Strabo, “boasts (σεμνύνεται) of having lived among the Lapiths (*Il.* 1.270),” while Menelaus boasts of his travels in *Od.* 4.83, and often takes care to mention “the distinctive peculiarity (τὸ ἰδίωμα)” of the places he has visited.²⁹ Such sentiments could not but be reflections of their author Homer’s love of travel and learning.

In a final παράδειγμα, Strabo claims that “it is likely (εἰκός) that Heracles is spoken of as ‘familiar with great deeds (μεγάλων ἐπίστορα ἔργων (*Od.* 21.26))’ from his wide experience (ἀπὸ τῆς πολλῆς ἐμπειρίας) and inquiry (ἱστορίας).” The addition here of the more active notion of ἱστορία—inquiry—to those of travel, experience, and observation suggests that, for Strabo, Homer had also recognized the importance of investigation in the seeking of knowledge. Later, at 1.2.13, Strabo is more explicit. In reference to the question of the location of Odysseus’ wanderings, he insists upon

infer Homer’s wealth from the fact that he was able to travel so much (see Fairweather (1974)). In general, see Lefkowitz (1981) and the excellent article of Heath (1998).

²⁸ Or, as Aujac (1969), loc. cit., translates, “l’information sur ce qui vit la terre.”

²⁹ 1.1.16: “So too Menelaus: ‘I roamed over Cyprus, Phoenicia and Egypt, and came to the Ethiopians, Sidonians, Erembians and Libya’ (*Od.* 4.83).” Among the peculiarities are the birth cycles of sheep in Libya, the herbs of Egypt (*Od.* 4.229), and the gates of Egyptian Thebes (*Il.* 9.383). Van Paassen (1957) has noted that characterizing the ‘particularity’ of a place was of great importance to Strabo’s notion of geography.

certain guidelines for the sort of information Homer can and cannot be expected to provide:

for we do not demand (ζητοῦμεν) that the poet should have inquired accurately into each particular (ἀκριβῶς ἕκαστα πυθέσθαι), nor demand accuracy from him (παρ' ἐκείνου τὸ ἀκριβές); yet even so, we surely are not entitled to assume that he composed the story (ῥαψωδεῖν) without having inquired at all (μηδὲν πεπυσμένον) about the wandering, either as to where or how it occurred (μήθ' ὅπου μήθ' ὅπως γεγένηται). (1.2.13)

Strabo finds it incredible to imagine that Homer would have written about Odysseus's wanderings, and *not* tried to find out 'where and how' they took place. By his use of the ὅπως, Strabo clearly signifies that Homer's love of learning was not restricted merely to geographical detail, but extended to determining *what actually happened*. Homer was not just a geographer but also a historian.

Polybius, Strabo, and Homer the Historian

After all, had not Strabo portrayed Homer as keenly interested in πράξεις—deeds—i.e., the stuff of history? Isn't utility—ὠφέλεια—which Strabo had touted as the primary goal of geography, the *raison d'être* of the historical work? And shouldn't the historian, in the oft-recited formulation, also be a man of action, that is, possess ἡ κατὰ τὸν βίον ἐμπειρία τὸν πολιτικόν?³⁰ While these ideas might strike us at first glance simply as *topoi* of ancient historiography, they particularly resonate with the discussions of the purposes of history and the characteristics necessary for

³⁰ Cf. Lucian, *How to Write History* 37, where the ideal historian should be "capable of handling the affairs of state...of understanding military affairs, and politics too..."

the proper historian found in Polybius.³¹ The similarities between Strabo's characterization of Homer and Polybius' of the historian are remarkable: for Polybius, of the three essential components of πραγματική ιστορία —contemporary history—one is περὶ τὰς πράξεις τὰς πολιτικάς while another is περὶ τὴν θέαν τῶν πόλεων καὶ τῶν τόπων, the very areas of knowledge in which Strabo praises Homer. Polybius also repeatedly highlights ὠφέλεια as his work's most important objective; for instance, his sort of 'political history' is ὠφελιμώτατον at 9.2.6, history's purpose is τὴν ὠφέλειαν for the serious student at 2.56.11, and history's *telos* is ὠφέλεια at 15.36.3.

But by far the most significant point of contact occurs around the term ἐμπειρία, experience, which Polybius sees as one of the most important assets of the good historian. Polybius' chief criticism of Timaeus of Tauromenium's historical abilities is that he had no *experience* of the things he was talking about, because, "it is neither possible for a man with no military experience (ἐμπειρίαν) to write well about what goes on in a war, nor for one unversed in the practice and circumstances of politics to write well on that subject." (12.25g.1) Not only does this mean that such historians get things wrong, but they also are unable to "arouse the interest of their readers" because they lack a certain "vividness" (ἔμφασις) only possessed by those who have such experience. ἐμπειρία is, as we have seen, a primary characteristic of Strabo's Homer, but Polybius is more explicit:

Now this quality [vividness—ἔμφασις] is likely to be found among only those historians who have played some part in affairs themselves (τοῖς δι' αὐτῶν πεπορευμένοις τῶν πραγμάτων) and made this aspect of

³¹ Polybius was one of Strabo's most important sources, see Clarke (1999b) and Dueck (2000), 46-52.

history their own (τοῦτο τὸ μέρος περιπεποιημένοις τῆς ιστορίας)...Sufficient proof (ικανὸν ὑπόδειγμα πρὸς πίστιν) that what I am saying is by no means impossible (οὐκ ἀδύνατον) is offered us by the poet, for in his poetry one sees much of this kind of vividness (τῆς τοιαύτης ἐμφάσεως)." (12.25h.6-25i.1)

Vividness in writing about politics, war, or even domestic matters, then, usually arises from participation in and familiarity with these activities, even if not necessarily in the specific events one was actually writing about.³² Such a stance is in keeping with Polybius' general privileging of political and military experience for those writing history, but here he specifically points, not to a historian, but to Homer for an example that such vividness can be achieved. Polybius not only implies that Homer was a man of experience, familiar with τὰ πράγματα, but he clearly considers him a historian, and goes so far as to see him as the *best* one that corresponds to the model Polybius has just set forth. Homer's poetry displays the vividness of which Polybius speaks, but does so because he is, like all historians should be, versed in worldly and domestic life experience.³³

A short while later, at 12.27.6, Polybius again refers to Homer's qualities as a historian. The thesis here is that personal investigation is the most important part of history (ἡ πολυπραγμοσύνη μεγιστόν ἐστι μέρος τῆς ιστορίας). Polybius claims that many historians before him have understood and asserted this fact, and he cites Epho-

³² "Hence our predecessors considered that historical memoirs should possess such vividness as to make one exclaim when the author deals with political affairs that he necessarily had taken part in politics and had experience of what is wont to happen in the political world, when he deals with war that he had been in the field and risked his life, and when he deals with private life that he had reared children and lived with a wife, and so regarding the other parts of life." (12.25h.5)

³³ We might note a rough parallel in Strabo 1.2.5 where Homer's skill in characterization is adduced as evidence that he had wide life experience: "How, then can a man imitate life if he has no experience of life and is a dolt?"

rus, Theopompus, and Homer to this effect. But of the three “the poet has been even clearer (ἐμφαντικώτερον) on this subject than the others. When he wishes to set before us the qualities that the man of action (ἄνδρα τὸν πραγματικόν) should possess, he presents the image of Odysseus in these words: “many were they whose cities he saw, whose minds he learned of (*Od.* 1.3),” and again: “One who had suffered the shocks of the battlefield and of the tempest” (*Od.* 8.183).” “It appears to me,” Polybius gravely concludes, “that the πρόσχημα of history demands such a man.” (12.28.1)

Here, as previously, Homer is included in a list of historians, in a manner that seems to require no justification. While in 12.25, Polybius had turned to Homer as an example of a historian who achieved an ἔμφασις τῶν πραγμάτων that can only be produced ἐκ τῆς αὐτοπαθείας, locating in the poet the consummate historical writer, he here uses Homer as the culminating citation of historians who emphasize the need for personal experience of political and military affairs. The historical qualities that Polybius sees in Homer resonate strongly with those found in Strabo—Homer as a man of action, concerned with personal investigation, experienced in a wide range of political and domestic affairs, and finally concerned to emphasize these same qualities in the people he writes about.³⁴

In his aspect as a historian, Homer exemplifies the qualities that Polybius holds as essential to his own work;³⁵ and so it shouldn't surprise us that the same is true of Strabo, whose description of his own qualifications as a geographer in the so-called “second introduction” at 2.5 brings the interplay of geography, philosophy, history and

³⁴ And note that Polybius quotes the very lines of the *Odyssey* as Strabo does in 1.1.16, to prove the same point.

Homer to a fitting climax. Strabo provides the reader with an itinerary of precisely where he has traveled,³⁶ taking care to note that “one could not find another geographer who has traveled over much more than I have” (2.5.11).³⁷ From this assertion of his own τὸ φιλέκδημον, Strabo turns to his τὸ φιλείδημον. Just as he had imagined Homer as inquiring after places and events he was unable to witness himself, Strabo argues that geographers (glossed as “those who love to learn”—οἱ φιλομαθεῖς)³⁸ must rely, not only on *autopsia*, but also on secondhand witnesses, i.e., “those who have seen and traveled over places, some here, some there, as sensors (αἰσθητηρίοις) and form in one diagram their mental image of the whole inhabited world.” The description has come full circle. Homer, the philosopher, the geographer, the historian, and of course, the first and most illustrious figure in a line that continues with Strabo.³⁹

³⁵ It is significant that the two passages in which Polybius mentions Homer are the two most important methodological passages in Book 12. For a lucid reading of the two, which however ignores the Homeric references, see Schepens (1974).

³⁶ C 117, 2.5.11: “I have traveled westward from Armenia as far as the regions of Tyrrhenia opposite Sardinia, and southward from the Euxine Sea as far as the frontiers of Ethiopia.”

³⁷ He clarifies this by claiming: “those who have traveled more than I in the western regions have not covered as much ground in the east” and vice versa, “and the same holds true in regard to the regions to the south and the north.” (C 117, 2.5.11)

³⁸ A term used frequently by Polybius to refer to the readers of history.

³⁹ Polybius also sees himself in a Homeric mold; Walbank (1948), 181, has suggested that Polybius’ interest in Homer, and Odysseus in particular, might have something to do with the extent to which the Odyssean model of a wise wanderer of distant lands, experienced in war and strategy, resonated with Polybius’ self-conception. Cf. his self-characterization at 3.59. which bears striking resemblances to Strabo’s: “It was in fact with this express object [to give an accurate description of the world] that I underwent the dangers and hardships of making journeys through Africa, Spain, and Gaul, and voyages on the sea which adjoins these countries on their western side.”

III THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF PLACES AND THE RETURN TO HOMER

Strabo has, then, devoted the first half of his opening section to sketching Homer as his predecessor, as a polymath, an inquirer, a traveler, and he clearly sees himself reflected in this image. But why does he do it? What is the point, here, and elsewhere in the *Prolegomena*, of Strabo's single-minded devotion to establishing Homer's credibility and proving his geographical knowledge, if it does not originate in some 'Stoic' zeal to invest Homer with divine wisdom?⁴⁰ Even if a reader were to grant Strabo's point, and accept that Homer was indeed the founder of geography and familiar with every part of the οἰκουμένη, they might still ask how relevant this is to the rest of the section (1.1.12-23), in which he argues that geography must be based on πολυμάθεια and aim at ὠφέλεια?

To answer this question, we have to look more closely at Strabo's discussion of his purpose in writing the *Geography*, and especially the place of history in relation to it. Building on the work of Christian Van Paassen and Anna Maria Biraschi, I want to bring out the ways in which Strabo's careful construction of Homer as a geographical and historical authority is intricately connected to his theoretical remarks about geography, particularly in regard to the utility of his work.

The "Utility" of Geography

As we mentioned earlier, Strabo follows his treatment of Homeric geographical knowledge with a section (1.1.12-16) presenting the various areas of knowledge that he deems it proper for a geographer to master—i.e., the πολυμάθεια necessary for geography. These include fluency in both celestial and terrestrial matters, and in particular

ἡ ἐπίγειος ἱστορία, that is, knowledge of “what lives on the earth.” (1.1.16) But this last aspect of πολυμάθεια takes on considerable importance because of its “great benefit for all those who possess this knowledge.” With this type of learning, we pass from the knowledge *necessary* for the geographer to that which imparts a benefit to his readers, and hence into a discussion of the usefulness of geography.

The benefits of ἡ ἐπίγειος ἱστορία, Strabo claims, are evident both from ancient memory (ἐκ τῆς παλαιᾶς μνήμης) and reason (ἐκ τοῦ λογοῦ). We have already gone over his first set of evidence—the quotes from Homer about the travels of the heroes—in the previous section. Strabo’s second argument has a more pragmatic cast: geography, for the most part, is geared towards political needs (πρὸς τὰς χρείας τὰς πολιτικός), and clearly bears upon the activities of leaders; “for thus they can manage their affairs in a more satisfactory manner, if they know how large a country is, how it lies, and what its peculiarities are...” (1.1.16) From this point Strabo moves into a discussion of geography’s utility as a whole, in matters both small and large. A knowledge of the forest is essential to a hunter, just as a sure grasp of the land is to the leaders of military expeditions; Strabo emphasizes this last point with a long list of campaigns that failed due to lack of geographical information, from Agamemnon’s mistaken invasion of Mysia (in the belief that it was Troy) to Crassus’ disastrous campaign against the Parthians.

This emphasis on utility as the standard by which geography must be measured (μέτρον τῆς τοιαύτης ἐμπειρίας) comes to dominate the section as we near its end. The “wide learning” required of the geographer translates in the end to that knowledge which the reader can be assumed to already possess, corresponding to that “useful for

⁴⁰ See Appendix Two for a discussion of why it does not.

the statesman and the general to know (ταῦθ' ὅσα τῶ πολιτικῶ καὶ τῶ στρατηλάτῃ χρήσιμα).” (1.1.21) Utility is the aim of the work; the geographer should direct his attention to “the useful (τὰ χρήσιμα).” (1.1.19)

Strabo’s emphasis on the utilitarian end of his work clearly derives from historiographical discourse, where it had become virtually *de rigueur* to proclaim the usefulness of one’s history as the reason to read it. He even explicitly declares the present work a companion piece to his *History*: “having written my ὑπομνήματα ἱστορικὰ, which have been useful (χρήσιμα) for ethical and political philosophy, I decided to add this work as well.” (1.1.23) This utility was usually aimed at a certain class of reader, and Strabo himself states that his *Geography* “is addressed to the same class of readers and particularly to men of exalted stations in life” as his historical work. (1.1.23) He even defines the sort of person he has in mind: “by statesman (πολιτικόν) I mean not the man who is completely uncultured (ἀπαίδευτον), but one who has taken the round of courses customary for free men or students of philosophy.”⁴¹ (1.1.22)

So geography, in Strabo’s eyes, is to be useful, particularly for statesmen. But how exactly does he envision this utility? Judging from his discussion of the benefits of geographical knowledge, he seems to be talking about detailed topographical information, of the sort that would be of use to a general on campaign. Naturally, this is what we would expect; how else could geography be useful? But Strabo adds a strange observation to his claims of geography’s importance to commanders. “Even,” he says, “if

⁴¹ As Biraschi (1988), 129-32 notes, Strabo envisions a reader similar to those that Dionysius of Halicarnassus describes in his *Antiquitates Romanae*; there are parallels also with Polybius, as is to be expected. Cf. Gabba (1982a), 60: “Strabo distinguishes

the whole world formed one empire or state...the nearer regions would be better known.” So, rather than treat every region indiscriminately with the same level of detail, Strabo feels that:

it would be quite proper (προσήκοι) to describe [the nearer] regions in greater detail (διὰ πλειόνων ἐμφανίζειν), in order to make them known (γνώριμα), for they are also nearer to utility (τῆς χρείας).

Strabo explains that for himself, a description, such as Homer’s, of Aulis as “rocky” (πετρήεσσαν) would be appropriate (ἡμῖν δὲ προσήκει) to include; but in the case of an Indian geographer such details would not; and in fact, “utility (ἡ χρεία) does not urge it.” (1.1.16) This is a rather peculiar statement; isn’t the whole point of a comprehensive geography to concentrate also on lesser known regions? And this would seem especially true in the context of military campaigns. After all, Strabo’s examples of military failures all involved regions distant from the invaders, and it’s hard to see how they might have avoided their disasters if they had access to a geographer unconcerned with the topographical details of far-off places.

This slight ambiguity about what Strabo means by “utility” becomes much more pronounced in the rather surprising conclusion of 1.1. After pounding home his dedication to the utility of his work, he ends with the following:

[In the same way as in my historical work] the things concerning the lives of distinguished men are recorded (τὰ περὶ τοῦς ἐπιφανεῖς ἄνδρας καὶ βίους τυγχάνει μνήμης), while small and unnotable things are left out (τὰ δὲ μικρὰ καὶ ἄδοξα παραλείπεται), so also here it is necessary to pass over small and inconspicuous things (κάνταῦθα δεῖ τὰ μικρὰ καὶ τὰ ἀφανῆ παραπέμπειν), and spend my time on noble and great matters, and on the practical, the memorable, and the pleas-

between the specialized scientist and the intelligent political uses of geographical doctrine.”

ant (έν δὲ τοῖς ἐνδόξοις καὶ μεγάλοις καὶ ἐν οἷς τὸ πραγματικὸν καὶ εὐμνημόνευτον καὶ ἡδὺ διατρίβειν).” (1.1.23)

Strabo’s decision to only deal with important events and distinguished men is a common *topos* of ancient historical writing, but its application to a geographical work seems more problematic. Strabo seems to be working with conceptions of geography and utility that are differently conceived from what we might have thought. This is especially apparent in the famous simile with which Strabo concludes:

Just as with colossal statues (καθάπερ τε καὶ ἐν τοῖς κολοσσικοῖς ἔργοις) we do not painstakingly examine each individual part (οὐ τὸ καθ’ ἕκαστον ἀκριβῆς ζητοῦμεν), but rather consider the overall effect to see whether the statue as a whole is beautiful (ἀλλὰ τοῖς καθόλου προσέχομεν μᾶλλον εἰ καλῶς τὸ ὅλον), so also should this work of mine be judged (οὕτως κὰν τούτοις δεῖ ποιῆσθαι τὴν κρίσιν). For since it is also some sort of colossal work, (κολοσσουργία γάρ τις καὶ αὕτη), in a certain way it also deals with great and complete things (τὰ μέγαρα φράζουσα πῶς ἔχει καὶ τὰ ὅλα), except if some small thing may stir the interest of the studious or practical man (πλὴν εἴ τι κινεῖν δύναται καὶ τῶν μικρῶν τὸν φιλειδήμονα καὶ τὸν πραγματικόν). (1.1.23)

“A Great Inventory of Everything”

From a study of these passages, and similar ones scattered throughout the *Geography*, Christian Van Paassen has characterized Strabo’s method of working as a “selective” approach similar, as we saw, to that practiced by ancient historians—to concentrate only on the events that are worthy of memory, the great deeds. In this way the *Geography* is thoroughly infused with a *historical* sense—its purpose is not comprehensiveness or objectivity, only a concern with what is noble, great, and memorable. This approach is directly related to the importance of ‘utility’ in Strabo’s conception of geography. As Van Paassen puts it:

Because Strabo's ultimate aim is usefulness, he says that he will pursue a selective, unsystematic approach; he will not provide an exhaustive account, but only choose those aspects he thinks are *μνήμης ἄξιος*; or useful to his potential audience.⁴²

But while a historical work can be selective, focusing only on the deeds worthy of memory, and henceforth useful in the sense that ancient historians understood the term—i.e., presenting persons or events as *exempla* to be emulated or avoided, or as case-studies of certain types of military and political situations, or simply as examples of the workings of fate—it is less clear how a geographical treatise could be 'useful' if it did not describe places at a certain level of detail. What does Strabo mean, in any case, by the terms memorable or useful in terms of geographical features? Or, as Bira-schi asks, "what does it mean, in a work of geography in which utility is aimed above all toward the practical, to neglect details?"

The answer is to be sought in what Strabo envisions by the term 'geography' as applied to his project. For Strabo geography is more than a simple description of the physical aspects of places; it encompasses a much wider range of material. Claude Nicolet has eloquently characterized Strabo's conception of geography as "comprising the science of the appropriation of the land by man, the inventory of his home, of his resources, and of the traces that he had left behind him...geography is neither especially practical nor theoretical (mathematical), neither public nor private, but rather all of these together..."⁴³ Above all, a reader of the *Geography* might encounter digressions on ethnographic detail, local legends, scientific information, regional ex-

⁴² van Paassen (1957), 20. Strabo is fairly firm about the matter; cf. 2.5.34: "keeping in mind the scope of my geography, I am not required to enumerate all of the many inhabited places that the said intervening distance suggests to me."

⁴³ Nicolet (1991), 73.

ports, citation of poetry; an encyclopedia of information, in some sense, classified according to a spatial organizing principle. As Van Paassen notes, when Strabo uses terms like χώρα, τόπος, or οἰκουμένη he refers to “a spatial entity whose content does not consist of nature alone, nor of the local culture as such, but forms the totality of the human world within the given spatial boundaries as also inorganic nature and the world of plants and animals.”⁴⁴ Strabo’s objective, in Van Paassen’s terms, is to describe this integrated totality of nature and culture—the “anthroposphere.”

This catholic notion of what counts as geographical extends, however, even beyond representations that take into account the current inhabitants and culture; for Strabo, places have a temporal aspect as well. “The man who busies himself with the description of the earth must speak, not only of the facts of the present, but also sometimes of the facts of the past, especially when they are notable.” (6.1.2) As Biraschi has so skillfully demonstrated, Strabo feels it necessary, when describing certain regions and areas, to concentrate not only on current conditions, but also to the important historical memory that lingers in each place, which constitute, as Strabo himself puts it, “a kind of natural attribute of a place.” In an extremely important passage, he states that geographers should mention both permanent attributes (those due to nature), as well as those more subject to change.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ van Paassen (1957), 18.

⁴⁵ 2.5.17: “Since different places exhibit different attributes, both good and bad, as well as the advantages and inconveniences that result therefrom (ἄλλων ἄλλας ἀρετάς τε καὶ κακίας καὶ τὰς ἀπ’ αὐτῶν χρείας ἐπιδεικνυμένων ἢ δυσχρηστίας), some from nature and others through acquisition (τὰς μὲν φύσει, τὰς δὲ ἐκ κατασκευῆς), the geographer should mention those that are due to nature; for they are permanent (διαμένουσι), whereas the acquired characteristics are subject to changes (αἱ δ’ ἐπίθετοι δέχονται μεταβολάς).”

And of these latter attributes he should indicate those which are able to persist for a long time, or else those which, although unable to persist, somehow possess a certain distinction and fame (ἄλλως δ' ἐπιφάνειαν ἐχούσας τινὰ καὶ δόξαν); this fame by enduring (παραμένουσα) to later times, make a work of man, even when it no longer exists, a kind of natural attribute of a place (τρόπον τινὰ συμφυῆ). As a result, it is clear that these latter attributes must also be mentioned. (2.5.17)

Strabo even asserts his right to mention cities and places that have utterly disappeared, in the interests of his readers and in keeping with his concern for utility:

Men like to visit these places [no longer in existence] as well as others, because they are eager (ποθοῦντες) at least to see the traces of deeds so celebrated (τά γε ἵχνη τῶν οὕτω διωνομασμένων ἔργων), just as they like to visit the tombs of illustrious men (τῶν ἐνδόξων ἀνδρῶν). So I have also mentioned customs and *politeiai* that no longer exist (νομίμων καὶ πολιτειῶν μεμνήμεθα τῶν μηκέτ' οὐσῶν), for the reason that **utility urges me** (τῆς ὠφέλειας προκαλουμένης) in the same way as in the case of actions (ἐπὶ τῶν πράξεων); that is, either for the emulation or the avoidance of things of this sort (ἢ γὰρ ζήλου χάριν, ἢ ἀποτροπῆς τῶν τοιούτων). (2.5.17)

Biraschi believes that behind these words, “one can almost see a fear that limiting oneself to only ‘physical’ geography and describing only the present state of things would risk losing the historical connotations that through tradition have come to form an integral part of the very individuality of place; a fear that the new political order could forget preceding assets, different customs and institutions from which there was always something to receive and learn.”⁴⁶ So Rome, never mentioned, still lurks in the background.

⁴⁶ Biraschi (1988), 133.

Homer and Ancient Memory

It's easy to see now how Homer enters the picture, particularly in the books on Greece and the Troad, where so much heroic activity took place. Because the stories associated with the Trojan War and the *nostoi* have become as intrinsic qualities of such areas as any current topographical features, because the very identity and perception of so many cities and regions was so dependent on their sense of connection to a Homeric past, Strabo feels it necessary to focus on these matters. He frequently apologizes for this practice. Witness the prologue to his description of the Troad:

The first country on this seaboard is the Troad, the fame of which, although it is left in ruins and in desolation, nevertheless prompts in writers no ordinary prolixity. With this fact in view, I should ask the pardon of my readers and appeal to them not to fasten the blame for the length of my discussion upon me rather than upon those who strongly yearn for knowledge of the things that are famous and ancient. (13.1.1)⁴⁷

But, he acknowledges, discovering the truth about the archaic periods of this region is extremely difficult due to “the number of the peoples who have colonized the country, both Greeks and barbarians, and due to the historians, who do not write the same things on the same subjects, nor always clearly either.” First among these historians is, of course, Homer, and as a result, Strabo pronounces the necessity of arbitrating “between his statements and those of the others.” Like Thucydides, Strabo practices a ‘return to Homer’ as the best source for information about the heroic age,

⁴⁷ ἔστι δὲ Τρωὰς πρώτη τῆς παραλίας ταύτης, ἧς τὸ πολυθρύλητον καίπερ ἐν ἐρειπίοις καὶ ἐν ἐρημία λειπομένης ὅμως πολυλογίαν οὐ τὴν τυχοῦσαν παρέχει τῇ γραφῇ. πρὸς τοῦτο δὲ συγγνώμης δεῖ καὶ παρακλήσεως, ὅπως τὴν αἰτίαν τοῦ μήκους μὴ ἡμῖν μᾶλλον ἀνάπτωσιν οἱ ἐντυγχάνοντες ἢ τοῖς σφόδρα ποθοῦσι τὴν τῶν ἐνδόξων καὶ παλαιῶν γυνῶσιν·

bypassing the intervening, less reliable, historians.⁴⁸ This privileging of Homer testimony for investigation into the heroic period is reiterated in his treatment of the Peloponnese:

Perhaps I would not be examining at such length things that are ancient, and would be content merely to tell in detail how things now are, if there were not connected with these matters legends that have been taught us from boyhood; and since different men say different things, I must act as arbiter. In general, it is the most famous, the oldest, and the most experienced men who are believed; and since it is Homer who has surpassed all others in these respects, I must likewise both inquire into his words and compare them with things as they now are, as I was saying a little while ago. (8.3.23)⁴⁹

For the geographer, then, the geographical and historical situation of the heroic age was extremely important; and from Strabo's remarks, it seems as if such matters were not simply relegated to antiquarians and pedants, but resonated with all educated people of the day. Time and time again Strabo tests, refutes, or confirms local stories, aetiological tales, identifications of relics or monuments, with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as his arbiters. The Homeric text is the foremost relic of that bygone heroic age whose vestiges and memories lay scattered around the first century Mediterranean; but it represents the surest connection to that era—the only means by which one might reconstruct what had been almost irreparably lost.

⁴⁸ According to Bruno Sunseri (1997), Ephorus also shared this same privileging of Homer for heroic events, and one suspects that it was a widespread practice.

⁴⁹ οὐκ ἂν δ' ἐξητάζομεν ἴσως ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον τὰ παλαιά, ἀλλ' ἤρκει λέγειν ὡς ἔχει νῦν ἕκαστα, εἰ μὴ τις ἦν ἐκ παιδῶν ἡμῖν παραδεδομένη φήμη περὶ τούτων· ἄλλων δ' ἄλλα εἰπόντων ἀνάγκη διαιτᾶν. πιστεύονται δ' ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ οἱ ἐνδοξότατοί τε καὶ πρεσβύτατοι καὶ κατ' ἐμπειρίαν πρῶτοι· Ὀμήρου δ' εἰς ταῦτα ὑπερβεβλημένου πάντας, ἀνάγκη συνεπισκοπεῖν καὶ τὰ ὑπ' ἐκείνου λεχθέντα καὶ συγκρούειν πρὸς τὰ νῦν, καθάπερ καὶ μικρὸν ἐμπροσθεν ἔφαμεν.

IV Προσμυθεύσθαι: THE THEORY OF HOMERIC COMPOSITION

A vivid portrait of Homer—curious, eager for knowledge, fond of travel, inquiring diligently after information on places and events, and committed to passing down this information to others. The poet turns out to embody the ideal historian, as well as geographer, and plays a large role in Strabo's own self-fashioning as a combination of these two occupations.

Not even Strabo, however, says that Homer actually was a *historian*. He was perfectly aware of the fact that Homer had not written a history or geography, but an epic poem; as we saw earlier, in 1.1.2 he had distinctly separated Homer's ἀρετή as a poet from his experience of public affairs, and concentrated his discussion on the latter. Such an acknowledgement naturally presented some difficulties to a writer, like Strabo, who was committed to demonstrating the reliability of Homeric historical (or geographical) information. How then to reconcile this with Homer's alleged desire to know as much as possible and transmit it to posterity?

This is the question that Strabo sets out to answer in sections 1.2.3 -40 of the *Geography*. In essence, while Strabo sees in Homer the archetypal geographer and historian, he also understands that his status as a poet affects not only the form in which Homer presents his knowledge of the world, but also the content. Only if one first correctly understands Homer's intentions and his methods of composition, can one properly read his poetry, sifting truth from fiction. It is worth emphasizing here that although Strabo is a geographer, in this part of his work he is laying out a fully *poetic* theory—of how he understands the notion of poetry, and how he reads it.

Strabo's springboard for his discussion of this issue is a polemic against Eratosthenes' critical remarks on Homer. In its barest, most reductive terms, the dispute was

this: Eratosthenes had claimed that the purpose of poetry was ψυχαγωγία, not διδασκαλία, while Strabo argued vehemently that it was a combination of both. As I mentioned earlier, scholarly discussions of Homeric and poetic criticism in the *Geography* have followed Strabo's lead, and focused almost exclusively on this disagreement. But Eratosthenes and his heterodox views function primarily as a convenient entry point for Strabo into a larger set of issues, and the ensuing discussion is better seen as an essential part of Strabo's demonstration of the value of Homeric poetry as historical and geographical evidence than as simply a debate about the nature of poetry.

So before we look at the famous debate, we should first examine Strabo's position vis-à-vis Homeric poetry on its own, and only then address Eratosthenes' views (as we can make them out from Strabo's remarks). Perhaps this will shift the focus onto some less familiar territory, and in the process challenge some oft-repeated truisms of literary critical history.

The Problem: Homer's 'Myths'

In his discussion of Homer's geographical knowledge, Strabo interjects a sudden defense of the poet's use of "mythic" material:

we might also excuse the poet if he has intertwined some 'mythic' material in among the things said historically and pedagogically (εἰ μυθῶδη τινὰ προσπέλεκται τοῖς λεγομένοις ἱστορικῶς καὶ διδασκαλικῶς), and it is not necessary to criticize this (καὶ οὐ δεῖ μέμφεσθαι), for what Eratosthenes says is not true, that every poet aims at ψυχαγωγία, not διδασκαλία. (1.1.10)

The matter, he says, will be discussed in more detail later, and he keeps his promise, taking up Eratosthenes in 1.2.3, and elucidating his own remarks on ‘mythic’ material in 1.2.7., where he offers a theory of Homer’s composing process.

“Homer mythologizes more accurately than those after him (δι’ ἀκριβείας Ὅμηρος καὶ μᾶλλον γε τῶν ὕστερον μυθολογεῖται), since he does not speak of everything in marvelous terms (οὐ πάντα τερατευόμενος), but allegorizes, elaborates, or popularizes for the purpose of knowledge (πρὸς ἐπιστήμην ἀλληγορῶν ἢ διασκευάζων ἢ δημαγωγῶν), especially with reference to the things concerning the wandering of Odysseus.”⁵⁰

The central point is that Homer does *not* “make everything marvelous”, but employs myth “for the purpose of knowledge,” by “allegorizing, elaborating, or popularizing.” Strabo devotes the bulk of the following sections to clarifying and elaborating this rather enigmatic statement.

He opens with a fascinating speculative excursus on the nature and development of μῦθος (1.2.8). The poets, he asserts, were not the only ones to employ myths, nor even the first; on the contrary, “long before the poets the *poleis* and the lawgivers had sanctioned them for the sake of utility (τοῦ χρησίμου χάριν).”⁵¹ They saw that children could be attracted to learning through the inclusion of “the wondrous and the marvelous” (τὸ θαυμαστὸν καὶ τὸ τερατῶδες); these myths might be ‘sweet’ and hence incite the youth to emulation, or ‘frightening’, dissuading them from evil ways. After reaching maturity, children would be able to learn the truth directly, without the use of myths. Most people, however—the ‘uneducated’, the ‘partly educated’, or the

⁵⁰ In general, translations are substantial modifications of H.L. Jones’ Loeb; for sections 1.2.3 – 1.2.9. I occasionally employ the translation in Russell and Winterbottom (1970), 300-5.

⁵¹ 1.2.8: Καὶ πρῶτον ὅτι τοὺς μύθους ἀπεδέξαντο οὐχ οἱ ποιηταὶ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ αἱ πόλεις πολὺ πρότερον καὶ οἱ νομοθέται τοῦ χρησίμου χάριν.

ιδιώται—never progress beyond this childlike state; because of this, when faced with ‘a crowd of women’ or a ‘disorderly throng’, the philosopher cannot simply use logic and reason to convince them to pursue or avoid certain paths, but must have recourse to ‘superstition’ (δεῖ καὶ διὰ δεισιδαιμονίας), via the use of μυθοποιία and τερατεία.⁵²

Strabo ends with a description of the original period of development:

The founders of our societies, however, used these tales as bogies for infantile minds. This characteristic of μυθοποιία, and its value in the transition to communal and public life and the ἱστορία of actual things, led the ancients to continue elementary education right up to adult life, and they considered that all ages could be disciplined sufficiently through poetry.

ταῦτα δ' ἀπεδέξαντο οἱ τὰς πολιτείας καταστησάμενοι μορ-
 μολύκας τινὰς πρὸς τοὺς νηπιόφρονας. τοιαύτης δὲ τῆς μυθ-
 οποιίας οὔσης καὶ καταστρεφούσης εἰς τὸ κοινωνικὸν καὶ τὸ
 πολιτικὸν τοῦ βίου σχῆμα καὶ τὴν τῶν ὄντων ἱστορίαν, οἱ μὲν
 ἀρχαῖοι τὴν παιδικὴν ἀγωγὴν ἐφύλαξαν μέχρι τῶν τελείων
 ἡλικιῶν, καὶ διὰ ποιητικῆς ἱκανῶς σωφρονίζεσθαι πᾶσαν ἡλικίαν
 ὑπέλαβον.

From a very early time, then, myths had been an essential element of political life and elementary education. Poetry, in this version of *Kulturgeschichte*, had developed later, and also incorporated myths for the same pedagogical and didactic purposes; the result was that it became the form in which the partly or un-educated public could be

⁵² Once again, a parallel can be found in Polybius. At 6.56, the historian expresses similar sentiments regarding the Roman's use of δεισιδαιμονία “for the sake of the common people.” “As the masses are always fickle, filled with lawless desires, unreasoning anger and violent passions, they can only be restrained by mysterious terrors or other dramatizations of the subject. For this reason I believe that the ancients were by no means acting foolishly or hapahazardly when they introduced to the people various notions concerning the gods and belief in the punishments of Hades...”

directed toward the proper activities.⁵³ But, Strabo concludes, “now, a long time later, the writing of history and philosophy have come to the fore (χρόνοις δ’ ὕστερον ἢ τῆς ἱστορίας γραφή καὶ ἡ νῦν φιλοσοφία παρελήλυθεν εἰς μέσον)”; that is, they have to some degree replaced poetry as the means to persuade people of the truth.⁵⁴ In the distant past, however—the age of οἱ ἀρχαῖοι—this was not the case; in fact, far from replacing poetry as a conveyor of knowledge, the first historians and natural philosophers (οἱ πρῶτοι δὲ ἱστορικοὶ καὶ φυσικοὶ) employed the same methods as the poets: they were also myth-writers (μυθογράφοι).

This process of transformation from poetry to history and philosophy is clarified by some earlier remarks, in 1.2.6, about the development of prose out of poetry.⁵⁵ Just as comedy imitated tragic form and “descended from tragic heights to its present ‘prosaic’ form,” prose developed by gradually whittling away the poetic elements of poetry: “Prose speech (ὁ πεζὸς λόγος) of an elaborate kind (κατεσκευασμένος), is very much a μίμημα of poetical; for poetical elaboration (ἡ ποιητικὴ κατασκευὴ) came into the world first and won fame.” The first prose-writers, the historians Cadmus, Pherecydes, Hecataeus and their followers, still wrote prose in a poetic manner, and

⁵³ The idea that poetry and myth act as ‘sweeteners’ for the bitter, yet beneficial, pills of philosophy is a commonplace. The idea has clear affinities with Plato’s famous thoughts on the matter in *Republic* 10: Cf. also Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 11.8.1074b: Examples closer in time to Strabo include Lucretius I.943-50 “...quoniam haec ratio plerumque videtur/ tristior esse...volui tibi suaviloquenti/ carmine Pierio rationem exponere nostram...” and Plutarch, *How the Young Man Should Listen to Poetry* (tr. Russell & Winterbottom (1970), 507-30) 14e: “young students...take a passionate delight in the doctrines about the soul which are mixed with mythology”; 15e: “...so poetry, by taking some arguments from philosophy and combining them with an element of myth, makes learning easy and agreeable to young people.”

⁵⁴ Although, as Strabo admits, even in his day, “it is poetry that is useful to the multitude and can fill the theaters, especially that of Homer.” ἡ δὲ ποιητικὴ δημωφέλεστερα καὶ θεάτρα πληροῦν δυναμένα, ἢ δὲ δὴ τοῦ Ὀμήρου ὑπερβαλλόντως.

⁵⁵ A helpful, in-depth discussion of this passage, even if concerned primarily with the question of sources, appears in Floratos (1972), 61-6.

with each successive stage, the poetic aspects of prose dropped out, one by one, until it reached its present state.⁵⁶ Strabo doesn't make the natural inference explicit, but it goes something like this: history and philosophy developed as separate disciplines *after* poetry, and prior to that time, historical and philosophical work was written in poetry and utilized myths. The evidence of the first prose writers demonstrates this—they wrote a verse-like prose and employed myths in their work because they still adhered to older, more poetic methods.⁵⁷

How Homer Did it: "Adding" Myth to Truth

Homer, then, had no other choice. Since prose did not yet exist in his day, historical or philosophical writing could only be composed in poetic form, employing myths to ensure that the information, which, as we recall, Strabo imagines Homer to be so eager to transmit to his readers, would reach the widest possible audience. The digression on the origin of myth answers two separate concerns: implicitly it suggests the historical reason why Homer, though portrayed as a geographer, a historian, and a

⁵⁶ εἶτα ἐκείνην μιμούμενοι, λύσαντες τὸ μέτρον, τὰλλα δὲ φυλάξαντες τὰ ποιητικά, συνέγραψαν οἱ περὶ Κάδμον καὶ Φερεκύδη καὶ Ἑκαταῖον· εἶτα οἱ ὕστερον ἀφαιροῦντες αἰεὶ τι τῶν τοιούτων εἰς τὸ νῦν εἶδος κατήγαγον ὡς ἂν ἀπὸ ὕψους τινός

⁵⁷ Strabo's theory of the development of prose from poetry is found in brief form in Varro (fr. 319 Fun. = Isidore, *Or.* 1.38.2), who mentions Pherecydes of Syros as the first Greek to write "soluta oratione," and in a remarkably parallel account in Plutarch, *De Pyth. Orac.* 24: "There was a time when men used verses, tunes and songs as the coinage of speech, and reduced to poetic and musical form all history and philosophy...they attained their ends by use of myths and proverbs...But as life took on a change...and as language also underwent a change and put off its finery, history descended from its vehicle of versification, and went on foot in prose, whereby the truth was mostly sifted from the fabulous. Philosophy welcomed clearness and teachability in preference to creating amazement, and pursued its investigations through the medium of everyday language." Russell (1981), 166 suggests Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1404a as a possible "germ of the common later view" represented in these authors; Floratos (1972), 62-3, however, rejects an earlier view that saw Plutarch and Strabo both ap-

philosopher, wrote poetry, and second it responds to the explicit question of why he included myths in an allegedly useful and informative work, by revealing that myths themselves serve an educative and didactic purpose. These strands are woven together to produce Strabo's definitive position on Homeric composition in 1.2.9:

It was because Homer regarded his μύθοι as **educative** that he thought so much of truth, while also "placing therein" (*Il.* 18.541) a false element, accepting the truth, **but using the false to win the favor of the populace and to out-general the masses**. 'Like a man who overlays gold upon silver,' (*Od.* 6.232) Homer added μῦθος to true occurrences, embellishing and adorning his style; **but he looks to the same end as the historian** or the one telling things that really happened. So for instance taking the Trojan War, which had happened, he adorned it with μυθοποιίαι; and he did the same to the wanderings of Odysseus.

"Ἄτε δὴ πρὸς τὸ παιδευτικὸν εἶδος τοὺς μύθους ἀναφέρων ὁ ποιητὴς ἐφρόντισε πολὺ μέρος τᾶληθοῦς, ἐν δ' ἐτίθει καὶ ψεῦδος, τὸ μὲν ἀποδεχόμενος τῷ δὲ δημαγωγῶν καὶ στρατηγῶν τὰ πλήθη. "ὡς δ' ὅτε τις χρυσὸν περιχεύεται ἀργύρῳ ἀνήρ." οὕτως ἐκεῖνος ταῖς ἀληθέσι περιπετείαις προσεπετίθει μῦθον, ἡδύνων καὶ κοσμῶν τὴν φράσιν, πρὸς δὲ τὸ αὐτὸ τέλος τοῦ ἱστορικοῦ καὶ τοῦ τὰ ὄντα λέγοντος βλέπων. οὕτω δὴ τὸν τε Ἰλιακὸν πόλεμον γεγονότα παραλαβὼν ἐκόσμησε ταῖς μυθοποιίαις, καὶ τὴν Ὀδυσσεῶς πλάνην ὡσαύτως.

Like all the ancient poets, Homer added a layer of myth, of ψεῦδος, onto a foundation of historical fact because he was both devoted to conveying the truth, and concerned to sway the masses with the sweetness of myths and style.⁵⁸ But in case anyone has forgotten, Strabo insists that Homer looks πρὸς δὲ τὸ αὐτὸ τέλος τοῦ ἱστορι-

propriating a Peripatetic view transmitted via Dicaearchus. See also Schröder (1990), 53.

⁵⁸ Cf. 1.2.30: "The μυθοποιίαι are not signs of ignorance (οὐκ ἀγνοίας σημεῖα δήπου)...for these are not told in ignorance of places (οὐ γὰρ κατ' ἀγνοίαν τῶν τοπικῶν λέγεται) but for the sake of sweetness and pleasure (ἀλλ' ἡδονῆς καὶ τέρψεως χάριν)."

κοῦ; the core of Homer's poetry describes real people, places, and events. As Strabo insists, "It is not Homeric (οὐχ Ὀμηρικόν) to hang idle fantasy (ἀνάπτειν κενήν τερατολογία) on no foundation of truth (ἐκ μηδενὸς δὲ ἀληθοῦς)...Homer therefore took his starting points from history (ἔλαβεν οὖν παρὰ τῆς ἱστορίας τὰς ἀρχάς)." (1.2.9)

Strabo's remarks are representative of a fairly mainstream, if often implicit, attitude toward Homeric poetry in antiquity. Some reasoning along these lines had to lie behind the treatments of Herodotus and Thucydides that we outlined last chapter, and the same could be said of nearly every writer, modern or ancient, who seeks historical information from heroic poetry.⁵⁹ But Strabo is exceptional in his explicitness, both in setting forth these presuppositions at length, and in putting his theoretical precepts to the test in practical readings of the Homeric text.⁶⁰ In characterizing the chief method of Homeric composition, Strabo even goes so far as to adopt a quasi-technical vocabulary—προσμυθεύω, προσμυθεύομαι, or προσμυθοποιέω, which occur nowhere else in extant Greek literature.⁶¹ So the commonplace idea of poets' mixing "true

⁵⁹ Paul Veyne (1988) has provided the most accessible and celebrated treatment of this remarkably persistent mode of thought.

⁶⁰ There are later outlines of similar theories that often match Strabo's explicitness, if not his abundance of illustrations and elaborations. Lactantius' account in his *Divinae Institutiones* 1.11 covers almost the exact same ground: (23-5) "The poets, then have not fabricated the exploits...but they added a certain color of poetic fancy to the deeds...men do not know what the measure of poetic license is, to what extent it is permissible to proceed in fictionizing, since the poet's function consists in this, that those things which were actually performed he may transfer...into other appearances by means of figurative language. But to feign the whole account which you relate—that is to be a fool and a liar instead of a poet." (30)

⁶¹ With the exception of Eustathius' 12th century commentary on the *Odyssey*, which used Strabo has one of its sources. Notably the terms appear in precisely the same discussions as they do in Strabo. Eustathius' preface to this work is strikingly similar in wording, sentiment, and examples to Strabo, who in turn, one suspects, de-

things with false' becomes a precisely definable and technical activity: "Accordingly the poet, employing starting points of this sort (τοιαύταις δὴ τισιν ἀφορμαῖς ὁ ποιητῆς χρῆσάμενος), in some respects agrees with historical facts (τὰ μὲν ὁμολογεῖ τοῖς ἱστορουμένοις), but 'adds myths' (προσμιθεύει δὲ τουτοῖς) to them, adhering to a custom both peculiar to him and common to others (ἔθος τι φυλάττων καὶ κοινὸν καὶ ἴδιον)." (1.2.40)

If we accept that Homeric poetry consists, then, of both a basic core of events and details that are true as well as adornments and exaggerations that have been "added to" this core, it follows that the properly trained reader should be able to tell the difference. The first rule is not to mistake the 'added' material for the truth:

Since they [the μυθοποιοί], and Homer in particular, do not mythologize everything (οὐ πάντα μυθεύουσιν), but more often 'add myths' (προσμιθεύουσι), the one seeking what myths the ancients added (τί οἱ παλαιοὶ προσμιθεύουσιν) does not seek if the 'added myths' (προσμιθευόμενα) were or are true, but rather seeks the truth about each of those places or characters to which the myths are added (οἷς προσμιθεύεται τόποις ἢ προσώποις, περὶ ἐκείνων ζητεῖ τ' ἀληθές). (1.2.19)

A specific example is presented for clarification at 1.2.11. The question is what people mean when they agree that "the wandering of Odysseus happened around Sicily and Italy according to Homer." According to Strabo, one could accept this statement in one of two ways. The better (βέλτιον) way is to assume "that Homer was convinced that the wanderings of Odysseus took place there, and taking this subject as true (λαβὼν ἀληθῆ ταύτην τὴν ὑπόθεσιν), he elaborated it poetically (ποιητικῶς διεσκεύασε)." The worse way, however, is to also "accept the elaboration as history (τὴν

pended heavily on Polybius for this excursus on literary theory. See Van der Valk

διασκευὴν ὡς ἱστορίαν δέχεται),” even though “the poet is clearly writing marvels (ἐκείνου... τερατογραφοῦντος φανερώς), when he tells of Ocean, Hades, the cattle of Helios, metamorphoses, the size of the Cyclopes and Laestrygonians, the form of Scylla, sailing distances, etc.” In Strabo’s opinion, it’s not even worth his time to refute someone who tells such lies against (καταψευδόμενον) the poet—no more than it is those who think that the whole episode of Odysseus’ return to Ithaca, viz., the massacre, the fight in the country, took place exactly as Homer described (τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον γενέσθαι). A belief that Homer described Odysseus’ wanderings as having taken place around Italy does not also require a belief that it occurred exactly as the poet said; to do so would be to misunderstand the poetic art. Only the true core of the Homeric account, then, the ἱστορία or the ὑπόθεσις, is reliable, and not the διασκευὴ or τὰ προσμυθεύμενα.

The precise nature of Strabo’s formulation, his consistency of terminology, and his insistence on explaining it again and again all suggest that, we would be wrong, having identified Strabo’s ideas as commonplaces of ancient criticism, to read no further. For if a poet is someone who “veris falsa remiscet,” in Horace’s celebrated formulation, it still remains to be asked: what is the nature of these ‘true’ things, and what of the ‘false’?⁶² Here as elsewhere, Strabo’s thoroughness allows us to examine the matter more closely.

The ‘marvels’ that Strabo considers as elements of the διασκευή, and hence as untrue, are familiar—Cyclopes, Laestrygonians, Scylla, metamorphoses, etc. But earlier he had provided a strikingly similar list when defining what counted as ἱστορία:

(1971-87), vol. I, introduction, for Eustathius’ use of Strabo.

⁶² Horace, *Ars Poetica* 151.

“Aeolus, they say, dominated the islands around Lipara, and the inhospitable Cyclopes and the Laestrygonians ruled the area of Etna and Leontini...Charybdis and Scyllaeum were haunts of pirates.” (1.2.9) How can these be both examples of marvels and facts, of truths and falsehoods? But a closer reading of the first passage shows that the ‘added myths’ are not the monsters themselves, but certain of their more unbelievable aspects: it is the ‘size’ of the Cyclops, and the ‘form’ of Scylla that is fantastic, not their existence *per se*. The ‘myth’ is not the existence of the Cyclops, for example, but the marvelous elements of Homer’s description—their having one eye, their enormous size, their taste for human flesh. The Cyclopes existed, and they ruled over the areas around Etna and Leontini; apparently their general lack of hospitality toward visitors was the basis from which Homer spun his tales. Strabo is not saying that the fantastic elements of the *Odyssey* have been inserted as myths and can therefore be ignored as ‘elaboration’, but that a mythic element has been ‘added to’ a kernel of truth in every given case.⁶³

⁶³ So Schenkeveld (1976) makes this mistake when he states that Strabo rejected the second view “because in that interpretation the Cyclops, the Laistrygones and other fabulous people must have been real persons; and everyone is convinced that the poet himself invented these.” (62) But Strabo has specifically mentioned both these peoples as actually having been ‘real persons’—the rulers of their respective regions—once their fantastic features have been pared away. Even as perceptive and sympathetic reader as Aujac (1969), 188-9 n.4 seems to agree when she suggests that by the ‘worse’ method, Strabo might have been referring to Euhemerists or rationalizers like Palaephatus. But the view that Aeolus was a ruler that Strabo endorses is precisely identical to a Euhemerist interpretation, and the view of Polybius that is mentioned later, that Aeolus was the man who taught sailors how to navigate the Strait of Messina, is remarkably similar to Palaephatus’ notion that Aeolus was a meteorologist familiar with wind patterns of the area.

Traces: Strabo and Homeric Iberia

Homer, then, in Strabo's eyes, is not simply mixing truth and fiction, inserting completely fabricated characters and episodes in among an otherwise accurate historical narrative; rather he uses various historical data as starting points, ἀφορμαί, which he elaborates in turn, but always keeping to the original structure of historical events. This should be no surprise in light of the very historical and inquisitive fashion in which Strabo imagines Homer. Nevertheless, the historical accuracy of Homer is not simply a matter of blind faith. We have, Strabo insists, corroborating evidence: "it is possible to find traces (ἵχνη) of Odysseus' wandering, and those of many others, not only around Italy, but also as far as the frontiers of Iberia." This notion of evidence is extremely important for Strabo, and is what separates his privileging of Homeric historical testimony from those that simply considered Homer *qua* Homer as the font of all wisdom. For him it is of the utmost necessity that Homer *knew* the truth, and that this can be proved by assiduous research.

This emphasis that historical facts underlie Homer's statements is brought out vividly in 3.2.12, where Strabo elaborates on his previous remarks on Iberia, in a discussion of considerable significance for an understanding of how precisely he imagines Homer's working methods. We catch up with Strabo as he argues (no surprises here) that there is good reason to believe that Homer had knowledge of Iberia, despite not specifically mentioning it in his poetry.

The poet, a man πολύφωνος and πολυίστωρ, gives us grounds (ἀφορμαί) that even these regions were not unheard of (ἀνήκοός) by him, if one wished to conjecture (συλλογίζεσθαι) correctly from both of the things that are said about them—the worse, and the better and more truthful (ἄμεινον καὶ ἀληθεστερον).

Strabo is once again posing two possible ways of demonstrating Homeric knowledge. The worse argument (3.2.12) goes something like this: in Homer's day, Tartessus in Iberia was known as the farthest settlement to the west. The west, as the poet says, is where "the sun's bright light" falls into Ocean, "drawing black night over earth, the grain-giver" (*Il.* 8.485). Since night is associated with Hades, and Hades with Tartarus, "one might suppose (εικάζοι) that Homer, having heard about Tartessus, called the farthestmost of the nether regions Tartarus with a slight change of name (τὸν Τάρταρον ἐκεῖθεν παρονομάσαι); adding a myth (προσθεῖναι δὲ καὶ μῦθον), and saving the poetic (τὸ ποιητικὸν σώζοντα)." Adherents to the 'worse' argument believe that "someone might get a hint of a memory of the regions around Tartessus, from the mythical invention of Tartarus (ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ Ταρτάρου μυθοποιίας αἰνίττοιτό τις ἂν τὴν τόπων μνήμην τῶν περὶ Ταρτησσόν)." ⁶⁴

But the better argument (3.2.13) reconstructs the poetic process in a different manner: Homer knew of the expeditions of Heracles and the Phoenicians to Iberia, and heard rumors that the people there were rich, and led an easy life. Odysseus had also been to Iberia and this fact, which was learned by Homer (ιστορηθεῖσα), furnished a pretext (πρόφασις). "So he transferred the *Odyssey*, just like the *Iliad*, from real events into poetry and the mythical invention so familiar to poets (ὥστε καὶ τὴν Ὀδύσειαν, καθάπερ τὴν Ἰλιάδα, ἀπὸ τῶν συμβάντων μεταγαγεῖν εἰς ποίησιν

⁶⁴ To elucidate this method better, Strabo presents another example: Homer had known that the Cimmerians lived in the gloomy north near the Bosphorus, and thus placed them near Hades in his poetry. An alternative explanation was that he placed them there because, like all Ionians, Homer had a hatred for the Cimmerians, living as he did within recent memory of the Cimmerian invasion (On Cimmerians, cf. *Hdt.* 1.15, 1.6, 4.11, 7.20 and for an overview, see Ramin (1979)). Homer also modeled the Planctae after the Cyaneae, "always bringing in myths from the history of some things (ἀεὶ τοὺς μύθους ἀπὸ τινῶν ἱστοριῶν ἐνάγων).

καὶ τὴν συνήθη τοῖς ποιηταῖς μυθοποιίαν).” Strabo adds that there is material evidence for Homer’s decision: such evidence (σημεῖα) includes the presence in Iberia of a city named Odysseia, as well as a temple of Athena, not to mention “countless other traces (ἄλλα μυρία ἵχνη)” both of Odysseus as well as other wanderers from the Trojan War.”⁶⁵ In any case, to sum up:

So then, the poet, informed through his inquiries (ἱστορικῶς πυνθανόμενος) of so many expeditions to the outermost parts of Iberia, and learning by hearsay about the wealth and other good attributes of the country (for the Phoenicians were making these facts known), invented (ἔπλασε) the abode of the blessed there, and also the Elysian Plain...

Although Strabo has presented two alternative theories of Homer’s working method here, his reason for considering one better than the other remains rather opaque. Apparently, Strabo doesn’t feel that an explanation is necessary. But both theories seem to prove that Homer knew of Iberia, and that moreover he was consciously referring to Iberia when he mentions Tartarus and Hades. Why is one better and the other worse?

The difference must lie in the corroborating evidence reinforcing the second explanation, the σημεῖα and ἵχνη of Odysseus’ travels in Iberia; this independent testimony—the temple of Athena, the city Odysseia, etc.—suggests that Homer, aware of these facts *through inquiry*, took what he knew of the real wanderings and some of the real traits of Iberia, and fashioned them poetically, situating them in the west. In the

⁶⁵ Strabo offers more arguments which further support his thesis: the description of the Elysian fields matches that of Homer’s Iberia, and that the Phoenicians were Homer’s informants (μηνηστᾶι). As for the “countless” other traces? In 3.4.3, Strabo provides an extensive list, deriving from Asclepiades of Myrlea: “shields and ships’ beaks have been nailed up in the temple of Athena as memorials of the wanderings of Odysseus.” There is also a city named after Amphilocheus, and one named after Ocelas, who came with Antenor from Italy.

other case, Homer is simply associating the name of Tartarus with the city of Tartessus and connecting the fact of the sun's setting in the west with night and therefore with Hades, in a sort of free play of signifiers, but there is no *historical* connection with Odysseus. Strabo has, therefore, a very strong interpretation of Homer's 'true', historical core; after all, the 'worse' interpretation still would prove that Homer 'knew of Iberia, and that he meant to situate Odysseus' adventures in Hades and the Elysian Fields in that area. But on this reading Homer would not really have known this to be the case; he would have had simply made up the whole story, and there would be no evidentiary basis for the events in heroic history or geography.

For Strabo the poetic sensibilities of Homer are always inextricably grounded by a historical knowledge that is itself the result of inquiry and learning. Homer's knowledge of Iberia is not as important as his knowledge that Odysseus wandered there, and the fact that clues still exist confirming this is only more reason to trust in it. Homer adds mythical details, but never disturbs the truth beneath the surface. What else would one expect from a man who "has the same end as the historian," and whose curiosity and love of travel took him to the four corners of the earth?

V STRABO AND ERATOSTHENES ON HOMER AND POETRY'S PURPOSE

Utility and Pleasure in Literary Criticism and Historiography

What, then, of the quarrel with Eratosthenes? As we have mentioned, the argument centered on whether διδασκαλία, ψυχαγωγία, or a combination of the two best described the purpose of poetry. "Eratosthenes asserts that every poet aims at ψυχαγωγία, not διδασκαλία... but he ought to have said that every poet writes partly

for the sake of ψυχαγωγία, and partly for διδασκαλία.” (1.2.3) The two terms are customarily translated as “instruction” and “entertainment.” Now it is clear what “entertainment” corresponds to in Strabo’s theory—the ‘myths’ that are added to the truth. But because the debate is first couched in the opening sections of 1.2, it is natural to assume that the term διδασκαλία is related to the moral and technical instruction that Strabo mentions there and later on in the section on myth.⁶⁶ The debate seems, in this view, a retread of the old arguments over the poet as ethical instructor—Strabo claims that Homer can instruct and improve his audience in all sorts of ways, while Eratosthenes asserts that the intention of a poet is purely to entertain.

But the moral element, as I explain in Appendix Two, quickly drops out of the picture and has no place in Strabo’s conception of Homeric composition. If Strabo’s arguments in favor of Homeric διδασκαλία are only incidentally related to moral instruction, how do his claims work with regard to geographical knowledge? Can he really mean that Homer consciously intended to teach geography in his poetry?⁶⁷ But is it possible that we have another terminological confusion here? Διδασκαλία was indeed a term for poetry’s educative or instructive function, and Eratosthenes is clearly using it in this sense. But it could also have a meaning that connoted a different sense of instruction, one which was less specific in terms of the information being taught, and that derives, once again, from ancient historiographical discourse. There, ‘instruction’ was a much more vague notion; a history did not necessarily teach spe-

⁶⁶ See Appendix Two.

⁶⁷ As Schenkeveld (1976), 54, remarks, if this was the case, and Strabo leads us to believe that it was, “it would have been a matter of course to use Homer’s epics as a geographical manual” but he “seldom used Homer to supplement his own knowledge.” Of course, Strabo *does* often use Homer in this way, but this is beside the point here.

cific things, although it could. What was at stake was a much more general notion that one would 'learn' by reading a history.

First of all, the terms διδασκαλία/ψυχαγωγία are part of group of words that are used to express this longstanding literary-critical distinction between the useful and the pleasurable aspects of poetry. This opposition is probably most familiar from Horace's lines *aut prodesse poetae aut delectare volunt, simul et iucunda et idonea dicere vitae*. Horace, like Strabo, goes on to choose the third 'combination' option: *omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci | lecturem delectando pariterque monendo*.⁶⁸ This compromise, however, has long been recognized to originate in a formulation of the early first century B.C.E. critic Neoptolemus of Parium preserved in Philodemus: καὶ πρὸς ἀρε[τὴν δεῖν τ]ῷ τελείῳ ποι[ητῇ μετὰ τ]ῆς ψυχαγω[γί]α[ς τοῦ τοῦς] ἀκούοντ[ας] ὠ[φελεῖν] καὶ χρησι[μο]λ[ογεῖν] καὶ τὸν "Ὀμη[ρον] τ]έρπειν [τε καὶ ὠφελεῖν] τὸ [πλεῖ]ον. "and with respect to virtue, the perfect poet, in order to fulfill his capacity, must not only thrill his listeners, but also benefit them and tell useful things, and Homer both pleases and benefits for the most part."⁶⁹ The use of the word ψυχαγωγία by Neoptolemus, coupled with his thesis that poets, especially Homer, combine utility and pleasure, suggest that he is responding to Eratosthenes here. But for our purposes, it is more important that he introduces a range of terms which correspond to both sides of Eratosthenes' διδασκαλία/ ψυχαγωγία division. On the one hand, διδασκαλία is glossed by ὠφελεῖν and χρησιμολογεῖν, while ψυχαγωγία is associated with τέρπειν; Horace uses *prodesse, idonea, utile,*

⁶⁸ *Ars Poetica* 333-4; 343-4. See Koster (1974), 143-51 on this ancient debate on the purpose of poetry

⁶⁹ Philodemus *On Poems* V, col. xiii.8.15 Jensen. Cf. Brink (1963-82), vol. 1, 55; Pfeiffer (1968), 166-7; and Meijering (1987), 6. On Strabo see Biraschi (1984).

and *monendo* in opposition to *delectare*, *iucunda*, and *dulci*. We have arrayed here a group of terms denoting utility, benefit, and instruction, against another set associated with entertainment, pleasure, and sweetness. Strabo also demonstrates the replaceability of these terms with one another: in a disparaging paraphrase of Eratosthenes' views, he objects that Homer wrote "not for the sake of nonsense, but for utility (οὐ γὰρ φλυαρίας, ἀλλ' ὠφελείας χάριν). "Utility" is a clear substitution for διδασκαλία.

As we saw in the previous section, ὠφέλεια functions as one of Strabo's key methodological terms, and plays a similar role in ancient historiography. More significantly, nearly all of these literary-critical terms, or their cognates—ὠφέλεια, διδασκαλία, ψυχαγωγία, τὸ χρήσιμον, τὸ τέρπειν—are used in ancient discussions of the purpose of historical writing. In the most famous instance, Polybius differentiates history, which teaches (διδάξαι) and whose purpose is utility (ὠφέλεια), from tragedy, which 'entertains' (ψυχαγωγῆσαι) and aims at deception (ἀπάτη).⁷⁰ At first glance, this seems to support Eratosthenes' claim; for both him and Polybius, poetry (or tragedy) does not teach or benefit, but only entertains (or deceives). But Polybius clearly states that history "teaches" for a "useful" end, and this is precisely what Strabo claims for Homer, whom he imagines as a historian writing in poetry. This demonstrates that the διδασκαλία and utility that Strabo is talking about need not suggest moral instruction, nor even the teaching of specific skills, but simply the instruction that one received when one read any text. Strabo treats Homeric "instruction" as a

⁷⁰ Polybius, 2.56.11-12.

virtual synonym for “telling useful things”—not so much beneficial in an ethical sense, but useful in the way a history is to its readers.⁷¹

Unfortunately, Strabo conflates these two different connotations of “instruction” by grouping them together. The clearest example is the transition from his excursus on myth, 1.2.8, to his claims for Homeric knowledge of geography: “It was because Homer regarded his μύθοι as educative (ἀναφέρων πρὸς τὸ παιδευτικὸν εἶδος) that he thought so much of truth (ἐφρόντισε πολὺ μέρος τᾶληθοῦς).” He had just been discussing the “paideutic” aspect of myth in its function as a means to get people to listen to philosophy, or to persuade or dissuade them from certain courses of action, but then he passes to a concern with *historical* truth. This elision of the different truths— philosophical and historical—is characteristic of Strabo’s less than consistent use of terminology.

My thesis that Strabo was thinking about instruction and entertainment in a historiographical context can be illustrated through yet another glance at Polybius. We saw in the last paragraph that he had opposed διδασκαλία and ψυχαγωγία in a similar manner as Eratosthenes. But Polybius introduces this opposition many other times in the course of his work, and his formulations in these other instances strongly suggest that Polybius saw history’s function as both to “entertain” and to “instruct.” The most explicit is 11.19a.2, where he claims that historians have to both provide the results of actions as well as their causes, for “results of actions only ψυχαγωγῆι one’s audience, while the knowledge of what came before benefits (ὠφελοῦσι) those who want to learn (φιλομαθοῦντας).” In three other places, he specifically lists utility and pleas-

⁷¹ Linking back, of course, to the notion of a ‘philosopher’ with which he began his work.

ure as two of the ends of history: in 1.4.11, he says that only by studying universal history can we “receive τὸ χρήσιμον καὶ τὸ τερπνὸν from history;” at 7.7.8, he describes an episode of his work as more pleasurable (ἡδίων) to those fond of tales (φιληκόοις) and more useful (χρησιμώτερος) to those who want to learn;” and at 15.36.3, he identifies two “ends” (τελή)—ὠφέλεια and τέρψις—for all intellectual pursuits, but especially history.

We have reached a rather peculiar position. It seems that both history and poetry are conceived as providing utility and pleasure. Roos Meijering’s pithy appraisal of Strabo’s view of Homer—“The final goal is διδασκαλία, or, in other words, τὸ τέρπειν must serve τὸ ὠφελεῖν”⁷²—could reasonably be Polybius’ appraisal of his own historical work. If history can both please and teach, then why could Homer *not* be considered a historian, as long as one accounted for why he wrote in poetry?

Strabo, Eratosthenes, and Polybius on Odysseus’ Wanderings

If Strabo takes up the didascalical position, it is in this less dogmatic, more general sense of instruction. In similar fashion, Eratosthenes’ remarks do not mean that he denied any correspondence between poetic depictions of the world and those in real life. Despite his apparently categorical remarks “to not judge (κρίνειν) the poems with reference to their thought (πρὸς τὴν διάνοιαν), nor to seek history from them (μηδ’ ἱστορίαν ἀπ’ αὐτῶν ζητεῖν),” and his oft-quoted *bon mot*: “You’ll find where Odysseus wandered when you find the cobbler who sewed up the bag of the winds,”⁷³

⁷² Meijering (1987), 6.

⁷³ 1.2.17; 1.2.15 = F I A 16 Berger. τότε ἂν εὐρεῖν τινα, ποῦ Ὀδυσσεὺς πεπλάνηται, ὅταν εὕρῃ τὸν σκυτέα τὸν συρράψαντα τὸν τῶν ἀνέμων ἄσκον. For a summary of the context, see Romm (1992), 183-96.

Eratosthenes has quite a bit to say about Homeric geography, especially concerning Odysseus' wanderings. After all, we shouldn't forget that Eratosthenes also saw Homer as a philosopher and the first geographer.⁷⁴ At this stage, we can finally turn to Eratosthenes' views themselves (reported, albeit, by Strabo), and see how the διδασκαλία vs. ψυχαγωγία argument is less a debate about poetry's nature, and more one about different methods of reading.

Eratosthenes' skepticism was not directed at the wanderings themselves, but only whether the *Odyssey* accurately represented them. A simple indication of this is the fact that, although he believes that Homer is unreliable, he has a rather better opinion of Hesiod: according to Strabo, "Eratosthenes conjectures (εικάζει) that Hesiod learned by inquiry (πεπυσμένον) that the scene of the wanderings of Odysseus lay in the region of Sicily and Italy, and, adopting this belief, mentioned not only the places spoken of by Homer, but also Aetna, Ortygia...and Tyrrhenia."⁷⁵ For Eratosthenes, Odysseus' wanderings were not fictional, but undeniably historical; the first knowledge of these wanderings, however, is shifted from Homer to Hesiod.

But why, Strabo asks, should we privilege Hesiod over Homer? Eratosthenes cannot deny that Homer included accurate geographical details in his poetry; in fact he has even expressly stated that:

from the earliest times all the poets have been eager to display their knowledge of geography (φιλοτίμως ἔχειν εἰς τὸ μέσον φέρειν τῆν ἱστορίαν); certainly Homer made a place in his poems (καταχωρίσαι εἰς τῆν ποίησιν) for everything that he had learned (ὅσα ἐπύθετο)

⁷⁴ Strabo 1.1.1: "those who in earliest times ventured to treat [geography] were, in their way, philosophers—Homer, Anaximander, and Hecataeus—just as Eratosthenes has already said." Strabo 1.1.11: "Eratosthenes declares that the first two successors of Homer [in geography] were Anaximander...and Hecataeus of Miletus."

⁷⁵ 1.2.14 = Hesiod, Fr. 150, 25-6 Merkelbach-West

about the Ethiopians and the inhabitants of Egypt and Libya, and he went into superfluous detail (λίαν περιέργως ἐξηνηνοχέναι) in regard to Greece, calling Thisbe the “haunt of doves,” Haliartus “grassy,” etc. (1.2.3)

Eratosthenes does not deny Homer’s geographical knowledge of Greece or even Egypt and Ethiopia, and he even acknowledges that Homer had learned these things by inquiry. As far as the wanderings, however, Eratosthenes directs his skepticism at Homer’s capacity as a diligent historian; he questions his familiarity with more distant places.⁷⁶ This is evident in the passage where he sets out his own theory of Homeric composition.

Eratosthenes says that one may suppose that the poet wished to put the wanderings of Odysseus in the far west, but abandoned his purpose (ἀποστῆναι δ’ ἀπὸ τῶν ὑποκειμένων), partly because of the lack of accurate information (τὰ μὲν οὐκ ἀκριβῶς πεπυσμένον), and partly because he had even preferred not to be accurate (τὰ δὲ οὐδὲ προελόμενον οὕτως) but rather to develop each incident in the direction of the more awe-inspiring and the more marvellous (ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ τὸ δεινότερον καὶ τὸ τερατωδέστερον ἕκαστα ἐξάγειν). (1.2.19)

The natural focus, by literary critics, has been on the second half of Eratosthenes’ theory—Homer, as a poet, was more concerned with τὸ δεινότερον and τὸ τερατωδέστερον than with the truth. Is this not, after all, the purpose of poetry, to effect wonder and sublimity in the listener? But in the first half of the passage, Eratosthenes attributes part of the reason for Homer’s poetic flights of fancy to his “lack of accurate information.” Just as Herodotus coupled a belief that Homer made a conscious choice to go with the more poetic version with a conviction that Homer also

⁷⁶ This skepticism is no doubt related to his belief that, historically, people of that period did not make long sea voyages, cf. 1.3.2. Strabo characteristically refutes Eratosthenes by citing the journeys of Dionysus, Heracles, Jason, Odysseus, Menelaus, Aeneas, Minos, and Theseus.

knew the true story, so here Eratosthenes cannot lay all of the theoretical burden onto poetic invention, but must also assert that Homer's decision was swayed by the dearth of historical material from which to draw on. Hesiod, apparently, had access to better information. Both Strabo and Eratosthenes share the same basic portrait of Homer; a poet who was familiar with the historical events, who attempted to get information about them, and who elaborated those events for the purposes of poetry. Where they differ is in Homer's intentions about accuracy.

Strabo insists that Homer had the same ends as a historian and only 'added myths' to please the public, something in which he had no choice because poetry was the only medium of transmitting information. For Eratosthenes, Homer had only heard about the journeys and because he didn't have access to accurate information, and he was pandering to his public, he largely made up his own fanciful versions of Odysseus' wanderings. In fact, Eratosthenes had even claimed "that far-off places are made the scenes of Homer's marvellous stories (τὰ πόρρω τερατολογεῖσθαι) because of the fact that it is easier to lie about them (μᾶλλον διὰ τὸ εὐκατάψευστον)."

James Romm sees as the hallmark of Eratosthenes' literary criticism "to have charted the *Odyssey* on a literary rather than geographical map, gauging its veracity according to how far from *terra cognita* it travels."⁷⁷ For Strabo, the problem with Eratosthenes' theory is that there are more Homeric marvels in places near Greece than in distant places; think of "the labors of Heracles and Theseus, and the myths on Crete and Sicily...and on Cithaeron, Helicon, Parnassus, Pelion, and in various places

⁷⁷ Romm (1992), 193, technically applied both to Eratosthenes and Aristarchus. In general, although I disagree with some minor points and emphasize different aspects, Romm's treatment of Strabo, Polybius, and Eratosthenes on the voyage of Odysseus (183-96) is by far the most insightful and stimulating thing written on the subject.

in Attica or in the Peloponnesus.” (1.2.19) To simply read the fantastic aspects of Odysseus’ wanderings (as depicted by Homer) as evidence of a lack of interest in the historical reality of those events, and furthermore to draw a connection between the fantastic and the distance of locales from Greece is to misunderstand the use of myth in poetry. That Eratosthenes constantly points to certain passages in Homer as evidence of the poet’s ignorance of geographical matters exasperates Strabo for this same reason—Eratosthenes does not comprehend the ways in which Homer employs myth and fantasy in combination with history.

If Strabo criticizes Eratosthenes for simply assuming that the presence of fantastic elements signals wholesale invention, he turns to Polybius, on the other hand, as an ally who knows how to read Homer correctly (ὀρθῶς ὑπονοεῖ τὰ περὶ τῆς πλάνης). Polybius seems to have set up a system of correspondences between Homeric episodes and geographical locations in the region of Sicily and Italy by carefully noting possible real-life phenomena that might have been the inspiration for Homer.⁷⁸ For instance, he identified Aeolus as “the man who taught navigators how to steer a course in the regions of the Strait of Messina, whose waters are subject to a constant ebb and flow and are difficult to navigate on account of the reverse currents”, and for that reason had “been called lord of the winds.”⁷⁹ Most likely, Polybius came to this conclusion based on his knowledge of the weather-predicting methods practiced by the inhabi-

⁷⁸ For a full listing of these identifications, see Ramin (1979), 121-37. Phillips (1953) goes through the traditions chronologically and attempts to postulate why the wanderings were located in the region of Italy and Sicily by the ancients. See also Klotz (1952).

tants of the Lipari Islands. The matter is too complicated to go into fully here, but apparently it was possible, by observing the behavior of the volcanoes there, to “foretell what wind [would] blow as much as three days in advance.”⁸⁰

A far more ingenious solution is offered for the question of Scylla: “The description of Scylla by the poet is in agreement with what takes place off the Scyllaeen Rock and in the hunting of swordfish.” Polybius proceeds to give us a page long description of both the effects of the Strait of Messina’s current on tunny-fish, and the method of hunting swordfish developed by Sicilian fisherman. Again, in the interests of space, I’ll spare the reader the details; suffice to say that Polybius sees a remarkable parallel between these fishing methods and Homer’s description of how Scylla attacks Odysseus’ ship and men. “From such facts as these, one may conjecture (εικάζοι) that Odysseus’ wanderings took place near Sicily, inasmuch as Homer attributed (προσηψε) to Scylla that sort of fish-hunting that is most characteristic of Scyllaeum.”⁸¹ And on it goes, through Charybdis, the Lotus-Eaters, and presumably many others that Strabo has neglected to include.

⁷⁹ Aeolus appears in *Od.* 10.1-27. Polybius 34 2.5-10 = Strabo 1.2.15. There is not enough space to go into the Euhemerist theory that Polybius cites as his justification for this identification. See Walbank (1974), 8 for a brief discussion.

⁸⁰ Walbank (1974), 9, to which I refer for a full treatment of the matter. Polybius’ account is preserved in Strabo at a later point: 6.2.10

⁸¹ Polybius 34.3 = Strabo 1.2.15-16. Again see Walbank (1974) for a full treatment, and it should be noted, one that is much more lucid than his later notes in his commentary. There is some controversy over whether Polybius means to compare Scylla with the fishermen or with the swordfish, which he mentions as hunting tunny-fish in the beginning of the passage. Walbank favors the former, but Romm (1992), 190 argues for a connection between the way that the swordfish catches tunny-fish which are prevented from reaching Sicily by the currents and the similar fate of Odysseus’ men. Perhaps the answer is both; Polybius could have thought that Homer had drawn both observations together into a composite figure.

Strabo agrees with Polybius that Homer knew that Odysseus' wanderings had taken place in Sicily and Italy, but he parts company in two significant aspects. In his arguments, Polybius tends to identify a social practice or a natural phenomenon with an analogous description in Homer, and assumes that Homer made the analogy because that was where Odysseus actually went. Strabo, on the other hand, seems much more reliant on the vestiges and remains of Odysseus' travels themselves. For instance, after his long reprisal of Polybius' views, he remarks that he agrees with him, but feels to add one more argument: "For what poet or prose writer ever persuaded the Neapolitans to name a monument after Parthenope the Siren, or the people of Cumae, Dichaearchia, and Vesuvius to perpetuate the names of Pyriphlegethon, the Acherusian Marsh, the oracle of the dead at Lake Avernus, and Baius and Misenus, two of the companions of Odysseus?" The events have left their mark also, the names of places and things preserve the past just as securely as the fishing and weather forecasting practices of the people of Sicily.

On the other hand, Strabo sometimes thinks that Polybius takes Homer too literally at times. The latter had apparently tried to argue that Odysseus had never gone into Ocean, and that Homer had situated all of the travels clearly in the Mediterranean. He had tried to demonstrate this by calculating the distance from Cape Malea to the Pillars of Hercules and dividing this number by the nine days that Homer has Odysseus say he traveled. The result, 2500 stadia, was clearly too much to sail each day, and Polybius also pointed to the fact that Odysseus was "borne by baneful winds" so could hardly have maintained a straight course. For Strabo however, this sort of argument "reaches the heights of inconsistency (ὑπερβολὴν τῆς ἀνομολογίας)." (1.2.18) Polybius conveniently ignores the passages where Homer clearly says that

Odysseus was in the Ocean, or an island, like Ogygia, was located there. Strabo's point is that Homer occasionally transferred the locations out onto Ocean for poetic reasons, and we shouldn't waste our time. Moving an episode out to Ocean is one way in which Homer "adds myth" to an event; as we saw earlier, Strabo includes in this category the "lengthening of distances."

Most modern discussions are devoted to sorting out the debate over poetic license, and to exalting Eratosthenes for his refusal to search for history in Homeric poetry. Sometimes this becomes part of a larger discourse which pits the Alexandrians (Eratosthenes, Aristarchus, and Apollodorus) against the Stoics/Pergamenes (mainly Crates, with Strabo and Polybius thrown in to make the polar opposition work). Like all such dichotomies and sweeping categorizations, this one is oversimplistic. Even the Alexandrians believed in the basic historical underpinning of Homeric epic (cf. Aristarchus' work on Homeric society and culture and Apollodorus' commentary on the Catalogue of Ships). Eratosthenes clearly hypothesizes from the Homeric poems theories about the state of the world, not just in Homer's time, but also that of the heroic age. The specific debate about the wanderings of Odysseus should not be taken as applicable to the entire content of the Homeric poems—it was, as everybody knows, a very special case, filled with fantastic events, told at one remove to the Phaeacians by a character renowned for his deceptive and evasive ways.

Both Strabo and Eratosthenes agree that the historical Odysseus wandered through Sicily and Italy, and probably in the west as well. They both also see Homer as the first geographer, who included in his work a wealth of important geographical and historical knowledge. Where they differ is in their ideas about the nature of Homer's compositional method; in essence this is an argument over the proper limits of read-

ing, of what constitutes a legitimate reading of Homer. What determined these limits were the level of responsibility they were willing to attach to Homer—did his capacity as a historian outweigh, as Strabo believed, his poetic tendencies? Or, in Eratosthenes' vision, was he only historically responsible when he had information, and let his imagination run wild when he didn't? This division still maintains Eratosthenes on the side of "entertainment" and Strabo advocating a combination of "entertainment" and "instruction," but in a much more nuanced way.

Epilogue: Taking Hints

At Aethalia there is a Portus Argoios named after the ship Argo, as they say; for when Jason, the story goes, was in quest of the abode of Circe, because Medea wished to see the goddess, he sailed to this port; and what is more, because the scrapings, which the Argonauts formed when they used their strigils, became congealed, the pebbles on the shore remain variegated still to this day. Now mythical stories (μυθοποιίαι) of this sort are proofs (τεκμήρια) of what I have been saying: that Homer did not fabricate (ἔπλαττεν) everything himself, but, because he heard many such stories told over and over again, he was wont on his own account to add to them by lengthening the distances and making the settings more remote; and that, just as he threw the setting of his Odysseus out into the Ocean, so similarly he threw the setting of his Jason there, because a wandering had actually taken place in the life of Jason too as well as in that of Odysseus—just as also in that of Menelaus. (5.2.6)

Another journey, another hero, but the song remains the same: material remains undergird Strabo's belief in the complete world behind the Homeric tale. Homer always embellishes a kernel of truth. In good *archaiological* fashion Strabo has τεκμήρια to prove this, the relics and memories of a long-gone age: the name *Argoios* which still clings to the site and a marvelous geological phenomenon that has preserved an unexpected (and unsanitary?) bit of the past.

In the *Prolegomena*, Strabo has set forth his basic theoretical apparatus in regard to Homeric poetry—Homer has based each episode of his poetry on real events and places, but exaggerated and embellished them for poetic purposes. To prove his thesis, Strabo had examined the hardest case, that of Odysseus' wanderings, the fantastic nature of which had led many to reject any truth-element at all. But for the more 'realistic' parts of his narratives, especially those to do with history and geography, there were fewer doubters, and Strabo rarely has to have recourse to the 'myth' argument. After the first two books of the *Geography*, Strabo makes his way across the *oikoumene*, often stopping to discuss whether a site has been mentioned by Homer, or undertaking a close inspection of the text in order to solve a famous geographical problem like the location of Pylos, Ithaca, or Troy. In these instances, his readings of Homer assume the poet's almost complete accuracy; each line, phrase, and word are imbued with enormous significance and examined down to the last detail for any information they might yield concerning the heroic age.

In the preface to his discussion of the Peloponnese Strabo acknowledges the particular difficulties that Homer presents to the diligent reader.

“although the statements of others are easy to judge (εὐδιάτητά), those of Homer require critical inquiry (σκέψεως δεῖται κριτικῆς), since he speaks poetically (ποιητικῶς), and not of things as they now are, but of things as they were in antiquity (οὐ τὰ νῦν ἀλλὰ τὰ ἀρχαῖα), many of which have been obscured by time (ὧν ὁ χρόνος ἡμαύρωκε τὰ πολλά).” (8.1.1)

Strabo, however, can perform such readings with confidence because he believes that he has established beyond a doubt that Homer “had the same end as the historian.” It is his method of reaching back into the past and regaining what had been thought lost.

Chapter Four

SPECTERS OF TROY

DIO OF PRUSA, *CHRYSEÏS*, AND THE CREATION OF CHARACTER

I DIO OF PRUSA: HIS LIFE AND HARD TIMES

Roughly two generations separate Strabo from Dio of Prusa, the itinerant orator and moralist of the late first century C.E., but their worldviews, their interests, their styles could not be further apart. Although both belonged to the Greek elite of Asia Minor and had strong ties to Rome, the former lived and labored in relative obscurity while the latter was one of the most recognized and notable personalities of his time. Dio, a student of the great Stoic Musonius Rufus and teacher of the celebrated orators Favorinus of Arles and Polemo of Smyrna, could be found haranguing audiences across the Greek-speaking Empire from Athens to Olbia, and was reputed to have had personal relationships with emperors from Titus to Trajan. Strabo produced two colossal and erudite works on history and geography that had precious little impact during or after his lifetime. Dio's surviving corpus found a much more receptive audience, and comprises some eighty speeches ranging in length from brief essays and dialogues to long and complicated civic and philosophical speeches. The pieces cover an equally broad selection of subject matter. Dio discourses on the relation of the human and divine in the *Olympicus*, on local urban politics in the Bithynian speeches, on

the proper way to rule in his four *Kingship Orations*; he narrates a pastoral romance in the *Euboean* to illustrate his ideas on poverty, compares the three great tragedians' versions of *Philoctetes* in his 52nd oration, treats Cynic themes in the Diogenaic orations, and discusses relations with Rome in the great 'city' speeches to the Alexandrians and the Rhodians. His reputation, moreover, lived on well after his death: he was admired as much for his style and elegance of expression (hence the moniker *Χρυσόστομος* (the golden-mouthed)), as for the vehemence of his moral homilies and his conviction in living up to the ethical standards which he preached.¹

But despite all these differences—of subject matter, of tone, of popularity, of style—Dio and Strabo both express a particular interest in Homer, and in reading his poetry. We saw in the previous chapter how important Homer was to Strabo's historical and geographical project, and how often his work was cited in the *Geography*. Likewise Dio's corpus is filled with Homeric citations and allusions, and several of his works are devoted to Homeric exegesis.² Notable are his short essays *On Homer* (53)³ and *On Homer and Socrates* (55), the 2nd *Kingship Oration* (2), in which Alexander shows his father Philip how Homer instructs his readers concerning the good king, and the short dialogues *Agamemnon* (57) and *Nestor* (58) that discuss the proper way to understand specific episodes and characters from the *Iliad*. In addition, there are substantial digressions or excurses on Homer embedded in longer pieces—the *Olym-*

¹ Although some (Arethas, *Dio* p. 328 von Arnim) explained that *Χρυσόστομος* was a euphemism for *Ὀζόστομος* (referring to his bad breath). On Arethas' *Dio*, see Brancacci (1985), 229-44.

² A chart listing all of Dio's Homeric quotations, paraphrases, and references can be found in Kindstrand (1973), 19-26.

³ A work of less importance than its title would lead one to believe. *On Homer* is a brief survey of Homeric criticism; much scholarship has been devoted to postulating

picus (12), the *Borystheniticus* (36), etc. For us, however, Dio's most relevant works are *Chryseīs* (61) and the great eleventh speech, the *Trojan Oration*, or *That Troy was not Captured*.

Both of these texts find Dio visualizing the Homeric world and creatively supplementing Homer's narrative to gain greater insight. In *Chryseīs* he muses over the personality of that minor Homeric player and imaginatively reconstructs the behind-the-scenes action of *Iliad* 1, arguing moreover that Homer sanctioned and even encouraged such reading practices. In the *Trojan Oration*, Dio argues that Homer lied about the Trojan War; the real story was that Paris legitimately married Helen, that the Trojans actually defeated the Greeks, and that Hector killed Achilles, among other revisionist theses. What is fascinating about this speech is that Dio paradoxically accomplishes his objective through a close reading of Homer himself. Despite his different purposes in *Chryseīs* and the *Trojan*, Dio ends up in both pieces having created new narratives about the Trojan War—one that fits snugly in the interstices of Homer's text, the other that, despite replacing it, remains strangely parasitic on it. Through an examination of these two examples of Dio's reading practice, I want to show how this way of reading Homer functioned, and on what principles it depended.

Life, Times, and Major Events

The biographical data we possess about Dio are not numerous.⁴ Pliny the Younger calls him Dio Cocceianus; the rest of his name is not known. He belonged to a wealthy

what Dio's laconic statements can tell us about Zeno's or Antisthenes' method of reading Homer, e.g., Hillgruber (1989).

⁴ The best brief account of Dio's life is Russell (1992), 3-7; Momigliano (1969) is also straightforward and succinct. See Jones (1978) for a more detailed treatment of the subject.

elite family (Roman citizens on both sides) from Prusa, a medium-sized city in the province of Bithynia, in northwestern Asia Minor. Based on dates mentioned below, his birth is estimated at sometime in the 40s or 50s C.E. At some point in the 70s, he became close to the future emperor Titus, and was probably a courtier of the Flavians—Philostratus has him on familiar terms with Vespasian in the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*.⁵ At some point after Titus died and Domitian came to power in 80, Dio was exiled from Italy and Bithynia due to his association with someone who had fallen out of the emperor's favor.⁶ Domitian was assassinated in 96, and his successor Nerva revoked the exile. Dio resumed a successful career as a politician and orator; he seems to have known Trajan well, and obtained a number of benefits for Prusa. According to one of Pliny's letters to Trajan, a Prusan had accused Dio of putting the graves of his family in a building where a statue of the emperor was also located; this interesting piece of evidence shows him still active ca. 110 C.E.⁷

Beyond these main facts, however, much lies open to debate: the dating of his speeches, his precise relationship with Titus, Vespasian, and Trajan, his travels, his philosophical leanings, the effect and nature of his exile. Biographical problems of this sort, of course, are typical of almost every figure from the ancient world, but in this case they are compounded by Dio's remarkably eclectic corpus and breadth of in-

⁵ Closeness to Titus inferred from Dio's encomiastic obituaries to Melancomas (28, 29), an athlete who was rumored to be Titus' lover (Themistius, *Or.* 28.10); Philostratus' reconstruction of a political debate between Dio, the philosopher Euphrates, and Apollonius of Tyana before Vespasian: *Apoll.* 5.31-40. But see the recent article of Sidebottom (1996), who vigorously contests the long-held assumption that Dio knew these emperors well.

⁶ *Or.* 13.1; Russell (1992), 4: "the common conjecture is that it was Flavius Sabinus, Domitian's cousin (Suet. *Dom.* 10.4). But note that another victim was a Salveius Cocceianus, a relative of Otho." Again, see Sidebottom (1996) for a recent discussion.

⁷ Pliny, *Epist.* 10.81-2.

terests. He is an extremely difficult person to characterize—sophist, orator, moralist, politician, philosopher—and this was also the case in antiquity, to judge from the impressions he made on his contemporaries and later writers. It's worth looking a little more into this difficulty (which has been the focus of a great deal of Dionian scholarship), because I think it reveals Dio as a public intellectual quite different from Strabo and the Hellenistic scholars that we discussed last chapter. As a result, the concerns and techniques of his discourse have their own particular trajectory, and this applies also to his use of Homer, the mythic tradition, and poets in general.

'The Horn of Amalthea': Dio between Philosophy and Rhetoric

Philostratus' brief portrait of Dio in his *Lives of the Sophists*, dating from the early third century (about a hundred years after Dio's death), is exemplary in this regard. The *Lives*, as its title indicates, deals with the 'sophists' of the Imperial era, those "orators whose surpassing eloquence won them a brilliant reputation"⁸ such as Herodes Atticus, Aelius Aristides, Polemo and a host of other lesser-known figures. Philostratus prefaces his discussion, however, with a catalogue of intellectuals that seem, in his eyes, to form a different group, among whom Dio figures prominently: "philosophers who expounded their theories with ease and fluency (τῶν φιλοσόφων τοὺς ξὺν εὐροίᾳ ἐρμηνεύοντας)." (484) The decision to count Dio as a philosopher skilled in rhetoric, as opposed to a sophist proper, reveals that already at this time there existed a perception that Dio, despite his sophistic characteristics, participated in a much wider sphere of intellectual life than many of the members of the so-called 'Second Sophistic'. Philostratus confesses as much:

“I do not know what one ought to call Dio of Prusa, because of his excellence in everything (Δίωνα δὲ τὸν Προυσαῖον οὐκ οἶδ’ ὅ τι χρὴ προσεῖπεν διὰ τὴν ἐς πάντα ἀρετὴν); for he was a Horn of Amalthea, as the saying goes (Ἀμαλθείας γὰρ κέρας ἦν τὸ τοῦ λόγου).” (487)

To some degree this *aporia* arose from a confrontation with the wide range of Dio’s subject matter. Far more perplexing, however, was the question of occupational label: should one refer to him as an orator or a philosopher? Perhaps more than any other figure in Philostratus’ list, Dio exemplified, in antiquity, the melding together of the two arts; on the one hand, Philostratus praises the lucid style and persuasive charm of his rhetoric, on the other, the political savvy, noble character, and admirable moral precepts of his philosophy.

This ambivalence is reflected in what we know of Dio’s reputation and fame during his lifetime as well as after his death. While Philostratus acknowledges the philosophical side of Dio’s life, he chooses instead to emphasize Dio’s formidable rhetorical abilities (especially the simplicity and lucidity of his style) in his account. Oratorical skill was of course an essential part of Dio’s fame. He himself even refers to the popularity of his speeches, warning his audience against bootleg copies that he had discovered were circulating around Asia Minor, and there can be no doubt that these speeches became the object of study for serious rhetoricians in the centuries following

⁸ Philostratus, VS 484. His treatment of Dio: 487–8 (on which see Whitmarsh (1998)). Further citations will be provided in the text.

Dio's death.⁹ Two of his students, Favorinus of Arelate and Polemo of Smyrna, would become the most prominent sophists of the following generation.¹⁰

Many of Dio's works, however, are better characterized as moral homilies or diatribes, rather than the epideictic or declamatory pieces so favored by Philostratus' sophists. His self-characterization during his exile as a wandering philosopher in the mold of a Socrates or a Diogenes reinforces this predominant image of Dio as a sort of Cynic preacher. The celebrated anecdotes told about Dio similarly reflect his reputation as a respected political and ethical figure—in the *Lives*, Philostratus tells us that when the news of Domitian's murder threatened to incite the troops along the German frontier into mutiny, Dio (who happened to be there) threw off his rags, leapt up onto a stone, and persuaded the army to remain loyal to their commanders, and in the *Apollonius*, he vividly portrays Dio and Apollonius of Tyana hotly debating the best form of government before Vespasian.¹¹ And in fact, as C.P. Jones writes, “within a few decades of his death, Dio was among the philosophic immortals”;¹² the writers who mention Dio in the second century refer to him exclusively in philosophical contexts. Fronto, for instance, includes Dio in a list of the students of Musonius Rufus, one of the most prominent and influential Stoics of the mid to late first century,¹³ while Lucian lists Musonius, Dio, and Epictetus as philosophers who were “exiled for

⁹ On these matters see Desideri (1991b) 3914-28. Later rhetoricians praise Dio for his style, e.g., Menander Rhetor 390.1 Spengel and Themistius *Or.* 5, 63d.

¹⁰ Philostratus, *VS* 490 (1.8.2) Favorinus; 539 (1.25.8) Polemo. On these two bitter rivals see Gleason (1995).

¹¹ Philostratus, *VS* 488; *Life of Apollonius* 5.34-40.

¹² Jones (1978), 55.

¹³ Fronto, *ad M. Antonin. Imp. De eloq.* 1.1: “Quid nostra memoria Euphrates, Dio, Timocrates, Athenodotus? Quid horum magister Musonius?” On these connections, see Desideri (1978), 6-16 and Jones (1978), 12-15.

frankness and excessive independence (διὰ τὴν παρρησίαν καὶ τὴν ἄγαν ἐλευθερίαν)."¹⁴

Even as a philosopher, however, Dio's eclecticism has caused problems. On the one hand, as Lucian and Fronto's quotes demonstrate, Dio was generally associated with the Stoics. But his discourses often convey a strong Cynic flavor, particularly in the works that scholars believe were composed during or shortly after his exile, such as the dialogues featuring Diogenes. In particular Dio often openly emulates Diogenes and Socrates, praises poverty, and advocates a simple life, devoted to the truth. From the late 19th to the mid-20th century, an enormous amount of work was devoted to identifying Stoic, Cynic, or other elements in Dio's corpus, in order to claim him for one philosophical school or the other.¹⁵ Another tack was to come up with a developmental model of Dio's thought that could explain the philosophical discrepancies as well as help to date his speeches on the same criteria: e.g., Dio started as a Stoic, but gravitated toward Cynicism as a result of his exilic experience.¹⁶ It's easy now to see the inadequacy of this sort of approach, and more recent scholarship has called into question its solutions, as well as its presuppositions. Simon Swain, for instance, suggests that the Cynic was one of the many *personae* that Dio took on for rhetorical purposes, and Paolo Desideri has pointed out that the overlap between Cynics and Stoics

¹⁴ Lucian, *Peregrinus* 18. Cf. Lucian, *Parasitus* 2, which refers to "Dio the philosopher" (see Desideri (1978), 21 for attribution to our Dio); Epictetus, 3.23.17-19; and Marcus Aurelius, *Medit.* 1.14, which refers to a Dio in a list of Stoics (Thrasea, Cato, Helvidius, Dio and Brutus); see Desideri (1978), 16-19 for persuasive arguments suggesting that this is Dio of Prusa. In general, see Desideri (1978), 1-60 for an overview of ancient references to Dio up to and including Philostratus; and the excellent treatment of Brancacci (1985) which also continues the story of Dio's *Nachleben* to the 12th century.

¹⁵ Swain (2000), 25-7.

in this period was so considerable that to look for a sharp identifiable break risks futility.¹⁷

I mention the debate over Dio's philosophical leanings both because it provides an example of how the need to provide a figure with a label can result in some distorting scholarship, and because the response to the uneasy synthesis of rhetoric and philosophy in Dio's work has been strikingly similar. In fact, as early as the 5th century C.E., a solution to Dio's identity problem based on a theory of his intellectual development had already been proposed by the scholar and bishop Synesius of Cyrene: Dio had begun as a sophist, and 'converted' to philosophy as a result of his exile by Domitian. The convenience of this model, particularly for the dating of Dio's speeches (works that seemed 'sophistic' were dated pre-exile, those more serious post-exile), led to its adoption as canonical, particularly after von Arnim's endorsement in his *Leben und Werke* at the turn of the century.¹⁸ Again, however, just as with the Cynic/Stoic question, the developmental model was eventually revealed to be a bit over-schematic, and not really based on any evidence.¹⁹ The idea of a 'conversion' seems to have been an invention of Synesius for the purpose of defending Dio, whom he greatly admired as a

¹⁶ Important in this regard are the lost speeches attributed to Dio by Synesius, *Dio* 38b: the *Κατὰ τῶν φιλοσόφων* and the *Πρὸς Μουσῶνιον*.

¹⁷ Swain (1996), 190; Jones (1978), 49-50; Desideri (1978), 537-47.

¹⁸ von Arnim (1898), 223. On von Arnim and Dio, see Swain (2000), 27-32.

¹⁹ See the thorough treatment of Moles (1978), who probably goes too far by claiming that the conversion was an invention of Dio himself (critiqued by Reardon (1983)); in the same year, Jones (1978), 45-55 and Desideri (1978) also refuted the conversion thesis, although they still retained a sense that Dio's exile changed his philosophical beliefs in some fashion. As early as 1950, Momigliano had already categorically stated that "the sharp distinction between a sophistic and philosophic period in Dio's life...[is] an illusion." The lecture was eventually published as Momigliano (1969).

philosopher, from those who disdained him for the sophistic leanings of certain speeches.²⁰

So in the end, the problem with Dio is that he fails to fall neatly into either side of the somewhat artificial dichotomies of Cynic and Stoic, orator and philosopher. But rather than trying to cram him into either category, we might step back and wonder whether the very difficulty that writers, both ancient and modern, have had in characterizing him says something about Dio's intellectual and social position. Although in many ways he prefigures the orators of the later period that has come to be known as the Second Sophistic, Philostratus' hesitation to include him among these men was legitimate. His sense that Dio did not quite fit in with the others wasn't, however, based on chronological concerns (as is the case with those who consider the Second Sophistic a purely second century phenomenon). After all the first 'real' sophist after Aeschines, according to Philostratus, was Nicetes of Smyrna, who was active under Nero (511). Philostratus put his finger on another significant difference. Despite the beauty and clarity of Dio's oratorical style, the *content* of his speeches differs markedly from that of second century figures such as Polemo, Scopelian of Clazomenae, and Herodes Atticus. The concern with declamation and *ex tempore* speaking that so marks the *Lives* does not occupy a very prominent place in Dio's corpus, but gives way to an overwhelming interest in moral didacticism, tinged on occasion with politics, philosophy, or literary criticism.²¹

²⁰ Following Jones (1978), 49.

²¹ Cf. Swain (1996), 89-100, where he characterizes the Second Sophistic in terms that would seem to leave Dio considerably out of this ambit; this despite Swain's inclusion of, and heavy dependence on, Dio for the rest of his book.

But Dio cannot, on the other hand, simply be grouped with someone such as his slightly younger contemporary Plutarch, despite their shared interests in moral and ethical issues. Dio is after all still an orator, and the predominantly rhetorical and interactive nature of his discourse sets him apart from Plutarch, who *wrote* his works, which generally reach a level of sophistication and complexity entirely alien to Dio's conceptual world.²² This somewhat peculiar middle ground that Dio occupies, not quite a sophist, not quite a philosopher, deserves some more description, because, as we shall see, the public, rhetorical, and essentially popular character of Dio's discourse considerably affects the ways in which we should interpret the observations and arguments embedded within it.

Dio's Performative Discourse of Morality

To understand Dio, we have to remember above all, not only that he was an orator who traveled all over the Mediterranean world delivering speeches to an incredibly diverse audience on a wide array of topics, but also that the corpus of his speeches that we possess represent the textual instantiation of these performances. This applies both to the site and event-specific orations such as the *Olympian* or the *Alexandrian*, as well as to the briefer pieces that could be delivered in any number of places, on any number of occasions. We are dealing here with a discourse fundamentally different from the more private, text-oriented world of intellectuals like Strabo, Dionysius, or Plutarch, and one that has its own particular characteristics. As Paolo Desideri, who has devoted enormous energy to delineating the contours of this discourse, describes

²² This is not to say that Dio and Plutarch did not have many similarities as well; cf. Swain (1996), 187. Moreover, Russell (1992), 1, is right to emphasize Dio's connec-

it, the amalgam of moralizing philosophy, rhetoric, and diatribe that so marks his speeches reflects a particularly Dionian solution to the problem of communicating ethical and political precepts to the Greek-speaking element of the Empire. He sees Dio's corpus as a record of this mode of intervention into the social, a task which Dio saw as the specific task of the cultured man.²³

As an orator concerned chiefly with ethical behavior, Dio's problems were fundamentally ones of communication—how best to get his message across to many different people in many different contexts, whether at festivals and special events, or simply impromptu gatherings in public squares. Furthermore his speeches circulated widely during his lifetime both orally and in writing—he admits to his audience in the *Trojan* that the speech will be given to other audiences at later dates²⁴—and we should imagine a repertoire of speeches, many of which were produced to be repeatable and for dissemination well beyond their original audience, whether by Dio himself, or via other means.²⁵ Dio's constant deployment of mythical/historical references and *empla* become (as also with the sophists) communicative devices comprehensible and meaningful to audiences with little else in common other than their knowledge of

tions with his contemporaries, Greek and Roman: "Dio belongs to the same literary culture not only as Plutarch, but as Pliny and Tacitus."

²³ See Desideri (1978), ch. vii and the refinements and additions of Desideri (1991b). On Desideri's work, see the brief overview of Swain (2000), 35-40.

²⁴ "I wish to say at the outset that this discourse must be delivered before other audiences also." (11.6) Note 17.1-5 on the importance of repeating things over and over.

²⁵ Dio, *Or.* 42.4: "For almost all men are acquainted with my speeches, and the distribute them broadcast in all directions...Moreover almost all report my speeches to one another, not as they were delivered, but after having made them still better in accordance with their own ability..." On the vexed question of the production, editing, and dissemination of Dio's speeches, see Desideri (1978), 255 n.11, 465-6, n.4; Braccacci (1985), 19-25.

Greek and their familiarity with the basic elements of Hellenic tradition.²⁶ This recourse to argumentation by means of examples, stories, and symbols, rather than through abstract argument, combined with his celebrated simplicity and lucidity of style, lend the characteristic Dionian flavor to many of his works. Of course to most modern readers they seem terribly superficial, repetitive, banal, but part of this feeling is the result of a style that had to adapt itself to a wide variety of performance settings and audiences.

Employing examples from Hellenic tradition is the primary mode by which Dio can communicate his ideas to his audiences; it is part of the 'language' by which he conveys and illustrates his moral and philosophical precepts. But this tradition itself, as reflected in myth and poetry, is also his main opponent in the field of cultural and political opinion; if Dio is attempting to instill his own ideas about proper behavior in civic or private contexts, he realizes that he has to combat *doxa*, the 'common-sense' of the masses, and this *doxa* has, to Dio's mind, been formed by myth and the poets.²⁷ In many ways, the situation parallels that of the Classical period which we examined in the first chapter—to create a space for their own ethical views, intellectuals invariably ran up against the poets, and had to prove the viability of their position in the face of poetically transmitted knowledge, whether in opposition or alliance. Dio has to negotiate this bind in speech after speech; it is a mark of his virtuosity that he can interpret a traditional story in different ways depending on the situation, that he can rail against people who (according to him) believe immoral myths in one instance, and then use

²⁶ See Millar (1969) and Swain (1996), ch.3.

²⁷ 7.98-101, cf. Ritoók (1995), 131-2. The battle against *doxa*, common opinion, is a dominant motif in Dio's work; cf. especially *Or.* 67, 68 *On Doxa*, which are devoted to the issue.

the same myth, interpreted properly, as an example of the highest truth, and an authority for his own position.

Dio's use of myths and the poets, it should be emphasized, nearly always works toward the illustration of specific moral points, and it is no different with regard to Homer. As opposed to Strabo, Dio's interests in Homer are almost invariably ethical, although like him, he rarely has anything but praise for the poet as a moral authority and a source of advice.²⁸ But this emphasis on the moral and ethical aspects of Homer does not preclude an interest in the historical and verisimilar aspects of epic narrative. As we will see, a faith in Homer's moral wisdom can enable an approach to the text that, through its concern with probability and narrative consistency, often coincides with the sort of reading practiced by historians and literary scholars. This overlap is the result of the importance of constructing probable narratives in the teaching and practice of rhetoric, and serves to contextualize the *Trojan Oration*, often seen as a glaring exception to Dio's customary interests in ethics and his reverence for Homer, within Dio's corpus.²⁹

But first, I want to begin our foray into Dio's treatment of Homer with the 61st oration, a short dialogue called *Chryseis*. *Chryseis* highlights certain representative characteristics of Dionian rhetorical practice that run through his use and criticism of Homer, and can thus serve as a convenient introduction to the subversion, manipulation, and repetition of these characteristics that we witness in the *Trojan Oration*.

²⁸ Note the lost work *In Defense of Homer against Plato* attributed to him by the Suda, s.v. Δίων II p.117 Adler. See Brancacci (1985), 253-9.

²⁹ On Dio's Homeric interpretation (not including the *Trojan*), see Valgimigli (1912), 1-48, Kindstrand (1973), 113-41, and Desideri (1978), 480-91.

II *CHRYSEÏS*: PROPRIETY

Chryseïs is an animated dialogue between Dio and an unnamed woman about the daughter of the priest Chryses, *Chryseïs*, who appears in the first book of the *Iliad*.³⁰ As we recall, the epic opens with Chryses visiting the Greek forces to ransom his daughter. Despite the general consent of the Greeks, Agamemnon, to whom the girl belongs as a war prize, rebuffs the request. Chagrined, Chryses goes off to call the wrath of Apollo, in the form of a plague, onto the Greeks. The rest is too familiar for summary; the upshot is that Agamemnon eventually gives *Chryseïs* back to her father, but takes *Briseïs*, Achilles' prize, in compensation, and the rest of the *Iliad* deals with the ramifications of this decision. Now in all this action, *Chryseïs* herself fulfills solely a structural role—an object of exchange between men—and Homer never describes her in any way. What, then, could the dialogue be about?

Dio proposes: "...let us examine (σκεψώμεθα) how the poet has depicted the daughter of the priest...For Agamemnon seems (ἔοικε) to praise not only her beauty but also her character (τρόπον), for he says that she is no way inferior in mind than his own wife (τὰς φρένας χείρων τῆς αὐτοῦ γυναικός); and it's clear that he considers that woman [his wife] to be intelligent (νοῦν ἔχειν)"³¹ Such a topic, he adds, will match the sophistication of his interlocutor (who should probably be imagined as Dio's student):

³⁰ *Chryseïs* has inspired only cursory treatment in the scholarship: von Arnim (1898), 300; Olivieri (1898), 593-5; Valgimigli (1912), 11-14; Kindstrand (1973), 136; Desideri (1978), 487-9 and to my knowledge merely two articles: Giner Soria (1987) and Blomqvist (1995), which takes the dialogue as evidence for Dio's favorable view of women.

³¹ A reference to *Iliad* 1.114-5: "For I prefer her to Clytemnestra, my wedded wife, since she is not inferior in any way to her, not in body, nor in stature, nor in mind, nor in accomplishments."

you happen to praise Homer in no unsophisticated manner (τυγχάνεις οὐ φαύλως ἐπαινοῦσα “Ὀμηρον); you don’t pretend to marvel at him, as do many others who trust *doxa* (οὐδὲ ὡσπερ οἱ πολλοὶ πιστεύουσα τῇ δόξῃ προσποιῆ θαυμάζειν), but have perceived that the aspect of the poet which is most skillful (ὁ δὲ δεινότατός ἐστιν, ἤσθησαι τοῦ ποιητοῦ) is his experience in human passions (τὴν περὶ τὰ πάθη τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐμπειρίαν)... (1)

The general area of inquiry, then, will be Homer’s depictions of emotions and character (τὰ πάθη and ὁ τρόπος); the specific case is Chryseïs. Of course, as perceptive readers of the *Iliad* might remember, Homer offers us precious little that might offer any insight into Chryseïs’ *êthos*. Dio’s interlocutor astutely points out, “he has depicted her doing or saying nothing, but only being given silently to her father (οὐδὲν γοῦν πεποιήκεν αὐτὴν πράττουσαν ἢ λέγουσαν, ἀλλὰ σιγῇ τῷ πατρὶ δεδομένην)?” “What other proof (Καὶ τίνα ἄλλην ἀπόδειξις),” she asks Dio, “do you have in Homer about Chryseïs’ character? (ἔχεις παρά γε Ὀμήρω τοῦ τρόπου τῆς γυναικός)?” (3)

As we mentioned a few pages ago, paradoxical situations of this sort are typical of Dionian discourse; they are *para doxan* in the literal sense—contrary to popular opinion, or common sense—but they also serve to shock listeners out of their complacent thinking, and act instead as a spur to inquiry. Here the absence of information concerning Chryseïs, rather than giving rise to *aporia*, serves to inspire more subtle techniques of reading.

Naturally, then, Dio is quick to respond. “Can’t we infer her thought from what took place around her, as long as we consider the matter not completely simply and foolishly? (ἐκ τῶν γενομένων περὶ αὐτὴν οὐκ ἂν τις συμβάλῃ τὴν διάνοιαν μὴ πάνυ ἀπλῶς μηδὲ εὐήθως σκοπῶν)” (3) Here Dio lays down the interpretative challenge: not content with simple-minded first impressions (the *doxa* of the masses)

which suggest that nothing at all could be known of Chryseïs' character, the skilled reader will dig deeper, forming an image of Chryseïs' ethics and behavior based on the *effect* that it has on others in Homer's narrative.

Astonishingly enough, Dio manages to do just this. He extrapolates, in a careful and rather elegant series of arguments, Chryseïs' thoughts and motivations from a close analysis of Homer's narrative. Beginning with Chryses' decision to come into the Achaean camp, Dio demonstrates with a string of counterfactual arguments that it was Chryseïs' decision to have her father come and ransom her, rather than his own. After all, if Chryseïs didn't want to leave, why would Chryses risk angering her as well as Agamemnon? Shouldn't he have been happy that his daughter was favored by the king who ruled over his city? If it had been his idea, he wouldn't have waited so long to get his daughter back (since Chryse, the town where Chryseïs was taken, was probably sacked near the beginning of the war, along with most of the smaller cities around Troy).³² The only sensible solution, Dio asserts, is that Chryseïs decided she wanted to go home, and beseeched her father to help her.

But, if Chryseïs was the one who set the whole process in motion, why did she wait so long? The interlocutor, asking Dio about this, says, "this *logos* of yours displays rather singular conduct (πολλὴν ἀτοπίαν) on Chryseïs' part—at first she endures being a prisoner, despite having recently lost her father and country, but then after ten

³² Actually, Homer informs us at *Iliad* 1.366-9 that Chryseïs was captured at Hypoplakian Thebes, along with Briseis. Eëtion, Andromache's father, ruled this town, and was killed in the battle by Achilles. The relative locations of Chryse, Thebes, and some of the other minor cities nearby are discussed at length by Strabo (13.1.61-3): "But it was at Thebe that Chryseïs was taken captive: "We went into Thebe, the sacred city of Eëtion" (*Il.* 1.366) and the poet says that Chryseïs was part of the spoil brought from that place (*Il.* 1.369)." The question also finds its way into the scholia—on which see section III of this chapter.

years have passed, she finds it hard going.” (5)³³ Dio responds that Chryseīs was initially satisfied with her position with Agamemnon, since he was powerful, handsome, and clearly quite enamored of her (as his remarks quoted earlier reveal).³⁴ The interlocutor, however, is not quite satisfied:

“Then according to these *logoi* Chryseīs did *not* want to be sent away from Agamemnon, but Chryses was doing these things [trying to ransom Chryseīs] on his own. Or if she did in fact wish it, she would have been rather stupid, and you have stated a *logos* opposite to that which you promised.” (7)

οὐκοῦν ἐκ τῶν λόγων τούτων οὐκ ἐβουλήθη Χρυσῆς ἀποπεμφθῆναι παρὰ τοῦ Ἀγαμέμνονος, ἀλλὰ Χρύσης ταῦτα ἔπραττε καθ’ αὐτόν· ἢ εἴπερ ἐβούλετο, ἀφρονεστέρα ἂν εἶη, καὶ τὸν λόγον ἐναντίον εἶπας ἢ ὑπέσχου.

In other words, either Chryses was acting on his own, a possibility which Dio has already rejected, or else Chryseīs was responsible for trying to win her own release despite the fact that she loved Agamemnon and that she had no practical reason to leave. This, the woman claims, would make her stupid, rather than intelligent, and therefore contradict rather than demonstrate Dio’s original premise.

Dio asks her to be patient; he’s not finished yet. “Do you agree that Homer is a wise man? (λέγεις δὴ σοφὸν ὄντα τὸν Ὅμηρον;)...Then you must think that he speaks of some things (Οὐκοῦν τὰ μὲν αὐτὸν λέγειν [οἴου]), but leaves others for his readers to perceive (τὰ δὲ τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσι καταλιπεῖν αἰσθάνεσθαι). But this

³³ Οὐκοῦν ὁ λόγος οὗτος πολλὴν ἀτοπίαν ἐπιδείκνυσι τῆς Χρυσῆδος, τὸ πρότερον μὲν αἰχμάλωτον οὔσαν ἀνέχεσθαι, προσφάτως στερομένην τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τῆς πατρίδος, διελθόντων δὲ <δέκα> ἐτῶν χαλεπῶς φέρειν.

³⁴ An additional supporting argument: If Briseis could love Achilles, who had killed her husband and brothers, surely Chryseīs could love Agamemnon, who had done no such thing.

isn't one of the very obscure cases (τοῦτο δὲ οὐ τῶν πάνυ ἀδήλων ἐστίν).” (8) For Dio, Homer has left traces in his poetry that enable his more perceptive readers to fill in the elements of his narrative that he has omitted. The proper understanding of his text is not open to all, and reading ‘between the lines’ becomes a necessary mode of understanding Homeric epic. This credo enables Dio to justify the much more speculative reading of Chryseīs’ motivations and thoughts that will follow, as he takes us deep into heroic psychology.

Although Chryseīs was initially satisfied with her position, Dio explains, she was prescient enough to realize that the fall of Troy was imminent, and that Agamemnon, like most victorious generals, would probably become more arrogant and unbearable as time went on. More importantly, she began hearing, little by little, about his domestic life back in Greece, particularly the cruelty and power of Clytemnestra.³⁵ Chryseīs also learned about Helen’s proud spirit and ambition (she had chosen Paris because of the great advantages of Asia in soil, population and riches), and this only provided more evidence of the power of the two sisters. And to top it all off, now “Agamemnon, puffed up because of his position as commander, had disparaged Clytemnestra (ὁ δὲ Ἀγαμέμνων διὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐπαιρόμενος τὴν Κλυταιμνήστραν ἠτίμασεν),” and had even publicly stated that he preferred Chryseīs to his wife (*Il.* 1.113-5). This would no doubt get back to Clytemnestra, “and so it was clear that they were not going to get along well with each other (ὥστε δῆλον ἦν ὅτι οὐκ ἀνέξοιντο ἀλλήλων).” (12) Even more prudently, she realized that if Agamemnon

³⁵ Dio mentions that the sons of Atreus were ruled by their wives. The reasons for this tendency were that Helen and Clytemnestra thought themselves superior to the Atreidae, who had only recently come from Asia, because they were daughters of Tyn-dareus, the king of Sparta, and the sisters of Castor and Polydeuces, not to mention cousins of Meleager.

could say such things about his own wife, what would happen when he got tired of herself, a mere captive? Chryseīs' decision to leave, then, in Dio's eyes, was the mark of quite a pragmatic and far-sighted young woman.

The interlocutor, however, wonders why (among other things),³⁶ if she was so happy to leave, Homer fails to mention that she "departed in gladness, just as he says that Briseis departed in sorrow?" Dio claims that Chryseīs, prudent as ever, didn't want to make Agamemnon any angrier than he already was. And Homer still manages to make her feelings clear when he says (*Il.* 1.446-7) that Chryses "rejoicing, received his dear child (ὁ δ' ἐδέξατο χαίρων παῖδα φίλην)," since if she were sad, the father wouldn't have been "rejoicing".

In the end, after a few more objections,³⁷ the interlocutor grudgingly concedes Dio's point: "I won't deny that Chryseīs was thoughtful (φρόνιμον), if these things happened in this way." (Οὐκ ἀντιλέγω τὸ μὴ οὐ φρόνιμον εἶναι τὴν Χρυσήϊδα, εἰ ταῦτα οὕτω γέγονε.)(18) In response, Dio offers an ambiguous rhetorical question that has often struck readers as a peculiar way to close the dialogue: "Do you want to

³⁶ For example, she asks why Agamemnon called Chryseīs wise, since he could not have been aware of her thoughts on these issues? This was, after all, Dio's initial clue to Chryseīs' intelligence. Dio concedes that it is unlikely that Chryseīs mentioned these things to Agamemnon, but the king must have gotten a general impression of her wisdom from her conduct in general.

³⁷ These are fairly sophisticated. For instance, she asks why one couldn't just attribute all of the inferred sentiments to Chryses, rather than Chryseīs. Then, one could say that Chryses realized what would happen to his daughter if she stayed, and so chose to take action at this time. Dio argues that Chryseīs was more likely to be thinking about Clytemnestra than her father; at any rate, even if it was her dad's idea, and Chryseīs just followed his advice, this was a pretty prudent course of action as well, since most women are more devoted to their lovers than to their parents.

hear how it really happened, or how it should have happened? (Σὺ δὲ πρότερον ἀκούειν θέλοις ἂν ὡς γέγονεν ὄντως ἢ ὅπως καλῶς εἶχε γενέσθαι).” (18)³⁸

Moral Interpretation

Dio’s primary concern in *Chryseīs* is undeniably moral and ethical.³⁹ By the conclusion of the piece, the unspeaking, unacting Chryseīs has become a model of wisdom, foresight, and moderation, and even possibly, as Desideri reads it, a paradigm for the behavior proper to intellectuals dealing with kings.⁴⁰ This concentration on the moral and ethical dimension is not surprising; such themes are representative of a predominant method of reading Homeric poetry in antiquity, and also characteristic of other Dionian speeches concerned with larger moral communicative projects.⁴¹ But the final coda of the dialogue suggests that reading Homer with these concerns overlapped to some degree with other seemingly disparate methods.

The interlocutor’s final concession—“if these things happened in this way”—reveals that, in her mind, the discussion has focused on ascertaining the actual motivations and intelligence of the historical personage Chryseīs. Dio’s response suggests that Dio had not been operating under the same assumption, and that their conversation had

³⁸ So Desideri (1978), 489: “La conclusione è sibillina.” Note the echoes of Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451a36ff.: φανερόν δὲ ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων καὶ ὅτι οὐ τὸ τὰ γενόμενα λέγειν, τοῦτο ποιητοῦ ἔργον ἐστίν, ἀλλ’ οἷα ἂν γένοιτο καὶ τὰ δυνατὰ κατὰ τὸ εἶκος ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον.

³⁹ von Arnim (1898), 300: “an ethical purpose” not concerned with “rationalistische Sagenkritik.” So Kindstrand (1973), 136: “although it appears to be a typical example of a joke and overinterpretation, it has a clear ethical objective.” On Dio’s moral interpretation of Homer, see Affholder (1966-7).

⁴⁰ Desideri (1978), 489. Blomqvist (1995), 185, who also notes instances of women in philosophy, e.g., Musonius Rufus, 3.4.

been operating at cross-purposes. Dio is saying, “Oh, you’re interested in what *really* happened? I was just examining what ought to have happened.” In other words he was engaged in reading Homer’s narrative for ethical import, while the interlocutor wanted to know about the historical Chryseis. This final rhetorical question reveals, however, in its joking form, the ultimate similarity of Dio’s and the interlocutor’s methods of reading that persists despite their different objectives and understanding of Chryseis—only at the end do the two realize that they haven’t been talking about the same thing at all.⁴²

But within the dialogue, Dio’s reading of Chryseis’ character continuously blurs this distinction. That he can make a moral point while also answering a classic ‘problem’ of Homeric scholarship (why did Chryses wait so long to ransom his daughter?) is a sign of his virtuosity—Dio’s interpretation results not only in a logical and plausible reconstruction of events, but also the development of a moral paradigm to which a teacher could point their charges. But beyond the moral point, Dio takes reading to a different, perhaps irresponsible, level in the dialogue—from a few hints and details in Homer he expands the opening episode in the *Iliad* by imaginatively filling in the gaps in the narrative, resulting in something halfway between invention and inference. If

⁴¹ So in the *Nestor* (58), Dio reads Nestor’s famous speech in *Iliad* I, where he tries to reconcile Achilles and Agamemnon, in the light of his own role as an advisor to emperors.

⁴² This rather enigmatic ending has engendered very different interpretations. Kindstrand (1973), 136, and von Arnim (1898), 300, believe that these words signal that Dio doesn’t take the dialogue very seriously; he is ridiculing the whole exercise by undermining its very premises—namely that it was a serious investigation of the truth. Others, such as Olivieri (1898) and Valgimigli (1912), have argued that Dio was posing an earnest philosophical question—offering the interlocutor a choice between two legitimate ways to do literary criticism. Desideri (1978), 489, thinks that Dio is admitting that his reconstruction is purely hypothetical, while maintaining its moral superiority over other possibly true versions. Cf. Kamesar (1994a), 60: “a purely hypothetical reconstruction intended for the sake of edification.”

we glance at Dio's comments on moralizing criticism contained in other speeches, I think we will better understand why it was so easy to collapse and combine two modes of interpretation—moralizing and historicizing—that seem at first to lie so far apart.

Ethos, Clothing, and Narrative

We can begin with Dio's response to his interlocutor's incredulity at his plan to determine Chryseis' character. "Surely we can infer her psychological characteristics from what took place around her, as long as we consider the matter not completely simply and foolishly?" What sort of presuppositions lie behind such a bold statement? To answer this, we should turn first to his 55th oration, *On Homer and Socrates*. Dio opens this short dialogue with another of his paradoxical claims: Socrates, he asserts, was the student of Homer. He goes on to illustrate this by a series of alleged (and commonplace) similarities between the two figures, primarily moral and ethical: both scorned wealth, both were not boastful, and both spoke "of human virtue and vice, wrongs and rights, truth and deceit, and how the masses have common opinion and the wise have knowledge."⁴³ (1) But the bulk of the dialogue is devoted to a more relevant point of resemblance—Homer's and Socrates' effective use of similes and exempla. Dio isn't, as we might expect, referring to the much-admired similes for which Homer was so well-known, but to the use of characters to exemplify particular ethical states and behavior. According to Dio, Socrates held that everytime he introduced a boastful man in his conversation, he was talking about boastfulness in general, and the same was true of Homer—when he introduces someone like Dolon, are we not sup-

⁴³ περὶ ἀρετῆς ἀνθρώπων καὶ κακίας καὶ περὶ ἀμαρτημάτων καὶ κα-
τορθωμάτων καὶ περὶ ἀληθείας καὶ ἀπάτης καὶ ὅπως δοξάζουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ καὶ
ὅπως ἐπίστανται οἱ φρόνιμοι.

posed to imagine that the story is really about cowardice? Doesn't Pandarus represent folly and treachery, or Antinöos gluttony and shamelessness?⁴⁴ If Homeric characters are embodiments of moral qualities, it follows, as Dio has shown in *Chryseis*, that every facet of their depiction will somehow reflect these qualities. Naturally it is up to the reader to imagine precisely how.

This type of reading is put into practice in the *2nd Kingship Oration*, an amusing dialogue between Alexander the Great, imagined as a vigorous defender of Homer's wisdom concerning kingship, and his father Philip II.⁴⁵ Alexander, like most moralizing readers of Homeric poetry, tends to read Homer's words as advocating particular courses of action.⁴⁶ So when Philip asks him whether a king should have "a home adorned with precious items—gold, amber, and ivory," (2.34) Alexander insists that the only decorations should be the spoils of war, and he quotes *Iliad* 7.83, where Hector says that he will hang his victims' arms "high in the temple of Apollo." (2.34) But Philip points out that Homer has portrayed the kings Alcinous and Menelaus as having rather extravagant homes; doesn't this mean that Alexander is in conflict with

⁴⁴ Some have considered this type of reading as moralizing allegory, but strictly speaking Dio is not allegorizing. To allegorize Dolon would be to claim that he stands for Cowardice, that he is a symbol of it, not simply an example of someone who is a coward. For Dio, Homer's stories are illustrations told for a didactic purpose, in a surprisingly similar fashion to the way Dio employs myths and stories in his own speeches. This debate about whether we should consider such moralizing readings of Homer as allegory is still going on, especially with respect to Antisthenes (see Chapter One, section 1).

⁴⁵ Moles (1990) includes the most comprehensive analysis of this speech, although predominantly concerned with how it reflects Dio and Trajan's relationship.

⁴⁶ As he says a little later at (2.44), "it is necessary to take on some occasions the poet as giving advice and admonition, but on others as only narrating, and on many as blaming and ridiculing (δεῖ δὲ τοῦ ποιητοῦ τὰ μὲν ὡς συμβουλεύοντος καὶ παραινούντος ἀποδέχεσθαι, τὰ δὲ ὡς ἐξηγουμένου μόνον, πολλὰ δὲ ὡς ὄνειδίζοντος καὶ καταγελῶντος)." Probably the best ancient example of this type of reading is Plutarch's *How a Young Man Should Listen to Poetry*.

his favorite poet? (2.37) To defend his position, Alexander offers an interesting statement of method: “it is fairly likely that the poet never speaks in vain about other things (σχεδὸν γὰρ οὖν ἔοικεν οὐδὲ τῶν ἄλλων οὐδὲν μάτην ὁ ποιητῆς οὗτος λέγειν), but often depicts clothing, dwelling, and manner of life so as to accord with people’s *êthos* (ἀλλὰ καὶ στολὴν καὶ οἰκησιν καὶ δίαιταν πρὸς τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἦθος πολλάκις ἀπεικάζει).” (2.40) Thus, the beauty and pleasantness of Alcinous and the Phaeacians is reflected in Homer’s description of their island, while Menelaus’ luxurious palace fits with his faint-heartedness in battle. Homer has also given Odysseus “a home furnished to suit his character, since Odysseus was a cautious man” (2.43).⁴⁷ Alexander is claiming that Homer describes the clothes and homes of various heroes in light of their characteristic personalities; here the 55th discourse’s general tenet that characters represent moral qualities is adopted to enable a more specific reading, where apparently contingent details such as dress and home décor must be read as participatory in a character’s overall *êthos*.

But if one accepts that Homer’s descriptions of characters accord with their *êthos*—that, apparently, no descriptive detail can be considered irrelevant—what prevents a skilled reader from reversing the signficatory process? If external details are consistent with character, could one not then infer character from an examination of outward appearance, or choice of furnishings? In *Chryseïs* Dio goes even farther into uncharted territory; he claims that we can infer Chryseïs’ character, not only from her appearance or actions (of which we have virtually no evidence) but from the actions involving her, that were undertaken by others—her father and Agamemnon.

⁴⁷ οὐ μὴν τὴν γε τοῦ Ὀδυσσεύως οἰκησιν οὐδαμῶς τούτοις ὁμοίαν, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἂν ἀσφαλοῦς ἀνδρὸς πεποίηκε πρὸς αὐτὸ τοῦτο παρεσκευασμένην. Backed up by the description of Odysseus’ palace at *Od.* 17.266-8.

As Desideri explains, “the poet, in Dio’s view, intends to transmit a message through the events he depicts, which reflect character.” (487-9) The poet’s didactic intention permeates every facet of his poetry; Dio asserts baldly that Homer “undertook to educate people (ἐπεχείρησε τοὺς ἀνθρώπους παιδεύειν).” (55.11) But the only way that one can justify reading every detail from a moral perspective is if we accept a strong notion of Homer’s intentionality. And Dio does, judging from his insistent rhetorical question: “Well, then, Homer doesn’t seem to you to say anything by chance, does he? (Μὴ οὖν ὑμῖν εἰκῆ δοκεῖ Ὅμηρος ὅτι οὖν λέγειν;)” (55.22) In other words, there can be nothing, or virtually nothing, expressed in the epics without a purpose; there are no random details, and hence everything is open to interpretation. Strabo constructed an impeccable geographer/historian committed to the truth (albeit with an occasional myth thrown in to please his listeners) which cleared a path to invest every poetic line with historical significance. Dio’s Homer is just as committed, but to teaching morality, not history. In either case, the interpreter has fashioned a model poet who invests virtually every word with meaning that lies waiting to be discovered through the proper mode of decipherment.

A moralizing purpose, however, was not necessarily incompatible with the conjectural activity that informs historical interpretation of Homer like Strabo’s. This is because for Dio and the many others who used Homer as a moral authority, the narrative form (as opposed to didactic) of Homeric epic meant that determining the precise nature of Homer’s moral precepts was dependent on a careful reading of the characters and situations in question. This type of reading in turn took for granted certain standards of narrative consistency and probability shared with other Homeric readers—often, to interpret Homer from an ethical standpoint involved a reconstruction of

events, a conjectural process of filling in the gaps in Homer's narrative, nearly identical to that used by those investigating the Homeric historical world. So it should be of no surprise that despite Dio's moral intentions and concern with character, he can't avoid the issues of narrative logic and probability that Aristotle and Homeric critics found so important (although Dio is more interested in psychological than material conclusions). For Dio, an individual's psychology can only be analyzed by examining their actions or their responses to actions, and hence, in cases such as Chryseïs, when we don't even know what actions she has performed, the only way to reconstruct her moral character is by first reconstructing the situation around her in all its complexity. In this way, since for Dio events reflect character, an ethical interpretation necessarily *depends* on a plausible reconstruction of those events, in those situations where Homer hasn't provided enough information.⁴⁸

If Strabo's concerns with verisimilitude and probability arose from his adamantly historical interests, Dio's dependence on them can I think be better explained by their importance, aside from but not entirely unrelated to the ethical sphere, in the fields of Homeric scholarship and the art of rhetoric. The next section will try to set out how this concern with verisimilitude binds and blurs the methods of these modes of inquiry.

⁴⁸ This connection between narrative, *êthos*, and probability, is, as Kathy Eden (1986) has shown in a brilliant study, the key to understanding Aristotle's concept of proper poetry in the *Poetics*. "To understand an action, the inquirer must judge the agent's deliberated choice by analyzing his character and his intentions." (39) As Aristotle states in the *Rhetoric*, "the narration should depict character." Cf. the briefer remarks of Ritoók (1995).

III CHRYSEÏS: PROBLEMS, PROBABILITIES, *PROGYMNASMATA*

If the principles of moralizing interpretation enable and require the reconstruction of character and action and narrative continuity, the question remains as to the means by which such a task is accomplished? As we recall, Dio begins his inquiry in earnest with some questions: did Chryses enter the Achaean camp against the wishes of his daughter or at her behest? Why did Chryses wait until the tenth year of the war to ransom his daughter? And the dialogue itself is centered around deciphering the meaning of Agamemnon's statement at *Il.* 113-5 that he prefers Chryseïs to Clytemnestra with respect to, among other things, her mind. In answering these questions in a logical and probable fashion, Dio manages to create a supplementary narrative to that supplied by Homer, which allows him to reconstruct the undescribed thought processes of Chryseïs. What are the connections between these "problems" in the Homeric narrative with which Dio chooses to open his investigation and his eventual conclusions concerning Chryseïs' prudence?

Dio's tack is to be expected; after all, Herodotus and Strabo both structured their Homeric inquiries in the same fashion—via problems—and as I suggested in Chapter 1, a large portion of ancient poetic criticism follows a similar pattern. But to get a better idea of the particularities of how Dio is using these problems, we should turn to the Homeric commentary tradition—most notably Porphyry's *Homeric Problems*, Eustathius' *Commentary on the Iliad*, and the group of texts known collectively as the Homeric scholia—and see what it says about the events around Chryseïs.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Despite the wide temporal range of these texts—the scholia contain comments dating from the 5th century B.C.E. to at least the 2nd C.E., while Porphyry is 4th century C.E. and Eustathius is 12th—the tradition and literary critical viewpoints they represent is remarkably consistent; Porphyry and Eustathius clearly derive most of their

Scholia

The beginning of the *Iliad*, which is generally considered today as a masterful and subtle depiction of the development of the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles, was a hotbed of problems for the ancient commentators; the Chryseïs episode was no exception. One problem, for instance, focused on the curse that Chryses calls upon the Greek forces. "Why," the scholiasts wonder, "did Chryses curse the Greeks when they supported giving back his daughter?" After all, only Agamemnon had opposed Chryses, insulting him in the process; wasn't it unfair to blame the Greeks when they had clearly supported the priest's request? For that matter, they ask, why did Apollo kill so many Greeks and not Agamemnon, the real guilty party? These examples display a keen interest in psychological verisimilitude and consistency, but questions could be of a more mundane nature—a good deal of discussion arose about why Chryseïs was captured at Hypoplakian Thebes, rather than Chryse, where, as Eustathius says, one would presume she resided. Here, as in many cases, the lines were athetized, or marked as spurious; the bT scholion remarks that some considered the whole excursus (1.366-92, where Achilles relates his conquests) an interpolation. Often, passages arouse moral concerns as well, especially with regard to Agamemnon; his harsh words to Chryses at *Il.* 1.29-32 inspired controversy and athetesis:

The girl I will not give back; sooner will old age come upon her in my own house, in Argos, far from her own land, going up and down by the loom and being in my bed as my companion

interpretations from earlier writers (on Eustathius' relation to the scholia, see the introduction to van der Valk (1971-87), vol. I; Porphyry's *Homeric Problems* was not strictly a commentary, but a text similar to Aristotle's, or Plutarch's *Table Talk* or *Greek Questions*), and I think it's fair to say, along with Nicholas Richardson (1980), 265, that the scholia represent the literary worldview of the 1st century B.C.E. to the 2nd C.E.

Agamemnon's last words—"being in my bed as my companion (ἐμὸν λέχος ἀντιώσσαν)"⁵⁰—struck many as particularly inappropriate: "The king's saying these things about his prisoner is inappropriate, especially since he has a wife, and children by that wife." (ἀπρεπὲς τὸ τὸν βασιλέα περὶ τῆς αἰχμαλώτου λέγειν, καὶ ταῦτα ἔχοντα γυναῖκα καὶ παῖδας ἐξ αὐτῆς).⁵¹

Finally, Porphyry includes discussion of the problem that Dio spotlights in *Chryseīs*: "Why did Agamemnon prefer the prisoner [*Chryseīs*] over his wife? For he says (*Il.* 113) 'I prefer her to Clytemnestra' (διὰ τί ὁ Ἀγαμέμνων τὴν αἰχμάλωτον τῆς γαμετῆς προκρίνει; λέγει γάρ· Ἐκλυταιμνήστρης προβέβουλα)." As we mentioned above, Dio takes Agamemnon's preference as evidence of some sort of intelligence or wisdom on *Chryseīs*' part. Porphyry, on the other hand, is concerned with resolving the problem and restoring the appropriateness of the situation.

Some say that it was on account of his [Agamemnon's] not wanting to seem to the Greeks to have possession of the girl with *hubris*...some others say that he did it in order to show that Calchas was lying; for how could the god be angry, when the prisoner had not suffered any outrage?" (ad *Il.* 1.113)

καὶ οἱ μὲν φασιν, ὅτι ἔνεκα τοῦ μὴ δοκεῖν Ἕλλησιν ἐφ' ὕβρει κατέχεσθαι τὴν κόρην...ἐνιοὶ δὲ ὅτι ἴνα ψευδόμενον ἀποδείξῃ τὸν

⁵⁰ As Sch. bT ad *Il.* 1.31 glosses: τῆς ἐμῆς κοίτης μεταλαμβάνουσιν ("sharing my bed").

⁵¹ Porphyry ad *Il.* 1.31 Schrader. Some athetize the line for this very reason: Sch. A ad *Il.* 1.29-31. Schenkeveld (1970) believes that ἀπρεπὲς in the Homeric scholia refers to concerns that a certain portrayal or action does not "fit" into the more general depiction of a character or the narrative, rather than having an ethically charged meaning of "inappropriate". While there is some validity to this line of thought, the distinction between the two meanings is not clear-cut enough to be of much use.

Κάλχαντα· πῶς γὰρ ὀργίζοιτο ἂν ὁ θεός, τῆς αἰχμαλώτου μηδὲν ἐφύβριστον πασχούσης:⁵²

In similar fashion, the scholiasts eliminate the other problems. Chryseïs was captured at Thebes, rather than Chryse, because she was visiting Thebes with the intention of sacrificing to Artemis;⁵³ Agamemnon was not killed by Apollo because if he had been, the Greek forces would have disbanded and the reason for the plague would never have been discovered; Agamemnon's ἐμὸν λέχος ἀντιόωσαν didn't mean "being in my bed as a companion," but simply "attending my bed," as a servant, and hence escaped censure. The experience of reading through such scholia is to observe the continuous ebb and flow of problems discovered and subsequently resolved. One follows the imaginary path of the scholiast, commentator, or grammarian as they painstakingly scour the text until their peaceful experience is disturbed by something *atopos*, out of place, a ripple in the continuum of narrative verisimilitude, linguistic normality, moral appropriateness. In each case the smooth flow of the poem is interrupted; a problem has been discovered, it must be put right, the narrative restored, until the next one comes along. The level of detail can get microscopic, and some of the problems can seem rather ridiculous to modern academics, but, as we saw with the minute geographical questions of the previous chapter, they often were treated with grave seriousness by eminent scholars.

⁵² Sch. bT ad *Il.* 113 seem to echo Porphyry's second solution. Eustathius, *Comm. ad Il.* 1.109 (p. 97 van der Valk) has an incredibly detailed rhetorical analysis of Agamemnon's words; he holds to the last option offered by Porphyry, that Agamemnon didn't really prefer Chryseïs, but was simply trying to refute Calchas' implication that he was mistreating the girl.

⁵³ Apparently mentioned, according to Eustathius, in the *Cypria* (=fr. 19).

In *Chryseīs* Dio's entire argument is structured around the same kinds of problems brought up and solved in Homeric scholarship: he locates where Chryseīs had been captured (though incorrectly),⁵⁴ notes Agamemnon's preference of Chryseīs to Clytemnestra, and even quotes the controversial lines about Chryseīs' sharing Agamemnon's bed. But whereas the scholars aim to 'solve' these problems (or simply eliminate them by athetesis), to hammer out the bumps and fill in the holes in the narrative, Dio has a completely different project. For him the problems are not simply imperfections to be brought back to normality, but spurs to inquiry, they allow him access into the underlying truth of the matter. In a sense they anchor the entire dialogue; it is only by fixing on the problems that Dio can extrapolate meaning, because only at those points is there sufficient room to maneuver.

Now we can see more clearly that Dio refers to this type of inquiry when he says that Homer "speaks of some things, but leaves others for his readers to perceive. (Οὐκοῦν τὰ μὲν αὐτὸν λέγειν [οἴου], τὰ δὲ τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσι καταλιπεῖν αἰσθάνεσθαι.) As Manara Valgimigli has pointed out, one can compare these words to Theophrastus' famous advice quoted in Demetrius' *On Style* 222:

One should not spell out everything in precise detail, but leave some things for the hearer to work out and understand for himself. When he grasps what you have not expressed, he will be more than your reader, he will be a witness on your behalf and more kindly disposed towards you, for you have given him the opportunity to exercise his intelligence and he feels he has done so.

οὐ πάντα ἐπ' ἀκριβείας δεῖ μακρηγορεῖν. ἀλλ' ἓνια καταλιπεῖν καὶ τῷ ἀκροατῇ συνιέναι, καὶ λογίζεσθαι ἐξ αὐτοῦ· συνεῖς γὰρ τὸ ἐλλειφθὲν ὑπὸ σοῦ οὐκ ἀκροατῆς μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ μάρτυς σου

⁵⁴ Perhaps he agreed with those who athetized the entire section.

γίνεται, καὶ ἅμα εὐμενέστερος. συνετὸς γὰρ ἑαυτῷ δοκεῖ διὰ σὲ τὸν ἀφορμὴν παρεσχηκότα αὐτῷ τοῦ συνιέναι.

Demetrius is quoting this passage in a section on persuasiveness (τὸ πιθανόν), a quality that depends, in its turn, on clarity (τὸ σαφές) and empathy (συνήθος). The point seems to be that by ‘leaving some things out’, and allowing the listener to work it out themselves, authors can produce an audience better disposed toward themselves and more receptive to their subsequent arguments. In essence Demetrius and Theophrastus approach the problem from the authorial perspective, from the effect on one’s audience that can be produced by ellipses. Dio’s statement, however, although it mentions Homer’s intentions in composing his work, is concerned with how a reader or listener manages to “work out and understand” these omissions.

In this light, Dio’s remarks might be more profitably compared to the exegetical principle of κατὰ τὸ σιωπώμενον. Eustathius provides an appropriate example from *Iliad* 1. Chryses ends his prayer to Apollo with the words “let your arrows make the Danaans pay for my tears shed.” (*Il.* 1.42) The problem here is that Homer hasn’t mentioned that Chryses had been crying; in fact, in line 1.34 Chryses “went silently away” to the beach. Eustathius argues that this sort of apparent inconsistency commonly occurs in Homer:

Notice that you will find in Homer many such things as are called ‘that which is kept silent,’ which is the figure of speech also in this very case. For concerning himself with the necessary things, he is silent about such unimportant things, and leaves these things to the listener to figure out.

καὶ σημείωσαι ὅτι πολλὰ τοιαῦτα εὐρήσεις παρὰ τῷ ποιητῇ τὰ λεγόμενα κατὰ τὸ σιωπώμενον, ὅπερ ἐστὶ σχῆμα λόγου καὶ αὐτό.

ἐπειγόμενος γὰρ εἰς τὰ ἀναγκαῖα σιγᾶ τὰ μὴ πάνυ τοιαῦτα καὶ ἀφήσει τῷ ἀκροατῇ ἐπινοεῖν αὐτά.⁵⁵

The solution κατὰ τὸ σιωπώμενον, apparently formulated by Aristarchus, appears often in the scholia, and holds that Homer did not have to mention everything that happened in the narrative; if it is suggested somewhere that an action has taken place, we should assume that it occurred even if Homer didn't explicitly describe it in the text.⁵⁶

For the commentators, the κατὰ τὸ σιωπώμενον is a principle used to clean up inconsistencies in Homeric poetry such as Chryses' missing tears, or loopholes in continuity. How is it that Athena gives Telemachus her spear at *Od.* 1.126, but never gets it back? Why does Menelaus say at 17.24 that he had justly slain Hyperenor for insulting him, when there is no mention of this in Homer's description of the killing earlier at 14.516?⁵⁷ Dio, however, takes the principle to another level. Homer's silently "leaving things for his readers to perceive" now justifies a foray into uncovering Chryseis' decision-making process as it developed between the time she was captured and her father's attempt to ransom her back. What's more, like Theophrastus and Eustathius, he assigns to Homer an active role in enabling these types of interpretative inquiries. Chryses' remarks about Apollo's avenging his tears should be taken as a sign from which the reader should infer that Chryses had cried, and furthermore, represents a conscious choice on Homer's part to encourage such readings. So, Dio asks, does not Homer work the same way in the case of Chryseis' motivations? Homer has left us all the clues with which to reconstruct these thoughts, and these clues are embedded in

⁵⁵ *Comm. ad Il.* 1.60 (37.18-20 van der Valk).

⁵⁶ See Roemer (1924), 239-48, and the monograph of Meinel (1915). Kamesar (1994a), (1994b) connects *Chryseis* with solutions κατὰ τὸ σιωπώμενον.

the very problems that surround the episode. Agamemnon's inappropriate words are a sign of his questionable character and act as another reason that Chryseīs wanted to leave him; Chryses' delay in ransoming his daughter, Chryses' happiness at the return of his daughter allows us to assume that Homer intended us to infer Chryseīs' happiness as well. Homer doesn't spell these things out; as Theophrastus had put it, "to express everything as to a fool is to accuse your reader of being one (τὸ δὲ πάντα ὡς ἀνοήτῳ λέγειν καταγινώσκοντι ἔοικεν τοῦ ἀκροατοῦ)." (Dem. *On Style* 222)

The *Chryseīs* is deeply embedded in the traditions of Homeric scholarship—nearly every one of Dio's arguments is based on a passage or event that was considered a 'problem' by the commentators, and in some sense, the entire dialogue could be viewed as a large-scale 'solution' to these problems, explaining more fully the behind-the-scenes activity concerning the Chryseīs negotiations, and resolving some of the seeming inconsistencies therein. But we also saw how Dio uses the structure and even some of the methods in his own particular way, for his rather different purposes; after all he ends up by demonstrating Chryseīs' prudence, and offering an extensive alternate history of one of the more minor characters in the *Iliad*. While Dio's inferential activity focuses on problems, and adheres to certain methodological principles found in moralizing criticism and others discussed in the scholia, he raises the stakes and the level of the discourse to a completely different level. Dio has a conception of Homer's compositional method that not only legitimates, but virtually requires reading the results of that composition imaginatively. He recognizes that Homer expressly wished his readers to construct the narrative world he left unexpressed, and believes that the best poetry, the best speeches, are the ones that best enable this reading process.

⁵⁷ Examples from Richardson (1980).

Truth and Verisimilitude: Refutations and Confirmations

The relationship between the scholia and *Chryseīs* can be given a different twist through an examination of the ancient rhetorical exercises called ἀνασκευαί (refutations) and κατασκευαί (confirmations), that both depended heavily on probability and took as their subject matter traditional stories, including Homer. These two exercises belong to the larger group of *progymnasmata*, preliminary lessons for students of rhetoric that originated in the Hellenistic period, although the earliest extant version is Theon's, written sometime in the first century C.E.⁵⁸ Quintilian also discusses the Latin variants in his *Institutio oratoria*, while Ps.-Hermogenes and Aphthonius' *Progymnasmata* date from the 3rd-4th centuries, Nicolaus' from the 5th, and others even later.⁵⁹ Despite some differences (Theon and Nicolaus are significantly longer and more complex), there is a remarkable continuity of structure, language, and content that runs throughout the *progymnasmata* tradition. They are designed to teach the budding orator how to speak in public and compose speeches, through a progressively more difficult series of exercises addressing individual elements of the art of rhetoric: the proper way to construct and employ a μῦθος, or fable, a χρεία, or maxim, a διήγησις, or narrative, ἐκφράσις, προσωποποιία, or personification, etc.

Ἀνασκευή and κατασκευή constitute two of the more advanced exercises related to narrative, to be undertaken only when the other more basic building blocks have been

⁵⁸ The *progymnasmata* were the basic building blocks of rhetorical education in the Imperial period; see Clark (1957), 19off.; Clarke (1971), 25-6, 36-9; Bonner (1977), 250-76; and Patillon & Bolognesi (1997), i-cxiv.

⁵⁹ In terms of the feasibility of comparing concepts from later *progymnasmata* with Dio, who was contemporary with Theon and Quintilian, I emphasize again the continuity of the rhetorical tradition; aside from some very specific elements, periodization here is rather unproductive.

mastered; as Aphthonius says, “This exercise includes in itself all the power of the art (Τὸ δὲ προγύμνασμα τοῦτο πᾶσαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ περιέχει τὴν τῆς τέχνης ἰσχύν).”⁶⁰

For the simplest definition of refutation and confirmation, let’s turn to that given in the *progymnasmata* of Ps.-Hermogenes:

Refutation is an overturning of an action that has been proposed, and confirmation is the opposite, a supporting [of it] (Ἀνασκευὴ ἐστὶν ἀνατροπὴ τοῦ προτεθέντος πράγματος, κατασκευὴ δὲ τοῦναντίον βεβαίωσις). One should not refute or confirm things that are completely false, like fables (Τὰ δὲ πάνυ ψευδῆ οὔτε ἀνασκευαστέον οὔτε κατασκευαστέον, ὥσπερ τοὺς μύθους), but clearly one ought to compose refutations and confirmations of things open to argument on either side (ἀλλὰ δεῖ δήπου τὰς ἀνασκευὰς καὶ τὰς κατασκευὰς τῶν ἐφ’ ἑκάτερα τὴν ἐπιχείρησιν δεχομένων ποιεῖσθαι). You will refute from the unclear (Ἀνασκευάσεις δὲ ἐκ τοῦ ἀσαφοῦς), implausible (ἐκ τοῦ ἀπιθάνου), impossible (ἐκ τοῦ ἀδυνάτου), inconsistent, also called the contrary (ἐκ τοῦ ἀνακολούθου τοῦ καὶ ἐναντίου καλουμένου), inappropriate, and not advantageous (ἐκ τοῦ ἀπρεποῦς, ἀσυμφόρου).⁶¹

The author goes on to give some examples of what he means by ‘unclear,’ ‘implausible,’ etc., and these demonstrate that we are dealing both with what we call myths—Narcissus, Arion and the dolphin, Apollo and Daphne—but also with historical material (one example concerns someone accused of destroying the democracy). Despite the predominance of mythic narratives in the *progymnasmata* of Ps.-Hermogenes and Aphthonius, one suspects that such exercises more often dealt with less fantastic episodes. For instance, Aphthonius’ full-blown sample refutation and confirmation of the story of Apollo and Daphne seem rather poor choices from a practical standpoint (10-13, 14-16 Rabe). They unintentionally demonstrate that narratives involving metamorphoses and gods chasing after mortals were a lot easier to re-

⁶⁰ *Progymn.* 5 (28 Spengel; 10, 18-19 Rabe).

⁶¹ Ps.-Hermogenes, *Progymn.* 5 Rabe (9 Spengel).

fute than make probable. As George Kennedy dryly remarks, Aphthonius' confirmation, "is filled with invalid assumptions and logical non-sequiturs. Refutation was a much easier exercise than confirmation."⁶² Since the topics to be refuted/confirmed are specified as those that were legitimately matters of debate, it would make more sense that they would consist of narratives that occupied an uneasy middle ground between truth and fiction, such as tales situated in the heroic age.⁶³ A better guide is the extensive account given by Theon, whose model refutation questions whether Medea actually killed her children, while his shorter examples derive from narratives in prose authors, especially historians, which deal with heroic or non-contemporary periods—e.g., Heracles' fight with Busiris.⁶⁴

The subject matter of the refutations/confirmations included Homeric episodes as well; an unsurprising fact, given that these were intimately familiar to most students from their education. This means that the material overlapped with that treated in the scholia, and the same goes for the criteria by which this subject matter was examined. Ps.-Hermogenes' list of ways to argue against or for a narrative's truth—on the basis of the unclear, implausible, impossible, inconsistent, inappropriate, or not advantageous—is remarkably parallel with those proposed in the scholia and the genre of Homeric problems. The series of terms reminds us, for instance, of the five types of 'censures' (τὰ ἐπιτιμήματα) into which Aristotle groups criticisms of Homer in the 25th chapter of the *Poetics*—impossible, irrational, harmful, contradictory, or against the correctness of the art (ἢ γὰρ ὡς ἀδύνατα ἢ ὡς ἄλογα ἢ ὡς βλαβερὰ ἢ ὡς

⁶² Kennedy (1999), p. 80, n.47.

⁶³ As the sample refutations and confirmations of Libanius show.

ὑπεναντία ἢ ὡς παρὰ τὴν ὀρθότητα τὴν κατὰ τέχνην).” As we saw in Chapter 1, this list corresponds to the different ways that Homeric detractors like Zoilus of Amphipolis could attack Homeric poetry, and Aristotle’s *Homeric Problems*, of which *Poetics* 25 is a summary, represents our first extant attempt to systematically defend Homer from such criticisms. While a direct match only exists between two of the terms in each list—ἀδύνατα and ὑπεναντία—we are clearly operating in the same semantic field, and the use of such words was never very precise in any case.

The basic method according to which one “refutes” a narrative thus overlaps completely with the criteria employed by those discovering Homeric ‘problems’, or ‘censures’, as Aristotle calls them. In other words, the same process is involved whether one is rhetorically arguing against a narrative or criticizing poetry—in essence we are talking about the same practice adapted to two different, yet closely related fields—oratory and poetic criticism (especially given that the object of refutation or criticism in both fields was often heroic narrative). In a sense, the refutation and confirmation are the censures and the solutions of the scholia writ large, in expanded and stylistically developed form. The exercises rarely limit themselves to a single point of contention; rather, as in Dio’s *Chryseīs*, they deploy a host of arguments based on the criteria of plausibility, possibility, propriety, etc., and weave them into a cumulative prosecution or defense of the episode at hand. Fortunately, there is a refutation and a confirmation focusing on the events around Chryseīs preserved in the corpus of Libanius, the famous fourth-century C.E. Antiochene rhetorician, who was, incidentally,

⁶⁴ Medea: p.94.17-95.3 Spengel; Busiris: p.93.20-22. Other examples include the Harmodius and Aristogeiton story from Thucydides (1.20.2), the claim that Cambyses was half-Egyptian in Herodotus (3.2). the story of Locrian Ajax.

the teacher of Aphthonius.⁶⁵ Through a glance at these texts, we can actually see how this expansion from scholia to *progymnasma* occurs, and then how Dio further elaborates and refines what was after all merely an *exercise*, not a full-blown literary product.

Libanius: Speculative Confirmation

Libanius wrote a series of sample exercises illustrating nearly all of the standard *progymnasmata*; included among these are three confirmations and two refutations, all concerning episodes that allegedly took place during the Trojan War. One confirmation deals with the division of Achilles' arms after his death, while Locrian Ajax's notoriously impious activities have inspired a pair of opposed speeches. The remaining two also form a set, in which Libanius argues for and against the probability of Chryses' visit to the Greek camp, and the subsequent events to which it gives rise. The pair are closely intertwined, since the confirmation specifically answers many of the objections raised in the refutation, while the refutation anticipates some of the arguments of the confirmation!

Libanius entitles his refutation, "That it is not probable that Chryses came into the *naustathmos* of the Greeks ("Ὅτι οὐκ εἰκὸς τὸν Χρύσην εἰς τὸν ναύσταθμον ἐλθεῖν τῶν Ἑλλήνων)," and the confirmation is phrased similarly: "That the events surrounding Achilles' anger are probable ("Ὅτι εἰκότα τὰ κατὰ τὴν Ἀχιλλέως ὀργήν)."⁶⁶ Both make clear the centrality of *εἰκός* to their inquiries; the refutation is

⁶⁵ Libanius' examples of *progymnasmata* are in vol. viii of Foerster's Teubner edition.

⁶⁶ The title of Aphthonius' sample refutation, "What is said about Daphne is not probable (ὅτι οὐκ εἰκότα τὰ κατὰ Δάφνην)," is similarly phrased.

synonymous with a demonstration of a narrative's *improbability*, as the confirmation is to its likelihood or verisimilitude. Furthermore, the language of the opening and closing arguments in these exercises situates us in the discourse of truth and lies; just as the refutation declares that Homer is clearly "pursuing false things (ψευδῆ διώκων)," (2) the confirmation conversely emphasizes the truth of Homer's narrative: "Thus everything is said by the poet truthfully, and those trying to speak badly of the wisest Homer are clearly out of their minds (Οὕτω πάντα μετ' ἀληθείας εἶρηται τῷ ποιητῇ, καὶ παραφρονοῦσι σαφῶς οἱ τὸν σοφώτατον Ὅμηρον κακῶς λέγειν ἐπιχειροῦντες)." (20)

Libanius' refutation ultimately depends on the same series of problems that preoccupied the commentators. But in this case, he isn't concerned with trying to resolve the difficulties, but to build an argument that will call the truth of the story into question. In doing so, he also provides us with a more systematic and coherent mobilization of the implausibilities in the Homeric account. How could an old man like Chryses dare to go among his enemies by himself? Why did he beseech the ruled as well as the ruler? Why did the Greeks agree to his proposal before hearing what their leaders had to say about it? How could Agamemnon have lost his temper as he did? Why did Chryses curse the Greeks when they were on his side? How could Apollo have agreed to kill blameless Greeks?

Each of these questions is further developed, with possible solutions anticipated and refuted in their turn. For instance, to the first question, defenders said that Chryses' love for his daughter gave him courage to enter hostile territory, as well as his scepter, which protected and emboldened him. Libanius scoffs: it was still implausible that Chryses didn't take anyone else along for protection, and the Greeks wouldn't

have had any respect for his scepter's authority. After a whole series of such rebuttals, Libanius concludes in the language with which he had begun: "These things are both false and harmful to those hearing them (ταῦτα καὶ ψευδῆ καὶ βλαβερὰ τοῖς ἀκούουσι). The only thing to do is to stay completely away from [Homer's] poems, or else read them for entertainment, knowing that this at least he is able to produce, but also that he has little concern for the truth. (καὶ προσήκει τῶν ποιημάτων ἢ παντάπασιν ἀπέχεσθαι ἢ ψυχαγωγίας ἕνεκεν ἄπτεσθαι εἰδότας ὅτι τοῦτο μὲν δύναται ποιεῖν, ἀληθείας δὲ ὀλιγώρηκεν)." (p. 128 Foerster, 12)

In contrast the confirmation, while structured similarly, is devoted to refuting the very arguments used in the refutations; in a sense, a confirmation necessarily is dependent on the structure of a refutation, since a narrative does not need to be defended until someone has drawn attention to its inconsistencies and problems. So, after the prologue quoted above, which attacks Homer's detractors as crazy and worthy of pity, Libanius begins with a question phrased exactly like the opening of a scholium, save for a negative to shift the expected answer: "For why *wouldn't* have Chryses come among the Greeks to free his daughter?" He answers this hypothetical question with a series of defenses of this purportedly implausible action, which, as we have seen, was also the first event discussed in the refutation. Chryses' willingness to risk danger by entering into the midst of the enemy is justified by the great love he had for his daughter, by the fact that he was old and didn't think he had long to live anyway, by the large ransom he was promising (which would guarantee his safety), and by the scepter and wreathes he possessed. It is easy to see here how the extensive imagination of motivation and attendant circumstance is deployed in order to solve accusa-

tions of improbability, and the exercise is repeated as the confirmation wends its way through the catalogue of objections dispensed in the refutation.

Although the confirmation is devoted to solving a whole series of problems that had attached themselves to a single episode (here of Chryses' entry into the Greek camp), it does so in piecemeal fashion, dependent on accumulation of argument rather than the formation of a coherent account which will satisfy all the puzzles of the narrative. The key is to find any point of attack or defense, even if mutually incompatible; the argument does not build on itself, it simply multiplies.

But inherent in the confirmation, and even to a lesser extent in the scholia, is the creative filling in of Homeric gaps – something essential to the reading process, as the ancient rhetorical and grammatical critics recognized. The question became one of proper boundaries, to know when and where to stop. We may believe that they went too far, but it was also perfectly natural to extrapolate and imagine character's motivations in this way--if you could find a plausible way to fill in the gaps, then that was enough. Ingenuity was legitimate because this only redounded to Homer's benefit, since there was the feeling that he specifically authorized the reader to make such leaps. In the process of defending the Homeric account, Libanius has also conceived of a new narrative which weaves in between the marks staked out by Homer. Just as the Cyclic poets filled out the parts of the Epic Cycle that Homer failed to treat, the later readers of Homer did the same within the seams of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* themselves; in a sense such activity comprised one of the few spaces in which to express originality in the ancient world. Homer famously left the events that he didn't treat for his followers—could he not also have been seen as leaving out an entire space within his narrative for others to construct and read more story, more information?

Chryseis is a more polished, more sophisticated version of these simple exercises. Its objective, the formation of a coherent character through the reconstruction of the events around her, is far more daring. If the scholia and *progymnasmata* give us a fragmented vision of an unglimped Homeric world, Dio provides us with a unity of imaging that not only 'confirms' Homer's account by explaining some peculiarities but has created a much richer and complete version of this Homeric episode. Here Dio has playfully problematized what had always been taken for granted, and shown that narrative criticism in the right hands can lead to the creation of character.

Chapter Five

READING HOMER 'AGAINST THE GRAIN'

DIO CHRYSOSTOM'S *TROJAN ORATION*

Are these things not, in reality, similar to dreams and unbelievable lies? In the *Dreams* written by Horus people envision these sorts of sights, imagining at one time that they are being killed and stripped of their arms, but then rising up again and fighting naked, while at other times thinking that they are chasing someone and conversing with the gods and killing themselves for no reason, and even, possibly, flying and walking on the sea. For this reason one might well call Homer's poetry a dream, and an obscure and vague one at that.

—Dio Chrysostom, *Trojan Oration* 129

I INTRODUCTION

In *Chryseis* Dio produced before our eyes the vision of a character who had previously been merely a cipher, an undefined, undifferentiated name. In the process he has provided us with a glance at the intersections of moralizing readings of Homer, the criticism of the scholia, and rhetorical exercises. In the *Trojan Oration*, a much longer and more ambitious work, Dio begins from completely different premises and works toward a radically different objective, yet in the end will be involved in a mode of reading that also vividly reconstitutes the absences in Homeric poetry. Dio, as the epigraph indicates, literally compares Homer's story to a dream, obscure, nonsensical, and false. But for all his criticisms, Dio utilizes the Homeric fantasy to activate his

own imagination and produce an alternative world that still resembles Homer's, but seen through Dio's own particularly perverse lens.

The *Trojan Oration* is addressed to the citizens of Roman Ilium—ἄνδρες Ἰλιεῖς—(the 'Trojans' of his day),¹ and in it Dio sets the record straight about the Trojan War.² Among other things, he insists that, on the testimony of an alleged Egyptian priest, Helen was rightfully married to Paris, that Hector killed Achilles, and that Troy ultimately won the war. But because he declares that he will prove his thesis through a close analysis of the Homeric poems themselves, the speech also becomes a vigorous attack on the improbabilities and contradictions of the *Iliad*, and to a lesser extent, the *Odyssey*. As one might imagine, the boldness of the premise, combined with the virtuosity Dio displays in accomplishing his task, helped make the *Trojan Oration* possibly his most notorious (and hence most popular) work in antiquity and the Byzantine period.³

Even in the Renaissance and the early modern era, the *Trojan's* importance as an ancient authority on the much-discussed questions of Homer and the Trojan War ensured an audience.⁴ Although Dio's reputation in general waned in the nineteenth century, and the debate over Troy was brought to an end with Schliemann's discoveries,⁵ a renewed interest in Dio's work in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centu-

¹ Dio, *Or.* 11.4. All subsequent quotations will refer to paragraph number alone (of von Arnim (1893)) and will be cited in the text.

² *Novum Ilium* thrived under the Roman Empire; for a simple survey of its visitors, see Vermeule III (1996).

³ The *Trojan* is mentioned by Philostratus, Synesius, Arethas, Tzetzes, Eustathius, and Photius. For a fascinating survey of the *Trojan's Nachleben* up until the end of the Byzantine period, see Brancacci (1985), 275-88.

⁴ See Swain (2000), 18-20 for a brief account of the *Trojan's* popularity from the 16th-18th centuries; cf. Desideri (1978), 502-3 and 522 nn.70-2.

⁵ Olivieri (1898) can still refer to the question as only recently resolved.

ries saw a flurry of scholarly activity devoted to the *Trojan*. Since then the speech's fortunes in the academic world have paralleled Dio's—a trickle from the twenties to the seventies, followed by a steadily increasing flow for the next 25 years or so, culminating with the recent publication of essays edited by Simon Swain, which hopefully marks a turning point of sorts.⁶ The *Trojan* has naturally benefited from this renewed interest; the nineties have seen at least six articles by different authors devoted solely to this one work.

Preliminaries: Date, Purpose, Text

Almost all scholarship on the *Trojan*, whatever its orientation, has been concerned with its date, its purpose, and the text, and I should outline my stance on these issues before moving on to my discussion of the speech. The issue of dating is closely tied to the developmental theories of Dio's career and conversion discussed at the beginning of the last chapter. Those who judge the *Trojan* sophistic naturally assign it to Dio's 'sophist' phase, which predated his exile and his so-called 'conversion' to philosophy. On the other hand, those who emphasize its Cynic elements and its affinities to the Diogenian speeches date it to the exilic period itself, when Dio allegedly took up the Cynic mantle. Others place it late in his career because of the maturity and sophistication of the arguments.⁷ Obviously, the answer will remain elusive, since, as Jones has noted, the tone of the speech "is the only indication of date," and the entire periodization of Dio's intellectual development has been thoroughly problematized.⁸

⁶ See the invaluable overview of Dionian scholarship of Swain (2000). Cf. Harris (1991).

⁷ For instance, Desideri (1978) dates it to Dio's maturity in keeping with his 'political harmony' thesis.

⁸ Jones (1978), 17.

Complicating the matter is Dio's admission that he planned to deliver the speech, not only at Ilium, but elsewhere.⁹

This brings us to the second area of debate—the textual doublets in sections 23-4 of the *Trojan* and the frequent repetitions of arguments, which are often recapped in summary form almost as reminders of what Dio has just been saying.¹⁰ The matter is too complicated to go into here at length, and not terribly relevant, but we should mention that the *Trojan* is probably our best evidence for the less than stable production and transmission of Dio's works, especially the public orations. As I explained in Chapter Four, we have to assume, based on the evidence of remarks found in Dio's speeches, that much of our corpus is the result of transcriptions by students or audience members and their eventual collation with or without the supervision of Dio himself. The doublets in the *Trojan* most likely result from two different versions of the speech delivered on different occasions. On the other hand, the frequent repetitions are probably better attributed to the need to remind the audience of the argument due to its length and extremely complicated nature.¹¹

Finally, a brief word about the question that has inspired the most debate, that of the *Trojan's* purpose—what was Dio's point? I will deal with this question more fully at the end of this chapter, but a short orientation on the matter offers a nice transition to a review of previous scholarship on the *Trojan*. Over the past several decades, the most prominent work on Dio and his literary production has approached his writings

⁹ "I wish to say at the outset that this discourse (τοὺς λόγους τουτους) must be delivered before other audiences also (ἀνάγκη καὶ παρ' ἑτέροις ῥηθῆναι)." (6)

¹⁰ von Arnim (1898) devotes nearly his entire discussion of the *Trojan* to this question (esp. 183-204), and his text (1893) frequently brackets sections of the speech he deems repetitive and hence interpolated.

¹¹ See the succinct treatment of Szarmach (1978), 196-7.

from a socio-historical perspective, situating him and his texts firmly within his late first century C.E. context and concentrating on his participation in local politics, his public life, his attitudes toward Rome, and the connections, explicit or implicit, of his orations to these concerns.¹² The *Trojan's* position in such studies varies considerably. Sometimes it is virtually ignored, dismissed as mere sophistic cleverness,¹³ while at other times it is granted much more prominence, such as in Desideri's work, which sees Dio formulating a new reading of the Trojan War emphasizing the "harmony of East and West in a philo-Roman framework."¹⁴ Or is he attempting to rehabilitate Troy and expressing a pro-Roman stance?¹⁵ Or is it simply the sort of epideictic praise that his Ilian audience wanted to hear?¹⁶ Can we use it to reconstruct Dio's position as a Greek from Asia Minor vis-à-vis his Roman rulers?

Dio's relation to Rome and to society in general is an important and interesting topic, and anyone familiar with the way that Dio employs paradoxical theses and sophisticated and playful interpretations of literary and mythical stories in service of a larger moral "message" would have to assume that here too Dio had some similar goal

¹² The primary works in this regard include the only two recent book-length treatments of Dio: Jones (1978) and Desideri (1978). Cf. the review by Reardon (1983). More nuanced, but in a similar vein are Desideri (1991a) and (1991b), Moles (1995), Swain (1996).

¹³ So Anderson (1993), 175: "His contradictions of the poet [Homer] require little comment." Jones (1978), 17: "his most sophistic [oration]."

¹⁴ Swain (2000), 38.

¹⁵ Troy is connected to Rome via Aeneas, as Dio makes clear 11.138: "Aeneas became ruler of all Italy and founded the greatest *polis* of all."

¹⁶ cf. von Arnim (1898), 166-204, and Kindstrand (1973), 141-62 (although K. thinks Dio has 3 purposes: combatting *doxa* and lack of knowledge, free Trojans/Romans from negative image, and polemicize vs. naïve readings of Homer), Desideri (1978), 431-4, 496-503, and Desideri (1991a), 3886. Contra: Swain (1996), 210-11.

in mind.¹⁷ But the precise nature of these messages is never particularly unitary or clear-cut, even in his relatively brief discourses. Any answers to questions about Rome, or contemporary politics ought to reflect the constitutive ambiguity and playfulness of Dionian writing; and it is worth noting that the Romans are almost never referred to in the speech.¹⁸

More relevant for my inquiry is the first wave of *Trojan Oration* criticism clustered around the turn of the last century. This work concentrated almost entirely on locating the philosophical and rhetorical sources of Dio's arguments, conspicuously ignoring possible resonance with his political and social milieu. The dizzying variety of opinions put forward often was the result of an urge to narrow Dio's sources down to a single tradition or even work. For instance, Ferdinand Dümmler saw traces of Cynic influence in the *Trojan*, while Paul Hagen detected Stoic elements, and William Montgomery considered it more Aristotelian.¹⁹ Manara Valgimigli, however, went so far as to hypothesize that Dio depended on a lost source *against which* Aristotle was polemizing in the *Poetics*, while Christ, following a suggestion of Wilamowitz, posited the Hellenistic grammarian and epigrammist Daphitas as the source, and as late as 1959 J. Moling, reviving Dümmler's Cynic theory, traced the *Trojan's* source back to a lost work of Diogenes.²⁰ Apart from these potential philosophical connections, others un-

¹⁷ See the discussion on Desideri in Chapter Four. Cf. Blomqvist (1989).

¹⁸ Gruen (1992), ch. 1, has emphasized that Greek writers (his example is Hegesianax of Alexandria Troas) are not always staking out an ideological position vis-à-vis Rome when they make comments about Aeneas or Troy. Sometimes a Trojan is just a Trojan.

¹⁹ Dümmler (1882), p.39; Hagen (1887), 43ff.; Montgomery (1901) and (1902). The source question lives on in some spheres, e.g., Ritoók (1995), who revives the idea of Peripatetic influence.

²⁰ Valgimigli (1912), 30-45; I have not seen Moling (1959); summary of content and criticism are from Szarmach (1978), 198.

derlined more general relations to literary criticism and rhetoric: in the course of their arguments, Valgimigli and Montgomery both emphasized the similarity of Dio's arguments with those found in the Homeric scholia and Aristotle's *Homeric Problems*,²¹ while Wilhelm Kroll (followed by Josef Mesk) pointed out the connection of the oration with the rhetorical exercise of refutation (ἀνασκευή).²²

The bewildering range of conclusions offered in this scholarship strikes the modern reader as dangerously speculative, and hence opens itself to criticism. But it reflects the wide and eclectic array of philosophical, literary, and rhetorical traditions that Dio incorporated into the *Trojan*, and the hunt for parallels undertaken by these scholars provides the invaluable groundwork for an appreciation of the complexity of Dio's project (and indeed this is true of many of his writings). By the time Dio wrote, the criticism of Homer was an unwieldy amalgam of ideas cobbled together from nearly every field of ancient intellectual activity.²³

In other words, it should not surprise us that so many 'sources' have been found for the ideas Dio uses in the *Trojan*, since by Dio's time, the study of Homer, as we saw in Chapter One, had filtered into nearly every intellectual endeavor. The more recent attempts of the last decades have shifted their emphasis away from source questions and toward exploring the *Trojan* in the context of various ancient intellectual discourses: historiography (Szarmach (1978)), literary criticism (Seeck (1990)), Homeric revisionism (Mestre (1990)), lying and fictionality (Fuchs (1996)), the ἀνασκευή (Cal-

²¹ Cf. Kindstrand (1973) who places the *Trojan* in the context of Dio's work on Homer; Szarmach (1978) sees the oration as commenting on current literary-theoretical problems as exemplified in Lucian's *How to Write History* and Plutarch's *How the Young Man should Listen to Poetry*.

²² Kroll (1915), Mesk (1920-1). See section IV for further discussion of the *Trojan*'s relation to the ἀνασκευή.

derón (1997)), and myth criticism (Saïd (2000)), while still addressing the old problems of date and purpose.²⁴ Although taking up to some extent the issues raised by scholars in the early part of the century, these inquiries are less concerned with the question of sources than with Dio's thought in relation to his contemporaries, or the way he employs techniques and ways of thinking from other disciplines for his own purposes. Still, by focusing on and overprivileging one particular genre as determinative and influential on the *Trojan*, each of these scholars fails to do justice to the way Dio's oration moves smoothly among *all* of them and interweaves them into an inextricable whole. A necessary prerequisite, at least, for exploring such questions is an understanding of the richness suggested by the source-critical scholarship: the variety of elements suggestive of so many different sources that Dio weaves together and incorporates into a single speech.²⁵

The *Trojan's* success on so many levels testifies to Dio's virtuosity, but it also marks how easily a work focused on Homer found itself mobilizing arguments and terminology culled from such a wide variety of sources and areas of knowledge. In Strabo, we saw this to a certain degree: his exegesis of Homer demonstrates how closely the study of Homeric philology could be combined with the study of historical geography, and significantly, how structurally similar both types of inquiry were. With the *Trojan Oration*, just as in *Chryseïs*, we are dealing with a completely different type of text, written by a very different individual, but the structural similarities are re-

²³ Valgimigli (1912), 32.

²⁴ See Kindstrand (1973), 143 on source hunting, and Saïd (2000), 177-80 for the most recent overview of scholarship on the *Trojan*.

²⁵ Seeck (1990) comes closest to my line of inquiry, with his emphasis on Dio's skill as a literary critic. One reason for the tendency to focus on one or a few aspects of the

markable. The *Trojan* exemplifies the overlap in conceptual thinking that links anti-quarian historiography, forensic rhetoric, the ἀνασκευή, Homeric criticism, and ancient ideas about lying. It demonstrates how even an attack on Homer, a proof that he was lying, manages to create an alternative account that still remains dependent on his poetry. In all three cases, the authors articulate a particular theory of reading, in which imaginative renderings and alternate visions have to find their enablement within the text, and be bolstered by an articulated idea of authorial intentionality--the motives and methods of composition must be reconstructed in order to properly read any text.

The speech, which is one of Dio's longest, breaks down roughly as follows: after a prologue in which Dio explains the difficulty of his project and why it's worth undertaking (1-14), he clears a space for his forthcoming version of the Trojan War by undermining Homer's credibility (15-36), and then introduces a privileged authoritative source for his information—an Egyptian priest (37-44). The priest in turn presents the 'real' story about the Trojan War, including pre- and post-war events (45-146), accompanied, however, by a sustained critique and comparison with Homer's version of events. Dio concludes with a few remarks which hearken back to his prologue (147-54).

Following the structure of Dio's speech, I divide this chapter into four subsequent sections (II-V), each corresponding to a relevant section of the *Trojan Oration*. In the section that follows (II), I concentrate on the opening of the oration, in which Dio talks about lies, deception, and Homer in a general fashion (1-23). The main point here is

speech is its length and the relative unfamiliarity it enjoys. The latter necessitates a

that the lies which Dio accuses Homer of telling are *not* the lies that are customarily discussed in a poetic critical context, nor are they, surprisingly, those that often appear in the polemics of ancient historiography. In most ancient discussions, Homer's lies are either those that don't accord with moral precepts, or else constitute fantastic, supernatural episodes. For Dio, however, Homer is a liar because he misrepresents certain historical facts, which are not impossible, nor, immoral, but simply improbable. Now while this may seem a concern for historiography, there is a much stronger case to be made for its originating in the rhetorical sphere, and its foundational concern for the probable and the verisimilar.

The second section (III) turn to Dio's attempts to prove that Homer was a liar, not so much by demonstrating the untruth of his statements, as by showing how his character was prone to lying, and conversely how his narrative itself displays patterns of behavior characteristic of liars (24-44). Here the case for a rhetorical viewpoint becomes stronger, because it slowly arises that Dio is not critiquing Homer as if he were a historian, but as if he were a courtroom witness—the *Iliad* is imagined as sort of a transcript of an extemporaneous story told to Greek rulers, and everything poetic and literary about the narrative is brought forward as evidence of its deceptive nature and lack of straightforwardness.

This characterization of Homer in a forensic rhetorical backdrop is essential for Dio's ultimate, paradoxical task: to figure out what really happened, not via a better source of information, but by a close examination of the false narrative itself. This part of the speech (45-146), by far the longest, will be the subject of the third and fourth sections of this chapter. First, I examine Dio's treatment of pre-Iliadic events,

detailed summary made difficult by the former.

and discuss how his technique employs, yet goes far beyond, the refutation (ἀνασκευή) exercise of the *progymnasmata*, using his short dialogue *Nessus* as an example. Then, I turn to the centerpiece of the speech, in which Dio attempts to identify traces of his new version of the *Iliad* within the *Iliad* itself. To accomplish his goals, Dio relies on the fact that liars can not actually hide the truth from a careful observer, because they tend to make the mistake of exaggerating certain points or making easily detectable mistakes. The result is a careful extraction of a new, more plausible story using the evidence of the old one.

II A WORLD OF LIES AND THE UNRELIABLE WITNESS (1-23)

The *Trojan Oration* opens amid a familiar Dionian landscape—a Cynic realm where truth is a precious commodity, secured only with difficulty, while falsehoods and lies proliferate, disseminating everywhere.²⁶ Dio wastes no time in introducing this lesson:

I am close to certain that it is hard to teach everyone, but easy to deceive them. And if they learn anything, they do so with difficulty from the few who know, but are quickly deceived by the many who don't, and not only by others, but even by themselves. For the truth is bitter and unsweet to the ignorant, while the false is sweet and gentle. (1)

Οἶδα μὲν ἔγωγε σχεδὸν ὅτι διδάσκειν μὲν ἀνθρώπους ἅπαντας χαλεπὸν ἐστίν, ἐξαπατᾶν δὲ ῥάδιον. καὶ μανθάνουσι μὲν μόγισ, ἐάν τι καὶ μάθωσι, παρ' ὀλίγων τῶν εἰδότην, ἐξαπατῶνται δὲ τάχιστα ὑπὸ πολλῶν τῶν οὐκ εἰδότην, καὶ οὐ μόνον γε ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑφ' αὐτῶν. τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἀληθὲς πικρὸν ἐστὶ καὶ ἀηδὲς τοῖς ἀνοήτοις, τὸ δὲ ψεῦδος γλυκὺ καὶ προσηνές.

²⁶ For the Cynic nature of this part of the discourse, see Kindstrand (1973), 145-56.

This first paragraph quickly establishes a set of opposing terms. On the one side, deception, the false, and pleasure or sweetness; on the other, teaching, the truth, and bitterness. The specific logic of this dichotomy becomes more clear if we reverse his argument: the false is sweet, so people tend to be attracted to it, and hence they are easy to deceive (understood here is that believing what is false is equivalent to being deceived); likewise, the truth is bitter, and as a result people are unwilling to learn it. “For how else,” Dio exclaims, “could falsehoods (τὰ ψευδῆ) so often conquer truths (τῶν ἀληθῶν), if not through pleasure (δι’ ἡδονήν)?”

Matters are made worse if people “have been listening to lies for a long time (ὅταν πολὺν τινες χρόνον ᾧσι τὰ ψευδῆ ἀκηκοότες)”(2); Dio conjures up the image of generations deceived for centuries. This gradual reinforcement of falsehoods makes it that much more difficult to rid people of their opinion (ἀφελέσθαι τὴν δόξαν)—the lies have been hardened into fact by their repetition over time. Here δόξα, Dio’s favorite object of derision, makes another appearance; as usual, it signifies *false* opinion or belief, and more specifically represents the term for a falsehood originating a long time ago—an old falsehood, well-worn by the passage of time.

In Troy, unfortunately, Dio finds himself in precisely such circumstances when he proposes to refute the lies that Homer told so long ago about the Trojan War. How, he asks, can he expect to gather support for “the facts as they occurred (τὰ ὄντα καὶ γεγόμενα)” in the face of the widespread respect bestowed on Homer;²⁷ a faith which persists even in Troy itself despite the fact that “he has nothing but insults for your city, and untruthful ones at that...(οὐθὲν ἄλλο ἢ κατάρως ἔχοντα κατὰ τῆς

²⁷ Dio claims that the Trojans “hold Homer to be a wise and inspired man, and teach your children his epic from their very earliest years.” (4)

πόλεως, καὶ ταύτας οὐκ ἀληθεῖς)"(4)? Confronted with such a paradox, Dio admits, "I wouldn't be surprised if you, men of Troy, find it more trustworthy to believe Homer who has lied about the most outrageous things than me who speaks the truth (οὐκ ἂν οὖν θαυμάσαιμι καὶ ὑμᾶς, ἄνδρες Ἰλιεῖς, εἰ πιστότερον ἠγήσασθαι "Ὀμηρον τὰ χαλεπώτατα ψευδάμενον καθ' ὑμῶν ἢ ἐμὲ τὰληθῆ λέγοντα)." (4)

Dio has painted quite a bleak picture of what he is up against: falsehood's inherent attraction, made even stronger by repetition and the high esteem in which the purveyor of the falsehoods is held. We are introduced to a world defined in the stark terms of bitter truth and sweet falsehood, in which everyone who doesn't know the truth has consequently been deceived. Innocent errors are out of the question; there are no unmotivated false statements.²⁸ His chief concern is, of course, to highlight the difficulty of the task he has set himself. The basic stance accords well with Dionian Cynic-Stoic moralizing boilerplate: the continuous polemics against *doxa*, the frequent assumption of unpopular positions, the passionate denunciations of pleasure and falsehood. But his decision to couch the prologue of his oration in terms of deception also reflects the essential importance that lying, in all of its myriad formulations, will have throughout the rest of the speech.

Dio declares the objective of the oration plainly. "I will try to show all the lies I think [Homer] has told concerning the events which happened here [at Troy] (πειράσομαι δεικνύειν ὅσα μοι δοκεῖ ψευδῆ εἰρηκέναι περὶ τῶν ἐνθάδε πραγμάτων), refuting him from no other place than his own poetry (οὐκ ἄλλοθέν ποθεν,

²⁸ The notion of a general ancient acceptance of deception has been employed with important effect in works such as Winkler (1990) and Gleason (1995).

ἀλλ' ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς ποιήσεως ἐλέγχων)."²⁹ (11) Dio, does not, however, jump right into the *Iliad*, criticizing Homer's story and refuting his stories. First, he has to dismantle the considerable authority of his opponent, whom his audience considers a "divine and wise man" and thereby create a space into which he can insert his own "true" version of events. To accomplish this, he undermines Homer's credibility with a direct attack on Homer himself, tarnishing the poet as a liar in a two-stage process: in paragraphs 15-23 he demonstrates that Homer's character was prone to lies, while in 24-36 he identifies the signs of a liar in action in Homer's narrative composition.³⁰

'The Boldest Liar Among Men' (15-23)

Dio opens his assault with a piece of biographical evidence: "People say that Homer, because of poverty and lack of means, was a beggar in Greece (πρῶτον μὲν οὖν φασὶ τὸν Ὀμηρον ὑπὸ πενίας τε καὶ ἀπορίας προσαιτεῖν ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι)." Nevertheless, "they still consider it impossible for someone like that to lie (τὸν δὲ τοιοῦτον ἀδύνατον ἡγοῦνται ψεύσασθαι) in order to please the people who give him things (πρὸς χάριν τῶν διδόντων), or to tell them the sort of stories that were intended to please them (οὐδ' ἂν τὰ τοιαῦτα λέγειν ὅποια ἔμελλον ἐκείνοις καθ' ἡδονὴν ἔσεσθαι)." (15) This is the first proof that Homer was prone to lying by inclination; after all, Dio observes, "they say that beggars nowadays say nothing worthwhile (τοὺς δὲ νῦν πτωχοὺς οὐδὲν φασὶν ὑγιᾶς λέγειν), and no one would accept

²⁹ Echoes of the methodological credo—"Ὀμηρον ἐξ Ὀμήρου σαφηνίζειν (Porphyry, *Quaest. Hom. Il.* 297, 16 Schrader)—thought to have derived from Aristarchus (cf. Sch. D ad *Il.* 5.385 and Eustathius 561, 29 van der Valk); e.g., Montgomery (1901), 10: "a manifest perversion of the well-known maxim." On the authenticity and meaning of this alleged Aristarchan saying, see Pfeiffer (1968), 225-7, Schaublin (1977), and most recently, Porter (1992), 70-85.

any of them as a witness for anything (οὐδὲ μάρτυρα οὐδεὶς ἂν ἐκείνων οὐδένα ποιήσαιτο ὑπὲρ οὐδενός), or take their praise as true (οὐδὲ τοὺς ἐπαίνους τοὺς παρ' αὐτῶν ἀποδέχονται ὡς ἀληθεῖς).” (15)

After establishing that deceitful tendencies are inherent in Homer's occupation (or lack thereof),³¹ Dio shows that there are even signs in Homer's poetry itself that he condones lying and perhaps even recommends it. “At any rate, he has represented Odysseus, whom he has especially praised, as telling many lies (πλεῖστα γοῦν τὸν Ὀδυσσεῖα πεποίηκε ψευδόμενον, ὃν μάλιστα ἐπήνει), and he says that Autolycus even made a false oath and that this was bestowed upon him by Hermes (τὸν δὲ Αὐτόλυκον καὶ ἐπιорκεῖν φησι, καὶ τοῦτ' αὐτῷ παρὰ τοῦ Ἑρμοῦ δεδόσθαι).”³²

(17) Thirdly:

Practically everyone, even his warmest admirers, agrees that Homer does not say anything true about the gods, and they seek to offer such excuses as that at such times he is not speaking his real mind but is using riddles and figures of speech. What, then, prevents him from having spoken in the same way about humans? (18)

περὶ δὲ θεῶν πάντες, ὡς ἔπος εἶπεῖν, ὁμολογοῦσι μηθὲν ἀληθὲς λέγειν “Ὀμηρον καὶ οἱ πάνυ ἐπαινοῦντες αὐτόν, καὶ τοιαύτας ἀπολογίας πειρῶνται πορίζειν, ὅτι οὐ φρονῶν ταῦτ' ἔλεγεν, ἀλλ' αἰνιττόμενος καὶ μεταφέρων. τί οὖν κωλύει καὶ περὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων αὐτὸν οὕτως εἰρηκέναι.”³³

³⁰ On this section see Montgomery (1901), 10-11; (1902), 406-7.

³¹ Dio also adds an argument (16) based on those who assume that Homer was crazy, a reference no doubt to the various theories of poets being divinely inspired familiar from Plato's *Ion*, among other places. Like the beggar, such a Homer was hardly trustworthy.

³² Referring to *Od.* 19.392-8.

³³ Dio elaborates and emphasizes this in the sentence immediately following: “for when a man does not frankly tell the truth about the gods, but, on the contrary, puts the matter in such a way that his readers get the wrong idea of them and without any advantage to himself either, why would he hesitate to utter any falsehood whatsoever

We can pass over the familiar reference to Homer's allegedly impious and unflattering depiction of the gods (as well as their allegorical defenses), and observe instead how Dio shifts the emphasis of this old accusation. If we acknowledge that Homer was lying about the gods, Dio argues, why should we not assume the same thing, *a posteriori*, about his characterizations of human beings?

Furthermore, on the subject of the gods, Dio adds a methodological question—how did Homer learn about the activities of the gods? (19-20) For instance, Homer reports not just the *public* actions and words of the gods, but even their private affairs, such as domestic squabbles, which, Dio reminds his audience, even mere mortals manage to keep rather secret.³⁴ How did Homer know what Zeus and Hera were doing inside that visually impenetrable cloud? Who were his sources? This lack of explanation cannot be attributed to ignorance; Homer was perfectly aware of proper procedure, as passages in his own work demonstrate:

...Homer has represented Odysseus as doing this correctly (so that he doesn't seem to be a braggart) when he tells of the debates that the gods held concerning him. He [Odysseus] says that he heard about them from Calypso and that she learned them by inquiry; but concerning himself Homer has made no such claim of having received his information from some god. (20)

καὶ τὸν Ὀδυσσεῖα πεποιήκεν ἐπανορθούμενον τὸ τοιοῦτο, μὴ δόξη ἀλαζῶν διηγούμενος τοὺς παρὰ τοῖς θεοῖς γενομένους ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ λόγους. ἔφη γὰρ ἀκοῦσαι τῆς Καλυψοῦς, ἐκείνην δὲ παρὰ τοῦ πυθέσθαι· περὶ αὐτοῦ δὲ οὐδὲν τοιοῦτον εἶρηκεν ὅτι πύθοιτο παρὰ θεοῦ τινος.

regarding men?" ὅστις γὰρ περὶ θεῶν οὐ φανερώς τ' ἀληθῆ φησιν, ἀλλὰ τούναντίον οὕτως ὥστε τὰ ψευδῆ μᾶλλον ὑπολαμβάνειν τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας, καὶ ταῦτα μηδὲν ὠφελουμένους, πῶς ἂν περὶ γε ἀνθρώπων ὀκνήσειεν ὅτι οὖν ψεῦδος εἰπεῖν;

³⁴ τοσοῦτό φημι μόνον, ὅτι λόγους οὐκ ὤκνει τῶν θεῶν ἀπαγγέλλειν, οὐς φησιν αὐτοὺς διαλέγεσθαι πρὸς αὐτούς, καὶ οὐ μόνον γε τοὺς ἐν κοινῷ γενομένους καὶ παρατυγχανόντων ἀπάντων τῶν θεῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ οὐς ἰδίᾳ τινὲς διαλέγονται ἀλλήλοις.

Homer, then, is aware of the need to justify how one obtained certain types of privileged information, but openly ignores this responsibility. For Dio, this isn't simply an oversight; on the contrary it proves what "utter contempt Homer showed for men, and [that] he didn't care if anything he said was considered true or not (οὕτω πάνυ κατεφρόνει τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ οὐθὲν αὐτῷ ἔμελεν, εἰ δόξει μηθὲν λέγειν ἀληθές)." (21)

The "finishing touch (τούτοις δὲ ἐπέθηκε τὸν κολοφῶνα σχεδόν)" (22) for Dio is Homer's presumption in explaining the differences between divine and human language, such as when he differentiates between the names Xanthus and Scamander, or the bird called χαλκίς by the gods and κύμινδις by humans.³⁵ Homer acts as if he held some privileged access to the dialect of the gods, and was "accustomed not only to mix other Greek dialects together (ὡς οὐ μόνον ἔξόν αὐτῷ τὰς ἄλλας γλώττας μιγνύειν τὰς τῶν Ἑλλήνων)—sometimes Aeolicizing, sometimes Doricizing, sometimes Ionicizing—but even to speak Zeus-dialect (καὶ ποτὲ μὲν αἰολίζειν, ποτὲ δὲ δωρίζειν, ποτὲ δὲ ἰάζειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ διαστὶ διαλέγεσθαι)."

To sum up, in paragraphs 15-23 Dio offers four basic arguments in order to prove that Homer had the capacity, the motive, and the character to lie; he depicts a man who (a) *needs* to lie due to his social position (as a beggar), (b) *likes* to lie and even thinks it praiseworthy (in his characters), (c) has been generally *acknowledged* as having lied (about the gods), and, to top it all off, (d) brazenly *parades* his lies without

³⁵ The third example is a place near Troy which humans call βατῖεια and the gods call Σῆμα Μυρίνης, and in the variant version of this section μῶλυ is mentioned as well. Cf. Dio 10 23-4 and Plato, *Cratylus* 391d, where the exact same examples are cited; for the interpolations, see von Arnim (1898), 171-82; Olivieri (1898), 568ff.; Szarmach (1978), 196-7. Again, one can compare the concerns in the novel (especially in Heliodorus) with accounting for communication between people from different cultures, on which see Morgan (1982).

even taking the proper steps to conceal them (by indicating his sources of information). In short, “Homer was the boldest liar of all (ἀλλ’ ὅτι ἀνδρειότατος ἦν ἀνθρώπων πρὸς τὸ ψεῦδος “Ὀμηρος).” (23)

Witnesses and Historians

This opening salvo against Homer, following a proemium stating Dio’s concern to tell the true story of the Trojan War, seems to situate us in the realm of historiography. After all, Strabo treats Homer in a historico-geographical milieu; is not Dio also criticizing Homer *qua* his capacity as a historian who has failed to accurately report the facts of the Trojan War? For J.F. Kindstrand, Dio’s brand of *Homerkritik* in the *Trojan Oration* is, like Strabo’s, “a criticism of Homer as a historian,” and to bolster this assertion, he has pointed out similarities between Dio’s arguments and terminology in this section and those deployed by Plutarch in his *On the Malice of Herodotus*.³⁶ Plutarch harps on Herodotus’ lies, accuses him of deception, contempt for truth, and notoriously charges him with being φιλοβάρβαρος and biased against the Greeks.³⁷ And we might add that Dio’s attack on Homer adheres roughly to the standard methods of ancient historiographical polemic: first undermining the target’s character and way of life, and then criticizing the work itself—a double-pronged assault on a historian’s ἦθος as well as his τέχνη.³⁸

If we take Dio’s critiques individually, it’s easy to find parallels in the historiographical literature. *Ad hominem* attacks, such as those employed in Dio’s first two

³⁶ Kindstrand (1973), 157.

³⁷ For references, see Kindstrand (1973), 159.

proofs, were common. They seem to be the prime tools of choice for Plutarch, as well as Lucian in *How to Write History*,³⁹ and Polybius, in a section attacking Timaeus' disposition (12.24-25c), lambastes the Sicilian historian for being "quarrelsome, mendacious and headstrong (φιλαπεχθῆς καὶ ψεύστης καὶ τολμηρός)" (12.25.6). Dio's claim that Homer's lying nature revealed itself in his treatment of Odysseus and Autolycus also reflected mainstream historical thought. In T.J. Luce's words: "As the historian is to judge the moral worth of his subjects, so the reader judges the moral worth of the historian...[who] must endeavor to demonstrate his own ethical sensibility through the judgements he makes on others."⁴⁰ And what could be of more concern to the historian than the proper enumeration of one's sources of information?

Based on this evidence, the assumption that Dio is treating Homer as a historian and undermining his authority via well-founded historiographical principles seems reasonable. Without denying these parallels, we can point out that Dio's criticisms have much more in common with principles found in the anti-Homeric tradition and in the treatment of witnesses and opponents in forensic rhetoric.

Here, for instance, is what the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* has to say about attacking witnesses' credibility:

Against witnesses (*contra testes*): their base manner of living (*vitae turpitudinem*); the contradictory character of their testimony (*testimonia inconstantiam*); if we contend that what they allege to have happened either could not have happened, or did not happen (*si aut fieri non potuisse dicemus aut non factum esse quod dicant*), or that they could not have known it (*aut scire illos non potuisse*), or that it is

³⁸ Guido Schepens (1990) has, for instance, recently shown that an argument structured in this fashion forms the basis of Polybius' famous attack on Timaeus of Tauromenium in the 12th book of his *Histories*.

³⁹ Szarmach (1978), 200.

⁴⁰ Luce (1989), 21-2.

partiality that inspires their words and inferences (*aut cupide dicere et argumentari*). (II.9)

In this brief paragraph, nearly every sort of criticism offered by Dio appears—the base way of life, the evident lies and falsehoods, the charge that the witness could not have known about the events, the suggestion of bias. Dio’s specific rendering of this last charge, that Homer’s poverty impinged on his ability to tell the truth, was apparently a standard *topos* employed in impugning a witness’ testimony, judging from the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*.

“We must run down the character of the witness if he is a rascal, or subject his evidence to examination if it is improbable...another thing to consider is whether the witness is a friend of the man for whom he is giving evidence... or an enemy of the person against whom he is giving evidence, or a poor man; witnesses in these circumstances are suspected of giving false testimony, because of, respectively, favor, revenge, and profit. (*Rhet. ad Alex.* 1431b)⁴¹

Dio’s language makes it clear that this forensic connection is uppermost in the text: “no one would accept any [beggar] as a witness for anything (οὐδὲ μάρτυρα οὐδεὶς ἂν ἐκείνων οὐδένα ποιήσαιτο ὑπὲρ οὐδενός).” (15) In this context, it’s worth noting that Dio does not imagine Homer as a historian, inquiring into and writing down the

⁴¹ This is probably the earliest example; the rest of the rhetorical tradition, both Latin and Greek, is remarkably consistent, with the notable exception of Quintilian (7.2.28ff.) who expands the discussion with what appears to be knowledge culled from personal experience. Note for example, Cicero, *De part. orat.* 14.48-9: “He often has to declare how unreliable witnesses are as a class, and to say that proofs are matters of fact but the evidence of witnesses is a matter of personal inclinations, and he must cite instances of witnesses who were not believed; and he must also run down particular witnesses, if they are men of unreliable character, or frivolous, or under a cloud, or actuated by hope and fear or anger or pity, or influenced by hope of reward or by gratitude; and they must be compared with witnesses of higher authority who have nevertheless not been given credence.”

results of his research, but as a poor storyteller, a travelling bard literally singing for his supper.⁴²

Other Dionian arguments seem not to have been specifically historiographical in nature; rather they reflect a more general attitude concerning people's reliability and truthfulness, which took the form of generic critical methods applied across the board to anyone offering a narrative of events. So while we saw above that historians' portrayals of characters and choice of topics were thought to reflect on their personalities, the same went for poets as well—Alcaeus was almost universally considered a drunk because he often mentions wine in his poetry.⁴³ Timaeus believed, according to Polybius, that “poets and historians reveal their real natures in their works by dwelling excessively on certain matters (διὰ τῶν ὑπεράνω πλεονασμῶν ἐν τοῖς ὑπομνήμασι διαφαίνειν τὰς ἑαυτῶν φύσεις); Homer, he says, is constantly feasting his heroes, and this indicates that he was more or less of a glutton (ὡς ἂν εἰ γαστρίμαργον παρεμφαίνειν).” (12.24.2)

This last formulation, uttered by a historian, illustrates how, long before Dio (and well after him) Homer continued to offer a popular target for those partial to this type of logic. For instance, in the *Republic* (1.334b), Socrates assumes, like Dio, that Homer is fond of Autolycus, “whom he describes as better than everyone at lying and stealing.” Later in the Imperial period, an anonymous Cynic treatise can accuse Homer of being φιλογύνης because in his poetry (a) several men die for the sake of

⁴² Dio is not impugning beggars or madmen *per se*. He often praises wanderers, especially since he often took on that persona; as Valgimigli (1912), 34 points out, Dio specifically praises Diogenes on these same grounds in Or. 9.8ff. Dio's argument here is that people who believe that Homer was a beggar, and also that beggars tell lies, yet still maintain that Homer told the truth, are contradicting themselves.

⁴³ Athenaeus 430a-c; Fairweather (1974), 233-4.

women, (b) the passions of women (Helen, Penelope) are foregrounded, and (c) all Odysseus ever does of his own free will is live with women.⁴⁴ In fact, such attempts to determine a poet's character through statements made in his poetry formed the backbone of ancient biographical work on poets.⁴⁵

On the other hand, the concern Dio displays with how Homer obtained his information would seem to be unequivocally historiographical in origin. After all, the use of sources is considered one of the central methodological issues in ancient history. But surprisingly, outside of Polybius' critique of Timaeus, this apparently crucial factor is largely ignored or treated as unproblematic in historiographical discussions like Plutarch's *On the Malice of Herodotus* and Lucian's *How to Write History*⁴⁶ Somewhat paradoxically, the context in which the subject surfaces most is in fictional works, including those hybrid forms associated with Homeric revisionism. The care with which narrators in the novel, especially in first person accounts like Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Cleitophon* or Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, reassure their readers by accounting for their sources of information has long been noted.⁴⁷ But this concern, which is deeply linked to the perceived necessity for authenticating one's own story, also plays a large role in texts that purport to provide a more accurate account of the Trojan War. The problem is obviously circumvented in Dictys' and Dares' works by

⁴⁴ Included in Pap. Genev. inv. 271 as an addition to the 7th letter of pseudo-Heraclitus. See Kakridis (1974).

⁴⁵ See Russell (1981), p.163 for some examples, and Fairweather (1974), 232-42; Lefkowitz (1981) for general discussion.

⁴⁶ Morgan (1982), 229 sees this as a result of shifts in historiographical writing: "as ancient historiography developed, it aimed more and more at presenting a definitive, complete, and continuous narrative account, with the result that the workings of historical method (examination of sources, assessment of evidence) tended to be suppressed in the end product."

⁴⁷ See especially Winkler (1985), 57-98, for Apuleius.

their status as participant observers from Crete and Phrygia, respectively; Dio and Herodotus turn to Egyptian records based on the testimony of Menelaus. Lucian, who barely touches on this issue in *How to Write History*,⁴⁸ calls attention to it several times in odd contexts. In his parodic treatment of Homeric revisionism in the *Dream*, or the *Rooster*, the rooster (who was the Trojan Euphorbus in a previous life) specifically denies knowledge of details, such as Achilles' personality, about which he, as a Trojan, could not possibly have known, while one of the many facets of the *True History's* humor is Lucian's scrupulousness in reassuring his reader of the sources of his fantastic stories.⁴⁹ In the *Heroicus*, Philostratus even seems to foreground the issue; his source for the War is Protesilaus, which only begs the question since that hero had died as soon as the Greeks landed in Asia. Philostratus then has to explain how Protesilaus could possibly know about the rest of the Trojan War—his 'source' is no source at all.

In light of this tradition, Dio's criticism of Homer, rather than being quintessentially historiographical, belong to a more generalized discourse about the proper method of narrating past events (which obviously includes historiography as well). In this speech, Dio imagines Homer as a narrator, as a storyteller, and critiques him on these grounds. Because of course, historians are also narrators, there is bound to be some overlap, but it will be crucial to Dio's method that Homer is emphatically *not* a historian. Rather, for Dio to succeed in extracting the truth from a liar, he has to imagine Homer as an oral storyteller. How does he do this? Why? We'll see in the next section.

⁴⁸ As Mattioli (1985), 101.

⁴⁹ So Fusillo (1999), 360.

III THE LIAR'S TALE, OR, WHY HOMER IS A BAD RHETOR (24-44)

Now that Dio has delivered his withering indictment of Homer's deceitful character one might presume that he could now move on to the presentation of his own alternate history. But Dio is not satisfied; his proof is not complete. As was the custom in such criticism, he passes from an attack on Homer's character to one on the work itself. This second movement, which comprises paragraphs 24-36, founds itself on a somewhat startling maneuver. Earlier Dio was demonstrating that *Homer* was a liar in order to suggest that his narrative also was a lie. Here, conversely, Dio will prove that Homer's *narrative* is constructed like a lie and, therefore, that Homer was a liar.

To put it a different way, Dio has moved from a conception that privileges the figure of Homer as a means of understanding his text, to one in which the text itself can prove that Homer was a liar on internal grounds alone—that is, not by pointing out sections where Homer is contradicted by other, more reliable sources, but by showing how Homer's particular storytelling choices themselves make it clear that he was trying to hide the truth. And how does Dio hope to accomplish this rather paradoxical task? By demonstrating that Homer tells his story in the same way that liars tell theirs. In a brilliant, unprecedented move, Dio connects what were traditionally defined as stylistic and organizational flaws with evidence of willful falsification.⁵⁰

Homer, having decided to tell of the war that happened between the Achaeans and the Trojans, didn't start right at the beginning, but at random. This is what virtually all liars do, entangling the story, making it involved, and refusing to tell anything in order. In this way they're less easily found out. If not, they are refuted by the subject-matter itself.
(24)

⁵⁰ See Hesk (2000), ch. 4 (esp. 231-41) on methods of lie detection in the orators, e.g., Aeschines 3.98-9.

ἐπιχειρήσας γὰρ τὸν πόλεμον εἰπεῖν τὸν γεγνημένον τοῖς Ἀχαιοῖς πρὸς τοὺς Τρῶας, οὐκ εὐθύς ἤρξατο ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς, ἀλλ' ὅθεν ἔτυχεν· ὁ ποιοῦσι πάντες οἱ ψευδόμενοι σχεδόν, ἐμπλέκοντες καὶ περιπλέκοντες καὶ οὐθὲν βουλόμενοι λέγειν ἐφεξῆς· ἤττον γὰρ κατάδηλοί εἰσιν· εἰ δὲ μή, ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ πράγματος ἐξελέγχονται.

Dio immediately draws a parallel to forensic rhetoric: “One can see this happening in the courts and among others who lie with skill (τοῦτο δὲ ἰδεῖν ἔστι καὶ ἐν τοῖς δικαστηρίοις καὶ παρ' ἄλλοις γιγνόμενον, οἱ μετὰ τέχνης ψεύδονται.)” This practice of entangling the narrative is contrasted to the way that truth-tellers (οἱ δὲ βουλόμενοι τὰ γεγνημένα ἐπιδείξαι) present their stories; they “narrate in this way (οὕτως ἀπαγγέλλουσι), as each thing happened, the first things first, the second thing second, and the rest likewise in order (ὡς ξυνέβη ἕκαστον, τὸ πρῶτον πρῶτον καὶ τὸ δεύτερον δεύτερον καὶ τὰλλα ἐφεξῆς ὁμοίως).” This is the “natural (κατὰ φύσιν)” way. (25)

Aside from this attempt to obscure his falsehoods, Homer also employed this convoluted narrative sequence, according to Dio, because he was “ill at ease” and “unable to speak readily” (οὐ γὰρ ἐθάρρει πρὸς αὐτὰ οὐδὲ ἐδύνατο εἰπεῖν ἐτοίμως.) (26) with respect to the beginning and end of the War—that is, the circumstances around Helen and Paris and the outcome of the War itself. Homer’s purpose was “make the beginning and the end disappear as much as possible (ὅτι τὴν ἀρχὴν αὐτῆς καὶ τὸ τέλος μάλιστα ἐπεβούλευσεν ἀφανίσαι) and create the opposite opinion about them (καὶ ποιῆσαι τὴν ἐναντίαν δόξαν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν).”(25) and because of this “he did not dare to tell either in a straightforward way (ὅθεν οὔτε τὴν ἀρχὴν οὔτε τὸ τέλος ἐτόλμησεν εἰπεῖν ἐκ τοῦ εὐθέως)...and if he does mention them anywhere, it is incidental and brief (ἀλλ' εἴ που καὶ μέμνηται, παρέργως καὶ βραχέως), and he is clearly trying to confuse (καὶ δῆλος ἐστὶν ἐπιταράττων).” (26)

Dio again connects Homer's behavior with the practices of liars:

It also usually happens to liars that they mention some parts of the story and linger over them, but whatever they especially want to conceal they do not bring out clearly or when their auditor is paying attention, nor do they put it in its proper place, but where it may best escape notice. They do this, not only for the reason [i.e. to confuse the listener] just mentioned, but also because lying makes them ashamed and hesitant to go on with it, especially when it concerns the most important matters. (26)

συμβαίνει δὲ καὶ τοῦτο τοῖς ψευδομένοις ὡς τὸ πολὺ γε, ἄλλα μὲν
τινα λέγειν τοῦ πράγματος καὶ διατρίβειν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς, ὃ δ' ἂν
μάλιστα κρύψαι θέλωσιν, οὐ προτιθέμενοι λέγουσιν οὐδὲ
προσέχοντι τῷ ἀκροατῇ, οὐδ' ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ χώρα τιθέντες, ἀλλ' ὡς
ἂν λάθοι μάλιστα, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ὅτι αἰσχύνεσθαι ποιεῖ τὸ
ψεῦδος καὶ ἀποκνεῖν προσιέναι πρὸς αὐτό, ἄλλως τε ὅταν ἦ περὶ
τῶν μεγίστων.

The fact that Homer neglects to directly relate the abduction of Helen or the fall of Troy is an indication, to Dio, that it was in regard to precisely these points that Homer had the most to hide; not only did Homer downplay these events in order to confuse, but also because he “flinched and weakened since he knew that he was telling the reverse of the truth and falsifying the essential part of his subject (καίτοι γὰρ, ὡς ἔφην, ἀνδρείοτατος ὢν ὑποκατεκλίνετο καὶ ἠττᾶτο, ὅτι ἦδει τάναντία λέγων τοῖς οὔσι καὶ τὸ κεφάλαιον αὐτὸ τοῦ πράγματος ψευδόμενος).”(27) After all, why *wouldn't* he have begun the story with Helen's seizure, “since all the readers of his poem would then have joined in indignation (ἐπειδὴ συνωργίζοντο ἂν πάντες οἱ τῇ ποιήσει ἐντυγχάνοντες) ...and [he] would have been assured of a more sympathetic and interested audience? (οὕτω γὰρ εὐνούστερον καὶ προθυμότερον ἔξειν ἔμελλε τὸν ἀκροατῆν)”(28) And why wouldn't he have ended with the capture of the city—“what greater or more awe-inspiring subject could he have chosen? (τί μείζον ἢ δεινότερον εἶχεν εἰπεῖν τῆς ἀλώσεως;)”(29) Dio goes on to enumerate a few other

important events which Homer alludes to but does not directly describe (or even ignores) and concludes from this evidence:

So for these reasons it is necessary to acknowledge that Homer was either unintelligent and a bad judge of the events so that he selected the less important and trivial things and left to others the greatest and most impressive, or else that he was unable, as I have said, to bolster up his falsehoods and demonstrate his poetic ability in handling those incidents whose actual nature he wished to conceal. (33)

ἀνάγκη οὖν ἐκ τούτων ὁμολογεῖν ἢ ἀγνώμονα Ὅμηρον καὶ φαῦλον κριτὴν τῶν πραγμάτων, ὥστε τὰ ἐλάττω καὶ ταπεινότερα αἰρεῖσθαι, καταλιπόντα ἄλλοις τὰ μέγιστα τε καὶ σπουδαιότατα, ἢ μὴ δύνασθαι αὐτόν, ὅπερ εἶπον, ἰσχυρίζεσθαι τὰ ψευδῆ, μηδ' ἐν τούτοις ἐπιδεικνύναι τὴν ποιήσιν ἃ ἐβούλετο κρύψαι ὅπως γέγονεν.

Finally, there is a third manifestation of liar-like behavior—the propensity to pass off as hearsay matters that, due to their importance, the liar can't bring himself to blatantly falsify. In the *Odyssey*, for example, Homer has no problem narrating events, Dio claims, that are clearly true, such as those in Ithaca, but “he did not dare to mention the greatest of his lies (τὰ δὲ μέγιστα τῶν ψευσμάτων οὐχ ὑπέμεινεν εἰπεῖν);...these he has represented Odysseus as narrating to those at Alcinous' court (ἀλλὰ τὸν Ὀδυσσεῖα ἐποίησε διηγούμενον τοῖς περὶ τὸν Ἀλκίνοον).” (34) Not only does Homer refer to the subject matter of his biggest lies obliquely, out of sequence, but he sometimes puts them at a second remove, attributing them to a character within his narrative, so as not to be held accountable.⁵¹

⁵¹ As Montgomery (1902), 407 n.1, notes, “Dio’s perversion of the well-known λῦσις ἐκ τοῦ προσώπου.” Aristotle praises this Homeric technique in *Poetics* 24. Umberto Eco’s remarks on composing *The Name of the Rose* (which is presented as the memoirs of a fourteenth century monk) perhaps shed some light on Dio’s accusations: “I was a novice narrator...I was embarrassed at telling a story...A mask: that is what I needed. I set about reading or rereading medieval chroniclers, to acquire their

Dio's argument in this section relies on the following presuppositions about liars—when they tell false stories, they mix up the order of the events (a) so that they can confuse the listener and hide their lies in this fashion, and (b) because they shy away from directly speaking about the most important matters that they are misrepresenting; this second reason also accounts for why liars often say they heard these stories from other people.⁵² It is clear that Homer's narrative strategy follows that outlined in (a), and Dio uses (b) to explain why Homer fails to address undeniably crucial episodes in the story of the Trojan War, such as the abduction of Helen, the death of Achilles, and the fall of Troy—if Homer doesn't speak of such important events explicitly, in the manner of someone "who speaks the truth, without fear or reserve," (27) then he *has to* be lying about those things. And what's more, Dio proclaims with a flourish, Homer often follows the tendency of liars to pass off as hearsay lies about which they don't feel bold enough to speak outright.

Testimony, Signs of Guilt, and the Virtutes Narrationis

Dio's close association of Homer's narrative choices with the behavior of liars is audacious enough, but of equal interest is that he has managed to bring together in a streamlined fashion three apparently unrelated elements of poetic and rhetorical discourse: well-known Homeric problems, the rules for proper compositional arrangement in the rhetorical *narratio*, and the recognition of signs of guilt mentioned in forensic rhetoric.

rhythm and their innocence. They would speak for me, and I would be freed from suspicion." Eco (1994), 511.

⁵² "Some of them falter and speak indistinctly, others as if they themselves did not know but spoke from hearsay (ὄθενούδὲ τῆ φωνῆ μέγα λέγουσιν οἱ ψευδόμενοι,

And after all that we've seen in Strabo and in *Chryseis*, it will hardly be unexpected when we discover that Dio's jumping-off points are precisely those that we see problematized in the Homeric scholia.⁵³ Dio was not the only one to wonder at Homer's choice of the ninth year as his starting point; the very first scholium to the *Iliad* addresses this concern: "It is asked (ζητεῖται) why the poet began from the final [events of the war] and not from the first (διὰ τί ἀπὸ τῶν τελευταίων ἤρξατο καὶ μὴ ἀπὸ τῶν πρώτων ὁ ποιητής)?" The standard explanation is simply that nothing worthy of recounting occurred during the first nine years of the war, since the Trojans never left Troy.⁵⁴ An interesting fact, however, is that the scholia point to this Homeric ploy as evidence of his skill: "they say that taking up the final events and narrating the remaining things from the beginning is a poetic virtue (λέγουσι δὲ καὶ ἀρετὴν εἶναι ποιητικὴν τὸ τῶν τελευταίων ἐπιλαμβάνεσθαι καὶ περὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἀνέκαθεν διηγείσθαι)."⁵⁵ In a similar fashion Porphyry refers to this principle on a smaller scale in his commentary on Book 12. The scene under discussion is a minor one, involving the battle between Asios and his brothers and the Lapiths. The problem was that at the beginning of the episode, the Lapiths are outside the gates of the Achaean wall,

ὅταν ἐπὶ τοῦτο ἔλθωσιν· οἱ δὲ τινες αὐτῶν βατταρίζουσι καὶ ἀσαφῶς λέγουσιν)." (27)

⁵³ So Montgomery (1901); cf. Valgimigli (1912), who notes, "chs. 24-37 are an example of the rationalizing criticism of the composition of the *Iliad* and also reflect criticism in the scholia: why did Homer begin with the wrath, why did he start with final events of the war." Lucian gets to ask Homer the question directly in his *True History*.

⁵⁴ Sch. bT ad *Il.* 1.1b Erbse: "We say that the battles before were sporadic and not [fought] over the greatest cities; for since Achilles was present, the Trojans never went out of the gates, and the Greeks spent nine years virtually idle, diverted to neighboring villages. It was not necessary for him to write about these things, since there was no material for a story (περὶ ὧν ἀναγκαῖον αὐτῷ γράφειν οὐκ ἦν, μὴ παρουσίας ὕλης τῷ λόγῳ).

⁵⁵ Sch. bT ad *Il.* 1.1b Erbse.

while later on they are imagined as running out from inside the gates. Porphyry explains that this is a common Homeric narrative device, “beginning from the later things, to go back to the beginning, and then connect these to the later things again.”⁵⁶

While the scholia naturally explain and justify Homer’s decision, and even claim that such a choice constitutes a poetic *virtue*, Dio considers the same aspect of Homeric composition a narrative flaw.⁵⁷ In fact, Dio’s criticisms of Homeric narrative rely on the principles of the proper arrangement of the *narratio* so as to avoid obscurity and incredulity, which are repeatedly discussed in ancient rhetorical treatises from the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* in the fourth century through the Latin works of Cicero and Quintilian, to the *progymnasmata* and τέχνηαι ῥητορικαί of late antiquity. The foundations on which correct arrangement depends consist of the ἀρεταὶ τῆς διηγησέως, or the *virtutes narrationis*: clarity, concision, and credibility—σαφήνεια, συντομία, πιθανότης (to use Theon’s formulation), or *perspicuum*, *brevitas*, and *verisimilitudo* (Cicero’s).⁵⁸ Narratives (*narrationes* or διηγήσεις), the treatises never tire of telling us, had to be told clearly, briefly, and convincingly (σαφῶς, βραχέως καὶ μὴ ἀπίστως), both in terms of the words and the events.⁵⁹ Of these three stipulations (which are all obviously interrelated, as the rhetoricians well understood), we are primarily interested in the first—σαφήνεια. What is for the scholiasts and Homeric commentators a particularly poetic virtue becomes in Dio’s hands a clear transgression of this particular *rhetorical* virtue.

⁵⁶ Porphyry ad *Il.* 12.127: ἐκ τῶν ὕστερον ἀρξάμενον ἀναδραμεῖν εἰς τὰ πρῶτα καὶ πάλιν συνάψαι ταῦτα τοῖς ὑστέροις. καὶ ἔστι συνήθης ὁ τρόπος τῆς ἐρμηνείας τῷ ποιητῇ.

⁵⁷ Cf. Horace, *Ars Poetica* 146-50; Meijering (1987), 146-8.

⁵⁸ Or, as the *Rhet. ad Her.* 1.14: *brevitas, diluciditas, verisimilitudo*; *De inv.* 1.28: *brevis, aperta, probabilis*.

As we saw, Dio accuses Homer of confusing the order of the events, neglecting to tell them in proper sequence, failing to mention the most important parts of the story, such as the beginning and the end, and choosing to concentrate on insignificant and improbable episodes rather than those central to his story. These are precisely the sorts of compositional practices that lead to a lack of σαφήνεια.

Clarity “from the events (ἀπὸ τῶν πραγμάτων),” the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* explains, will be obtained:

“if we do not set them out in a transposed order (ἐὰν μὴ ὑπερβατῶς αὐτὰ δηλώμεν), but state first the things that were done first...and arrange the remaining ones in sequence (ἀλλὰ τὰ πρῶτα πραχθέντα...πρῶτα λέγωμεν, τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ ἐφεξῆς τάττωμεν), and if we do not leave the matter about which we have undertaken to speak and make a story about something else.” (1438a28-34).

Likewise Theon advises his reader that “one should also guard against confusing the times and order of events (φυλακτέον δὲ καὶ τὸ μὴ συγχεῖν τοὺς χρόνους καὶ τὴν τάξιν τῶν πραγμάτων)...for nothing else confuses the thought more than this (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἥττον τῶν ἄλλων καὶ τοῦτο συγχεῖ τὴν διάνοιαν).” (80) In the same way, the rhetoricians warn against omission of significant events and focusing on irrelevant ones. “Narration becomes unclear by omission of what ought necessarily to have been mentioned (ἄσαφής δὲ γίνεται διήγησις παρὰ τὴν ἔλλειψιν ὧν ἐχρῆν ἀναγκαίως μνήμην ποιήσασθαι).” (Theon 79)

These treatises are primarily concerned with the *narratio* of a judicial speech, or in the *progymnasmata*, with rhetorical exercises. But this prescriptive template clearly dictated ideas about proper composition in virtually all narrative production. We can

⁵⁹ So Theon, *Progymn.* 79.

see this in Lucian's *How to Write History*,⁶⁰ which advises the potential historian to follow a remarkably similar set of rules. "Let it then be graced with clarity, achieved, as I said, by the diction and the interweaving of the events (ἔπειτα τὸ σαφές ἐπανθείτω, τῇ τε λέξει, ὡς ἔφην, μεμηχανημένον καὶ τῇ συμπεριπλοκῇ τῶν πραγμάτων)...for only when he has completed the first section, will he introduce the second one, touching it and linked to it as in a chain (τὸ πρῶτον ἐξεργασάμενος ἐπάξει τὸ δεύτερον ἐχόμενον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀλύσεως τρόπον συνηρμοσμένον)." (55)

In sum, clarity (τὸ σαφές) is achieved by the proper arrangement (τάξις) of the narrative (διήγησις).⁶¹

For Lucian, speed (τάχος), which corresponds to the brevity of the rhetoricians,

should be achieved not so much with economy of words and phrases as of the events (τοῦτο πορίζεσθαι χρὴ μὴ τοσοῦτον ἀπὸ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἢ ῥημάτων ὅσον ἀπὸ τῶν πραγμάτων). I mean by hurrying over what's trivial and inessential, but giving adequate treatment to important matters (λέγω δὲ, εἰ παραθείοις μὲν τὰ μικρὰ καὶ ἥττον ἀναγκαῖα, λέγοις δὲ ἰκανῶς τὰ μεγάλα). (56)

So also in his criticism of bad historians, Lucian chastises those who

omit or treat cursorily those events that are important and noteworthy (οἱ τὰ μεγάλα μὲν τῶν πεπραγμένων καὶ ἀξιομνημόνευτα παραλείπουσιν ἢ παραθέουσιν) but, through amateurism, lack of taste, and ignorance of what to say and what to pass over in silence (ὑπὸ δὲ ἰδιωτείας καὶ ἀπειροκαλίας καὶ ἀγνοίας τῶν λεκτέων ἢ σιωπητέων), linger over descriptions of quite unimportant things most earnestly and laboriously (τὰ μικρότατα πάνυ λιπαρῶς καὶ φιλοπόνως ἐρμηνεύουσιν ἐμβραδύνοντες). (27)

⁶⁰ On Lucian's *How to Write History*, see above all Avenarius (1956) to whom I am indebted for much of what follows. Cf. Jones (1986), 59-67, MacLeod (1991), Georgiadou and Larmour (1993), and specifically on some of the things I will be talking about: Mattioli (1985), Montanari (1984) and (1987b).

⁶¹ On arrangement (τάξις), see Meijering (1987), 138-43.

The proper method of arrangement was an issue often connected to historiographical composition. Polybius urges that the διήγησις needs to be easy to follow and clear (τὸ εὐπαρακολούθητον καὶ σαφῆ γίγνεσθαι τὴν διήγησιν), and Thucydides' division of his narrative into summers and winters came under heavy fire for the confusion this caused the reader.⁶² Once again we see a connection between Dio's argumentation and that used against historians, and once again we realize that underlying both are the rules of rhetorical composition.

Dio is not interested in criticizing Homer merely on his arrangement of material, but sees in these errors the traces of misrepresenting the truth. This is striking because not even Lucian suggests, in a treatise specifically on historical writing, that a historian's lack of skill in arrangement has any relation to the historians knowledge of the truth. Again, in the rhetorical treatises, no writer is worried that the narrative's lack of clarity will lead an audience into thinking that the speaker is lying. Here lies Dio's originality—he posits a causal relationship between emotional and psychological states and narrative choices. For Dio, these decisions of Homer, like not narrating the beginning, are themselves *signs* that indicate psychological conditions, which are in their turn signs that Homer was lying.

The proper use of signs, and arguments from signs, or clues, or evidence, constituted a fundamental portion of rhetorical training from Aristotle until late antiquity.⁶³ There were several different systems of categorizing such signs, but for our purposes here, what is most important is that a sign was understood as something visible by

⁶² Polybius 5.31.4. Criticism of Thucydides include Dionysius of Halicarnassus *ad Pomp.* 3.13 (ἄσαφής καὶ δυσπαρακολούθητος) and Theon, *Progymn.* 80 Spengel. For more citations, see Avenarius (1956), 119-30 on τάχος and τὸ σαφές.

⁶³ See Manetti (1994), Crapis (1988), and (1991).

means of which the orator could conjecture a previous event or state of affairs. As we can see in the following passage from Cicero's *De partitione oratoria*, included among these were involuntary physical gestures and actions that indicated guilt:

Subsequent indications of something that is past (*consequentia quaedam signa praeteriti*), the traces and imprint of a previous action (*quasi impressa facti vestigia*); these indeed are most powerful in exciting suspicion, and are silent evidence of guilt (*quasi tacita sunt criminum testimonia*)...for instance a weapon, a footprint, blood; the discovery of some article that looks as if it had been taken away or snatched from the victim; an inconsistent answer, hesitation, stammering (*ut responsum inconstanter, ut haesitatum, ut titubatum*)...looking pale, trembling (*ut pallor, ut tremor*); a writing or a sealed document or deposition. For these are the kind of things that whether part of the affair itself or even as prior or subsequent occurrences render the charge suspicious. (33.114)

Alongside *material* evidence (what we would call 'clues') of a crime, Cicero includes evidence based on the behavioral response of the guilty party; both types are "the traces and imprint of a previous action." In the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* signs based on behavior have their own category:

For *consecutio* is when the signs which usually attend guilt or innocence are investigated (*consecutio est cum quaeritur quae signa nocentis et innocentis consequi soleant*). The prosecutor will, if possible, say that his adversary, when come upon (*Accusator dicet, si poterit, adversarium, cum ad eum ventum sit*), blushed, paled, faltered, spoke uncertainly, collapsed, or made some offer (*erubuisse, expalluisse, titubasse, inconstanter locutum esse, concidisse, pollicitum esse aliquid*)—signs of a guilty conscience (*quae signa conscientiae sint*). (II.8)

These physical signs, then, are employed in the same way as material evidence. Although Dio cannot claim to have observed Homer engaged in any of this "guilty behavior," he can claim to read Homer's confusing and obfuscating narrative arrangement as textual equivalents to these well-known examples of unease. A conspicuous failure to narrate vital portions of a story in the correct order, and then to give them

only a cursory treatment are the equivalents of narrative “blushes,” or the textual manifestations of “faltering speech.”

But while several of Dio’s arguments are reminiscent of those aired in historiographical critiques, their underlying assumptions closely parallel the principles advocated in forensic rhetoric, another discipline which, like historiography, concerned itself with the reconstruction of the past. And in fact, Dio’s specific references to the courtroom in the course of his critique suggest that this connection was uppermost in his mind. The overlap, or even confluence, of history and rhetoric in antiquity, is of course a well-worn topic, but interest has mainly been in how “rhetorical”, or creative, ancient historiography was, and much excellent work has been done on how ancient historians manipulated and artfully composed their histories.⁶⁴ But the two disciplines intersected in many other ways as well, and my interest centers on their common subject matter—the past—and the identical methodological problem that both had to tackle—how best to determine the truth about that past.⁶⁵ In this sense, if Dio’s arguments have an historiographical flavor, it is chiefly because historiography itself, like all other ancient discourse, was dependent on the lessons in argument and composition adopted in rhetorical education. By the end of this section, Dio has envisioned a Homer who is not so much a bad historian, but an improvisatory, extemporaneous, lying narrator of the Trojan War story—an oral witness to these historical events whose testimony has somehow been transcribed, resulting in the text with which Dio and his audience are familiar.

⁶⁴ See, among numerous works, Wiseman (1979) and Woodman (1988).

⁶⁵ For a forceful statement of this view, see Ginzburg (1999), especially the introduction and ch.1.

The Narrative as Spontaneous Performance

This parallelism between how liars construct their lies and the structure and composition of a narrative can only be sustained, however, if Dio is drawing a similarity between the text of the *Iliad* and an oral performance or narrative of some sort. For how else could he point to an error in arrangement as equivalent to faltering and uncertain speech? This is the crux of Dio's proof—a necessary presupposition that relates his theses on liars to Homer directly, and moreover, allows him to conceive of Homeric narrative in a way that will enable him to read an entirely new account between the lines of the old. If Homer's narrative can be likened to those who lie, it is only because Dio conceives of this narrative as a written manifestation of what was originally an *oral performance of a spoken lie*, and furthermore a performance which was spontaneous and *ex tempore*. He explains:

It seems to me that [Homer] had not prearranged these things from the beginning, since they had never occurred; but as his poem went along, and he saw that people would readily believe anything, he showed his contempt for them and at the same time his desire to gratify the Greeks and the Atreidae, by throwing everything into confusion and turning events to their opposite. (35)

δοκεῖ δέ μοι μηδὲ προθέσθαι ταῦτα τὴν ἀρχὴν, ἅτε οὐ γεγόμενα, προΐούσης δὲ τῆς ποιήσεως, ἐπεὶ ἑώρα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ῥαδίως πάντα πειθομένους, καταφρονήσας αὐτῶν καὶ ἅμα χαριζόμενος τοῖς Ἑλλησι καὶ τοῖς Ἀτρεΐδαις πάντα συγχέαι καὶ μεταστῆσαι τὰ πράγματα εἰς τὸναντίον.

As proof of this assertion, Dio cites the first several lines of the *Iliad* and explains that at this point Homer had implied that the things mentioned here—the wrath of Achilles, the 'countless sufferings of the Greeks' (*Iliad* I.2), and their numerous deaths—would be "the chief incidents and worthy of poetry (ὡς ταῦτα μέγιστα τῶν

γενομένων καὶ ἄξια τῆς ποιήσεως)...and which did indeed happen (ὥσπερ οὖν καὶ συνέβη).” (36) In the beginning then, it appears that Homer was prepared to tell the truth; only as he continued did his intentions, and his practice, change:

but he didn't plan the subsequent shift of events [after those enumerated in Iliad I.1-5], as well as the death of Hector, all of which were likely to please his hearers, nor the final capture of Ilium. For perhaps he had not yet planned to turn everything upside down. (36)

τὴν δὲ ὕστερον μεταβολὴν τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ τὸν τοῦ Ἑκτορος θάνατον, ἃ ἔμελλε χαριεῖσθαι, οὐ φαίνεται ὑποθέμενος, οὐδὲ ὅτι ὕστερον ἐάλω τὸ Ἴλιον· ἴσως γὰρ οὐκ ἦν πῶ βεβουλευμένος ἀναστρέφειν ἅπαντα.

This conception of Homer and his relation to his narrative is essential to Dio's strategy for impugning Homer's reliability. Dio envisions a fluid, rather than static, notion of Homer's narration; it is not a composition, revised, corrected, set down, but a narrative act, in which Homer has to make up things on the spot, cover up past mistakes. It ends with Homer giving up, “not knowing how to continue his work and being dissatisfied with his falsehoods (οὐκ ἔχων ὅτι χρήσεται τῇ ποιήσει καὶ τοῖς ψεύσμασι δυσχεραίνων).” (109) From here Dio can not only interrogate these texts as the utterances of a Homer who had the means and motive to lie, but also grant the narratives a progressive character and approach them as a process inseparable from the context in which they were produced. This means that the narrative itself can shed light on Homer, because it can be seen in the same way as a witness testifying in court who has to invent and distort at a moment's notice, depending on the situation.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Seeck (1990), 106, hypothesizes that Dio's critical acumen developed from courtroom experience: “Tactical observations sharpen the look for the technical tricks of opponents; one pays attention to traces where the real truth shines through, recognizes weak places...”

Furthermore, to Dio, this Homeric performance took place in a historically specific context, which motivates Homer's deceptive practices. Homer was able to lie so freely, he claims:

because there were no other poets or historians in whose work one could read the truth. He was the first who applied himself to writing about these events, though he composed his poem many generations later, when those who had known the facts had passed away along with their descendants, and only an obscure and uncertain tradition survived, as is to be expected in the case of very ancient events. Moreover he intended to narrate his epics to the masses and the common people, at the same time overstating the achievements of the Greeks, so that even those who knew the facts would not refute him. (92)

οὐκ ὄντων δὲ ἑτέρων ποιητῶν οὐδὲ συγγραφέων, παρ' οἷς ἐλέγετο τὰ ληθῆς, ἀλλ' αὐτὸς πρῶτος ἐπιθέμενος ὑπὲρ τούτων γράφειν, γενεαῖς δὲ ὕστερον ξυμβεῖς πολλαῖς, τῶν εἰδότεων αὐτὰ ἠφανισμένων καὶ τῶν ἐξ ἐκείνων [ἔτι], ἀμαυρᾶς δὲ καὶ ἀσθενοῦς ἔτι φήμης ἀπολειπομένης, ὡς εἰκὸς περὶ τῶν σφόδρα παλαιῶν, ἔτι δὲ πρὸς τοὺς πολλοὺς καὶ ἰδιώτας μέλλων διηγείσθαι τὰ ἔπη, καὶ ταῦτα βελτίω ποιῶν τὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων, ὡς μηδὲ τοὺς γινώσκοντας ἐξελέγχειν.

Homer exploits, in Dio's eyes, the lack of certain knowledge about the past in order to freely please his Greek audience, a decision that leads to the escalation of his lies as his story progresses. This insistence on a Homer who reacts on the one hand to the immediate storytelling exigencies of the moment and on the other to larger nationalist and propagandistic goals will resurface at the conclusion of the speech, when Dio defends Homer's lies on the grounds that they "saved the Greeks from being alarmed in case war, as was expected, arose between them and Asia." (147).⁶⁷

⁶⁷ See Desideri (1978), 466 n.7, and van der Valk (1953) who makes the same argument as Dio does!

Interlude: Poetry, Deception, and Falsehoods

This reconstruction of the original performance context of the *Iliad* is quite remarkable because it assumes that the Homeric epics were products of oral composition, although in a rather different configuration than that adopted by modern Homerists. Other differences aside, a significant aspect of Dio's theory (and one that is easy to overlook), is that he virtually ignores Homer's use of *poetry* to convey his story. In the prologue, although he criticizes Homer for telling lies about Troy, his focus remains on the reception, rather than the production, of falsehoods—on belief rather than deception—and hence ignores the means, i.e., poetry, by which Homer transmits these falsehoods.⁶⁸ In his attack on Homer's character, even though Dio doesn't hesitate to refer to Homer as a poet, and his work as a poem, he makes no attempt to connect this most salient biographic detail with his lying character.

This comes as somewhat of a surprise given the long tradition of associating poetry and deception. What better evidence of Homer's propensity for lying than that he was a poet, and that he chose to tell his story in poetry, that famously deceptive and delectable art? After all, it would be natural, when we see Homer accused of lies, deception, and pandering to his audience (with words such as ἀπατή, ἡδονή, ψεύδεσθαι, etc.), to be reminded of the famous pronouncements of early Greek poetic criticism: Hesiod's Muses, who "know how to tell many lies that sound like truth (ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα)," Solon's maxim that "poets speak many falsehoods (πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἀοιδοί)," Gorgias' scattered witticisms on deception and tragedy,

⁶⁸ In other words, Dio is talking about belief, and here he supports Paul Veyne's (1988), 59, assertion that "the Greeks...hardly wondered why some had lied; instead they wondered why others had believed."

and Plato's famous remarks on the falsehoods of the poets in the *Republic*.⁶⁹ These authors employ the same group of terms for discussing poetry: they identify deception, pleasure, and falsehood as somehow intrinsic and essential to poets and their work.⁷⁰

In fact, the conception of poetry in these terms loomed just as large in the post-classical world as well, and in sections 37-44, Dio's Egyptian priest does finally bring up the issue of poetry's relation to the discourse of deception, in a brief discussion of the difference between Greek and Egyptian culture's relation to history and the truth. From these remarks, several parallels have been adduced between Dio's formulations and those of contemporary poetic criticism. J.F. Kindstrand in particular has grouped the *Trojan* together with Strabo's remarks on Homer (1.2.9, discussed in the third chapter) and Plutarch's *How a Young Man should Listen to Poetry*;⁷¹ all three share, he claims, virtually identical ideas about poetry.

This might be true if one took this passage of the *Trojan* in isolation. If one looks at it in a slightly wider context, one finds, however, that the ideas about poetry expressed

⁶⁹ Hesiod, *Theog.* 27-8; Solon (29 West); Gorgias B 23 DK = Plut. *de glor. Ath.* 5, 348c; cf. *How a Young Man should Listen to Poetry* 15d, where tragedy is "a deception (ἀπάτην) in which the deceiver is more honest than the one who doesn't deceive (ὁ τ' ἀπατήσας δικαιότερος τοῦ μὴ ἀπατήσαντος), and the deceived is wiser than the one who is not deceived (ὁ ἀπατηθεὶς σοφώτερος τοῦ μὴ ἀπατηθέντος)." Much, perhaps too much, has been written on the conception of 'literature' or 'fiction' implied by these and several other scattered remarks pertaining to poetry and lying or falsehood in the Archaic and Classical periods. Cf. Pratt (1993) and Finkelberg (1998) for two rather different approaches to the question of 'fiction' in this era.

⁷⁰ So Valgimigli (1912), 37: "Siamo di fronte...all forma primitiva, edonistica, della negazione dell poesia, di cui si sa che Platone fu il piú conseguente e rigoroso dimostratore e sostenitore. Anche Platone parla nettamente di menzogna...ma resta la proposizione fondamentale che la poesia è menzogna."

⁷¹ This piece is one of the most important surviving examples of mainstream ancient opinion on poetic discourse, and it is surprising how little scholarship has been devoted to this work. The best account I have come across is Atkins (1934), 309-17. See also Tagliacchi (1961), Bechis (1977), and on a smaller scale, Schenkeveld (1982).

here are in stark contrast to Dio's (and the priest's) statements in the entire rest of the oration. Dio's method of reading cannot incorporate poetry; the conceit of the *Trojan* is not only to critique Homer by willfully ignoring his poetic aspects but to show how poetic virtues turn out to be narrative vices when read through a different conceptual lens.⁷² Why then, does he finally introduce the issue? Let us turn to the section in question to clarify matters.

Dio introduces his superior source for the Trojan War in paragraph 37. He relates a conversation he had in the Egyptian city of Onuphis⁷³ with an anonymous priest, who had ridiculed the Greeks' lack of knowledge (οὐθέν εἰδότων ἀληθῆς περὶ τῶν πλείστων). His central pieces of evidence were two lies which the Greeks took as articles of faith: that they had conquered Troy and that Paris had unlawfully run off with Helen. "And so thoroughly were they persuaded of these things (καὶ ταῦτα οὕτως ἄγαν πεπεισμένοι εἰσὶν), having been deceived by one man [i.e., Homer], that each one even swore to them (ὑφ' ἑνὸς ἀνδρὸς ἐξαπατηθέντες ὥστε καὶ ὁμόσαι ἕκαστος)." (37) The Egyptians, however, knew the real story. According to the priest, they had recorded "all previous history (πᾶσαν τὴν πρότερον ἱστορίαν)" on some stelae; this included that of Troy, "for Menelaus had come to visit them and told them everything as it had happened (τὸν γὰρ Μενέλαον ἀφικέσθαι παρ' αὐτοῦς καὶ διηγῆσασθαι ἅπαντα ὡς ἐγένετο)."⁷⁴ The language parallels the opening para-

⁷² Szarmach (1978), 201, keys in on this when she suspects parody.

⁷³ Onuphis, an apparently unidentified Egyptian city, is Morelius' conjecture for the ὄνυχι of the manuscripts.

⁷⁴ This is a clear allusion to Herodotus 2.112-20, where, as we saw in Chapter Two, the Egyptian priests claim that their written records are also based on Menelaus' tes-

graphs—the contrast between those who know nothing true and are deceived (the Greeks), and those who know the truth (the Egyptians).

But the mention of ‘history’ as a particular province of the truth-loving Egyptians suggests that there is a corresponding type of discourse on the Greek side associated with their love of falsehood. And what better candidate than poetry?⁷⁵ After all, the priest points out, the Greeks simultaneously believe two contradictory accounts: Homer’s story of Helen, and Stesichorus’ *Palinode*, which claimed that Helen had never left Sparta (not to mention other poetic accounts in which Paris takes Helen to Egypt). Why this mess of contradictions?

[The priest] said that the reason for this was that the Greeks were pleasure-lovers [or “lovers of listening”]. They consider as true whatever they hear someone saying pleasingly, and they allow the poets to lie about whatever they want, and say that it is permitted to them, but nevertheless trust them in everything they say and sometimes bring them on as witnesses concerning matters under dispute. Among the Egyptians, however, it is not permitted to say anything in meter, nor for poetry to exist at all; for they know that poetry is the drug of pleasure for the listener. Therefore, just as the thirsty have no need of wine, but it is enough for them to drink water, so also those wishing to know the truth have no need of meters, but it is sufficient for them to hear things simply. Poetry, however, persuades them to hear false things just as wine persuades them to drink excessively.

τούτου δὲ αἴτιον ἔφη εἶναι ὅτι φιλήδονοί [φιλήκοοι Dindorf] εἰσιν οἱ Ἕλληνες· ἃ δ' ἂν ἀκούσωσιν ἠδέως τινὸς λέγοντος, ταῦτα καὶ ἀληθῆ νομίζουσι, καὶ τοῖς μὲν ποιηταῖς ἐπιτρέπουσιν ὅ,τι ἂν θέλωσι ψεύδεσθαι καὶ φασιν ἐξεῖναι αὐτοῖς, ὅμως δὲ πιστεύουσιν οἷς ἂν ἐκεῖνοι λέγωσι, καὶ μάρτυρας αὐτοὺς ἐπάγονται ἐνίοτε περὶ ὧν ἀμφισβητοῦσι· παρὰ δὲ Αἰγυπτίοις μὴ ἐξεῖναι μηδὲν ἐμμέτρως λέγεσθαι μηδὲ εἶναι ποιήσιν τὸ παράπαν· ἐπίστασθαι γὰρ ὅτι φάρμακον τοῦτο ἡδονῆς ἐστὶ πρὸς τὴν ἀκοήν. ὥσπερ οὖν οἱ διψῶντες οὐδὲν δέονται οἴνου, ἀλλ' ἀπόχρη αὐτοῖς ὕδατος πιεῖν, οὕτως οἱ τάληθῆ εἶδέναι θέλοντες οὐδὲν δέονται μέτρων, ἀλλ'

timony. Se Froidefond (1971), 196-9 on Herodotus and 303-5 on Plato’s similar use of Egypt.

⁷⁵ A commonplace of ancient literary criticism since Aristotle’s famous distinction in *Poetics* 9.

ἔξαρκεῖ αὐτοῖς ἀπλῶς ἀκοῦσαι. ἢ δὲ ποίησις ἀναπείθει τὰ ψευδῆ
ἀκούειν ὥσπερ <ὁ> οἶνος πίνειν μάτην.

Earlier, Dio had equated the false with pleasure and sweetness; the false was sweet, and for this reason was believed. Here it seems as if poetry is also co-extensive with both pleasure (it is whatever is ‘said pleasingly’, the φάρμακον ἡδονῆς to the hearer) *and* falsehood (poets can ‘lie about whatever they want’, and poetry persuades its listeners ‘to hear false things’). Furthermore, this pleasure and falseness so intrinsic to poetry seem to be inextricably linked to meter; the Egyptians, since they are only concerned with the truth and not with pleasure, have no poetry or other metrical discourse, and claim that the only discourse necessary to convey the truth is that which is spoken “simply,” i.e. in prose. The pleasure of poetry apparently lies in the meter. Poetry is by nature, then, opposed to the truth, and the dichotomy between deceived Greeks and Egyptians who know the truth seems to correspond to the privileging of poetry and prose (history) in the respective cultures.

Despite this interweaving of poetry into the theory of deception, the emphasis of this passage lies elsewhere. The priest is attempting to contrast Greek and Egyptian attitudes toward truth. If the implication is that Homer’s lies are believed because of their sweetness (and that due to their being in meter), this formulation is consistently at odds with Dio’s’ views in the rest of the speech. Further proof of this can be adduced from an examination of Kindstrand’s parallels, and the significantly different ways they imagine Homer and other poets’ relation to truth and lies.

Kindstrand believes that Dio’s position “fully corresponds” to those expressed by Plutarch and Strabo. Strabo had imagined Homer’s compositional method as adding μῦθος onto ἀληθεία, and had employed ψεῦδος as a synonym for μῦθος. This mix of truth and falsehood as definitive of Homeric poetry finds its parallel in Dio, and

Strabo's claim that Homer employed myths to please his audience matches up with Dio's accusations that Homer was lying in order to pander to his listeners. Kindstrand continues:

According to Plutarch every poem possesses an essential combination of μῦθος and ψεῦδος (2; 16c and 4; 20b-c) and is most effective when πιθανότης and ψεῦδος become joined (2; 16b-c). Behind this poetic procedure lies the effort to give pleasure (πρὸς ἡδονὴν ἀκοῆς καὶ χάριν (2; 16a) and to astonish (πρὸς ἐκπληξιν ἀνθρώπων (4; 20ff)). Above all, one can acquire the truth more easily if it is treated in connection with the mythic (14; 36e).⁷⁶

Essentially, Kindstrand attributes to the three authors two simple views: (1) that a poem is a combination of truth and myth/falsehood, and (2) that the myth/falsehood portion is inserted for pleasure, which is part of the poet's objective. This neat model, however, disguises the fact that while the terms might be the same, the referents often are not. Yes, all three authors understand poetry as a combination of truth and lies, but how they understand those concepts is not entirely compatible. When Plutarch claims that poets add myths to truth to make them more palatable, the truth he is talking about is an ethical truth, not the historical truth of Strabo and Dio. For Plutarch and Strabo, the myths are fantastic tales of monsters and gods, while the Homeric lies that Dio refers to are misrepresentations of mundane human events. And the "pleasing" of the poets mentioned by Plutarch and Strabo is aimed at entertainment and astonishment, while for Dio it is for gratification and flattery.

Even within the very discussion of the priest itself, if we look at the specific example offered by the priest as an instance of the Greek susceptibility to lies, we see that any talk of meter or sweetness of listening is irrelevant. Stesichorus was blinded by

⁷⁶ Kindstrand (1973), 158.

Helen for his 'lies' when he followed Homer's traditional version; he only regained his sight when he recanted and told the 'true' story in a later poem. The Egyptians criticize the Greek poets on historical terms—the lies and truths they are concerned with involve whether the events happened as the poets say they do. It's this orientation toward the issue of distortion and misrepresentation of the facts that will soon come to the fore—after this interlude, the fact that Homer wrote poetry, not prose, will almost entirely be forgotten. In fact, the willful forgetting, or bracketing, of Homer's identity as a poet, is essential to Dio's strategy for reading his text. Homer is basically conceived, not as a historian or a poet, but as an improvisatory orator.

IV *TROJAN* 43-70: READING AND REFUTATION

In the first part of the speech Dio has carefully constructed a particular vision of Homer and his work, in order to call his reliability into question. The combination of his presentation, in paragraphs 15-23, of why Homer himself had all the characteristics of a liar—his position as a beggar *required* it, his praise of Odysseus proved that he *condoned* it, his treatment of the gods is evidence that he *was guilty* of it, and his carelessness of accounting for his information shows that he *flaunted* it—with the argument, in paragraphs 24-36, that the way Homer chose to tell his story was precisely parallel to the way liars tell their lies, seems to have conclusively cast Homer's credibility into doubt.

With the introduction of a more legitimate and trustworthy source— the Egyptian priest—it would seem that Dio has opened up a new space in which he can expound the 'true' version of the Trojan War. But Dio is not content to simply tell a new story; he has promised, as we remember, to "refute Homer from his own poetry" as well. In

the previous 'destructive' half of the speech, Dio has cast Homer as a particular sort of liar—an oral improvisatory performer—precisely so that he can locate the traces of the true story within Homer's false version, and hence use Homer's poetry as supporting evidence for his new account.

The Marriage of Paris and Helen

With paragraph 43, we have moved into this "constructive" part of the speech. Dio devotes the opening section (up to paragraph 70) to pre-war events, offering a new account of Paris and Helen's relationship. In keeping with his criticisms of Homer's poor choice of starting point, the priest's narrative follows the more "natural" procedure and begins in the heroic Peloponnese. At first, he adheres to the version with which we are all familiar: Tyndareus, the king of Sparta, had four children—Clytemnestra, Helen, Castor and Polydeuces. Helen, widely famed for her beauty, was kidnapped while still a girl by Theseus, the king of Athens. Her brothers immediately went after her, sacked Athens, and recovered Helen, keeping Theseus' mother as punishment for the crime (the importance of Dio's inclusion of this episode will become clear below). Later, Agamemnon, the ruler of Argos, married Clytemnestra in order to cement an alliance with Sparta, and wanted his brother Menelaus to marry Helen. So far, the priest has basically kept to the traditional story-line; though he attributes political motivations to the actors *à la* Thucydides, the events remain those of tradition.

The changes occur in the ensuing narrative. Menelaus, rather than marrying Helen, had his suit contested by other Greeks as well as foreigners. Among these was Paris, who impressed Tyndareus and family with his wealth, beauty, and the power of

his father, among other things. Against the objections of Agamemnon, Tyndareus accepted Paris' offer, and so "Paris took Helen as his lawful wife, having gained the consent of her parents and her brothers, and took her home with him amid great enthusiasm and rejoicing." (53)

Menelaus was angry over this turn of events. Agamemnon, however, wasn't so much concerned with his brother's hurt feelings as he was of the threat posed to his rule by Paris, whose new marriage had now given him reason to interfere with Greek affairs. Agamemnon thus stirred up the animosity toward Paris which lingered among the other Greek suitors, who, spurred on by this newfound hatred (and also by their hope of plunder), sent an embassy to Troy to demand the return of Helen and began amassing their forces. The Trojans, on the other hand, expressed outrage at this clear breach of agreement, and, suspecting correctly that the charge was simply a pretext for war, prepared for the coming attack.

In place of the simple, brief, and somewhat romantic origins of the war known from Homer and other sources, we have here instead a more in-depth account, intent on providing psychological and naturalistic realism. This alternative, more 'plausible' version of events is somewhat reminiscent of the Persians' revisionist story of Helen's seizure in Herodotus 1.1-5 and Thucydides' reworking of Trojan and Greek motivations in his *Archaeology*.⁷⁷ As I showed in Chapter Two, such attempts to bring the legendary tradition back into the fold, as it were, of credibility, dominated the ancient

⁷⁷ Dio's debt to Herodotus is remarkable: the attribution of his new version to Egyptian priests dependent on records dating back to Menelaus, his claim that Helen's voyage to Troy was voluntary, the focus on how improbable it was that the Trojans did not simply give Helen up. Herodotus of course gives a different explanation of the last conundrum (Helen was in Egypt), and the Persian's adherence to the second does not induce them to claim that the Greeks were wrong to attack Troy, just that they overreacted.

inquiry into these tales. This passion for the plausible ended up producing such works as Dictys of Crete's *Ephemeris* and Dares of Phrygia's *Acta diurna*—purported eyewitness narratives of the Trojan War which notably eliminate the divine and other fantastic elements, and systematically revise the familiar stories in the direction of the mundane and the lifelike.⁷⁸

Dio, however, is not content just to provide an alternative version of this type which implicitly corrects and condemns Homer. He introduces the priest's account in the following way: "So, I will try to repeat what I heard from him, adding the reasons for which the things he told me seem to me to have been true (ὡς οὖν ἤκουσα παρ' ἐκείνου, πειράσομαι εἰπεῖν, προστιθείς ἐξ ὧν ἐδόκει μοι ἀληθῆ τὰ λεγόμενα)."

(43) Rather than a continuous exposition, there will be an ebb and flow of narrative and argumentation—the Egyptian version is periodically interrupted for an evaluation, whether in Dio's own voice or that of the priest's, comparing it to that of Homer. This explicit argumentation, which simultaneously demonstrates the plausibility of the Egyptian narrative and the implausibility of the poet's, allows us to follow the process of criticizing Homer as it leads Dio to the imagining, conjecturing, and creation of a sort of parallel Homeric universe.⁷⁹

The summary of the new tale I gave above is, within the speech, marked by digressions devoted to such assessments. After relating Paris and Helen's marriage, the priest pauses to pursue an extended demonstration of the more familiar version's absurdities. Homer's story, he notes, is ridiculous, and filled with strange and inconsis-

⁷⁸ For Dictys and Dares, see Gianotti (1979) and Merkle (1994).

⁷⁹ For some remarks on Dio's use of 'probable' vocabulary (τὸ εἰκός, τὸ πιθανόν) see Ritoók (1995), although he perhaps overemphasizes the debt to Aristotle. Cf.

tent events. His own version, on the other hand, is “much more plausible (πολὺ γὰρ πιστότερον)” (68) than Homer’s, which claims that:

Paris fell in love with a woman he didn’t know and that his father allowed him to sail on such an enterprise, even though, according to the story, Troy had recently been taken by the Greeks and Priam’s father, Laomedon, slain; and that afterwards in spite of the war and their countless hardships the Trojans refused to surrender Helen either when Paris was living or after he died, although they had no hope for safety, that Helen gave her affection to a stranger with whom she had probably never come in contact at all and shamefully abandoned her fatherland, relatives, and husband to come to a people who hated her, that no one should have nipped all these doings in the bud, or sought to catch her while she was hurrying to the sea, and on foot too, or pursued after she had embarked, and that the mother of Theseus, an old lady, who certainly hated Helen, should have accompanied her on the journey. Afterwards too that on the death of Paris, whom they say Helen loved, she should have been the wife of Deiphobus... and that not only she should have been unwilling to return to her husband, but that the Trojans should not have been unwilling, until their city was captured, to surrender her through compulsion. (68-70)

“None of these things,” he concludes, “are probable or even possible (τούτων οὐθὲν εἰκὸς οὐδὲ δυνατόν).” (70) The unexplained gaps, internal contradictions, and improbabilities suggest, in the best traditions of anti-Homeric scholarship, that Homer was lying.

The new Egyptian variant solves this series of Homeric problems neither by explaining each of them away individually, nor by dismissing the whole story as false, but by providing a radical, yet economical solution which explains *all* of the problems in one fell swoop—Paris did not steal Helen away, he *married* her. Working from this single fundamental alteration, the priest simultaneously eliminates the host of problems brought up by the Homeric account and fashions a highly probable tale that re-

Montgomery (1902), 405, who considers the whole *Trojan* as an “application of Aristotle’s theory of τὸ εἰκὸς and τὸ ἀναγκαῖον as laid down in *Rhetoric* 1.2.14-15.”

tains, however, the basic framework and details of the narrative. These interludes, in which the absurdities of the Homeric account are specified point-by-point and marshaled in the service of calling its credibility into question, cannot help but remind us of the rhetorical exercises of ἀνασκευή, or refutation, that we discussed in the previous chapter *apropos* of *Chryseïs*. As in those texts, a traditional story is critiqued primarily on the grounds of verisimilitude and psychological naturalism. But it should be clear even on a first glance that Dio takes things much further than the *progymnasmata* prescribe. Once again, *how* he manages this—the mechanisms of reading—will be our subject in the following pages.

Previous views on ἀνασκευή

The *Trojan Oration's* similarity to the ἀνασκευή of the rhetorical treatises has often been remarked upon. Eustathius had already described the oration in these terms: "It is clear that the Ilians boasted that their city had not been completely destroyed; from this Dio strove to *refute* [the standard view of] Trojan events (ὄθεν καὶ ὁ Δίων ἐπηγωνίσσατο ἀνασκευάσαι τὰ Τρωικά)." ⁸⁰ As we mentioned last chapter, this exercise consisted of a point-by-point refutation of an established narrative which occupied a murky ground between truth and falsehood. Such a narrative could be critiqued on the basis of several *topoi*, or headings—e.g., the unclear, impossible, incredible, false, self-contradictory, inappropriate, or not beneficial. Each of these in turn could be applied with reference to the elements (στοιχεῖα) of the narrative's ac-

⁸⁰ *Comm. ad Il.* 460.7 (727.11 van der Valk). Desideri and others have pointed to this passage as indicating that the *Trojan* could have been responding to existing revisionist thought about the outcome of the war among the Ilians themselves. Szarmach (1978) believes, however, that Eustathius has probably simply inferred this fact from the *Trojan* itself.

tion (πρᾶξις)—person, action, place, time, manner, and cause. What we end up with, then, is a grid of possible points of attack formed by the combination of a given heading with an element. Theon proceeds to illustrate a series of criticisms under the ‘improbable’ heading, questioning the story of Medea’s murder of her children element by element in a manner that shows remarkable similarities with Dio’s arguments. The section of the *Trojan Oration* under consideration could easily be conceived of as a refutation entitled: “That it is improbable that Paris stole Helen.” Libanius’ sample refutations of the Chryseïs episode examined earlier illustrate the practical results; he proceeds chronologically through the narrative, critiquing each aspect as it appears, from one or more vantage points, and often even anticipates and attacks possible defenses to his original criticisms.

Wilhelm Kroll was the first modern scholar to pursue the connections between Dio’s *Trojan* and the prescriptions in the *progymnasmata*, pointing out that several pieces of advice offered by Theon (to criticize narrative order (under lack of clarity), to begin with an attack on the narrator, and to combine narrative with argumentation) are closely followed by Dio.⁸¹ A few years later, Josef Mesk attempted to exhaustively show that Dio had used all of the *topoi* enumerated by Theon, although not in the precise order specified, and not always with the exact same terminology.⁸² The identification seemed assured, and by 1978 C.P. Jones could unequivocally refer to (and dismiss) the *Trojan* as an ἀνασκευή.⁸³

⁸¹ Kroll (1915).

⁸² Mesk (1920-1). The recent article of Calderón (1997) does not advance the discussion.

⁸³ Jones (1978), p. 17. Cf. Anderson (1993), p. 50: “the ultimate extravagance of *anaskeuê*.”

One dissenting voice was J.F. Kindstrand, who argued, among other things, that the terms for which Mesk had so painstakingly found parallels were just as common in the Homeric scholia, and not necessarily integrally connected to the refutation. More importantly he insisted that the *Trojan* was not simply reducible to a school-exercise, a point that Marian Szarmach elaborated by showing how in other speeches Dio characteristically takes the exercises as a rough starting point and guide and then moves from that foundation to a much more complex and expansive whole.⁸⁴ There is no doubt that Dio incorporates the prescriptions and lessons, and even the form of the ἀνασκευή in this speech, but the mistake has been to consider the whole thing a refutation writ large. Even if individual segments of the speech appear identical to refutations familiar from other sources, the *Trojan* as a whole is not really comparable, either in scope, size, or content with the ἀνασκευή. What seems to have been forgotten since Mesk originally pointed it out is that Dio's speech displays a dialectical movement between a refutation of the Homeric account and a confirmation of the Egyptian.⁸⁵ Dio is not simply refuting the traditional story; he uses this refutation to justify and arguably even create a more compelling alternative. This creative aspect is essential to an understanding of Dio's writing—he never composes a purely destructive negative critique; for him such criticism always leads to a greater truth.

Nessus, or, Deianeira

An instructive example of Dio's procedure is found in his 60th Discourse, *Nessus, or, Deianeira*, and it's worth a brief digression to demonstrate more clearly the princi-

⁸⁴ Kindstrand (1973), 154-5; Szarmach (1978), 198-9. See also the note of Desideri (1978), n. 46, 518-20.

⁸⁵ Mesk (1920-1), xx.

ples at play in Dio's method of refuting tradition.⁸⁶ Dio's reading of the myth involving Nessus, Deianeira, and Heracles is motivated by a student's request to solve (λύσαι) the *aporia* it had engendered.⁸⁷ Two problems had arisen: first, in Archilochus' version, Deianeira's long-winded plea for help from Heracles as she is being kidnapped seems to afford the centaur much leisure to escape with her. Sophocles' version, on the other hand, came under fire for its representation of Heracles shooting Nessus with an arrow when the centaur was still mid-stream holding Deianeira; in this case, it seemed likely that she would have drowned when Nessus died.⁸⁸

Dio, in response, takes the problematization even further. "The whole matter of the centaur trying to rape Deianeira is an impossibility," he declares, adding, "does it seem plausible (πιθανόν) to you that, in the full sight of Heracles, who was holding a bow...he would have tried to rape that man's wife?" (3) Once again, however, Dio doesn't try either to dismiss the story as false or to 'solve' the problems individually. Instead he identifies the fundamental crux of the myth which, upon being changed, will allow everything else to fall into place. In this case, Dio realizes that one simple alteration can cut the Gordian knot of interpretative difficulties: Nessus, rather than grabbing Deianeira, was simply *talking* to her, advising, in his nefarious way, how she might best gain control over Heracles. He suggested that she domesticate the hero, soften his wild and difficult behavior, and get him to spend more time at home. The

⁸⁶ The bibliography on *Nessus* is virtually non-existent. Of the few treatments, the best are Höistad (1948), 54-6, and Desideri (1978), 491-3; cf. Valgimigli (1912), 58-9; Saïd (2000), 175-6.

⁸⁷ *Or.* 60.1. The interlocutor, knowing Dio well, pleads that he not simply proceed in his usual manner, paradoxically overturning *doxa*. Dio of course insists that if the interlocutor wants the correct reconstruction of events, it will necessarily be against popular opinion. (2) And indeed, as we shall see, it is.

⁸⁸ *Or.* 60.1. Archilochus fr. 285 West; Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 564.

centaur did this, according to Dio, because “he knew that when Heracles changed his life and his behavior (ἄσκησις), he would be easy to handle and weak.” (5)

By replacing the act of seizure with that of conversation, Dio can retain the basic form and elements of the rest of the narrative, yet still render it more plausible. So, he continues, Deianeira was convinced; Heracles, for his part, suspecting Nessus was up to no good, killed him. But as the centaur died, he urged Deianeira to remember what he had told her. Afterwards, when Heracles’ behavior grew more and more unacceptable, (bringing home Iole from Oechalia was the last straw), Deianeira put Nessus’ plan into action. Eventually she managed to get Heracles to exchange his lion’s skin for regular clothing, and to adhere to a more sedentary and domestic lifestyle. Eventually, disgusted at the weakness and softness of his life and body, Heracles committed suicide by immolation.⁸⁹ “By Zeus,” Dio’s stunned interlocutor declares at the end of the tale, “the story seems to me not at all base or implausible (φαῦλος οὐδὲ ἀπίθανος).” (9) Part of the student’s astonishment is directed at how Dio’s new version not only eliminates the problems and maintains plausibility, but ends with a flourish, conveying a moralizing message dear to his Cynic heart.⁹⁰ Here, as in *Chryseis*, Dio’s reading has uncovered an ethical truth.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Dio elsewhere holds to the more traditional version of Heracles’ death: *Or.* 78.44, where Dio in fact contrasts Heracles’ physical pain and ailment with the much more difficult to bear corruption of the soul. On Dio’s treatment of Heracles, a favorite of the Cynics, see Höistad (1948), 50-60.

⁹⁰ Desideri (1978), 493: “the type of moral teaching which this revision aims to provide...corresponds perfectly to the entire thematic of the Diogenic discourses [*Orr.* 8-10]: the exaltation of a life lived according to nature, and the denunciation of a life based on luxury and pleasures.”

⁹¹ This is, as Desideri has well argued, an essential aspect of Dio’s reading practice essential. The last paragraphs of *Nessus* are the closest thing to a methodological statement of this practice. The student judges Dio among those philosophers who take “whatever myth or story (ὅποῖον ἂν μῦθον ἢ λόγον), dragging and fashioning it ac-

Nessus is often grouped with the *Trojan* as an ἀνασκευή, but the oration is obviously much more than a simple refutation of a myth. Like the refutations, Dio points out problems with the story, relying on concepts of psychological probability, likelihood, and narrative consistency so dear to the *progymnasmata*. But to simply refute the traditional tale or even to substitute another in its place would not be as effective as showing how the story has been improperly read, and how, with a small amount of alteration, it could be rendered more satisfactory. As we mentioned last chapter, Dio recognized the communicative power possessed by the legends and myths of the Greeks, familiar to a wide audience and imbued with an authority with which mere invention could not compete. The key is to locate the most economical reading, in which the least corrections are required, which accounts for the most difficulties, and which maintains the recognizability of the traditional story.⁹² By having everything remain the same except that *Nessus* is *talking* to *Deianeira* rather than kidnapping her, and retaining the sequence of events—*Heracles* kills *Nessus*, *Nessus* advises *Deianeira* to remember his words, *Deianeira* is angry with *Heracles* after his return from *Oechalia* (and jealous of *Iole*), *Deianeira* puts *Nessus*' advice into action, as a result of this action *Heracles* commits suicide—Dio has eliminated everything suspicious about the story with the least amount of alteration. (Note the elegance with which Dio turns the poisoned shirt into a metaphor for domestication). The story has not so much been refuted, or shown to be false, as it has been re-read and reconfigured by em-

ording to their own *dianoia* (ἔλκοντες καὶ πλάττοντες κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν διάνοιαν), and demonstrate it as useful and appropriate for philosophy (ὠφέλιμον καὶ φιλοσοφία πρέποντα ἀπέδειξαν).” (9)

⁹² The same principles that underlie the unconscious activity of the ‘philological method,’ according to Most (1994).

ploying the principles and presuppositions of the ἀνασκευή.⁹³ The results, however, are far more sophisticated than those of Libanius.⁹⁴

Absent Brothers, Errant Mothers

Dio's reading of Homer in this portion of the *Trojan* proceeds similarly to the one in *Nessus*, albeit on a much larger scale. Here the main alteration is, as we mentioned above, the claim that Paris *married* Helen rather than kidnapping her. For Dio, this one change of fact renders the rest of the narrative much more plausible, as his series of counterfactual arguments are meant to indicate. Dio doesn't so much solve these problems as eliminate the presuppositions that led them to be judged puzzling; his skill lies in his realization that the difficulties stem from a single false element in the text. But whereas the refutation in *Nessus* only involved the smoothing out of a few narrative details fairly restricted in scope, the more complicated and extensive story of Paris and Helen—spanning different countries, families, and involving a host of characters—requires the proper synchronization of a far vaster array of variables. We saw in our discussion of *Chryseis* how refutations and confirmations of Homer were closely linked and necessarily dependent on the tradition of poetic problems which centuries of scholarship had discovered and tackled. Dio's task, then, entailed an engagement with this tradition as well—the incorporation of several notorious problems

⁹³ Some might call this moral allegory; *Nessus* demonstrates that the borders between 'rationalizing' and 'allegorizing' myths are rather porous.

⁹⁴ As Desideri (1978), 492, writes: "the reconstruction of the event coincides with the individuation of its intrinsic rationality. In other words, the semantic strength of an account ...and this is the guarantee of his use for a didactic end; people must be convinced that there is a historical reality at the core of each myth; otherwise they will not be receptive to completely receive the educational message. But to obtain this it is necessary that the myth be perfectly logical and verisimilar. Ideology is therefore superior to truth."

of Homeric scholarship was vital for the persuasiveness and virtuosity of his argument.

Dio's primary piece of evidence concerns Helen's brothers, Castor and Polydeuces. Their absence from the Trojan campaign is one of the well-known oddities of the Homeric account, given their close relationship with Helen as well as their famed martial skills. The only time they are mentioned in the *Iliad* is in a passage from the *teichoskopia* episode in Book 3, when Helen, at Priam's request, is identifying the Greek heroes to the king. As she is doing this, she wonders aloud about her siblings:

δοίω δ' οὐ δύναμαι ιδέειν κοσμήτορε λαῶν
 Κάστορι θ' ἰππόδαμον καὶ πύξ ἀγαθὸν Πολυδεύκεα,
 αὐτοκασσιγνήτω, τῷ μοι μία γείνατο μήτηρ.
 ἢ οὐχ ἔσπέσθην Λακεδαίμονιος ἐξ ἔρατεινῆς,
 ἢ δεύρω μὲν ἔποντο νέεσσ' ἐνὶ ποντοπόροισιν,
 νῦν αὐτ' οὐκ ἐθέλουσι μάχην καταδύμεναι ἀνδρῶν,
 αἴσχεα δειδιότες καὶ ὄνειδεα πόλλ', ἃ μοι ἔστιν.
 ὣς φάτο, τοὺς δ' ἤδη κάτεχεν φυσίζοος αἴα
 ἐν Λακεδαίμονι αὖθι, φίλην ἐν πατρίδι γαίῃ

“yet nowhere can I see those two, the marshals of the people,
 Kastor, breaker of horses, and the strong boxer, Polydeukes,
 my own brothers, born with me of a single mother.
 Perhaps these came not with the rest from Lakedaimon the lovely,
 or else they did come here in their sea-wandering ships, yet
 now they are reluctant to go with the men into battle
 dreading the words of shame and all the reproach that is on me.”
 So she spoke, but the teeming earth lay already upon them
 away in Lakedaimon, the beloved land of their fathers. (Lattimore tr.)

Naturally, these lines became considered problematic. Aside from the related difficulty that Priam still didn't recognize the Greek heroes after having had nine years to practice, two basic questions were posed. First how could Helen not have known anything about her brothers (given that she could have asked the Greek prisoners for information)? Second, why did it suddenly pop into her head at that moment to won-

der about them, as if she hadn't thought of it before?⁹⁵ The scholia consider both of these "implausible (ἀπίθανον)" or "irrational (ἄλογον)." The problem was quite an old one—Heraclides of Pontus discussed it in the 4th century B.C.E.; and even Aristotle tried his hand at a solution, as we mentioned in Chapter One: "Perhaps she was shielded from encountering the prisoners by Alexander (ἴσως ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἐντυγχάνειν ἐφυλάττετο τοῖς αἰχμαλώτοις). Or she did not know where her brothers were in order that her ἦθος appear better and she not be a busybody (ἢ ὅπως τὸ ἦθος βελτίων φανῆ καὶ μὴ πολυπραγμονοίη. οὐδὲ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ἦδει ὅπου εἰσί)." ⁹⁶ Not perhaps the most elegant of solutions; others fared little better. Zenodotus, for instance, thought that the Dioscuri had been left behind in Greece as διοικηταί.⁹⁷

For Dio of course, the solution is right at hand; what better reason for their absence than that they did not actually go on the expedition? If Helen and Paris were married with their blessing, the brothers obviously would not have supported a military mission against their new in-laws. Furthermore, this explains the peculiarity of the passage:

Homer, concealing this irrationality (ταύτην δὲ τὴν ἀλογίαν κρύπτων Ὀμηρος), has represented Helen in a state of amazement (πεποίηκε θαυμάζουσιν τὴν Ἑλένην); then he defends himself (ἀπελογήσατο), saying that they had died previously. But then it is clear that her seizure occurred while they were still living. So why did they

⁹⁵ The scholiasts remark that neither Priam nor the poet himself previously mentioned them.

⁹⁶ Sch ad Il.3.236 = Aristotle fr. 147 Rose. There is some debate whether the second solution is Aristotelian or not.

⁹⁷ Another solution from the scholia: since many Greeks had been sacking and fighting cities on the islands, it would have been difficult for Helen or prisoners to know whether her brothers were at Troy or not. For modern 'solutions' see Kirk (1985) on 3.236.

wait ten years for Agamemnon as he spent time gathering an army, rather than immediately pursue their sister, particularly if they might have caught her while she sailed? [72] For they went immediately after Theseus, who was Greek, and better than the rest, and even a ruler over many men...yet they would not go after Alexander and waited ten years for the sons of Atreus to gather a force?

Dio imagines Homer telling his story, and then awkwardly realizing at this critical juncture that he has failed to account for the Dioscuri's absence, which in Dio's account is perfectly rational, but in Homer's version seems rather peculiar. The poet, Dio claims, made Helen appear surprised at this absence, and then he tried to explain it by informing his audience of their death. But, as Dio points out, this explanation presents its own problems—Helen's ignorance means that they were still alive when she left Troy, so Homer still has not accounted for their failure to participate on the expedition. In fact, Dio muses, the same could be said for Helen's father, Tyndareus, who likewise would have had ample reason to come on the campaign, if his own daughter had been stolen from Sparta.⁹⁸ The problem of the Dioscuri has been identified as yet another Homeric mistake stemming from the necessity of the nature of the compositional situation, but paradoxically depends on an original point—their absence from Troy—that Dio takes to support his own story.

⁹⁸ Anticipating an excuse based on Tyndareus' advance age, Dio adds that other older men, like Nestor and Phoenix had accompanied the expeditionary forces. In general, Dio implies that none of the Spartans went to Troy. Any mention of their forces, under the command of Menelaus, is only due to Homer's necessity of keeping to his lie that Menelaus, through his marriage to Helen, was king of Sparta. After all, he argues, if Tyndareus was still alive, how could Menelaus have been king, even if he were married to Helen? Dio again anticipates an objection based on T.'s old age, and again offers Nestor as a counter-example: despite his age, there was never any question that he would still rule Pylos, even on his return from the war as represented in the *Odyssey* (by which time he must have been extremely old).

Another notorious crux is deployed by Dio in a different way.⁹⁹ In *Iliad* 3.144, Aethra, the daughter of Pittheus, is mentioned as one of Helen's maidservants: ἀμφίπολοί δὲ ἔποντο/ Αἶθρη Πιτθῆος θυγάτηρ Κλυμένη τε βοῶπις. This woman was, apparently, the mother of Theseus, and this strange connection attracted the attention of many Homeric readers. "If he is speaking of Theseus' mother then this must be athetized (εἰ μὲν τὴν Θησέως λέγει μητέρα ἀθετητέον), for it is implausible that a servant of Helen was such an old woman (ἀπίθανον γὰρ ἔστιν Ἑλένης ἀμφίπολον κείναι τὴν οὕτως ὑπεραρχαίαν).¹⁰⁰ The rather unsatisfactory answer in the scholia relies on homonymy, that last refuge of the perplexed commentator.¹⁰¹ In other words, this Aethra, daughter of Pittheus, is not the mother of Theseus, but should be identified as some other Aethra, daughter of some other Pittheus.¹⁰² In his *Theseus*, however, Plutarch mentions that others believed that this Homeric line referred to the Dioscuri's mission to recover Helen from Theseus, who had kidnapped her. In the course of their attack, they managed to capture Theseus' mother, who became Helen's servant, and apparently accompanied her new mistress to Troy.

As we saw, Dio also refers to this apparently post-Homeric tradition, but ties the issue in with the vexed problems surrounding Helen's family and their lack of in-

⁹⁹ I briefly discussed this example in the Introduction.

¹⁰⁰ Sch. A ad *Il.* 3.144. It continues: ἦν οὐκ ἐκποιεῖ ζῆν διὰ τὸ μῆκος τοῦ χρόνου.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Eustathius, *Comm. Il.* ad 3.144: "But if it is a homonymy, just as in many other places, it can remain; for there are some other homonymys in the *Iliad*. (εἰ δὲ ὁμώνυμία ἐστί, καθάπερ καὶ ἐπὶ πλειόνων, δύναται μένειν· καὶ γὰρ ἄλλοι εἰσὶν ὁμώνυμοὶ τινες κατὰ τὰ Ἰλιακά)."

¹⁰² Normally homonymys would only involve a single name, and there are legitimate examples in Homer: One instance is Adrastus, one of whom is mentioned at 2.572 and the other at 2.830. An example of how far some would take this method of interpretation can be found in Plutarch's *Theseus* 31: without referring to the myth obviously being re-interpreted, he describes how Theseus and Peirithous travelled to

volvement in the Trojan campaign. If Castor and Polydeuces had so eagerly attacked Theseus, who was quite powerful, why didn't they do the same if Helen had been kidnapped once again, by Paris? Aethra's presence in Troy, moreover, serves two different functions: as Plutarch shows, it provides evidence of the Dioscuri's campaign against Theseus (how else could Aethra have been Helen's servant?), but Dio also uses it as yet another indication of a legitimate marriage—while it seems unlikely that Paris would have stolen an aged servant woman along with the rest of the goods, it would be natural for a bride to take her servants with her to her new home.

Why a Liar Has to Know the Truth

One of the striking things about these two uses of Homeric problems is that they both accept that part of Homer's statements about the Dioscuri or Aethra were true; this is why Dio can use them to support his argument. In fact, implicit in Dio's earlier demolition of Homer's claim to trustworthiness is the presupposition that Homer knew the 'truth' but was willfully misrepresenting, distorting, or omitting it due to his desire "to gratify the Greeks and the Atreidae (χαριζόμενος τοῖς Ἑλλησι καὶ τοῖς Ἀτρεΐδαις)." (35) Paul Veyne has noted this defining feature of Greek thinking—the idea of "falsehood as the truth distorted," the faith that the tradition itself possesses the truth within it, waiting to be uncovered, extracted. We have already seen that even historians like Thucydides, Strabo, and Polybius assumed that Homer and indeed the whole mythic or legendary tradition was in essence true, however encrusted with lies and exaggerations that kernel of truth might have been. This idea extended beyond myths into any representation—as Paul Veyne declares, "one cannot lie *ex nihilo*."

the land of "Aidoneus, the king of the Molossians, who called his wife Phersephone,

One might doubt whether Heracles actually visited the underworld, but not that he existed, and that he was an extremely famous and successful individual. The most peculiar thing about this notion is that it presupposes that whoever is telling a story or recounting a myth actually has access to the truth, but, whether through incompetence, a desire to please, or maliciousness, somehow gets portions of it wrong. Truth itself is unproblematized; if you eliminate the lies, the truth is what's left over.

Nowhere is this better exemplified than in ancient historiography, where, as we've already pointed out, the question of ascertaining the true account seems unproblematic; rather, the concerns are with how best to arrange the material, since, as Lucian implies, the facts are there for all to see. As a result, for many ancient historians, to guarantee the truth of their history, it was enough to show that they had no bias for or against any of the people they were writing about.

As Lucian shows us, Homer could be assessed by these criteria as well.

Though most of what Homer has written in praise of Achilles is fictitious, some people today are actually inclined to believe him, taking as a great proof of his truthfulness only the fact that he wasn't writing about a living person; for they can't find any motive he could have for lying.¹⁰³

Ὁμήρω γοῦν, καίτοι πρὸς τὸ μυθῶδες τὰ πλεῖστα συγγεγραφότι ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως, ἤδη καὶ πιστεύειν τινὲς ὑπάγονται. μόνον τοῦτο εἰς ἀπόδειξιν τῆς ἀληθείας μέγα τεκμήριον τιθέμενοι ὅτι μὴ περὶ ζῶντος ἔγραφεν; οὐ γὰρ εὕρισκουσιν οὔτινος ἔνεκα ἐψεύδατ' ἄν.

Lucian's comment demonstrates that, for most people, if they couldn't find a motive for Homer to lie, then he must have been telling the truth. There seems to be no

his daughter Kore, and his dog Cerberus.”

¹⁰³ Lucian, *How to Write History* 40. Translation adapted from Macleod (1991), 235. On bias, see Luce (1989).

possibility that perhaps Homer simply might never have known what happened, whatever his motives. Homer's writing after Achilles' death, rather than calling into question how he knew the details of Achilles' exploits so well, paradoxically bolsters confidence in his account, because it removes the possibility of currying the great hero's favor. Dio, of course, although he believes that Homer lived well after the Trojan War, does accuse Homer of a bias toward the Greeks, concerned as he was to flatter his hosts;¹⁰⁴ later, he will add that Homer was motivated by more propagandistic motivations—he assured the Greeks of their victory in order to avoid the massive political unrest and fear the news of their defeat would be sure to provoke.¹⁰⁵ Even if Homer was biased, however, even if because of that bias he lied shamelessly and often, for Dio his account nevertheless contains much of the truth.

Now we see that Dio's attacks on Homer's credibility—his failure to list sources, his bias, his love of lying—are not marshaled as evidence that he didn't know what he was talking about, only that he can be shown to have wanted to hide the truth that he knew too well. Far from being another Dionian conceit, however, this aspect of the argument falls in line with mainstream conceptions of the intertwined nature of truth and lies. Indeed, Dio fashions his entire method of reading Homer around it, particularly in his analysis of the main body of the *Iliad*, which we shall examine next.

¹⁰⁴ The idea that Homer was biased for the Greeks (φιλέλλην) is a commonplace in the scholia. The charge was brought up more recently in an article by van der Valk (1953) which basically uses Dionian argumentative techniques. Kakridis (1971/1956) refutes van der Valk with the reminder that Homer was *not* writing a historical account.

¹⁰⁵ Philostratus in *Heroicus* 25 explains Homer's omission of Palamedes and his devotion to Odysseus as a result of a personal friendship between the poet and his subject (an accusation going back as far as Pindar *Nem.* 7.20ff.).

V SIGNS OF THE TRUTH: *TROJAN* 77-110

Dio's treatment of the pre-Iliadic Trojan War narrative is radically revisionist—by claiming that Paris married Helen legitimately, it eliminates the alleged justification for Greek aggression, and squarely lays the blame for the war onto the Greeks. But we shouldn't allow this to mask the fact that despite this major alteration, the so-called new version agrees substantially in other respects with the traditional account. In fact, as we have just seen, the priest goes so far as to use evidence from Homer's narrative in support of his own version. Homeric details such as the Trojan's refusal to surrender Helen, the presence of Aethra at Troy as Helen's servant, and Tyndareus' and the Dioscuri's absence from Troy are treated as true elements of a fundamentally false story. Their truth, paradoxically, arises from their incongruity with the rest of Homer's narrative, which has already been proven a lie.

This method of reading is strikingly reminiscent of that employed by Herodotus in his own analysis of Helen and the Trojan War. As we recall from our discussion in Chapter One, the Egyptian priests he interviewed performed an operation on the Homeric narrative analagous to the one found in Dio—they insisted that Paris had never brought Helen to Troy, since she had been rescued by the Egyptian king during a lay-over in that country, and remained there until the war was over. For Herodotus, this story seemed convincing because its adoption explained away a serious implausibility in Homer's account: the Trojan unwillingness, even with their losses mounting, to return Helen to the Greeks, and bring an end to hostilities. Just as in the *Trojan Oratio*, Herodotus' reasoning depends on the fact that, Homer's narrative, despite having had a major element called into question, adheres in all other respects to the truth. We have in both revisions a radical positing of new facts that nevertheless function to

render the remainder of the traditional story more believable, and in fact depend on evidence adduced from the old version to demonstrate the truth of the new.

Homer, in Herodotus' view, represented everything accurately except for Helen's whereabouts, and, he adds, the only reason that the poet told this falsehood was because he thought it more fitting for poetry than the truth. What was so interesting about this last assertion was that Herodotus never questions that Homer did know the real story (and in fact goes to some length to prove that he did), and this *a priori* assumption forces him to provide a reason why Homer consciously told a story that was contrary to the truth. Herodotus' answer is one of the earliest formulations of the concept of poetic license, and of the idea that poet's do not have the same goal as historians. But unlike Eratosthenes, Herodotus still insists that if Homer invented, he did so in full knowledge of what actually happened. The same thing applies to Dio, who, despite asserting that Homer was *not* an eyewitness, or even a contemporary of the Trojan War, takes it for granted that Homer knew what actually happened, and consciously chose to ignore or distort it.

But the strangeness of this attitude is more marked in Dio than Herodotus, since the latter takes pains to retain Homer as trustworthy and shares the general view of the poet as an authoritative source of Greek culture and tradition. But Dio has just spent the better part of 30 pages trying to convince us of the worthlessness of Homer's testimony and the contempt he displayed toward the truth. The next sections (77-110) of the *Trojan Oration* shine an even brighter spotlight on the peculiarities of Dio's project. The priest constructs his reading of *Iliadic* episodes by means of a point-by-point comparison with the *Iliad*, constantly switching back and forth from a narration of his new 'true' episode to a demonstration of precisely *how* we can witness Homer

maliciously distorting or reluctantly acknowledging this truth. The 'facts' cannot ever be entirely effaced; their traces, however faint, are visible to the careful observer, and properly read, allow that observer to recover the facts themselves. In essence, Dio is faced with the same situation that Strabo had been in; both acknowledge that Homeric poetry contains a mixture of truth and falsehood, and both set themselves the task of uncovering that precious, buried truth. The mechanisms which they developed to accomplish this goal, however, could not have been more different.

Uncontrollable Truths

For Dio, the text of the *Iliad*, as we have seen, is the written record of an oral off-the-cuff performance, made up on the spot, marked by textual manifestations of the poet's continuous catering to the desires and reactions of his audience. Such a conception of Homeric poetry provided Dio with evidence supporting his accusations that Homer was lying, since his storytelling technique resembled that practiced by extemporaneous narrators of stories attempting to distort or hide the truth. As the priest comes to the *Iliad*-narrative, he transforms the lines of argumentation used to such effect in the critique of Homer's character (15-36) into presupposed modes of accounting for and extracting the truth from Homer's narrative performance.

For pre-Iliadic events, the priest had proposed a continuous alternative narrative and then compared it favorably to the Homeric account. Beginning at paragraph 77, however, in the sections of the story that coincide with those told in the *Iliad*, the priest continuously interrupts his own presentation with extended explanations of Homer's divergences or concurrences with the 'facts'. In this fashion, the priest's narrative, though diametrically opposed to Homer's, remains entirely parasitic upon it.

His procedure allows us to see exactly how he imagines the relation between truth and lies in the *Iliad*, and how he is able to produce the true story from a hostile, deceptive witness.

According to the priest, “since the Achaeans were faring badly in the war, and nothing was turning out as they had hoped...disease and famine bore down upon them, and *stasis* was arising between their leaders—the sort of thing which usually happens to the unsuccessful side, not those winning.” (79) Here the opening events of the *Iliad*—the plague among the Greek forces and the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon—are, far from being false, employed as evidence for the priest’s new truth, that the Trojans had been winning the war. As a further piece of evidence, he points to the curious and disastrous ‘test’ of the Greek forces by Agamemnon in *Iliad* 2.1-210—another favorite of the commentators—which revealed the widespread desire among the Greek troops to return home.¹⁰⁶ The priest has not simply asserted that things were going badly for the Greeks, but inferred and supported it from the testimony of the very account whose credibility has recently been condemned.

Much of the narrative proceeds in this fashion: the priest’s main point is to prove that Hector killed Achilles, and that the Trojans defeated the Greeks; in keeping with these theses, he holds that the Trojans decisively took the upper hand in the fighting in the ninth year of the war, foreshadowing their eventual defeat of the Greeks. Homer’s account roughly agrees with this, although he attributes the Trojan’s gains to Achilles’ withdrawal and Zeus’ will, and obviously concludes his story rather differently. As a result of this confluence, the priest has to concede that “when Homer tells of the defeat and rout of the Achaeans, the glory of Hector, and the masses of dead (as he had

¹⁰⁶ A puzzle that still vexes modern commentators.

promised), he speaks of true things (τάληθῆ λέγει), albeit somewhat unwillingly and desirous to enhance Achilles' honor (τρόπον τινὰ ἄκων καὶ ἀναφέρων εἰς τιμὴν τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως).¹⁰⁷ How, we might legitimately ask, if Homer was such a liar, can Dio justify using his poetic statements as evidence of the truth? Given the fact that Homer is biased for the Greeks and against the Trojans, why would he portray the Trojans as the winning force (at least until Achilles' return to battle)? The problem for the priest then, is not, paradoxically, to counter Homer, but to explain why an egregious liar like the poet would have occasionally told the truth.

The problem is addressed directly, by imagining a Homer not only in possession of the truth, but unable to keep it repressed within himself; despite his best efforts, the true story keeps leaking out, escaping his control. The priest repeatedly emphasizes this incontinence as the reason why Homer often tells the truth: "Homer agrees with" Agamemnon's 'testing' of the Greeks, despite its unflattering implications, "since he could not conceal the whole truth (ὁμολογεῖ δὲ ταῦτα καὶ "Ὀμηρος· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐδύνατο πάντα τάληθῆ ἀποκρύψασθαι)." (80) Similar phrasing recurs in the descriptions of the fighting in *Iliad* 9-10; "Homer cannot conceal Hector's deeds (ὅμως δὲ οὐχ οἴος τέ ἐστὶν ἀποκρύψαι τὰ τοῦ "Ἐκτορος ἔργα) as he conquers and pursues the enemy to their ships," and "he is reluctant to state these things so clearly (ταῦτα γὰρ οὐ βουλόμενος εἰπεῖν οὕτως ἐναργῶς), but since they're true, he isn't able to stop himself once he's started (ὅμως ἐπεὶ ἀληθῆ ἦν, ἀρξάμενος αὐτῶν οὐ δύναται ἀποστῆναι)." (85) The next day's events (*Iliad* 11 ff.) also find Homer over-

¹⁰⁷ 11.84. Cf. 11.88: "in the case of Hector, however, he shows no such a loss for something great and splendid to say—because, I believe, he is telling of actual events (ἀλλ' οὐ περὶ τοῦ "Ἐκτορος ὁμοίως ἀπορεῖ ὅ,τι εἶπη μέγα καὶ θαυμαστόν, ὥς γε οἶμαι τὰ γενόμενα διηγούμενος)."

whelmed by truth's compelling power—"in this part of his narrative he is also evidently telling the truth and what really occurred, carried away as he is by the facts themselves (καὶ ταῦτα μὲν λέγων δῆλός ἐστιν ὅτι ἀληθῆ λέγει καὶ τὰ γενόμενα ὑπ' αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων προαγόμενος·)." (86)

Homer, despite his desire, is not able to "conceal" (ἀποκρύψαι) the truth, and once some of it makes its way to the surface, he can't stop it; he is led forward by the inexorable pull of the facts. Once again, we can see the flexibility of Dio's model of the *Iliad* as spontaneous narrative; it allows him to identify, not only the lies in the text, but the truth as well. For Dio, Homer knows what really happened, and since he is fashioning his story on the spot, it would naturally be easier to relate the truth than to fabricate. After all the truth, as every good critic and rhetorician knew, possesses a certain plausibility and consistency by virtue of its having actually occurred. In this formulation, even telling the truth is characteristic of a liar.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Two famous passages echo Dio's thoughts from a slightly different perspective. Polybius' remarks *apropos* of Homer quoted by Strabo (1.2.9): "to hang an empty marvel-narrative on nothing true is not Homeric. For it occurs to us at once, doubtless, that a man will lie more plausibly if he will mix in some actual truth (καὶ τὴν Ὀδυσσεύως πλάνην ὡσαύτως· ἐκ μηδενὸς δὲ ἀληθοῦς ἀνάπτειν κενὴν τερατολογίαν οὐχ Ὀμηρικόν. προσπίπτει γάρ, ὡς εἰκός, ὡς πιθανώτερον ἂν οὕτω τις ψεύδοιτο, εἰ καταμίσγοι τι καὶ αὐτῶν τῶν ἀληθινῶν)." In the *Poetics* 24 (1460a19ff.), Aristotle has a more sophisticated analysis of Homer's skill in lying: "Homer in particular has taught the others how one should tell lies. This is the *paralogismos* (δεδίδαχεν δὲ μάλιστα Ὀμηρος καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ψευδῆ λέγειν ὡς δεῖ. ἐστὶ δὲ τοῦτο παραλογισμός). When B is true if A is true, or B happens if A happens, people think that if B is true A must be true or happen. But that is false. Consequently if A be untrue but there be something else, B, which is necessarily true or happens if A is true, the proper thing to do is to posit B, for, knowing B to be true, our mind falsely infers that A is true also."

Desperate Lies

These true portions of Homer's narrative, moreover, are judged true not only because of their agreement with the priest's story, but also because of their lack of fantastic and improbable elements. In the priest's eyes, Homer's descriptions of Hector's activities—his defeat of various Greek warriors, his crossing of the trench, the siege of the naval station, the defeat of Ajax atop the wall, the firing of the ships—are noticeably bereft of the incredible. "For here there is no Aeneas snatched away by Aphrodite, no Ares wounded by a mortal, nor any other such implausible thing (οὐδὲ ἄλλο τοιοῦτον οὐθὲν ἀπίθανον); rather they are true events and resemble actual occurrences (ἀλλὰ πράγματα ἀληθῆ καὶ ὅμοια γεγονόσι)." (90)

In contrast, when Homer describes the exploits of the Achaeans, all sense of naturalism and sense seems to disappear.

When he glorifies the Achaeans, he is in a state of great *aporia*, and anyone can see that he is dealing in fiction...In all these episodes it is clear that he is favorable to the Achaeans and wanting to marvel at them, but that, not knowing of anything true to say, he is led, through his *aporia*, to mention impossible and impious deeds—the usual experience of all who contradict the truth.

ὅταν δὲ αὖξῃ τοὺς Ἀχαιοὺς, πολλῆς ἀπορίας μεστός ἐστι καὶ πᾶσι φανερός ὅτι ψεύδεται ὡς οἷς ἅπασιν δηλὸς ἐστὶν εὖνους μὲν ὦν ἐκείνοις καὶ βουλόμενος αὐτοὺς θαυμάζειν, οὐκ ἔχων δὲ ὅτι εἴπη ἀληθές, διὰ τὴν ἀπορίαν εἰς ἀδύνατα ἐμπίπτων καὶ ἀσεβῆ πράγματα, ὃ πάσχουσιν ὡς τὸ πολὺ πάντες ὅσοι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ μάχονται.
(86-7)

According to the priest, the Trojans had won all these battles, and Homer had no true Greek success stories at his disposal. But because such tales of valor were what his Greek audience wanted to hear, he was forced to make them up on the spot, and

this explains why the stories of Greek victories are marked by such strange and unbelievable elements. Aside from the obvious instances of Diomedes' wounding of Ares and Aphrodite, Menelaus' victory over Paris is ridiculous (νίκην γελοίαν) and the ending of Ajax's duel with Hector (where they exchange gifts) is silly (πάνυ εὐήθης ἢ διάλυσις).¹⁰⁹

Here again, as in sections 15-36, we meet a Homer whose lies can be easily detected by comparing his narrative methods to those of liars; this time, however, the priest attributes the inclusion of such absurd episodes to Homer's deficiencies in improvisation. They result from Homer's *aporia* (πολλῆς ἀπορίας μεστός ἐστι; διὰ τὴν ἀπορίαν), which itself arises from the confluence of a desire to praise with a lack of material. Conversely, when he is telling of Hector's glorious deeds, he was *not* at a loss (οὐ περὶ τοῦ Ἑκτορος ὁμοίως ἀπορεῖ), for the very reason that "he was narrating what happened (τὰ γενόμενα διηγούμενος)." (88) As with all liars, the 'fabulous' nature of certain descriptions function as signs of their author's *aporia*, and hence of their status as fabrications, while the consistency and plausibility of others guarantees their truth. We are back to the *virtutes narrationis* again, only this time the main concern is plausibility, πιθανότης; an implausible episode, a compositional flaw, has become for Dio a sign of the liar's *aporia* when forced to fabricate on the spur of the moment.

Achilles, Patroclus, and Hector

The centerpiece of the priest's argument is the complicated section (93-110) presenting the true account of Patroclus, Achilles, and Hector. Here the entire arsenal of

¹⁰⁹ Again, Dio has fixed upon noted 'problem' passages discussed in the scholia.

demonstration is on display—the brilliant substitution that forces a radical reinterpretation of the episode, the identification of implausibilities and well-known problems as evidence of botched cover-up operations, the insistent adherence to much of the false narrative (attributed to Homer’s inability to completely stifle the truth), and the simultaneous refutation of Homer and use of his material as supporting testimony.¹¹⁰

The pivotal contention is that it actually was Achilles, not Patroclus pretending to be Achilles, who was fighting in *Iliad* 13-17, and that hence it was also Achilles whom Hector killed. Now, Dio’s earlier changes to Homer’s story were directed against the margins of the *Iliad*. His claim that Paris had *married* Helen addressed an incident that Homer had only mentioned indirectly and that lay outside the chronological scope of his poem. Likewise, Dio’s assertion that Homer had tried to disguise the fact that the Trojans had the upper hand in the ninth year of fighting only accused the poet of some misdirection and prejudicial treatment. Even Dio’s subsequent claim that Troy won the war deals with offstage (that is post-*Iliadic*) events. But to declare that Hector killed Achilles rather than the other way round is to attack the very heart of the *Iliad*. To go further and declare that one can prove this from the text itself is, well, very Dionian.

Aware of the enormity of this correction, the priest nonchalantly attributes it to Homer’s improvisational sensitivity to his audience; at this point “Homer had no more concern for the truth (‘Ὅμηρος οὐδὲν ἔτι τᾶληθοῦς ἐφρόντισεν),” and “simply overturned all the events and turned them to their opposite (πάντα τὰ πράγματα ἀπλῶς ἀνέτρεψε καὶ μετέστησεν εἰς τοῦναντίον), having contempt for people be-

¹¹⁰ See Montgomery (1902), 409-412 for references to relevant scholia. Cf. Mont-

cause he saw how easily they believed the other things (καταπεφρονηκῶς μὲν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὅτι καὶ τᾶλλα ἐώρα πάνυ ῥαδίως πειθομένους αὐτούς).” (92) The burden of the alteration has now fallen on Homer’s shoulders: “In such a way, he dared to represent things opposite to those that had happened (οὕτως δὴ ἐτόλμησε τάναντία τοῖς γενομένοις ποιῆσαι).” (93)

But in telling his story, Homer still mostly adheres to the truth, as all liars do. The priest explains that when Achilles had beaten back the Trojan forces (Hector had been permitting this in a planned retreat, waiting for Achilles to tire), “Hector engaged him in battle, slew him, and gained possession of his arms, just as Homer has told it (ὥς καὶ τοῦτο “Ὀμηρος εἶρηκε).” (96) After the two Ajaxes had dragged Achilles’ body back to the ships, Hector, “after donning the emblazoned arms of Achilles, continued the slaughter and pressed on in pursuit to the sea, just as Homer admits (ὥς ὁμολογεῖ ταῦτα “Ὀμηρος).” (97)

Homer, of course, says that it was not Achilles but Patroclus in Achilles’ armor whom Hector killed. Dio reads this substitution first as a sign of Homer’s inability to fabricate wholesale; because he “was not able to conceal the truth (οὐκ ἔχων ὅπως κρύψει τᾶληθές),” (97) he described the episode largely as it happened, changing only the identity of the slain man in order to rob Hector of his glory. The absurdity of the Homeric version is then demonstrated at length by the priest, in another ἀνασκευή marshalling the familiar arguments from psychological and narrative probability. How could Achilles have sat idly by while Hector was firing the ships? How could he have let Patroclus, a hero much his inferior, go out in his stead? What sort of advice was it for the latter to avoid Hector, since “it wasn’t possible for Patroclus to choose

gomery (1901) which is slightly different.

with whom he would fight?” (98) Wasn't it absurd that when Patroclus couldn't lift Achilles' spear, “he gave him the other things that were evidently proportionate in weight to the spear and did not fear that he would be unable to carry them?” (102) All of these problems, however, disappear if we merely accept the more likely, and more economical, alternative: rather than imagine that someone else put on Achilles armor, beat back the Trojans, and then was killed by Hector, isn't it easier to assume that Achilles himself did these things?

The priest concludes:

But if someone were to refute everything, it would take a lot of work. To those turning their minds to it the falsity is self-evident, so much that anyone with half a mind can see that Patroclus is little more than a counterfeit that Homer has substituted for Achilles in his desire to conceal the truth concerning him.

ἀλλὰ γὰρ εἴ τις ἅπαντα ἐλέγχοι, πολὺ ἂν ἔργον εἴη. τὸ γὰρ ψεῦδος ἐξ αὐτοῦ φανερόν ἐστι τοῖς προσέχουσιν· ὥστε οὐδενὶ ἄδηλον καὶ τῶν ὀλίγων νοῦν ἔχόντων ὅτι σχεδὸν ὑπόβλητός ἐστιν ὁ Πάτροκλος καὶ τοῦτον ἀντήλλαξεν Ὅμηρος τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως, βουλόμενος τὸ κατ' ἐκείνον κρύψαι. (102)

As evidence of this substitution, the priest points out another peculiarity of Homer's account—in *Iliad* 23.243ff, Achilles orders Patroclus' bones to be buried in a tomb that will serve as Achilles' own eventual burial place as well. The priest attributes this to Homer's covering up his lies: “then Homer had a misgiving (ὑφορώμενος) that someone might actually look for the tomb of Patroclus...so safeguarding himself (προκαταλαμβάνων) against this, he says that Patroclus had no separate tomb but was buried with Achilles.” (103)¹¹¹ Here Homer is reacting to potential critics; since in his own time, the tombs of the other heroes slain at Troy were visible, he moves to

forestall questions as to where Patroclus' tomb was. Again, Dio reads Homeric narrative choices as driven by the exigencies of the performance situation, but whereas before his desire to please his audience led him to fabricate Greek victories, here his concern for their knowledge of potentially conflicting evidence restricts his capacity for invention.

Wholesale Fabrication and Despair

Of course, the priest's claim that Achilles was in fact killed by Hector necessitates some further explanations, insofar as, in Homer's account, Achilles continues to live and do things, such as fight, which he could logically not have done were he dead. But Dio dispenses with his problem in a brilliant tour de force. Hence, although "Homer particularly wanted to make the death of Achilles disappear (μάλιστα μὲν οὖν ἐβούλετο "Ὀμηρος ἀφανίσει τὴν τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως τελευτήν) and create the impression that he did not die at Troy (ὡς οὐκ ἀποθανόντος ἐν Ἰλίῳ), he saw that this was impossible (τοῦτο δὲ ἐπεὶ ἀδύνατον ἑώρα), since the tradition prevailed and his tomb was being pointed out (τῆς φήμης ἐπικρατούσης καὶ τοῦ τάφου δεικνυμένου)." (104) Instead, he decided simply to suppress his death at Hector's hands, and make the opposite statement, that Hector was killed by Achilles. The entire ending of the *Iliad*, which details this event and its aftermath, is, to the priest, a complete mess of improbabilities:

Finally, Homer brings out Achilles (who was in fact already dead) and has him fight. But he doesn't have his weapons, since Hector has them—**for here Homer did permit one truth to be spoken**; he says that Thetis brought the arms made by Hephaestus from heaven, letting Achilles in this way rout the Trojans single-handed—a **ridicu-**

¹¹¹ *Iliad* 23.91; 24.76-7. Cf. Apollodorus, *Epitome* 5.5.

lous scene, where Homer has ignored all the other Achaeans, as if no one else was there. **And having dared to lie once about this, he distorts everything.** At this point he represents the gods as fighting with one another, **virtually acknowledging his utter disregard for the truth.** Moreover, **he recounts Achilles' heroic deeds in a very weak and implausible manner.** At one point the hero is fighting with a river, at another he is threatening Apollo and pursuing him—from all these things, one can see Homer's virtual *aporia*. For he is not so implausible or dull in the true episodes. (106-7)

τέλος δὲ προάγει ἤδη τεθνηκότα τὸν Ἀχιλλέα καὶ ποιεῖ μαχόμενον· οὐκ ὄντων δὲ ὄπλων, ἀλλὰ τοῦ Ἑκτορος ἔχοντος· ἐν τούτῳ <γὰρ> ἔλαβεν αὐτὸν ἐν τι τῶν ἀληθῶν ῥηθέν· ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ φησι κομίσει τὴν Θέτιν ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἥφαιστου γενόμενα ὄπλα· καὶ οὕτως δὴ γελοίως τὸν Ἀχιλλέα μόνον τρεπόμενον τοὺς Τρῶας, τῶν δὲ ἄλλων Ἀχαιῶν, ὥσπερ οὐδενὸς παρόντος, ἀπάντων ἐπελάθετο· ἅπαξ δὲ τολμήσας τοῦτο ψεύσασθαι πάντα συνέχεε. καὶ τοὺς θεοὺς ἐνταῦθα ποιεῖ μαχομένους ἀλλήλοις, σχεδὸν ὁμολογῶν ὅτι οὐδὲν αὐτῷ μέλει ἀληθείας. [107] πάνυ δὲ ἀσθενῶς καὶ ἀπιθάνως τὴν ἀριστείαν διελθῶν, ὅτε μὲν ποταμῷ μαχόμενον αὐτόν, ὅτε δὲ ἀπειλοῦντα Ἀπόλλωνι καὶ διώκοντα αὐτόν· ἐξ ὧν ἀπάντων ἰδεῖν ἔστι τὴν ἀπορίαν αὐτοῦ σχεδόν· οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἐν τοῖς ἀληθέσιν οὕτως ἀπίθανος οὐδὲ ἀηδής. (106-107)

The scene where Achilles finally kills Hector is similarly ridiculed— Hector circles the city in flight when he could have entered it, Achilles is unable to catch him, despite being the swiftest of men, all of the Achaeans are standing around as if watching a show, without helping, Athena intervenes pretending to be Deiphobus. Homer, according to the priest, has completely abandoned any confluence with the truth at this point,¹¹² since, in focusing on Achilles, who was already dead, he had given up any pretence of maintaining plausibility— everything else is told ridiculously (γελοίως), feebly and implausibly (ἀσθενῶς καὶ ἀπιθάνως), with no care for the truth (οὐδὲν

¹¹² Although there is one element of truth that has worked its way into this narrative—Achilles' lack of weapons and armor—since it has carried over from the Patroclus-episode.

αὐτῷ μέλει ἀληθείας); full-scale invention and fantasy have taken its place, and the whole episode is instanced as a sign of the poet's *aporia*. After this, Homer had nowhere else to go.

“When he reached this point, Homer gave up (εἰς τοῦτο δὲ προελθὼν ἀπέιπε λοιπόν), not knowing how to continue his work and being dissatisfied with his lies (οὐκ ἔχων ὅ,τι χρήσεται τῇ ποιήσει καὶ τοῖς ψεύσμασι δυσχεραίνων). He merely added some sort of funeral games, in a totally ridiculous way (τοῦτο πάνυ γελοίως), then the arrival of king Priam in the Greek camp at the tent of Achilles without the knowledge of any of the Achaeans (μηδενὸς αἰσθομένου τῶν Ἀχαιῶν), and the ransom of Hector.” (109)

As noted earlier, this strange stopping point raised Dio's suspicions of Homer's veracity—what of the death of Achilles, the capture of Troy, Memnon's arrival, the battle with the Amazons? He explains, “Homer, I believe, did not have the heart to depict Achilles, who had long been dead (οὐδὲ γὰρ ὑπέμεινεν οἶμαι πάλαι τεθνηκότα τὸν Ἀχιλλέα ποιεῖν πάλιν ἀναιρούμενον), as being slain again, or the defeated and routed as victorious, or the conquering city as being sacked.” Unfortunately, “those who came later, since they were deceived, and because the falsehood was generally accepted, henceforth wrote without misgiving (οἱ δὲ ὕστερον ἄτε ἐξηπατημένοι καὶ τοῦ ψεύδους ἰσχύοντος ἤδη θαρροῦντες ἔγραφον).” (110)

Conclusion

The final section of the *Trojan Oration* continues the narrative of the war to its conclusion, utilizing much of the argumentative methods we have looked at in this chapter, but in a somewhat looser, less text-tied fashion. The thrust is that the Trojans won, of course, but in the process, Dio continues to offer readings of traditionally attested events as evidence rather of his new thesis. I'm especially fond of his claim that

the late arrival of such heroes as Philoctetes and Neoptolemus demonstrate the precarious position of the Greeks at that time, who were so depleted that they were forced to resort to conscripting cripples and young boys (115). He also reads the well-known disasters that befell many of the heroes on their return to Greece as signs of their previous defeat rather than victory, since awful things usually happen to humiliated and weakened leaders coming home, not to triumphant ones.¹¹³ The most significant pieces of evidence, however, are the traditions concerning the Trojan migrations and colonization of the west—Helenus took over Epirus, Antenor ruled the Heneti, and Aeneas, of course “founded the greatest city of all (πόλιν ᾧκισε τὴν μεγίστην πασῶν).” (138)

“Which was more probable (εἰκόσ): that a vanquished people should sail to the land of their conquerors and reign among them, or that, on the contrary the victors should sail to the land of the conquered? Why didn’t Aeneas, Antenor, and Helenus, when Troy fell and their people fled, go anywhere else rather than Greece and Europe, or content themselves with occupying some place in Asia, rather than sailing straight to the land of those who had driven them out?” (138)¹¹⁴

In the end, Dio declares, in Aristotelian fashion: “What happened was something that was possible to have happened (ἀλλὰ τὸ γεγόμενον δυνατὸν γενέσθαι).” (139)

With his narrative concluded, Dio reiterates his diatribe against *doxa*, falsehood, and foolish people prone to being deceived with which the oration began. He adds,

¹¹³ “It is clear that Agamemnon was despised by his wife because of his defeat, that Aegisthus attacked and easily overcame him...the Argives would not have [allowed this] had Aegisthus slain an Agamemnon who had returned with all his power and glory after conquering Asia.” (132) I especially like the observation that the returned leaders’ weakness is displayed by the fact that none of Odysseus’ friends came to Penelope’s aid, “not even Nestor, though he was so close.” (134)

¹¹⁴ Dio conveniently invents a treaty between the Greeks and the Trojans, which permitted the Trojan victors to colonize anywhere except for “the Peloponnese, Boeotia, Crete, Ithaca, Phthia, or Euboea.” (122)

however, that he doesn't blame Homer for lying, since by doing so he prevented Greece from panicking and falling into disarray from fear of an Asian invasion, as they would have done had they realized how badly they had been defeated.¹¹⁵ Such propaganda, he claims, is common practice, and a pragmatic strategem (τὸ στρατήγημα): "We can pardon one who, being Greek, used every means to aid his countrymen (ἀνεμέσητον δὲ Ἑλληνα ὄντα τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ πάντα τρόπον ὠφελεῖν)." (147) But for Dio, living in a different era, it's time, however, to set the record straight: on the one hand, "the truth is worth something (τὸ δὲ ἀληθὲς οὐκ ὀλίγου ἄξιον)," and on the other, "the situation has changed (ἄλλ' οὐδὲν ἔστιν ἔτι τοιοῦτον), and there is no longer any fear of people from Asia ever invading Greece; for Greece is subject to others and so is Asia (ἢ τε γὰρ Ἑλλάς ὑφ' ἑτέροις ἐστὶν ἢ τε Ἀσία)." (150)

Although he rounds off the discourse with a brief harangue on how the Greeks should be thankful that the traditional story of the Trojan War was untrue, given all the impieties and outrages attributed to them during the sack, Dio's final apologetic remarks on Homer suddenly mute the sustained outrage that Dio had kept at a fever pitch throughout this long speech. Dio concedes not only that Homer's lies were understandable, but also that the crucial Greek-Asian dichotomy that traced its lineage back to the poet no longer had much relevance in the new world order. As I mentioned above in the beginning of the chapter, I agree with those who think that the Roman element in this speech is not nearly as significant as some would like to believe; nevertheless, I can't help but feel that the *Trojan*, like Strabo's *Geography*,

¹¹⁵ βούλομαι δὲ καὶ περὶ Ὀμήρου ἀπολογήσασθαι, ὡς οὐκ ἀνάξιον ὁμολογεῖν αὐτῷ ψευδομένῳ. πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ πολὺ ἐλάττω τὰ ψεύσματά ἐστι τῶν περὶ τοὺς θεούς· ἔπειτα ὠφελειάν τινα εἶχε τοῖς τότε Ἑλλησιν, ὅπως μὴ θορυβηθῶσιν, ἐὰν γένηται πόλεμος αὐτοῖς πρὸς τοὺς ἐκ τῆς Ἀσίας, ὥσπερ καὶ

openly acknowledges the Roman presence, and that this presence has in an oblique way, been one of the spurs to the work's creation. For Strabo, the Roman conquests activated a desire in him to preserve the cultural memory of the places now in danger of being forgotten under the dominion of new rulers, and this is one of the primary reasons he introduced so much antiquarian, especially Homeric, information in his *Geography*. Dio too seems to have been influenced by Rome, but in the opposite direction; the growing irrelevance of the ideologies and politics that brought the *Iliad* into existence has authorized him to perform the long delayed task of revealing the extent of fabrication and deception (for a good cause, of course) that went into its composition.

Beyond Refutation

Remember Herodotus' re-reading of the tale about the doves at Dodona, which we discussed in Chapter Two? Faced with a marvelous story involving speaking black birds mandating the foundation of oracles in Libya and Dodona, he discovers a solution in a version of the same story told by the Egyptians—pirates kidnapped two priestesses from Egypt and sold one in each of the two countries mentioned above. By positing that the two versions are telling the same story, and proposing an equivalence between the doves and the women—the foreign language of the priestesses seemed like the twittering of birds, the blackness of the birds signifies the Egyptian provenance of the women—Herodotus has not only discovered the real story but accounted for how the other versions arose.

προσεδοκᾶτο. ἀνεμέσητον δὲ Ἕλληνα ὄντα τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ πάντα τρόπον ὠφελεῖν. (147)

This bravura reading is mentioned by Theon (Herodotus is described as ἐξηγούμενός τε τὸ μυθολόγημα) as an example of a more advanced and difficult variant of rhetorical ἀνασκευή, which is particularly effective when applied to “mythical narrations told by the poets and historians about gods and heroes (πρὸς τὰς μυθικὰς διηγήσεις τὰς τε ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν καὶ τὰς ἱστορικῶν λεγόμενας περὶ θεῶν καὶ ἡρώων).” “Not only to refute such *muthologiai* (τὸ δὲ μὴ μόνον ἀνασκευάζειν τὰς τοιαύτας μυθολογίας), but also to show from where such a story arose (ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅθεν παρερρήκεν ὁ τοιοῦτος λόγος ἀποφαίνειν), is a matter for more polished skill (τελεωτέρας ἔξεως) than most possess.” (95). Aside from Herodotus, he mentions as examples Plato’s interpretation of the story of Oreithyia and Boreas in the *Phaedrus*, various instances in Ephorus, and “the entire book of Palaeophatus the Peripatetic, entitled *On Unbelievable Tales* (Περὶ τῶν ἀπίστων), in which he explains such things (ἐπιλύεται).” (96)¹¹⁶

None of these examples involves Homer. The process was more easily applied to what we now call myths, whose provenance was unknown and whose parameters were more restricted. Dio’s treatment in *Nessus* falls precisely into this category, where the implication is that somewhere along the line, the mundane, straightforward tale became distorted, mythologized with fantastic and improbable elements. With Homer the task was much more difficult, because it involved coordinating the relation between so many more narrative details, as well as accounting for why he had gotten the story wrong. Dio’s brilliance in the *Trojan Oration* arose from his decision to read Homer’s text as the written transcription of an oral, improvisatory, testimonial narra-

¹¹⁶ Herodotus 2.54-7; Plato, *Phaedrus* 229c; Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F 31, 34; for Palaeophatus, see Stern (1996), which includes Festa’s Teubner text from *Mythographi graeci*, v. 3.2.

tive. By envisioning Homer in this way, he was able to make a series of equations between narrative decisions and the obfuscatory and deceptive practices of liars, exploiting and erasing the differences between poetic, literary storytelling, with its concern for entertainment and a straightforward rhetorical *narratio* presenting the facts of a case.¹¹⁷

In the process, he accounts for and solves some of the most puzzling inconsistencies in the *Iliad*, displays a deep and detailed knowledge of the poem's structure, biases, and composition, incorporates his tried and true denunciations of human blindness and ignorance, and most importantly is consistently persuasive. This last point should be underlined, because whatever one might think of Dio's level of seriousness in composing and delivering this speech, there can be no denying that his arguments and method of inquiry are remarkably similar to much subsequent Homeric scholarship. Olivieri called Dio a Lachmann *avant la lettre*, and G.A. Seeck has pointed out how close Dio's methods (if not presuppositions) are to the Analysts of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹¹⁸

But that is another story. Perhaps Dio's reputation would suffer, not be enhanced, by his association with the dry and tedious work of modern Homeric scholarship. To return to the advanced refutations such as Herodotus' retelling of the Dodona doves, I want to emphasize the creative and inventive thrust of these narratives—by passing well beyond the mere dismantling of an unbelievable narrative, these readings don't

¹¹⁷ Seeck (1990), 106, sees this as Dio's great achievement: his "insights into the structural difficulties of the *Iliad*."

¹¹⁸ Olivieri (1898), 593, : "The critical method continuously adopted by Dio...is that which Niebuhr and Schnegle initiated in the study of Roman history...at its base it is

merely reduce a fantastic story to a bare-bones mundane rationalization. They introduce a sort of parallel universe, not completely fabricated or posited, but dependent on, yet supplementary to, the original. They come up with something new by attending to and imaginatively reconstructing the gaps and interstices of previous narratives. By doing so, they multiply the narrative—in the end, as any perusal of the ancient literature on the legendary times will reveal, they have not replaced the old with the new, but brought a new variation into being.

that which Lachmann and his followers introduced into Homeric studies.”; Seeck (1990), 98.

Conclusion

FICTIONS OF HOMER

Phantasia, a woman from Memphis, wrote an *Iliad* before Homer, and left it at the temple there. Homer only recovered it later from Phanites, the temple scribe.

—Ptolemy the Quail, *A New History for the Sake of Wide Learning*

When Dio supplements or even rewrites Homeric narrative in *Chryseïs* and the *Trojan Oration*, he does not do so simply by fiat. Rather, he makes sure to explain his reasoning process and the means by which the story itself, or its author, authorizes his interpretative excursions. This explicitness allowed us to follow along with Dio in his role as a *reader* of Homer; we see precisely how Dio's imagination actually "fills in" Homer's narrative and descriptive gaps, and we noted the relation of this act of constructive criticism with the principles of historiography, ethical thought, rhetorical education, and mainstream Homeric criticism.

Dio theorizes a Homer who actively impels the reader to make inferential leaps; in *Chryseïs* he imagines the poet as specifically expecting that his more skilled readers would engage in such activity, while in the *Trojan* he forces such readings on Homer by accusing him of being a liar, whose lies themselves urge the reader to analyze them for the truth. In similar fashion Strabo, following in the footsteps of Thucydides, imagines Homer as a faultless historian, whose concern for accuracy and the truth enables the geographer to extrapolate information based on his verses. The idea that the author himself would be intentionally advocating these "inferential walks" seems to take us even further from a proper literary-critical approach to texts, yet there has been a recent spate of scholarly interest in the way authors direct these flights of fancy on the part of

their readers in their writing, as well as in theorizing how readers go through this process of visualizing and imagining the elements left out by the author.¹

I have been emphasizing the creative, productive nature of ancient readings of Homer—how they use the text as a springboard for their own inventive and imaginative interpretations. But there is a way in which the continuous concern for probable narrative, for reconstructing the likely activities and motivations of characters, for the proper maintenance of a coherent and consistent narrative universe, for strict correlation to actual historical and geographical knowledge, suggests a process not only of creative interpretation, but fictional production. In these last few pages, I want to offer some possible points of contact, and some starting points for further reflection.

Dio's *Trojan Oration* is one of the chief representatives of a long line of anti-Homeric literature, which took issue with Homer's accurate representation of the Trojan War.² We can trace the tantalizing suggestions of these writers following in the footsteps of Zoilus: enticing lesser-known figures such as Timon of Pleius, who coined the term *Homêrapatê*, Apollodorus the Erythraean (*FGrH* 422 F 1), who said that *Homerum mendacia scripturum*, and Daphitas of Telmessus, the 3rd century B.C.E. poet and grammarian, who "wrote with reference to Homer and his poetry that he had lied."³ Ptolemaeus Chennus (the Quail), that intriguing figure of the first century C.E., wrote both an *Anthomêros*, of which we know nothing, and the *New History for the*

¹ For example, Scarry (1999), Schwenger (1999).

² Wolff (1932).

³ γεγραφώς περὶ Ὁμήρου καὶ τῆς αὐτοῦ ποιήσεως ὅτι ἐψεύσατο (*Suppl. Hell.* 371 = *Suda* s.v. Δαφίδας).

sake of *Erudition*, which rewrites much of Greek legendary tradition and is preserved in Photius' summary.⁴

The *New History* represents perhaps the most famous and influential form taken by these rational critiques of Homer—new narratives attempting to replace or displace the *Iliad*. In addition to Ptolemaeus' work, the so-called "Troy romances" (the *Ephemeris belli Troiani* of Dictys Cretensis and the *Acta diurna belli Troiani* of Dares Phrygius), Philostratus' *Heroicus*, and Hegesianax of Alexandria Troas' *Troica* all offer narratives that run counter to Homer's, and purport to tell "the true story of the Trojan War."

What unites these texts, however, are the pains they take to authenticate their accounts through new and privileged sources of information, with varying levels of complexity: Philostratus asserts that he was told his version by a farmer who was acquainted with the ghost of Protesilaus who haunts the region near his fields; the narrative of Dictys, who purports to be a Greek eyewitness of the events at Troy (as does Dares, though from the Trojan side) is made credible by an amazingly complicated tale of discovery and translation related in the prologue; Hegesianax apparently wrote under the pseudonym of Kephalon of Gergis; and the most peculiar tale is the anecdote related by Ptolemaeus Chennus in his *New History* that forms the epigraph to this section. The obsession with finding ways to authenticate one's own Trojan history appears even in Lucian's parody of these narratives in *The Dream, or the Rooster*, where the rooster claims to have been Euphorbus the Trojan in a previous life, and offers the incredulous interlocutor his own version of what happened in the battles—Homer, he adds, was a camel in Bactria at the time.

⁴ Suda s.v. Πτολεμαῖος Ἀλεξανδρεὺς; Photius, *Bibliotheca* 146a-153b (190): Περὶ τῆς εἰς πολυμαθίαν καινῆς ἱστορίας. See Tomberg (1968) and, more briefly, Bow-

Conceptually, this tradition of rewriting Homer can be traced back to Herodotus' excursus on Helen in Egypt, which set the standard for criticizing Homeric accuracy.

Herodotus himself had neatly dealt with two central dilemmas faced by Homeric revisionists—how does one command belief in one's own account of Troy and, at the same time, wrest control of the truth away from the canonical sway of Homer? In his brief account, Herodotus shows us two ways to do so—the positing of a more authoritative source (here Egyptian priests) providing the 'true' story, and the formulation of a reason why Homer had offered a different version (because it wasn't as fitting, *euprepês*, for epic, as the one he used).

As we saw in the *Trojan Oration*, Dio follows Herodotus' conceptual schema; he conjures up an Egyptian priest as his source, and also provides an explanation for why Homer got the story wrong. But Dio privileges the latter over the former; the very explicitness with which he details Homer's errors and discovers the true story behind those errors is what makes the *Trojan* so valuable for our study. In the rest of the rewritings, however, the concern for why Homer had given another story required less and less explanation; Philostratus, Lucian, and Ptolemaeus deal with the issue humorously but summarily, eager to get on with their retellings, while the conceits of Dictys and Dares, purporting to be written long before Homer's birth, elegantly circumvent any need to mention the poet. In essence, the explicit argumentation defending the supplementary activity, which was so important to Strabo, Dio and our other authors, drops out of these new texts, which rely more and more solely on their authorizing fictions. But just as in ancient poetic texts, anyone with knowledge of the depths of Homeric criticism can occasionally see the traces of the debates and reasoning of the scho-

ersock (1994), 23-7. Among many other pieces of information, he claimed that "Odys-

liasts and intellectuals, providing the structural skeleton for these novel accounts of the Homeric past.

This assertion of a new truth, bolstered by an apparatus of confirmatory devices, is a phenomenon that runs throughout the literature of this period, irrespective of genre, and deserves serious investigation. But it seems no accident that the Homeric retellings recall the ancient Greek novel in their atmosphere, their concerns, and sometimes their plots, and indeed modern scholars often group them together as para-novelistic texts that stand in some unquantifiable relation to the canonical works of Greek fiction. Many of the novels devise ingenious ways in which to authenticate their narratives; and throughout they ground their stories historically, geographically, and carefully construct a plausible and consistent world of actions and characters, cultivating a concern for credibility that even surpasses that of ancient historians. These ancient ways of thinking about the production of narrative are identical to those involved in reading it, and we should be exploring more vigorously the connections between the two. Philostratus' *Heroicus*, for example, which consistently foregrounds issues of belief, the supernatural, authenticating devices, probability, all in the service of Homeric criticism, would be an ideal testing ground to address the nature of fiction in antiquity and its relation to the creative aspect of historical exegesis. In this final way, perhaps, the inventive nature of Homeric supplementation might be brought into contact with the vexed problem of ancient fictional production.

seus was first called Οὔτις because he had big ears (ὠτᾶ).” (147a)

Appendix One

ARCAIOLOGIA, ANTIQUARIANISM & ANCIENT HISTORIOGRAPHY

Chapter Two examined *archaiologia*, or the ancient study of the heroic age. I purposely avoided using the term antiquarianism, even though it is the more common term, because of the negative overtones it possesses. Here I want to briefly mention some of the reasons for antiquarianism's poor reputation and highlight the resulting scholarly neglect into which it has fallen.

In 1950 Arnaldo Momigliano traced back to antiquity his highly influential distinction between the historical research of the distant past, which he called antiquarianism, and contemporary, political historiography of the kind exemplified by Thucydides, Polybius, Sallust, and Tacitus.¹ In antiquity, 'history' properly termed came to mean only this latter type, and "authors of local history, chronography, genealogy, erudite dissertations, ethnographical works, whatever their merits, did not rank as true historians."² Nevertheless, he claimed, they were still engaged in historical activity,³ and rep-

¹ Momigliano (1950).

² Momigliano (1990), 59. First formulated in Momigliano (1950); cf. id. (1961-2) and (1990), ch. 3. Naturally, even Momigliano recognized the over-generalizing nature of such a demarcation; he acknowledged, for example, that local history, or horography, combined both contemporary and antiquarian historical methods, and universal historians such as Ephorus of Cyme or Livy, who extensively treated archaic times, also straddled the divide.

³ A judgment shared by Jacoby (1909), who, in laying out his proposal for what would become *FGrH*, included virtually any ancient author writing on the past in his catholic understanding of 'historian'. As Murray (1968), 220-1, notes: "Jacoby was right in the central insight behind his program for *FGrH*: it is impossible to consider Greek historiography as an entity, unless ethnography, mythography, local history, geography, etc., are included."

resented a branch of intellectual inquiry into the past that was to remain separated from political history until the nineteenth century.

Despite this delineation, by the foremost scholar of historiography in this century, of an antiquarian history quite distinct from contemporary political history, the study of ancient historiography has relegated the former to the sidelines of scholarship and been almost exclusively concerned with the latter.⁴ As Tim Cornell laments: "Modern students of Greek and Roman historiography have...concentrated exclusively on the writing of political history...Antiquarian research is either ignored or relegated to a footnote."⁵ The situation is rendered all the more ironic when we recall Momigliano's observation that contemporary historiography in antiquity was characterized by its reliance on oral testimony, while the practice of using material remains and written documents as evidence came under the sphere of the antiquarians.⁶ In one very significant sense, then—the type of evidence they use—the antiquarians are much closer to modern

⁴ Fornara (1983) devotes all but twenty pages of his survey to contemporary political history. Even illustrious antiquarians such as Aristotle have inspired little attention. The dearth of interest in this aspect of ancient historiographical practice is all the more striking given the situation in the study of early modern historiography, where studies of antiquarian activity abound, spurred on, no doubt, by Momigliano's own investigations.

⁵ Cornell (1995), 2-3. The few scholars who do look at antiquarian history today are primarily interested in analyzing the possible political motives and implications involved in writing or rewriting the history of the mythic period; to study this practice as historiography *per se*, as a method of seeking the past, remains relatively unexamined. This is not to deny that all historiography is in some way implicated in contemporary ideological discourse, but to claim that this is not the *only* reason antiquarians write. Jacoby himself, in his study of the local Attic historians had emphasized the political nature of the treatises, but he was careful to note that the *Attheis* were fundamentally *historical* documents, concerned with their subject matter as well as contemporary political ideologies (Jacoby (1949), 133).

⁶ Momigliano (1961-2), 212.

ancient historians than are Thucydides and Herodotus. Why, then, has the ancient study of the distant past so often been denigrated and ignored?⁷

The problem, as Sarah Humphreys has said, is one of narrative frameworks. Most classicists are still bound by the model of “a Whig story of progress towards a 19th century positivist model of historiography”⁸ beginning with Hecataeus and culminating in Thucydides, whose choice to focus on contemporary history, as well as his insistence on privileging the reports of reliable witnesses and autopsy become the benchmarks for historical inquiry.⁹ *Archaialogia*, which looked into the *distant* past and for that very reason had to rely on other sources of evidence, could then hardly qualify as true historical research. In addition, as part of the progress to true history, proper ancient historians were supposed to have clearly defined a *spatium historicum* as a legitimate area of historical inquiry, as distinct from the *spatium mythicum* of legend; was not ancient antiquarianism, then, in its concern to create history out of what was simply *myth*, a fundamentally unhistorical way of thinking?

The idea that ancient historians somehow recognized an ontological difference between a *spatium mythicum* and a *spatium historicum* has proven remarkably difficult

⁷ Finley (1986), 31: after Thucydides, “serious Greek historical writing was about contemporary history.” Thomas (1992), 112: “Serious historians in the ancient world tended to concentrate on the history of their own times.” Were the historians of the distant past simply “not serious”? How can we know this?

⁸ Humphreys (1997), 208. She is primarily concerned with Hellenistic historiography, where the Thucydidean benchmark means that “later historians can only be treated as examples of decadence or as attempting to reverse the decline and return to Thucydidean standards.” Cf. Gabba (1981), who gives a good overview of post-classical historical work, despite relying heavily on the model of post-Thucydidean decline.

⁹ Thuc. 1.22; 5.26, where he explains his personal relationship to the war of which he is writing. So also Herodotus puts a premium on *seeing* things; cf. the discussion in Verdin (1971), 251.

to dislodge, despite numerous demonstrations of its inaccuracy.¹⁰ The argument depends on a fundamental misunderstanding of the ancient opposition of myth and history; it imagines that they each represent actual states of reality—a mythic era different in kind from the historical, human one that followed it. It is then assumed that ancient historians had to establish a chronological point separating these eras in order to demarcate their proper area of inquiry; evidence is located in Herodotus' distinction between Polycrates of Samos—"the first of the so-called human generation"—and Minos of Crete,¹¹ his decision to begin his history with Croesus of Lydia, and Ephorus' choice of the Return of the Heraclidae, traditionally the end of the heroic age, as his starting point.¹²

This position, however, is clearly contradicted by the countless times where Herodotus and Ephorus discuss the heroes and the heroic age in perfectly historical, human terms,¹³ and by the fact that, in antiquity, "historians could, and did, write about any-

¹⁰ Jacoby (1909) introduced the terms, but not the theory. On the persistence of this concept, cf. van Groningen (1953), ch. 8; Vandiver (1991), 146: "[In 3.122.2 Herodotus] indicates that the heroes were a different race of beings"; Canfora (1991), who succinctly summarizes the position.

¹¹ Hdt. 3.122.2: "For Polycrates was the first of the Greeks of whom we know (πρῶτος τῶν ἡμεῖς ἴδμεν) to aim to rule the sea, except for Minos of Cnossus and any others who before him may have ruled the sea; of the so-called human generation Polycrates was the first (τῆς δὲ ἀνθρωπιῆς λεγομένης γενεῆς Πολυκράτης πρῶτος).

¹² Ephorus' beginning: *FGrH* 70 T 8. Fornara (1983), 8-9 claims that Ephorus "undoubtedly followed the guidelines of an established tradition" in making the Return of the Heraclidae the boundary between historical and mythic time.

¹³ Nickau (1990) points out that Herodotus has unambiguously accepted Minos as a historical figure earlier at 1.171.5, a fact that goes unnoticed by the many scholars who believe Herodotus more 'skeptical' of tradition than Thucydides, who explicitly treats Minos as an historical figure (1.4); other examples include the excursus on Helen of Troy at 2.112-20, and 7.20.2, where Herodotus groups the Trojan, Mysian, and Persian expeditions among "those of which we know." Graf (1993), 123 puts it best: "For although Herodotus' phrase "the human era" may imply the germ of the notion of myth as something essentially different from history...elsewhere he, like all later historians, distinguished myth from history solely on the basis of the degree to which it could be veri-

thing from the creation of the world on...there were no out-of-bounds for history."¹⁴

When ancient historians oppose *muthos* and *historia*, they are not talking about mythic and historical eras, or even mythic as opposed to historical stories; they are differentiating the mythic and historical *content* of traditional stories. Their belief in the basic historicity of such events as the Trojan War or the voyage of the Argo conflicted with their conviction that these stories contained fantastic—mythic—aspects that simply could *not* have happened as represented. Herodotus and Ephorus chose to start their histories later because they were aware,¹⁵ along with many historians, of how difficult the distillation of the historical from the mythic was.¹⁶ In this sense the concerns were epistemological, not ontological. No one doubted that some truth lay beneath the layers of falsehood, but the question was how to determine which elements were true and which were false, *muthos* and *historia*.

Investigations of the heroic age required different historiographical procedures than political historiography; but just because *archaiologia* could not rely on direct testimony does not mean that it was 'unhistorical'. "The *archaiologia* was for the Greeks no retelling of sagas or guesswork but a methodical science."¹⁷

fied." See further von Leyden (1950-1), Wiseman (1979), 145-6, Hunter (1982), 12, 87ff. Ephorus also often writes about events before the point at which his universal history had officially begun: see Humphreys (1997), 218 n.46; Fornara (1983), 9. Ephorus treats the Trojan War, for example, in F 11-14; cf. F 31. On Ephorus' use of poetry as a source, see the excellent article by Bruno Sunseri (1997).

¹⁴ Feeney (1991), 257.

¹⁵ Of course, the precise demarcation points differed from historian to historian, and, as we have seen, historians were not always so diligent in adhering to their own programmatic statements.

¹⁶ Hecataeus' laconic statement—"the stories of the Greeks are many and laughable" (*FGrH* 1 F 1)—is echoed in Diodorus Siculus' (4.1) lament, some four hundred years later, that a reconciliation of all the stories about the heroic age is virtually impossible.

¹⁷ Bickerman (1952), 70.

Appendix Two

STRABO AND THE STOIC WORSHIP OF HOMER

If Strabo views Homer as a historian and geographer, as I argued in Chapter Three, why has mainstream opinion invariably held that “Strabo’s view on poetry is clearly a moralistic one” in keeping with his Stoic views, in which Homer was revered as the receptacle of ancient wisdom or the ideal model of the Stoic sage?¹ Well, the argument goes, doesn’t Strabo begin the whole discussion in a context that has nothing to do with historiography, contesting Eratosthenes’ thesis that every poet aims at entertainment, not instruction, in the language of moral and ethical education?

The ancients held a different view [from Eratosthenes]. They regarded poetry as a sort of primary philosophy, which was supposed to introduce us to life from our childhood, and teach (διδάσκουσα) us about character, emotion, and action (ἦθη καὶ πάθη καὶ πράξεις) in a pleasurable way (μεθ’ ἡδονῆς). My own school, the Stoics, actually said that only the wise man could be a poet. This is why Greek communities give children their first education through poetry (πρώτιστα διὰ τῆς ποιητικῆς παιδεύουσιν), not for simple ‘entertainment’ of course, but for moral improvement (οὐ ψυχαγωγίας χάριν δήπουθεν ψιλῆς, ἀλλὰ σωφρονισμοῦ). (1.2.3)

This analysis of poetry’s role as a teacher of ethics² quickly segues into one which focuses rather on its ability to teach other sorts of information. In a long discussion in 1.2.3-5, Strabo goes beyond a mere attribution of geographical knowledge, and claims that Homer “was experienced in many subjects, including generalship, agriculture, and

¹ Schenkeveld (1976), 57. This article has had considerable influence. Cf. Gabba (1983), 10.

rhetoric.”³ The combination, in rapid sequence, of the familiar tropes of poet as moral educator and teacher of τέχναι, coming soon after Strabo’s seemingly obsessive attributions of all sorts of geographical knowledge to Homer, have suggested to many that Strabo, in line with his Stoicism, considered Homer a source of infallible and comprehensive knowledge.

On reading Strabo’s remarks, one can’t help being reminded of the common practice of assigning all sorts of practical knowledge to Homer—dependent on the notion of the ‘Homeric encyclopedia’—that we outlined in its earliest stages in Chapter One. Like Xenophon’s *Niceratus*, or Plato’s *Ion*, Strabo argues for Homeric poetry as a source of information on matters of farming, military strategy, and public speaking. Such ideas were still popular just before, during, and well after Strabo’s time; one thinks of Philodemus’ *On the Good King according to Homer*, which sought to locate appropriate advice for rulers in the words of the poet, Polyaeus’ *Strategies*, which devotes a preface to Homeric military matters, and the *On Homer* attributed to Plutarch, which manages to locate the seeds of all philosophical doctrines, sciences, and learning in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.⁴ Homer’s role as the founder of the ῥητορικὴ τέχνη likewise has a long and distinguished history, and Strabo devotes considerable space arguing this point.⁵

² See Aly (1957), 376-85 for a discussion of possible sources. Strabo cites Aristoxenus, the Peripatetic musical theorist, as an authority on this matter in the passage immediately following the one quoted, and once again Horace expresses similar ideas.

³ τὸ πολλῶν ὑπάρξαι τόπων ἔμπειρον ἢ στρατηγίας ἢ γεωργίας ἢ ῥητορικῆς. Central to this conception is the rhetorical notion of *prosopopoiia* – if Homer can “introduce men speaking in the roles of orators, or generals, or in other roles that exhibit the accomplishments of excellence...how then can a man imitate (μίμοιτο) life if he has no experience of it?”

⁴ The best overview is Buffière (1956): on ‘Les devoirs du chef’, 347-9; ‘L’art oratoire’, 349-54; ‘Homère, stratège et tacticien’, 358-9. On Philodemus’ fascinating text, see Asmis (1991) who provides a translation, brief commentary and comprehensive bibliography; Polyaeus, *Strategemata* 1-3; on the *De Homero*, see the brand new edition and

But despite their similarities, all of these texts are actually quite different in flavor, in ambition, and ultimately, in their view of Homer. Strabo is no exception. While he spends an inordinate amount of time and energy demonstrating Homer's experience and knowledge of the world, he is not trying to demonstrate Homer's geographical infallibility or omniscience, but only that he was the first geographer. This claim requires of course proving that Homer was interested in geographical matters, and to show this, Strabo has to establish that Homer described a reasonably comprehensive array of geographical material. But this doesn't mean that he is to be grouped with those who believed Homer to be the source of all wisdom;⁶ although Strabo argues against Eratosthenes' refusal to grant Homer πολυμάθεια, he specifically adds that "to seek to 'invest' (περιποιεῖν) Homer" with "every art and all knowledge" (πᾶν μάθημα καὶ πᾶσαν τέχνην) should be regarded as "characteristic of a man whose zeal exceeds the proper

commentary of Hilgruber (1994), as well as the annotated translation of Keaney and Lamberton (1996).

⁵ Cf. Russell (1981), 123-4 for a brief discussion. Dio Chrysostom's *Nestor* (57) is a short piece exploiting this point of view, while the two fascinating and rarely studied works *On Figured Speeches* found in the corpus of Dionysius of Halicarnassus use Homeric speeches as examples of complicated types of misdirectional rhetorical ploys. Ps.-Plutarch in the *De Homero*, of course, makes Homer the founder of rhetoric, along with everything else.

⁶ It should be added that this group is not necessarily Stoic in affiliation. Long (1992) has convincingly argued that Stoic allegory of Homer was aimed at uncovering the philosophy of archaic times; like Strabo, they believed that philosophers of ancient times could only express themselves via poetry, metaphor and mythical language. This required them to read this language backwards, as it were, to uncover the original philosophical thought. In general the practice of labelling as Stoic anyone who practiced allegorical or even Euhemerist interpretation (e.g., Crates, Polybius, Ps.-Heraclitus, Cornutus, Strabo, etc.) fails to understand the variety of opinions within Stoicism, the popularity of these methods across the philosophical spectrum, and the general eclecticism of most ancient writers.

limit." (1.2.3) Strabo is not attributing *all* wisdom to Homer; rather the knowledge that he assigns to Homer is that of an illustrious predecessor.⁷

But while Strabo has a more restrained idea of Homeric knowledge than some of his colleagues, the confusion caused by his outlining, in 1.2.3-6, a theoretical position in many respects utterly incompatible with the position he takes up in subsequent sections, is quite genuine. As Anna Maria Biraschi has shown, in a detailed study of this part of the *Prolegomena*, Strabo's basically 'philosophical justifications' of a Homer who writes "for the sake of moral improvement (σωφρονισμοῦ χάριν)," are not sufficient to defend his use of Homer later on, because for Strabo "Homer is not the ideal of the Stoic sage who appears in certain passages of the *Prolegomena*, but rather the first historian-geographer of Greece."⁸ What is remarkable is how quickly the moral and philosophical apparatus is abandoned; after the aforementioned discussion of the origins of myth in 1.2.9, there is no more talk of Homer's value as ethical instruction or improvement.

⁷ In a similar fashion, Strabo clearly thought it ridiculous to assume that everything, even non-fantastic episodes such as the battle with the suitors, happened in the *Odyssey* exactly as described. (1.2.11)

⁸ Biraschi (1984), 152. This is not to say that Strabo's discussion is not coherent taken on its own; as Biraschi shows, the ideas laid out reflect the popularity of debates about the nature of the ἀγαθὸς ἀνὴρ at this time, as well as the ἀρετὴ ποιητοῦ. Following Floratos (1972), 60, she sees Strabo's position as possessing affinities to that of the oldest Stoics, emphasizing the unity of wisdom and the ties between philosophy, poetry, and science.

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