

Oral Poetry Theory and Neoanalysis in Homeric Research

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SINCE THE Second World War, Homeric scholarship has taken two different courses, one in America and England and the other in most parts of Europe, particularly the German-speaking countries. In the former the theory of oral poetry propounded by Milman Parry has been predominant, while on the continent the approach which probably contributed most to Homeric research has been neoanalysis.¹ Fortunately, the time of separate development is now over: several treatises on oral poetry theory have been written in Germany,² and neoanalysis has increasingly been taken notice of in America and Great Britain.³ In spite of this welcome development, no systematic comparison of the two theories and their results has as yet been made. It is only in a special area, the battle scenes of the *Iliad*, that such a comparison of the methods of the two approaches exists: Bernard Fenik has provided an important and fair examination from the point of view of oral poetry theory.⁴ I shall attempt here to confront the two approaches with each other on a general level. In this brief space, however, the examination is bound to be rather cursory. I propose first to summarize the main points of the two theories; then to compare the methods applied; and finally to discuss the respective conclusions about the main issues of Homeric scholarship. I shall give particular consideration throughout to the form of the large-scale epic and to the question of oral versus written composition.

¹ Cf. Alfred Heubeck, "Homeric Studies Today. Results and Prospects," in *Homer: Tradition and Invention*, ed. B. C. Fenik (Leiden 1978) 1ff; and Heubeck, *Die homerische Frage* (Darmstadt 1974) 40ff, 130ff.

² See Joachim Latacz, ed., *Homer, Tradition und Neuerung* (Wege der Forschung 463 [Darmstadt 1979]).

³ I may mention Mark Edward Clark and William D. E. Coulson, "Memnon and Sarpedon," *MusHelv* 35 (1978) 65ff; and Malcolm Willcock, "The Funeral Games of Patroclus," *BICS* 20 (1973) 1ff, and "Antilochos in the *Iliad*," in *Mélanges Édouard Delebecque* (Aix-en-Provence 1983) 477ff.

⁴ Bernard Fenik, *Typical Battle Scenes in the Iliad* (*Hermes Einzelschr.* 21 [1968]) 231ff.

I

I begin by giving a summary of the two theories. The two approaches have completely different starting-points. In oral poetry theory the first thing to be examined is the epic language, whereas neoanalysis starts from the thematic motifs found in the epics. Milman Parry began by examining the traditional epithets used by 'Homer' and investigated the laws that determine their use. In doing field-work in Yugoslavia, where he explored the oral heroic poetry of the Serbian *guslars*, Parry and his collaborators obtained a general view of this poetic tradition, which survives to the present day. In investigating poetic epithets, Parry arrived at valuable results for Homeric scholarship by means of analogy. It appeared to be confirmed that the large number of formulas in the language of the Homeric epics is characteristic of an oral poetic tradition, in which the singer is obliged to improvise when presenting traditional themes of mythology in metrical language.⁵ In the tradition of oral poetry, mythological themes may have existed for centuries, as A. B. Lord and other scholars have pointed out. It is only the specific chance version of the performance that can be called the singer's own achievement. Each time the singer delivers a song on a certain subject he produces a version different from all others that came before it or after it. The singer is not conscious of producing a new version. The same technique of oral delivery is always used, and there is no original version.⁶

The devices of this technique include not only epic formulas (*i.e.*, groups of words that are often repeated), but also the repetition of entire verses. Another characteristic feature of the technique of oral poetry is the recurrence of typical scenes or basic themes (which in German can be called *Erzählshablonen*) such as arrival, eating, arming, battle scenes, etc. A. B. Lord called them simply 'themes'. These events recur in very different narrative contexts. They are not necessarily composed of the same formulaic elements of language. As regards their content, however, they are in most cases narrated according to the same pattern.

According to this theory, not even the *Weltbild* of the epics can have any individual features: rather, the picture of the world is that of the feudal aristocratic society to which these epics belong.

⁵ See *The Making of Homeric Verse. The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*, ed. Adam Parry (Oxford 1971).

⁶ A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1960) 99ff.

Neoanalysis, in contrast, is mainly concerned with the history of motifs.⁷ According to this approach, certain motifs found in Homer were taken from earlier poetry, and the constellations of persons as well as plots that appeared in certain earlier poetry decisively influenced the poetic narrative of the extant epics. One of the main differences between the principles of oral poetry theory and neoanalysis is that neoanalytic scholars do not assume that the main contents of, say, the *Iliad* had been handed down by tradition for several centuries before this epic was written down. Instead, they think that the poetic composition is original, with many of the motifs and elements of plot having been taken from several epic contexts which can still be identified. Neoanalytic scholars do not believe that there was a stock of motifs apart from the typical scenes (or 'themes', in Lord's terminology) such as eating, arrival, arming, etc. However, they think that there is an essential difference between the adoption of motifs in early Greek epic poetry and such borrowings in later literature. The original use of these motifs (*i.e.*, the contexts in which they were originally used) can still be made out because the motifs are not thoroughly assimilated to their new context. Neoanalytic research mainly concentrates on the so-called Cyclic epics, which deal with the Trojan War in its entirety.⁸ Summaries and fragments of these Cyclic epics are extant. Although these poems are thought to have been composed after Homer, neoanalytic scholars think that a great part of their contents had been delivered orally long before the Homeric epics. Their record in writing may be post-Homeric.

One of the main theses of neoanalysis concerns the invention of the *Iliad* as a whole. We shall proceed from this thesis as a starting-point. The central event of the *Iliad* is the death of Patroclus, who loses his life by going into battle in place of Achilles, wearing Achilles' armour, in order to avert the defeat of the Achaeans. He is consequently killed by Hector. Achilles avenges his friend although he knows that once Hector is killed, his own death by Paris will be inescapable. According to neoanalysts, this story is no traditional

⁷ Cf. W. Kullmann, "Zur Methode der Neoanalyse in der Homerforschung," *WS N.F.* 15 (1981) 5ff.

⁸ Cf. J. T. Kakridis, *Ἵλληρικὴ Ἔρευνα* (Athens 1944) and *Homeric Researches* (Lund 1949); H. Pestalozzi, *Die Achilleis als Quelle der Ilias* (Erlenbach/Zurich 1945); A. Heubeck, "Studien zur Struktur der Ilias," in *Gymnasium Fridericianum. Festschrift zur Feier des 200-jährigen Bestehens des Hum. Gymn. Erlangen* (Erlangen 1950) 17ff; W. Schadewaldt, "Einblick in die Erfindung der Ilias," in *Von Homers Welt und Werk*⁴ (Stuttgart 1965) 155ff; W. Kullmann, "Ein vorhomerisches Motiv im Ilias-Proömium," *Philologus* 99 (1955) 167ff; *Die Quellen der Ilias* (*Hermes Einzelschr.* 14 [1960]); and *supra* n.7.

myth, but an imitation of a narrative known to us from one of the Cyclic epics, the *Aethiopsis*, which in its core must be pre-Homeric. In this epic, Memnon, the king of the Ethiopians, comes to the Trojans' aid in the tenth year of the war. In connection with this event, it is told that Antilochus, Nestor's son, who is another friend of Achilles, is killed by Memnon while trying to rescue his father from a dangerous situation in the battle. Consequently Achilles enters the lists. He had previously abstained from fighting against Memnon because Thetis had prophesied that he would die if he killed Memnon. He now takes revenge upon Memnon for the death of his friend Antilochus; shortly afterward he is killed by Paris with an arrow-shot, near the Scaean gate, as prophesied by his mother.⁹

The similarities to the plot of the *Iliad* are striking. Achilles appears in both epics. In one his friend is Patroclus, in the other Antilochus, while his enemy is either Hector or Memnon. The sequence of the following motifs is the same in both epics: Thetis' prophecy, Achilles' abstention from fighting, the intervention and death of a friend of Achilles (Patroclus/Antilochus), Achilles' vengeance upon his enemy for the death of his friend, and the death of Achilles (which is not, however, narrated in the *Iliad* but only predicted or described as a presentiment). In addition, the description of the death of Patroclus in the *Iliad* contains certain motifs that are also found in the *Aethiopsis*, but in connection with Achilles and not with Antilochus, the character who corresponds to Patroclus. Apollo assists in the killing of Patroclus as he will in the killing of Achilles. Thetis and the Nereids, *i.e.* the mother and aunts of Achilles, mourn the death of Patroclus, whereas in the *Aethiopsis* they mourn the death of Achilles. In honour of Patroclus there are festive funeral games, as there will be for Achilles later. In the *Iliad* these motifs appear to contain fixed elements, which enable us to perceive beyond doubt that these motifs were taken from the mythological context of the *Aethiopsis*. It is obvious, for example, that the motif of the Nereids participating in a lament for Achilles may have been invented as such, but scarcely their participation in a lament for Patroclus. And funeral games take place at the burial of persons of high rank such as βασιλῆες, but the motif appears to be secondary when it is connected with the death of a ἑταῖρος such as Patroclus. Space does not permit a survey of the evidence for priority of the mythological context of the *Aethiopsis* in more detail. In neoanalysis, in any case, it is considered to be fact

⁹ Testimonia in T. W. Allen, *Homeri Opera* V (Oxford 1911) 105f, 125f; and E. Bethe, *Der troische Kreis*³ (Darmstadt 1966) 19ff, 95ff.

that what is narrated in the *Aethiopis* must have been narrated before Homer, if only in oral poetry. In the written version of the *Aethiopis* (which is possibly later) there may have been details which are secondary and were invented after the *Iliad* was composed.

The origin of neoanalysis has no similarity to that of oral poetry theory. It was the original intention of neoanalysts to bridge the gap between unitarianism and (old) analysis. They believed that they could explain a great many of the irregularities observed by the analysts in the *Iliad* by assuming that motifs of other epic contexts have been adopted to the plot of the *Iliad*. Though they only partly succeeded, the concept of neoanalysis has remained.

II

I now turn to the second issue, the comparison of methods. The two approaches do not contradict each other in all their components. The basic results of the research done by Parry and his followers were accepted by almost all Homeric scholars when they were presented. Neoanalysts share the basic conviction that the necessities entailed by improvised poetry account for the formulaic character of the Homeric language and the 'principle of economy', features that can still be observed in the modern Serbo-Croatian epic poetry investigated by Parry. There is, however, one fundamental difference between neoanalysts and the scholars who adhere to the doctrine of oral poetry: the neoanalysts assume that there is a comparatively high degree of individual creation in the Homeric epics. They think that the Homeric poems were composed at the end of a period of oral poetry, and that they were composed with the help of writing. Such an assumption contradicts orthodox Parryism, since individual invention is not an important factor for Serbo-Croatian singers. The Parryists consider the formulaic character of Homeric language to exclude the possibility of written composition. To the Parryists, that the Homeric poems were composed in writing is unthinkable.

The reaction of some of them to the similarities of motifs pointed out by neoanalysis is as follows. They do not dispute these similarities, but rather think that, just as there was a stockpile of formulas and typical scenes, there probably was another one of motifs and plots, such as the motifs of wrath, abstention from fighting, lament for a dead warrior, funeral games, abduction of a woman, unfaithfulness of a warrior's wife, etc. The singers, they claim, did not orient themselves by any other single epic but by a common store of mo-

tifs.¹⁰ My answer to this is twofold: I agree that *very* general motifs, such as wrath springing from lost honour, revenge, abduction of women, and unfaithfulness of wives, may indeed have been used independently of one another in different epic contexts. I do not think, however, that they derive from a common store; I believe rather that they were rooted in the actual conditions of life in the heroic age.¹¹ This means, for instance, that treating lost honour and revenge is, in my opinion, not a mechanical result of poetic technique, but rather reflects the experience of the poet and his age. It is otherwise for more specific motifs or specific nuances in general motifs. In this regard neoanalysts are the better Parryists, in that they believe in the continuity of epic tradition more seriously than some of the oralists. They do not think that the tradition of the motifs of heroic mythology was dealt with arbitrarily, *i.e.*, that stock motifs were mingled with no regard to their original source. This would leave unexplained the extraordinary coherence and the relative absence of contradictions in the whole of Greek heroic legends.

If seen in isolation, the intervention and death of Patroclus and the vengeance of Achilles upon Hector might also be accounted for without reference to the death and self-sacrifice of Antilochus and the vengeance of Achilles upon Memnon. But if we keep the *Aethiopsis* in mind, it seems impossible to explain the character and the behaviour of Antilochus in the *Iliad*.¹² In the *Iliad* Antilochus is very scrupulously depicted so as to render plausible his later fighting and self-sacrifice for his father Nestor. It is he who delivers the news of the death of Patroclus to Achilles. In the games in honour of Patroclus, he is represented as being closely associated with Achilles. This relationship manifests itself in the kindness Achilles exhibits toward him when he confirms that Antilochus has won the second prize originally intended for Eumelos, the favorite, who had met with an accident during the race (23.558ff). In the foot-race, Antilochus wins the third prize, half a talent of gold, which is doubled by Achilles. We get the impression that Antilochus is no less Achilles' friend than Patroclus had been. His character in the *Iliad* becomes most clear if we assume that the audience already knew that Antilochus will come

¹⁰ Cf. Fenik (*supra* n.4) 238f; H. Patzer, *Dichterische Kunst und poetisches Handwerk im homerischen Epos* (SitzGoetheUnivFrankfurt 10 [Wiesbaden 1972]) 40ff. Compare also the brilliant attempt of Michael N. Nagler, *Spontaneity and Tradition* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1974), to reduce similar motifs and motif sequences, in accordance with the psychology of C. G. Jung, to "preverbal Gestalts."

¹¹ Cf. also W. Schadewaldt, *Der Aufbau der Ilias* (Frankfurt am Main 1975) 31.

¹² Cf. Kullmann (*supra* n.7) 19f.

to a tragic end similar to that of Patroclus. Neither does the picture of Achilles undergo any change by the adoption of the motif. This picture is only deepened: in tragic circumstances Achilles loses two friends, one after the other. Respect for the mythical tradition seems to lie behind the fact that although the death of Achilles is linked to the death of Patroclus in the *Iliad*, it is not itself described in this epic. Obviously, the death of Achilles has been left out in consideration of the mythical tradition, where it was linked to the death of Antilochus. This is not ignored in the *Iliad*. The fatal arrow-shot of Paris at Achilles is not described after Hector's death.

Detailed neoanalytic examination has shown that in the *Iliad* the mythological fate of all the major heroes is taken into account, and the heroes are given a character which makes plausible their fate—in many cases a tragic one—subsequent to the action of the *Iliad*.¹³ Conversely, transfers of motifs to different heroes occur only where a certain period of the life of a hero, or his whole life, has not been arranged otherwise by mythological tradition. A character in myth is by no means a 'typical element'. According to neoanalysis, the composition of the *Iliad* is distinguished by the tendency to fill a certain niche (one might speak of an 'ecological niche') within a wide mythological framework. While motifs can be transferred to other characters, the life and death of a hero obviously remain unchanged. The probable reason for this is that mythological characters were taken to be historical persons.

According to neoanalysis, this respect for tradition is combined with poetic invention. This invention, it is true, cannot be as free as it is in later literature; however, even when motifs from earlier contexts are adopted, there is scope for originality.

The different ways of interpretation pursued by neoanalysis and oral theory can be further illustrated by a characteristic example. In 11.369ff Diomedes is wounded by Paris in the foot and forced to leave the battlefield. One is reminded of the *Aethiopsis*, where Achilles is killed by an arrow-shot of Paris, which hits his heel. In both cases Paris hits an enemy in the foot.¹⁴ Oral theory, however, tends to deny a special connection with the *Aethiopsis*, and to take the scene in the *Iliad* to be a typical scene, one composed of typical elements rather than elements

¹³ Cf. Pestalozzi (*supra* n.8) 40f, and Kullmann, *Quellen* (*supra* n.8) 59ff, 382ff.

¹⁴ Unfortunately I omitted this important passage in *Quellen* (*supra* n.8), where it should be added at 320 under Proclus 62 as number 3A. The parallel has been noticed by P. Von der Mühl, *Kritisches Hypomnema zur Ilias* (Basel 1952) 195f; H. Erbse, *RhM* 104 (1961) 175; Phanis I. Kakridis, *Hermes* 89 (1961) 293 n.1; and Heubeck, *Frage* (*supra* n.1) 46 (who justly criticizes my omission).

taken from an identifiable context in the *Aethiopsis*. Fenik (whose book *Typical Battle Scenes* is extremely valuable for every Homeric scholar) argues as follows:¹⁵ all the single elements of the scene in Book 11 are also found in other scenes of the *Iliad*, the wound in the foot excepted. In the manner the scene is told in the *Iliad*, he says, it resembles the wounding of Diomedes by Pandarus in 5.93ff more than the killing of Achilles by Paris in the *Aethiopsis*. In Book 11 Diomedes is wounded by Paris, Paris rejoices, Odysseus removes the arrow from the wound. In Book 5, Diomedes is wounded by Pandarus, Pandarus rejoices, and Sthenelos removes the arrow from the wound. Wounding, rejoicing, and removal of the arrow are parallel to Book 11. Although Paris is absent in Book 5, this hero, according to the Parryists, also appears as a dangerous enemy in other parts of the *Iliad*, and is therefore regarded as another typical element.

Neoanalysis cannot deny these facts established by oral theory. It will try, however, to interpret them from the point of view of the respective contexts of the passages cited. As Schadewaldt has shown, the function of Book 11 in the overall structure of the *Iliad* is to demonstrate that the Achaeans are bound to be defeated when fighting without Achilles.¹⁶ Their leaders (Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus) are wounded one after the other. This eventually leads to the intervention of Patroclus. In this framework, the wounding of Diomedes has special significance: for in the fighting after Achilles' withdrawal from battle, Diomedes figures as a substitute for Achilles. The manner alone in which Agamemnon reproachfully addresses him when reviewing the army (4.365ff) demonstrates the singular importance of this hero. Later, in his *aristeia* in Book 5, he proves a worthy substitute for Achilles. He also avenges the breach of the truce by Pandarus. It is he who objects to the Trojan peace offer (7.399ff), opposes Agamemnon's plans of escape (9.32ff), and belatedly criticises the petitionary embassy to Achilles and urges resumption of fighting even without Achilles (9.696ff). At 14.109ff, finally, he resumes his rôle as an admonitor. If it is to be shown that Diomedes in spite of all this cannot be a full substitute for Achilles, he has to be defeated by that Trojan hero who is destined to vanquish Achilles—Paris. That this is the meaning of the scene is emphasized by the similar wounding in the foot, which as such is only motivated by the context of the *Aethiopsis*. This interpretation does not rule out the possibility that this scene in Book 11 is technically composed of typical elements which

¹⁵ Fenik (*supra* n.4) 234, *cf.* also 95f.

¹⁶ W. Schadewaldt, *Iliasstudien*³ (Darmstadt 1966) 1ff, esp. 29ff.

do not derive from the *Aethiopsis*, as far as the details are concerned. These details may include the rejoicing (of Paris) and the extracting of the arrow. There is full agreement with Fenik in that respect.¹⁷

To the neoanalysts, such a scene can be entirely composed of traditional narrative elements and nevertheless be an individual variation of a certain motif. The poetical meaning of a motif has to be considered independently from the possibly typical character of the several elements of which it is composed. A single source can suggest the use of a motif even if the new shaping of this motif is partly accomplished by narrative elements that derive from completely different contexts¹⁸ or are typical. In the case mentioned above (11.369ff), two main arguments favour a borrowing from the *Aethiopsis* story, even if only known to the poet of the *Iliad* in an oral form: (a) A large number of quite different motifs are common to the *Aethiopsis* story and the *Iliad*, and in all cases where a judgement is possible the Iliadic version seems secondary. This seems to exclude that in a given case the two variants are both derivatives of an Ur-form. (b) The wounding of Diomedes in the foot by Paris is not simply a further similarity to the *Aethiopsis* as are other similarities. It is connected with the whole invention of the *Iliad*. It is apparently a symbol for the fulfilment of the promise given to Thetis by Zeus. The most Achilles-like hero is wounded by Paris long before Achilles himself will be wounded by Paris in the same way. The motif makes sense in the *Iliad* only if the whole poem was invented after the story of Achilles' death by Paris was known.

Unfortunately this type of argument is often neglected by the opponents of neoanalysis.¹⁹ All the same, this neoanalytic approach

¹⁷ Fenik even goes a step further, almost beyond Parryism, in saying (237): "It is one thing to argue that the details of the battle scenes are typical and derived from a common store, and quite another to claim that the *plots* of the poems are equally typical and derived . . . Typical composition and direct influence are not incompatible." He discusses the possibility that the list of similarities between the two poems indicates a direct imitation of one by the other, but is sceptical because of the many mythical doublets we find in early Greek myth.

¹⁸ Erbse (*supra* n.14) 175f believes that the passage in Book 5 is a variation of that in Book 11 and is influenced simultaneously by another passage of that book, 504ff. With regard to this argument, one may ask the Parryists: can it be excluded in each case that the narrative elements within the *Iliad* that they consider as typical have been composed in an identifiable sequence without reference to a stockpile of such elements?

¹⁹ Cf. Kullmann, *Gnomon* 49 (1977) 532ff. Recently J. Griffin has pleaded for the uniqueness of Homer in comparison with the epic Cycle (*JHS* 97 [1977] 39ff). But to my mind his case is inconsistent insofar as he rejects the arguments of neoanalysts (39 n.5), who try to find pre-Homeric motifs in the Cyclic epics, though they concede that the recording of these epics in writing might be post-Homeric. I think that the uniqueness of Homer can be shown conclusively only by a comparison with post-Homeric as well as pre-Homeric motifs (*cf. supra* n.7).

still shares some points with oral theory. Individual variations of a motif also follow a previously shaped form, as do formulas, *versus iterati*, and 'basic themes'. However, the adopted motifs are less rigidly used even in comparison with the 'typical scenes'; one might therefore speak of a 'semi-rigid' adoption. It does not concern us here whether the adoption of a motif has indeed in every case been going on in the way claimed by the neoanalysts. There is no doubt, however, that adoptions of this kind took place.

To repeat the result of the specific comparisons from the point of neoanalysis: (1) The core of the plot of the *Iliad*, the wrath of Achilles, is no traditional subject-matter of mythology, but an invention of one singer or poet, who thereby gives an individual shaping to one basic situation of the life of the heroic age. The frame of the plot of the *Iliad* is traditional: e.g., the general themes such as 'Achilles, the Best of the Achaeans'²⁰ or 'Trojan War in its tenth year'. (2) This invention is not as completely independent as a similar one may be in later literature, but is characterized in its details by the semi-rigid use of motifs taken from other identifiable epics or their oral predecessors. (3) The semi-rigid use of motifs is similar to the use of fixed formulas, *versus iterati*, and typical scenes. This use, however, is not based on any stock of motifs. (4) In this respect, the conditions of contemporary Yugoslavian epic poetry afford no exact parallel to the facts of Homeric epic composition as described here. These facts are compatible with the main findings of oral poetry theory, but not with the conclusions drawn from them, inasmuch as they go beyond merely stating the analogy of Serbo-Croatian epic poetry.

III

We now to come to the divergent conclusions about the main issues arising in Homer. Let us return for a moment to the relations between the *Iliad* and the stories of Memnon. The way things are told in the *Aethiopis* differs strikingly and fundamentally from the way things are told in the *Iliad*. In the *Aethiopis*, the narrative of Memnon spans four books, by contrast with the twenty-four of the *Iliad*. In the *Iliad*, the narrative takes the form of a large-scale epic. Its contents not only cover a period of time that is even smaller than that of the *Aethiopis*, but, moreover, what happens in the *Iliad* is of much less

²⁰ Cf. G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans. Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore/London 1979).

importance to the Trojan War as a whole than what happens in the *Aethiopis*. The wrath of Achilles and his fight against Hector are not central events of the Trojan cycle of myths.

If we compare the few extant fragments of the Cyclic epics with the *Iliad* from the point of view of style, we realize the exceptional stylistic quality of the *Iliad*. This includes the poet's much greater fondness for details, his preciseness of narration, and his profound psychological shaping of characters and events. The impression made by the *Iliad* does not depend on the plot as such. As remarked above, the motif of wrath is in itself a rather common one, because in the heroic age violation of honour and wrath were rooted in life. In the *Iliad* the motif of wrath is made unique by the manner in which it is narrated and linked to the frame of the whole Trojan War. The motifs shared by the *Iliad* and the *Aethiopis*—e.g. the withdrawal from fighting, the death and the avenging of a friend which entails giving up one's own life—are not, as *facta bruta*, the elements that create the impression made by the *Iliad*. What constitutes the artistic rank of this epic is the special shaping of these motifs. As far as form is concerned, this includes retardations, which provide a view both of the Trojan War as a whole and, at the same time, of the individual's position in the world. So the disastrous dream of deception, sent by Zeus to induce the general of the Achaeans to attempt an attack upon Troy without Achilles; so too the petitionary embassy to Achilles, or the large number of hand-to-hand combats which involve heavy losses until Achilles resumes fighting. The connection between single events and the whole war is a central theme of the epic. In the first verses of the *Iliad* the wrath of Achilles, a single emotion of a single man, is related to the whole process of events in a way which I think is unparalleled. The wrath, the poet says, brought about the death of innumerable Achaeans and was part of the plan of Zeus.

According to neoanalysis, the treatment of the more special motifs points in the same direction. The majority of motifs in the *Iliad* that are parallel to the subject-matter of the Cyclic epics are not just variations (*i.e.*, mere transfers of motifs or elements of motifs to other persons) but rather 'refinements'.²¹ Deaths often become 'near deaths' which foreshadow the disaster to come. So for example the difficult position of Nestor in Book 8. There is no tragedy in his being rescued by Diomedes; but in the *Aethiopis*, Antilochus in similar circumstances dies the death of self-sacrifice in order to save his father. As noted above, Diomedes is merely wounded by Paris in the

²¹ See Kullmann (*supra* n.7) 24ff.

Iliad, while Achilles is killed by him in the *Aethiopsis*. In the *Aethiopsis* Zeus uses the scales of fate to weigh the fates of Achilles and Memnon, while in the *Iliad* this has become a recurrent symbolical action which characterizes Zeus. This is evident in the four times the motif is used. In this case, the refinement lies in the fact that the motif is no longer modelled as a full dramatic scene, but as a concomitant act of Zeus' decisions.

We can also speak of refined motifs whenever the poet of the *Iliad* uses speeches and actions to show certain traits of character which are in keeping with the deeds done by the respective hero or god in the source. In the *Iliad* the Judgement of Paris, for example, produces the after-effect that Hera and Athena intervene in the affairs of men because of their injured vanity.²² In their hatred of Troy they are inexorable. The goddesses even incur a conflict with Zeus in order to promote the victory of the Achaeans over the Troy of Paris, who had declared Aphrodite the winner of the beauty contest. In the mythological tradition Agamemnon appeared as an unfortunate figure, who had to sacrifice his daughter to be successful in his campaign against Troy, and who was killed when he returned home. In the *Iliad* he is depicted as a man who is by nature ill-fated. This becomes apparent in his quarrel with Achilles, in his disastrous deceptive dream in Book 2, and in his resigned attitude toward the first defeats in Book 9. In the premonitions of Achilles and Priam at the restitution of Hector's body in Book 24, the themes of the death of Achilles and the destruction of Troy are splendidly spiritualized.²³ The premonitions of Andromache in Books 6 and 24 foreshadow the fate of the Trojan women and children. Such transformation of mere facts into premonitions gives the story a special religious meaning. These premonitions demonstrate the tragic nature of the hero's fate much better than any mere narration of facts could do.

All this indicates that the position of the *Iliad* in early Greek epic poetry is in many respects a very special one. We can assume that the Cyclic epics, so far as they concern the Trojan cycle of myths, more or less reflect the mythological subject-matter that was known to the poet of the *Iliad*, at least from oral poetry. We can best account for the particular structure of the *Iliad*, *i.e.* the treatment of an episode in the form of a large-scale epic, by assuming that this epic looks

²² This is the splendid and convincing result of K. Reinhardt's famous paper "Das Parisurteil" (originally 1938), in *Tradition und Geist*, ed. Carl Becker (Göttingen 1960) 16ff, a result which was anticipated by F. G. Welcker, *Der epische Cyclus oder die homerischen Dichter* II (Bonn 1849) 113ff.

²³ Cf. Kullmann (*supra* n.7) 26.

back upon a long oral tradition of epic poetry, but was itself composed with the help of writing, so that the poet could take his time in formulating it. Invention takes up a great portion of the subject-matter of the *Iliad*, so that Homer could consider his poem to be his 'literary property'.²⁴ The assertion that the *Iliad* was composed in writing is not a necessary consequence of the neoanalytic approach. The results obtained by this approach do, however, suggest written composition. Before we proceed with this question, we should stress that the elements of oral style, the presence of which in the *Iliad* is not denied by the neoanalysts, are of course not abandoned immediately upon a transition from oral to written composition. This is especially true in times like Homer's in which no extensive written culture existed. We see much the same among school children, who often continue using the characteristics of oral composition when composing essays (parataxis, ring composition, repetitions of words or groups of words, etc.). Moreover, Homer's audience was expecting an epic with formulas, repetitions, and 'themes'; and recitation is made easier by retaining the traditional style.

We come to the question of how the *Iliad* reached its written form. Here we cannot adduce Yugoslavian epic poetry because it never reached by itself the transition to written poetry. In this case, argument by analogy fails completely. The *Iliad* was handed down in a written form and won literary acknowledgement, but not the Yugoslavian epics. We should therefore examine those paradigms which illustrate a transition from oral to written composition. These paradigms can be found in the wide area of mediaeval epic poetry, in Old French, Old and Middle High German, Old English, and Icelandic. Many of the extant mediaeval epics still bear traces of earlier orality, in a way similar to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. These epics, which obviously preserve ancient mythology, contain formulas and repeated verses which are characteristic signs of an originally oral tradition. The results of oral theory have been extensively discussed by scholars of mediaeval literature, who have shown that the different heroic epics are connected with oral poetry in very different degrees. Although there are great differences in the details, six general points can be made:

(1) These heroic epics preserve the subject-matter of old legends. They are more or less firmly rooted in the tradition of oral improvised poetry but are at the point of abandoning this tradition. Ac-

²⁴ I do not claim, as is generally done by those who believe in the written composition of the Homeric epics, that the quality of the Homeric epics itself demonstrates the use of writing. But I maintain that this follows from the relatively original invention of the plot, as it is proved by neoanalysis.

ording to most scholars there is no doubt that (e.g.) *Beowulf*, the *Chanson de Roland*, and the *Nibelungenlied* were composed with the aid of writing.²⁵ An extreme break from the old tradition is made, for example, by the Latin *Song of Waltharius*. There is no doubt that it preserves ancient oral legends and transfers them to the language of literary Latin epic poetry. In other epic, the break with the oral tradition is obviously less extreme. In all this, the degree of formulaic language offers no certain indication of the proximity to oral poetry, as has been shown by American scholars of Anglo-Saxon poetry.²⁶

(2) In these epics we often find semi-rigid adoptions of motifs taken from other contexts, which would correspond with neoanalytic find-

²⁵ The impressive attempts (e.g. F. P. Magoun, Jr., "Oral Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry," *Speculum* 28 [1953] 446ff) to prove that *Beowulf* and other Anglo-Saxon poems were composed orally have been refuted, especially by American scholars. Cf. Claes Schaar, "On a New Theory of Old English Poetic Diction," *Neophilologus* 40 (1956) 301ff; A. G. Brodeur, *The Art of Beowulf* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1959); R. D. Stevick, "The Oral-Formulaic Analyses of Old English Verse," *Speculum* 37 (1962) 382ff; L. D. Benson, "The Literary Character of Anglo-Saxon Formulaic Poetry," *PMLA* 81 (1966) 334ff, who also points out (340) that not only formulas but also themes can be composed by literate poets; M. Curschmann, "Oral Poetry in Mediaeval English, French, and German Literature: Some Notes on Recent Research," *Speculum* 42 (1967) 36ff (reprinted in Latacz [supra n.2] 469ff), who rightly stresses (45) the concept of 'transitional texts'; Edward R. Haymes, *Das mündliche Epos* (Stuttgart 1977) 34ff; Klaus von See, "Was ist Heldendichtung?" in his *Europäische Heldendichtung* (Wege der Forschung 500 [Darmstadt 1978]) 19ff. On the *Chanson de Roland* cf. Adrien Bonjour, "Poésie héroïque du moyen âge et critique littéraire," *Romania* 78 (1957) 243ff; even Jean Rychner, the Parryist among the Romanists, considered written composition of *Roland* as at least probable, though not of the other chansons de geste: *La chanson de geste. Essay sur l'art épique des Jongleurs* (Geneva/Lille 1955) 154ff; see also Curschmann 46ff. On the *Nibelungenlied* cf. Werner Hoffmann, *Das Nibelungenlied*⁵ (Stuttgart 1982) 76ff; Alois Wolf, "Die Verschriftlichung der Nibelungensage und die französisch-deutschen Literaturbeziehungen im Mittelalter," in *Hohenemser Studien zum Nibelungenlied* (Dornbirn 1981) 227ff.

²⁶ The core of the argument of C. M. Bowra (*Heroic Poetry* [London 1952] 236f), that in the Greek hexameter an especially large degree of formulaic language is needed in order to make improvisation possible, has not been refuted by A. B. Lord, "Homer as Oral Poet," *HSCP* 72 (1968) 1f. Lord argues that the density of formulas in Serbo-Croatian poetry is even higher. This may be the case; but it is evident that the structure of the decasyllabic Serbo-Croatian verse is nevertheless much simpler than the Greek hexameter. Lord's density argument must be abandoned completely once it is settled that the Anglo-Saxon poems are 'transitional poems' composed "pen in hand and subject to overall planning which the process of additive oral composition does not permit" (Curschmann [supra n.25] 45); against the density argument see especially Benson (supra n.25) 336. While Lord earlier stated expressly (supra n.6: 198) that *Beowulf* because of its formulaic language was composed orally, he here seems to hesitate (21). The case of the extreme formula density of the literary *Heliand* should also be recalled: D. Behaghel and W. Mitzka, *Heliand und Genesis*⁷ (Tübingen 1958); cf. J. Rathofer, *Der Heliand. Theologischer Sinn als tektonische Form* (NiederdeutStud 9 [Cologne/Graz 1962]); Curschmann 50f. One significant difference between the Homeric poems and the Serbo-Croatian songs of the Parry collection should be mentioned here. In our text of Homer there are no metrical and stylistic blunders such as occur, according to Parry's text, in the Yugoslavian singers when extemporizing.

ings in Homer. In the *Nibelungenlied*, for example, the motif of vassals is adopted from the old French *Epics on William* (so with regard to the characters Hagen and Rüdiger).²⁷

(3) There is a tendency to create large-scale epic structures with the help of writing, especially in the French and German areas.²⁸

(4) The traditional subject-matter is used more or less freely in accordance with the poet's own ideas. The poet's individual view of the world is partially reflected in these epics. Characteristic features are Christian elements in pagan legends, such as in *Beowulf*.²⁹

(5) In many cases the more original and ambitious transformations into the written form obviously date from an earlier time than other written epics of lower quality. The *Nibelungenlied*, for example, is earlier than the *Epic of Kudrun* though its literary rank is higher, and the *Chanson de Roland* seems to be earlier than other *chansons de geste*.³⁰

(6) The authors who transfer traditional oral epic poetry to a written form already know existing written epics which can serve as models—mostly Latin epics, both Classical, such as Virgil, and Christian.³¹ Written versions of other oral poems in the vernacular languages could also serve as models. Is it possible to prove, or to consider as probable, that the Homeric poems came into being in a similar way?

In most cases the similarity of the Homeric situation to the situation in the Middle Ages is obvious: we suggested a transition from oral tradition to written composition in Homer.³² The formulas seem more consciously and artfully used than in any oral poems. We claimed a semi-rigid adoption of motifs from other epics. The Homeric poems are large-scale epics, and there is a tendency toward original poetic invention. The contents of the Cyclic epics seem to be more

²⁷ Wolf (*supra* n.25) 227 and *passim*: the French vassal motif already intruded into the *Waltharius* where Hagano has become a vassal of his 'former' brother Guntharius; the original relationship is preserved in "The Old Sigurd Song" of the *Edda*.

²⁸ Cf. Alois Wolf, "H. Gunkels Auffassung von der Verschriftlichung der Genesis im Licht der mittelalterlichen Literarisierungsprobleme," *Ugarit-Forsch* 12 (1980) 373.

²⁹ F. Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*³ (Boston 1950) xlviii–li (with references to further literature); Brodeur (*supra* n.25) 182ff; von See (*supra* n.25) 18f. Contrast e.g. Beowulf's speech at 2792ff with the Christian evaluation of the treasure at 3166ff.

³⁰ Cf. Wolf (*supra* n.28) 370f.

³¹ Cf. Wolf (*supra* n.28) 373.

³² In this connection our knowledge is increasing gradually. Among the standard examples of oral theory are the noun-epithet formulas of Odysseus. Odysseus Tsagarakis has now shown that the epithets *πολύμητις* and *πολύτλας* in most passages in Homer acquire an individual meaning beyond the 'essential idea' *Odysseus* which they should both express in the same way according to Parry's theory: *Form and Content in Homer* (*Hermes Einzelschr.* 46 [1982]) 35ff. The poet distinguishes carefully between the formulaic verses *τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς* and *τὸν δ' ἡμείβετ' ἔπειτα πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς* according to the situation he is describing. It seems he has time enough to consider which of the two formulaic verses he should proceed with.

ancient and nearer the legends of the oral singers than the contents of the *Iliad*. Nevertheless these epics were perhaps written down later, after the model of the written *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

With regard to the originality of the *Iliad*, it should be added that originality appears not only in its structure but also in the area of religion.³³ The *Iliad* often explains the tragic fate of man by the arbitrary behaviour of the gods, who are also responsible for the evils of man. Quite another view of the gods is found in the *Aethiopsis*: both Memnon and Achilles are granted immortality after death so that their tragic fate is mitigated. The religious conceptions of the *Odyssey* are also quite different from those of the *Iliad*. In the former the gods guarantee justice in the world, and only the unjust perish; while in the *Iliad* men are disproportionately punished by the gods for their faults, although they are without substantial moral guilt.

The most disputable point in comparing mediaeval epics is whether Homer knew a written model of another epic. While in the Middle Ages the existence of epics written in other languages prompted the transformation of oral epics into written form, this does not at first strike one as being the case in early Greece. Certainly there were no foreign epics written in Greek letters, to inspire Greek poets to write down heroic legend. Nevertheless, a parallel to the heroic poetry of the Middle Ages can be found: according to findings in archaeology and in the history of religion, crafts and religious customs developed substantially in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C., the Orientalizing epoch. This was due to the influx of oriental craftsmen and prophets. The same applies to mythology. During this time many oriental myths must have been taken up by the Greeks through the intermediary of the Phoenicians. These include the myths of Kumarbi, which are reflected in Hesiod's *Theogony*.³⁴ Parallels to the motif that Zeus gives rise to the Trojan War in order to decimate mankind are also found in oriental epic poetry: so the epic of Atrahasis,³⁵ which was recently cited in this connection by Walter Burkert,³⁶ and related stories found in Egyptian and Indian literature.³⁷

³³ Cf. my "Gods and Men in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*," forthcoming in *HSCP* 89 (1985).

³⁴ Cf. H. G. Güterbock, *Kumarbi. Mythen vom churritischen Kronos aus den hethischen Fragmenten* (Zurich/New York 1946); H. Otten, *Mythen vom Gotte Kumarbi. Neue Fragmente* (Berlin 1950); M. L. West, *Hesiod, Theogony* (Oxford 1966) 20ff.

³⁵ E. A. Speiser and A. K. Grayson in *ANET*³ 104-09, 512-14; W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-hasis. The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford 1969).

³⁶ *Die orientalisierende Epoche in der griechischen Religion und Literatur* (Sitz Heidelberg 1984) 95ff. For the beginning of the seventh century as the date of composition of the *Iliad* see Burkert, "Das hunderttorige Theben und die Datierung der *Ilias*," *WS N.F.* 10 (1976) 5ff.

³⁷ Cf. Kullmann, "Motiv" (*supra* n.8) 185f.

The fact of direct adoptions of myths makes it probable that the Phoenicians, who gave the Greeks the knowledge of writing, the *φοινικῆια γράμματα*, also gave them the idea of written composition and inspired them to write down heroic poetry. Of course it is very improbable that the Greeks learned of the oriental myths from books. But they could have heard something of the practice of writing down oral myths. It is true that we do not know of any Phoenician epics of this time, but their existence is evident from the striking correspondences between Hesiod and both the Phoenician cosmology of Sanchuniathon as reported by Philon of Byblos (*FGrHist* 790^{FF}1–7) and the myths of Kumarbi. We have also the older Phoenician texts found at Ras Shamra.³⁸ In Homer's time, there had been written epics in the orient for more than a thousand years. Together with writing, the orient may have transmitted to the Greeks the impulse to give a written form to their own mythology.³⁹

I recapitulate the essential points of this section: Serbo-Croatian epic poetry provides no parallel for the written form of the *Iliad*. An analogy can only be found in mediaeval epic, where in most cases the ancient legends were reshaped according to the ideas of the poet and written down after the model of the well-known Latin epics. Therefore I conclude with the hypothesis that matters were to a degree similar in early Greece and knowledge of oriental written epics, even if only by hearsay, provided a model for written composition.⁴⁰

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³⁸ Cf. Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature* (Rome 1949).

³⁹ Cf. also some hints in Lord (*supra* n.6) 156f, which point in a similar direction (I owe this reference to Dr H. Banner of Vienna).

⁴⁰ The whole question of orality and literacy needs further interdisciplinary cooperation. It is to be hoped that this will develop in the near future. [Addendum: on neo-analysis see now also Jacqueline de Romilly, *Perspectives actuelles sur l'épopée homérique* (Paris 1983), and E. Ch. Kopff, "The Structure of Amazonia (Aethiopsis)," in R. Hägg, *The Greek Renaissance of the Eighth Century B.C.* (ActSuec 30 [Stockholm 1983]) 57ff].

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