Preface

Authority texts, whether ancient or modern, from law codes to credos, tend to grow to adjust to new conditions. This is as true of the Homeric poems as of the Confucian Analects, or Isaiah, or the Mahâbhârata. The very excellence of the Homeric poems suggests that they rest on earlier tradition. It has been the aim of scholars since Wolf, whose Prolegomena appeared in 1795, to try to discern, in the texts we have, the way in which they came to be what they are. A recent preference, in all fields of humanistic inquiry, to consider only the texts we now have, has put those efforts on hold. We here return to them.

In all that has been said, there are some propositions that seem to command substantial recognition. These are our starting point. They include:

- In general, Homer's work rests on a long previous tradition, of which it is rather the culmination than the origin.
- There exist in the Iliad passages both earlier (the scenes with Helen and Paris, from the *first* year of the war) and later (the proud self-identification of Odysseus as "father of Telemachus," which implies a time ten years *after* the war) than Homer's Menis (set in the *tenth* year of the war). Then Homer has incorporated material from an earlier Trojan War cycle. His work has in turn been subject to the addition of later material; the tale of Dolon is a widely accepted instance.

Proceeding from that basis, and making use of

- Standard philological techniques: the recognition of interpolations and the determination of directionality between related passages,
- A sense of performance before an audience, which has not been much in evidence in previous Homeric discussions, and
- A new stylistic difference measure, which helps in analyzing single speeches or clarifying the relations between parts of a dialogue,

we arrive at what we think is a consistent and coherent account of the major problems of the two texts and their relation to each other. It is this account that we present in what follows. It is not complete; it is rather offered as suggestive, for those in our time who take an interest in Homer.

We use the name "Menis" for Homer's work as Homer himself left it, and retain the traditional name "Iliad" for the thing we now read, which includes those later additions.

We have in mind two readerships: those versed in Homeric problems, and those who last read Homer in school. Our proposal is effectively new to both. We here write as for the latter, being confident that the former, if they care to, will easily find their way.

These poems were authority texts, even identity texts, for ancient Greece. They do not have that function today. But like many treasures from the past, they remain part of our common heritage. They are worth our attention, simply as part of what the world has been, and of what, in some ways, it still is.

Conventions observed in this book include the following:

- Dates in the main argument are "BC," and need not be specified as such.
- To "Il" (so like a Roman "II") and "Od," we prefer "Id" and "Od."
- The full forms of works cited by short form in the text are given, not at the end of each chapter, but in the Works Cited list at the end of the book.
- We use Bolling's Ilias Atheniensium for passages doubted at Alexandria.
- Our translations are adapted from the line-by-line versions of Smith and Miller (1944) for the Iliad, and that of Cotterill (1911) for the Odyssey.
- Those following in Lattimore's Iliad should renumber lines at two places: (1) Iliad 11:543 should be 544, and so on to the end; the last line is 11:848. (2) 189:604 is really two lines; number as 604-605; the last line is 18:617.
- With Lattimore, we sometimes depart from rigor in the spelling of Greek names: Athena (vs Athene), Calypso (vs Kalypso), Achilles (vs Achilleus).
- Out of consideration for readers new to Homer, our citations are mostly from works available in English.
- The vituperation characteristic of much Homeric discourse is a disgrace to that or any other field; it is the argument of those who have no argument. Save for this one sentence, we will take no notice of it.
- We make no apology for the parallels from other traditions. Literary and musical expression have many differences, but also many commonalities. Here as elsewhere, the more we know, the more we can hope to recognize.

We thank various friends for their criticisms, which have helped us much. We must especially mention the other members of the online Homerica group: Al Cohen, Dennis Grafflin, Larissa Kennedy, and Haun Saussy. We are grateful also to the scholars of the past: the light they have shed on both sides of the many Homeric problems has done much to clarify just what the problems are. For our own choices among the possible solutions, we are solely responsible.

Our debts go back to antiquity itself: to Zenodotus and the Alexandrians, who challenged some lines of both poems, and to Aristarchus, who produced the standard text which, in its Wolfian form, is what we now have.

We return at the end to Wolf himself, whose Prolegomena inaugurated the modern study of Homer, and whose demand to study philology at Göttingen, at a time when that subject did not even officially exist there, helped to establish the modern form of the ancient tradition in which we ourselves work. It is to Friedrich August Wolf that this book is dedicated.

May our readers find these present studies to be of interest, and assistance, in approaching the always challenging and always rewarding Homeric poems.

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