

CHAPTER 5

The Gods

HUMAN AND DIVINE MOTIVATION

DIVINE INTERVENTION AND NATURAL CAUSALITY

Everything of note in the *Iliad* is the work of a god. One may give a coherent account of the poem's action without any reference to the gods at all. Both statements are true, and the lack of contradiction between them captures an essential element of the Homeric gods. There is an easy but not entirely satisfactory way of resolving the apparent contradiction. It consists of treating the gods as a redundant system of motivation, whose function consists of metaphorically repeating and thereby clarifying human motives and actions. Thus, when Athene tells Achilles not to kill Agamemnon (1.210), it is 'really' Achilles who changes his mind, but Homer emphasises the sudden and radical nature of Achilles' change of mind by resorting to the rhetorical device of divine intervention. The analysis of the action can proceed without reference to this device, even though its frequent occurrence has an important bearing on the texture of the poem.

This interpretation is inadequate but its possibility tells us something important about the Homeric gods. Their intervention works through rather than against human nature, and with a few uncharacteristic exceptions such interventions do not interrupt natural causality. The divine, far from transcending the natural, is the natural in its most perfect state. The field of divine intervention is the outstanding. Success and failure, courage or loss of nerve, presence of mind or folly of judgement wherever these are present in an eminent degree the poet and his characters see the hand of a god. The view of the world underlying this habit is perhaps less strange to us than the elaborate machinery through which it expresses itself. Wherever risk and skill are at a premium, effort and result are rarely fully commensurate. The Homeric god operates in that gap, closing or widening it in a manner that is both beyond calculation and yet curiously appropriate to the intention and performance of the agent. When we use phrases like 'I don't know how I did it' or 'I don't know what came over me' we reveal the common ground between our experience and the work of the gods in the *Iliad*.

In the most characteristic form of divine intervention it is possible to

subtract the work of the god without altering the result or leaving a residue of unexplained events.) The simplest cases are accidents that the poet or his characters attribute to a god. When Menelaos' sword shatters on Paris' helmet, he sees the work of Zeus (3.365). So does Aias when Hektor cuts off his spearhead (16.119). Zeus snaps the bowstring of Teukros (15.461). Athene makes Aias slip on a pile of cow dung (23.774). She also breaks the axle of Eumelos' chariot after Apollo has caused Diomedes to lose his whip (23.384). A god guides the warrior's missile so that it hits its target squarely or fails of its intended result. So Athene guides the spear of Diomedes that kills Pandaros (5.290), but she also deflects Pandaros' arrow (4.129) and blunts the force of Sokos' spear (11.437) so that Menelaos and Odysseus do not suffer mortal wounds. Poseidon protects Antilochos in a non-specific manner (13.554) and prevents the Trojan spears from penetrating his shield. It is worth stating that these cases are exceptional: most spears and arrows hit or miss their targets without divine assistance.

The ebb and flow of the fighting is often seen as the work of a god. Zeus gives strength to the Trojans or bewitches the Achaeans (8.335, 12.254). The sudden access of energy in an individual fighter - his second wind, as we would say - is also the work of a god. Athene gives speed to Odysseus in the finish of the foot race (23.772), strength and nimbleness to Diomedes (5.122) and Menelaos (17.569), on all three occasions in response to a prayer. Zeus gives Hektor the strength to pick up the boulder with which he smashes the gate of the wall (12.450); the Aiantes feel a surge of power after Poseidon has cheered them on (13.68). By contrast, Aias retreats reluctantly when Zeus inspires fear in him (11.544). In all these cases the reference to a god is in one sense redundant. The same is true of the many passages in which a god offers advice or encouragement to men, whether for good or for ill. The outcome is always an action that is perfectly intelligible in human terms alone, but from the perspective of the character the event may or may not involve a breach of natural causality. On a dozen occasions a god addresses a mortal in the disguise of a fellow-warrior. In these scenes the character has no inkling of the divine source of the advice, and nothing prevents us from taking the words as spoken by the human character and attributing to them a power as if they were spoken by a god. On a few occasions, the character has a sense of their divine origin and experiences, with varying degrees of intensity, an epiphany of the god. Aeneas recognises Apollo in the shape of Periphas (17.322). The lesser Aias is elated by the words of Poseidon/Kalchas and claims to discover the divinity of Kalchas by the mode of his departure (13.71). The sudden absence of Deiphobos tells Hektor that he really was Athene (22.294). On a few occasions, the god assumes no disguise at all. When Poseidon speaks to the Achaeans nothing is said about his shape, but we may still imagine him as the Kalchas who had previously spoken to the Aiantes (13.94). Apollo assumes no disguise when he tells Hektor to stay away from Achilles

(20.375). To the wounded Hektor he explicitly reveals himself (15.254). It is in his own shape that he rebuffs Diomedes and Patroklos and causes them to retreat (5.439, 16.703). He reverts from the disguise of Agenor when he mocks Achilles (22.7). Athene comes in her own shape to Odysseus and gives him the presence of mind to stop the Achaean panic (2.172). Later she stands beside him in the shape of a herald and hushes the assembly (2.279).

The most epiphanic moment in the *Iliad* is Athene's very first appearance when she tells Achilles not to kill Agamemnon. This is one of only two occasions on which the poet singles out physical details of the god's appearance. Athene moves in from behind him, pulls Achilles by the hair, and as he turns he sees her flashing eyes (1.200). In the other scene Aphrodite addresses Helen in the guise of an old woman but Helen recognises the goddess by her beautiful throat (3.396). In both cases the human respondent is amazed (*thambēse*) but free from terror.

There are some situations in which the subtraction of the god leaves an unexplained residue. Take the chariot race where Diomedes loses his whip and Eumelos' axle breaks - the work of Apollo and Athene. But Athene also returns the whip to Diomedes - an outcome for which there is no natural explanation (23.390). The same is true of the spear that Athene returns to Achilles after he has first missed Hektor (22.276). A rhetorically more emphatic case occurs in the death of Patroklos. Here we may, if we wish, reconstruct a naturalistic sequence in which Patroklos is struck with panic and in the resulting confusion is wounded by Euphorbos and killed by Hektor. A parallel to such a scene occurs when Poseidon strikes Alkathoös with panic and Idomeneus kills him (13.434). It is possible to subtract the god from the latter sequence, but Apollo literally strikes Patroklos with his hand so that he loses his armour piece by piece (16.791). This is not only miraculous, but the violation of natural causality is emphasised and contributes to the pathos of Patroklos' death.

There are a few other passages in which the poet goes beyond nature. In one case, much against his usual practice, Zeus pushes Hektor into battle 'with his big hand' (15.695). Poseidon leads the Achaeans with a magical sword (14.384). Apollo levels the Achaean wall and fills the moat as if it were child's play (15.361). But such excursions beyond the boundaries of nature only confirm the sense that the supernatural is foreign to the *Iliad*. The arms of Achilles are indeed made by a god. They gleam terribly so that Achilles alone can endure to look at them. But they are not magical, and if they are impenetrable it is by virtue of Hephaistos' workmanship. The attitude of the *Iliad* towards the supernatural is perhaps best illustrated by the curious incident of Xanthos, the horse of Achilles (19.404). Hera momentarily gives speech to him and he predicts his master's death. But then the Erinyes, goddesses of vengeance and guardians of established practice, silence him, as if his momentary

eloquence were a violation both of natural causality and literary decorum.

There are two forms of divine intervention that go beyond nature but are so heavily conventionalised that they almost count as natural occurrences. They are the removal of an endangered warrior (always a Trojan) and his sudden healing by a god. A helpful god will cover a warrior in a fog and snatch him away at the moment of imminent defeat. Aphrodite rescues Paris (3.380), but her rescue of Aeneas fails and has to be completed by Apollo (5.311, 432). Aeneas is once more the subject of divine rescue when Poseidon spirits him away from Achilles (20.290). Apollo saves Hektor from Achilles on one occasion (20.443); he also prevents the encounter of Agenor and Achilles (21.596). At the command of Zeus, Apollo removes the body of Sarpedon and hands it to Sleep and Death to carry home to Lykia (16.666). The removals of Aeneas and Agenor involve a substitution. Apollo fashions a phantom of Aeneas' body over which Trojans and Achaeans fight (5.449). After the removal of Agenor, Apollo assumes his shape and leads Achilles on a wild goose chase (21.599).

On three occasions Apollo acts as a healer. The healing of Aeneas (5.445) and Glaukos (16.528) is miraculous, but the third example yields to a natural explanation. Hektor, stunned by the stone Aias threw at him, is carried off by his companions to a safe place, where he vomits blood and faints. When Apollo comes to him he has just regained consciousness and is sitting up. Apollo reveals his protection to him and gives him strength so that he bounces back into battle like a well-fed stallion. Since Hektor's injury was non-specific we may see Apollo's intervention simply as a metaphor of quick recovery from the loss of consciousness (15.239). A quasi-healing occurs when Diomedes prays to Athene after his injury by Pandaros. She gives him strength so that he re-enters battle with increased fury (5.121), but she does not heal his wound, for later in the fighting we see him resting from exhaustion and cooling his wound that is irritated by sweat.

It is part of the natural perspective in the *Iliad* that, although the gods participate in human affairs, conflicts between gods and men are rare. The exceptions prove the rule. When Athene opens Diomedes' eyes she tells him not to attack any of the gods except Aphrodite (5.130). He almost forgets this advice when he attacks Aeneas even after Apollo has taken him under his wing. But it only takes the words of the god to make Diomedes know his place (5.440). Similarly, Patroklos retreats from Apollo when he appears on the walls of Troy and orders him back (16.707). When Apollo casts off the disguise of Agenor and mocks his pursuer, Achilles scolds him but he does not attack the god (22.15). In Book 14 the poet dwells on the general fighting and describes the armies as respectively led by Poseidon and Hektor (14.389). Such asymmetry is unique, and the passage may be spurious. Book 5, which is rich in divine episodes, ends with a scene that pits Diomedes and Athene against Ares and ends in ignominious defeat for

the war god. This scene is unique for blurring the dividing-line between men and gods. First Ares kills and despoils an Aetolian (5.842), and then Diomedes wounds Ares in the stomach. But a character in the *Iliad* would see nothing remarkable in the encounter. He would see Ares in his mortal disguise as the Thracian Akamas (5.462) and, given the association of Diomedes with Aetolia through his grandfather Oineus, he would interpret the sequence as a repetition of the end of Book 4, where the Thracian Peiros kills the Aetolian Dioreus and is killed in return by the Aetolian Thoas.

Achilles' fight with the river involves a unique and spectacular extension of natural causality. At a natural level we can clearly trace a sequence in which Achilles pursues his enemies into the river, is caught by the swift current, but climbs ashore with the help of an uprooted tree straddling the river banks (21.240). But when the river pursues Achilles beyond the plain the boundaries of nature are left well behind, and the counter-attack of Hephaistos reverses the expected outcome of the clash of fire and water. Poseidon and Athene come to Achilles' rescue in his plight, the former a water god who has seniority over a mere river, the latter a goddess who is superior to the elements. The entire scene sees the hero's triumph over the elements as prior and subordinate to his human conflicts. One may also see in the entire scene a narrative modulation from human conflict to the battle of the gods. Whatever the reason for the temporary indulgence in the supernatural on such a scale, the narrative returns firmly to a natural perspective with the final encounter of Achilles and Hektor, where the presence of the gods as spectators underscores rather than suspends the limits of the natural world.

DIVINE MOTIVATION AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

Who deserves the credit or blame for the outcome of an action in which a god intervened? The answer to this question is far from simple and rests on premisses that were misunderstood even in antiquity. These misunderstandings, to which Plato and Euripides bear witness, are a good point of departure because they are the result of a perspective in some respects closer to ours than to Homer's. In Euripides' *Trojan Women* (860) there is a trial scene in which Helen asserts her innocence by pleading that she was compelled by Aphrodite against her will and is therefore not responsible. Clearly this defence derives from the Iliadic scene in which Helen refuses to obey Aphrodite's command to return to her husband but complies reluctantly when Aphrodite threatens her. Euripides' Hekabe refuses to accept this defence, and playing on a word she argues that it was not Aphrodite but Helen's *aphrosunē*, her recklessness and lack of control, that caused the disaster (989). In the myth of Er at the end of the *Republic* the souls must choose a fate before returning to earth, and this choice will

determine their moral life. As they choose, a voice reminds them: *aitia helomenou, theos anaitios* ('the choice is yours, do not blame the god!').

The polemical thrust of the two passages is unmistakable. Both disapprove of a view according to which a man may disclaim responsibility by shifting the blame on to the gods. The view they attack seems to be fully articulated in the apology of Agamemnon, where he says:

This is the word the Achaians have often spoken against me
and found fault with me in it, yet I am not responsible
but Zeus is, and Destiny, and Erinys the mist-walking
who in assembly caught my heart in the savage delusion
on that day I myself stripped from him the prize of Achilles.
Yet what could I do? It is the god who accomplishes all things. (19.85–90)

He then continues this statement with a long digression showing that even Zeus was subject to Delusion. The standard answer to the problem raised by this and similar passages runs as follows: the problem exists only if you hold a view of responsibility that focuses on intention and consciousness. If you hold such a view, then the apology of Agamemnon appears as a blatant piece of buckpassing, and something like the Euripidean and Platonic polemic is inevitable. But Homer's view of responsibility does not focus on intention, and in fact he is much more interested in liability than in responsibility. It is a characteristic feature of Homeric psychology, demonstrated by Snell and Dodds, that it will motivate an action externally through the intervention of a god while at the same time holding the subject liable for the consequences of an action of which he is not the cause. Hence Agamemnon's invocation of Zeus is not an evasion of responsibility. While there is much truth to this answer, Lesky (1961) has shown that it is not sufficiently sensitive to the nuances of Homeric situations. Agamemnon does not evade liability, but it is remarkable that he should find it necessary to say with such emphasis: 'It was not my fault.' The fact of the denial proves that it is possible to say: 'It was your fault'; indeed, that is what according to Agamemnon the Achaeans did say. Agamemnon's apology is more than Homeric psychology in action; it is an elaborate face-saving procedure quite intelligible in terms of common-sense psychology. Observe first that the poet makes a fuss about the injuries of the Achaean leaders (elsewhere he is apt to forget or ignore previous injuries). Diomedes, Odysseus and Agamemnon hobble into the assembly, visible sign of the humiliation Agamemnon has suffered (19.47). Not leaning confidently on his sceptre, but sitting down, Agamemnon begins to speak (19.76). His speech goes on for ever; its very length suggests that there is something to explain (away). Liability Agamemnon cannot escape – the hobbling warriors are visible proof of his folly – but he can make up a good story to make his responsibility appear in a flattering light: what should poor Agamemnon do if even Zeus could not escape

Delusion...? Nobody is in a mood to challenge Agamemnon's self-restoration, least of all Achilles, who concludes the assembly with pious words that are conspicuously silent about his first prayer, which Zeus granted as a cruel favour:

Father Zeus, great are the delusions with which you visit men.
Without you, the son of Atreus could never have stirred so
the heart inside my breast, nor taken the girl away from me
against my will, and be in helplessness. No, but Zeus somehow
wished that death should befall great numbers of the Achaians. (19.270-4)

In Book 3 the rhetoric of responsibility appears in a very different light. Helen has gone to the wall, where the old men still respond to her beauty but agree none the less that she should be handed over to the Achaeans. Against this background of disapproval Priam calls out to Helen and is anxious to say something kind to her:

Come over where I am, dear child, and sit down beside me,
to look at your husband of time past, your friends and your people.
I am not blaming you: to me the gods are blameworthy
who drove upon me this sorrowful war against the Achaians. (3.162-5)

Helen recognises the tactfulness of Priam, but for her the proper thing is to insist on her share of responsibility:

Always to me, beloved father, you are feared and respected;
and I wish bitter death had been what I wanted, when I came hither
following your son, forsaking my chamber, my kinsmen,
my grown child, and the loveliness of girls my own age.
It did not happen that way: and now I am worn with weeping. (3.172-6)

Not a word here of the gods, but a stark acknowledgement of the facts: I followed your son and left my family and friends behind. She concludes her speech with a strong phrase of self-reproach that appears to have the force of the slang usage 'bitch' (*kunôpis*).

The dialogue of Helen and Priam and the speech of Agamemnon suggest that the words of Homeric characters are highly responsive to differences in context. The formal assembly permits, perhaps even requires, elaborate face-saving: the Achaeans have as strong an interest as Agamemnon that the self-image of their king remain intact. In the private encounter Priam displays a kindness that is in character but not required by his office, and to his solicitous manner of removing the problem of responsibility Helen responds by emphatically pointing the finger at herself.

The Helen-Priam scene must also be read together with the Helen-Aphrodite scene that follows shortly. Aphrodite has rescued Paris and deposited him in the safety of his bedroom. Now she approaches Helen in

the guise of an old woman and tells her to go to her husband. Helen recognises the goddess and indignantly refuses. Here is the guilt-ridden woman of the conversation with Priam, venting her anger on the goddess: if you are so fond of him, why don't you go with him - he may make you his wife or his slave - but I will not (3.406). But, when the goddess turns on her in anger, Helen yields to the powerful combination of fear and passion Aphrodite represents. The scene is unique in the *Iliad*. No other character rebels against a god; no other god manifests his power by overruling and cowing his subject. But it is Homer who shows the power of Aphrodite, not Helen who claims the goddess as an excuse for her behaviour. In the subsequent scene we find Helen contemptuous of Paris and solicitous for his safety - a contradiction intelligible enough. In later scenes Helen is full of regret, self-recriminations and laments, but never does she offer an excuse.

If we now return to Euripides, we notice that his polemic rests on a systematic distortion of the *Iliad*. His Helen echoes Agamemnon, and the scene between Helen and Hekabe reverses the scene between Helen and Priam. The coarsening of the texture is appropriate to Euripides' polemic purpose, but Iliadic situations are much more ambiguous than their parodies and do not support a view of human responsibility that is the univocal opposite of the Platonic *aitia helomenou, theos anaitios*.

The flexible relationship between divine motivation and human responsibility extends to credit as well as to blame. Ancient writers did not find Homer problematic in this regard, but modern readers have often been uneasy in giving credit to a warrior for a deed in which a god tips the scale. The most notorious example occurs in the duel of Achilles and Hektor, where the trickery of Athene seems to give Achilles an unfair advantage that takes away from the glory of his triumph. The simple cases show clearly that the warrior may take full credit for the result achieved through divine intervention, but not all cases are simple. An unambiguous example occurs when Diomedes, on being wounded by Pandaros, prays to Athene that she may help him in his revenge. Some hundred lines later we see him throwing his spear at Pandaros, and Athene guides the missile towards its target as a reward and confirmation of his marksmanship (5.290). Things are cloudier in the foot race, where Odysseus prays to Athene and she rewards him with speed. His opponent is the lesser Aias, who after the fall of Troy incurred the wrath of Athene for destroying her sanctuary in the citadel. This tradition may be echoed when Aias, who does not pray to Athene, slips on a piece of cow dung, the work of the goddess as the poet tells us (23.774). So does Aias when, covered with cow dung, he exclaims:

Ah, now! That goddess made me slip on my feet, who has always stood over Odysseus like a mother, and taken good care of him. (23.782-3)

Do the poet and his character speak with the same voice? Or may we attribute to Aias a touch of jealousy and a suggestion that but for the (unfair) intervention of the god the race would have ended differently?

Whatever doubts we may have about the intention of Aias' words, the death of Patroklos offers unambiguous evidence of divine intervention that detracts from the glory of the human victory. There is nothing in the conventions of Homeric poetry that would prevent Apollo from playing the same role in the defeat of Patroklos that Athene plays in the defeat of Pandaros. But, as Homer shapes that death, the glory of Hektor's achievement is sharply diminished, as Patroklos himself points out in his dying words:

No, deadly destiny, with the son of Leto, has killed me,
and of men it was Euphorbos; you are only my third slayer. (16.849-50)

What, then, about Athene's role in the defeat of Hektor? She returns his spear to Achilles after his first throw, an action that perhaps has no thematic implications and is a somewhat awkward device for extending the critical encounter beyond the first exchange of blows that usually terminates a duel. In any event, the decisive spear-cast is the work of Achilles alone; Athene neither guides the missile nor adds to its thrust. He takes careful aim - a quite unusual thing to do for a Homeric warrior and hits Hektor where he knows his armour to be most vulnerable. This emphasis on the independent strength and skill of Achilles contrasts too sharply with the dominant role of Apollo in the death of Patroklos to be accidental. Athene's role is more ancillary than in the aristeia of Diomedes and more closely related to the delusion and final insight of Hektor (above, p. 63). Her presence neither enhances nor detracts from the achievement of Achilles but helps to direct sympathy towards the victim - a characteristically Iliadic motif. Achilles at the moment of triumph is distanced by his formidable superiority. Hektor, no longer the hectoring man of illusion, engages our pity no less profoundly than Patroklos, though in a very different manner.

THE HOMERIC GODS AND THEIR SOCIETY

THE INDIVIDUAL GODS: APOLLO AND ATHENE

Apollo and Athene intervene in the action of the *Iliad* more often than any other god except Zeus. To some extent the two are the patron gods of Trojans and Achaeans respectively. So it appears in the first fighting when Apollo, 'looking down from Pergamos', rallies the Trojans while Athene is busy among the Achaeans (4.507). The association of Apollo with the

citadel of Troy as well as with other surrounding places recurs in several passages, and some historians of religion have seen in it a reflection of the Asian origin of the god. But it would be quite wrong to say that Apollo is a Trojan and Athene an Achaean god. The Trojan bias of Apollo appears less powerfully in his protection of Hektor and the Trojans than in his opposition to Patroklos and Achilles. That opposition transcends the circumstances of the particular narrative and is rooted in the fundamental opposition of man and god. Apollo is the god in whom the characters of the *Iliad* experience the limits of the human. He keeps his distance and in so doing keeps man in his place. Take his first appearance in the poem. Insulted by Agamemnon, the priest Chryses prays to Apollo, invoking him in solemn and ritual terms. Apollo responds by sending the plague on the Achaeans. In the portrayal of the god the poet dwells on his bow as the attribute that reveals the essential nature of the god. In human hands the bow is a suspect weapon, suitable only to minor warriors, but Apollo's bow is the perfect emblem of divine distance, destroying man from a position of remote power:

and Phoibos Apollo heard him,
and strode down along the pinnacles of Olympos, angered
in his heart, carrying across his shoulders the bow and the hooded
quiver; and the shafts clashed on the shoulders of the god walking
angrily. He came as night comes down and knelt then
apart and opposite the ships and let go an arrow.
Terrible was the clash that rose from the bow of silver. (1.43-9)

This first appearance of Apollo sets his style in the poem. Whenever he speaks to men he draws a line. When Diomedes attacks the injured Aeneas, Apollo intervenes:

Take care, give back, son of Tydeus, and strive no longer
to make yourself like the gods in mind, since never the same is
the breed of gods, who are immortal, and men who walk
groundling. (5.440-2)

He utters similar words when Patroklos threatens the wall of Troy (16.707). He taunts Achilles with the question: Why do you chase me? I am not mortal (22.8).

Apollo responds to transgressions of sacred order. His role in the poem begins and ends with such a response. The intervention on behalf of Chryses is balanced by his protection of Hektor's body. He urges the gods to attend to Hektor's ransom, not because Hektor is his protégé, but because Achilles' actions are unseemly (24.40). His protection of Hektor's body is related to his function as a god of healing and ritual purity. He also acts in this role when he restores Aeneas, Glaukos and Hektor to health

and removes the body of Sarpedon from battle. In the society of the gods the defining attribute of Apollo is not the bow but the lyre, an instrument that likewise depends on controlled tension. When the unquenchable laughter of the gods has dispelled the quarrel of Zeus and Hera, it is Apollo's lyre that confirms the spirit of harmony among the gods (1.603).

The limits set by Apollo create the space of civilised existence. Apollo thus is a great benefactor of human life; without him all order would collapse. And yet the benefactor acts out of no special concern for mankind. Disdain is his prevailing mood, and man enters his field of vision only when he crosses the line drawn by the god. When the gods fight each other, Hermes and Apollo for very different reasons refuse to be drawn into the quarrel. Hermes, who faces Leto, tells her that it is a dangerous business for a god to attack a bedmate of Zeus. He concedes defeat in advance and urges her to boast of her victory among the gods. This shamelessness worthy of a Falstaff contrasts with the reasons Apollo advances to Poseidon:

Shaker of the earth, you would have me be as one without prudence
if I am to fight even you for the sake of insignificant
mortals, who are as leaves are, and now flourish and grow warm
with life, and feed on what the ground gives, but then again
fade away and are dead. Therefore let us with all speed
give up this quarrel and let the mortals fight their own battles. (21.462-7)

Like Apollo, Athene reveals traces of a more specialised role. She is the goddess of skills – in particular, domestic skills. When the women of Troy offer her a precious robe we catch a glimpse of the weaving goddess about whose competition with Arachne Ovid wrote one of his most famous tales. Achilles rejects the daughters of Agamemnon even if they combined the beauty of Aphrodite with the handiwork of Athene (9.389). The Trojan shipwright Harmonides was her special favourite (5.61). This functionally limited association of Athene with the Trojans pales before her vigorous partisanship of the Achaeans. She is much more emphatically a supporter of the Achaeans than Apollo is a protector of the Trojans, but her partisanship ultimately serves to express another experience of the divine, which Walter Otto has captured by contrasting the 'ever-remote' Apollo with the 'ever-present' Athene. The closeness of the divine embodied in Athene manifests itself in the narrative as support of her favourites and occasionally deception of her enemies.

Once again the god's peculiar being and style manifest themselves in her first appearance. Achilles is on the verge of killing Agamemnon when Athene intervenes. She is not ceremonially invoked nor does she act from afar. She arrives in the nick of time, stands behind Achilles, and with an intimate gesture pulls him by the hair:

Achilles in amazement turned about, and straightway
knew Pallas Athene and the terrible eyes shining.

He uttered winged words and addressed her: Why have you come now,
o child of Zeus of the aegis, once more? Is it that you may see
the outrageousness of the son of Atreus Agamemnon? (1.199-203)

The amazement of Achilles is free from all terror, and he addresses her in familiar terms. He obeys her, of course, if obedience is the right term: in the presence of Athene one sees the force of reason and acts on it. Her closeness also inspires presence of mind. So Odysseus in Book 2 is the only warrior not stampeded by panic. As he stands by his ship but refuses to draw it into the sea, Athene arrives once more in the nick of time, and armed with her encouragement he persuades and cudgels the Achaeans back to the assembly (2.166). Odysseus as the special favourite of Athene is not unknown in the *Iliad*, but this theme flowers in the *Odyssey*, where the 'ever-presence' of Athene almost assumes the form of chumminess, as in the long and teasing colloquy on Odysseus' first arrival in Ithaca (13.287). In the *Iliad* Athene is closest to Diomedes. She is with him at the beginning and end of his aristeia, and she addresses him without disguise. Her proximity to Diomedes in the final attack on Ares is quite literal: with an unceremonious shove she pushes Sthenelus off the chariot and mounts it herself, standing beside her favourite at the moment of his triumph. Familiar she may be, but she is also majestic: the axle of the chariot groans under her weight (5.838).

The close presence of Athene has its dangerous side. She deludes her enemies with destructive intimacy. She is the bright idea that moves Pandaros to break the truce (4.89). She takes the Trojans' wit away (18.311), and with heartrending cruelty she approaches Hektor in the guise of Deiphobos and gives to him, who had broken under the terrifying stress of loneliness, the illusion of fellowship and solidarity (22.226).

Apollo and Athene embody different modes in which man experiences the divine, but they are complementary rather than opposing deities. Within the sphere that Apollo defines as appropriate to human action Athene offers divine assistance. This complementarity emerges very clearly in the aristeia of Diomedes, where Athene gives her protégé the strength to defeat all mortals but warns him to beware of attacking the gods, a warning that he remembers and respects when it is repeated by Apollo. Although the narrative casts Athene and Apollo in the roles of the chief partisans of the opposing sides, the poet never opposes them to one another because there is at the thematic level no conflict between their natures.

THE INDIVIDUAL GODS: ARES AND APHRODITE

Athene is openly hostile to Ares and, in conjunction with Hera, is hostile

to Aphrodite as well. The complementarity of Ares and Aphrodite and their joint opposition to Athene are a major thematic axis of the poem, no less important to its understanding than the complementarity of Athene and Apollo. Ares and Athene are joined several times as war gods. When the armies first encounter one another, the Achaeans silent in well-ordered advance, the Trojans and their allies in noisy confusion, Ares appears as leading the latter and Athene the former. But the implicit contrast is blunted by the following lines, which describe the presence of weakly personified attributes of war, terror, fear and hate, presumably on both sides (4.440). On three occasions Athene and Ares are joined without any differentiation in phrases meaning 'not even Ares or Athene would belittle/undertake such fighting' (13.127, 17.398, 20.358). Zeus characterises war as the work of Ares and Athene (5.430). But wherever their conjunction is elaborated it turns into the opposition of control and mindless fury.

This point appears clearly when Hera stirs rebellion against Zeus and tells Ares about the death of his son Askalaphos (15.110). Full of outrage, Ares is ready to defy Zeus' command, calls for his horses Fear and Terror and puts on his armour. But Athene, fearing for the safety of the gods, stops him, takes off his helmet, takes the spear out of his hand, and gives him a tongue-lashing. To complete her treatment of him as an ill-tempered brat she makes him sit down. Evidently Ares is not a god whose feelings need to be respected.

The fullest elaboration of the opposition occurs in the *aristeia* of Diomedes, where Ares and Aphrodite are joined as gods of passion whom Athene subjects to ridicule and humiliation. At the beginning of his *aristeia*, Athene gives Diomedes permission to attack Aphrodite alone of all the gods. She does so because of the scandalous role Aphrodite had played in the duel of Paris and Menelaos and because in the divine assembly following the abortive duel Zeus had aroused her anger by praising Aphrodite for looking so well after her protégé. Without saying so, Athene seeks revenge through Diomedes, and her opportunity comes when Aphrodite ventures once more on the field of battle, this time to rescue Aeneas, her son by Anchises (5.311). The rescue attempt is given in unusual detail. What covers Aeneas is not the customary dense cloud, but Aphrodite's white elbows and the folds of her shining dress. These, she thinks, will be a 'bulwark against missiles' and keep bronze from her son's chest. But Diomedes is made from other mettle than Menelaos. His spear pierces the gown 'that the graces wove for her' and stabs her wrist so that *ichôr*, the divine blood, flows to the ground. Screaming, she drops Aeneas, and but for Apollo he would be lost, for she is preoccupied with her terrible wrist-wound and implores Ares to drive her back to Olympus. There she finds a sympathetic welcome from her mother Dione, who makes a proper fuss over her, tells stories about other gods who suffered at the hands of mortals, accuses Athene of having egged on Diomedes, and

mutters darkly that he will come to no good end. But Hera and Athene have fun at her expense. Now it is their turn to do the teasing, and Athene mocks:

Father Zeus, would you be angry with me if I said something? It must be the lady of Kypros, moving some woman of Achaia to follow after those Trojans she loves so hopelessly, laying hold on the fair dresses of the Achaian women, tore the tenderness of her hand on a golden pin's point. (5.421-5)

Zeus takes the teasing in good spirit but has kind words for Aphrodite:

No, my child, not for you are the works of warfare. Rather concern yourself only with the lovely secrets of marriage, while all this shall be left to Athene and sudden Ares. (5.428-30)

His words look forward to the repetition of the incident with a different cast. Athene has come to the side of Diomedes worn out by his previous injury. She scolds him for being less warlike than his father, and he replies: I see Ares in the field. Did you not tell me to stay away from the gods except for Aphrodite (5.819)? But now Ares joins Aphrodite as a target of attack. With the help of Athene, Diomedes attacks the god; his spear, lent additional thrust by the goddess, pierces the abdomen of Ares. He, too, screams, but much louder than Aphrodite (859), and flees back to Olympus like a funnel cloud. Where the divine daughter sought refuge with the mother, the divine son seeks out the father. Clearly the sequence repeats the wounding of Aphrodite with a deliberately coarsened crescendo. But the climax is different as the father turns on the son with contemptuous anger:

Do not sit beside me and whine, you double-faced liar.
To me you are most hateful of all gods who hold Olympos.
Forever quarrelling is dear to your heart, wars and battles. (5.889-91)

Sex and violence are the stuff of the Trojan war, which begins with the rape of Helen and ends with the burning city. The poet is far from idealising his subject. The cowed submission of Helen and the smouldering ruins of Troy reveal the power of Ares and Aphrodite at their elemental worst. But the poet who acknowledges the power of these gods pays little tribute to them; instead he views them with laughter and disdain. The easy triumph over them by Athene, repeated in the Battle of the Gods (21.391) and echoed in the Odyssean story of Ares and Aphrodite, manifests the Olympian ethos of the *Iliad*, in which the dignity and control of Athene and Apollo count for more than the chaotic passions of love and war.

THE INDIVIDUAL GODS: ZEUS

The quartet of Apollo, Athene, Ares and Aphrodite cover much of the range of the divine in the *Iliad*, but we must remember that these gods (as well as all the others) can do little that lies outside the will of Zeus. Indeed, in their most important interventions the other gods are simply the instrument of Zeus. He is the king of the gods in a far more radical sense than Agamemnon is the king of the Achaeans. Power is his defining feature. He likes to boast of it in crudely physical terms. In a famous passage, he challenges the other gods to a tug-of-war with a golden chain and predicts that he would easily pull the chain with all the gods and goddesses, including Earth and Ocean, and hang it from the top of Olympus (8.19). He threatens violence to Hera (1.565, 15.16) and to Poseidon (15.162), and the fear of his indiscriminate anger leads Athene to stop Ares from avenging his son Askalaphos (15.121).

As with Apollo and Athene, the first appearance of Zeus manifests his being and style. When Thetis visits him she finds him sitting apart on the highest summit of Olympus. Because her mission is secret the poet needs to show Thetis and Zeus by themselves. But the solitude of Zeus transcends narrative exigency and is a defining aspect of his nature. He is usually by himself, imagined either on a mountaintop (8.47, 14.157, 15.151) or nowhere in particular. When he grants the request of Thetis, he nods his head and shakes Olympus (1.528): the passage inspired Phidias to his famous statue of Zeus and is a metaphoric anticipation of Aristotle's unmoved mover.

Unlike the other gods, Zeus never appears on the battlefield, and he never speaks to a human being, whether in disguise or in his own voice. He communicates with men through intermediaries such as Apollo and Athene or the messenger gods Hermes and Iris (4.70, 11.185, 15.146, 24.331). On the other hand, Zeus likes to comment on human affairs. He regrets the death of Sarpedon and weeps bloody tears, a meteorological prodigy without parallel (16.459). He pities Hektor (17.198) and the horses of Achilles (17.441). He prophesies the death of Patroklos and return of Achilles to battle (8.470); on another occasion, he looks beyond the death of Hektor to the fall of Troy (15.69). No other god shares this choric function with him.

Zeus sometimes acts in his original role as lord of the skies. He sends thunder and lightning (8.75, 133, 15.377); he can darken the battlefield with fog and clouds (16.567, 17.268), but he can also send sudden light (17.649). These meteorological interventions, however, are much less common than a more abstract form of intervention that makes Zeus the cause of things *par excellence*. Here it is useful to take note of the very different knowledge that readers and characters have of divine actions in the *Iliad*. The reader is throughout in the privileged position of Diomedes to whom Athene gives temporary clairvoyance so that he can see and

distinguish the gods. Thus the reader will develop a vivid image of the Olympian gods in their striking individuality. The normal situation of the characters is quite different: they combine a keen sense of divine effects with ignorance of their particular causes. The characters will attribute such effects to 'a god' or 'the gods'. The reader knows that Athene is protecting Diomedes; Pandaros only knows that some god stands by him (5.185). Similarly, Aias knows that one of the Olympians took the form of Kalchas and gave courage to the Achaeans, but he does not recognise Poseidon (13.68). Only in special cases does a character attribute an effect to a specific god. Thus Hektor recognises the absent Deiphobos as Athene, and for the lesser Aias it is clear that Odysseus owes his victory in the foot race to Athene.

The great exception to this rule is Zeus, and perhaps the best measure of his radical superiority is the way in which Homeric characters habitually trace events to Zeus in a manner in which the Christian sees the hand of the Lord. If a god is specified by a character as the cause of an event, it is almost invariably Zeus, and his various names occur more frequently in the *Iliad* than the names of all other gods put together.

THE OTHER GODS

Other gods than the five discussed so far appear in the *Iliad*, some of them quite frequently. But none of them plays a narrative or thematic role that is distinct and crucial to the structure of the poem. Of these gods, lesser not in rank but in poetic function, Hera and Poseidon are clearly the most important.

There are two important aspects of Hera in the *Iliad*, reflecting her status in the divine hierarchy and her role in the story. As the consort of Zeus she ranks above all the other gods and in some ways stands between him and the others. The poet does not oppose the pair of Zeus and Hera to the rest of the gods. When he insists on the singularity of Zeus he will put Hera with the gods. But she derives from her special situation a licence to contradict him and quarrel with him openly.

The Iliadic Hera is motivated by a bitter hatred for everything Trojan, a hatred so radical that its satisfaction leads her to abandon her favourite cities of Argos, Mycenae and Sparta to the later wrath of Zeus as long as he will guarantee the destruction of Troy. No wonder, for the judgement of Paris and the rape of Helen offend her in a triple capacity: as woman, as guarantor of marriage, and as patroness of the city of Menelaos. Despite the intensity of her hatred, her narrative function is quite limited because the translation of her anger into action is the work of Athene. Hera and Athene are great plotters on Olympus, but Hera recedes into the background as soon as the action begins. Thus Hera is much less central to the

Iliad than Juno is to the *Aeneid*, where her relentless anger resists the fulfilment of Aeneas' mission at every stage. The only action that is planned and carried through by Hera is the deception of Zeus in Book 14.

Poseidon presides over the counter-offensive of the Achaeans in Books 13 and 14 but, considering his status as one of the three lords of the universe, he plays a marginal role in the *Iliad*. He supports the Achaeans because the Trojans under King Laomedon did not reward him when he built a wall for them (21.441). This motive is a rather thin justification for his presence, especially in comparison with the *Odyssey*, where he and his crude son Polyphemos represent the furious revenge of the elements once man intrudes on them. In fact, Poseidon is somewhat out of place in the *Iliad* in a twofold manner. He is literally out of his element; he is also behind the times. He remembers the division of the universe into three parts of which Zeus, Poseidon and Hades were to be co-equal rulers. He grumbles at, but lacks the power to challenge, the supremacy of Zeus. His exit from the scene develops that theme in considerable detail (15.184). The poet gives Poseidon playing-time according to his status, but he is ultimately a superfluous presence. One can imagine an *Iliad* without Poseidon.

The other gods appear in either marginal or sharply restricted contexts. Thus Leto and Artemis help in healing Aeneas and appear briefly in the battle of the gods (5.447, 21.470). Iris is always the messenger of the gods and nothing else. Hermes in his safe conduct of Priam combines his traditional roles of god of wayfarers and thieves and conveyor of the dead (above, p. 74). Hephaistos is the god of fire, appearing both in its elemental form and as the artificer who controls and uses it.

A survey of the gods in the *Iliad* should not pass over personifications, which sometimes owe their divinity to editorial fiat. Hebe is youth personified; her personhood and divine status in the poem are unquestioned (4.2, 5.722, 905). But some personifications have a more ambiguous existence. Take the following lines:

and Terror drove them, and Fear, and Hate whose wrath is relentless,
she the sister and companion of murderous Ares,
she who is only a little thing at the first, but thereafter
grows until she strides on the earth with her head striking heaven.
She then hurled down bitterness equally between both sides
as she walked through the onslaught making men's pain heavier.
(4.440-5)

Here *Eris*, 'Hate', is clearly personified, as she is at the beginning of Book 11, where she stands on the ship of Odysseus and rouses the Achaeans to battle. Are Terror and Fear similar daemons, deserving of capital initials,

or are they lower-case nouns? The same question arises about the companions of Ares in Book 5:

and Ares led them with the goddess Enyo,
she carrying with her the turmoil of shameless hatred

Arēs kai potni' Enuō
hē men echousa Kudoimon anaidea dēiotētos (5.592–3)

The translator here denies to *kudoimos* the status that the editor gives to it. *Enuō* and *kudoimos* are both very obscure words; the latter occurs in contexts where personification is clearly inappropriate and in others where it may be intended (11.52).

In many of these cases it is impossible to tell (nor does it matter very much) whether a noun is personified and whether such personification rests on religious practice or is a matter of poetic convention. It is certainly wrong to take such forms of speech as in themselves providing evidence about the belief in or cult of divine entities. Nowhere is it more important to resist this temptation than with the group of words, often vaguely and sometimes strongly personified, that imply some sort of deterministic outlook. Most prominent in this group is the word *moira*, which means 'share' or 'lot'. The word *aisa*, derived from a semantically similar root, is also common. Homer uses *moira* in sentences where it is the subject of an action, either by itself or in conjunction with another noun or god, as in

alla me moir' oloē kai Lētous ektanen huios
(But Zeus and *moira* and mist-walking vengeance, 19.410)

Hektora d'autou meinai oloīē moira pedēsen
(Destructive *moira* forced Hektor to stay in the same place, 22.5)

ellabe porphureos thanatos kai moira krataiē
(Purple death and strong *moira* seized him, 5.83)

alla Zeus kai moira kai ēerophoitis Erinus
(But Zeus and *moira* and mist-walking vengeance, 19.410)

Who or what is *moira* (or *aisa* and similar words)? What is its relationship to human decisions and to the gods? What is Zeus up to when he deliberates whether he should prolong the life of Sarpedon, whose *moira* it is to be vanquished by Patroklos (16.434)? What about Apollo, who repulses Patroklos on the grounds that it is neither his *aisa* nor that of Achilles to conquer Troy (16.707)? In what sense are the premature return of the Achaeans (2.155), the death of Aeneas (20.336) or the conquest of Troy by Achilles (20.30, 21.517) 'against fate'? Does Zeus make a decision

or a discovery when he weighs the lots of Achilles and Hektor and the latter's *aisimon ēmar*, 'day of *aisa*', falls (22.212)?

The demand for systematic and coherent answers to questions of this kind wrongly imputes to Homer a concern with philosophical and theological problems of determinism. Homer was not Boethius. His characters are all fatalists of a pragmatic kind, and their lives, defined by generations of storytellers, were full of events that 'had to happen'. But from the fact that the *Iliad* has a rich language of fate it does not follow that either Homer or his characters used that language with more precision or greater metaphysical claims than we do when we say 'It was bound to happen' or 'That's the way it is'. To mystify such simple words as *aisa* and *moira* and to catch through them a glimpse of a demonic and comprehensive agency of fate is to misunderstand the clarity, nobility and un-sentimental realism with which Homeric warriors recognise and accept their mortal lot. Not for them the endless arguments of Milton's devils about 'providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,/Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute' (*Paradise Lost*, 2.559-60).

THE SOCIETY OF THE OLYMPIANS

The gods of the *Iliad* have their residence on Mount Olympus. They form a society that is more than the sum of its parts and breathes a style and ethos of its own. Athene and Apollo are the Olympians *par excellence*. Ares and Aphrodite are not Olympian at all in spirit. They are admitted to Olympus to reflect within its boundaries the opposition against which the Olympian spirit defines itself with laughter and disdain. Homer is aware of gods that are not admissible to Olympus because they challenge it too radically. One of these gods is Dionysus, to whom the *Iliad* refers briefly on two occasions (6.132, 14.325). The Dionysus of Euripides' *Bacchae* or the Aphrodite of the *Hippolytus*, a much more Dionysiac force than her namesake in the *Iliad*, cannot be contained within the limits of Olympus, and the worshipper's ecstatic union with the god, which is at the heart of the Dionysiac cult, is equally foreign to the severe distance of Apollo and to Athene's illuminating proximity. The gods of the underworld are also banished from Olympus. Death is final in the *Iliad*. Precisely because the poem is so insistent on this point it can have no truck with chthonic forces or with the cult of the dead that attributes to the deceased ancestor a continuing power to bless or curse. In the *Oresteia* Apollo and Athene are the winners in the conflict with chthonic forces, but their victory is precarious and yields to a harmonious and mysterious settlement. The Aeschylean Athene does not dare treat the Erinyes as Homer's Athene treats Ares and Aphrodite. A comparison of the modes of her triumph in the *Iliad* and the *Oresteia* tells us much about the character and limits of the Homeric Olympus.

Zeus is the only god to carry the epithet 'Olympian'. It occurs half a dozen times in the *Iliad*, and on a dozen occasions 'the Olympian' is a sobriquet for Zeus. Both usages have their origin in the role of Zeus as the sky god, but it would be wrong to infer from them that Zeus is the most Olympian of gods. Although his power guarantees the continuance of Olympian society, he is in some important respects not an Olympian at all. When Zeus scolds Ares for his quarrelsome and barbarian nature he speaks like a true Olympian, but the *Iliad* attributes to Zeus fits of indiscriminate anger that go beyond anything Ares is capable of. Hephaistos remembers one such occasion when Zeus flung him from Olympus (1.591). Hypnos suffered a similar fate (14.257). Zeus reminds Hera how he hung her from the sky and weighted her feet with anvils (15.18). The past violence of Zeus and the threat of its repetition serve to limit the Olympian society no less than the exclusion of Dionysus and the chthonic deities. Olympian society owes its existence to a censorship Victorian in its rigour, if not in its prudishness. The censorship rests on the poet's commitment to the Olympian values embodied in Apollo and Athene, but he knows too much about the world not to give us a sense of the continuing existence and force of what he excludes. The attitude of the *Iliad* towards Olympus is a curious mixture of admiration, envy and condescension. It is determined by the manner in which the poet defines the opposition between human and divine society. The human world is shaped by conflict. To such a world one could oppose Paradise or Elysium, a world of unchanging bliss and devoid of conflict. Alternatively, if conflict is seen as the result of passion, one could oppose to the human world a rational order, such as that of Swift's Houyhnhnms. Olympus is unlike Paradise and unlike the world of the Houyhnhnms, for the gods are not always rational, and they are far from peaceful. But, conflict-ridden as their society is, it differs from the human world in that their struggles always yield to reconciliation and never have irreversible consequences. The quarrel of Agamemnon and Achilles rages unchecked until it claims Patroklos as its victim. The assembly in which their quarrel erupts is balanced by a divine assembly in which Zeus and Hera have a frightful row, but the mediation of Hephaistos resolves the tension in peals of divine laughter.

The outrageousness of the gods reaches its high (or low) point in the theomachy, the battle of the gods that takes place after Hephaistos has stopped the attack of the river god on Achilles (21.385). The reader who expects a solemn catastrophe, a kind of *Götterdämmerung*, will be sorely disappointed, for the theomachy is more in the nature of a tavern brawl. Ares seeks revenge on Athene, but she lays him flat with a stone. This is the only encounter that bears any resemblance to heroic fighting. As for the others, Athene gives Aphrodite a push as she conducts Ares from the battlefield so that both lie on the ground — probably an allusion to their amours. Hera takes Artemis' arrows and slaps her face with them. Hermes

freely admits his cowardice and refuses to fight. So does Apollo, for whom the occasion is altogether too undignified. And Zeus, who shed tears for Sarpedon and generally follows human events with serious concern? He laughs:

But upon the other gods descended the wearisome burden of hatred, and the wind of their fury blew from division, and they collided with a grand crash, the broad earth echoing and the huge sky sounded as with trumpets. Zeus heard it from where he sat on Olympos, and was amused in his deep heart for pleasure, as he watched the gods' collision in conflict. (21.385-90)

The sublime frivolity of the gods relates them to mortals in a twofold manner. From one perspective their youth, beauty, power and immortality make them immeasurably superior to man - a theme stressed in the famous image of the fallen leaves (6.146, 21.464). But from another perspective poverty, ephemerality and exposure to risk are a source of human dignity and significance. Because the gods are protected against risk, their experience is finally void, for value is created by risk and the possibility of loss. From this perspective, the 'easy lives' of the gods are looked on with condescension. The perspectives of despair and condescension are intimately related. To daydream about a life free from the constraints of sickness, age and death is very human. Sarpedon does so in his famous exposition of the heroic code. If we were gods, he says there, we would not fight but would live in perpetual pleasure. But we are not and must earn pleasure and recognition by risking our lives (12.322). When Achilles daydreams about a peaceful life on his estate in Phthia, what is this but a secularised version of the life of the gods? He learns that the choice is impossible, and once the inevitable choice is confirmed ironic denigration colours the picture of the easy life.

The *Odyssey* illuminates the *Iliad* in this respect. If we except the song of Ares and Aphrodite, distanced by virtue of its being a song within the song, the Odyssean gods are less glamorous and more moral than the gods of the *Iliad*. The world of desire and daydreams takes intermediate shapes that lack the prestige of Olympus and can be rejected. Thus Scheria is a quasi-divine world, more decorous and less sublime than but just as frivolous as the Iliadic Olympus. When a conflict erupts, as in Euryalos' boorish challenge to Odysseus, it is easily resolved and serves only to stress the freedom of this world from toil and strife (8.158, 396). Nausikaa, though native to this world, is bored by it, and Odysseus is not tempted for a minute. For he had rejected a similar opportunity in a more glamorous form. Kalypso had promised him immortal youth, but Odysseus chose Penelope and rocky Ithaka (5.215). The world of mortality and labour to which the Bible condemns mankind as a result of the Fall appears in the

Homeric vision as the object of deliberate choice. In different ways Odysseus and Achilles both reject divinity and choose mortality. Here, as in Freud's celebrated essay on *The Merchant of Venice*, the possibility of human dignity arises from the ability to transform the inevitable into the freely chosen. The Homeric Olympus is a mirror in whose glittering surface mankind discovers that dignity.

JUSTICE AND THE GODS

The history of Homeric criticism begins with attacks on Homer's representation of the gods. The sixth-century poet-philosopher Xenophanes wrote: 'Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods everything that is a shame and reproach among men, stealing and committing adultery and deceiving each other' (fr. 169; Kirk, 1957, 166). Plato in the *Republic* elaborated this attack. Because it was inconceivable to him that justice and the divine would not completely coincide, and because this is evidently not the case in Homer, he drew the radical consequence of banishing Homer from his Utopian commonwealth, which had room only for a poetry strictly committed to celebrating the gods as guardians of justice. The Platonic attack had a considerable effect on the development of the Western epic as the most prestigious and political form of poetry. The epic poet had to think of himself as answering the Platonic charge on behalf of all poetry. Milton as usual shows the most explicit awareness of the epic poet's task when he asks the spirit for illumination

That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

The reader who, steeped in the epic tradition, looks in the *Iliad* for theodicy will be disappointed. The gods are not just in any ordinary sense of the word. He may attribute the lack of theodicy to the fact of polytheism. A system of many gods is much better at representing the manifold conflicts of the world than at establishing an overriding principle of justice. But this answer founders on the pre-eminence of Zeus, which gives rise to the expectation that the conflict of particular gods is part of some overarching design. The proemium of the *Iliad* endorses this expectation when it concludes its summary of events with the phrase *Dios d' eteleieto boule*, 'and the design of Zeus was fulfilled'.

Some scholars have argued that the poet of the *Iliad* does not justify the ways of God to men because he does *not yet* have a concept of justice. They point out that the root for the word 'just' and its derivatives in the classical period is rare in the *Iliad* and is used more restrictively. Also the characters in the *Iliad* invoke Zeus as protector of particular rights (hospitality, oaths)

rather than as guarantor of a comprehensive principle. Social justice is a theme in the *Odyssey*, and even more so in Hesiod, but when in an Iliadic simile Zeus punishes the wicked with a flood, not unlike the Old Testament god, the sentiment and language of the passage stick out like a sore thumb (16.384). The 'not yet' theory sees in the behaviour of the gods the reflection of an aristocratic code based on a self-regarding competition for goods. Men are to gods what the poor and weak are to the rich and powerful. Men, or the lower classes of them, as the case may be, must suffer the fallout from the dealings of their betters. Nowhere does this situation appear more starkly than in the divine deliberations about the fate of Troy, which falls victim to the horsetrading of Zeus and Hera (4.1). In the poem's final vision Zeus appears as the random dispenser of good and evil.

From an evolutionary perspective the recalcitrance of the *Iliad* to theodicy appears as a moral deficiency. But such a perspective is highly questionable. It is now widely agreed that the significant differences in outlook between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* reflect different purposes and generic constraints rather than moral and intellectual evolution. These differences are most marked when it comes to justice. The *Odyssey* is a model tale of poetic justice. Odysseus tells how he punished Polyphemos for his violation of hospitality, but through Odysseus Homer tells his story of Odysseus' unwarranted intrusion into the brutal but innocent world of the Kyklops, and he derives from it the interpretation of the subsequent adventures of Odysseus as punishments. Transgression and punishment figure prominently in the Aiolos and Thrinakia adventures that seal the fate of the companions. In the story of the homecoming, loyalty is tested and disloyalty provoked into insolence; in the final reckoning, the virtuous are rewarded and the guilty are punished.

The poet of the *Iliad* is perfectly familiar with the explanatory scheme that underlies the *Odyssey*. He does not deny that the fall of Troy is the divinely sanctioned punishment for the rape of Helen; this premiss accounts for the bitter irony of the scene in which Hekabe in her search for the most valuable gown to offer to Athene picks one that Paris had brought home from his fateful voyage (6.286). But such explanatory patterns are peripheral to the *Iliad*. The poet is more interested in the logic of events than in their justice, and what interests him most of all is the discrepancy between the intentions that trigger an act and the consequences that follow from it. The 'plan of Zeus' that is fulfilled in the *Iliad* is the order of events that becomes intelligible to the human mind only in retrospect. It is an order of events, rather than a chaos, and it provides, among other things, for justice of a rough kind. The poet of the *Iliad* does not justify the ways of God to men, but he shows the gods in their bewildering contradictions as guarantors of the logic of events. That is a theodicy of sorts, and by claiming less it may be truer to the facts of our experience.

CHAPTER 6

The Composition of the *Iliad*

In the previous chapters I have looked at the *Iliad* as we have it without paying much attention to questions of origin. My working hypothesis has been that the text can be interpreted according to the same canons and procedures that we use in the analysis of other large-scale works. The hypothesis gained strength from the emergence of an architectonic design and from the discovery that much narrative detail, however traditional if considered on its own terms, assumes a specific structural function through its placement or elaboration. The discriminating use of lion similes (above, p. 116) is typical of the poet's way, and even in the battle scenes, the loosest and most formulaic part of the poem, detail is never allowed to proliferate for long without some control that relates it to the poet's larger narrative ends.

In this chapter I turn to what a long tradition of scholarship has identified as the Homeric Question: How did the *Iliad* come into being? I ask the question in a modified form: What processes of composition can plausibly account for the highly organised structure modern criticism has discovered in the text? This version of the question has a strong 'unitarian' bias and reveals my affinity with those scholars who use the unified nature of our *Iliad* as their main argument for the position that it must have been the work of a single poet.

Any plausible hypothesis about the process of composition, however, must satisfy conditions beyond its compatibility with the architecture of the poem. It must do justice to Parry's demonstration that the *Iliad* is rooted in a tradition of formulaic language and must respect more generally those aspects of Homeric art that 'oral criticism' has taught us to see. Finally, a plausible hypothesis must take into account the observations of the 'analysts', the scholars who have used narrative discontinuities or contradictions as evidence for the position that our *Iliad* is the work of several hands. This approach to Homer has never found much favour in the Anglo-American world, if only because the zeal of its predominantly German practitioners has often been singularly devoid of common sense. But, however offensive this position is to the intuitions of the common reader, neither oral criticism nor unitarian theories offer satisfactory explanations for the major stumbling-blocks on which the analytical case rests. (See J. A. Davison for a survey of the Homeric Question.)

REPETITION AND CONTEXTUAL SURPLUS

In looking for a theory of composition that is compatible with the findings of major branches of Homeric scholarship, I begin with the analysis of a class of repetitions that previous scholars have either ignored or used without any concern for their status as evidence. I refer to whole lines or longer passages that are repeated once or twice in the poem. Analysts have blithely derived theories of multiple authorship from such doublets or triplets on the assumption that they could discriminate between original and copy. Oral critics, on the other hand, have not bothered to differentiate such repetitions from the mass of unmistakably formulaic repetitions. But the behaviour of many doublets is incompatible with assumptions of formulaic origin, and the task of constructing a plausible hypothesis of composition is greatly narrowed down if we recognise the co-existence in the *Iliad* of formulaic and non-formulaic repetitions.

The formula that reveals the oral nature of the Homeric epic is typically a fraction of a line, but there are longer passages as well that are clearly formulaic in usage. There is the entire system of speech-framing lines with its rigid combinations of a 'saying-phrase' with a 'name-phrase'. In addition some forty-five lines occur four times or more often in the *Iliad*; another twenty lines have four or more occurrences in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Their frequency and their occurrence in fixed contexts with random distribution suggests that such lines are formulaic, although we cannot tell, nor does it matter very much, whether Homer inherited these lines or invented some or all of them. Examples of such lines are

all' ageth' hōs an egō eipō peithōmetha pantes (× 8)
(Come then, do as I say, let us all be won over)

aneres este philoi mnēasthe de thouridos alkēs (× 7)
(Friends, be men and remember fierce battle)

autika d'ex ocheōn sun teuchesin alto chamaze (× 8)
(At once in all his armour he leapt to the ground from his chariot)

aps' d' hetarōn eis ethnos echazeto kēr aleeinōn (× 7)
(To avoid death he shrank into the host of his own companions)

doupēsen de pesōn arabēse de teuche' ep' autōi (× 6)
(He fell thunderously, and his armour clattered about him)

A line of this type will occur on average once every forty-five lines, a sufficient frequency to contribute to the formulaic character of the poetry. But, apart from speech-framing and otherwise formulaic lines, there are about 600 passages, ranging from one to nine lines, and adding up to a

little over a thousand lines, that are repeated once or twice and account for almost 2,000 correspondences within the *Iliad* and another 350 correspondences between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. These figures do not include some forty instances in which a message is repeated or an order is given and executed in the same words. This convention is a striking feature of Homeric narrative, but it has no bearing on questions of composition.

Roughly speaking, every eighth line in the *Iliad* is a doublet or triplet, although the distribution is quite uneven, ranging from less than 10 per cent to almost 30 per cent for individual books. Some doublets are no doubt formulaic, i.e. they are pre-existing lines that because of the limitations of the Homeric corpus do not reveal their formulaic nature beyond a reasonable doubt. There are other doublets that cannot be formulaic. The clearest examples are the twenty-odd doublets five lines or longer. We may exclude from the outset the possibility that such passages were generated independently. Since a five-line passage will consist of fifteen to twenty phrasal elements, it defies all probability that independent generation, using the same formulas and rules of combination, would produce exactly the same sequence of words over five or more lines on an average of once every 400 lines. The other possibility, that the whole passage is a formula, runs counter to the principle of economy. The longer a passage the more limited its field of application. It is in the interest of the oral poet to travel lightly. Why should he burden his memory with the heavy luggage of whole verse paragraphs when simpler modules and the rules of combination achieve the same result?

With these general considerations in mind let us turn to some examples. In the second book Agamemnon says:

Zeus son of Kronos has caught me fast in bitter futility.
He is hard; who before this time promised me and consented
that I might sack strong-walled Ilion and sail homeward.
Now he has devised a vile deception, and bids me go back
to Argos in dishonour having lost many of my people.
Such is the way it will be pleasing to Zeus, who is too strong,
who before now has broken the crests of many cities
and will break them again, since his power is beyond all others. (2.111-18)

He continues for another twenty-one lines and concludes:

Come then, do as I say, let us all be won over; let us
run away with our ships to the beloved land of our fathers
since no longer now shall we capture Troy of the wide ways. (2.139-41)

At the beginning of Book 9 the same lines occur, where they now serve as the whole of Agamemnon's speech. The hypothesis that the doublet

depends on a formula for a leader in despair is surely much less plausible than the alternative that either a short version was expanded or a longer version cut. Exactly the same cut/expansion relationship obtains between the scenes that describe the departure of Hera and Athene from Olympus (5.719-21=8.381-3; 5.733-7=8.384-8; 5.745-52=8.389-96). In Books 4 and 8 we find the following passage:

So he spoke; and Athene and Hera muttered, since they were
sitting close to each other, devising evil for the Trojans.
Still Athene stayed silent and said nothing, but only
sulked at Zeus her father, and savage anger took hold of her.
But the heart of Hera could not contain her anger, and she spoke forth:
Majesty, son of Kronos, what sort of thing have you spoken?
(4.20-5=8.457-62)

Shall we argue that the tradition possessed a six-line formula for the situation in which Hera and Athene are angry at a remark by Zeus, but Athene bites back her anger whereas Hera cannot control herself? Surely the existence of a formula for three specified characters in a specified sequence makes nonsense of all assumptions about the usefulness of a formula system as an improvisational device. The inescapable conclusion for the three cases cited, as well as similar ones, is that passage A is a copy of passage B or vice versa. We may not be able to establish which passage is the original or whether the copyist was the same or a different poet. But the presence of such doublets establishes beyond a reasonable doubt that at least with regard to these passages we are dealing with a process of composition in which there is a fixed text (not necessarily written down) from which a poet copies a passage for use in another context. The implications of that conclusion for the composition of the *Iliad* are considerable. It is, however, possible that the limited number of long and self-evident instances of copying are the result of interpolation or other special circumstances and tell us little about the composition of the poem as a whole. For this reason it is important to establish whether traces of a model-copy relationship, so apparent in long doublets, can also be found in the much larger number of short doublets.

The evidential value of doublets emerges very clearly if we treat them as formulas and check whether their behaviour is compatible with formulaic origin. A formula R may appear in contexts r_1, r_2, \dots, r_n if each context shares the minimum requirements for its correct use. According to a theory of formulaic origin, r_1 and r_2 are separately related to R, but their relationship to each other is a by-product of formulaic composition, and they stand in a random relationship to one another. Even the most cursory examination of doublets shows that this is not the case. On the contrary, doublets show a high degree of 'contextual surplus', by which I mean

resemblances between r_1 and r_2 that are not required by the meaning of the line(s) in question. Some contextual surplus will occur randomly or will be the result of specific narrative constraints compatible with formulaic composition. Thus, if we insisted on treating Agamemnon's speech in Books 2 and 9 as two occurrences of the 'speech of the discouraged leader' formula, we should not attach any significance to the fact that Agamemnon is the speaker on both occasions, for that similarity arises from the most general constraints of the narrative. But with the Hera and Athene scenes of Books 5 and 8 we must assume either that there is a 'departure of Hera and Athene' formula or we must account for the contextual surplus that makes them, as opposed to some gods, the subjects of the 'departure of the gods' formula on two occasions.

Contextual surplus has little value as evidence in any individual case, where it can always be dismissed as random. But its cumulative value is high. If we can show that many doublets show contextual surplus of varying kinds and degree, and that its incidence in the aggregate is higher than one would expect on a random basis, the hypothesis that doublets derive independently from formula types becomes less plausible than the hypothesis that many doublets derive from each other. Thus the cumulative weight of contextual surplus is strong evidence for a model-copy relationship among doublets.

Contextual surplus is most striking when it attaches to short passages that do not in themselves raise any suspicions about their formulaic origin. Take the following example. Hippothoös drags the body of Patroklos by the heel

for the favour of Hektor and the Trojans, but the sudden evil
came to him, and none for all their desire could defend him.
(17.291-2 = 15.449-50)

Aias kills him, and the poet speaks a little necrologue:

and he could not
render again the care of his dear parents; he was short-lived,
beaten down beneath the spear of high-hearted Aias.
(17.301-3 = 4.477-9)

The first two lines recur in Book 15, where Teukros, at the command of his half-brother Aias, kills Kleitos. The second doublet is applied to Simoeisios, an earlier victim of Aias. The mutually reinforcing association of these passages with Aias, their contextual surplus, is very strong.

The restriction of a doublet to the same person or to a set of closely related characters is the commonest and clearest form of contextual surplus. Menelaos is a particularly good example because he turns up in a

number of doublets that are restricted either to himself, or to himself and his brother, or to himself and Nestor or Antilochos. (In the following examples, Lattimore does not always use the same translation for different occurrences of the same line.)

(1) *Restriction to Menelaos*

- (a) nor did the bronze point break its way through, but the spearhead bent back in the strong shield. Then in turn he was ready to hurl the bronze spear.
(3.348-9=17.44-5)

The passage is both times followed by the line: 'Atreus' son, Menelaos, with a prayer to Zeus father'.

- (b) Drawing his sword with the silver nails, the son of Atreus...
(3.361=13.610)

This refers to Menelaos attacking Paris and Peisandros. The blow of the sword both times hits *koru:hos phalon*, 'the horn of the helmet', a phrase that occurs on two other occasions, on one of which it involves Antilochos. More significant is the fact that both contexts address the outrage to Menelaos: he concludes his victory over Peisandros with a long speech of indignant exultation.

- (c) So he was whirled beside the wheel from the chariot...
(6.42=23.394)

The subject of this innocuous line is Adrestos in Book 6 and Eumelos in Book 23. The former supplicates Menelaos; the latter comes in last in the chariot race because of an accident. Achilles' decision none the less to award him second prize touches off the dispute between Menelaos and Antilochos.

(2) *Restriction to Menelaos and Agamemnon*

- (a) First the lion breaks her neck caught fast in the strong teeth then gulps down the blood and all the guts that are inward.
(11.175-6=17.63-4)
- (b) and leaned in on the stroke in the confidence of his strong hand...
(11.235=17.48)

Both doublets link Menelaos as the killer of Euphorbos to the aristeia of Agamemnon.

- (c) He lifted his voice and called in a piercing cry to the Danaans:
Friends, o leaders and men of counsel among the Argives...
(11.275-6=11.586-7=17.247-8)

The second line is formulaic and occurs eight times in the poem. The first line recurs at 8.227, where Agamemnon is the speaker. The combination of the lines again links the Menelaos of Book 17 to the *aristeia* of Agamemnon, although this link is weakened by the third occurrence in which the wounded Eurypylos is the speaker.

- (d) Now when these in their advance were close to each other the son of Atreus missed with his throw, and the spear was turned past him.
(11.232-3 = 13.604-5)

The first line occurs eleven times. The phrase 'missed with his throw, and the spear was turned past him' occurs only in this context and only with the subject 'son of Atreus'. The passage as a whole links the *aristeia* of Agamemnon to the duel of Menelaos and Peisandros.

(3) *Restriction to Antilochos and Menelaos*

Antilochos is a prominent minor character, who usually appears in the company of Menelaos. In Book 5 he comes to the latter's rescue when he is threatened by Aeneas; in Book 15 he follows Menelaos' encouragement to do something special and kills Melanippos. In Book 17 he is told by Menelaos to bring the news of Patroklos' death to Achilles; in Book 23 he tries to outwit Menelaos in the chariot race and is upbraided by the latter after the race. The narrative connections are probably suggested by the relationship of the houses of Menelaos and Nestor in the tradition. Antilochos or Antilochos and Menelaos form a strong contextual surplus in a number of doublets.

- (a) so that gasping he dropped from the carefully wrought chariot...
(5.585 = 13.399)

The line describes the death of a charioteer killed both times by Antilochos after the warrior has been killed by Menelaos (Book 5) and Idomeneus (Book 13).

- (b) He fell, thunderously, and darkness closed over both eyes.
(15.578 = 16.325)

This doublet combines two extremely common phrases. In the first occurrence the victim is killed by Antilochos, in the second by his brother Thrasymedes after an unsuccessful attack on Antilochos.

- (c) ...and he was hurled into the dust backwards reaching out both hands to his own beloved companions...
(4.522-3 = 13.548-9)

- (d) and his eyes
filled with tears, the springing voice was held still within him . . .
(17.695-6 = 23.396-7)
- (e) and hefted the shining javelin,
glaring round about him, and the Trojans gave way in the face of the man
throwing with the spear. And he made no vain cast.
(4.496-8 = 15.573-5)

In each of these three doublets Antilochos is the agent in one passage and is part of the narrative or turns up in the immediate vicinity of the other.

- (f) and now the Trojans and Hektor
with unearthly clamour showered their baneful missiles . . .
(8.158-9 = 15.589-90)

The victim is Nestor in one passage and Antilochos in the other.

- (g) Father Zeus/Antilochos, no god/man beside is more baleful than you are.
(3.365 = 23.439)

The speaker is Menelaos in the duel with Paris and after the chariot race.

- (h) He turned and stood when he got into the swarm of his own companions.
(11.595 = 15.591 = 17.114)

The subject is Antilochos in Book 15 and Menelaos in Book 17. In Book 11 it is Aias, but Nestor turns up in the following line.

- (i) Nor did Aineias/Antilochos hold his ground, though yet a swift
fighter . . .
(5.571 = 15.585)

Aeneas yields to Antilochos and Menelaos. In Book 15, Antilochos yields to Hektor after being urged on by Menelaos

- (j) Far the first to rise up was the lord of men, Agamemnon/Eumelos and
rose after him the son of Tydeus, strong Diomedes . . .
(7.162-3 = 23.288, 290)

The lines, which sound as formulaic as anything in the *Iliad*, describe the volunteering for the duel with Hektor and for the chariot race. Both events, however, feature Menelaos and Nestor in very prominent roles. The phrase 'Far the first to rise up was . . .' (*ōto polu prōtos*) does not recur in Homer.

The passages discussed above show strong and mutually reinforcing

contextual surplus. They raise the question why seventeen disparate and often quite nondescript doublets should be restricted in their use to contexts that involve the presence of Menelaos, Menelaos and his brother, or Menelaos and the family of Nestor. Similar networks of doublets with marked context restrictions exist for Hektor, Hektor/Paris, Hektor/Patroklos/Sarpedon, Aias, Aias/Menelaos, Aeneas, Deiphobos, Meriones/Idomeneus. By far the most extensive network, however, links Achilles to himself and to his substitutes Patroklos and Diomedes. There is not enough space to develop this network in detail here; I conclude instead with a set of Odysseus-Sarpedon doublets that are remarkable both for their quirkiness and because they extend into the *Odyssey*.

- (a) But I tell you, what you will win from me here will be death
and black destruction; and broken under my spear you will give me
glory, and give your soul to Hades of the famed horses.

(5.652-4 = 11.443-5)

The lines are spoken by Sarpedon to Tlepolemos and by Odysseus to Sokos. Following the Sarpedon-Tlepolemos duel, Odysseus appears, wondering whether he should pursue the wounded Sarpedon or the injured Lykians. The coincidence is made more striking by the fact that Odysseus does not figure prominently in battle and that outside of Book 11 the scene in Book 5 is his most extended fighting scene.

- (b) to stand among the foremost
fighters, and endure your share of the blaze of battle . . .

(4.341-2 = 12.315-16)

The lines occur in Agamemnon's rebuke to Menestheus and Odysseus, whom he accuses of being the first at a feast but the last in battle. They also occur in the famous speech of Sarpedon, in which he correlates the warrior's privilege in peace with his obligation to fight. After this speech, Sarpedon and Glaukos prepare to attack Menestheus. Although Menestheus' name is mentioned on three other occasions, the scenes in Books 4 and 12 are the only ones in which he can be said to play a part.

- (c) he went like a mountain bred lion . . .
. . . his manly spirit/his stomach urges him
to attack the sheep and enter the close homestead . . .

(*Iliad*, 12.299-301 = *Odyssey*, 6.130, 133-4)

The simile of the mountain-bred lion introduces Sarpedon in Book 12. An expanded version that maintains the basic pattern and wording describes the naked Odysseus when he faces Nausikaa. There is the further resemblance that Sarpedon carries his shield and spear before him - not a very

common gesture – whereas Odysseus covers his private parts with a branch. In any event, there is a similar sequence of carrying gesture and simile.

(d) They as two hook-clawed beak-bent vultures...

(Iliad, 16.428 = *Odyssey*, 22.302)

This striking phrase (*aigupioi gampsónuches ankulocheilai*) describes the encounter of Patroklos and Sarpedon. In the *Odyssey* it is applied to Odysseus and Telemachos in their attack on the suitors.

This contextual surplus relating Odysseus, Sarpedon and Menestheus is remarkable both for its specificity and its pointlessness. Unlike the Menelaos passages, the Odysseus-Sarpedon passages cannot be coordinated with any narrative tradition or purpose. But the very quirkiness of the association strengthens its evidential value.

Contextual surplus can take other forms than identity or association of characters. Thus the line 'stabbed with the bronze-pointed spear and unstrung his sinews' (4.469 = 11.260) both times refers to a victim who had been trying to drag another body by the foot. The line 'raged on among the champions until so he lost his dear life' (11.342 = 20.412) refers to warriors trusting in the swiftness of their feet. More strikingly, the line both times occurs in the vicinity of a reluctant father. In Book 20 we hear that Priam would not let his favourite son Polydoros join the fighting, but he disobeyed his father. In Book 11, where Agastrophos is the victim, the motif occurs in the immediately preceding killing, where the sons of the prophet Merops fall to Diomedes after ignoring their father's advice.

A third example looks far-fetched at first sight but gains some force from the dense network of Diomedes-Achilles doublets:

...saw them across the ranks and drove on against them
crying aloud, and with him followed the Trojan
battalions... (5.590-1 = 11.343-4)

This doublet occurs both times in the context of a Hektor-Diomedes encounter, but I am interested here in the phrase 'drove on against them' (*orto d' ep' autous*), which occurs only in this doublet and in the river fight, where the river does not let go of Achilles but 'rose on him' (*orto d' ep' autôi*, 21.248). If we now return to Book 5, we find Diomedes frightened by Hektor like

a man in his helplessness who, crossing a great plain,
stands at the edge of a fast-running river that dashes seaward,
and watches it thundering into white water, and leaps a pace
backward. (5.597-9)

The association of the rare theme of death by water with the humdrum phrase *orto d' ep' autōi/autous* in two of its three occurrences is noteworthy, all the more so since the coincidence fits the firmly established pattern according to which Diomedes undergoes the trials of Achilles in a palliated form.

A weak form of contextual surplus appears in doublets that are restricted to the same book or neighbouring books. Such doublets are especially frequent in the fighting scenes of Books 13-15. A much more interesting problem is posed by clusters of doublets that relate two books to each other. A good example is the relationship of Books 3 and 19. These books share five doublets for a total of ten lines. The longest is the standard arming passage, which refers here to Paris and Achilles but also occurs in a varied form in other books (3.330-2, 334-5=19.369-73). Then there are three doublets that refer to a sacrifice made in confirmation of an oath (3.271-2=19.252-3, 3.279=19.260, 3.292=19.266). That arming and oath scenes should occur in close proximity on two occasions and produce verbal resemblances is not in itself remarkable. But an additional doublet puts the others in a new light and generates strong contextual surplus. Helen speaks of 'my own brothers, born with me of a single mother' (3.238), whereas Briseis in her lament for Patroklos speaks of 'my three brothers, born with me of a single mother' (19.293).

The pervasive evidence of contextual surplus permits certain minimal conclusions to be established with great certainty. Contextual surplus is the product of an individual mind that betrays its presence in the text by the persistence and sometimes quirkiness of its associations. This mind does not operate with a stock of formulas but copies parts of a particular text inscribed in its memory. Contextual surplus by itself cannot tell us whether the mind remembers its own productions or those of another, but it is sufficient proof that the remembered passage is a part of a fixed text, which may or may not have been written down. It follows that there are two types of repetition and memory that prove with equal force the existence of two different processes of composition. The system of noun-epithet formulas and related phenomena points to a traditional diction that served the needs of oral poets in whose work improvisation played a dominant role. Doublets with contextual surplus point to a process of composition in which new lines are created by re-using or adapting fragments from a previously existing text. The collective memory of formulaic diction points to a process of composition to which the ordinary concept of a text is quite inappropriate. The individual memory of contextual surplus presupposes on the part of the author a sense of textual identity that is fundamentally like ours, although it is characterised by a very high tolerance to verbatim repetition. As it turns out, the account of composition that reconciles these two types of memory and repetition also permits us to integrate into one hypothesis the major insights of analytical, unitarian and oral theories about the composition of the *Iliad*.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE *ILIAD*

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EPIC POET

A plausible account of the composition of the *Iliad* must respect the constraints that different aspects of our knowledge of the poem exercise on each other. The evidence for an individual memory and for the model copy relationship of many doublets is of itself compatible with theories of single and multiple authorship. The large-scale structural coherence of the work, on the other hand, is a strong 'argument from design' for single authorship. The formulaic elements of the style finally point to the rootedness of the poem in an established tradition. The mutual constraints of these elements point to a process of gradual composition, the stages of which are to some extent recoverable.

The author of the *Iliad* grew up in a tradition of oral versemaking that provided him with an extraordinarily powerful instrument, the language of hexametric narrative. He learnt his craft and assembled a repertoire of familiar stories to be recited on festive occasions of various kinds. A typical performance would last an hour or two; perhaps some were as long as Odysseus' narrative at the court of the Phaeacians. But it is difficult to imagine an institutional context that would support more extended narratives. The poet's repertoire in all probability did not consist of fixed texts, but we may also assume that two performances by him of a given story would resemble one another more closely than either one would a telling of the 'same' story by another singer. Such resemblances would include the scope of the story as a part of the total repertoire, the arrangement and weighting of elements within that scope, and elements of diction and style. We should allow the young Homer one to two decades to develop into a master of his craft, with a complete repertoire and a style and excellence recognisable by his audience.

Whether or not we want to attribute 'innovative' tendencies to Homer, we must think of him not only as a master of his craft but also as a supremely gifted man who, like Shakespeare, Bach or Mozart, could not help transforming whatever he touched. Aristotle saw the particular excellence of the Homeric poems in their control of large-scale narrative, and since this quality distinguishes them from all other heroic poems it is reasonable to look for a specific quality of Homer's genius in his sense for large-scale narrative. We arrive thus at the situation of a master-poet who 'decides' at a certain point to extend the scope of heroic narrative and to compose a work of encyclopaedic dimensions that would incorporate much of his repertoire. The context and motives of that decision are shrouded in darkness, but some speculation may be permitted. One aspect of a poet's greatness is his ability to give authoritative expression to the deepest concerns of his age. Dante and Milton, the most autobiographical of the great epic poets, were open about the relationship of their poetic ambition

to the religious and political conflicts of medieval Florence and seventeenth-century England. Did Homer respond similarly to the sense of pan-Hellenic identity of which we find other traces in the eighth century BC? Did this response trigger the break with the tradition that led to the *Iliad* as a poem much longer and more complex than any of its predecessors, or should we look for the cause of this transformation merely in the individual excellence and ambition of a 'monumental composer'? (Kirk, 1962, 280) Was the Ionian poet from Asia Minor attracted to the story of Troy because, like the author of the *Aeneid*, he wanted to account for his cultural indebtedness to a homeland beyond the sea? Such questions are of course unanswerable, but it is a fact that within a generation, perhaps even in the poet's lifetime, the *Iliad* became a founding text of Greek culture. It is tempting to relate this historical achievement to an intention and to see Homer's ambitious design for a monumental poem prompted by the desire to give shape to the growing Hellenic consciousness of his age. At the very least, there is no reason to use his status as an oral poet to deny the presence in his career of motives that are more clearly articulated and more easily traced against a known historical background in the works of Vergil, Dante and Milton.

If it took Homer the better part of two decades to become a master-poet, the execution of his design for a grand poem must have been the work of further years, perhaps decades. Let us assume, for argument's sake, that the composition of the *Iliad* lasted as long as the Trojan War. We can hardly imagine Homer delaying 'publication' to the moment of perfection. Nor can we imagine him reciting from work in progress, as Vergil did with the *Aeneid*. Neither of these alternatives is easily reconciled with what we know from the *Odyssey* and other heroic traditions about the circumstances of a professional singer. Instead we should think of a gradual process of composition in which the poem was always complete after a fashion, having a beginning, a middle and an end. Thus, during Homer's maturity there was always something like a 'complete *Iliad*', but it was always expanding. (A distant analogue would be the composition of Goethe's *Faust*, of which there also was a complete/incomplete version over a period of fifty years.) We may assume that the plan and scope of the work underwent modifications over the years but that it was part of the poet's genius to have conceived of a design capable of such expansion.

The assumption of an evolutionary process in which an always complete *Iliad* was always expanding is eminently compatible with the one distinctly 'oral' feature of Homeric narrative that may justly be said to operate with equal force at all narrative levels. G. S. Kirk (1976, 78), who has given the best description of this feature, calls it the 'cumulative style' (other names for it are 'additive' or 'paratactic'). Unlike a Latin period, the Homeric sentence is complete from a very early stage but can be greatly elaborated through additions. The first paragraph of the *Iliad* is a good example.

Mēnin aeide thea is a complete sentence to which the poet adds elements each of which leaves the sentence complete but capable of further expansion:

- | | | |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (1) | <i>Mēnin aeide thea</i>
<i>Pēlēiadeō Achilēos /</i> | sing goddess of the wrath
of the son of Peleus Achilles |
| (2) | <i>oulomenēn</i>
<i>hē muri' Achaiois alge'</i>
<i>ethēke /</i> | the destructive (sc. wrath)
which brought countless suffering
to the Achaeans |
| (3) | <i>pollas d' iphthimous psuchas</i>
<i>Aīdi proiapsen /</i> | and threw many strong souls to Hades |
| (4) | <i>hērōōn</i>
<i>autous de helōria teuche</i>
<i>kunessin /</i> | of heroes
but left their bodies as a prey to
dogs |
| (5) | <i>oiōnoisi te pasi</i>
<i>Dios d'eteleieto boulē /</i> | and all carrion birds
and the will of Zeus was fulfilled |
| (6-7) | <i>ex hou de ta prōta diastētēn</i>
<i>erisante / Atrēidēs te anax</i>
<i>andrōn kai dios Achilleus</i> | from the time when a quarrel erupted
between Atrides, lord of men and
brilliant Achilles. |

The forward surge and cumulative force of this magnificent paragraph are not arrested by any suspension of meaning except for the very end, where the postponement of the subject into the next line creates a two-line semantic unit with great closing force. This procedure, in which modification is achieved without 'revision' or loss of forward motion, clearly has its origin in a technique of oral versemaking.

A procedure that allows for continuous forward composition also tolerates subsequent insertions of additional materials: the joints of a narrative stretch composed in this fashion are rarely so tight that something cannot be squeezed in. Take the example of the Catalogue of the Ships, which shows the technique operating at several levels. This is almost certainly a piece of narrative that existed once in a somewhat different form and was inserted in its present place after minor modifications that themselves took the form of additions. At one time the Catalogue may have been a simple muster of troops. The text acquires its naval character through the addition after each contingent of a line specifying the number of ships. We would not miss these lines if they had not been transmitted. Moreover, at the beginning of the Catalogue the poet invokes the Muse to tell him the names of the leaders rather than the crowd, but the invocation ends with a detachable specification of the leaders as the leaders of the ships (2.493).

The Catalogue certainly was composed to reflect the Achaean forces at the beginning rather than at the end of the war. For instance, it lists Protesilaos, the first man to die on Trojan soil, and Philoktetes, who was left behind on Lemnos. The resulting editorial problem was solved by

addition rather than subtraction: to the mention of these two leaders is in each case added a detachable commentary (2.699-709, 721-8) that brings the story up to date. Once adjusted by means of appropriate additions, the whole Catalogue becomes an addition that is inserted at a joint in the narrative.

The epic that accumulated over ten or more years as a consequence of the poet's expansion of an elastic design differed from his previous repertoire in being a fixed text to be recited verbatim rather than composed anew with each performance. It is very likely that the concept of a fixed text entered Greek culture through the creation of the *Iliad* as a poem of such scope, excellence and complexity that it had to be protected from the vagaries of performance. Most Homeric scholars believe – and, I think, rightly – that the existence of the *Iliad* as a fixed text is closely related to the introduction of writing into Greek culture some two generations before the life of Homer. But the concept of a fixed text does not depend on writing, and it would be misleading to think of the availability of writing as the chief cause of the transformation of an oral tradition into the monumental epic.

Shortly after Homer, the heroic tradition went into a tailspin from which it never recovered. Following a line of argument that W. J. Bate in *The Burden of the Past* (p. 82) has traced back to Velleius Paterculus, G. S. Kirk (1976, 2-3) has argued that the cause of that decline lies in the very excellence of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. These poems exhausted the possibilities of the genre, discouraged creative imitation, and replaced innovation with preservation. Like tragedy three centuries later, the epic died after a burst of stupendous energy only to survive as a 'fixed monument. If we accept this plausible analysis, for which the history of culture provides many analogues, the concept of a fixed text is the product of a collusion between Homer and his audience. The author, after developing from the fluid tradition a repertoire that bore the imprint of his personality and over the years had grown more stable, took the further step of refashioning and freezing this repertoire into a monumental poem. The audience responded to this extraordinary ambition and recognised the poem as a 'classic' in need of preservation. The birth of the *Iliad* was the death of the heroic tradition.

The role of writing in the creation of the *Iliad* as a fixed text is much disputed. Kirk believes that Homer did not write and that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were transmitted orally in a substantially unchanged form for several generations until they were written down in the middle of the sixth century. This is a minority view, but Kirk's arguments have the great virtue of stressing that the concept of a fixed text is not dependent on writing. On the other hand, it is tempting to see in the availability of writing a powerful contributing cause to the growth of the monumental epic, not to speak of the problems of transmission.

The Mycenaean Greeks used writing for administrative and commercial purposes (Linear B). After the collapse of their civilisation, writing disappeared from Greece for about four centuries. Towards the end of the ninth century BC, the Greeks adapted an alphabet from the Phoenicians. The date is suggested by the resemblance of the Greek alphabet to Phoenician scripts current during that period. We know very little about the spread or degree of literacy in Greece until roughly 600 BC when inscriptions become slightly more frequent. Only a handful of documents can with any confidence be dated before 700 BC. The most famous of these – the early date is not uncontested – is a cup found in 1953 in Ischia. It is a plain piece of pottery with a three-line inscription, partly iambic and partly hexametric. The inscription is fragmentary; a plausible reading attributes to the modest cup aphrodisiac powers and therefore ranks it above the ‘cup of Nestor’ (*Nestoros poterion*), about which Book 11 of the *Iliad* has much to say. It is a striking feature of the inscription that its orthography and punctuation imply a system of prosodic notation for hexametric verse. The few other inscriptions from around 700 BC also are in hexameters.

Because of the archaising tendency of heroic poetry, writing is never mentioned in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, with one exception. In Glaukos’ narrative of Bellerophon we read that Proitos sent Bellerophon to Lykia ‘and handed him many murderous symbols, which he inscribed in a folding tablet’ (6.168–9). Most scholars think of these lines as a heroically stylised description of a letter, both because of the emphasis on *many* signs, and because of the use of the word *graphein*, which usually means ‘scratch’ or ‘graze’ in Homer but here is used in a manner that anticipates its later usage as the standard word for writing.

The evidence, slender as it is, is sufficient to establish the fact that writing was known in Homer’s day. There is, however, no positive evidence to suggest that Homer’s contemporaries had the resources to record, store and transmit a document as long as the *Iliad*. The early fixing and transmission of the Homeric texts will forever remain a mystery. Our conviction that we do indeed have ‘Homer’s *Iliad*’ rests on one of two assumptions, both of which involve a leap into the dark and beyond the available evidence. On one assumption the fixed text was transmitted by memory over several generations. There is no analogue for verbatim transmission of texts of such complexity, with the possible exception of the *Rig Veda*. On the other assumption, we must attribute to Homer’s contemporaries the ability to handle lengthy and complicated written documents. The chief difficulty with this assumption is not technological but historical. If the Greeks of the late eighth century BC had this capacity, why does the historical memory of classical Greece not extend back to Homer but blurs shortly before 600 BC?

On balance, the assumption of a written *Iliad* causes fewer difficulties

than the assumption of its oral transmission over several generations. The history of the world is full of inventions and discoveries whose 'obvious' fields of application were long ignored. Thus it does not strain belief (and is compatible with the epigraphic evidence) that writing, which was adapted from the Phoenicians, presumably for trading purposes, was used by Homer to create and record the monumental epic, but that the technological capacity implicit in this achievement remained specialised for several generations and was not applied to other forms of extended discourse until much later. In the ancient biographical tradition about Homer we read that his dowry to his daughter was a copy of the *Cypria*, a lost epic about the events preceding the *Iliad*. The anecdote may be historical in pointing to a copy of the text as the professional poet's chief capital.

It is likely, then, that Homer saw the possibility that writing offered to his ambitions and that he used it to create a text that differed from earlier heroic poetry in being longer, more complex, and fixed. But Homer the writer did not unlearn the skills of oral versemaking. On the contrary, the technical constraints of writing in his days reinforced the procedure of cumulative composition. Even in an age of Xerox machines and word processors revision of a text in the light of subsequent changes is a tedious, complicated and error-prone business. In Homer's day, when papyrus must have been scarce and writing laborious, a text once written represented an investment one would touch only with reluctance. On the basis of such considerations G. P. Goold has developed a model of the 'progressive fixation' of the Homeric texts, and some such procedure most readily accounts for the abundance of doublets in the text. Above all, such a hypothesis resolves the paradox that the *Iliad* is both a magnificently designed and, by our standards, a 'poorly edited' poem.

Homer possessed a copy of the *Iliad*, to which he added over the years until it reached its present shape. The existence of a text that was at any one time fixed but subject to further additions had an effect on the nature of the additions. The poet did not mind repeating himself. Oral versemaking had accustomed him to a very high level of tolerance to repetition at the phrase level, and such conventions as the verbatim repetition of messages established precedents for the repetition of longer passages. The move to a fixed text did not immediately diminish the tolerance to repetition, but created new forms of it. The poet who had composed one speech by a discouraged Agamemnon had no scruples in using a cut version of it when he needed a similar speech for the subordinate purpose of introducing the Embassy. On many other occasions, the poet unconsciously remembered his own combinations of formulaic phrases, as with *rigēsen d'ar'epeita* ('then shuddered'), which occurs only with *anax andrōn Agamemnon* ('the lord of men Agamemnon'). In other words, through convenience and inertia, the fixed text replaced the formulaic repertoire as the

source of new lines. The force of that development increased with time. Let us imagine Homer in the eighth year of his *Iliad*, with a text that has grown to 12,000 lines, or 75 per cent of its final length. For the poet at this stage of his career, the existing *Iliad* was a much more powerful determinant than the heroic tradition. The last 4,000 lines of the *Iliad* are Iliadic rather than heroic hexameters, composed for a specific place in a *magnum opus* and reflecting the pressures of that work both in their sameness and difference. But Homer the writer did not yet face any incentives to avoid repetition, and the conditions of recitation ensured that even extended doublets would, for the most part, lie below the threshold of recognition.

The bulk of doublets, including the very long ones, cannot be interpreted as the product of a poetic intention but are a carry-over of formulaic habits into a new mode of composition. Of the splendid lines portraying the clash of armies (4.446-51=8.60-5) one can only say that the poet used them again, presumably because he thought well of them. Nothing is gained by reading one context in the light of the other. Sometimes the contexts get in each other's way. The famous prophecy about the fall of Troy is spoken by Agamemnon to Menelaos and by Hektor to Andromache (4.163-5=6.447-9). Most modern readers will find the echo disturbing and wish the words had been reserved for Hektor, in whose mouth they resonate with pathos and irony, an effect that is undercut by the vindictive certainty of the hysterical Agamemnon. There are, however, occasions when the doublets establish a significant link between their contexts. Whether the poet intended these links or whether they are a by-product of his associative memory we cannot tell, but the effects yield to interpretation. While such semantically charged doublets are a minority it would be a mistake to disregard them simply because the majority of repetitions are inert.

Occasionally, it seems possible to speak of a deliberate effect. Thus, the moment of death for Patroklos and Hektor is described in an identical three-line sequence. When Thetis visits Achilles for the first time she says:

Why then, child, do you lament? What sorrow has come to your heart now?
Tell me, do not hide it in your mind, and thus we shall both know.
(1.362-3)

She repeats the same question, with a slight variation of the second line, when she visits Achilles the second time (18.73). A precise echo of the second line, however, occurs when Achilles addresses the weeping Patroklos (1.363=16.19). The sympathetic question almost becomes a refrain articulating the stages of Patroklos' career. It is also deeply ironic that, in the conclusion of his fighting speech to the Myrmidons, Patroklos repeats the words of Achilles to Thetis:

That Atreus' son wide-ruling Agamemnon may recognize
his madness, that he did no honour to the best of the
Achaians. (1.411-12 = 16.273-4)

When Hektor reaches the ships, the Achaeans are pushed back to the point from which they started in Book 2. Both passages include a bird image with the identical line 'of geese, and of cranes and of swans long-throated' (2.460 = 15.692). This is not the only time that the narrative uses an identical line to return to the same spot. At the end of Book 15 the poet turns from the retreating Aias to Achilles and Patroklos. When he returns to Aias, he repeats himself: 'the volleys were too much for Aias, who could no longer hold his place' (15.727 = 16.102). When Patroklos encourages the Myrmidons to attack the Trojans, they cheer just as the Achaeans had cheered the words of Odysseus (2.333-4 = 16.276-7); the doublet marks the recovery from a nadir. Twenty lines later the flight of the Trojans 'along the hollow ships' takes the same form as that of the Achaeans when Hektor smashed the gates (12.471 = 16.296).

THE STAGES OF THE ILIAD: A ROUGH SKETCH

The evidence of the doublets, together with our knowledge of the poetic craft in which Homer's artistry is rooted, suggests that the *Iliad* grew over a period of many years and in a cumulative fashion. Is it possible to go farther and to reconstruct the stages of its genesis? The answer depends on the extent to which we believe that Goold's 'progressive fixation of the text' took place without revision of previous elements. If the text grew simply by addition, then it should in principle be possible to recover earlier stages through a process of subtraction, using as evidence the narrative discontinuities to be expected when insertions strain the original narrative joints. On the other hand, there is a great difference between no revision and some revision. We may well believe that the poet was reluctant to adjust his earlier narrative in the light of subsequent additions. We may also concede, without calling into question the excellence of his design or brilliance of his execution, that he was not a very good nuts-and-bolts editor of his own work. But that the progressive fixation of the text proceeded entirely without deletion or revision is highly improbable, given the size and complexity of the work. Since even a modest amount of deletion and revision, with its possibilities for feedback between early and late passages, can effectively block the path to the origin of the text, precise reconstruction, the dream of much nineteenth- and twentieth-century German scholarship, is a chimerical enterprise. On the other hand, the rough stages of the poem's growth are visible and have been well known since the nineteenth century, although scholars of that period invariably attributed the stages to different hands. Gottfried Hermann was the first

scholar to develop a systematic expansionist theory early in the nineteenth century. In the English-speaking world, the theory gained currency through its inclusion in Grote's *History of Greece* and through the great commentary by Walter Leaf, which still provides the sanest and most comprehensive discussion of the narrative stumbling-blocks that have given rise to theories of multiple authorship.

In addition to uncertainty about the extent of revision, the task of reconstruction is made more difficult by the nature of the evidence. Homer's language is a linguistic and cultural amalgam of several centuries. It is possible to identify 'early' and 'late' elements in this amalgam with great confidence, but of course the evidence thus obtained is quite irrelevant to the task of identifying individual strata in a work that may have grown into its current form over the much shorter span of a single lifetime. Linguistic evidence may be helpful in identifying some limited post-Homeric interpolations, but for the bulk of the *Iliad* we must assume that the amalgam did not change significantly during the poet's life.

The evidence for different stages of the *Iliad* lies in various forms of narrative discontinuity resulting from the poet's indifference to some unintended consequences of his additions to the text. There are two difficulties with such evidence. First, it is much more difficult to reach agreement on what counts as a narrative discontinuity than to identify a Mycenaean relic or an Aeolian morphological form. Second, narrative discontinuity engenders critical ingenuity. Interpretative strategies of all kinds, from allegorical exegesis onward, have been developed to make sense of textual difficulties. There is no narrative discontinuity that a skilled interpreter cannot fill with meaning; whether it should be filled is a matter of judgement and rests on one's assessment of the range of narrative conventions operative in the work. My own sense is that Homeric narrative, while very subtle in its use of juxtaposition and implicit contrasts, is very straightforward in its concern for causes and consequences - witness the opening lines of the *Iliad*. Any interpretation that violates the straightforwardness of Homeric narrative may miss the mark as easily as one that shrugs off problems of coherence as inevitable by-products of oral composition.

The two major forms of discontinuity are 'cracks' in the narrative joints and poor cross-references. With both forms, there are many instances in the *Iliad* where 'interpretation' puts a much greater strain on the conventions of Homeric narrative than does the assumption that the discontinuity results from the poet's deficiency as an editor. A cardinal example of a crack in the narrative occurs in the opening of the second book. Zeus has taken steps to honour his promise to Achilles and has sent a dream promising victory to Agamemnon. One expects that Agamemnon will act on this deceptive dream and will come to grief, but nothing of the kind happens. Instead he calls a council of his elders and informs them that

he will first test the army 'as is proper' (2.73) and make a speech urging them to go home. The failure of this plan, the mutiny of the army and Odysseus' restoration of order lead to a new beginning of the war in which, as countless critics have pointed out, we move back in time to the first year. The derailment of narrative at the beginning of Book 2 corresponds to some odd features of what may have been the other end of the original joint. Book 11, the third day of battle, marks a very strong beginning. It is, to be sure, appropriate as the overture to this decisive day of fighting, but a number of correspondences between Books 11 and 1 and 2 suggest that the third day of fighting was once the first and that with Book 11 the narrative returns to the position at which it had been interrupted at the beginning of the second book.

Another crack in the narrative is remarkable for showing signs of careful splicing on the surface. Book 13 ends with a description of the noise of battle. In the opening lines of Book 14, Nestor responds to the noise of battle, leaves his tent, and shortly encounters the injured warriors Agamemnon, Diomedes and Odysseus. Their ensuing conversation, however, does not reflect the situation at the end of Book 13, where the Achaeans have the upper hand; rather, it responds to the crisis of Book 12, when Hektor smashes the gates of the wall. Thus Nestor's response to the battle noise covers up a significant discontinuity. If we return now to the end of Book 13, we see that an encounter of Aias and Hektor is elaborately prepared through an exchange of flying speeches, but is left dangling in the air. On the other hand, towards the end of Book 14, there is an encounter of Aias and Hektor that begins unusually abruptly (14.402).

A third and very glaring example occurs in Book 20. The book opens with an assembly of the gods in which Zeus urges the gods to take sides in the imminent battle. The gods line up on the battlefield, and there is an expectation of cosmic terror as sky and earth are shaken and Hades fears for the safety of his infernal realm. But nothing happens. Instead the narrative turns to the unusually digressive encounter of Achilles and Aeneas, which does contain the structurally important lion simile in which the chain of lion similes culminates but is otherwise only loosely related to the narrative (20.164; above, p. 119). If we look for a continuation of the narrative that pitches the gods against each other, we must go to the second half of Book 21, where we can very clearly see the poet's splicing of different pieces. Hera sends Hephaistos to assist Achilles in his fight with the river (21.330); this confrontation of water and fire in their most elemental form leads to the free-for-all of the gods that was expected (if not quite in this style) after the impressive line-up of Book 20. The transition is smooth enough, but in retrospect the concluding line of the prologue looks strange:

and against Hephaistos stood the great deep-eddying river
 who is called Xanthos by the gods, but by mortals Skamandros. (20.73-4)

If they are poised to battle already, why does it take Hera to set Hephaistos against Skamandros? More fundamentally, what business does the lowly local river have among the immortal gods in the first place? The answer is that the lines were added to the prologue in the light of changes that (a) separated it from its original continuation and (b) merged the river fight with the fight of the gods.

Many students of Homer attribute the problem of odd, absent or inaccurate cross-references to the imagination of pedantic readers and appeal to an alleged rule of oral poetics under which the attention span of the poet and his audience is limited to the immediate narrative context. For instance, in Book 8, Zeus predicts that there will be fighting over the body of Patroklos *epi prumnēsi...steinei en ainotatōi* (8.475-6). Aristarchus deleted the line on the grounds that the prediction does not come true: the fighting over the body of Patroklos does not take place 'near the bows of the ships', let alone 'in a very narrow place'. Schadewaldt (1943, 110 n) excused such inaccuracies by postulating an 'uncertainty principle' that results partly from the poet's desire for progressive revelation and partly from the exigencies of traditional diction, which did not always permit the required precision. But the trouble with the phrase is not that it is insufficiently accurate; rather, it is falsely specific, and there is no evidence that it is formulaic. We may not want to make much of the discrepancy, but it will not do to see in such instances an unproblematic by-product of oral composition. Precise cross-references are not uncommon in the *Iliad*. Thus Antenor and Hektor refer to the broken truce (7.69, 7.351), Hektor (8.177) and Achilles (9.349) to the recent building of the wall. Athene refers to Thetis' interview with Zeus (8.370), and Poulydamas remembers yesterday's defeat (13.745). Similarly, Hektor remembers his flouting of Poulydamas' advice on the previous night (22.100). Patroklos describes Sarpedon as the man who first breached the wall (16.558). And, with a precision that borders on pedantry, Glaukos, after the death of Sarpedon, prays to Apollo to heal the hand-wound he had suffered 2,500 lines earlier (16.511, 12.387). Who would have noticed had Homer nodded on this occasion? Given the frequency of quite precise cross-references, false connections and the conspicuous absence of expected connections pose a problem that requires explanation.

A very instructive case of missing or misleading cross-references occurs in the career of Pandaros, which spans Books 4 and 5. Armed with the weapon of Paris, he re-enacts the original offence and wounds Menelaos. His death, on the other hand, resembles that of Hektor: he is the victim of Diomedes' spear guided by Athene. His career has thematic coherence as a foreshortened version of the war which begins with Paris and ends with Hektor. Against the strong presence of this pattern we must set the spectacular absence of any explicit statement to the effect that his death is the punishment for his foolish transgression. When Pandaros reappears in Book 5, introduced by his patronym, he injures Diomedes, who prays to

Athene that she may assist him in his revenge. The goddess grants the prayer, and we see its fulfilment 160 lines later when she guides Diomedes' spear (5.290). This is an intelligible sequence of promise and implicit fulfilment, and it tells a story that concerns only Diomedes and Pandaros. The second encounter of the two has an unusually broad prelude. Aeneas goes in search of Pandaros and scolds him for not using his bow. Pandaros gives a lengthy answer in which he describes this unsuccessful attack on Diomedes, whom he correctly supposes to stand under the protection of some god. Arguing that he foolishly took his bow when he should have followed his father's advice and come to Troy with his horses, he continues:

For now I have drawn it against two of their best men, Tydeus' son, and the son of Atreus, and both of these I hit and drew visible blood, yet only wakened their anger. (5.206-8)

These lines are doubly problematic. First, Pandaros refers to Diomedes as if he had not told the story of their previous encounter twenty lines earlier in the same speech. Second, the reference to Menelaos is assimilated to the Diomedes scene as if it had been an injury in open battle. Thus lines 206-8 are both redundant and inaccurate, but together with the general fuss Pandaros makes about his bow they strongly link the Pandaros of Books 4 and 5. Why did the poet not take the obvious step and have Diomedes exult over the body of Pandaros, saying something like: 'There you are, you foolish braggart, and may other truce-breakers come to no better end'? The gloating speeches of Book 13 (above, p. 93) show that such words are entirely within the conventions of Homeric narrative. Why are they absent here? The most plausible answer is that the poet developed the role of Pandaros in our *Iliad* from a simpler version that survives in Book 5 but saw no need to make explicit the changed significance the death of Pandaros acquired in the elaborated version.

Inadequate cross-references also appear between the duel of Paris and Menelaos and the Paris-Hektor scene of Book 6, where Hektor accuses his brother of dodging war because of an unspecified *cholos*, 'anger' (6.326). This allusion to an event not reported in the *Iliad* is especially odd since we might reasonably expect Hektor to say something about the fiasco of the duel in Book 3. Some scholars have heard such a reference in Paris' reply in which he says that he is full of grief rather than anger but will go and fight since 'victory passes back and forth between men' (6.339). Such an echo requires very subtle ears, and the fact remains that Hektor's visit to Paris does not in any real sense 'follow' on the events of Book 3 (Heitsch).

A somewhat similar problem is raised by the duel of Hektor and Aias and its relation to the duel of Paris and Menelaos. Here there are several passages that refer explicitly to the breaking of the truce, but the links are

perfunctory, and do not answer the question how anything like the Hektor-Aias duel is at all possible following the disaster of the broken truce (Kirk, 1978).

Yet another problem appears in the assembly of the gods in Book 20, where Zeus tells the gods to join the fighting. This is usually taken as the lifting of his earlier order in which he forbade the gods to join the fighting. But Zeus does not say: 'I hereby revoke my previous order.' Indeed, nothing in the scene compels us to assume that the gods previously were absent from the fighting for an extended period – a strange fact in view of the occasional references to the enforced idleness of the gods elsewhere in the poem (11.73, 13.523, 15.113). It is not even possible to say that the scene by its structure implicitly refers to the earlier injunction. Homeric scenes will sometimes recall one another through a set of correspondences and reversals. Thus, the oblivious Andromache of Book 22 reverses the solicitous Andromache of Book 6; the boasts of Hektor in the council of the third night recall those of the second night, etc. But the opening of Book 20 neither refers to nor corresponds to the opening of Book 8, and this absence is all the more conspicuous since in the battle of the gods in Book 21 there is a very explicit cross-reference on a much less important matter: Ares attacks Athene with the express purpose of avenging his defeat at her hands in Book 5 (21.394).

From a structural perspective the most striking discontinuity is the absence of any back-references to the Embassy at places where such a reference would seem a good deal more functional than Glaukos' memory of his injured hand. Indeed, in Books 11 and 16 the text is in open conflict with the Embassy. In Book 11, Achilles says to Patroklos:

Son of Menoitios, you who delight my heart, o great one,
now I think the Achaians will come to my knees and stay there
in supplication, for a need past endurance has come to them. (11.608-10)

In Book 16 he says that the Trojans would not be victorious 'if powerful Agamemnon treated me kindly' (16.72), but urges Patroklos to

win, for me, great honour and glory
in the sight of all the Danaans, so they will bring back to me
the lovely girl, and give me shining gifts in addition. (16.84-6)

These words are not easily construed as the words of a man who had on the previous night rejected a most elaborate attempt at reconciliation. A whole literature has grown up around attempts to explain Achilles' silence on various grounds, none of them persuasive. Schadewaldt (1943, 81) argued that when Achilles imagines the Achaeans' supplication he implicitly contrasts this with the Embassy in which Aias and Odysseus merely asked

him to settle out of court. As for the phrase 'if powerful Agamemnon treated me kindly', he sees it as referring to a fundamental attitude unaffected by recent events. And he points out rightly that the same speech that appears to ignore Agamemnon's offer contains another statement that has a passage in Book 9 as its antecedent. When Achilles says

and yet I have said
I would not give over my anger until that time came
when the fighting with all its clamour came up to
my own ships (16.61-3)

his words refer as plainly as anything in the *Iliad* to his final words to Aias:

I shall not think again of the bloody fighting
until such time as the son of wise Priam, Hektor the brilliant,
comes all the way to the ships of the Myrmidons, and their
shelters. (9.650-2)

But the silence of Achilles about the offer of Agamemnon does not yield to any interpretation that is compatible with the conventions of Iliadic narrative, and we may conclude that his silence is not an intentional and interpretable aspect of the narrative but a by-product of the cumulative process of composition.

Discontinuities in the joints and cross-references of the *Iliad* are the result of an editing technique that did not keep pace with the poet's architectonic ambition. The creative genius and the wretched editor of the scholar's imagination are one and the same person, composing a major work at an intersection of two modes of textual production. Editorial deficiencies, however, are not structural flaws. This is the point usually overlooked by the analysts in whose scheme of values editorial neatness ranks next to, perhaps even above, godliness. It is a characteristic experience of reading the *Iliad* that as soon as the reader adjusts to the 'sloppy tolerances' of the text its most glaring cracks disappear and its structural coherence comes into full view. But because Homer was not, by our standards, a very good editor of his text we can sketch the development of the *Iliad* through several phases. Homer began his career by developing a repertoire of songs, which existed in his memory in a fluid or semi-fluid form. The earliest 'Iliad' is that structure which eventually proved capable of absorbing much of his repertoire into the fixed text of a grand epic. This 'Ur-Iliad' was very much like the hypothetical 'mēnis-poem' of the nineteenth-century analysts. It moved from the quarrel of Agamemnon and Achilles and Achilles' prayer to Zeus to the defeat of the Achaean heroes in what is now the battle of the third day. It continued with Hektor's attack on the ships, the Patrokleia, and the return of Achilles to battle. This earliest version did not have the elaborate and expansive finale

of our *Iliad*. Perhaps in it Hermes did steal the corpse of Hektor – a possibility that is raised by the gods in our text, only to be discarded as inappropriate (24.24, 71).

The poet expanded this 'Ur-Iliad' by adding two large blocks of narrative, roughly Books 2–7 and 12–15 in our *Iliad*. Each block shows traces of internal stratification. The derailment of narrative at the opening of the second book is the chief evidence for the addition of the first block, but the relation of Paris–Menelaos to Aias–Hektor, Paris and Hektor in Books 3 and 6, the oddities in the career of Pandaros, and numerous other features make it certain that the first day of fighting reached its final shape in several stages. The fact that key scenes in this block are 'dated' early in the war is the strongest argument for the hypothesis that these books 'existed' in some form prior to their inclusion in the *Iliad*. It is very easy to see how a poet would shrug off as insignificant the anachronism that results from putting scenes from the beginning of the war at the beginning of his poem, even though it begins late. It is much harder to see why a poet would invent such anachronisms. (It is tempting to see in the flashback narrative of the *Odyssey* a solution to technical problems of narrative raised by the construction of the *Iliad*.) The books 'existed' in the repertoire of the poet. When he recast them for inclusion in his epic he probably gave them for the first time a genuine fixed shape, but his version of, say, Helen on the walls had sufficiently solidified over the years to resist a seamless incorporation into the fixed text.

The second block of narrative is identified as a later insertion by the opening of the Patrokleia. When Patroklos returns to Achilles he reports to him the situation of the war as it existed at the end of Book 11. It could be argued that since Patroklos had spent his time tending to the wounded Eurypylos his report accurately reflects the limited knowledge he has of the war. But it is not like Homer to distinguish between his own and his characters' knowledge of plain facts, and what, in any event, would be the point of such perspectivism? Patroklos' report at the opening of Book 16 is out of date because it was composed at a time when Books 12–15 did not yet exist. The curious splicing of Books 13 and 14 is only one of many features pointing to the internal layering of this block.

Book 9 represents a late stage in the growth of the *Iliad*, as is shown by the lack of back-references in Books 11 and 16. The impulse for the composition of this book may have come from the poet's recognition that in his transformation of a *mēnis* poem into an 'Iliad' he was beginning to lose sight of Achilles, whose absence from battle threatened to turn into disappearance from the poem. Hence the decision to foreground the absence of the protagonist by his renewed refusal to fight (above, p. 44). It is quite in keeping with the assignment of Book 9 to a late stage that Adam Parry (1956) has found in the speech of Achilles evidence of a personal Achillean and Homeric style.

The addition of the Embassy required the creation of a situation that

would plausibly motivate it. It is an old insight of analytical criticism that Book 8 serves this function. The second day of fighting in the *Iliad* is remarkable for the brevity of description and for the extremely high percentage of repeated lines. Given the previous elaborations of the first and third days of fighting the poem did not stand in need of further fighting scenes. Thus the poet composed a minimal version of a major Achaean defeat. Only the end of the book rises above a utilitarian minimum: the famous tableau showing the Trojans outside the wall is carefully composed with a view to the contrasting despair of the Achaeans, and the transition from Book 8 to Book 9 is the most artful and deliberate in the whole poem.

There is powerful evidence that our version of Book 9 is itself an elaboration of an earlier form in which Aias and Odysseus were the only delegates. When the delegates walk to the tent of Achilles, the poet repeatedly uses dual forms of pronouns and verbs. There are some dozen instances in the *Iliad* in which dual verb forms are used with plural nouns, sometimes because there is a residual notion of pairs and sometimes for no apparent reason at all. But in Book 9 dual pronouns and verbs reinforce each other and continue for some twenty lines so as to convey a strong vision of two delegates. There are, however, three delegates: Aias, Odysseus and Phoinix, the old tutor of Achilles. Further oddities in the narrative relate to the manner in which Phoinix is introduced. There are many attempts to 'interpret' the dual forms, but they are all counsels of despair and do not explain the flagrant violation of ordinary narrative norms, for which much the simplest explanation is that the poet wanted to add the more intimate appeal of the old tutor and did not bother to revise his previous narrative in the light of his addition.

Book 9 is evidence of Homer's growing interest in the consciousness of his protagonist. The same interest transformed the death of Patroklos without completely obliterating traces of an earlier version. The narrative oddities of Patroklos' death concern the fate of his armour and the relationship of Kebriones and Sarpedon as his major victims. Like the death of Hektor, the Patrokleia enacts the rule that the killer is killed: Patroklos kills Kebriones, Hektor's charioteer, and after a bitter fight over the body Hektor kills Patroklos. The Patroklos Kebriones Hektor triangle is supported by a sequence of two similes. Hektor and Patroklos fight over the body of Kebriones like two lions over a dead deer (16.756). When Hektor kills Patroklos he is like a lion who has defeated a boar after a long fight over a spring (16.823). In this triangle Patroklos is a strong warrior who loses in the end to an even stronger one. But this version of Patroklos' death is overlaid by another version in which Patroklos is the helpless victim struck by a god. In this version his major antagonist is Sarpedon, who supersedes Kebriones as a warrior of greater stature and whose death brings greater glory to Patroklos. That Sarpedon is an addition to Book 16

is apparent among other things from the overly explicit cross-references that refer to his presence in Book 12, where he is also a latecomer. There are also inconsistencies about the armour of Patroklos, sometimes explained by attributing the entire motif of the exchange of armour to another poet who wanted to insert his poem about the shield of Achilles. G. S. Kirk (1962, 220) attributed the loose ends to the oral composer's weaving a narrative fabric with the threads of different traditions. More probably, the loose ends result from a reinterpretation of the Patrokleia in the light of the deeper purpose visible in the Embassy: the poet developed the theme of Patroklos as the *alter ego* of Achilles (the exchange of armour) and chose for Patroklos a mode of death that would be reflected with greater pain in the consciousness of Achilles.

The expansion of the *Iliad* also affected the aristeia of Achilles. It is a peculiar feature of the *Iliad* that some of its most awkward narrative joints occur in this section. Nowhere in the *Iliad* is narrative continuity as poor as in Books 20 and 21, the sequence of events that moves from the assembly of the gods via the 'Aeneid' to the scenes of mass slaughter, from there to the curious doublets of Lykaon and Asteropaios (the former one of the most magnificent scenes in the *Iliad*), and then to the river fight and theomachy. Why this should be so is hard to tell, but the fact is worth noting.

The first and last books of the *Iliad* were probably among the last sections of the work to receive their present shape. As time went on the poet faced the problem that Henry James lamented when he termed the novel a 'baggy monster'. To counteract the sprawling tendencies of his epic, the poet designed a narrative frame, an elaborate set of correspondences that relate beginning to end. The design is deeply rooted in the poet's vision of the world as a cosmos of polar opposites, which led Whitman to analyse the entire *Iliad* as a geometric structure in which every part is balanced by a counterpart in a pattern of elaborate and total symmetry. But the geometric structure is much more apparent in the outer than in the middle sections of the work, and it reaches a peak of formalism in the virtual mirror images of beginning and end (above, p. 68).

That the *Iliad* developed roughly in the manner sketched above is plausible, but the nature of the evidence does not permit firmer conclusions. It is also plain that the unity of design, which is visible through the stages of evolution, is not a compelling argument for single authorship. Analysts are fond of pointing to Gothic cathedrals, in which the work of many hands over centuries has elaborated a single design. The honest unitarian should admit that there is an element of faith in his position. Additional support for the hypothesis of a single poet, however, comes from the virtual scholarly consensus that Book 10 of the *Iliad*, the so-called Doloneia, is a later addition. The 579 lines of this book relate how after the failure of the Embassy both the Achaeans and Trojans

engage in spying missions, how Diomedes and Odysseus trap the Trojan spy Dolon, extract a confession from him, kill him despite their promises to the contrary, and conclude their mission with a massacre of the sleeping Thracians. The book is full of odd words and things, such as the boar helmet or the animal skins worn by the Achaeans, and it delights in a complex parallelism of scenes that has struck many scholars as mannered. The emphasis on the ruthless cunning of Diomedes and Odysseus differs markedly from the ethos of fighting that prevails elsewhere in the poem. Even in translation the reader senses that the Doloneia takes him into another world and speaks with a different voice. One could of course argue that the Doloneia is in more ways than one a night piece and that it contrasts intentionally with the remainder of the work. On the other hand, there is no reference to the events of the Doloneia anywhere in the *Iliad*, and the narrative moves without disturbance from the last line of Book 9 to the first line of Book 11. No other passage of comparable length can be cut from the *Iliad* without any consequences to the structure of the rest.

The Doloneia is the only part of the *Iliad* whose authenticity has been doubted since antiquity, and modern scholars agree for the most part with the position attributed by Eustathius to ancient critics that it was composed after the completion of the *Iliad* for inclusion in its present place. This scholarly consensus contrasts sharply with the notorious disagreements analysts have about the rest of the *Iliad*. In particular, there is no comparable agreement about differences of voice and narrative technique in other parts of the *Iliad*. The Doloneia thus is a test case: it shows what types of evidence or degree of convergence between such types is required to make a forceful claim that something has been added to a complete text. Since no other part of the *Iliad* comes close to meeting those requirements, the consensus about the Doloneia is an acknowledgement of sorts that the assumption of a single author working over a lifetime is the most plausible hypothesis to account for the co-existence in the *Iliad* of narrative discontinuities with an overriding coherence of voice, design and purpose.