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Greece & Rome, Second Series, Volume 27, Issue 1 (Apr., 1980), 1-21.

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Tue Mar 4 13:06:06 2003

THE SHIELD OF ACHILLES WITHIN THE *ILIAD*

By OLIVER TAPLIN

I

Why is the shield of Achilles, instrument of war in a poem of war, covered with scenes of delightful peace, of agriculture, festival, song, and dance? I shall try to approach an answer to this question by looking at the scenes on the shield in relation to the rest of Homer, I mean the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.[1]

The 130-line set-piece comes as the calm before the storm at a turning point in the epic. The long central day of battle, which dawned with the first line of book 11, has just ended (18.239–41). Achilles has without a second thought determined to return to the battlefield even though he knows his death is bound to follow (18.78–126,esp.95–8). Hector has made the no less lethal decision to stay outside the city and fight, though he on the contrary does not realize that it seals his fate (18.243–314).[2]

This is the shield that Achilles will carry through the massacre of books 20 and 21 and which will avert Hector's last throw (22.290-1; cf.313–4). It is the defiant front presented to the foe by the most terrible killer in the *Iliad*. What would the audience have expected the poet to put on the shield of such a warrior? Consider first the shield which Agamemnon takes up before his gruesome 'aristeia':[3]

> And he took up the man-enclosing elaborate stark shield,
> a thing of splendour. There were ten circles of bronze upon it,
> and set about it were twenty knobs of tin, pale-shining,
> and in the very centre another knob of dark cobalt.
> And circled in the midst of all was the blank-eyed face of the Gorgon
> with her stare of horror, and Fear was inscribed on it, and Terror. (11.32-7)

The demons are designed to inspire terror in the enemy. Compare also the aegis of Zeus donned by Athena (5.736–42: Panic, Strife, and their crew surround the Gorgon's head), and the baldrick which Odysseus sees on the ghost of Heracles at *Od* 11.609 ff., covered with beasts and carnage. 'May he who artfully designed them . . . never again do any designing', comments Odysseus. Looking outside Homer (and leaving aside the shield of Aeneas in *Aeneid* 8), the ready comparison is the description in lines 141-317 of the fragment of epic narrative usually known as 'The Shield of Heracles' and associated (undeservedly) with the name of Hesiod.[4] This too is a shield made by Hephaestus for a great fighter, and it is moreover obviously under the influence of the shield in the *Iliad*. Yet it is dominated by terror and slaughter. Here is a typical extract: 'By

them stood Darkness of Death, mournful and fearful, pale, shrivelled, shrunk with hunger, swollen kneed. Long nails tipped her hands, and she dribbled at the nose, and from her cheeks blood dripped down to the ground. She stood leering hideously, and much dust sodden with tears lay upon her shoulders' ([Hes.] *Aspis* 264–70, tr. Evelyn-White).

So the joys of civilization and fertility on our shield are peculiar. Why all this and not the usual horrors? The question is reinforced by the representations of Achilles' shield in later visual art, which do not try to reproduce Homer's scenes but simply show the Gorgon and other standard devices.[5] More tellingly, Euripides actually protests against the Iliadic shield. The chorus of his *Electra* (442–86) make it clear that they are singing of the celebrated shield (*κλεινᾶς*, 455); but it is designed to terrify the Trojans (456–7). In the centre it has the sun and constellations, as in Homer, but they are there to panic Hector (468–9), and round the edge skims Perseus with the Gorgon's head (458 ff., a motif from the 'Shield of Heracles'). A more recent poet, reacting like Euripides to a brutal and all-consuming war, has also reforged the Homeric shield to suit its fell recipient. W.H. Auden's fine poem 'The Shield of Achilles' begins[6]

> She looked over his shoulder
>   For vines and olive trees,
> Marble well-governed cities
>   And ships upon untamed seas,
> But there on the shining metal
>   His hands had put instead
> An artificial wilderness
>   And a sky like lead.

Three times Thetis looks to see the scenes which she expects because she knows them—or rather we know them—from Homer, and each time she is presented with a scene from a world of militaristic and totalitarian inhumanity. At the end even the child is corrupted and knows no better:

> A ragged urchin, aimless and alone,
>   Loitered about that vacancy, a bird
> Flew up to safety from his well-aimed stone:
>   That girls are raped, that two boys knife a third,
>   Were axioms to him, who'd never heard
> Of any world where promises were kept,
> Or one could weep because another wept.
>
>   The thin-lipped armourer,
>   Hephaestos, hobbled away,
>   Thetis of the shining breasts
>   Cried out in dismay

At what the god had wrought
 To please her son, the strong
Iron-hearted man-slaying Achilles
 Who would not live long.[7]

It appears that Auden sees Achilles as the prototype of the Aryan superman and makes his shield prefigure accordingly. In the same way Euripides presents the events of his *Electra* as the aftermath of the inhumanity of Agamemnon and his chiefs of staff.

Why, then, does Homer fill his shield with scenes which he repeatedly insists are beautiful and with people who delight in their innocent activities? My question does not seem to have concerned English-speaking critics in our times: at least, I cannot find it raised in any of the standard books on Homer, by which I mean the ten or so books by Lord, Bowra, Page, Finley, and Kirk.[8] I can, however, offer three explanations which would be in keeping with the attitudes to be found in these books. One would be that the shield is based on some actual artefact, perhaps some heirloom fossilized by the oral tradition (this is the standard explanation of, for instance, the boar's-tusk helmet at 10.257 ff.). This must be mistaken.[9] Nothing really like this shield has ever been found nor ever will be, no more than the exemplars of Hephaestus' automata at 18.417 ff. That is the whole point: the shield – like those golden gynaikoids – is a wonder of divine craftsmanship unlike anything known in our age. The decoration of the shield is derived from poetic invention not from history.

Next it might be answered that the shield affords relief from the protracted battle narratives. It is orthodox to claim this as a function of Homeric similes (though most similes are in fact placed to intensify rather than relieve). It is true that the shield takes us far from the Trojan war, but that is hardly enough to explain its detail. After all, the rest of books 18 and 19 are relief from battle scenes.[10] We are still left with the question, why this particular sort of relief?

Thirdly the explanation which is, I suspect, most in keeping with the dominant school of what might be called 'primitive oral poetics', namely that the oral poet has simply wandered on from one thing to another as the improvisatory Muse has taken him. Once he had decided to elaborate the shield at appropriate length for its maker and recipient he has added and added inorganically. The reason why I think this would be the orthodox account is that the standard view of the elaborated similes is that after starting off from a point of comparison they develop paratactically at the poet's pleasure. 'The poet follows his fancy and develops the picture without much care for his reason for using it.'[11] According to this view the poet would

have settled on the subject-matter of the shield, not because it was relevant—or come to that irrelevant—to the *Iliad* as a whole, but because that is what happened to come into his mind as he went along. I can only ask anyone who reckons this is obviously the right answer to bear with me while I look at an alternative. But I am more likely to make headway with someone who finds it hard to believe that a poet who worked in that way could have so consistently commanded the attention, indeed adulation, of our civilization.

II

My starting-point is that the shield is not the only place in Homer where we encounter peace and prosperity and people delighting in their lives. I shall survey the shield scene by scene relating each to similar pictures elsewhere, and looking for similarities of tone and feeling as well as of subject-matter. There will be three main sources. First, the settled societies of the *Odyssey;* that is, Nestor's Pylos and Menelaus' Sparta, visited by Telemachus in books 3 and 4 and showing him, and us, a proper re-established *oikos* to contrast with Ithaca and Mycenae; and even more the Phaeacia of Alcinous which serves for Odysseus as the transition and model between the remote disordered worlds of his wanderings and his disrupted home. Indeed the description of the palace of Alcinous at *Od.*7.81 ff., especially the gardens (112–33), is the set-piece closest of all to the shield of Achilles. Secondly there is the peacetime world of many of the similes, especially in the *Iliad.* And lastly Troy, at least Troy were it not for the war, as it was in the days of peace before the Achaeans came.

When these three elements are put together we arrive at an easy hedonistic existence spent in feasting with the pastimes of conversation, song and dance, making love—in fact a life such as the gods lead. This is the life that humans aspire to, even if they only achieve it in brief snatches. ('We live in unhappiness, but the gods themselves have no sorrows', *Il.*24.526.) Witness Menelaus' odd homily on satiety at *Il.*13.620–39: he contrasts war with life's pleasures, 'sleep and love-making, the sweetness of song and the stately dancing' (636–7, *ὕπνου καὶ φιλότητος | μολπῆς τε γλυκερῆς καὶ ἀμύμονος ὀρχηθμοῖο*). Thus when at last Odysseus' house is cleared of the suitors there are celebrations:

> First they went and washed, and put their tunics upon them,
> and the women arrayed themselves in their finery, while the inspired
> singer took up his hollowed lyre and stirred within them
> the impulse for the sweetness of song and the stately dancing.

> Now the great house resounded aloud to the thud of their footsteps,
> as the men celebrated there, and the fair girdled women. (*Od.* 23.141–7)

But the Homeric good life is most memorably summed up by Alcinous' couplet on the pursuits of the blessed Phaeacians (*Od.* 8.248–9):

> Always the feast is dear to us, and the lyre and dances
> and changes of clothing and hot baths and beds.
> (*αἰεὶ δ' ἡμῖν δαίς τε φίλη κίθαρίς τε χοροί τε*
> *εἵματά τ' ἐξημοιβὰ λοετρά τε θερμὰ καὶ εὐναί.*)

The precise plan of the shield is not made so clear by the poem that it is beyond doubt; and we should bear in mind Lessing's point that we are told of the making of the shield not given a map of the finished product.[12] It is not even clear that the shield is to be envisaged as decorated with five concentric circles. Moreover it is not likely that our text is exactly as it left Homer; some lines have probably been added and possibly others have been omitted (see further below). The divisions and arrangement which I shall adopt are widely accepted and make, I think, a coherent whole; but they are not essential to my argument.

I *The first (inmost) circle* (483–9): *the earth, heavens, and sea.*[13]

After the first all-inclusive line it is only the heavens which are given any detail. It is enough for now to remark that the sun, moon, and constellations are the cosmic constants and the markers of the passage of time, reflected in Homer by recurrent formulae whatever the human vicissitudes they may accompany.

II *The second circle: city life.* The two cities are clearly set out as a pair—see 490–1, 509. Each in turn provides two scenes.

(a) *The city at peace,* (i) 491–6: *marriage celebrations*

Of all the pleasant occasions of civil life, especially in a highly kin-conscious world, a wedding might be singled out as the most unifying and optimistic. It is also a time for everyone to indulge in the 'good life'. Compare with the shield the wedding celebrations for Hermione which greet Telemachus on his arrival at Sparta:

> So these neighbours and townsmen of glorious Menelaus
> were at their feasting all about the great house with the high roof,
> and taking their ease, and among them stepped an inspired singer
> playing his lyre, while among the dancers two acrobats
> led the measure of song and dance revolving among them.
>
> (*Od.* 4.15–9; see further p.9 below)

And at such times thoughts turn in due course to bed. We have in fact most of the delights enumerated by Alcinous.

The accomplishments of singing and dancing, which are of course

useless and even despised in time of war,[14] epitomize the pleasures of peace. The Phaeacians are, as appropriate, especially good at dancing (see *Od.*8.250–65). The wives at their doors represent 'home' no less tellingly. The marital home is what the Achaeans have had to leave behind. 'Nine years have gone by, and the timbers of our ships have rotted away and the cables are broken, and far away our wives and our young children are sitting within our halls and wait for us' (*Il.*2.134–7). And the meeting of Hector and Andromache in Troy suggests poignantly what might be if it were not disrupted by war.[15]

(ii) 497–508: *the law case*

There has been much discussion of the precise legal problem and procedure here.[16] What matters for present purposes is that we have the stable justice of a civilized city. δίκη (508) is used here in a sense similar to that in the famous 'Hesiodic' simile at 16.384 ff. Here is no vendetta or the perilous exile which Homer and his audience associated with a murderer in the age of heroes. We have, rather, arbitrators, speeches on both sides, and considered judgements.

The sceptre (505) is the symbol of a well-ordered hierarchy (though within the *Iliad* it has been somewhat mishandled in the first two books). Note also the well-shaped or polished stones that the elders sit on (ἐπὶ ξεστοῖσι λίθοις, 504). This is the epithet used to describe the masonry of the marvellous palace of Priam (6.242 ff.), and even of the palace of Zeus (20.11); but compare above all the council-stones of well-ordered Pylos where Nestor sits and Neleus sat before him. 'Nestor went outside and took his seat upon the polished stones which were there in place for him in front of the towering doorway, white stones, with a shine on them that glistened' (*Od.*3.406–8; cf. also Phaeacia at *Od.*8.6 f.).

(b) *The city at war,* (i) 509–19: *the siege*

We do not have to seek far for parallels to this scene. Here—somewhat altered, for we are dealing with a subtle poet not a crude emblematist—here we have the *Iliad* and its belligerent deities.[17] On the shield there are *two* besieging armies (their relation to each other is obscure), but like the Achaeans they are not agreed among themselves. The besieged are making a foray, not to drive the invaders back and burn their ships, but to make an ambush for provisions. Yet we are unmistakably put in mind of Troy by the old men, women, and children on the walls (rather than in their doorways or in the *agora* as in the city at peace). Closest of all probably are Hector's instructions at 8.518–22:

> Let the boys who are in their first youth and the grey-browed elders

> take stations on the god-founded bastions that circle the city;
> and as for the women, have our wives each one in her own house,
> kindle a great fire; let there be a watch kept steadily
> lest a sudden attack get into the town when the fighters have left it.

But we think also of Helen with Priam and the chattering elders on the walls above the Scaean gates (3.146 ff.), and of Priam watching and pleading with his son (21.526 ff., 22.25 ff.). We remember that Hector did not find Andromache and the child at home, but on the Great Tower (6.386 ff.); and that is where she rushes maenad-like when she hears of Hector's death (22.462; cf.447). The city on the shield stands for every threatened homeland: within the *Iliad* Troy is such a city.

(ii) 520–34: *the ambush of the herd*

This violent devastation of the pastoral world takes us away from Troy itself to the countryside of the Troad and the neighbouring cities, which, as we are often reminded, the Achaeans, and above all Achilles, have been looting for nine years. Compare the seven brothers of Andromache, sons of Eetion king of Thebe: 'Achilles slaughtered all of them as they were tending their white sheep and their lumbering oxen' (6.423–4). He was kinder to Isus and Antiphus, sons of Priam: 'Achilles had caught these two at the knees of Ida and bound them in pliant willows as they watched by their sheep, and released them for ransom' (11.105–6).[18] The pathos of the ruthless warrior cutting down the innocent pastoral world is quintessentially Homeric, and is wonderfully conveyed here by the two herdsmen. One moment they are going along with the flock 'playing happily on pipes, and they took no thought of treachery' (526), the next they lie killed.[19]

(iii) 535–40: *the ensuing mêlée*

Here we have the kind of scene which might have been expected on a shield, monstrous ghouls fighting over the dying and the dead. And, indeed, four of the six lines (535–8) also occur on the *Shield of Heracles* (156–9). This primitive conception of battle is not typical of the *Iliad*. On this and other good grounds Solmsen has condemned lines 535–40 as an interpolation (or 'plus verses') derived from the *Shield of Heracles*.[20] We can see exactly the same phenomenon a little later, though this time the plus-verses never became canonical. In *P. Berol.* 9774 (first century B.C.) after line 608 at the end of the shield are four more verses describing a harbour full of fishes: the lines are almost the same as *Shield of Heracles*, 207–13.[21]

III *The third circle: rural life*

There follows a series of scenes of people going about agricultural tasks. Seeing that the first three clearly represent spring, summer,

and autumn, I take it that 573 ff. shows winter.[22]

(a) 541–9: *spring*

Note the emphasis on the fertility of the soil: it is a dark, deep tilth, and enough for many ploughmen. For pictures of ploughing in similes see 10.351 ff., 13.703 ff. (also *Od.* 13.31 ff.). The cup of wine at the end of each furlong is a civilized touch. Hecuba offered wine to Hector in book 6 (258 ff.); but bloody war is not the time for such ceremony and relief (6.264–8).

(b) 550–6: *summer*

We also find reapers in a striking simile:

> And the men, like two lines of reapers who, facing each other,
> drive their course all down the field of wheat or barley
> for a man blessed in substance, and the cut swathes drop showering,
> so Trojans and Achaeans driving in against one another
> cut men down . . . (11.67–9)

On the shield the children helping, their arms full of golden swathes, is the kind of touch for which Homer used to be justly famous. The harvest is hot, hungry work, and for the scene to be complete there has to be a good meal of meat being prepared, beneath, of course, thick leafy shade—*ὑπὸ δρυΐ* (558).[23]

But the most telling figure of all in this vignette is the lord with his sceptre standing by, silently joyful. This is his *temenos* (550), an especially desirable estate granted to him, the kind of privilege which any great *basileus* might hope to return to after the war, the kind which Achilles might have had if he had chosen long life instead of glorious death.[24] This is the life which Odysseus is striving to win back to in the *Odyssey*, and he gives a memorable account of it:

> As of some king, a fine man and god-fearing,
> who, ruling as lord over many powerful people,
> upholds the way of good government, and the black earth yields him
> barley and wheat, his trees are heavy with fruit, his sheepflocks
> continue to bear young, the sea gives him fish, because of
> his good leadership, and his people prosper under him.
> (*Od.* 19.109–14)

The prosperity and good government go hand in hand (see further p.13 below).

(c) 561–7: *autumn*

The grape harvest with its heavy fruit and promise of next year's wine inspires song and dance (on which see above). The pickers are 'young girls and young men, in all their light-hearted innocence' (*παρθενικαὶ* (*δὲ*) *καὶ ἠΐθεοι ἀταλὰ φρονέοντες*, 567). Elsewhere in the *Iliad* only the infant Astyanax is graced with this quality (*ἀταλάφρονα*, 6.400). But these boys and girls on the shield are older,

and there is another passage where that age of ingenuous first love is most poignantly evoked: as his death approaches Hector realizes that it is no good trying to talk gently to Achilles 'talking love like a young man and a young girl, in the way a young man and a young maiden talk love together' (22.127–8). The phrase conjures up a world of youth and delight which could not be further from the confrontation of Achilles and Hector.[25]

(d) 573–89: *winter*

The cattle are kept in the midden-yard (*κόπρου*, 575) during the winter nights; but as the herdsmen set off for the water meadows we seem to be entering another pastoral idyll. The lions break in on this as though to prevent the world of the shield from being too perfect. We are, of course, in the realm of the similes still, in fact we are bound to be reminded by this of the similes. In the peacetime agricultural world man's worst enemy is the lion, not other men.

(I must confess that I am not clear how the last three lines, 587–9, fit in. The scene is different from all the others, not only because much briefer, but also because it contains no human figures. Yet it is clearly marked off from the scene of the winter herding and the lions. The lines may be interpolated: see Leaf ad loc.)

IV *The fourth circle* (590–606): *the dance*

It appears that the dance goes all the way round without subdivision. Although they sometimes move in lines (602) the emphasis is put on the circular dance by the one simile within the *ekphrasis*, the potter testing his wheel. The length and unity of this scene make it appear the climax of the whole shield.[26] As in the scene of the vintage we see *ἠίθεοι καὶ παρθένοι* (593); but in several respects this section forms a 'ring' with the wedding scene at the beginning. As before there is singing and dancing, and again the onlookers delight in the festive spectacle. There are in addition a pair of tumblers, and, if we are prepared to import a line from the otherwise identical formulae at *Od.* 4.17–19 (quoted on p. 4 above), we would have a poet, the one and only *ἀοιδός* to appear in the *Iliad*. We might feel that the shield would not be complete without him.[27]

Homer dwells on the clothing and appearance of the young men and women:

> These wore, the maidens long light robes, but the men wore tunics
> of finespun work and shining softly, touched with olive oil.
> (*τῶν δ' αἱ μὲν λεπτὰς ὀθόνας ἔχον, οἱ δὲ χιτῶνας*
> *εἵατ' ἐϋννήτους, ἦκα στίλβοντες ἐλαίῳ.*)
> And the girls wore fair garlands on their heads, while the young men
> carried golden knives that hung from sword-belts of silver. (595–8)

Fine clothing is, one might say, the hallmark of a prosperous civilized society in Homer, and its making and care the distinction of its women. Alcinous singled out changes of clothing as a delight of the Phaeacians, and fine weaving is stressed in the utopian picture of his palace (*Od.* 7.105–11). And it is, of course, in order to wash the clothing of Alcinous' household that Nausicaa goes to the shore (*Od.* 6.13–112). Her unmarried brothers, for instance, are always wanting newly laundered clothes when they go dancing (64–5).

In the *Iliad* this kind of raiment comes almost exclusively from two places—Troy and Olympus. When Diomedes wounds Aphrodite his spear rips 'through the immortal robe that the very Graces had woven for her carefully' (5.338; cf. 5.315, and the veil of Artemis at 21.507). Athene, more used to battle, takes off her 'elaborate robe which she herself had wrought with her hands' patience' (5.735 = 8.386). And of course when Hera prepares herself to seduce Zeus she has an especially seductive toilette (14.169 ff., esp. 171–81).

Turning to Troy, the fine quality of Helen's dress in book 3 is reiterated,[28] and when Aphrodite fetches her to Paris she says:

> He is in his chamber now, in the bed with its circled pattern,
> shining in his raiment and beauty (*κάλλεΐ τε στίλβων, καὶ εἵμασιν*).
> You would not think he came from fighting a man,
> but was going rather to a dance or rested from dancing lately. (391–4)

In book 6 Hecuba goes to the palace treasure-chamber to find a robe to dedicate to Athene.

> There lay the elaborately wrought robes, the work of Sidonian
> women, whom Alexandros himself, the god-like, had brought home
> from the land of Sidon, crossing the wide sea, on that journey
> when he brought back also gloriously descended Helen.
> Hecuba lifted out one and took it as a gift to Athena,
> that which was the loveliest in design and the largest,
> and shone like a star. It lay beneath the others. (6.289–95)

That offering fails, of course, and its inevitable failure is woven into its guilty history. But it is that same treasure-chamber which Priam goes to in book 24 to fetch the ransom for Achilles:

> He lifted back the fair covering of his clothes-chest
> and from inside took out twelve robes surpassingly lovely
> and twelve mantles to be worn single, as many blankets,
> as many great white cloaks, also the same number of tunics (*χιτῶνας*).
> (24.228-31)

This supplication succeeds, and Achilles carefully leaves for wrapping the corpse of Hector 'two great cloaks and a fine-spun tunic' (*δύο φάρε' ἐΰννητόν τε χιτῶνα*, 580; cf. 588). The fine clothing of Troy, and above all of the household of Priam, is dispersed as ransom or

used for wrapping corpses—and what is left is due to be looted or burned.

So the washing-troughs in book 22 are no gratuitous detail (let alone a quaint record of real-life hydrography). Three times Hector is pursued by Achilles round the walls of Troy, past the springs of Scamander, the river of Troy:

> Beside these in this place, and close to them, are the washing-hollows
> of stone, and magnificent, where the wives of the Trojans and their lovely
> daughters washed the clothes to shining, in the old days
> when there was peace, before the coming of the sons of the Achaeans.
> (22.153–6)

So Hector's heroism and his death are closely associated with the place that epitomizes the former prosperity and delight of Troy, Troy which once Hector falls is doomed to burn. The motif is continued in Andromache's lament at the end of the book. She mourns Hector's corpse

> . . . naked, though in your house there is clothing laid up
> that is fine-textured (λεπτά) and pleasant, wrought by the hands of women.
> But all of these I will burn up in the fire's blazing,
> no use to you, since you will never be laid away in them. (22.510–3)[29]

But she is wrong. Achilles himself has the corpse of Hector wrapped in the fine raiment of Troy (24.588–90). And at the very end of the epic the ashes of Hector are buried in a casket 'wrapped about with soft robes of purple' (24.796).

The dance on the shield of Achilles shows, then, how fine raiment *should* be put to use, how it was used at Troy in the old days before the Achaeans came: the rest of the *Iliad* shows the uses they have to put it to in wartime.

V *The fifth (outmost) circle* (606–7): *Ocean*

> He made on it the great strength of the Ocean River
> which ran around the uttermost rim of the shield's strong structure.

The inmost circle showed the heavens which are above the earth, the outmost the stream of Ocean which runs round the earth. The shield presents, that is, a kind of microcosm or epitome of the world. I hope by now that this is clear: it would, I believe, have been clear to the original audience from the first line (483),

> *ἐν μὲν γαῖαν ἔτευξ', ἐν δ' οὐρανόν, ἐν δὲ θάλασσαν . . .*

III

The shield is a microcosm. This elementary observation is a commonplace, indeed the starting-point, for critics like Schadewaldt and

Reinhardt; but it is not to be found in the standard handbooks read in England, only in some less orthodox works of the kind that students are often warned off.[30] The shield is a microcosm; but that does not mean it includes in miniature every single thing to be found in the world—that would be impossible, and is not in any case the way that poetry and art work. They select and emphasize in order to impart meaning. The shield omits, for instance, poverty and misery; it omits trade and seafaring; it does not figure religion or cult, and it does not figure mythology or named heroes and places. The omissions might prove instructive, but I wish to concentrate on what is there.

I hope I have shown that on the whole the scenes are those of prosperous settled societies at peace, representing the Homeric picture of the good life. But the shield is a microcosm, not a utopia, and death and destruction are also there, though in inverse proportion to the rest of the *Iliad.* Rural life is invaded by the lions, and one of the two cities is surrounded by armies and carnage. I argued (pp. 6–7 above) that the city and its besiegers are meant to put us in mind of Troy and the Achaeans, in fact of the rest of the *Iliad.* What I now wish to suggest is that the city on the shield puts the *Iliad* itself into perspective; it puts war and prowess into perspective within the world as a whole. On the shield the *Iliad* takes up, so to speak, one half of one of the five circles. It is as though Homer has allowed us temporarily to stand back from the poem and see it in its place—like a 'detail' from the reproduction of a painting—within a larger landscape, a landscape which is usually blotted from sight by the all-consuming narrative in the foreground. This interpretation is close to that of Schadewaldt (op. cit. in n.1, esp. p.368), and of Owen in *The Story of the Iliad* (pp.186–9).

> He lifts our eyes from their concentration upon the battlefield to the contemplation of other scenes which remind us of the fullness and variety of life; it is a breathing-space in the battle, in which we have time to look around us and remember that this is only an incident in the busy world of human activities, that though Troy may fall and Achilles' life be wrecked, the world goes on as before; and in that remembrance there is at the same time relief of emotional tension and yet a heightening of expectation through the holding back of the long-awaited crisis, and also a deepening of the poignancy of the tragedy by seeing it thus against the large indifferent background of the wider life of the world (Owen, pp.187–8).

But I hear the protest that this kind of interpretation is the product of sentimental pacifism and is contradicted by the whole spirit of the *Iliad.* The *Iliad,* it is claimed, is a poem of heroic war; it glorifies war and glorifies those who kill most successfully. 'The *Iliad* is saturated in blood, a fact which cannot be hidden or argued away, twist the

evidence as we may in a vain attempt to fit archaic Greek values to a more gentle code of ethics. The poet and his audience lingered lovingly over every act of slaughter' (Finley, *WO* p. 118). But not even Professor Finley can believe that this is the only attitude to be found in Homer. We do not have to go to the 'unheroic' Hesiod to find 'One kind of Strife fosters evil war and battle, being cruel: her no man loves'.[31] Odysseus himself speaks of 'the wars, and throwing spears with polished hafts, and the arrows, gloomy things, which to other men are terrible' (*Od.* 14.225–6), and Menelaus sitting at home in Sparta among the spoils of Troy laments,

> I wish I lived in my house with only a third part of all
> these goods, and that the men were alive who died in those days
> in wide Troy land far away from horse-pasturing Argos. (*Od.* 4.97–9)

But our standard authorities feel that such attitudes are alien to the heroic ethos and to Homer proper. They write them off as later, anachronistic, and incongruous. Take, for instance, Finley (*WO* p.97) on the good king at *Od.* 19.107 ff. (quoted on p. 8 above): 'Everything that Homer tells us demonstrates that here he permitted a contemporary note to enter, carefully restricting it, however, to a harmless simile and thus avoiding any possible contradiction in the narrative itself.' The professor of History abhors 'contradiction', and he sifts the poem for the history and discards the contemporary or anachronistic accretions. For a historian this may be legitimate method, but it has also been applied by a professor of Literature. This same strategy is even more fully worked out for the *Iliad* by G. S. Kirk in his essay 'Homer: the meaning of an oral tradition'.[32] He implies (pp.11–12) that the unwarlike tone of the similes and the shield of Achilles are foreign and somehow inessential: 'These intrusions are morally and aesthetically permissible; they do not break the heroic mood that must predominate before Troy because they are formally enclosed in similes or in a digression about armour.' But he is well aware that such attitudes are not only found on the shield and in the similes. On p.11 he nips through the greatest scenes in the *Iliad*—Hector and Andromache, Achilles' rejection of the embassy, Priam and Achilles ('more unnerving'[33])—and concludes 'what is happening here is that the *subsequent poetical tradition* [K.'s italics] has allowed these occasional flashes of humanity to illuminate the severer architecture of the heroic soul'. The metaphors are rather obscure, but presumably the 'heroic soul' is what the *Iliad* is really about and 'heroic soul' is free from all contaminations of 'humanity'. These authorities, then, see anything that is not really 'heroic' and does not glorify war as 'subsequent' and detachable.

Chronologically speaking these divisions might be right, but as literary criticism they are invalid. Within a work of literature tensions,

even contradictions, are inseparable parts of a complex whole. The strategy of Professors Finley and Kirk is in fact left over from the good old days of the multi-layered analysts: in these days of 'the monumental poet' we cannot split Homer into consistent layers so easily. I shall try to maintain that the shield of Achilles is much more than just 'a digression about armour' by looking at other ways in which in the *Iliad* war is set against a larger world view, other elements which confirm and give context to the striking effect created by the shield. It is, I suggest, as though there lay behind the *Iliad* the whole world of peace and ordinary life, but only glimpsed occasionally through gaps or windows in the martial canvas which fills the foreground.

This other world is seen most directly in Troy itself, since the Trojans still have to live in the setting of their former prosperity and joy. Troy as it was, as it might be were it not for the war, is envisaged most clearly in the scenes of book 6—the palace of Priam (p.6 above), its treasure-chamber (pp. 10-11 above), the whole scene between Hector and Andromache. But the peacetime Troy is glimpsed, subliminally almost, throughout the poem in the formulaic epithets: the city is spacious, well built, with fertile lands; it has fine horses and lovely women. The motif of the former wealth of Troy and of its royal house runs right through,[34] and it reaches its fulfilment, like so many of the motifs of the *Iliad*, in the scene between Achilles and Priam:

> And you, old sir, we are told that you prospered once . . .
> . . . of all these you were lord once in your wealth and your children.
> But now the Uranian gods have brought me, an affliction upon you,
> for ever there is fighting about your city, and men killed. (24.543-8)

We also glimpse the world that the Achaeans and the Trojan allies have left behind, the world they hope to win back to when the war is over (cf. the *Odyssey*). Again and again we are given fleeting glances of wives and families, native rivers, fertile estates, and beautiful treasures. They have left these to go to war, and many shall never return. These lost delights are evoked above all to emphasize the pathos of slaughter. Such passages are discussed in an essay of great insight by Jasper Griffin (see n.19):

> But in the *Iliad* the lesser heroes are shown in all the pathos of their death, the change from the brightness of life to a dark and meaningless existence, the grief of their friends and families; but the style preserves the poem from sentimentality on the one hand and sadism on the other. Stripped of the sort of passages here discussed, it would lose not merely an ornament, but a vital part of its nature (p.186).

Thirdly, there are the similes. Many are drawn, of course, from the

world of peace, of rural life, from the everyday life of ordinary people, the audience. What has to be further appreciated is that some of the simile-pictures derive their power from an actual *contrast* with the world of war which they are compared to.[35] What this contrast does is to oblige the audience to reconsider the context through the comparison, to look at it again in the light of the difference as well as the similarity. I hope to make the point simply by four illustrations. The tranquility of the snowscape at 12.278–86, spanning from mountain-top across the lowlands and out to sea, muffling all disturbance, throws us back with all the more shock into the din and violence of the Trojan attack on the wall. When the fire of Hephaestus sweeps through the vegetation on the banks of Scamander and even the fish are tortured, it is likened to a breeze that dries a newly irrigated plot and so delights the gardener (21.346–7). Agamemnon's wound hurts like a woman's labour pains (11.269–72), and when Gorgythion is killed his head droops like a poppy-head heavy with seed (8.306–7). Again and again pain and destruction and violent death are compared to fertile agriculture, creative craftsmanship, useful objects and tasks, scenes of peace and innocent delight. I quote the conclusion of a valuable article by D. H. Porter:[36]

> The grimness and bloodiness of the battlefield are inevitably rendered darker and more tragic by the constant brief glimpses we get in the similes of a world where milk flows, flowers and crops grow in the fields, shepherds tend their flocks, and small children play. Conversely, these momentary glimpses of the world of peace are made more idyllic and poignant by the panorama of violence and destruction which surround them.

The similes thus let us—indeed make us—look through the war to the peace that lies behind it, to the peace that the warriors have abandoned and which many of them will never know again. The similes make us see war as wasteful and destructive, the blight of peace and pleasure. And this is, I suggest, what the shield of Achilles does, but on a far larger scale. *It makes us think about war and see it in relation to peace*. Achilles has just made the decision which will lead to Hector's death and then to his own; Hector has just made the decision which will lead to his death and then to the sack of Troy. At this point we are made to contemplate the life that Achilles has renounced and the civilization that Troy will never regain. The two finest things in the Iliad—Achilles and Troy—will never again enjoy the existence portrayed on the shield: that is the price of war and of heroic glory. The shield of Achilles brings home the loss, the cost of the events of the *Iliad*.

I trust I do not seem to be maintaining that the *Iliad* is an anti-war epic, a pacifist tract—that would be almost as much of a distortion as the opposite extreme which I am attacking. The *Iliad* does not

explicitly condemn war nor does it try to sweeten it: indeed its equity is essential to its greatness. It presents both sides, victory and defeat, the destroyer and the destroyed; and it does not judge between them. The gain and the loss are put side by side without prejudice. In terms of quantity, of course, much more of the poem is taken up with war and killing, but the glimpses of peace and loss stand out all the more by contrast, as a simile stands out in a battle-scene, or the shield of Achilles in the poem as a whole.

The *Iliad* is a poem of war in which valiant heroes win glory in battle and prove their worth by killing the enemy. The poem is the product of a tradition of martial epic, songs of the *κλέα ἀνδρῶν*; and it does not deny—let alone condemn— the fundamental premiss of its own tradition, that mighty deeds of battle are fit matter for the immortality of song. Many early Greek epics may have consisted solely of narrative of the glorious exploits of Greek warriors,[37] but the *Iliad* is much, much more than that. The poem itself is the primary and incontrovertible source for what Homer regards as important, and it outweighs any amount of comparative material from other cultures or of synthesized versions of the 'Heroic World'. Homer shows what is important by conferring on it the immortality of song. Consider, after all, what it is that wins the major characters their immortality in the poem as it is. Hector may win glory by his victories in battle during the central books, but he is remembered above all for his scene with Andromache and for his failure and death in battle defending his fatherland.[38] Achilles is not immortalized for his massacre of Trojans in books 20 and 21 so much as for his impending death before his time, for his rejection of the embassy in book 9, and for his treatment of Priam.[39] Certainly some of the lesser heroes win their place in the poem for their deeds in battle, but there are others who are immortalized for what they do and say off the field, not only Thersites, Paris or Nestor, but Helen, Hecuba, and Priam. In fact, to cut a long story short, the great figures of the *Iliad* are great not because of the outstanding slaughter they inflict, but because of the quality of their suffering and the way that they bear it.

The *Iliad* owes its tragic greatness to Homer's ability to appreciate and sympathize with *both* aspects of heroic war. He shows how for every victory there is a defeat, how for every triumphant killing there is another human killed. Glorious deeds are done, mighty prowess displayed: at the same time fine cities are burned, fathers lose their sons, women lose their families and freedom. This is implicit in Achilles' own decision:

> Now I must win excellent glory,
> and drive someone of the women of Troy, or some deep-girdled

> Dardanian woman, lifting up to her soft cheeks both hands
> to wipe away the close bursts of tears in her lamentation,
> and learn that I stayed too long out of the fighting (18.121–5)

—and explicit in his words to Priam in book 24. He does not look after his old father Peleus 'since far from the land of my fathers I sit here in Troy, and bring nothing but sorrow to you and your children' (24.541–2). Homer gives victory and prowess their due recognition, but he never loses sight of the human cost, of the waste of what might have flourished and brought joy. Human beings protect their dependants and win glory, and thus war is important: human beings also suffer and endure, and war is a great cause of this.

The scope of Homer's sympathy has perhaps never been more deeply expressed than in Simone Weil's essay, *The Iliad, or The Poem of Force.*[40] It was not written for scholars and is not argued in the academic mode: it none the less conveys a fundamental understanding of the *Iliad.* A single quotation will have to serve:

> And yet such an accumulation of violences would be cold without that accent of incurable bitterness which continually makes itself felt, although often indicated only by a single word, sometimes only by a play of verse, by a run over line. It is this which makes the *Iliad* a unique poem, this bitterness, issuing from its tenderness, and which extends, as the light of the sun, equally over all men. Never does the tone of the poem cease to be impregnated by this bitterness, nor does it ever descend to the level of a complaint . . . Nothing precious is despised, whether or not destined to perish. The destitution and misery of all men is shown without dissimulation or disdain . . . and whatever is destroyed is regretted.

The person who found this dimension in the *Iliad* was not some complacent pedant, but a young woman who renounced pacifism in 1939 and died in 1943, consumed by regret for man's inhumanity to man.

Simone Weil understood the *Iliad* more fully than W. H. Auden. Auden was disturbed that the great poem of war should include the shield of Achilles, and insisted that art must present war in all its brutal inhumanity without such loopholes. But the *Iliad* is not only a poem of war, it is also a poem of peace. It is a tragic poem, and in it war prevails over peace—but that has been the tragic history of so much of mankind.

The extent of Auden's partiality is brought out by his ragged urchin 'who'd never heard of any world where promises were kept, / or one could weep because another wept'. Let me end by quoting in full the passage which in many ways the whole *Iliad* has been leading up to. Priam has come to the tent of Achilles, and ends his plea for the ransom of Hector:

> 'Honour then the gods, Achilles, and take pity on me
> remembering your father, yet I am still more pitiful;

I have gone through what no other mortal on earth has gone through;
I put my lips to the hands of the man who has killed my children.'
So he spoke, and stirred in the other a passion of grieving
for his own father. He took the old man's hand and pushed him
gently away, and the two remembered, as Priam sat huddled
at the feet of Achilles and wept close for manslaughtering Hector
and Achilles wept now for his own father, now again
for Patroclus. The sound of their mourning moved in the house. Then
when great Achilles had taken full satisfaction in sorrow
and the passion of it had gone from his mind and body, thereafter
he rose from his chair, and took the old man by the hand, and set him
on his feet again, in pity for the grey head and the grey beard,
and spoke to him and addressed him in winged words: 'Ah, unlucky,
surely you have had much evil to endure in your spirit.
How could you dare to come alone to the ships of the Achaeans
and before my eyes, when I am one who have killed in such numbers
such brave sons of yours? The heart in you is iron. Come, then,
and sit down upon this chair, and you and I will even let
our sorrows lie still in the heart for all our grieving. There is not
any advantage to be won from grim lamentation.
Such is the way the gods spun life for unfortunate mortals,
that we live in unhappiness, but the gods themselves have no sorrows.'
(24.503–26)

NOTES

1. Little in this essay is new, though much may be unfamiliar to those brought up on the kind of Homeric studies which have prevailed in Britain and America for some half a century now. I have been especially helped by three essays on the shield: W. Schadewaldt, *Von Homers Welt und Werk* (Stuttgart, 4th edn. 1965) [hereafter *HWW*], pp. 352–74 (first published in 1938), K. Reinhardt, *Die Ilias und ihr Dichter* (Göttingen, 1961), pp. 401–11 (first published in 1956), and W. Marg, *Homer über die Dichtung* (Münster, 1st edn. 1957, 2nd edn. 1971). Their influence has been pervasive and I shall not try to single out every concurrence. For a list of those renegades who have taken the shield seriously in English see n.30 below. I am indebted to Colin Macleod and Malcolm Willcock for some helpful suggestions and corrections.

2. For the contrasts between these two crucial decisions to fight see Schadewaldt's superb essay 'Die Entscheidung des Achilleus' in *HWW*, pp. 234–67.

3. See J. Armstrong's excellent article on arming scenes, *AJP* 79 (1958), 337 ff., esp. 344–5. All the translations are Lattimore's, with slight alterations where necessary.

4. The useful introduction and commentary by C. F. Russo (Florence, 2nd edn. 1965), esp. pp. 29–35 date the poem to the sixth century. Anyone who has read the *Shield of Heracles* can hardly continue to believe that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were merely typical products of a tradition in which the author submerged his individual genius. I am not sure why Jasper Griffin does not make more use of this third-rate cyclic-type blustering in his excellent article 'The Epic Cycle and the Uniqueness of Homer', *JHS* 97 (1977), 39 ff.

5. See the useful pamphlet on the shield of Achilles by K. Fittschen in the series *Archaeologia Homerica*: Kapitel N, Bildkunst, Teil 1 (Göttingen, 1973), esp. p.2; and compare the plates to be found on pp. 93–109 and 181–3 of K. Friis Johansen, *The Iliad in Early Greek Art* (Copenhagen, 1967).

6. First published in *Poetry* for Oct. 1952. I can find no external reason to think the poem was written earlier than 1952.

7. 'Who would not live long': *ὠκύμορος, μινυνθάδιος*. The motif is introduced in book 1 (352,416f.) and recurs throughout: see Schadewaldt, *HWW*, pp.260 f.

'Iron-hearted': the metaphor is rare in the *Iliad*, but is used by Hector of Achilles as he dies at 22.357 (otherwise only of Priam at 24.205,521). 'Man-slaying': is it not likely that Auden derived the epithet from the phrase *χεῖρας ἐπ' ἀνδροφόνους* at 18.317? The only other times the epithet is used of hands are also about Achilles: 23.18 and 24.479—the latter at the greatest moment of the entire *Iliad*. I shall return to the subject of Auden and *Iliad* 24 at the end (p. 17 below).

8. For the less orthodox scholars see n.30 below.

9. See Fittschen, op. cit., *passim*. For a bibliography of such views see Fittschen, pp.4–5.

10. 18.148–238 is the only fighting in between 18.1 and 20.156 ff.

11. Quoted from C. M. Bowra, *Tradition and Design in the Iliad* (Oxford, 1930), p.126. I have found the most thoroughgoing and readable assertion of the paratactic approach the article by J. A. Notopoulos, *TAPA* 80 (1949). 1 ff. The notion has been adapted and updated by G. S. Kirk under the term 'cumulation', particularly in his paper 'Verse-structure and Sentence-structure' in *Homer and the Oral Tradition* (Cambridge, 1976) [hereafter *HOT*], pp. 146 ff., esp. pp. 167 ff. (originally in *YCS* 20 (1966), 73 ff.). Note this on p. 171: 'Arming scenes, descriptions of pieces of armour, developed similes, the description of minor figures and their genealogy whether or not in a catalogue—these are the typical *loci* for cumulation.'

12. Lessing, *Laocoon*, chs. 17-19. This point has been stressed by H. A. Gaertner, 'Beobachtungen zum Schild des A.' in *Studien zum antiken Epos*, hsgb. H. Görgemanns and E. A. Schmidt (Meisenheim, 1976), pp. 46 ff.

13. It would undoubtedly make most sense if line 483 ('land, heaven, sea') were a summary of the entire shield, and 484–9 the details of the first circle, showing only the heavens; this is maintained by Fittschen, op. cit., p.10. But there are difficulties, above all the construction of line 484; this interpretation is impossible without emendation.

14. Cf. in various circumstances the rebukes and taunts at *Il.* 3.54, 15.508, 16.617, 16.745–50, 24.261.

15. Those who are inclined to fall for the stuff about women and wives in M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (London, 2nd edn. 1977) [hereafter *WO*], pp. 126 ff., should read *Iliad* book 6 as an antidote. They might also take note of *Od.*6.180–5 (overlooked by Finley).

16. See notably H. Hommel in *Palingenesia* iv (Festschr. für R. Stark, Wiesbaden, 1969), 11 ff., and Ø. Andersen, *SO* 51 (1976), 5 ff., esp. 11–16.

17. Cf. Andersen, op. cit. 9.

18. Achilles had once come upon Aeneas herding on the slopes of Ida, but Aeneas ran and escaped (20.187 ff.). Achilles would often spare the Trojans he captured, like Lycaon whom he caught in Priam's garden cutting fig branches to make a chariot rail: but the death of Patroclus changes all that—see 21.99–113.

19. On pathos in the *Iliad* see the exceptionally perceptive and well-argued article by J. Griffin, *CQ* 26 (1976), 161 ff.

20. F. Solmsen, *Hermes* 93 (1965), 1–6. Further points against 535–8 are added by J. M. Lynn-George, *Hermes* 106 (1978), 396–405; Lynn-George defends 539–40 as Homeric, but unconvincingly to my mind. On the promitive notion of *κῆρες* see J. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad* (Chicago, 1975), pp. 184 f.

21. For full details see S. West, *The Ptolemaic Papyri of Homer* (Cologne, 1967), pp. 132–6.

22. It is often said that the division of the year into *four* seasons is not to be found before Alcman (fr.20). But all four of Alcman's seasons—*ἔαρ, θέρος, ὀπώρη*, and *χεῖμα*—are to be found in Homer.

23. Kirk, *HOT*, p.12 asserts that the king is going to eat all the roast beef while the workers will have barley mash. I can not see any reason for preferring this to the interpretation well argued for by Leaf. The heralds have performed the slaughter and jointing; the women are actually cooking it, and this involves sprinkling the meat with barley, exactly as

at *Od.* 14.77.

24. Cf. Gaertner, op. cit., pp. 61–3. For some examples of such *temene* in the *Iliad* compare 6.194 (Bellerophon), 9.576 (Meleager), 12.313 (Glaucus and Sarpedon), 20.184 (Aeneas).

25. Who is to say that it is pure coincidence that the unusual verb ὀαρίζειν also occurs at 6.516 used of the conversation of Hector and Andromache? See the good remarks of E. T. Owen, *The Story of the Iliad* (see n.30 below), pp.121–2; cf. C. Segal, *The Theme of the Mutiliation of the Corpse in the Iliad* (*Mnem.* Supp. 17, Leiden, 1971), p.36.

26. J. Kakridis has produced comparative material which confirms that the main scene of an 'imagined ecphrasis' should come last: see *Homer Revisited* (Lund, 1971), pp. 108 ff., esp. 123 (originally in *WSt* 76 (1963), 7 ff.). Gaertner (op. cit., p. 53 n.18) argues that the king's *temenos* is the climactic scene of the shield, but he does not refute Kakridis.

27. Most editors since Wolf have included the line and believed that it was wrongly ejected by Aristarchus. This rests on a long stretch of fictional pedantry in Athenaeus book 4 (180a–181c). But all the experts on Aristarchus are quite clear that Athenaeus cannot have got his facts right—perhaps he did not try to. For full bibliography see *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Iliadem* IV, ed. H. Erbse (Berlin, 1975), p.509. The case for the line must stand or fall without Athenaeus.

28. 141, ἀργεννῇσι ὀθόνῃσιν; 385, νεκταρέου ἑανοῦ; 419, ἑανῷ ἀργῆτι φαεινῷ. 3.385 surely gives extra point to Athena's taunt at 5.421–5: but at the time in book 3 Aphrodite's treatment of Helen is no joke.

29. See Schadewaldt's brilliant essay on the death of Hector in *HWW*, pp. 268 ff., esp. 331–2; also Segal, op. cit., pp. 46–7.

30. Pride of place must go to E. T. Owen, *The Story of the Iliad* (Toronto, 1946, repr. Ann Arbor, 1966), pp. 186–9; there is a quotation on p.12. This admirable book is directed to students rather than research scholars, but that does not explain the unjust neglect of it. I suspect that it has been axiomatic that any Homeric study which does not take due account of oral composition must be totally valueless: I see no justification for this attitude. Other works in English which say things worth saying about the shield of Achilles are J. T. Sheppard, *The Pattern of the Iliad* (London, 1922), pp. 1–10, esp. 8, C. H. Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Harvard, 1958), pp. 205f., G. A. Duethorn, *Achilles' Shield and the Structure of the Iliad* (Amhurst, 1962), C. R. Beye *The Iliad, the Odyssey and the Epic Tradition* (Garden City, 1966), pp. 143–4, Redfield (see n.20), pp. 187–8. I find K. J. Atchity, *Homer's Iliad, the Shield of Memory* (Southern Illinois, 1978) disappointingly diffuse and fanciful.

31. *Works and Days* 14–15; see West's note on 15.

32. *HOT*, pp. 1 ff. (first published in 1972); compare also *HOT*, pp. 50–2 (first published in 1968).

33. 'Achilles' temporary compassion for Priam . . . is more unnerving . . . but then Achilles sees his own father in Priam, and in any case he rapidly suppresses the unheroic emotion and threatens a renewal of anger, the proper heroic reaction to an enemy.' This is not the place to explain why I take this to be a fundamental misconstruction of book 24 and of the whole *Iliad.* It will have to serve for now to observe that what lines 560–70 do is to show what an *effort* of willpower it is for Achilles to overcome the 'proper heroic reaction'; but the whole point is that, unlike Agamemnon in book 1, he succeeds. The lines do not mark the end of his compassion but its continuation (see especially 633 f., 671 f.).

34. See notably 2.796 f.; 18.288 ff.; 9.403, τὸ πρὶν ἐπ' εἰρήνης, πρὶν ἐλθεῖν υἷας Ἀχαιῶν = 22.156 (see p. 11 above).

35. Only some similes, not all. I consider it a great mistake to try to isolate a single function for all Homeric similes: on the contrary Homer seems to expect his audience to be alert to a wide variety. Far from providing relaxation the similes are especially taxing because of the very unpredictability of the relation of each to its context.

36. See in general Porter's excellent article 'Violent Juxtaposition in the Similes of the *Iliad*', *CJ* 68 (1972), 11–21 (the quotation is from p. 19); also Redfield (see n.20), pp. 186 ff. On the Agamemnon simile see also C. Moulton, *Similes in the Homeric Poems* (Göttingen, 1977), pp. 98–9, on Gorgythion M. Silk, *Interaction in Poetic Imagery* (Cambridge, 1974), p.5.

37. It is clear that the construction of battle narratives was highly traditional. This is one of many important points which receive interesting confirmation in B. Fenik, *Typical Battle Scenes in the Iliad* (Wiesbaden, 1968). The tradition was evidently chauvinistically pro-Greek: on Homer's departure from this see the fine essay ''Ἀεὶ φιλέλλην ὁ ποιητής?' in Kakridis (see n.26), pp. 54 ff. (originally in *WSt* 69 (1956), 26 ff.).

38. See the brief but telling remarks by J. Griffin (see n.19), 186 f.

39. Note especially 24.110, spoken by Zeus to Thetis, *αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ τόδε κῦδος Ἀχιλλῆι προτιάπτω*. The *κῦδος* is to pity Priam and accept the ransom, thus proving Zeus' estimate of him in 24.157–8 right rather than Apollo's in 24.39 ff.

40. Originally in *Cahiers du Sud* 1940–1, and reprinted in *La Source grecque* (Paris, 1952); translated into English as a pamphlet by M. McCarthy (New York, 1945, repr. 1967), and in the collection *Intimations of Christianity among the Ancient Greeks* (London, 1957) by E.C. Geissbuhler.