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The Use and Abuse of Homer

I. HOMER AND THE HISTORIANS

SOONER OR LATER, all those who study Dark Age Greece must ask themselves what value to attach to the Homeric poems as sources for social history. Most of the leading archaeologists and historians of early Greece have, as a result, outlined their own approaches to the texts, to such an extent that this problem may be said to have replaced the single/multiple authorship debate as *the* Homeric Question.¹ In the last thirty years, historians have generally concentrated attention on the institutions found in the poems and on the question of to what stage of early Greek history (if any) they belong. The problems arise from the general agreement on three points—first, that the poems were oral compositions; second, that they reached substantially the form in which we have them in the course of the eighth century B.C.; and third, that they purport to describe events taking place in the thirteenth century B.C. These assump-

I would like to thank Paul Cartledge, Richard Janko, Bjørn Qviller, Anthony Snodgrass, and the anonymous referees of *Classical Antiquity* for reading and commenting on earlier drafts of this paper. They are not, of course, responsible for any errors of fact or fancy that appear in the text.

The bibliography of Homeric studies is vast, and it has not been possible to refer in the notes to every work to which I am indebted. In particular, I find I have made no mention of the writings of Eric Havelock or Cedric Whitman. Such omissions should not be taken necessarily as a sign of disagreement.

In a departure from the usual method of citation in *Classical Antiquity*, references in the footnotes are given by the name of the author and the date of publication, with all works collected in a consolidated bibliography at the end of the paper. Books of the *Iliad* are referred to in arabic numerals, and books of the *Odyssey* in lower-case Roman numerals.

1. Redfield 1975, ix.

tions, all of which are accepted here, have given rise to a very wide range of opinions. It seems probable that oral poetry was being composed across at least the whole period from the thirteenth to the eighth century,² and it has been possible for historians to see the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as describing a society from any point within these five centuries, or even as a conflation or pure fantasy, related to no social reality at all.³

The arguments about the date and nature of the Homeric world have often been sharp, but are becoming increasingly sterile. The evidence is limited, and new insights will only be reached through a combination of new approaches and new questions. The key to success lies in gaining a thorough understanding of the processes surrounding the composition of the poems: how, when, why, and for whom the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were created.

Broadly speaking, there are three ways to approach these questions: through the information contained in the poems themselves; through the traditions recorded by later Greek authors; and through analogies drawn from similar literature in better-documented societies.⁴ The method followed in this paper is primarily comparative. The work of Milman Parry and his successors has established beyond reasonable doubt that the Homeric poems were orally composed. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* thus belong to the genre of heroic epic, a well-defined sub-group within the class of oral literature as a whole,⁵ and modern anthropological work on the relationship of oral poetry to the society that produces it and to the distant past in which heroic ballads are set is of the utmost value to the ancient historian. In the first part of this paper, I argue that the comparative evidence makes it seem very probable—indeed, almost certain—that the institutions and modes of thought in the poems were ultimately derived from the world in which Homer and his audiences lived, and are not memories of vanished cultures of five hundred, four hundred, or even one hundred years earlier.

The comparative evidence is extremely suggestive, but, as opponents of its use in Classical studies always point out, is not in itself decisive, and the analogies drawn may prove to have only formal similarities.⁶ However, this material provides a vital dimension that has been missing from many studies of the Homeric poems as historical sources. In the second part of this paper I shall consider two of the principal arguments against Homer's own culture as the basis for the world of the poems, and will conclude that these are not strong enough to warrant flying in the face of the comparative evidence.

It will become clear, however, that placing the world of the poems in time is only one of a number of steps the historian must take. Any literary form is a

2. Kirk 1962, 126–56.

3. See Gray 1958, 293.

4. Fränkel 1975, 8; on the necessity of using comparative ethnographic data, Lord 1975, 13.

5. Bowra 1952, 5; Finnegan 1977, 9–10.

6. E.g., Kirk 1960, 277.

functioning part of the society to which it belongs, rather than a passive reflection; and oral poetry, it seems, can play a particularly active structuring role,⁷ which will be considered in the final sections of the paper. The question to be asked is how Homer drew on the world in which he lived to create his Heroic Age—why and for whom the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* came into existence, what sort of world-view the poems enshrine and, above all, how they functioned within the world of Homer and his audiences. The method followed is to reach a general understanding of the relationships of oral poetry and society through comparative studies, and to use this insight in combination with detailed examination of the poems and other evidence from Early Greece to place Homer precisely within his culture. The final result is in some ways negative, stressing the very great difficulties for the historian wishing to treat Homer as a direct source for the social history of early Greece; but this is more than made up for by the deeper understanding of the structure of Homer's own society that will emerge from this study.

II. HOMER AS AN ORAL POET

As stated above, the position adopted in this paper is that Homer has been shown to have been an orally composing poet, and to understand his works we must first know something of the genre of oral poetry as found elsewhere in the world.

Milman Parry's studies of the formulaic nature of the poems and his own and Albert Lord's work among oral poets in Yugoslavia are too well known to require much comment. The combination of internal and external evidence led them to the inescapable conclusion that both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were orally composed.⁸

Oral composition is now widely accepted, but argument still surrounds the implications of this discovery. Lord was very clear about what the oral composition theory meant: that every performance of a song was different from every other, and every song was in a constant state of flux unless fossilized in writing. He claimed that "oral . . . does not mean merely oral presentation . . . what is important is not the oral presentation but rather the composition *during* performance." And Parry wrote: "No graver mistake could be made than to think that the art of the singer calls only for memory . . . the oral poem even in the mouth of the same singer is ever in a state of change, and it is the same when his poetry

7. Jason 1977, 280; Snell 1961, 2.

8. M. Parry 1971, 321; Lord 1960, 30–68. Some specialists have disputed this claim, suggesting that the formulae in Homer may not be such a valid indication of oral composition as Parry and Lord held. However, these arguments seem to be unsound: see Russo 1976, pointing out that Milman Parry's analysis (1971, 325–64) only treated fifty lines of Homer, but he is successfully answered by Finnegan (1977, 72); compare Konishi (1981) and the reply of Postlethwaite (1981). For evidence of orality other than the formulae, see M. Parry 1971, 404–7; Lord 1938, 439–45.

is sung by others.”⁹ Lord’s position was that memorization was far less important than free re-creation in the performance of oral poetry;¹⁰ he even went so far as to claim that “sacred texts which must be preserved word for word, if there be such, could not be *oral* in any except the most literal sense.”¹¹

This is an extremely important point for our understanding of Homer, as will be seen below. It may be that Lord’s claims represent an extreme position and that memorization *can* have an important role in oral poetry: Ruth Finnegan, arguing against Lord, shows us examples from Somalia, Hawaii, Alaska, and the Appalachian Mountains where some success in verbatim reproduction (in the sense that we, as members of a literate community, understand it) has been achieved.¹² But on the whole these cases seem rather unusual, and Finnegan herself concludes: “As soon as one looks hard at the notion of exact verbal reproduction over long periods of time, it becomes clear that there is very little evidence for it.”¹³ Lord’s model of an insistent, conservative urge for the preservation of an essential idea, but in a fluid context, is much closer to the norm.¹⁴ Jack Goody has argued that large-scale memorization in fact only appears in literate societies. It is only when mnemonic devices drawn from writing itself become available within a society that rote-learning becomes possible; oral societies possess neither the elaborate techniques nor the necessity for such memorization.¹⁵

The Serbo-Croat bards observed by Parry and Lord often claimed to be capable of exact reproductions of songs over long intervals of time and attached great importance to this ability;¹⁶ and yet the best recorded performance by Demail Zogić, is far from encouraging for those in favor of large-scale memorization as a prime factor in transmission of oral poetry.¹⁷ Other good examples of the difference between the oral poets’ conception of exact transmission and our own are easy to find. The “Invocation of the Bagre,” a hymn sung among the LoDagaa of Northern Ghana, is a useful case.¹⁸ Both the audiences and the reciters express a wish that each performance of the Bagre should be exactly the same as every other performance, and indeed believe to a great extent that this is the case; but it is not so.¹⁹ The Bagre can be up to 12,000 lines long—considerably more than Demail Zogić’s effort—and the differences between versions can be very great. Similar claims of verbatim

9. Lord 1960, 5; M. Parry 1971, 335; see also Lord 1953; Lord 1967.

10. Lord 1960, 20–29; 1980, 459.

11. Lord 1960, 280 n.9; contra, Finnegan 1977, 16–24, 126–33.

12. Finnegan 1977, 73–87, 135–39.

13. Finnegan 1977, 140.

14. W. C. Scott 1974, 185–86; Notopoulos 1951, 99.

15. Goody 1977a, 42–49.

16. M. Parry et al. 1974, 66. For a similar case in Albania, see Jensen 1980, 65–67.

17. A. Parry 1966, 188–89.

18. Goody 1972.

19. Goody 1977a, 30; Goody 1977b, 119.

reproduction have been made for Xhosa oral poetry in South Africa, which rarely rises above sixty percent accuracy in transmission.²⁰

The reason for this is clear enough: there is no cultural demand for great accuracy. The idea of exact reproduction that we hold, as members of a literate society, does not exist in oral cultures. There can be no fixed, “original” text of an oral poem, and hence one version cannot be more or less authentic than another, and cannot even be contrasted in practice. The only criterion is that the poem meets the demands of the singer and audience as it is performed: certain controls over elements of plot and devices of epic distance (to be discussed below) will apply, but neither the poet nor his hearers wish for more than this. This observation has been made by nearly all ethnographers interested in oral poetry and is one of the most securely established generalizations.²¹

To sum up, the evidence shows that oral poetry generally undergoes considerable change from one performance to another, and while memorization may be the aim of the bard and may provide him with opportunities for virtuoso displays, poems hardly ever remain static for any length of time.

There is some further evidence that the Homeric poems definitely belong in a class with this majority of oral literature, rather than in the small group where memorization does play a very significant role. The Somali poems mentioned above are described in detail by Andrzejewski and Lewis²² and are bound by a far more rigid metrical structure than the Homeric hexameters, forcing them into a rather inflexible mold, and thus making them less malleable for the creative bard. Only two types of syntactical structures out of hundreds possible are used in the poems.²³ Parry compared the rhyme in modern poetry with the Homeric formulae, which, far from restricting improvisation, serve to facilitate it.²⁴ Even the Indian *Rgveda*, the archetypal memorized text, has far more variants than is generally admitted.²⁵

It seems likely, then, that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were constantly changing poems until a moment when each was fossilized in writing. In one sense, it could be said that neither existed as texts until that moment came along. This has not always been accepted by Classicists. In particular, Geoffrey Kirk has argued for a “monumental composition” by Homer followed by more or less verbatim transmission of the text for three to six generations.²⁶ Adam Parry’s response to this is decisive; Homer was the poet (or poets) who composed the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* that we have, and if “Homer” was in fact a poet living a

20. Opland 1983.

21. See Lord 1960, 101; Finnegan 1977, 58–69; Ong 1982, 61; Goody 1977a, 32; Abrahams 1970; Glassie et al. 1970.

22. Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964.

23. Ong 1982, 64.

24. M. Parry 1971, 133–38; the richness of the Homeric style allowed even greater flexibility than the Yugoslav bards managed; see Lord 1948.

25. Ong 1982, 66–68.

26. Kirk 1962, 301–4; Kirk 1970; Kirk 1985, 1–16.

century or more earlier, then we do not have the *Iliad* of Homer, but that of some other poet.²⁷ The notion of a long transmission of a finished poem is not consistent with oral composition of the Homeric type. "With oral poetry," says Lord, "we are dealing with a particular and distinctive process in which oral learning, oral composition and oral transmission almost merge; they seem to be different facets of the same process."²⁸

The next step is to draw the implications of this position for the ancient historian—that is, to consider the relationship between the constantly re-created oral poem and the society to which its performer and his audiences belonged. It will be shown that just as it is very unlikely that Kirk's one or two centuries of verbatim transmission occurred, it is highly improbable that the events of the poems could have been set against an extinct social order some two hundred years old, as Finley has claimed.²⁹

This argument raises the spectre of the oral tradition within which Homer worked. The Asiatic Aeolic, and Ionic traditions which culminated in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* can now be charted with some detail,³⁰ but historians have not given sufficient consideration to what it means to say that Homer worked within a tradition. Is this simple fact enough to support arguments that the institutions found in our texts could have been dead and vanished for anything from a century to half a millennium, but still have continued to be faithfully described by bards? Many writers assume that it is, but as we shall see, all the comparative evidence weighs against this idea.

Oral heroic poetry generally describes wars set a few hundred years before the time in which the poet and audience lived; for example, the epics of Northern Europe, composed in the seventh to the eleventh century A.D., are generally set in the time of the fifth- and sixth-century migrations.³¹ The discrepancies between the narratives of the poems and the actual course of the events they describe are well known, with the strange distortions of reality found in the twelfth-century *Song of Roland* perhaps being fairly typical.³² The most important question here, though, is how far the *institutions* found in heroic poetry belong to a bygone era, frozen and handed down intact by the "tradition"—the "chronicle," as Gomme would call it.³³ H. M. Chadwick certainly believed that the "tradition" transmitted such a fossilized code of behavior,³⁴ but current anthropology suggests otherwise.

27. A. Parry 1966.

28. Lord 1960, 5.

29. Finley 1978, 48.

30. Janko 1982, 200; D. G. Miller 1982, 144–45.

31. Chadwick 1912, 3, 41–63.

32. See Finley 1978, 47; Bowra 1952, ch. 14.

33. Gomme 1954, 2.

34. Chadwick 1912, 30. This position, described as "Romantic and evolutionist," is discussed and rejected by Finnegan (1977, 30–41).

As will be argued below, writing only appeared in Greece at about the time that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were composed, and the poems were the products of a wholly oral culture. This is of great importance, for it is possible to provide further comparative evidence on the nature of the oral traditions of non-literate societies.

The evidence is heavily set against the long-term transmission of dead institutions within a tradition of constantly re-created oral poetry. It would perhaps be an exaggeration to say that non-literate societies float in a kind of perpetual present, but it does seem to be the case that ideas that are no longer relevant to the present rapidly disappear from oral traditions.³⁵ Both Walter Ong and Ruth Finnegan make this point very clearly:

oral societies live very much in a present which keeps itself in equilibrium by sloughing off memories which no longer have present relevance . . . oral traditions reflect a society's present cultural values rather than idle curiosity about the past.³⁶

an oral poem is an essentially ephemeral work of art, and has no existence or continuity apart from its performance . . . oral literature is . . . dependent on its social context.³⁷

There are many examples of this homeostasis of oral culture and its poetry; Goody and Watt's accounts of the Tiv of Nigeria and the Gonja of Ghana are particularly illuminating here.³⁸ Both the Tiv and the Gonja had oral traditions recorded by the British colonial authorities, which underwent considerable change in less than two generations as they were made to fit the needs of the present. As Lord noted among the Novi Pazar, an oral culture really has no way to keep track of how far its own oral traditions are changing to keep in step with the present;³⁹ hence it is hardly surprising that the past should be continuously sloughed off in this manner, in the interaction in performance between the poet and his audience (or, exceptionally, between the dictating poet and his scribe).⁴⁰ The Greek oral poets were probably no different, either forcing the past to fit the needs of the present or else rejecting outmoded formulae and elements of plot.⁴¹

Thus, features of the past that no longer have meaning for the poet and his audience—vanished institutions and conditions of action—disappear from oral poetry. As Redfield says,

35. See, for example, Evans-Pritchard 1940, 107–8; Lévi-Strauss 1973, 391.

36. Ong 1982, 46–48.

37. Finnegan 1977, 28–29.

38. Goody and Watt 1968, 31–33; see also Packard 1980, 157.

39. Lord 1960, 27.

40. Jensen 1980, 81–89.

41. Hoekstra 1981, 88–89.

In telling a story the poet employs and persuades us to certain assumptions about the sources and conditions of action. He thus (in effect) takes a view of culture. And further: since he is telling his story to an audience, the meaning he conveys must be a meaning to them.⁴²

The argument proposed here is that poetry of the Homeric type would contain only elements that made sense to the poet and his audience. Both parties to the performance were part of an oral tradition, but just as the poem was re-created in every performance, so too we can speak of a constantly re-created tradition.⁴³ The much-vaunted oral tradition was not in any sense a "chronicle," a repository of antiquated institutions and world-views; it was on the contrary intimately linked to the present, consisting only of what the parties to the oral performance thought proper.

Turning now from the general consideration of oral poetry in relation to its culture to the particular consideration of Homer, we will find an abundance of internal evidence, particularly from the *Odyssey*, to support this argument.

The bards in Homer told their audiences about the doings of heroes and gods. Normally, it seems, the members of the audiences had no firsthand experience of these adventures. This was obviously equally true of the audiences to whom Homer and his contemporaries sang, whether we believe they were noblemen, peasants, or a mixture of both. Yet the highest praise that could be given to a bard was that he told his story with absolute veracity. As Odysseus said to Demodocus in Phaeacia:

Demodocus, I give you the highest praise of all men; either Zeus' child the Muse or else Apollo taught you. For you sing exceedingly well of the doom of the Achaeans, as if you were present yourself, or heard it from one who was. (viii.487-91)

How could the audience judge who was the best bard? This is important, as it leads us to consider the value of the poets as informants for periods prior to their own, in the nature of their interactions with the audience. It was easy for Odysseus to judge, since he had been at Troy; but no one in Homer's audiences had. Similarly, none of the Phaeacians had sailed to Ilium (they are not mentioned in the Catalogue of Ships, and no one at the feast recognized Odysseus) and yet Demodocus could still be judged as λαοῖσι τετιμένον, "the people's favorite" (viii.472) for his heroic songs.

The poets could choose any theme for their songs (Phemius, i.337-40; Demodocus, viii.45), but it was the reaction of the audience that determined the poet's and the song's success, and on their reports that the poet's reputa-

42. Redfield 1975, 23.

43. A similar position is implied by Lord (1951, 73-74; also 1953, 127-28; 1980, 459) and more recently by Henige (1982, 2-5). The importance of the performance in shaping Homer's poetry is increasingly widely emphasized: e.g., Thalmann 1984; Thornton 1984.

tion depended (e.g., i.351–52, viii.496–98, and cf. *Del. Ap.* 165–73; for bad results, i.336–42, viii.536–41).

Of course, the truthfulness of the bard's stories was not conceptualized merely as his ability to entertain; his skills were divinely inspired by the Muses (viii.488, xxii.346–48). It was from the Muses that the poets learned about the Heroic Age (1.1–7, 2.484–92, 11.218–20, 14.508, 16.113–14, i.1–10, viii.73, 479–81, 496–98, xxii.346–48; Hesiod *WD* 1; *Theog.* 22–28),⁴⁴ but it was the audience who judged the extent of his inspiration and the truth of the account. Redfield has described Homeric poetry as a “collective representation,”⁴⁵ in that the poet was judged on his ability to entertain the audience, and the reality of the world he described (and so the degree of his divine inspiration) was also assessed by the hearers. Homeric poetry had to be satisfactory to its audience; it had to conform to *their* ideas of the way reality was structured and the way the world worked. As we have seen, the oral tradition is very much part of the present, and in view of the internal evidence for the performance it seems that it is simply not possible that oral poetry of this type can have re-created the social structure of a world that had vanished many generations ago, or a composite reality put together from many different chronological periods. The assumptions Homer made about the workings of society will have been based on those of the Greek world in which he lived.⁴⁶

However, we must not lose sight of the fact that Homer was very probably consciously trying both to transmit faithfully the received “tradition” and to describe events he and his audience knew of as having taken place in the distant past.⁴⁷ The Heroic Age was different from his own, and everyone had to be reminded of this. As a result, to set apart the heroic world, the epic poets used a variety of narrative devices, which, following Redfield, we may call the “epic distance.”⁴⁸ Homer's main model for the world in the poems must have been his own experience, but certain changes had to be made. Some we might call archaizing—the boars' tusk helmet, bronze weapons, and the use of the chariot spring to mind;⁴⁹ others were pure invention—exaggerated wealth, monsters, talking rivers and horses,⁵⁰ and the common epic claim that in the Heroic Age men were better in every way.⁵¹

The appearance of such devices for epic distance is entirely expected and to a great extent predictable and does not constitute any bar to the arguments advanced here. Again, we can turn to comparative evidence on oral literature to help us identify distancing effects. In his discussion of memorization in oral

44. See Dodds 1951, 80–82; Nagy 1979, 15–18.

45. Redfield 1975, 40–41.

46. Redfield 1975, 75.

47. See Vidal-Naquet 1965, 116.

48. Redfield 1975, 36–37.

49. See Gray 1954; Snodgrass 1964; Snodgrass 1974; Greenhalgh 1973.

50. See Finley 1978, 157; Redfield 1975, 75. For Northern Europe, Chadwick 1912, ch. 6.

51. *Il.* 1.260–72, 20.286–87; Bowra 1952, 91.

poetry Goody draws a sharp distinction between the recall of “informations auditives” and “situations totales.”⁵² The “total situation” is described as an element of a poem that has an external *visual* referent—that is, a physical place to which the poet can refer, a road that can be walked, etc. Thus, in Homer, we find remarkable accuracy in the list of Bronze Age centers in the Catalogue of Ships (*Iliad* 2).⁵³ In Homer’s day, Mycenae, Tiryns, and Orchomenus were no longer major centers. Their power was part of the dead past, but it retained a physical, visual referent—the actual sites. “Mycenae rich in gold” was a concept that could still have meaning to an audience; even if Mycenae was no longer so rich or powerful, poet and listeners alike could grasp such an idea. Similarly, men no longer fought from chariots with bronze weapons, but everyone knew what these things were.⁵⁴ As the oral tradition was being continually re-created, these “total situations” of the epic distance continued to be re-created as a part of it.

Goody’s other class of situations, those without a material referent in the living world, constitute a very different group of elements. For example, Homeric burial practices probably had few close parallels in the Aegean, but when a bard recounted a heroic cremation, the audience would nevertheless understand what was meant. But what if the poet told them about a Mycenaean palace functioning as a redistributive center, with its professional scribes and syllabic script? Vanished social institutions with no present referent could mean nothing. These elements disappeared from the constantly evolving poetic tradition as fast as they disappeared from Greek life. The institutions, attitudes, and conditions of action that we find in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* must of necessity be derived in some way from those of the functioning societies that Homer himself knew.

Another feature of the distant past in the Homeric poems is the frequently archaic language. Is this evidence for the transmission of chunks of dead institutions, along with dead word forms, across long periods of time? Again, the comparative evidence indicates that it is unlikely to be so. The preservation of archaic words whose original meanings may have been completely forgotten is very common, again perhaps as part of an epic distancing effect.⁵⁵

Similarly, the overlap of personal names in Homer and the Linear B

52. Goody 1977a, 37.

53. Although Lord has even argued that there is no Bronze Age content in the Catalogue of Ships (1971). See also Giovannini (1969, 51–71), arguing that the Catalogue is based on the seventh-century Delphic *theorodikoi* lists.

54. It seems that while the material side of warfare—bronze and chariots—remained static, Homeric tactics may be those of the eighth century. Like other institutions without a material referent, outmoded tactical systems disappeared from the tradition. This theme is developed in great detail by Latacz (1977). On the use of material culture as a feature of the epic distance in Homer, see DuBois 1982, 12.

55. M. Parry 1971, 361; Ong 1977, 94–95; Ong 1982, 47; Goody 1977a, 37; Finnegan 1977, 111, 151, 171.

tablets⁵⁶ should cause no dismay. Again, the Trojan expedition itself may well have actually happened in Mycenaean times, but this does not mean that the society and economy of the Homeric world derives from the Late Bronze Age.⁵⁷

The use of the epic distance becomes clearest in the *Odyssey*, where, as Redfield says, “the two worlds are to some extent collapsed.”⁵⁸ In a detailed study, Pierre Vidal-Naquet has shown how Homer used exclusions as devices of the epic distance—principally, the absence of bread eating and sacrifices to the gods—to divide Odysseus’ world into spheres of “reality” and “unreality.”⁵⁹ The “real” world, including Ithaca, Pylos, and (to a great extent) Sparta, shares the structures that are to be found as typical of mankind in Hesiod, while the “unreal” world of Odysseus’ travels is differentiated by these distancing effects.

The implications of Parry and Lord’s work for ancient historians are therefore very clear. The institutions and structures of Homeric society must necessarily be derived from the period when the poems were written down in essentially the form we have them. Given that, the next problem is to date this freezing of the texts.

A *terminus ante quem* is difficult to find. Late sources tell us of a Peisistratid recension and date the first authoritative texts of Homer to the sixth century B.C. (Ps.-Plato *Hipparchus* 228B; Cicero *De oratore* III.137). The manuscripts of Homer certainly picked up a gloss of the Attic dialect, and probably at least one major fourth-century interpolation in *Iliad* book 7;⁶⁰ but it is impossible to make a strong case for the sixth century as the date of the first text.⁶¹

Minna Jensen has recently renewed the case for a low dating.⁶² She suggests a *terminus post quem* of 650 B.C., but this has no support at all. She is quite correct to argue that vase paintings of “epic” scenes cannot be used as evidence for an eighth-century date,⁶³ but to use the non-Homeric names in Kleitias’ scene of the funeral games of Patroclus on the François vase as evidence for the text of Homer only appearing after 570 B.C., as she does, is even worse methodology.⁶⁴ The *Iliad* and Kleitias’ names stand in no necessary

56. Ventris and Chadwick 1973, 104.

57. In a brilliant study, J. K. Davies has argued for the acceptance of the *logos* of the Trojan War (Davies 1984); however, he too stresses that the ideals and ways of life of the *Iliad* are those of the eighth century, not the thirteenth (1984, 89).

58. Redfield 1975, 37.

59. Vidal-Naquet 1981.

60. Page 1959, 315–23.

61. Davison 1955a; Kirk 1962, 212–15. It is worth bearing in mind that none of the sources denies the existence of a pre-Peisistratid text—see A. Parry in M. Parry 1971, xi.

62. Jensen 1980, 96–171.

63. See also Kirk 1962, 284–85.

64. Jensen 1980, 104.

chronological relationship to one another. Snodgrass has pointed out that "the practitioners of the visual arts, throughout history, have looked at literature less often than they have drawn on their own perceptions and expertise."⁶⁵ Alternative versions of the story will have coexisted with a text of Homer, as Jensen herself suggests later.⁶⁶ Douris' magnificent early-fifth-century cup tondo showing a dragon regurgitating Jason, with Athena looking on,⁶⁷ is a good parallel, since this episode is not known in any recorded version of the Argonauts story.

Two very serious objections can be made to a sixth-century Homer. First, there is Kirk's reason for opposing a seventh-century poet—"the extreme improbability of Homer's personality and birthplace having been so thoroughly obscured if he was in fact a near-contemporary of Archilochus."⁶⁸ Not the least of the problems here would be Herodotus' date for Homer, around 850 B.C. (2.53.2). Herodotus places Homer and Hesiod around four hundred years before his own time, "and not longer," hinting that if anything Homer was generally dated still earlier. Herodotus seems to have used a forty-year generation for his Spartan king list (2.145.4), which is normally dismissed as an attempt to stretch the reigns to span the whole Dark Age;⁶⁹ and Herodotus himself seems to imply that he felt such a generation might be too long (2.142.2). Quite possibly Herodotus knew of Homer as having lived ten generations before his own time, and so quite close to the generally accepted date ca. 750 B.C., if thirty-year generations are assumed. Molly Miller's suggestion that a thirty-nine-year generation would be accurate for Spartan kings before the mid-sixth century⁷⁰ remains improbable⁷¹ and while we must conclude that Herodotus' chronography was extremely hazy, the situation becomes ridiculous if we picture Homer working less than a century before Herodotus' own time. Homer's anonymity becomes an insuperable problem if he is down-dated to ca. 525 B.C. A second critical difficulty is the absence of any hint of the sixth century itself in the poems. Jensen is unable to cite any convincing anachronisms.⁷² I do not find the use of Peisistratos as the name of Nestor's son in the *Odyssey* at all persuasive.⁷³

A terminus ante quem must be established well before the sixth century,

65. Snodgrass 1979, 128; cf. Snodgrass 1980a, 65–78; Kannicht 1982; Brillante 1983; Boardman 1983, 29.

66. Jensen 1980, 112–27.

67. Beazley 1963, 437, #116.

68. Kirk 1962, 117–18. However, in fairness to Jensen, it should be noted that most of what is usually written about Archilochus' biography may be fictional. See Burnett 1983, 15–54; and for a stronger view, Miralles and Pòrtulas 1983.

69. For example, Snodgrass 1971, 11.

70. M. Miller 1955, 54; M. Miller 1965, 115; M. Miller 1970, 172.

71. Henige 1974, 210.

72. Jensen 1980, 167–71.

73. For an alternative account of the story of the Peisistratid recension, see Allen 1907; Allen 1924, 240–48. See also J. A. Scott 1911; J. A. Scott 1914.

but where? Parallels and echoes of Homeric themes in seventh-century lyric poetry may mean nothing more than that heroic poetry was popular at this time,⁷⁴ although the resemblances are in some cases so striking that we might strongly suspect the existence of a text of Homer by the mid-seventh century.⁷⁵

The strongest arguments for Homer's date come from his language, which suggests that the poems reached more or less their final form before the compositions of Hesiod and the Homeric Hymns. Richard Janko's sophisticated analysis provides by far the firmest chronological basis for Homer and his successors. Janko's relative chronology seems secure beyond any reasonable criticism, and he suggests absolute dates of 750–725 B.C. for the *Iliad* and 743–713 B.C. for the *Odyssey*.⁷⁶

This dating corresponds well with the available evidence for the adoption of writing in Greece, which must necessarily provide a *terminus post quem* for the fixing of the text. The archaeological evidence makes a date before the middle of the eighth century unlikely.⁷⁷ The earliest inscription in Greek so far known is said to date ca. 770 B.C., on an amphora from Grotta on Naxos, but this is not yet well published.⁷⁸

While archaeological chronology is always rather imprecise, the ceramic styles of the eighth century are probably as well understood as any series prior to the late sixth century; this is particularly true of Attica, where the overlapping of hands and workshops provides a very tight control on absolute chronology.⁷⁹ A major discrepancy between the chronology used by Janko and those of the archaeologists is unlikely. If anything, the archaeological dating may need to be lowered by a decade or two, but nothing more.⁸⁰ The appearance of writing can probably be dated close to 750 B.C., providing a secure *terminus post quem* for the texts.

Homer was certainly aware of writing (6.168–70), although it must have been a novelty. All the evidence points to a date in the second half of the eighth century for the composition of the poems. It has been pointed out that the recording of 28,000 lines of poetry in the eighth century, so soon after the adoption of writing, would have been a remarkable feat,⁸¹ but this is in itself no reason to move Homer away from the *terminus post quem* into the seventh century. The question of the link between the poems and the introduction of writing to Greece is one of the utmost importance for our understanding of the texts, and it will be returned to at some length in section V.

74. Davison 1955b; Jensen 1980, 101.

75. Kirk 1962, 283.

76. Janko 1982, 228–31; see also the critical remarks of Kirk (1985, 5–7).

77. Johnston 1983.

78. Lambrinoudakis 1981, 294. A comprehensive list of alternative datings is provided by Heubeck (1979, 75–76).

79. See Davison 1961; Coldstream 1968.

80. See Descouedres 1976; Descouedres 1978; Descouedres and Kearsley 1983.

81. Jensen 1980, 98–99; Kirk 1970; Goold 1976.

The implications to be drawn from Parry and Lord's work are far-reaching. I have argued that all we know about oral poetry, and much of the internal evidence of the Homeric poems, demands that the social structure of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* must be derived in some manner from Greek culture in the second half of the eighth century B.C.

So far, the argument has relied primarily upon comparative data and non-Classical parallels. My position differs in many respects from the conclusions drawn from the poems by some of the leading ancient historians and archaeologists, and in the next section it will be necessary to demonstrate from the texts themselves and from other primary sources that the arguments of this section, revolving mainly around dating, are fully consistent with the evidence available. When this has been shown, I will go on to consider exactly how and why Homer's Heroic Age is derived from his own eighth-century world.

III. HOMER AND THE EIGHTH CENTURY B.C.

This section is a detailed discussion of some of the principal arguments that have been raised *against* an eighth-century source for the Homeric social structure. I have claimed that comparative evidence makes an eighth-century date for the material from which Homer's Heroic World is put together almost certain, but it is always possible to argue that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are unique in this and are not based upon the lived experiences of poet and audience, just as they are unique in the genius of Homer's language. To fly in the face of the overwhelming probability of the comparative evidence, though, the case for non-eighth-century origins for the institutions of the Heroic Age would have to be strong indeed; but in what follows it will be seen that there is nothing in the poems to rule out the eighth century as the source of the institutions and interactions we find in Homer.

The earliest date currently advocated for Homer's world is the Late Bronze Age, the period in which the Trojan War is ostensibly set. In the decades following Schliemann's successes at Troy and elsewhere, it was often assumed that Homer was describing this thirteenth-century world fairly faithfully, with just a few anachronisms.⁸² There are certainly still many "Mycenaeanists" around, arguing that Homer contains a substantial core of genuine Bronze Age memories (to a greater or lesser extent), but I will not discuss the Bronze Age "survivals" in any detail here. Instead, I shall simply quote the closing paragraph of Finley's seminal essay on property and land tenure in Homer and the Linear B tablets, from which I take my position: "The Homeric world was altogether post-Mycenaean, and the so-called Mycenaean reminiscences and

82. For example, Leaf 1915; Nilsson 1933.

survivals are rare, isolated and garbled. Hence Homer is not only not a reliable guide to the Mycenaean tablets; he is no guide at all.”⁸³ The few memories of Mycenaean objects, as Finley stressed, are not relevant to the central question of this section, the origin of the institutions incorporated in Homer’s Heroic Age. No one would argue today that the palace system of the Late Bronze Age is in any way indicated in Homer; the structures of his society were not drawn from the Mycenaean world.

A more serious case has been made for an Early Dark Age date for Homeric society. Anthony Andrewes suggested that the institutions in Homer were handed down within an oral tradition from the twelfth or eleventh century to the eighth century, and so were three to four hundred years out of date when the poems were written down.⁸⁴ The arguments used by Andrewes are similar to those advanced by Finley in favor of the tenth and ninth centuries as the World of Odysseus, and the discussion below, while dealing primarily with Finley’s case, is also intended as a reply to Andrewes’ dating.

Finley seems to arrive at his dating almost out of desperation, in that he feels that the world Homer describes could not belong in the eighth century and must therefore be an earlier one. He sums up his argument: “If, then, the world of Odysseus is to be placed in time, as everything we know from the comparative study of heroic poetry says that it must, the most likely centuries seem to be the tenth and ninth.”⁸⁵ Finley supports the possibility of a “frozen” society with an analogy drawn from the twelfth-century A.D. *Song of Roland*. *Roland* describes (very inaccurately) a campaign in 778, but Finley claims that “the background of *Roland* is the France of about a century before the poet’s own time.”⁸⁶ Such a purely formal analogy, however, is hardly relevant to Homer, because there is a fundamental difference between the Greek bard and the nameless medieval poets of epics such as *El Cid* and *Roland*: the latter were almost certainly *literate* clerics.⁸⁷ The importance of this cannot be over-emphasized. Much of the discussion in section I is not relevant to the creative processes of literate poets, who belong within an entirely different tradition of writing, as opposed to recitation. As first pointed out by Mireaux, the poet of *Roland* probably made use of other written texts as sources, particularly the text of an earlier epic composed about 1000 A.D.⁸⁸

Even so, however, there is relatively little belonging to a pre-twelfth-century world in the social background of *Roland*; as Bowra says,

83. Finley 1981, 232; cf. Finley 1964; Finley 1977, 31–42; Finley 1978, 159–77. On similar lines, Vidal-Naquet 1963; Vidal-Naquet 1965, 115.

84. Andrewes 1961; Andrewes 1967, 41–48.

85. Finley 1978, 48.

86. Finley 1978, 47.

87. Bowra 1952, 516 (the *Cid*) and 532–36 (*Roland*).

88. Mireaux 1943; also Bowra 1952, 532. Finley’s class of *comparanda* is further criticized by Davies (1984, 87–88) and Hainsworth (1984, 112–13).

We can hardly doubt that, when the poet of our *Roland* set out to describe a battle with the Saracens, he made them behave as recent history had taught him they might . . . *Roland* is quite as important a document for the understanding of the twelfth century as any chronicle, since it takes us into the workings of the crusader mentality.⁸⁹

Even the heroic poetry of literate bards describes a society built primarily from contemporary concepts, and it seems impossible to find any parallel of an oral poem that preserves a bygone society to even the very limited extent of the *Song of Roland*. For example, Paul Radin, analyzing a myth of the Winnebago, an Eastern Sioux tribe from the area of modern Wisconsin, feeling that the society in the story was unrelated to that of the twentieth-century Winnebago, argued that it must therefore describe a situation in the distant past. This has since been shown not to be the case; Lévi-Strauss was able to demonstrate that the same myth was in fact intimately tied to contemporary Winnebago culture, forming part of a complex structural scheme underlying Winnebago mythology in general.⁹⁰

It has been noted that the Tamil *Anthologies of Love Songs* show differing relationships between the kings and the commoners, which may represent different historical stages;⁹¹ but it is not clear at which stages in the first to the tenth century A.D. any of these poems were written down, and the chronological development is more likely to be linked to the dates of the poems themselves than to memories of a variety of past worlds,⁹² therefore providing no parallel case for Finley's model. Chadwick held that there was a general Northern European Heroic Age, remembered in oral poems several centuries later than the *Völkerwanderung* in which most of the stories were set, but this too seems to be a faulty formulation.⁹³

The core of Finley's argument against an eighth-century date is the absence of institutions that he feels must have existed at the time of the poet. His writings are a little vague as to what we should expect to find in Homer and do not,⁹⁴ but the questions he raised demand very serious consideration.

What is missing from Homer that existed in the eighth century? Finley tells us "neither poem has any trace of the *polis* in its political sense" and goes on to point out that in Homer we find "no Ionia, no Dorians to speak of, no writing, no iron weapons, no cavalry in the battle scenes, no colonization, no Greek traders, no communities without kings."⁹⁵ In *The Ancient Greeks* he had also

89. Bowra 1952, 533, 535. The same position on the society of the poems is generally adopted by most medievalists, e.g., Duby 1974; Duggan 1980.

90. Radin 1948, 74–77; Lévi-Strauss 1960.

91. Kailasapathy 1968, 76–77.

92. Kailasapathy 1968, viii.

93. Finnegan 1977, 247–50.

94. Finley 1963, 25–26; Finley 1978, 34, 48, 154–58.

95. Finley 1978, 34, 48.

called attention to the absence of overpopulation and the Olympic games as typically eighth-century features in Homer (p. 26). Of these objections, the question of *polis* institutions is the most serious one. It must be pointed out that we know relatively little about the precise form of the *polis* in the eighth century; Finley tells us that the argument can be circular if we claim that Homer describes the eighth century faithfully, since we know so little of it,⁹⁶ but equally there is a danger of circularity if we claim that we can see that Homer does not describe this eighth-century world. In spite of this initial problem, there seem to me to be reasonable grounds to think that the Homeric institutions are based on those of the eighth century. I will return to institutions later, since it is around these that the main arguments will cluster; but first I will consider Finley's other objections to the eighth century.

His list of absent features in *The World of Odysseus* makes curious reading, followed as it is by the assertion that the Homeric world belongs to the tenth and ninth centuries. Of the items he gives as missing, the Dorians, Ionians, iron weapons, and cavalry were surely as present in Greece in the tenth century as in the eighth, and their exclusion from the poems does not constitute an argument against either date.⁹⁷ All these features may be taken under the heading of the epic distance. As we have seen, certain surface features of the poems were deliberately archaizing or fantasizing to foster the awareness in the audience that the story was not of their world, although the underlying assumptions about social structure and human nature were not affected. These features fall into the same class as the talking rivers and horses, as a patina of archaism or fantasy on the surface of a world founded in the shared experience of the poet and audience—that is, the epic distance. The epic distance does not affect the reality or otherwise of the assumptions about society expressed in Homer, as Finley himself points out,⁹⁸ and cannot be said to rule out an eighth-century world any more than one in the tenth century.

The absence of writing in the poems has been touched on above and will be returned to, but it obviously constitutes a very poor argument against an eighth-century world.

No colonization? Once again, this is hard to use as an argument favoring an Early Dark Age date over the eighth century. Finley here assumes that the colonial foundations of the eighth century were different from those of the tenth and ninth centuries in Ionia and the Cyclades, but where colonization does crop up (vi.7–10) he tells us that Homer's account of Scheria "could equally reflect the first Greek settlements in Ionia about or soon after 1000

96. Finley 1978, 154.

97. The exclusion of these features is never complete; iron-working creeps in in the similes and non-military situations, the chariots are made to act like horses, and a "Dorian" tribal order occurs in some places. See the works named in n.49 supra, and Craik 1982.

98. Finley 1978, 157.

B.C.” as the eighth-century foundations.⁹⁹ If this is so, why does the absence of colonization rule out the eighth century, but not the tenth? The argument is again a circular one, with no bearing on the date of Homer’s world. Similarly, Menelaos’ desire to move Odysseus and all the Ithacans to the Argolid (iv.174–77) could reflect any stage of post-Bronze Age history. It is quite possible that eighth-century colonization was not so very different in its organization from the establishment of new settlements across the whole Dark Age;¹⁰⁰ the relative infrequency of colonies in the poems is no argument in favor of a society based in the earlier period.

Our evidence on Greek traders is insufficient to tell whether this is an argument against the eighth century. Limited amounts of Dark Age Greek pottery have been found in the Near East, and a few Oriental objects in Greece,¹⁰¹ but we simply cannot say who transported them, or why. Recent excavations at Lefkandi suggest the possibility that there was direct contact between Greece and Egypt in the tenth century B.C. and that the volume of traffic between Greece and the Near East has been underestimated.¹⁰² The *Odyssey* has stories about Greeks sailing to Egypt (xiv.425–58; xvii.424–27), albeit for plunder; and Odysseus was taken for a trader in Phaeacia (viii.159–64). The Phoenicians were probably still active throughout the eighth century,¹⁰³ and their activity (e.g., xv.415–84) does not indicate an early date.

Finley found in Homer “no communities without kings,” and took this as evidence for an Early Dark Age date, on the assumption that Dark Age monarchs were gradually replaced by oligarchies in the eighth century.¹⁰⁴ According to tradition, kingship was still important in the period to which Homer is assigned; the monarchy is said to have continued until 753/52 B.C. at Athens, and 747 B.C. at Corinth, while at Sparta the first eponymous ephor took office in 755/54 B.C. Of course, these dates are to be regarded with a great deal of caution, but it is not so immediately apparent as Finley implies that kingship is a pre-eighth-century feature. Nicolai has suggested that the *Iliad* belongs to a mid-eighth-century movement away from kingship.¹⁰⁵ In fact, if Herodotus is believed, the monarchy at Argos may have dragged on into the early sixth century.¹⁰⁶

However, Finley may be more seriously challenged by asking a still more fundamental question: *do* all Homer’s communities have kings? Much depends

99. Finley 1978, 156.

100. Bérard 1982.

101. Snodgrass 1971, 113–17.

102. Popham et al. 1982a, 247.

103. Coldstream 1977, 103 and 240–42.

104. For this view, see (among others) Starr 1961a; Thomas 1966a; Andreev 1979.

105. Nicolai 1983; cf. Qviller 1981.

106. On the Argive monarchy, see Kelly 1976, 94–111, for a sixth-century Pheidon; and Tomlinson (1972) and Cartledge (1979) for a more conventional seventh-century dating.

here on the definition of *king*. If we take it to mean an hereditary male monarch, it can be shown that the Homeric *basileus* was perhaps not a king at all, and that the equation of *basileus* with king was made only in the sixth century B.C. and later. In an important study, Fritz Gschnitzer argued that *basileus* often meant only “nobleman” in Homer and found only nine occurrences where the word suggested an exclusive hereditary position.¹⁰⁷ In a recent book Robert Drews has gone still further, suggesting that in Homer *basileus* almost always meant only “highborn leader,” with true hereditary monarchy almost entirely absent. Where Homer wished to indicate a “real” king, he suggests, he used the Mycenaean word *anax*.¹⁰⁸ Drews’ thesis is that Dark Age communities, which he somewhat loosely terms *poleis*, were headed by groups of competing *basileis*, as we see on Ithaca in the *Odyssey*, and that “kingship” was largely absent from Homer’s world.

Drew’s picture is rather one-sided, in that there obviously was a large element of heredity in the leadership of the communities at Ithaca, Pylos, Mycenae, and Sparta in the *Odyssey*, and Troy in the *Iliad*,¹⁰⁹ but it challenges Finley’s use of kingship as an argument against an eighth-century basis for the Homeric polities. Homer’s *basileis* have much in common with Hesiod’s, those of the *Hymn to Demeter* (678–625 B.C. on Janko’s dating) and even Tyrtaeus’.¹¹⁰ They certainly cannot be used to preclude Homer’s own world as the ultimate background of the poems.

Finley’s claim that Homeric society is not so “over-populated” as eighth-century Greece is interesting.¹¹¹ It has long been assumed that the wave of colonies established after ca. 750 B.C. stemmed from population pressure, and that the eighth century was a time of rapid demographic expansion after three hundred years when the Aegean had been thinly settled.¹¹² The figures given in Homer are perhaps little use; the huge numbers of warriors in the *Iliad* (2.494–877; 8.562–5), the 4,500 men sacrificing with Nestor at Pylos (iii.7–8), and the remarkably numerous suitors from Dulichium, Same, Zacynthus, and Ithaca (xvi.247–50) would doubtless be dismissed by Finley as poetic exaggeration, and he is presumably referring to the pattern of settlement in Ithaca. There was, it seems, unoccupied land available to be taken under cultivation in Ithaca (xxiv.206–7); but so too was land available in the late eighth and early seventh centuries for Hesiod’s father, an immigrant to Boeotia from Asia Minor (*WD* 635–40). The eighth and seventh centuries seem to have been a time of the infilling of the landscape, and the establishment of many new small settle-

107. Gschnitzer 1965, especially p. 101. See also Ehrenberg 1969, 13.

108. Drews 1983, 98–105.

109. See the reviews of Cartledge (1983a) and Donlan (1984).

110. Drews 1983, 105–8.

111. Finley 1963, 26.

112. See Snodgrass 1971, 367–69; Snodgrass 1977; Snodgrass 1980a, 15–24; Desborough 1972, 19–20; Coldstream 1977, 367–68; O. Murray 1980, 65–66.

ments.¹¹³ Otherwise, it is hard to see any evidence on this in Homer, and to argue *ex silentio* that the Homeric world is a pre-eighth-century one would be very illogical. ↵

Continuing with the arguments, we come to the contrast of Patroclus' funeral games with the Olympic games.¹¹⁴ There is nothing in the games for Patroclus that suggests anything other than an eighth-century date. Turning to Hesiod again, we find him singing at the funeral games of Amphidamas in Chalcis (*WD* 654–57), and it has even been argued that the *Theogony* was composed to be sung at these games.¹¹⁵ Funeral games and Panhellenic games coexisted in the eighth century and later.

It is worth noting that the absence of Panhellenic games in Homer is not very surprising. The list of victors in the *stadion* at Olympia compiled by Hippias of Elis around 400 B.C. suggests that the games had a very local color until the seventh century. The first winner from outside the Western Peloponnese was Diocles of Corinth in 728 B.C.; and the first from outside the Peloponnese as a whole Orsippus and Menos of Megara in 720 and 704 B.C. Nor are the Panhellenic sanctuaries where the games were held overly neglected. These only began to flourish and to attract offerings from all over Greece in the very last years of the eighth century¹¹⁶ and accordingly receive only a few passing mentions in Homer (2.459–66; 20.403–5; vi.162–67).¹¹⁷ The same chronological considerations apply to cult activities at Mycenaean tombs, which receive only oblique references in Homer.¹¹⁸

None of these arguments, then, provides any grounds at all for rejecting an eighth-century base for the poems. Finley's most serious criticism is that the *polis* institutions, which were surely beginning to appear in the eighth century, are entirely absent in Homer. If justifiable, this claim would be a serious objection to my argument on general grounds that Homer's oral poetry must be related to the society in which it was performed. However, I do not find such a dearth of evidence for eighth-century *polis* institutions in the poems as does Finley.

It is on institutions, of course, that the case must be decided. Finley was correct to point out that the walls, docks, and so forth of Scheria did not constitute a *polis*.¹¹⁹ Unfortunately, Finley did not go on to elucidate exactly what he would require to find in Homer to accept an eighth-century basis, saying just

113. Snodgrass 1977; Cherry 1982 (on Melos; see the modifications of the survey data suggested by R. Catling [1984]).

114. Finley 1963, 26.

115. West 1966, 44–45; Wade-Gery 1949, 87.

116. Rolley 1983. On the subject of chronology, it has been suggested that the Olympic games may have begun in the later seventh century rather than in 776 B.C. (Lévy 1976, with references).

117. See also Wade-Gery 1952, 2–3.

118. Hadzisteliou-Price 1973; Snodgrass 1982.

119. Finley 1978, 155, criticizing Snodgrass 1971, 435.

“the social organisation of the world of Odysseus was inadequate for the tasks we know some *poleis* contemporary with Homer to have performed.”¹²⁰

We might begin at the obvious point, with the political organization of Ithaca. Runciman, taking a stance close to Finley’s, has defined Ithaca as a “semi-state,” with well-defined sociocentric statuses, but not, he suggests, about to develop into a true state.¹²¹ This contrasts to some extent with the view of the eighth and seventh centuries as a period of state formation in Greece,¹²² but the concepts of *dikē* and the polity are perhaps not so far from Hesiod’s (e.g., *WD* 220–73).¹²³

Finley rightly stresses the importance of the *oikos* in the organization of life in Homer but concedes that the *agora* and *themis* were familiar concepts in Ithaca.¹²⁴ The distinction between public and private business was well understood (ii.32, 44–45). That no assembly had been called in nineteen years is indeed strange (ii.26–27) but perhaps no more strange than the whole episode of the years of courtship of Penelope.¹²⁵ Perhaps this baffling situation was the result of Homer telling the received story, but basing his tale in the assumptions about social action of his eighth-century culture, leading to an anomalous situation where Ithaca had to have remained frozen in political terms for twenty years. There are other examples of this sort of thing: Fränkel’s discussion of fate and the gods,¹²⁶ and the strange passage in the *Iliad* where in the tenth year of the war Priam does not recognize the Achaean leaders (3.161–242).

The powers of the Ithacan assembly were considerable. It could have imposed a heavy fine on Halisërthes (ii.192–93), and it could conceivably have sent all the suitors into exile (xvi.381–82). The Ithacan *dēmos*, acting outside the context of the formal assembly, had in the previous generation been able to act concertedly against the anti-Thesprotian policy of Antinous’ father, who would have been lynched but for Odysseus’ intervention (xvi.424–30).

The assembly of the warriors at Troy was less powerful but represents a very different political context. It could make its wishes felt by applauding and cheering (e.g., 1.22–23), but decisions rested in the hands of the *basileis*, particularly Agamemnon (e.g., 1.376–79). On occasion, the assembly could even be dissolved and the final say placed in the hands of a gathering of nobles at dinner (9.68–70). In Phaeacia, Alcinous tells his elders that they will be summoned the following day to discuss Odysseus’ passage home (vii.189–96); but when they appear Alcinous simply informs them that he has already made his decision (viii.28–40).

120. Finley 1978, 156.

121. Runciman 1982.

122. Snodgrass 1980a, 26–35; Renfrew 1982.

123. Ehrenberg 1937, 155.

124. Finley 1978, 79.

125. Finley 1978, 89.

126. Fränkel 1975, 57–58.

There is nothing about any of these community-level decision-making processes that precludes an eighth-century origin. The Ithacan assembly, with its wide power, might well have been able to organize the same sort of activities that the Greek cities of the eighth century undertook. The evidence is of course inconclusive, since the Ithacans had no desire to send out a colony and we have little idea of what else assemblies of the eighth century did; but it certainly cannot be used as an argument against an eighth-century basis. The debates at Troy could equally well fit in an eighth-century situation; indeed, the public acclamation and the ability of the nobles to overturn the wishes of the assembly recall nothing so much as Plutarch's account of the Spartan constitution (*Lycurgus* 6), which probably dates to the seventh century.¹²⁷ The Spartans had been able to found a colony at Taras in the late eighth century¹²⁸ with a political organization which was probably no more evolved than the Homeric. Finally, Alcinous' autocracy contains no hint that the Phaeacians would not have been able to carry out the activities that the Greeks managed in the eighth century.

Another area where we might hope to gauge the level of political organization is in the resolution of disputes within the community. One of the most common definitions of the state is the surrender of the right to use force to settle personal disputes, with this prerogative being confined to a centralized authority.¹²⁹ This certainly seems to be what happens in Hesiod (*WD* 28–39, 247–64; *Theog.* 81–90).

In Homer, three ways to settle disputes can be identified. The first is through strife. The numerous examples of men fleeing their homes to escape the vengeful kinsmen of a murder victim (e.g., i.298–300; xvi.97–98) are testimony to this but are not very significant in this argument. As late as the fourth century B.C., it could still be felt that killing to protect or avenge the family was still perfectly acceptable behavior (e.g., Plato *Laws* 874B–D). There is even a tradition that the founders of Syracuse in the 730s were banished from Corinth after a drunken killing (Plut. *Moralia* 772; scholiast on Ap. Rhod. iv.1212). Homicide remained a private rather than a public matter even in the developed city state, and so it is no surprise to find that it was so in the eighth century; and no surprise to find it so in Homer if his world is based on this period.

MacDowell¹³⁰ suggested that *Iliad* 12.421–24 represents an example of two farmers settling a dispute over ownership of land by fighting it out. If *δηριάασθον* in line 421 is to be taken literally as meaning fighting, we still have

127. Forrest 1968, 55–58. This is not meant to imply that the balance between *basileus*, council, and assembly in Homeric Ithaca or at Troy was the same as that found in eighth- or seventh-century Sparta, only that the Homeric and Archaic systems are not so radically different as Finley assumed.

128. Dated to 706 B.C. by Eusebius; for the archaeological chronology, see Coldstream 1968, 104; LoPorto 1971, 358; Graham 1982, 112.

129. E.g., Service 1971, 163; Service 1975, 87–90; Sahlins 1972, 178–79.

130. MacDowell 1978, 11–12.

no more than two squabbling farmers, used in a simile to illustrate the story. There is nothing to suggest that this was actually seen as a way to settle the dispute over their common boundary.

Iliad 23.553–54, Antilochus' offer to fight for his prize in Patroclus' funeral games, is more serious. Homer tells us that Achilles was delighted by Antilochus' offer of violence (23.557). It is significant that this dispute was purely a matter of honor, although it may be anachronistic to distinguish between matters of honor and legal concerns in the Homeric world (at least within the class of *aristoi*). Violence was used to settle at least some classes of dispute in the *Iliad*.

Disputes could also be settled by private agreement between the litigants (e.g., 9.632–36; xxi.15–30), by the judgment of a *basileus* (2.205–6; 9.98–99; 18.497–508; 23.485–87; iii.244–45), or by a group of elders, often under the gaze of the *dēmos* (1.237–39; 11.807; 16.387; 18.497; xii.439–40).

Finley recognized all three types of litigation¹³¹ but dismissed all ten cases where a third party resolved the issue (eleven if we count *Odyssey* book ii, where Telemachus tried to persuade the *dēmos* to intervene) as anachronism “which slipped by the poet,”¹³² leaving him with a “primitive” level of settlement at the *oikos* level, which he sees as the real way to resolve disputes in Homer.

Such special pleading, separating out “early” and “late” strata in the poems, is always open to question. I would suggest instead that all three levels of arbitration existed simultaneously in the eighth-century world. Doubtless some disputes could be settled by a fight, but others were resolved by discussion between the two parties, and where this failed, the decision of a third party could be called upon. The scene on the Shield of Achilles shows us part of this progression. The defendant wished to settle the case out of court, as it were, paying a fine (18.499), but the wronged party had refused this, with the result ἄμφω δ' ἰέσθην ἐπὶ ἵστορι πεῖραρ ἐλέσθαι (18.501). Hesiod's story (*WD* 37–39) is another example: after he and Perses had divided up their *klēros*, an agreement within the *oikos*, Perses seized the greater part. Since the dispute could not be settled, it became a public matter, and the δωροφάγοι βασιλῆες were called in. For all we know they may have passed through the stage of the two farmers in *Iliad* 12.421–24, wrangling over the *horoi* in the fields, before a settlement favorable to Perses was reached.

The coexistence of various levels of litigation, from the *oikos* up to the *basileus*, should be no surprise. The decisions at community level are not anachronisms, nor are the lower levels of settlement survivals. The same pattern of an escalating scale of judgments can be seen all over the world.¹³³

131. Finley 1978, 108–111.

132. Finley 1978, 110.

133. See Roberts 1979, chs. 4, 8, and 9, and the essays reprinted in Bohannan 1967.

Finley's claim that the world of Odysseus was one "of strictly private rights privately protected"¹³⁴ is not accurate. The settlement of disputes was not governed by rigid rules, but a level of integration above that of the household was recognized in Homer, and the Homeric pattern of judgments does not seem very different from the Hesiodic. The community could settle disputes that threatened its equilibrium, just as it could reach decisions of the type Greek communities must have made in the eighth century B.C. The Homeric institutions are in no way incompatible with a background drawn from the eighth century.

Essentially the same conclusions have been reached in a number of studies of the *polis* in Homer: the Classical type of city-state is absent, but we can observe the rudimentary outlines of a polity on the verge of statehood.¹³⁵ We do not see the developed *polis* on Ithaca, but neither is Homeric society so alien when compared with what we find in Hesiod or even Tyrtaeus that we must try to push it back into the mists of the Dark Age, as Finley did.

This discussion is not intended to be any sort of exhaustive analysis of the institutions of the Homeric world; rather, it shows that two of the most important of the institutions studied by Finley, the two that he claimed dictated an Early Dark Age date for the Homeric world, are not really so incompatible with Homer's own day. They certainly do not give reason to overturn the arguments of section I, which made an eighth-century origin for the poetic world seem inescapable.

We can now return to Finley's summary of his position: "If, then, the world of Odysseus is to be placed in time, as everything we know from the comparative study of heroic poetry says it must"—so far we can agree—"the most likely centuries seem to be the tenth and ninth."¹³⁶ This, as we have seen, is not so. Everything we know from the comparative study of *oral* poetry, of which oral heroic poetry is but one group and which forms a far more relevant analytical category than confusing the products of oral and literate cultures, points to a date late in the eighth century, and Finley's claims that what we know of the eighth century and what the *Odyssey* tells us "are simply not the same"¹³⁷ cannot be upheld. If the Homeric poems are to inform us about early Greece at all, it will be Greece in the eighth century B.C., and not the Early Dark Age.

Finley is by no means the only opponent of the poems as evidence for the structure of eighth-century Greece. There is also an important school of thought which sees the Homeric poems as an artificial conflation of elements

134. Finley 1978, 110.

135. See Thomas 1966b; Luce 1978; Lloyd 1983. On the *oikos* and the *polis* in Hesiod, Millett 1984, 93–103 and 109 n.16.

136. Finley 1978, 48.

137. Finley 1978, 33–34.

spanning the whole period of the composition of oral poetry, and no use as an historical source for any specific period within this half-millennium or more.

The most important contribution to this position has been made by Anthony Snodgrass in his article “An Historical Homeric Society?” The discussion that follows will be confined to a critique of Snodgrass’s position, although the counter arguments will lead us into many different areas.

Snodgrass argued that two of the areas of social life at the core of the Homeric world—marriage and the devolution of property—show so many inconsistencies that they cannot have belonged to a single functioning society. This argument is extremely important, since it is in just such spheres as kinship where we should expect to find the world-view that Homer and his audiences took for granted in the eighth century. If Snodgrass’ arguments can withstand criticism, they will constitute a serious objection to the position outlined in section I, that the Homeric world must be based on the culture of a single historical moment.

The first part of Snodgrass’s article¹³⁸ is concerned with patterns of marriage. It is claimed that two types of marriage settlement, bridewealth and dowry, can be seen operating alongside one another in the poems, and that these two forms are incompatible. Snodgrass notes that it is not uncommon to find bridewealth in one class and dowry in another within a single society, but stresses that all the marriages for which we have information in Homer are those of the *aristoi*, the upper class.¹³⁹ Nor is there any consistent pattern linking the relative status of the wife-givers and the wife-takers to the form of marriage settlement. Objections that bridewealth and dowry are not so opposed as Snodgrass claimed generally do not seem to take this into account, and cannot be used as a refutation of Snodgrass’s case, although Rowlands made the very good point that we should allow a great deal more flexibility within Homeric marriage.¹⁴⁰

The evidence used by Snodgrass must be discussed in detail. Finley and Snodgrass have both provided lists of the occurrences in the poems of marriages accompanied by the transfer of gifts from the bridegroom or his kin to the bride’s kin, and from the bride’s kin to the groom, sometimes via the bride herself, respectively referred to as bridewealth and dowry.¹⁴¹ The thirteen cases of bridewealth, the passage of gifts or services from the groom or his kin to the kin of the bride, seem clear enough and unequivocal. Snodgrass points out that there is no evidence whatsoever for what Goody calls “indirect dowry,” where

138. Snodgrass 1974, 115–18.

139. Snodgrass 1974, 116.

140. Rowlands 1980, 23; see also Brent Shaw and Richard Saller in Finley 1981, 296; Qviller 1981. For a more general discussion, see Goody 1973, 47; Keesing 1976, 270.

141. Finley 1981, 290 n.16; Snodgrass 1974, 115 nn.16, 17. On the bridewealth/dowry distinction, see Radcliffe-Brown 1950, 43–53.

the groom's gifts are passed on to the bride by her kinsmen in order to establish a joint conjugal fund.¹⁴²

The fourteen cases of "dowry" are less clear. Finley, seeking empirical support for his thesis that the marriage ceremony formed part of a wider exchange of gifts in the Homeric world, took these cases as evidence for a return flow of gifts from the bride's kin to the bridegroom, following initial gifts or services which had moved in the opposite direction.¹⁴³ However, as Snodgrass pointed out, there is a striking lack of evidence for gifts flowing in both directions within a single Homeric marriage;¹⁴⁴ furthermore, the general exchange of gifts at marriage is associated mainly with very simple societies without settled agriculture and social and economic stratification, which patently does not include the Homeric world.¹⁴⁵ Snodgrass concluded that two separate marriage practices within the class of *aristoi* are visible, and that these represent two historically distinct layers in the poems, which are thereby revealed as an unhistorical conflation.¹⁴⁶

Snodgrass's criticisms of Finley's account are to a great extent justified; but perhaps another criticism could be leveled at both scholars—that of exaggerating the contrast between the forms of marriage settlement found in Homer. I will try to demonstrate in what follows that most of the examples of "dowry" in Homer are no such thing, and that the standard form of *aristos* marriage seems to be that suggested by Lacey¹⁴⁷—gifts offered in both directions (δῶρα) to establish good relations between the bride's kin and potential suitors; bidding of gifts (ἔδνα) by the suitors; acceptance of the best offer by the bride's guardian, her κῆρυξ; and usually, the movement of the bride to take up residence with her husband in his father's home (virilocal residence) or in a new location (neolocal). The Classical Athenian dowry system (προίξ) is entirely different from what we find in Homer,¹⁴⁸ and no trace of true Greek dowry can be seen in the marriage practices of the *aristoi*.

I will demonstrate these claims by a complete review of the cases of "dowry" in Homer.

142. Snodgrass 1974, 116; Goody 1973, 1–2. Further examples of gifts to the bride's kin can be added from Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women*—fr. 7.9–10 M-W; 14.15–20; 22; 68 part 1.21–100. The only dubious case is fr. 211.8 M-W, which was restored by Wilamowitz to read ᾧ τ' ἄλοχον πολὺ δῶρον Ὀλύμπιος εὐρύσπα Ζεὺς. If this restoration is correct, this is an example of an ἄλοχος πολὺδωρος, as discussed in the text for 6.394 and xxiv.294. M. L. West (1985, 125–71) would date the poem to the late sixth century, but repeating eighth-century elements. His book does not take account of Janko's study. Janko (1982, 198) concedes that the *Catalogue* is problematic but places it in the early seventh century (1982, 200).

143. Finley 1981, 238–41.

144. Snodgrass 1974, 116.

145. Goody 1973, 51.

146. Snodgrass 1974, 117.

147. Lacey 1966.

148. Vernant 1980, 56.

6.192–95. The Lycian king offers Bellerophon his daughter's hand and half his kingdom if he will settle in Lycia. This uxori-local residence is different from the usual Homeric pattern but is nevertheless consistent with it.¹⁴⁹ In any monogamous society, there will often be cases where a family has no heir to receive its property; Goody has suggested that in typical agrarian communities, as many as one-third of all farms may have no son at the end of the developmental cycle, and one-sixth no child at all.¹⁵⁰ Further, marriage must not be treated as a rigid institution, and there will often be cases where living heirs are passed over in favor of a particularly desirable son-in-law, attracted into a wealthy family by such a fili-centric marriage. The result is a high proportion of uxori-local marriages within any normally viri-local system, reversing the usual pattern.¹⁵¹ As Goody puts it,

The “appointed” daughter acts as a social male, producing children for her own natal group. The incoming son-in-law on the other hand acts like an adopted child, since in return for enjoying the property . . . he looks after not only his wife but her surviving parents as well.¹⁵²

Through such a strategy, the wife-givers and wife-receivers mutually benefit. Odysseus' invented story of winning a wife in a rich family through his valor (xiv.211–13) may refer to a similar situation. One thing is clear: this marriage is complementary, rather than contradictory, to the normal viri-local Homeric marriage.

6.251. Hecabe is described as Hector's ἡπιόδωρος μήτηρ. Snodgrass notes that well-dowered is rather a dubious translation for ἡπιόδωρος, and Lacey holds that it is totally unconnected with dowry. In the Penguin text, E. V. Rieu translated the word as “gracious.” All in all, this does not seem a very convincing example of dowry.¹⁵³

6.394. Andromache is called Hector's ἄλοχος πολύδωρος. The word πολύδωρος, like ἡπιόδωρος, is given as “richly dowered” by scholiasts, but Snodgrass again notes various other possibilities. Lacey's distinction between ἔεδνα, gifts passing from the groom to the bride's father after an agreement to marry has been reached, and δῶρα, gifts exchanged in both directions to establish goodwill before the match has been arranged, is important here.¹⁵⁴ If this distinction is valid, then πολύδωρος should be read as “bringing many gifts,” in either direction. For a parallel to Lacey's δῶρα/ἔεδνα distinction in an ethnographic context, the *vaygu'a* relationship of the Trobriand Islanders can be cited. This is

149. Lacey 1966, 59.

150. Goody 1973, 7; Goody 1976, 92, 133–34.

151. Goody 1976, 93; Humphreys 1978, 162.

152. Goody 1976, 94.

153. Snodgrass 1974, 117; Lacey 1966, 58; Rieu 1950, 124.

154. Lacey 1966, 57.

somewhat similar to the ξενίη guest-friendship relationship in Homer.¹⁵⁵ The δῶρα exchanged before the ξέδνα is given are paralleled by the Trobrianders' gifts called *pari* and *vaga*; once a *pari* has successfully elicited a *vaga* gift, the real gift exchange of the celebrated *kula* begins, and the full *vaygu'a* relationship is initiated. The Trobriand terminology is at least as precise as the Homeric, and there is nothing unusual about the division into δῶρα and ξέδνα suggested by Lacey. Πολύδωρος will be discussed further with reference to xxiv.294, but we can note here that translating it as "well-dowered" is only one, and probably not even the most likely, possibility; and to reject the Homeric marriage system, going against the arguments of section I, on the basis of one possible reading of this word would be rash indeed.

9.146–48. Agamemnon, in offering Achilles one of his daughters, says that he will give her ἀνάεδνον—without ξέδνα. This only emphasizes the fact that a wedding was usually accompanied by ξέδνα passing from the groom or his kin to the bride's κύριος. Agamemnon goes on to say: "Moreover, I will give [Achilles] many gifts (μείλια), more than anyone ever gave with his daughter." In this context, we should perhaps take the μείλια of line 148 as reflecting an attitude similar to the king of Lycia's toward Bellerophon. The whole point of Agamemnon's offer to Achilles is that it was supposed to have been irresistibly tempting. The issue at stake here is not so much the marriage as Achilles performing a great service for Agamemnon by returning to the battle. The phrase ὅσσ' οὐ πῶ τις ἔῃ ἐπέδωκε θυγατρὶ, following as it does immediately upon the renunciation of the right to ξέδνα, is obviously reconcilable with the idea of ξέδνα, as was seen by Lacey and Vernant.¹⁵⁶

22.51. Priam tells us his wife Laothoe would be able to ransom her children Lycaon and Polydoros, because her father Altes gave her a great fortune. This implies that Altes' settlement remained under the control of Laothoe, rather than coming to Priam. This is certainly a case of dowry, or pre-mortem inheritance, as Goody classifies it.¹⁵⁷ However, Goody notes that it is vitally important to establish who gets control of the gifts bestowed in such a dowry.¹⁵⁸ Altes' gifts to Laothoe are very different from, for instance, Classical Athenian dowry (προίξ), which came under the husband's control. This case seems more like the Archaic φερνή, or trousseau, than a προίξ; there is no reason at all to suppose that it represents a distinct historical stage in the poems, opposed to ξέδνα, and it is easily accommodated within this view of Homeric practices.

155. Malinowski 1922, 439; Mauss 1966, 25–26.

156. Lacey 1966, 59; Vernant 1980, 68 n.26.

157. See Goody 1962, 315–20; Goody 1973, 17.

158. Goody 1973, 20.

i.277–78 (= ii.196–97). Athene is visiting Telemachus and advises him to send Penelope back to Icarius if she wishes to remarry, saying ἄρτυνέουσιν ἔεδνα / πολλὰ μάλ'. Finley and Snodgrass both translate this as “they will arrange a large dowry for her,” although Homer specifically used ἔεδνα, rather than a word for gifts such as δῶρα or μείλια. The sense here is surely “they will contrive many fine gifts (ἔεδνα)” —that is, attract rich ἔεδνα, with no mention of dowry at all.

ii.53. Snodgrass again follows Finley in rendering ἐδνῶσαιτο θύγατρά as “that he may himself dower his daughter.” Finley admitted the “virtual unanimity” of commentators and translators that this refers to ἔεδνα passing from the groom to the bride’s kin.¹⁵⁹ To treat it as an example of dowry would probably be a mistake.

ii.132–33. This passage has been discussed in detail by Lacey.¹⁶⁰ He sees it as an example of δῶρα that Telemachus will be forced to send to Icarius if he returns Penelope to him against her will, to soothe the bad feeling it would cause by implying disrespect for Icarius’ line. On this reading, dowry gifts do not come into the picture.¹⁶¹ Snodgrass dismissed Lacey’s case in a footnote on the grounds of its “improbable and indeed almost legalistic fidelity on the poet’s part,” and read πολλ’ ἀποτίνειν as referring to the return of a dowry.¹⁶² There is nothing improbable in Lacey’s explanation. The giving of gifts is one of the most common ways of smoothing over a rift in the social fabric.¹⁶³ It is not at all difficult to believe that Telemachus would have to give Icarius gifts for slighting him, and Lacey’s idea is perfectly valid.

iv.736. Penelope speaks of Dolios, “the slave whom my father gave *me* when I came here”—again a case of φερνή rather than προῖξ, the slave apparently being Penelope’s rather than Odysseus’. Lacey too characterizes this as a δῶρον, not dowry.

vii.134. Alcinous’ offer to Odysseus is similar to the offers to Bellerophon (6.192–95) and Achilles (9.146–47); not a case of dowry, but an attempt by a βασιλεὺς to lure a particularly desirable son-in-law into his οἶκος—put another way, a filiacentric, uxorilocal marriage, quite compatible with the Homeric system.

xx.342. Lacey treated Telemachus’ offer of ἄσπετα δῶρα with Penelope as δῶρα offered before he, as κύριος, would invite offers of ἔεδνα for her hand.¹⁶⁴ As with ii.132–33, this is surely the most economical view.

xxiii.228. Penelope refers to another slave “whom my father gave me when I came here.” As with iv.736, this is a δῶρον, part of a φερνή, rather than a προῖξ.

159. Finley 1981, 293 n.46.

160. Lacey 1966, 61–66.

161. As explicitly pointed out by Lacey (1966, 65 n.52).

162. Snodgrass 1974, 117 n.21.

163. For example, Radcliffe-Brown 1922, 81; Mauss 1966, 17–18, 92 n.3.

164. Lacey 1966, 57–58.

xxiv.294. Here Laertes mentions “constant Penelope,” Odysseus’ ἄλοχος πολύδωρος. A. T. Murray, in the Loeb translation, rendered this as “his wife, wooed with many gifts,” offering “bountiful” as an alternative for πολύδωρος.¹⁶⁵ “Well-dowered” is again, as with 6.394, just one possibility. Finley used this passage to treat πολύδωρος as an antonym of ἀλφεσίβοια, reading it as “‘bringing many gifts’ to the husband.”¹⁶⁶ “To the husband” is supplied by Finley; all we can say is that πολύδωρος probably carries the implication of “bringing many gifts,” but the direction of the flow cannot be specified. The use of Polydoros as a personal name for one of Priam’s sons (22.51) suggests that it may even be best to see the word as implying gifts in a metaphorical sense, with the meaning of “bountiful” suggested by Murray.

This brief review of the occurrences of “dowry” should be enough to show that Snodgrass’s case for the inconsistency of the marriage practices of the Homeric *aristoi* is very weak. Certainly some elements are rather complex, but Lacey’s explanations are convincing.¹⁶⁷ Πολύδωρος can indeed be translated as “well-dowered,” and the cases I have treated as φερνή, be taken as dowry, but the argument will then rest on two debatable readings. It is in no way strong enough to refute the arguments made in section I above that the Homeric society is drawn from the real society of the eighth century in which the poet and his audiences moved.

The second part of Snodgrass’s article¹⁶⁸ picks up themes which have been fully developed by Jack Goody in a number of works. Goody has drawn a distinction between two principal modes of devolution of property found in human societies, the homogeneous and the diverging. Working mainly from the information coded in the *Ethnographic Atlas*, Goody demonstrated statistically significant links between the two forms of devolution and corresponding types of social structure. Diverging devolution is associated with societies practicing plough agriculture, which provides the potential for some households to become significantly wealthier than others in the same community. The result is a tendency toward economic and social stratification, and the corresponding desire of parents to preserve their children’s status vis-à-vis that of other members of the community. This is achieved through the mechanisms of diverging devolution, which allows children of *both* sexes to be matched with members of equally wealthy or even wealthier families in their marriages (“homogamy” and “hypergamy”). Very often women will only be residual heirs, in the event of the absence of male children, as in the case of the Classical Athenian *epiklēros*; and, as happened at Athens, the result is a general tendency toward lineage endogamy (marriage within a fairly restricted descent group, at Athens

165. A. T. Murray 1919, 423.

166. Finley 1981, 293 n.41.

167. Lacey 1966; Lacey 1968, 39–44.

168. Snodgrass 1974, 118–21.

often the *oikos* group). Dowry functions as a form of pre-mortem inheritance. Further consequences of the system include an emphasis on monogamy, and a “descriptive” rather than “classificatory” kinship terminology that serves to isolate the nuclear family from the wider descent group.

The other side of the coin is homogeneous devolution. This tends to occur in simple agricultural systems, particularly among hoe cultivators, where there is little opportunity for major differences in wealth to appear within a community. Property is usually passed down unilineally, with the non-inheriting sex not even acting as residual heirs; where there is no heir of the appropriate sex within the nuclear family, property will devolve to collaterals within the wider descent group. That is, in a patrilineal society, if a man has no sons, his property will go to a brother rather than to his daughters. Marriage is often polygynous, and bridewealth, which is to some extent a device for rationing the distribution of women, is common. Bridewealth passes to the kin of the bride and functions as a societal rather than a conjugal fund, doing nothing to ensure the status of the married couple. Consequently, the ambilocality associated with heiresses in the diverging devolution system is absent. Often the items used as bridewealth constitute a distinct sphere of exchange, not utilized in social contexts other than marriage. Exogamy (rules specifying marriage outside particular descent groups) is the rule, accompanied by a classificatory kinship terminology.¹⁶⁹

The whole idea of using the *Ethnographic Atlas* in cross-cultural studies of marriage institutions can be criticized,¹⁷⁰ but the results of Goody’s work are nevertheless most striking. Furthermore, as Goody points out, the very fact of the groupings involved in the codes in the *Atlas* should increase the significance of any positive results obtained.¹⁷¹ Snodgrass suggests that in Homer we see elements of *both* Goody’s modes of devolution, and that this implies that there is at least a possibility that the Homeric world is drawn from several historically distinct cultures. I will argue below that this is probably not so, that Homeric society belongs to a form of Goody’s diverging devolution, and that it is fully consistent with subsequent well-documented developments in the Archaic and Classical periods.

This may seem paradoxical at first, since I have been at great pains to show that the instances of dowry cited by Finley and Snodgrass are in fact no such thing. Dowry is one of the central institutions of diverging devolution, serving to preserve the status of households; but as Finley commented in connection with land tenure, we must expect to find in ancient societies institutions that are appropriate to the needs of the groups practicing them.¹⁷² Thus, Gernet points

169. See Goody 1973; Goody 1976. For a slightly different consideration of the egalitarian nature of bridewealth, see Meillassoux 1981, 61–74.

170. E.g., Leach 1982, 180–81.

171. Goody 1973, 22; see also Köbben 1967.

172. Finley 1968, 31.

out that within the closed world of the *polis*, endogamous $\pi\rho\omicron\tau\acute{\iota}\xi$ marriages were appropriate, "as opposed to the earlier system followed by the *noble families*, in which marriages were made with foreigners" (Emphasis added).

$\Pi\rho\omicron\tau\acute{\iota}\xi$ -marriages of the Athenian type functioned, as Goody says, to safeguard the status of a family within the community and to insure the continuity of the *oikos*. There was in Classical Athens a strong tendency toward *oikos*-endogamy, and Goody has used the Athenian adoption practices and the celebrated epiclerate as model examples of diverging devolution in action.¹⁷³ Gernet and Vernant both argued that the appearance of the *polis* marked a radical change in marriage settlements from $\xi\epsilon\delta\nu\alpha$ to $\pi\rho\omicron\tau\acute{\iota}\xi$,¹⁷⁴ but we should note that Goody has demonstrated that it is not the state but economic stratification that is the prime causal mechanism in the development of diverging devolution.¹⁷⁵ Such stratification can be traced in the archaeological record throughout the Dark Age and did not suddenly appear with the *polis* in the seventh century, let alone in the fifth,¹⁷⁶ and I would contend that diverging devolution was probably the norm in much of Greece, certainly from the Late Bronze Age onward, and possibly from much earlier still, acting to preserve the differences in wealth between households.

So how are we to explain the Homeric practices? Is this, as some would hold, pure poetic fantasy? I think not. There are two points to make here. The first is that the Homeric marriage-payments are rather different from the bride-wealth practices observed in many African societies, where large prestations often form a "circulating fund" tying together the families *within* a society. In particular, the marriage gifts may belong to a restricted sphere of exchange, only being reusable in the form of another bridewealth payment. Neither this feature nor the creation of "linked" couples and the importance of the mother's brother¹⁷⁷ are apparent in Homer. Homeric payments are not a simple form of bridewealth.

The second point is the *context* of Homeric marriages. It is summed up most clearly by Finley:

all marriages about which we are informed occurred exclusively among the most powerful nobles and chieftains, so that it is impossible to say anything at all about the law or customs of marriage among commoners . . . the marriages in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were between outsiders, that is to say, between a man from one community and a woman from another. This fact is to be explained by the circumstance

173. Goody 1976, 14, 71–72.

174. Vernant 1980, 56–57.

175. Goody 1976, 8–40.

176. See Morris, forthcoming; for a contrary view of the rise of a peasantry and aristocracy in Geometric Greece see Starr 1977.

177. Radcliffe-Brown 1950, 50–53.

that the characters all moved in the highest circles, in which marriage was an important instrumentality for the establishment of ties of power among chieftains and kings. . . . Marriage was, of course, a major social occasion, and particularly so in the upper social classes in which Homeric heroes moved. There a marriage was, among other things, a political alliance; in fact, marriage and guest-friendship were the two fundamental devices for the establishment of alliances among nobles and chieftains.¹⁷⁸

There are many recorded cases of societies where the upper class and the commoners had very different marriage practices,¹⁷⁹ but the point can be made most precisely through a study of the institutions of marriage in Greece in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. According to Gernet and Vernant, and almost certainly if Goody's model is correct, a fairly fully developed marriage system of the ἐγγύη type accompanied by προίξ will have been operating within very many Archaic *poleis* after 700 B.C. And yet, down to the end of the sixth century, we find many aristocrats continuing to behave in a manner very similar to the Homeric *aristoi*. Women acted to some extent as ἀγάλματα, as they had done for Homer, being exchanged between households in different communities in order to establish political alliances. In the 630s, the Athenian aristocrat Cylon used his marriage to the daughter of Theagenes, tyrant of Megara, to enlist help in a failed coup at Athens (Thuc. 1.126); around 575 B.C. we hear of a very Homeric ἄγών for the hand of Agariste, daughter of Cleisthenes, tyrant of Sicyon (Hdt. 6.127); and in the 550s Peisistratos married Megacles' daughter in order to build up a power base for his second coup at Athens (Hdt. 1.60).¹⁸⁰

With the increasing institutionalization of the *polis*, such exogamous aristocratic marriages probably largely faded out after 500 B.C. (although they continued among the Sicilian tyrants of the fifth century); but for nearly two hundred years previously, class in-marriage of the Homeric type had prevailed over clan in-marriage of the Classical type among the aristocracy. It is likely

178. Finley 1981, 234, 235, 238; Snodgrass (1974, 116) is in full agreement.

179. For modern Sri Lanka, see Yalman 1967, ch. 8; for medieval Western Europe, see Goody 1976, 43–46; and more generally, see Goody 1973, 19.

180. Other examples include Procles, tyrant of Epidaurus, who married the daughter of Aristocrates of Arcadia in the seventh century; their daughter went on to marry Periander of Corinth (Diog. La. 1.94). According to *Ath. Pol.* 17.4, Peisistatos of Athens also married the daughter of Gorgilus of Argos, subsequent to her own marriage to Archinus of Ambracia. See Lacey (1968) for further examples, and Gernet (1968, 344–59). It will be noted that these examples of Archaic marriages never mention prestations. Quite possibly these declined in the seventh century, with the general movement away from interpersonal gift exchange, and the transfer of the word ἀγάμα from this category of prestation (as seen in Homer) toward specifically religious offerings, and ultimately its restriction to religious statuary alone (Morris 1986). The important feature shared by the Homeric and Archaic marriages is their exogamous, alliance basis, as part of the personalized nature of early Greek politics.

that the commoners were practicing the more typical forms of diverging devolution at this time.¹⁸¹

My argument is simply that the situation that seems to have been current in the Archaic period could well have applied in the eighth century and earlier too. If Goody's diverging/homogeneous devolution distinction is to be considered as a possible objection to the "historicity" of the Homeric world, it must be accepted that the societies of Archaic Greece were cases of diverging devolution where the aristocracy could follow an alternative marriage strategy. If so, then there is no reason to deny this for the eighth century; and if it is not accepted, then the relevance of Goody's arguments for early Greece must be rejected along with it.

Perhaps it is not even necessary to consider what Homer and his audiences may have thought about the marriages of the *kakoi*; such things simply did not belong in the heroic world. Only once does the question of non-elite marriage surface. In the *Odyssey*, Eumaeus says Odysseus would give him "a house, a piece of land (κλήρος), and a much-wooed wife" adding that these are "things which a well-disposed master (ἄναξ) gives to a slave (οἰκῆτι) who has labored much for him" (xiv.63–65). If a bard ever had reason to sing of the marriages of commoners, I feel he would do so in terms of current practice; but there is simply no evidence, and certainly nothing in the poems, to suggest that Homer was drawing on anything beyond his own eighth-century concepts.

Returning to the other features of diverging devolution, plough agriculture is of course the norm in Homer. Monogamy is also generally practiced, and certainly the rare exceptions such as Priam are no more common than is normally the case in otherwise monogamous cultures.¹⁸² Kinship terminology was largely descriptive, distinguishing between the brother, ἀδελφεός, and cousin, ἀνεψιός; the occurrence of κασίγνητος (15.545) is not such an important exception as Snodgrass suggests.¹⁸³ We can see a parallel very limited use of classificatory language in the Gortyn Code, which clearly belongs to a society of the diverging devolution type.¹⁸⁴ Nor is the tendency for sons to remain at home with their fathers until the latter's death worrying; this is again hinted at in the Gortyn Code (Col. IV.24ff). In any case, the chances are that in eighth-century Greece most fathers would die while their sons were still in their late teens and hence either unmarried or newly married.¹⁸⁵

Finally, Homeric society is rigidly stratified into *aristoi* and *kakoi*, at least to some extent on the basis of landholdings and clientship based on land,

181. If it is argued that the commoners may also have practiced out-marriage in the Archaic period, then early Greece forms an unusual exception to Goody's typology. In that case, any inconsistencies in the Homeric marriage pattern could hardly be used as evidence that the society is unhistorical.

182. E.g., Goody 1976, 17.

183. Snodgrass 1974, 120.

184. Cols. VII.17–IX.24 and XII.6–19. See Willetts 1967, 18–27; Willetts 1982, 245.

185. For some relevant figures, see Goody 1976, 58.

characteristic of diverging devolution;¹⁸⁶ and marriage is very definitely restricted by class, although again the alliance function of aristocratic marriages means we cannot identify any tendencies to *oikos*-endogamy lower down the scale. The dominant role of men in agricultural practices and the prohibition of female premarital sex, two more features of diverging devolution omitted by Snodgrass, also feature prominently in Homeric society and the poetry of the Archaic period.

Summing up, I argue that Homeric society conforms to Goody's position that diverging devolution is characteristic of the major Eurasian civilizations,¹⁸⁷ and that Homer does not contain the inconsistencies that Snodgrass discussed. The gaps in the evidence are tantalizing, but as we have seen, the balance of probability seems to be in favor of a consistent basis to the society of the poems, derived from Greece in the eighth century B.C.

The arguments of this section have probably not done full credit to the subtleties of Finley's and Snodgrass's cases, but it does seem from my understanding of them that neither offers a serious objection to the thesis advanced in section I.

There are, of course, many other opponents of an eighth-century Homeric world, but a full survey would be impossible. Geddes has recently revived Calhoun's rather idiosyncratic ideas of the organization of the societies in the poems,¹⁸⁸ but his claims seem strangely unable to answer Finley's position of the essential consistency of Homer in *The World of Odysseus*. There seems to be no reason to doubt the conclusion that Homeric society is derived from the real world in which Homer and his audiences lived.

IV. POETRY AND SOCIETY

The conclusion that the Homeric poems are based in the eighth century does not end our problems, however. We still have to answer one fundamental question: how did Homer use his eighth-century world to create the heroic society?

We can start to answer this with a generic statement of the relationships between oral poetry and society:

poetry may reflect certain aspects of society and express ideas and reactions that are of concern to people of the time—but to take literary forms as representing a direct and full reflection, or as a *direct* source of social history can only be misleading.¹⁸⁹

186. On landholdings, see Finley 1978, 60; Goody 1976, 109.

187. Goody 1973, 23; 1976, 13.

188. Calhoun 1934; Geddes 1984.

189. Finnegan 1977, 263.

Any work of art is necessarily an imitation of culture and is only one of an infinite number of possible models of society.¹⁹⁰ Like any other literary source from antiquity, the Homeric poems provide at best just one view of the world from which they come—and in this case, a view that is certain to be highly colored. It is the task of the historian to disentangle the Homeric world-view, and to try to establish just whose model of society it is and how far other contemporary views are likely to have differed from it.

Some historians have more faith than others in the absolute value of Homer's world-view: after removing the effects of the epic distance, they assume we see a faithful portrait of the Greek world. Of those who completely accept Homer's account, reading the poems as a direct source of social history, we can single out Arthur Adkins, whose contribution has probably been the greatest. Adkins claims that:

Homeric values . . . suit Homeric society, inasmuch as they commend those qualities which most evidently secure its existence . . . we discover a society whose highest commendation is bestowed upon men who must successfully exhibit the qualities of a warrior, but must also be men of wealth and social position; men, too, who must display their valour both in war and peace to protect their dependents . . . it is reasonable to assume that such a scale of values was generally acceptable.¹⁹¹

Adkins also believes in an Early Dark Age date for the Homeric world,¹⁹² but that is no longer at issue in this section. In a number of important studies,¹⁹³ Adkins has fully developed a picture of the Homeric society as a warlike world of insular *oikoi* in a perpetual struggle with one another.¹⁹⁴ Adkins' *aristos* is very much an island unto himself: "the *aidos* he feels at not being *agathos* must be stronger than the *aidos* he feels at not being *pinutos*."¹⁹⁵ The most powerful term of denigration, *αἰσχρός*, is said to be the term never applied to the *agathos*;¹⁹⁶ these *agathoi*, at the head of the *oikoi*, can only be overruled by another *agathos* at the head of a stronger *oikos*.¹⁹⁷

Adkins' outline has been severely criticized, particularly by Anthony Long. Long argued that excess on the part of the *agathos* led to criticism, just as failure did,¹⁹⁸ and that Adkins only made use of part of the available evidence on terms of evaluation.¹⁹⁹ Discussing the quarrel of Achilles and Agamemnon

190. Redfield 1975, 54–55.

191. Adkins 1960, 55, 34; see also Adkins 1971, 1; Adkins 1972a, 10–11.

192. Adkins 1960, 57 n.3.

193. Adkins 1960; 1963; 1969; 1970; 1971; 1972b.

194. E.g., Adkins 1960, 53–54.

195. Adkins 1960, 50.

196. Adkins 1960, 38.

197. Adkins 1960, 61; Adkins 1971, 1.

198. Long 1970, 129–37.

199. Long 1970, 129.

in *Iliad* book 1 in his reply to Long, Adkins retorted that “*Aischron* is the only word powerful enough [to condemn an *agathos*]; and this is never used to decry injustice in Homer,”²⁰⁰ but did not answer Long’s argument that other terms, equally strong in their own way, are used to criticize ὕβρις and ὑπερβασία. Long’s criticism of Adkins’ discussion of ἀεικῆς and κάλον²⁰¹ attacks the central theme of *Merit and Responsibility*, Adkins’ focus on the supremacy of the *oikos*.

In a lengthy footnote, Long rejected the historicity of the Homeric world.²⁰² His arguments, based on the administration of justice, have already been answered on pp. 102–104 *supra* and the points he cited were found to be perfectly consistent with a single functioning society in the eighth century. Nor does his rejection of Adkins’ thesis that only “competitive” values are praised in Homer constitute a bar to the origin of Homeric society in a single historical moment; quite the reverse, as will be seen below. But Long’s work does raise some very interesting questions. His criticism of Adkins is sharp, and in places unanswerable; yet Adkins’ reply²⁰³ also makes many good points. The “competitive” society seen by Adkins does indeed emerge from the poems on first readings. This is not to imply that Adkins’ treatment of the poems is in any way superficial—nothing could be further from the truth; rather, the two studies are looking at the poems in different ways. It may be said with fairness that the praise of “co-operation” seen by Long is only visible at a deeper level than the ethical system Adkins elucidates. Generally, the competitive ethic is highly praised in Homer; but on occasion a rather different sort of attitude seems to show through.

It is hard to imagine Adkins’ Homeric society, which he describes as “more an agglomeration of ‘Cyclopean’ households than an integrated community”²⁰⁴ founding Syracuse or Megara Hyblaea; but it is hard to imagine it performing some of the communal activities dated to the tenth and ninth centuries either. The fortification wall at Zagora, the wall and ditch at Filizi off the coast of Paros, or the wall and “Platform Fill” at Smyrna all come to mind, as does the huge effort involved in raising a mound over the Toumba building at Lefkandi, around 1000 B.C.²⁰⁵ Can Adkins’ society then be taken as an argument against an historical Homeric society?

It was argued in section II that the *oikos* was subsumed within a higher, community-level scale of integration in Homer, epitomized by Mentor’s criticism of the Ithacans for failing to intervene in the affairs of Telemachus’ *oikos*

200. Adkins 1971, 9.

201. Long 1970, 135–38; Adkins 1960, 43–46; Adkins 1972a, 14–16.

202. Long 1970, 137–38 n.58.

203. Adkins 1971.

204. Adkins 1960, 54.

205. For Zagora, see Cambitoglou 1969; Cambitoglou 1972. For Filizi, see Schilardi 1975a, 95–96; Schilardi 1975b, 209. For Smyrna, see Nicholls 1958/59; Akurgal 1983. And for Lefkandi, see Popham et al. 1982b.

(ii.239–41; cf. iii.214–15). This contrasts with Adkins' model of Homeric society. But the further contrast between Adkins' "competitive" society and Long's revelation of deeper levels of integration tells us something very important about the relationship between Homeric society and the eighth-century culture in which it is rooted, and provides the key to the differences between my account of Homeric society and Adkins' and Finley's.

Paradoxically, it is Long's view of Homeric society that supports its fundamental historicity, and Adkins' that is impractical, despite the protestations of both to the contrary.²⁰⁶ Adkins' assumption of an undeclared war between the *oikoi* of a community, the *oikos* only surviving insofar as its *agathos* is stronger than other *agathoi*, and a similar struggle being carried on between communities that would perish but for the martial valor of their heroes, is very difficult to accept as an historical reality. In fact, it bears a striking resemblance to the model put forward by Hobbes in his *Leviathan* of the "natural" stage of human evolution:

For WARRE, consisteth not in Battell only, or the act of fighting; but in a tract of time, wherein the Will to contend by Battell is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of *Time*, is to be considered in the nature of Warre; as it is in the nature of Weather. For as the nature of Foule Weather, lyeth not in a shower or two of rain; but in an inclination thereto of many dayes together; So the nature of Warre, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE.²⁰⁷

"Warre," of course (as Hobbes realized) was not a general empirical reality, but an ideal type, which philosophers might contrast with functioning societies to make more clear the essence of the state.²⁰⁸ War existed nowhere because of a general surrender by all members of society of their right to wage war. Is it really possible that a state of war existed at any time in the Greek Dark Age, let alone the eighth century B.C.? I think not; and Long's complex and subtle analysis of the poems shows us that deep beneath the war-level Homeric society followed "the first, and Fundamentall Law of Nature: which is, to seek Peace, and to follow it."²⁰⁹ Warre is certainly part of Homer's model of the world, part of a particular view, not part of a balanced overview (if there can be such a thing) and cannot have belonged to any "real" world such as that

206. Adkins 1971, 1; Adkins 1972a, 10; Long 1970, 137–38 n.58. Long also comments: "It would certainly be remarkable if the moral standards found in Homer bore no relation to the life and language of actual peoples" (1970, 122), which should perhaps be taken as support for a composite world picture similar to Snodgrass's.

207. Quoted from Sahlins 1972, 172.

208. Sahlins 1972, 173.

209. Hobbes, in Sahlins 1972, 177.

from which the poems were derived. This statement receives indisputable support from the internal evidence of the poems.

Hobbes' speculation that the imposition of the state by force ruled out Warre seems not to be the best explanation. Hobbes did not have access to ethnographic accounts of simpler societies than his own, other than accounts of the American Indians on which his celebrated judgment of primitive life as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" was based. The mutual surrender of the right to use force is effected not through the conquest of all by the state, but through the mechanism of exchange.²¹⁰

Marcel Mauss's classic study *The Gift* considered the meaning and motivation of exchange institutions in non-capitalist societies.²¹¹ The characteristic feature of the cultures Mauss discussed was the apparently voluntary exchange of gifts, often unsolicited. But Mauss tells us that "although the prestations and counterprestations take place under a voluntary guise they are in essence strictly obligatory, and their sanction is private or open warfare." Again, "To refuse to give, or to fail to invite, is—like refusing to accept—the equivalent of a declaration of war."²¹² Even in the most agonistic of societies, rivalry is subsumed into the exchange relationships, and Warre along the lines of Hobbes' and Adkins' constructs is buried deep below the surface of social reality.²¹³

This is most significant: gift exchange is one of the most striking features of Homeric society.²¹⁴ Gifts are constantly given and received, with the express purpose of establishing friendly relations between individuals and households (xv.54–55), normalizing social relations (viii.401–5), or marking the status gradations in society (23.534–39). Finley has developed in detail the significance of gift-giving in Homer.²¹⁵ In all non-capitalist cultures the fundamental role of gift exchange is that of integration. Any society contains elements of both conflict and harmony; and different self-representations will emphasize the two to different extents. In Homer's model of his world, the conflict between *oikoi* and indeed between communities is very much in the foreground, and the dependence of the *dēmos* on the *aristoi* is total in this state of Warre. Warre is incompatible with the institutions of the Homeric world, and, as Long has shown, Peace exists there, but hidden at a deeper level.

The imitation of society caught in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* presents us with a picture which we might suspect is both partial and exaggerated. We do not have to simply reject it as unworkable; we must exercise our judgement as

210. Sahlins 1972, 177.

211. Mauss 1966, 2.

212. Mauss 1966, 3, 11.

213. Mauss 1966, 4, 36; on the integrative, "personifying" nature of the gift economy, see Gregory 1982.

214. See Qviller 1981.

215. Finley 1978, 45–46; Finley 1981, 213–45.

historians in asking how far it is a reliable guide to what was really happening in Greece in the eighth century B.C. Adkins, as we have seen, takes a position of great faith in Homer's impartiality, but this, I shall argue in the next section, is something we cannot afford to do; we must try to look beneath the surface of our ancient sources to gain a profounder insight into antiquity. As well as being wary of the epic distance in Homer, we must seek to understand the perspective from which Homer will have taken premises from his own world in order to create the Heroic Age; that is, what elements of reality he incorporated into his imitation of society, and whose reality this was in the eighth century B.C.

V. LOCATING HOMER

Summarizing the argument so far, we can say that Homeric society must be based on the world in which Homer lived, but that the poetic representation is not a direct reflection of the world, being rather an image drawn from one viewpoint. Some elements of eighth-century society are exaggerated and others given diminished significance.

This much is reasonable enough. But to give precise meaning to these statements will require much more speculation. It is impossible to create a Homeric "cookbook" laying out exactly how to use the texts as historical sources, but in this section I will suggest one possible view of Homer's aims and how he represented elements of the eighth century in his poetry. While this discussion will allow us to explain many of the anomalous features of the poems, it is not the only possible explanation and will certainly not be acceptable to everyone.

Recapping the argument briefly, we should continue to bear in mind the first and most obvious observation, which is that Homer was describing the Heroic Age, and this was supposed to be different from the everyday world. So while we speak of Homer drawing on his own culture, which must have been his main model, it is in no way implied that Homer was in any way consciously attempting to describe the world of the eighth century. But on the other hand, in trying to describe the world of the heroes, Homer had to build upon the shared assumptions of his own culture, embellishing them in collectively accepted ways, to create an alternative reality. We can isolate some devices as those of the epic distance, intended to remind both the poet and his audience that the world in the poems was not their own: but even when these have been peeled away, as it were, we still have the fundamental truth that Homer was striving to describe something other than his own milieu, and while the poetic world must have grown from his own, we should expect the contacts between the two to appear in a rather subtle way. The most valuable perspective here is offered by Redfield in *Nature and Culture in the Iliad*, where he points out that while the premises of the Heroic Age may be fantastic, the story must unfold in a comprehensible way, and that the chain of cause and effect must have seemed reasonable to the

eighth-century audience. For all the exaggerations and omissions, the Homeric world shares the same assumptions about human nature as at least a part of the communities of the eighth century B.C. and it is our task to identify these assumptions, determine whose assumptions they were, and ultimately gauge the value of Homer to the historian and archaeologist.

Let us return to the poems. We have the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* only because at some point(s) in the eighth century it was decided to write down 28,000 verses of poetry. This was surely an awesome task, not to be undertaken lightly or without good reason. We must ask why a supremely skillful oral poet would have wanted to record his works in writing at all.²¹⁶

Albert Lord held that literacy destroyed the skills of oral composition.²¹⁷ This point is not quite clear, but it does seem that it is incorporation into a developed literate culture, with its very different traditions, that can have this effect, rather than writing pure and simple.²¹⁸ Lord noted that some Serbo-Croat bards could read and write²¹⁹ but made no use of this skill in composition. The same phenomenon has been seen among Albanian oral poets, who simply ignore the fact that they can make use of written versions of their own songs, and continue to improvise freely in performance.²²⁰

We may suggest, then, that on balance it was rather unlikely that Homer himself decided to write down his own poems, especially at a time when the Greek script was in its infancy. While writing the poems down was certainly possible, presumably on papyrus and in ink (papyrus is alluded to by Homer: xxi.390–91),²²¹ it would surely have required some extraordinary impetus to provide the motivation for this massive task. Whether Homer wrote himself or dictated to a scribe²²² it would have required many days of work, and must have been a remarkable event.²²³

What could have provided this impetus, and what does it tell us about the origins of the texts? Writing, as we have seen, was only just appearing in Greece when the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were recorded. Yet writing was known to the Greeks well before the late eighth century. Linear B almost certainly disappeared soon after 1200 B.C., but the knowledge of the possibility of scripts was perhaps never entirely extinguished. A few years ago, a bronze bowl bearing an inscription in Phoenician writing was found in a late-tenth-century context in a tomb at Knossos,²²⁴ and Semitic inscriptions roughly contemporary

216. As does Kirk (1970, 49).

217. Lord 1960, 129; cf. Kirk 1962, 98.

218. A. Parry 1966, 212–14; see Lord's reply (1967, 5).

219. Lord 1960, 132; A. Parry 1966, 181 n.2.

220. Jensen 1980, 83–86.

221. Dornseiff 1914; Wade-Gery 1952, 11.

222. Which, personally, I find more likely; see Lord 1953, 132.

223. A. Parry 1966, 184.

224. H. W. Catling 1977, 12–14, Tomb J; Szynger 1979.

with the earliest Greek writing have been found at Pithekoussai.²²⁵ Furthermore, the Greeks were in regular contact with Cyprus throughout the ninth and eighth centuries, where a syllabary was in use throughout the Dark Age.²²⁶ Yet writing was not adopted until ca. 750 B.C.

This is not totally surprising. Mere technical knowledge is never the key to acceptance of an innovation; only when a need for the innovation appears in society will it be adopted.²²⁷ Where motivation is lacking, there is no innovation. So, in the second half of the eighth century B.C., the Greeks felt the need to develop a system of alphabetic writing and to write down huge amounts of orally composed poetry. The obvious coincidence is made more striking by the Greek invention of the alphabet, which could be used to record hexametrical verses, rather than a syllabary, which all their neighbors used.²²⁸ The Etruscans took an alphabet from the Greeks, but within two hundred years had slid into a syllabary. "It would seem that the Greeks needed [alphabetical writing], the others did not. . . . What function? . . . To serve as a notation for Greek verse."²²⁹

The argument is that the Greek alphabet was invented in the middle of the eighth century to write down oral poetry. The significance of this should not be underestimated: such an innovation must have required an enormous stimulus.²³⁰ Wade-Gery suggested that the demand came from the desire of the ruling family of Chios to be celebrated at the new *panegyreis*.²³¹ While this may be rather fanciful—his sources are very poor—he had the right idea, looking for some powerful motivation external to the brilliance of the poetry itself that could have led an oral poet of genius to dictate these huge works over several sittings.

We do not have to look far for the likely roots of such a stimulus in the eighth century. Society was in turmoil. Everything was changing. Starr speaks of the "Age of Revolution," and Snodgrass of a structural revolution.²³² Earlier attempts to identify revolutionary sentiments in Hesiod were perhaps misguided,²³³ but this should not be allowed to distract attention from the funda-

225. Buchner 1978; Garbini 1978.

226. See Snodgrass 1971, 326–32; Karageorghis 1982; Mitford and Masson 1982.

227. Renfrew 1978.

228. Wade-Gery 1952, 12–14; Heubeck 1979, 73–100; Snodgrass 1980a, 78–84; Schnapp-Gourbeillon 1982.

229. Wade-Gery 1952, 13. Alan Johnston (1983, 67) suggests that since most of the inscriptions on eighth-century vases are abecedaria or mark possession the alphabet was adopted essentially for purposes of display. While this is a real possibility, with numerous parallel cases (e.g., Lévi-Strauss 1973, 390–94), we should note that the eighth-century evidence is largely limited to sherds, and so the narrow range of themes is perhaps not very significant in considering the motives behind the adoption of the alphabet.

230. See Jensen 1980, 98–99.

231. Wade-Gery 1952, 6–9.

232. Starr 1961b; Snodgrass 1980a, 15–84.

233. E.g., Ed. Will 1957; Detienne 1963; see the replies of Ern. Will (1965); Carrière (1979), and Millett (1984).

mental changes in social structure in the late eighth century. The Archaic *poleis* were making their first appearance, along with the idea of the citizen estate, replacing Dark Age notions of the structure of the polity. The relationship of the elite to the lower classes was undergoing a far-reaching transformation.²³⁴

Finnegan has described how oral poetry can become an ideological tool.²³⁵ It can be used to enshrine the values of either an exploiting or an exploited group, justifying or condemning the status quo. In brief, it can be thought that it served class interests.²³⁶ As Wade-Gery has pointed out, the eighth century saw the first large-scale gatherings at Panhellenic games and sanctuaries, which were the only contexts in which poems as long as Homer's could be performed—the ideal setting for the propagation of ideologies. The point has been further emphasized by Nagy.²³⁷

Do the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* fit this definition of ideology? Certainly a case can be made. Throughout the poems, the *basileis* are glorified, and the *demos* ignored to the point of total exclusion.²³⁸ The wealth of the *basileis* ultimately depended on “gifts” from the *demos*, although these are hardly mentioned in the poems.²³⁹ Individual incidents occur that make overt the pro-*basileis* viewpoint; only a few need be cited here.

The most obvious is of course Odysseus' treatment of Thersites (2.270–78), where Homer tells us that the *πληθὺς* praised the justness of his actions. “These final words, ‘thus spake the multitude,’ protest too much,” commented Finley.²⁴⁰ He is quite right. Elsewhere, Homer frequently alludes to the source of the *basileis*' authority: the will of Zeus. Nestor reminds Agamemnon that “a sceptre-bearing *basileus*, to whom Zeus gives *κῆδος*, has more than his equal share of *τιμῇ*” (1.278–79), while earlier, Agamemnon had warned Achilles, “a *basileus* is the stronger one when he is angry with a common man; for even if the *basileus* keeps his wrath (*χόλος*) from rising on that day, afterwards he preserves his ill-will in his heart until he is able to settle the matter” (1.80–83). Examples could be multiplied. In another famous passage, Odysseus describes for Penelope the *κλέος* of “the blameless *basileus*, who is god-fearing, ruling

234. This point was made long ago by Ehrenberg (1937) and has recently been reinforced by de Polignac, who describes the period ca. 750–700 B.C. as “une crise de croissance hellénique” (1984, 18). The alternative position, that there was no “general crisis” in the eighth century, is difficult to maintain; for example, see van Effenterre (1985).

235. Finnegan 1977, 242–43. Interest in this feature of poetry is growing; for a good medieval example see Duggan 1980, and for this function in epic poetry generally, DuBois 1982, 3.

236. See also Wolff 1981, 49–70.

237. The use of the Olympic games as an opportunity to disseminate a point of view is well known from the Classical Period—Lysias' speech there in 388 B.C. and later the building programs of the Macedonian kings and Nero spring to mind (see Snodgrass [in press] on this theme). Nagy (1980) emphasizes the importance of the rise of eighth-century Panhellenism in the fixation of the text of Homer.

238. See Geddes 1984.

239. Finley 1978, 96.

240. Finley 1978, 111.

over many men and upholding justice; through his good rule, the black earth bears wheat and barley, the trees are heavy with fruit, the flocks quickly produce young, and the sea yields fish; and the people flourish under him" (xix.109–14). This is an important passage, frequently seen as "a dimming memory of an archaic conception of kingship."²⁴¹ As follows from the arguments of sections I and II, this passage (and Hesiod *WD* 225–47) represents one particular view, current in the late eighth century, of the legitimacy of the *basileis'* power. It is an example of a very common form of legitimation, which was characterized by Weber as "traditional authority."²⁴²

[In these passages—and many others—we seem to see the eighth century through a distorting lens. We hear what the social elite wanted to hear a poet saying. However, in such complex poems, the ideological messages are not simple or direct. Nicolai has usefully discussed what he calls "affirmativen" and "kritische Wirkungsabsicht" in the *Iliad*.²⁴³ The affirmative elements are those stressing the vital role of the *basileis* in defending their community; while the critical features emphasize the horrors of war and the disastrous consequences for the *πληθὺς* of the *basileis'* headstrong behavior. He concludes that the *Iliad* is polemicizing on behalf of state institutions, in particular the *boulē*, against individual chiefs.

There is much in the poems that is ambiguous; the internal evidence is rich but equivocal, and the viewpoint of the commentator will inevitably influence the interpretation. I argued in section IV that Homer exaggerated competition in the Heroic World and glorified the *basileis*, presenting the *dēmos* as totally dependent on them. The existence of Nicolai's "kritische" features is not, I think, necessarily an objection to this reading of Homer. Any social formation will be found to include conflicting and at times directly contradictory ideals; the rituals and myths through which the ideal social structure is momentarily articulated—with which we might loosely bracket the Homeric epics—tend to express more than one attitude to the distribution of power within the group.²⁴⁴ The dominant element in the Homeric model of the world seems to me to be an aristocratic vantage point. A tentative model of the social function of the poems can then be suggested.

At a time of tremendous tension, when the whole structure of society was in a state of flux, the *aristoi* had to try to preserve their position through every possible ideological device. With the invention of the alphabet, it became possible to record the work of a poet of genius which presented a notion of how society worked which the elite agreed to, and wished all to agree to. A tremendously powerful weapon was forged in the struggles accompanying the rise of the *polis*.

241. As Mondì 1980, 211–12.

242. Weber 1947, 341–58.

243. Nicolai 1983, 9.

244. See Leach 1954: La Fontaine 1977

Poetry was being exploited to serve as an ideological tool to legitimize elite domination, presenting it as natural and unchangeable. This, the poet is saying, is how it was in the Heroic Age; this, he is implying, is how it should be now. "The specific state is legitimised in the eyes of its citizens by the existence of other states which patently do function along comparable lines," Renfrew tells us.²⁴⁵ Very few images could legitimize the dominance of the *aristoi* as well as that of the society of the Heroic Age.²⁴⁶

If we were to seek an image that could legitimize this dominance still more powerfully than the heroes, we would have only one place to turn to: Mount Olympus and the society of the gods. The gods are an integral part of the Homeric poems,²⁴⁷ but have always puzzled commentators.

Homer's gods have long been recognized as curiously un-numinous (e.g., Xenophanes fr. 11), and very different from the gods elsewhere in early Greek literature.²⁴⁸ Redfield dismissed them as merely a generic device in oral poetry, but this will hardly do.²⁴⁹ The main point to notice here is the location of the gods in the Homeric world. They differ from the heroes only quantitatively, not qualitatively.²⁵⁰ Essentially Olympus is like Troy or Ithaca, with the gods struggling for *τιμή* just like the *basileis*. Adkins suggested that the society of the gods was modeled on the reality of the human society described in the poems;²⁵¹ I would further suggest that the divine world had its strange form for precisely the same reasons the heroic world was so one-sided—to legitimize a desired structure of social dominance in the eighth-century world.

Lévi-Strauss has argued that in the least sophisticated societies, the human order is legitimized by imposing its structure onto the classification of the natural world, so that wherever members of the society look they find the image of their own society repeated over and over.²⁵² The Greeks of the eighth century were more sophisticated; they used not the world of animals but super-human worlds for their legitimation by homology. Looking to the Heroic Age as recorded in the texts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* they would find the domination of the *basileis* enshrined; turning to Homer's gods they would find the same thing repeated. Having these images captured in magnificent poems per-

245. Renfrew 1982, 289; also Renfrew, in press.

246. The importance of Homer in providing role models for Greeks in the Archaic and Classical periods should not be overlooked, as a different sort of example of the ideological function of poetry. Donlan (1980, 1–2 and 183 n.1) puts it as: "Historically 'real' or not, the epic system of values was very real to the Greeks of the Archaic and Classical periods . . . for the post-Homeric Greeks, especially those of higher status, the norms of individual behavior contained in the Homeric warrior ideal constituted a paradigm they accepted as right and proper."

247. Fränkel 1975, 53–85; Griffin 1980.

248. Fränkel 1975, 59; Redfield 1975, 76.

249. See Griffin's comments (1980).

250. Calhoun 1935; Adkins 1972b, 1. Cf. Nicolai 1983, 7.

251. Adkins 1972b, 2, 19.

252. Lévi-Strauss 1972, 263; a similar concept is employed by Vogt (1965). Such legitimation by homology is probably a widespread feature of human societies.

fectly suited for performance at the *panegyreis* where so many people gathered was a powerful weapon. Oral poetry is by its nature a two-edged sword; since it is constantly changing, there is no guarantee that the poet will continue to represent the "right" sort of society among the heroes and gods. Written down, it is a different matter. It is there for everyone to see: the greatest of all the poets, and therefore by definition the man most inspired by the Muses and knowing most about the "truth," says it was so. Therefore it was so.²⁵³

The differences between Adkins' and Long's accounts of Homeric morals and values are thus resolved. Adkins is right to say that competition between *oikoi* is presented as natural in Homer, and that the *oikoi* seem to depend totally on their *aristoi* for their very existence. Equally, Long is right to say that cooperative values were praised and the actions of the *aristos* were bound by social sanctions. The former is the view propounded by the poet; the latter is closer to the nature of the eighth-century world on which Homer drew to put his heroic society together. Occasionally the seams showed, but at the time that would not have mattered much.

This explanation of the poems is not the only one possible, but it does have the merits of accounting for many of the problems surrounding Homeric society and of harmonizing with both the comparative evidence from other oral cultures and the archaeological evidence from Iron Age Greece. The role of the *aristoi* is exaggerated, the view of the divine is idiosyncratic, and the stories are liberally spiced with inventions and archaisms to provide the epic distance. The poems can be seen to have been composed from a polemical aristocratic van-

253. It has been argued that a similar sort of structural homology appears in Hesiod's adaptation of the Near Eastern myth of the Ages of Man (WD 106–201; see Vernant 1983, 3–72). However, this argument has not won wide support.

In an interesting study, Alfonso Mele (1979) has argued that both Homer and Hesiod are polemicizing against non-aristocrats involving themselves in trade. While this would fit well with the arguments advanced here, there are a number of unsolved problems in Mele's approach, and some caution is advisable. See Cartledge 1983b; Millett 1984, 88.

Just as the human society of the oral epic is probably derived from eighth-century society, so too the gods are presumably derived from actual eighth-century religious beliefs; the poems give us a *selection* from traditional ideas, rather than pure invention (Dodds 1951, 44). It is commonly assumed that from the Bronze Age onward there were two rather separate Greek religions, the "aristocratic" and the "peasant" (e.g., Hägg 1981; Renfrew 1985, ch. 10). This would partly explain the differences between Homer and Hesiod, with Homer's capricious aristocratic Olympians gradually turning into the moralizing gods with Zeus' divine justice in the seventh century, as seen in Archilochus, Solon, and Theognis. Once in a while, Homer's gods manage a more Archaic level of *numen*, the best example being Apollo's attack on the Achaeans at Troy (1.9–21). This suggests not just differences between Olympians and peasant chthonic deities, but also between epic and "everyday" Olympians.

There are several ways in which these special, "ideologically active" Olympians might have come into being; one plausible path is given by Dodds (1951, 15), in which the externalization in the form of divine visitations of formerly internal daimonic interferences led the poets to build up the characters of their gods (cf. Hdt. 2.53!) to the extent that they might differ substantially from the "standard" gods.

tage point; and it only remains for us to draw some final conclusions on the value of the poems for the ancient historian and the archaeologist.

VI. CONCLUSIONS: HOMER AND HISTORY

Now we can see how far this lengthy discussion has brought us toward the stated aims of this paper—to establish what value the Homeric poems have for the study of early Greek society. To answer this question, three fundamental aspects of the poems must be understood: what they are, and why and for whom they were written.

The answer to the first of these problems was that the texts are examples of oral poetry frozen in writing. As such, Homer is a source for the social history of the eighth century B.C. Finley points out that many activities changed little between the tenth and the eighth century,²⁵⁴ but it is in that sense only that Homer can tell us about the Early Dark Age. Trying to find tenth- and ninth-century societies in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is just as misguided as looking for the Mycenaeans.

Moving on to the second and third problems—why and for whom the poems were written—it has been suggested that these were aristocratic and polemical texts, rather like the so-called *Old Oligarch* in the fifth century.²⁵⁵ As source material, the poems can be used only with the greatest care. They describe a particular elite viewpoint. The eighth-century *aristoi* may or may not have believed that their own society actually functioned along lines similar to Homer's; but they wanted it to.

Using the poems as a *direct* source for social history will be a matter of sieving and sifting for elements we feel are the implicit assumptions of the poet and audience. As with any source, when in doubt we can ask the questions *cui bono*; if a feature has no obvious ideological value by its mere appearance in the text and no obvious value as an archaizing or distancing effect, we might assume that it is something that was simply taken for granted in the eighth century. I feel that this might be at least partially true with the kinship institutions, the attitudes to death and burial that bulk so large in the poems, and possibly exchange systems too. For the poems to succeed as ideological tools at all, much in them must have been acceptable to everyone.

It may seem that all this argument has not brought us so very far after all. The eighth century still cannot by any stretch of the imagination be called an historical period. Homer cannot be used simply as an aristocratic view to be added to Hesiod's "*dēmos*" view to give a full picture of the eighth-century world;²⁵⁶ the poems must be used far more discerningly.

254. Finley 1978, 154.

255. See Davies 1978, 16.

256. As is done, for instance, by Donlan (1980) and Oswyn Murray (1980, 38–56).

While the historian does not gain a direct source for eighth-century society, this view of the poems is of the greatest value for the archaeologist. Coincidentally, Snodgrass wrote in *The Dark Age of Greece* that the Homeric poems are "of priceless worth for eighth century Greece if sifted carefully enough" (p. 393), although he came to this conclusion by a route entirely different from that followed here. The process of sifting remains one that individual historians and archaeologists must carry out for themselves. Factors in the poems such as the epic distance of polemicizing cannot be quantified; we cannot draw a line and say this far is objective history, *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, and no further. But the current emphasis on the role of ideology in the formation of the archaeological record²⁵⁷ suggests that an insight into the ideology of power in the eighth century will tell us as much about the interpretation of the archaeological record as Hesiod's poems can. The eighth century can at least be dragged some way out of the murk of the Dark Ages.

While historians are likely to adopt a variety of positions forming a spectrum ranging from warm acceptance of Homer as a direct source for social history through the rather critical stance adopted in this paper to complete skepticism, for the archaeologist any insight into the cognitive processes of the eighth century is, as Snodgrass said, priceless. The distribution of luxury goods in the eighth century can only be understood from the perspective of Homeric attitudes to gift-exchange;²⁵⁸ the decoration and deposition of fine painted pottery from the institutional role of the Homeric *symposia*;²⁵⁹ the formation of the state from the attitudes of the Homeric elite to the nature of their domination; the changing forms of Geometric and Archaic burial from the endless discussions of death. In these areas, and many more, the poems offer a flood of light on the end of the Dark Age for the historically minded archaeologist.

On a rather different tack, the view of the poems presented in this paper offers the potential of a further use of Homer, not so much as an historical source as in the role of an archaeological artifact. I have argued that the Homeric poems are an example of ideology by analogy, as in Renfrew's "peer polity interaction," using the analogy of the Heroic Age to legitimize an eighth-century dominance structure. But Homer is not the only example of the Heroic Age intruding into the eighth century. The florescence of representational art in Athens and elsewhere around 750 B.C. is dominated by the great funeral and battle scenes where the contemporary and the Heroic are inextricably mixed.²⁶⁰ At the same time, cult activity began at Mycenaean tombs.²⁶¹ In both cases, the

257. See the papers in Spriggs 1984; Miller and Tilley 1984; and Bradley 1984.

258. See, for example, Coldstream 1983.

259. See O. Murray 1983a; O. Murray 1983b; Qviller 1981; Qviller n.d.

260. Snodgrass 1980a, 65–78; Snodgrass 1980b.

261. Coldstream 1976; Snodgrass 1980a, 38–40; Snodgrass 1982.

sudden appearance of the past in the present should be seen as a resort to legitimation by analogy on the part of the *basileis* of Geometric Greece. Look, they seem to be saying, not only is our position the will of Zeus, but also the logical continuation of traditions going back to the Heroic Age. The tracing of genealogies back to the heroes (e.g., Hdt. 7.204; 8.131.2)²⁶² and the use of heroic scenes on grave markers²⁶³ further pointed out that the eighth-century *basileis* were the direct lineal descendants of the heroic *basileis*—legitimation of inequality by means of descent from the ancestors. In placing offerings in Mycenaean tombs, or the cult-places of particular heroes like Menelaos at Sparta or Agamemnon at Mycenae,²⁶⁴ the *dēmos* of the eighth century found themselves worshipping the ancestors of their masters; a particularly fine way to ensure the people's acceptance of the desired order of domination.

The changes in social structure and ideology in the late eighth century are a fascinating subject, but one too broad to pursue here. It is important to realize what a significant change there was around 750 B.C.; representational art, Mycenaean tombs, and heroic poetry were all known to the Greeks throughout the Dark Ages, but it was only in the later eighth century that the embattled aristocracy felt the need to put these links with 'their' heroic past to such polemical use. Homer fits into this pattern as an example of ideology playing an active role and reflecting back and influencing changes in the structure of society.

Homer is a priceless source for our understanding of the eighth century B.C., but the relationship of what he describes to the living societies of the eighth century is a subtle and complex one, and one that requires a sympathetic and careful approach from the historian. For the archaeologist, the very problems of the poems provide a fruitful source of information on the mental processes and the particular historical context behind the formation of the archaeological record, which we ignore at our peril. The problem to face with Homer is not so much *what* he is talking about as *how* he is talking about it. An understanding of the circumstances surrounding the initial formation of the texts throws a clear light on this question, revealing some of the relationships of the poems to the eighth-century world. Much remains obscure in this period, which is so vitally important in the history of Greece, but with the Homeric poems we emerge from the prehistoric night of the Dark Age into the half-light of protohistory.

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262. See Snodgrass 1971, 10–11.

263. Coldstream 1968.

264. E.g., Cook 1953.

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