



The Invention of Homer

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THE INVENTION OF HOMER

I shall argue for two complementary theses: firstly that 'Homer' was not the name of a historical poet, but a fictitious or constructed name, and secondly that for a century or more after the composition of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* there was little interest in the identity or the person of their author or authors. This interest only arose in the last decades of the sixth century; but once it did, 'Homer' very quickly became an object of admiration, criticism, and biographical construction.

Most scholars nowadays consider that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are the work of different authors. This is what is indicated by the many differences of narrative manner, theology, ethics, vocabulary, and geographical perspective, and by the apparently imitative character of certain passages of the *Odyssey* in relation to the *Iliad*.¹ But if there are two major authors, we cannot claim to know the names of both of them, and at least one of the epics has to be regarded as anonymous. Yet people continue to use the name 'Homer' (preferably for the poet of the *Iliad*, the greater of the two epics) and to assume that there was a real person of that name who very likely had something to do with the creation of the poem. Let me begin by questioning the basis for that assumption.

HOW OLD IS THE TRADITION ABOUT HOMER?

Why do we believe that there was a poet called Homer? The answer is evident: we believe it because there is a long-standing and unanimous tradition from antiquity to that effect. But in assessing the value of a tradition, the important thing is not how long it has lasted, or whether anyone has questioned it hitherto, but when and how it started. Is the existence of the tradition explicable only on the hypothesis that what it alleges is historically true, or could there have been other circumstances that might have given rise to it?

Most scholars would agree that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were both composed not later than the seventh century. The *Iliad*, at least, seems from the evidence of art and literature to have been in circulation by about 630. However, we cannot tell whether the two poems were associated with one another at that time, or whether either of them was current under the name of Homer. There is only one (probable) seventh-century reference to 'Homer', and there he is associated not with the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* but with a lost epic, the *Thebaid*. I shall come back to that later.

How far back, then, can we trace the belief that Homer was the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*? It must have been established by about 520, when Hipparchus instituted regular recitations of these two epics (and only these two) as a feature of the Great Panathenaea at Athens. But that is as far back as we can trace it. So from the time of the poems' composition there is a gap of a century, or a century and a half, during which we have no evidence at all as to who, if anyone, was regarded as their author.

¹ It is not the purpose of the present paper to establish these points, which are not essential to my argument, and this is not the place for a bibliography of separatist and unitarian statements. Those who cling to the belief that one man was responsible for both poems seem to me to be hindered from a just assessment of the contrary evidence by a romantic attachment to the traditional idea of the one supreme poet.

One may want to say, 'Well, but these are such impressive creations that their author's name or names must have been celebrated from the beginning, and could not possibly have been forgotten or displaced by a false name.' This cannot be taken for granted. We are used to the idea that every book bears an author's name, which is one of the most important things about it when one wants to order it from a bookshop or look it up in a catalogue. Anonymous books are a rare exception to the general rule. But in most ancient literatures, at least in their earlier stages, anonymity is either the rule or at any rate commonplace. We have no idea who wrote most of the books of the Old Testament, apart from the Prophets. We have no authors' names for most of the Babylonian epics, or for the works of Ugaritic or Hittite literature, or for the *Mahabharata*, or for *Beowulf*, or the *Nibelungenlied*, or the poems of the *Elder Edda*. As for Archaic Greece, of course we do know the names of many poets, sometimes because they mentioned their own names in their poems, as do Hesiod, Alcman, Sappho, Alcaeus, Theognis, and Solon. Theognis claims that his name was famous, and that people would recognize his verses as those of Theognis even if someone else were to recite them as his own. But epic poems are a special case because of their traditional nature. They were the work of men known as *ᾄδοί*, singers, a term that refers to performance, not creation. The singers portrayed in the Homeric epics are not represented as creating poems but as reproducing songs that they know about the deeds of men and gods, memory of which has been preserved through the ages by the Muses. Lyric and elegiac poets speak of poetic creation, using the terms *εὐρίσκειν*, *ποιεῖν*, *σοφίζεσθαι*, *μῶσθαι*.² But the epic *ᾄοιδός* is not said to do any of these things, he just sings.³ Evidently there was not, to begin with, the same concept of an author in the case of epic poems as in lyric and elegy.⁴

This is reflected in the titles of certain epics, such as the *Cypria*, the *Phocais*, the *Naupactia*, and indeed the *Iliad* and *Little Iliad*, which suggest poems identified by their currency in a particular region, not clearly attached to particular poets: the *Cypria* (τὰ Κύπρια ἔπη) was the poem that came from Cyprus, the *Phocais* was the poem from Phocaea, the *Naupactia* (τὰ Ναυπάκτια ἔπη) the one that came from Naupactus, and the *Iliad* and the *Little Iliad*, I take it, were ones current at Ilios.⁵ There were other epics in Greece named from their subject matter and preserved without any author's name, such as the *Danaïis*, the *Phoronis*, the *Alcmaeonis*, and the *Titanomachy*. There are others again for which two or three alternative authors are named. For example, some said that the *Cypria* was by Stasinus of Cyprus, others ascribed it to Hegesias of (Cyprian) Salamis, others again ascribed it to Homer. For the *Little Iliad* no less than five different authors are named. Such controversies indicate 'that the epics as a rule were transmitted without an author's name, from

² Alcman. *PMGF* 39; Sol. 20.3; Thgn. 19; 771; Stes. *PMGF* 212.

³ Phemius' song about the *Ἀχαιῶν νόστος* is called 'new' (*Od.* 1.352), with regard to the fact that its subject matter was very recent, but there is no suggestion that he personally composed it or that it belonged to him more than to other poets.

⁴ Cf. M. Durante, *Sulla preistoria della tradizione poetica greca*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1976), 185–7. He notes that in the South Slavic epic tradition no *guslar's* name is remembered from the centuries before Vuk Stefanović Karadžić made his famous collections (from 1813 on).

⁵ Some Old Norse texts were similarly identified by their place of origin, like the *Greenland Lay of Atli* and the *Flateyjarbók* (*Flat Island Book*). According to one view, the name *Edda* comes from the place-name Oddi in south-west Iceland, the home of Snorri Sturluson. For the *Iliad* poet's connection with Ilios, cf. W. Schadewaldt, *Iliasstudien* (Leipzig, 1938), 125, n. 0; M. L. West, *MH* 52 (1995), 217, n. 43.

naive interest in their contents: it was the scholars who looked for the “poet”, only to resign themselves to uncertainty’.⁶

In these circumstances we cannot assume that if only one author is named the attribution is reliable, or that if the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were ascribed to Homer from about 520 B.C. they had not been anonymous at an earlier period. Indeed, the ascription to Homer must be wrong for at least one of them, if we accept that they are the work of different poets. And we must bear in mind that these were not the only poems attributed to Homer: he was credited with several of the Cyclic epics too, with the whole corpus of the *Hymns* (which were obviously composed at various different times and places), and with the comic narrative poem *Margites*. For most of these poems no alternative author was ever identified. So the ‘consensus of antiquity’ that he was the author of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* cannot carry very much weight. If the title *Iliad* means ‘the poem current at Ilios’, the inference is that it had originally been anonymous.

THE NAME HOMER; THE HOMERIDAI

‘Very well,’ the reader may respond, ‘but what have you got to set against the consensus of antiquity? Why shouldn’t we believe that a poet called Homer existed, whatever exactly he did?’

One reason is that ‘*Ὅμηρος* is not a regular Greek name, and hard to account for as such. No other person so named is known from before Hellenistic times. The following are attested from the third century B.C.:

1. An Aetolian *Ὅμαρος* (*Fouilles de Delphes* iii[3].184.2, 190.1; *SIG*³ 498.2). This is probably to be connected with the *Ζεὺς Ὀμάριος* worshipped by the Achaean confederacy (cf. below, p. 375).⁷
2. A Cretan *Ὅμαρος* (*Inscr. Cret.* 1.108 no. 1.3, from Lato).
3. An Athenian *Ὀμηρ* (*Ath. Mitt.* 85 [1970], 213; *SEG* 32.207.18).
4. The tragedian Homeros of Byzantium (*TrGF* 98), whose parents were a philologist and a poetess, and who was no doubt named after the famous poet.

In the mid second century there is a ‘*Ὅμηρος* (NB not *-αρος*) at Larisa (*GDI* 2138), and a century later there is another, presumably of the same family (*SIG*³ 1059 I 3, II 29). The Ionic vocalization points to an association with the poet.

Under the empire the name became more frequent, in particular for freedmen; a M. Anniolenus Homerus is known from Apulia, a M. Servilius Homerus from Lucania, an *Ἀδρήλιος Ὅμηρος* from Melos. Ten ‘*Ὀμηροί* are attested from Attica between the first and third centuries A.D. There was also a poet and grammarian Sellios ὁ καὶ ‘*Ὅμηρος*, evidently a literary nickname.⁸

How, then, is Homer’s name to be understood? To the ancients it suggested the meaning ‘hostage’ (from *ὄμηρα*, normally a neuter plural), and there were various stories explaining how he came to be so called after being given as a hostage by some

⁶ W. Burkert, *MH* 29 (1972), 75.

⁷ Durante (n. 4), 189. He refers also to the Euboean *Ὁμεριος* (*IG* 12[9].56.135; lead tablet from Styra, fifth century), ‘che peraltro è omonimo di *Ζεὺς Ὀμάριος*, e quindi ha ragione teoforica.’ The Aetolian *Ὅμαρος* ‘può ben essere una *Rückbildung* del nome precedente, qual è ad esempio *Παναίτωλος* rispetto a *Παναιτώλιος* (così Bechtel, *Pers[onennamen]*, pp. 525, 532).’

⁸ A. Körte, *RE* iiA, 1321–2.

town or other. But it is incredible that anyone would be given the name Hostage for this or any other reason, and in any case the masculine formation is linguistically suspect.⁹ Ephorus, the historian from Cyme, who wanted Homer to be a Cymaean, claimed that ὄμηρος was a Cymaean word for 'blind', and that Homer was named for that reason.¹⁰ But there is no supporting evidence for the existence of such a word; and again, while 'Blind' may serve as a cognomen, as with Appius Claudius Caecus (*né* Crassus) or Δίδυμος ὁ τυφλός, no one is given it as a self-sufficient name.

We have now to consider the ancient corporation of rhapsodes who called themselves the Homeridai, generally understood to mean 'the descendants of Homer'. They are first mentioned in surviving literature by Pindar in the Second Nemean. He describes them as the 'singers of stitched verses', ῥαπτῶν ἐπέων ἀοιδοί, which is clearly a paraphrase of ῥαψωιδοί. He refers to their often beginning their recitations with a hymn to Zeus, as we know rhapsodes used the extant Homeric Hymns to introduce their recitations from epic. Plato in the *Phaedrus* quotes two otherwise unknown verses about Eros and says that some of the Homeridai recite them from the ἀπόθετα ἔπη, evidently poems not generally current which these Homeridai have in their possession and are able to produce from under the counter, asserting that they are by Homer. In another dialogue Plato portrays the Ephesian rhapsode Ion as claiming to be a fine expounder of Homer's meaning, so fine that he reckons he deserves to be decorated by the Homeridai with a golden crown. In the *Republic* Plato alludes to the Homeridai as people who proclaim Homer's achievements and spread his fame. Isocrates too refers to their telling stories about the poet's life; some of the Homeridai, he says, relate that Helen appeared to Homer in a dream and instructed him to compose an epic about the Trojan War.¹¹

So in the fifth and early fourth centuries the Homeridai appear as a kind of guild of rhapsodes who recited Homer's poetry, including some poems which were not widely known; who told stories about his life, and were concerned to spread his fame; and who were corporately wealthy and prestigious enough to confer gold coronets on others who they thought had served the poet well. It looks as if people's ideas about what Homer had been and what he had done were very much determined by what the Homeridai chose to tell them.

Who were these Homeridai, and where did they come from? The most valuable information about them comes from ancient commentators on two of the texts just cited.

One is Harpocration, who, in explanation of Isocrates' mention of the Homeridai, says that they were a family or clan in Chios. He refers to two fifth-century historians, Acusilaus of Argos and Hellanicus of Lesbos, the second of whom stated that the Homeridai were named after the poet. Harpocration also cites Seleucus as having contradicted the view of one Crates ἐν ταῖς Ἱεροποιαῖς, that the Homeridai were Homer's descendants. According to Seleucus, they really got their name from ὄμηρα 'hostages', because once upon a time, at the Dionysus festival on Chios, the women had gone mad and fought against the men; they had then made a truce, giving each other hostages in the form of young men and women. These hostages got married, and their descendants were called Homeridai.¹²

⁹ Durante (n. 4), 190–1.

¹⁰ Ephorus, *FGrHist* 70 F 1. Lycophron's use of ὄμηρος for 'blind' (422) is of course inspired by this theory.

¹¹ Pind. *Nem.* 2.1–2; Pl. *Phaedr.* 252b; *Ion* 530d; *Rep.* 599e; Isoc. *Helen* 65.

¹² Harpocr. s.v. Ὀμηρίδαι; Acusilaus, *FGrHist* 2 F 2; Hellan. 4 F 20; the Crates in question is

The other important source is the well-known scholion on the Pindar passage, explaining Pindar's reference to the Homeridai. It reads as follows:

‘Ομηρίδας ἔλεγον τὸ μὲν ἀρχαῖον τοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ ‘Ομήρου γένους, οἱ καὶ τὴν ποίησιν αὐτοῦ ἐκ διαδοχῆς ἤιδον· μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα καὶ οἱ ῥαψωδοί, οὐκέτι τὸ γένος εἰς ‘Ομηρον ἀνάγοντες. ἐπιφανεῖς δὲ ἐγένοντο οἱ περὶ Κύναιθον, οὓς φασὶ πολλὰ τῶν ἑπῶν ποιήσαντας ἐμβαλεῖν εἰς τὴν ‘Ομήρου ποίησιν. ἦν ὁ Κύναιθος τὸ γένος Χίος, ὃς καὶ τῶν ἐπιγραφομένων ‘Ομήρου ποιημάτων τὸν εἰς Ἀπόλλωνα γεγραφῶς ὕμνον ἀναπέθεικεν αὐτῷ. οὗτος οὖν ὁ Κύναιθος πρῶτος ἐν Συρακούσαις ἐρραψώωιδησε τὰ ‘Ομήρου ἔπη κατὰ τὴν ξθ’ Ὀλυμπιάδα, ὡς Ἰππόστρατος φησιν.

‘Homeridai’ was the name given anciently to the members of Homer’s family, who also sang his poetry in succession. But later it was also given to the rhapsodes, who no longer traced their descent back to Homer. Particularly prominent were Cynaethus and his school, who, they say, composed many of the verses and inserted them into Homer’s work. This Cynaethus came from a Chian family, and, of the poems that bear Homer’s name, it was he who wrote the *Hymn to Apollo* and laid it to his credit. And this Cynaethus was the first to recite Homer’s poems at Syracuse, in the 69th Olympiad (= 504/1 B.C.), as Hippostratus says. (FGrHist 568 F 5)

The Hippostratus cited as a source (at least for the last statement) was a Hellenistic historian who specialized in Sicilian history. The rather precise date which he gave for Cynaethus’ Homeric recitation at Syracuse, if it has any value, might conceivably have been derived from an inscription listing the victors in a competition for rhapsodes, in which Cynaethus appeared as the first entry.¹³ It would be a plausible date for the beginning of such a record; a few years earlier the Athenians had begun to keep records of the victors in the competitions for tragedy and dithyramb at the Great Dionysia, and the Gamoroi of Syracuse might have copied the practice from Athens. Against this hypothesis stands the objection of Jacoby that if any such victor lists had existed we ought to have more firm dates for Sicilian poets.¹⁴ Alternatively, Cynaethus’ performance may have been associated with some other event that yielded a synchronism with the tyranny of Cleander at Gela, which began in 505. The histories of Gela and Syracuse were soon to be entwined, and there is actually a possible piece of evidence for Cynaethus’ presence at Gela: a sixth-century statue base has been found there with the inscription ϩ]υναίθο εμι το α[γαλ]μα το Εποχο, ‘I am the s[ta]tue of [C]ynaethus the son of Epochos’. We cannot be sure that it is the same man, but Cynaethus is a rare name.¹⁵

The statement that Cynaethus wrote the *Hymn to Apollo* and passed it off as Homer’s is extraordinarily interesting, and opens the way to further conclusions. The

identified by Jacoby (FGrHist 362 F 5) as the Athenian writer on rituals. Besides Jacoby’s commentaries ad locc. see his important additional note in vol. IIb (Noten), 407–10. The Seleucus fragment (76 Müller) is overlooked by M. P. Nilsson in his brief treatment of the Chian Dionysia, *Griechische Feste von religiöser Bedeutung* (Leipzig, 1906), 306.

¹³ G. W. Nitzsch, *De historia Homeri*, vol. 1 (Hanover, 1830), 130; id., *Die Sagenpoesie der Griechen* (Braunschweig, 1852), 317; A. Kirchhoff, *SPAW* 1893.904; W. Schmid, *Gesch. d. gr. Lit.* I.1 (with O. Stählin, Munich, 1929), 158; W. Burkert in G. W. Bowersock et al. (edd.), *Arktouros. Hellenic Studies presented to Bernard M. W. Knox* (Berlin–New York, 1979), 55. The conversion into an Olympiadic dating would be due to Hippostratus himself after the example of Timaeus; cf. Jacoby (n. 12), 595. A dating by Olympiads also appears in F 4.

¹⁴ Jacoby (n. 12), 596.

¹⁵ P. Orlandini, *Kokalos* 3 (1957), 94–6, fig. 22/3; M. Guarducci, *Annuario* (1959/60), 397; *Bull. épigr.* (1962), no. 397; Burkert (n. 13), 54–5. A. Fick, *Die homerische Odyssee* (Göttingen, 1883), 280, sought to find another reference to Cynaethus in Pliny, *N.H.* 4. 66, *hanc Aristoteles ita appellatam prodidit quoniam repente apparuerit enata; Aglaosthenes Cynthiam, alii Ortygiam, Asteriam, Lagiam, Chlamydiam, Cynethum Pyrpylen* (Cynaethus Pyrpolen Fick) *igne ibi primum reperto.*

Hymn to Apollo as we have it is clearly a composite text, consisting of two separate hymns that have been roughly cobbled together. The first is a hymn to Apollo of Delos, telling the story of his birth on that island and concluding with an evocative picture of the festival there at which people gather from all over Ionia to honour him. The poet says his farewells to Apollo, Artemis, and the chorus-girls of Delos. Then we suddenly find ourselves in a second and longer hymn to Apollo of Delphi, in which it is related how he first came there and established the Pythian oracle. It has a different geographical perspective from the Delian portion and a measurably different style. The Pythian hymn seems to date from the early part of the sixth century, and the Delian hymn from the latter part; I have argued elsewhere that the Delian hymn was composed with knowledge of the Pythian and was to some extent modelled on it.¹⁶ As for the conflation of the two into one text, Walter Burkert and Richard Janko have independently connected it with the occasion, probably in 523, when Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos, celebrated a festival on Delos that was called both Pythian and Delian.¹⁷ That would have been a uniquely suitable moment for the combination of the Delian hymn, which must have been quite a recent poem, with the older Pythian one, and the hypothesis that the combination was made on that occasion has been widely accepted.

What are we to make of the allegation that Cynaethus of Chios wrote ‘the *Hymn to Apollo*’? The Delian hymn refers explicitly to a poet from Chios in the famous lines from near the end (166–75), addressed to the Maidens of Delos whose singing had been one of the major events at the festival:

χαίρετε δ' ὑμεῖς πᾶσαι· ἐμεῖο δὲ καὶ μετόπισθε
 μνήσασθ', ὅπποτε κέν τις ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων
 ἐνθάδ' ἀνείρηται ξείνος ταλαπείριος ἑλθών·
 “ὦ κούραι, τίς δ' ὕμῖν ἀνὴρ ἦδιστος αἰδῶν
 ἐνθάδε πωλεῖται, καὶ τέωι τέρπεσθε μάλιστα;”
 ὑμεῖς δ' εὖ μάλα πᾶσαι ὑποκρίνασθαι ἀφήμῳ·
 “τυφλὸς ἀνὴρ, οἰκεῖ δὲ Χίῳ ἐν παιπαλοέσσηι
 τοῦ πᾶσαι μετόπισθεν ἀριστεύουσιν αἰοδαί.”
 ἡμεῖς δ' ὑμέτερον κλέος οἴσομεν, ὅσσον ἐπ' αἶαν
 ἀνθρώπων στρεφόμεσθα πόλις εὖ καιεταώσας.
 170
 175

Farewell, all of you, and remember me in future,
 whenever some long-suffering stranger comes here and asks,
 ‘O Maidens, which is your favourite singer
 who visits here? Who do you enjoy most?’
 Then you must all answer with one voice(?):
 ‘It’s a blind man, who lives in rocky Chios;
 all of his songs remain supreme afterwards.’
 And we will take your fame wherever we go
 as we roam to the well-ordered cities of men.

¹⁶ M. L. West, *CQ* 25 (1975), 161–70. On p. 168 I suggested that the Delian hymn might be dated between 570 and 547. However, Burkert (n. 13), 62, has a better argument for a later date: the hymn presupposes that Apollo has a temple on Delos (52, 56, 80), which he does not seem to have done until about 540/30.

¹⁷ Burkert (n. 13), 59–60; R. Janko, *Homer, Hesiod, and the Hymns* (Cambridge, 1982), 112–13. Burkert dates the event to (spring) 522, arguing that Polycrates’ death followed μετ’ ὀλίγον χρόνον (Phot. s.v. Πύθια καὶ Δήλια; cf. Zen. Ath. 1.62), and that that was ‘late in 522’. But this is incorrect. The account of Polycrates’ death in Hdt. 3.122–5, which is no doubt based on Samian tradition, presupposes that Cambyses was still the King of Persia (122.3, 126.1).

But who is this blind singer? Is it the sixth-century poet (Cynaethus or whoever) speaking of himself? Thucydides, who quotes the passage (3.104.5–6), assumes it to be Homer, and draws attention to the fact that this is a place where Homer mentioned himself. 'All of his songs remain supreme afterwards' (that is, presumably, after he has once sung them): this is a reference to songs that are learned and perpetuated by other singers and acknowledged as the best in the repertory. It certainly looks much more appropriate to Homer than to a new poet, and it must have been generally understood in antiquity to refer to Homer's songs. It would have been strange for Cynaethus to claim that his own songs were supremely famous throughout Greece, when he was remembered only as one who concealed his identity under that of Homer. The picture of the singer who roamed from city to city also suits Homer: this is just how he was imagined by classical writers and in the later *Lives*, which must be based on the stories told about the poet's life by the Homeridai.

But how could the new poet, addressing his Delian audience in the late sixth century, speak as if he were Homer, the famous singer of the past? Evidently he claimed to be reciting verbatim a hymn composed by Homer many generations earlier and addressed to an earlier Delian audience. This might not have been very much out of the ordinary by that time. After all, whenever a rhapsode recited Hesiod's *Theogony* or *Works and Days*, the audience must have understood and accepted that the references to 'I' and 'me' meant the original author, Hesiod, and not the rhapsode who was uttering the words. In the same way, we may suppose, the poet of the Delian hymn to Apollo might claim to be singing Homer's hymn, and ask his audience to understand the first-person references as being to Homer, not to himself.

This corresponds closely to what is alleged about Cynaethus in the Pindaric scholion, namely that he composed the *Hymn to Apollo* and got it accepted as the work of Homer. The emphasis on Homer's being a Chiot is not surprising if the Chian Cynaethus was the poet.

But is the ascription to Cynaethus trustworthy? It was evidently clear to some in antiquity that the attribution to Homer was false, but what basis did they have for identifying the author with the Cynaethus recorded as having recited at Syracuse in the late sixth century? Some scholars have thought that there was no basis and that it was merely a conjecture.¹⁸ Burkert writes,

in such a case, it was customary for ancient critics to ask for, and to supply, a name of the forger, the 'real' author . . . the search for the 'real' author of the 'spurious' hymn to Apollo would inevitably lead to disreputable Homerids. . . . Just because the discovery at Gela gives some background to Kynaithos' career in Sicily, his connection with the hymn to Apollo disappears in the turmoils of ancient literary feuds.

But what made Cynaethus a 'disreputable' Homerid? If he was known for other frauds, as the Pindaric scholion suggests, is it not all the more likely that he, as a prominent Chian poet-rhapsode active in the late sixth century, was indeed implicated in the matter of the Apollo hymn? Since his date was known, whoever made that accusation must have believed that the composite hymn was a product of the late sixth century (if not the early fifth); and as that appears to be a correct dating, we may suspect that some memory remained of the circumstances in which the hymn had been presented to the assembled Ionians. Even if its ascription to Cynaethus was

Cambyzes died in the spring or summer of 522. It remains theoretically possible that Polycrates could have celebrated his Delian festival in the spring of 522 and still died before Cambyzes, but 523 seems much likelier. So H. W. Parke, *CQ* 40 (1946), 105–8.

¹⁸ Kirchoff (n. 13); Burkert (n. 13), 57–8.

based only on a guess, it would seem to have been a very shrewd guess. I am prepared to accept the ascription and go on using his name, not in easy certainty but in the confidence that he is an altogether more palpable reality than Homer.

The conclusion that he was deliberately claiming Homer's authorship for his own hymn helps to account for a suspicious feature about the 'blind' poet who is supposed to be the author. Twenty lines before the reference to the blind man of Chios, the poet has enthused about what a wonderful *spectacle* the Delian festival is (151–5):

φαίη κ' ἀθανάτους καὶ ἀγήρωσ ἔμμεναι αἰεὶ,
ὅσ τότ' ἐπαντιάσει, ὅτ' Ἰάονες ἀθρόοι εἶεν·
πάντων γάρ κεν ἴδοιτο χάριν, τέρψαιτο δὲ θυμόν
ἄνδράσ τ' εἰσορόων καλλιζώνους τε γυναικας
νήας τ' ὠκείας ἧδ' αὐτῶν κτήματα πολλὰ.

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Anyone coming when the Ionians were all here
would think they were the unaging immortals,
as he saw the beauty of it all, delighting his heart
at the sight of the men and the fair-girdled women,
the swift ships, and all the people's belongings.

It would hardly have occurred to a blind man to comment on the festival in those terms (it was not a traditional motif), and yet the lines were surely inspired by the very festival at which they were recited. The inference is that Cynaethus himself was not blind, and his audience could see that he was not. This confirms that they were being asked to accept the hymn as the words of another poet—Homer.¹⁹ The belief that Homer was blind did not arise from the subsequent ascription of the hymn to him: it was already the doctrine of the hymn's author.

Again according to the Pindaric scholiast, Cynaethus was the chief among those later Homeridai who foisted much of their own work on Homer and who no longer claimed to be actually descended from Homer. But these were the earliest Homeridai about whom there was any definite information. There can be no question of the ancients' having had records of Homeridai from an earlier period when they all were of the true blood. So the statement that they had originally been a clan cannot have had any other basis than what the later Homeridai claimed. These Homeridai were a guild of poets who did not in fact belong to one family and could not pretend to. On the other hand, their title 'Homeridai' sounded as if it meant the descendants of Homer. So they told the story that the Homeridai had originally been one clan, but had subsequently admitted others who were not related. This is a most unlikely thing for a true clan to do. Why should a family so proud of their descent from Homer as to call themselves the Homeridai (only very special families were labelled by means of this suffix) have allowed others to assume the title and so rob it of its meaning? Detlev Fehling has pointed out that there is no analogy either for a genetic clan that maintained the profession of its ancestor or for one that turned into a supra-regional professional organization.²⁰

There are other weaknesses in the claim to lineal descent from Homer. If it had been true, the family ought to have been able to name the poet's descendants in each generation and provide details of the genealogy. But while several historians offered a

¹⁹ Cf. W. Burkert in *Papers on the Amasis Painter and his World* (Malibu, 1987), 55.

²⁰ *RhM* 122 (1979), 197. Fehling argues bizarrely that the Homeridai did not exist at all, but were a fantasy developed from Pindar's poetic use of the word for rhapsodes.

list of Homer's ancestors, going back to Orpheus or Apollo, there is no trace of any genealogy of his descendants down to classical times.²¹ Indeed, according to the principal *Life of Homer*, the pseudo-Herodotean one, the poet had two daughters but no son: a poor basis for a genetic line of Homeridai.²²

The position we have reached is as follows. In the second half of the sixth century there existed a company of rhapsodes called Homeridai, of whom Cynaethus of Chios was a prominent member. They believed that they had their name from a great, blind poet of the past called Homer, though they could not collectively claim to be descended from him. They celebrated him as the author of all the poems in their repertoire, and even passed off new poems on the public as his. They were concerned to magnify his fame, and they claimed to be able to relate episodes from his life.

In 523 Polycrates celebrated a Delian and Pythian festival on Delos. For this occasion Cynaethus' recent hymn to Delian Apollo (supposedly Homer's hymn) was combined with the older hymn to Pythian Apollo which Cynaethus knew and had imitated in composing the Delian hymn. Cynaethus himself is the obvious person to have performed this editorial operation and presented the result at the festival.

Polycrates died not long afterwards. At least one poet from his circle, Anacreon, subsequently found patronage at Athens with Hipparchus (who is said to have sent a ship to fetch him). Did Cynaethus too go to Athens? There is no direct evidence. But it was Hipparchus, apparently, who established at Athens the custom of reciting the entire *Iliad* and *Odyssey* at the Great Panathenaea, with teams of rhapsodes taking turns to work through the poems over the four days of the festival. These two epics must have been chosen as being the two pre-eminent works of Homer, and advertized accordingly. We can hardly doubt that those who took this step did so under the influence of the Homeridai and their claims.²³ A few years later Cynaethus turns up again at Syracuse, as the first who recited 'the poems of Homer' in that city.

'HOMER': A FICTITIOUS PERSON

We began with what seemed to be a unanimous ancient tradition that Homer was the author of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. It now appears that that broad stream of tradition can be traced back to a single narrow source: the claims of a society of 'Homeridai' in the late sixth century. We have already found those claims implausible in part, inasmuch as the two epics do not seem (to most of us) to be the work of the same poet; and we have seen that at least some of these Homeridai were unscrupulous forgers, willing to attach Homer's name to poems that they knew were not his because they had composed them themselves.

There is other evidence for literary forgery in the names of legendary poets of the past at just this period and in just these milieux. Pythagoras, who began his career in Polycrates' Samos, started (or was among the first to adopt) the practice of composing

²¹ The various genealogies of Homer are conveniently tabulated by T. W. Allen, *Homer. The Origins and the Transmission* (Oxford, 1924), facing p. 32. A late genealogy of Terpander that makes him Homer's great-great-grandson (Suda τ 354 s.v. Τέρπανδρος = Terpander test. 24 Gostoli) is not relevant to the Homeridai's claims to be descended from the poet.

²² Jacoby (n. 12), 408–9, demolishing the amateurish romancings of H. T. Wade-Gery in *The Poet of the Iliad* (Cambridge, 1952).

²³ It was no doubt the Panathenaic canonization of these two poems that led over time to their being regarded as the only epics that were truly by Homer. 'Um 500 sind alle gedichte von Homer; um 350 sind von Homer im wesentlichen nur noch Ilias und Odyssee' (Wilamowitz, *Homerische Untersuchungen* [Berlin, 1884], 353, after a survey of the evidence).

poems under the name of Orpheus.²⁴ The *χρησμολόγος*, the collector of oracles attributed to old prophets such as Bakis or the Sibyl, is first heard of under Pisistratus (who himself acquired the nickname Bakis).²⁵ A protégé of Hipparchus, Onomacritus, undertook the collection and edition of the oracles of Musaeus; he was caught forging them and left Athens in disgrace.²⁶

What if Homer should be as fabulous a figure as Orpheus and Musaeus? We have not yet found any particular reason to doubt that this name which the Homeridai touted about was the name of a real epic poet of the past, except that it is an odd name for anybody. What we must do next is examine the relationship between the name Homer and the name Homeridai; for clearly there must be a relationship, and on the nature of this relationship will depend the existence of Homer.

There are three logical possibilities:

1. There was once a poet called Homer, and the Homeridai were named after him.
2. There was no original Homer, the Homeridai were not named after a person, but, not knowing any better, they invented a Homer as their ancestor or founder.
3. There was a Homer, but the Homeridai were not named after him, and came to think they were as a result of some confusion.

The third alternative is really too unlikely to be worth considering. It would mean that an organization which originally had nothing to do with the poet Homer developed into one which was totally devoted to him, because of the similarity of name; as if Lincoln College should develop into a society for the study of Abraham Lincoln.

On the first hypothesis, that there was once a poet called Homer, and the Homeridai were named after him, we should expect them to be his descendants, because that is the normal meaning of *-ίδαι* when it is added to a person's name. The Homeridai themselves thought this ought to be the case; only they knew that they were not the common descendants of anybody. They gave the explanation that the name had at some previous time meant 'the descendants of Homer', and had then come to mean 'the school of Homer'.

In fact we have no real evidence for a *family* called the Homeridai at any historical period, because, by the time the Homeridai come into view in the latter part of the sixth century, the earlier existence of a family is part of their mythology and quite unverifiable. They had their reasons for inventing it, and an original Homer from whom it had descended.

This leaves us with the second of our three alternatives, namely that the Homeridai were not named after a person at all. This is a perfectly valid possibility, because the suffix *-ίδαι* was in origin not specifically patronymic. There are many collective names with this ending that do not denote a relationship to an individual. Aristophanes refers to the mutilators of the Hermai as the Hermokopidai, or 'Herm-chop-idai'; there is no question here of a family, or of descendants or followers of a man called Hermokopos.

These collective names in *-ίδαι* (or *-άδαι*, or *-άδαι*) are characteristic of professional groups or of those who perform some traditional role in ceremonies.

²⁴ M. L. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford, 1983), 7–20, 108–11. The first extant mention of Orpheus in literature comes from Ibycus, another poet at Polycrates' court.

²⁵ Hdt. 1.62.4; sch. Ar. *Pac.* 1071.

²⁶ Hdt. 7.6.3. In the Homeric scholia he is also accused of having interpolated *Od.* 11.602–4, and elsewhere he is regarded as a forger of Orphic poems (West [n. 24], 40).

Sometimes they came to be interpreted in terms of genetic descent, and a fictitious ancestor was created. For example, there was the medical guild of the Asklepiadaí in Cos, who claimed descent from the god or hero Asklepios, and were able to enumerate nineteen generations of healers from Asklepios to Hippocrates.²⁷ In Crete there were singers called ἀμήτορες or ἀμητορίδαι, who sang love songs to the lyre, and they were supposed to be descended from one Ametor, who invented this type of song.²⁸ In the Eleusinian Mysteries the cantor-hierophants had the hereditary title of Eumolpidaí, which means no more than Master Cantors; but they claimed to be descended from a legendary ancestor Eumolpos, who appears in the *Hymn to Demeter* as one of the rulers of Eleusis to whom the goddess revealed the Mysteries. Similarly the heralds or marshals at Eleusis, the Kerykes or Kerykidaí, whose office was a hereditary privilege, traced their descent to a legendary person called Marshal (Keryx).

We see that it would be quite normal for a professional body called (for whatever reason) the Homeridaí to invent an ancestor Homeros, and to say that they had inherited their name, their functions, and their properties—their poems—from him. That is what they must have done, seeing that they were not in fact a family. When the Pindar scholiast says that the first Homeridaí, Homer's descendants, sang his poems in succession (ἐκ διαδοχής), that is, from generation to generation, this reflects the claim made by the later Homeridaí that the poems had been transmitted to them by descent through the family. If they said that Homer was blind, that was because many of them were: minstrelsy is a favoured occupation for the blind in many societies.

THE MEANING OF THE NAME HOMERIDAI

The question remains: how is the name Homeridaí to be accounted for, if not from a man called Homeros? We are not in a position to answer this with certainty, any more than we can explain why an individual might be given the name of Homeros. But several possibilities can be suggested.

The stem ὄμηρ- has several possible connotations in Greek.²⁹ A verb ὄμηρεῖν occurs in the *Odyssey* in the sense 'meet up with' someone. This is a special application of the basic sense of the roots, ὄμ- + ἄρ-, 'fit together, come into union'.³⁰ Another application appears in Hesiod's use of the verb with reference to singing. He describes the Muses singing before Zeus in Olympus and delighting his great mind as they tell of what is and what shall be and what was aforesaid, φωνῆι ὄμηρέουσαι, which I take to mean 'with voices in unison', fitting together so that no gap is apparent between them.³¹ If ὄμηρεῖν was an ideal aimed at by singers, might the Ὀμηρίδαι have been the 'All-in-tunesters'? There is an easy objection: that might be an appropriate name for a

²⁷ Soranus, *Vita Hippocratis* 1; cf. Jacoby on Pherecydes 3 F 59; L. Edelstein, *RE* Supp. 6.1295.

²⁸ Ath. 638b; Hsch. s.v. ἀμητορίδας; *Et. Magn.* 83.15; O. Crusius, *RE* 1.1828–9.

²⁹ I will pass over a possible explanation from West Semitic which I have put forward elsewhere (*The East Face of Helicon* [Oxford, 1997], 622–3) and which is too adventurous to justify a second airing.

³⁰ *Od.* 16.468. Cf. συμβάλλομαι, which can also mean 'meet, encounter'. ὄμηρα 'hostage' is similarly analogous to σύμβολον, a token exchanged by way of a compact. For the semantic development, cf. Durante (n. 4), 190–1.

³¹ Hes. *Th.* 39. In my commentary I compared *Hymn. Ap.* 164 οὕτω σφιν καλῆ συνάρηρεν ἀοιδῆ, and referred to the musical sense of ἀρμονία, 'tuning, attunement'. Gregory Nagy, who also regards Ὀμηρος as a mythical, prototypical author, interprets the name as 'he who fits [the Song] together': *The Best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore, 1979), 296–300; *Pindar's Homer* (Baltimore, 1990), 373; *Homeric Questions* (Austin, 1996), 89–91; *Poetry as Performance* (Cambridge, 1996), 74–5. It is not clear to me whether he regards the Homeridaí as prior.

choir, or a league of choirs, but the Homeridai were rhapsodes who performed solo and did not have to be in tune with anything but their own lyre (if they had one). The *δμ-* element therefore seems to have no reference.

The most familiar sense of the *δμηρ-* stem is 'hostage'. What have hostages to do with epic singers? The only perceptible connection is the one contained in the aforementioned claim of Seleucus, that the Homeridai were not named after Homer (as most people assumed), but were the descendants of certain young men and women who were given to each other in marriage as 'hostages' in a sex war, in the context of a Dionysus festival on Chios.³² This looks like something more than mere invention. It looks like a myth designed to explain a Chian ritual, perhaps one involving transvestism and/or sexual licence, in which certain participants were called *δμηροί* or *δμηρίδαι*.³³ This may seem promising; only it is hard to see why it should lead to rhapsodes being given this name, even if they were regular performers at the festival in question.

Some light, however, may be thrown by a theory argued with great learning by Marcello Durante in what seems to be a little-known paper.³⁴ He referred to the sacred grove *Ῥμάριον* or *Ἄμάριον* near Helice in Achaëa, and to its patron deity *Ζεὺς Ῥμάριος*. This was where the Achaean Confederacy held its common assemblies.³⁵ The name itself means the Place of Union; in Roman times it was replaced by the more perspicuous *Ῥμαγύριον*, the place of *δμήγυρις* or *πανήγυρις*.³⁶ The assembly of the whole people for a common festival at one centre, Durante argued, was the natural place for displays by rhapsodes and competitions between them, as is illustrated by the Panionian festival on Delos, and subsequently by the Panathenaea at Athens.

Philological investigation strengthens the argument. *Ῥμάριον* and *Ζεὺς Ῥμάριος* seem to presuppose an old word for assembly, **δμᾶρος* or **δμᾶρις*. A parallel word in Vedic Sanskrit formed from the same elements, *sam-aryám*, is used in the context of festive gatherings, and, at least in some passages, refers to the priest-poets' 'meeting' in poetic competition. **δμᾶρος* or **δμᾶρις* may therefore have been an ancient word in Greek for an assembly of the people with which poetic contests were associated, a sort of eisteddfod. The poets might appropriately have come to be called **δμᾶριοι*, or collectively *Ῥμαρίδαι*, in Ionic form *Ῥμηρίδαι*. The institution would presumably go back to the time of Graeco-Aryan unity, sometime before 2000 B.C., though the creation of an eponymous poet 'Homer' need not antedate the first millennium. Durante

³² Above, p. 367 with n. 12.

³³ Wilamowitz, *Die Ilias und Homer* (Berlin, 1916), 366 (cf. Jacoby [n. 12], 410), thought that they were called *δμηροί*, not in the sense of 'hostages' but of 'followers, attendants'; Theopompus (*FGrHist* 115 F 300) said that *δμηρεῖν* was an old word for 'follow', and derived the 'hostage' sense from this. (Cf. Hsch. ο 714 *δμηρεῖ ἔγγυᾶται, ἀκολουθεῖ*, and 717 *δμηρητήρες ἀκόλουθοι, συνήγοροι*.) Aristotle (fr. 76), in a complicated story about Homer's birth and childhood, related that he had at first been called Melesigenes, but his name was changed to Homer when the Lydians were abandoning Smyrna to the Greeks, the inhabitants were invited to follow them out of the city, and he said he wanted to *δμηρεῖν*, using this word for 'follow'.

³⁴ 'Il nome di Omero', *Rendic. morali dell'Accad. dei Lincei* 1957, ser. 8 vol. 12 fasc. 1-2, 94-111, repeated with slight modifications in *Sulla preistoria ...* (n. 4), 185-203.

³⁵ Polyb. 5.93.10; Strab. 8.7.3 *εἴκοσι μὲν ἔτη διετέλεσαν γραμματέα κοινὸν ἔχοντες καὶ στρατηγούς δύο κατ' ἑνιαυτὸν οἱ Ἀχαιοί, καὶ κοινοβούλιον εἰς ἓνα τόπον συνήγετο αὐτοῖς, ἐκαλεῖτο δὲ Ἄμάριον, ἐν ᾧ τὰ κοινὰ ἐχρημάτιζον καὶ οὗτοι καὶ οἱ ἔωνες πρότερον*, and 8.7.5. The *Ῥμάριον* established in Calabria in the fifth century by the Achaean colonies Croton, Sybaris, and Caulonia had the same role: *κοινὸν ἱερὸν καὶ τόπον ἐν ᾧ τὰς τε συνόδους καὶ τὰ διαβούλια συνετέλουν* (Polyb. 2.39.6).

³⁶ Paus. 7.24.2, who relates the legend that Agamemnon convened the Greek leaders there before they set out against Troy.

refers finally to the legendary poet Thamyris or Thamyras, whose name is evidently related to the old Aeolic word *θάμυρις* meaning ‘assembly, gathering of the people’.³⁷ He suggests the possibility that Thamyris’ name was derived from a collectivity, the Thamyridai or Thamyradai, parallel to the Homeridai from whom Homer’s name was derived.

Durante’s theory may fall short of certainty, but it is the best and most coherent that has been offered. What should no longer be in doubt is that however the Homeridai got their name, Homer got his from them and not vice versa.

To put the argument in a nutshell: if Homer had been a real person, we could not account for the Homeridai, who were not of one family. Their existence refutes his.

HOMER FINALLY MAKES IT BIG

In the remainder of the paper I shall try to trace the elaboration of the fiction, the process which provided Homer with a biography (like Lieutenant Kije) and set him up as an object of universal admiration.

The process reached its culmination in the late sixth century, but the Homeridai may have attributed their repertoire to ‘Homer’ for many generations before that. There are four references or apparent references to Homer that have been thought to date from the eighth or seventh century, though only one of them has a good chance of actually doing so:

1. Philochorus quoted three verses, allegedly by Hesiod (fr. dub. 357 M.–W.), in which the poet recalled that

*ἐν Δήλῳι τότε πρῶτον ἐγὼ καὶ Ὅμηρος αἰοῖδοί
μέλομεν, ἐν νεαρῶις ὕμνοις ῥάψαντες αἰοιδήν,
Φοῖβον Ἀπόλλωνα χρυσάορον, ὃν τέκε Λητώ.*

that was the first time, in Delos, when I and Homer
sang, stitching our song in new hymns,
of Phoebus Apollo of the gold sword, the son of Leto.

Very few scholars have ever seen this as anything other than a forgery, based on the sophistic fable of a contest between Homer and Hesiod, though with the venue on Delos instead of at Chalcis as in the *Certamen*. (‘That was the first time’ may imply that they were to meet again at Chalcis.³⁸) A forgery it certainly is; and the reference to a hymn to Apollo composed by Homer on Delos shows that the forger had a particular interest in the claims of Cynaethus. His purpose may have been to counter the critics who accused Cynaethus of having forged the Delian hymn: here, in these alleged verses of Hesiod, was independent testimony from a contemporary that Homer had composed a hymn to Apollo on Delos.³⁹

2. A Byzantine commentator on Aristotle names Archilochus (fr. 304 W), among others (Aristotle, Cratinus, Callimachus), as having referred to the *Margites* and

³⁷ Hsch. θ 90 *θάμυρις*: *πανήγυρις, σύνοδος* . . . 91 *θαμυρίζει*: *ἀθροίζει, συνάγει*. In a fourth-century inscription from Thespieae two men are named as *θαμυρίδδοντες*, evidently some kind of official role (*SEG* 32.503; cf. P. Roesch, *Études béotiennes* [Paris, 1982], 138–42, who interprets as ‘célébrer le culte de Thamyris’).

³⁸ O. Crusius, *Philologus* 54 (1895), 717, ‘mit *τότε πρῶτον* soll wahrscheinlich der Agon in Chalkis übertrumpft werden’.

³⁹ Janko (n. 17), 113–14, 259–61, suggests that Cynaethus himself produced the verses to validate the performance of a ‘Hesiodic’ together with the ‘Homeric’ hymn, sc. the Pythian beside the Delian.

provided evidence for its being the work of Homer. We may be sure that Archilochus did not cite that or any other poem by title, and even if he alluded to the famous idiot Margites, we may be *almost* sure that he did not adduce a poet's name in connection with him. Probably the statement is based only on the fact that the proverbial line *πόλλ' οἶδ' ἀλώπηξ, ἀλλ' ἐχίνος ἐν μέγα* appeared both in Archilochus (fr. 201) and (from Archilochus?) in the *Margites*. Someone may have taken this as evidence that Archilochus knew the *Margites*, which was therefore by the older poet, Homer, as commonly claimed.

3. Stobaeus preserves under the heading *Σιμωνίδου* an elegiac fragment in which a line of the *Iliad* (6.146) is quoted as the work of a *Χίος ἀνήρ* (sc. Homer). This has often been supposed to be from Semonides of Amorgos in the mid-seventh century. But a papyrus discovery has confirmed that it stood in the elegies of Simonides of Ceos (fr. 19 W²).

4. Pausanias (9.9.5), after mentioning the epic *Thebaid*, writes

τὰ δὲ ἔπη ταῦτα †Καλαῖνος, ἀφικόμενος αὐτῶν ἐς μνήμη,ν, ἔφησεν 'Ὅμηρον τὸν ποιήσαντα εἶναι. †Καλαίνοι δὲ πολλοί τε καὶ ἄξιοι λόγου κατὰ ταῦτα ἔγνωσαν.

Kalainos, coming to speak of this epic, said that it was by Homer; and Kalainos' opinion has been supported by many notable authorities.

'Kalainos' is an unknown name and ever since Sylburg (1583) it has been emended to that of the seventh-century elegist Callinus. This is very probably right; the context suggests an early author, and early poets are the sort of source that Pausanias likes quoting. (He does not cite Callinus elsewhere, but he does cite Tyrtaeus.) However, Callinus cannot have said anything like 'in the *Thebaid*, which Homer composed'. Presumably he referred to the story of the Theban War, and mentioned 'Homer' as the poet who told of it. But it is highly unlikely that he would have seen fit to name a contemporary or recent singer, however outstanding. If he named Homer, it will have been as the legendary poet reputed to be the source of epic narrative in general; as if he had said, 'as we hear from ancient tradition'. The inference would be that the Homeridai of Callinus' time already attributed their poetry to their imaginary eponym 'Homer'.

This mention of Homer remains isolated. For the rest, poets in the seventh century and the first half of the sixth show a lively interest in the subject matter of the various epics, but none at all in the poet or poets who gave shape to them. Hesiod speaks of the Theban and Trojan Wars, of the exploits of Heracles, and of the gathering of the Achaeans at Aulis. Tyrtaeus refers to Tithonus, Pelops, Adrastus. Mimnermus too knows about Tithonus, as well as Neleus' Pylos, the Argonauts, Niobe, Tydeus. There are mentions in Alcman of Ajax and Memnon, Priam and Paris, Odysseus and Circe. Sappho and Alcaeus are full of Helen, Hector, Achilles, the Locrian Ajax. Stesichorus retells whole epics in lyric form. But in all this, no allusion to the poet Homer. This can hardly be a mere accident of preservation.⁴⁰

From the last third of the sixth century the picture is strikingly different. Homer springs into life. Author after author names him and comments on his achievements. The epics are no longer treated as free-standing records of the past, but as the artistic creations of an individual, to be praised or criticized. Cynaethus in the Delian hymn

⁴⁰ When Herodotus (5.67.1) says that Cleisthenes of Sicyon stopped the rhapsodes from reciting 'Homeric' poetry, or when Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1375b30) says that the Athenians used 'Homer' as evidence in support of their claim to Salamis about 600 B.C., it is unsafe to infer that the name Homer was actually used at the time of those events. Cf. Burkert (n. 19), 44.

tells his audience of the blind poet of Chios who wandered from city to city, and whose songs constitute a matchless legacy. Theagenes of Rhegium at the same period is said to have written the first book about Homer.⁴¹ Xenophanes criticizes Homer and Hesiod for promulgating false and pernicious ideas about the gods, and in another verse he speaks of everyone having learned from the beginning according to Homer, as if Homer—so named—was already regarded as the basis of education.⁴² Heraclitus too criticized Homer, saying that he deserved to be driven out of the ἀγῶνες and whipped. He referred to Homer's reputation as the wisest of men, and to the story about how he was defeated by the fisherboys' riddle. He is also reported to have cited verses from the *Iliad* as evidence that Homer was an ἀστρολόγος.⁴³ Simonides shows enormous admiration for Homer's achievement. In the proemium of his recently discovered Plataea elegy he writes of the Danaans who fought at Troy,

οἷσιν ἐπ' ἀθά]νατον κέχυται κλέος ἀν[δρὸς] ἔκητι
 ὅς παρ' ἰοπ]λοκάμων δέξατο Πιερίδ[ων
 πᾶσαν ἀλη]θείην, καὶ ἐπῶνυμον δπ[λοτέρ]οισιν
 ποίησ' ἤμι]θέων ὠκύμορον γενεή[ν].

[And they] are bathed in fame that cannot die, by grace
 [of one who from the dark-]tressed Muses had
 the tru[th entire,] and made the heroes' short-lived race
 a theme familiar to younger men.

In another elegy he quotes the 'finest single thing' that the man from Chios said, and he may have hailed him as one whom all-conquering Time had spared. In a lyric poem, referring to Meleager's victory with the javelin at the funeral games for Pelias, Simonides adds Homer's name as a warranty of truth: 'for so Homer and Stesichorus have sung to the peoples'.⁴⁴ In a similar spirit, an epigram inscribed on a Herm in the Athenian Agora following the capture of Eion in 475 recalled that the Atreidai were accompanied to Troy by an Athenian leader, Menestheus,

ὄν ποθ' Ὀμηρος ἔφη Δαναῶν πύκα θωρηκτάων
 κοσμητῆρα μάχης ἕξοχον ὄντα μολεῖν.

whom Homer once pronounced, of all the Danaans,
 the outstanding arrayer of the battle-line.⁴⁵

Pindar refers to Homer a number of times. Like Heraclitus, he was familiar with stories about Homer's life. He allowed him to be both a Chiot and a Smyrnaean, and mentioned his daughter's marriage to the Cypriot Stasinus, who got the *Cypria* as dowry. He quotes a maxim from τὰ Ὀμήρου; he notes that the fame of the heroes of old is dependent on the accounts of skilled poets, and that the charm and the soaring

⁴¹ Tatian, *Ad Graecos* 31 (= DK 8.1), names Theagenes with others under the heading of those who have enquired about Homer's poetry, his ancestry, and his date, but this need not mean that each writer in the list treated all those topics. Theagenes' main concern was apparently to justify Homer's theology by means of allegorical interpretation.

⁴² Xenoph. DK 21 B 11; 10 ἐξ ἀρχῆς καθ' Ὀμηρου(,) ἐπεὶ μεμαθήκασι πάντες (cf. Burkert [n. 19], 45). This might, of course, have been written as late as the 470s.

⁴³ Heraclitus, DK 22 B 42, 56, 105.

⁴⁴ Simon. eleg. 11.15–18, 19.1–2, 20.13–15; *PMG* 564. Note also the apophthegm about Hesiod and Homer attributed to Simonides in Gnom. Vat. 1144 (*FGrHist* 8 F 6; D. A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric*, 3.366).

⁴⁵ Aeschin. *Ctes.* 183; Plut. *Cimon* 7.6; D. L. Page, *Further Greek Epigrams* (Cambridge, 1981), 257, lines 841–2 (cf. Hdt. 7.161.3).

grandeur of Homer's verses probably mislead us about what actually happened.⁴⁶ Bacchylides too is cited as a witness to Homer's birthplace: he endorsed the claims of Ios.⁴⁷ Herodotus thinks that Oceanus is a poetic fiction due to 'Homer, or one of his predecessors'; he has views on the date of Hesiod and Homer, and holds these two responsible for formulating the conventional notions of the gods; he argues that Homer knew the story of Helen in Egypt, but deliberately excluded it; he exercises himself about whether Homer composed the *Cypria* and *Epigoni* as well as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.⁴⁸

It is unnecessary to go further. The point has been sufficiently established: from the time of Cynaethus onwards, Homer becomes an object of historical curiosity, literary criticism, and biographical romance, and the almost complete absence of reference to him in the preceding 150 years rapidly gives way to a great abundance of reference. Homer had been invented long before as the eponym of the Homeridai, but now he was invented again as a figure of real flesh and blood and intellect. It was probably at this period that he became established as a school text, as the author that every gentleman's son would most benefit from studying.⁴⁹

A TIME OF TRANSITION

To say 'from the time of Cynaethus onwards' is not to say that Cynaethus was personally responsible for the whole phenomenon, though he does seem to have made a significant contribution to it. Other factors were at work.

Firstly, this was a time when Greek poetry as a whole was undergoing a revolution, the biggest in its history: the transition from Archaic to Classical. The unselfconscious traditional style was breaking down and being displaced by the more concentrated and intricate manner, the tendency to complexity and artificiality of thought and diction, that was to be characteristic of the fifth century. One sees the change in all genres: in the lyric poetry of Simonides, Lasus, and Pratinas; in the elegies of Simonides and Dionysius Chalcus; in the inscribed epigram; in the hexameters of Parmenides, Empedocles, and Panyassis; and in the new genre of tragedy. Lyric metres and music in general became more complex and innovatory. There was a more intellectual and analytical approach to the arts, and a new emphasis on individual creativity. This brought with it an interest in literary history, in defining and assessing the achievements of past poets and musicians and contrasting the old with the new. The lively interest in Homer fits squarely into this context, but there was interest in others too. Xenophanes criticizes Hesiod as well as Homer; so does Heraclitus, who also condemns Archilochus. Simonides names Stesichorus as a classic beside Homer, and takes sayings of Hesiod, Pittacus, and Cleobulus as texts for discursive philosophical comment. Lasus wrote the first book on music; we know little about its contents, which will have been in part theoretical, but it is tempting to suppose that he gave some account of famous musicians of the past such as Olympus and Terpander. Pratinas certainly had views about them: he identified two different Olympoi, the younger of whom invented the *πολυκέφαλος νόμος*, he referred to Xenodamus as a poet of hyporchemata, and he told the story of how Thaletas ended a plague at Sparta by means of his music. Epicharmus named Aristoxenus of Selinus as the first

⁴⁶ Pind. fr. 264, 265; *Pyth.* 4.277, 3.112–15; *Nem.* 7.20–3; *Isth.* 3/4.55–9; cf. fr. (anon.) 347. Homeric tradition as the *τριπτός ἀμαξιώτης*; *Pae.* 7b.11.

⁴⁷ Bacchyl. fr. 48. ⁴⁸ Hdt. 2.23, 53, 116–17; 4.32.

⁴⁹ On this development, see Burkert (n. 19), 56–7.

to introduce a certain type of iambus. Pindar frequently refers to older poets and musicians, quoting from them, making literary criticism, commenting on their inventions, or alluding to stories about their lives: he touched on Homer, Hesiod, Archilochus, Alcman(?), Olympus, Terpander, Polymnestus, Sacadas, and by implication Xenocritus and Arion.⁵⁰

With this interest in reconstructing literary history there went a certain amount of pseudepigraphy. Books became more fascinating and authoritative if they could be represented as the work of a great name from the past. I have already mentioned the production of poems under the names of Orpheus and Musaeus. It was certainly in the sixth century, and perhaps between 540 and 520, that an Athenian poet (as I believe) compiled the *Catalogue of Women* and attached it to Hesiod's *Theogony*, as if it were all Hesiodic, as Hecataeus already seems to have thought.⁵¹ The Homeridai claimed Homer as the author of all their poems, not just of texts such as the *Iliad* which they had acquired in book form and reproduced more or less without change, but also of new compositions such as the Delian hymn.

There are signs, too, that they made efforts to appropriate for Homer certain poems with which other authors' names were associated. Hence the stories in the *Lives* that Homer 'gave' the *Cypria* to Stasinus as his daughter's dowry, that he gave the *Capture of Oichalia* to Creophylus of Samos in return for his hospitality, and that Thestorides of Phocaea wrote down the *Phocais* and other poems at Homer's dictation and then passed them off as his own. Hence too, perhaps, the tale that Homer composed the *Odyssey* at a time when his name was not yet Homer but Melesigenes.⁵²

FROM IONIA TO ATHENS

The developments I have described can be placed in time: they belong, roughly speaking, to the last third of the sixth century. Can we also plot them on the map?

By 520 or 510, Athens is clearly the focal point. Here a comprehensive *Hesiodus auctus* was in circulation; here Onomacritus was editing the Oracles of Musaeus; here Lasus the musicologist was active, reforming the dithyramb and nailing Onomacritus' forgery; here, as nowhere else, one could hear 'the Poems of Homer' (the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*) recited from beginning to end in all their splendour.

But this was an Athens newly stimulated by impulses from outside, especially from Ionia. Ionian poets such as Anacreon and Simonides were there, enjoying Hipparchus' patronage; Anacreon became the centre of a set that rejoiced in a foppish type of Ionian couture, wearing long feminine chitons, turbans, and ear-rings, and promenading under parasols.⁵³ In the official recognition and glorification of Homer at the Panathenaea we cannot but see the influence of the Ionian Homeridai—and very possibly of Cynaethus himself, the Chiot who presented 'Homer's' *Hymn to Apollo* with such éclat on Delos.

⁵⁰ Xenophanes, Heraclitus, see above; Simonides, *PMG* 542, 579, 581; Pratinas, *PMG* 713; Epicharmus fr. 88 (*IEG* 2.45); Pindar, see references collected in my *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford, 1992), 345, n. 73. If we can trust the Peripatetic Megaclides, Stesichorus had already mentioned older poets by name: Xanthus (*PMGF* 229); Hesiod (*PMGF* 269). Cf. R. Janko, *CQ* 36 (1986), 41–2.

⁵¹ M. L. West, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women* (Oxford, 1985), 136–7.

⁵² Cf. Wilamowitz (n. 33), 370–1, 375–6, 439; F. Marx, *RhM* 74 (1925), 406–8, 417.

⁵³ West (n. 50), 348. Anacreon may have introduced the barbitos to Athens (*ibid.*, 58). I suspect he may also have brought knowledge of the Lesbian poets, with whom acquaintance is shown from early in the fifth century (e.g. *PMG* 891).

The great Delian festival of 523 was organized by Polycrates of Samos, whose court had been the great centre of poetic patronage in the years immediately before. Polycrates and Pisistratus are the two earliest Greeks to have a reputation as book-collectors.⁵⁴ It was in Polycrates' Samos that Pythagoras started his career, Pythagoras whom Heraclitus describes as having made 'selections' from a body of writings, and who is implicated in the beginnings of 'Orphic' literature.⁵⁵ There, as with 'Homer', we see the reinvention of an ancient poet and the propagation of new compositions under his name.

Samos was also the home of a guild of rhapsodes called the *Κρωφύλαιοι*, one of whom, Hermodamas, is said to have taught the young Pythagoras.⁵⁶ Just as the Homeridai claimed to have been the descendants of a certain Homer, so the Creophylei claimed to be descended from a poet Creophylus.⁵⁷ According to the biographical tradition about Homer, he was entertained by Creophylus (on Ios, say some), and he rewarded him with the gift of a poem, the *Capture of Oichalia*, which thereafter bore Creophylus' name.⁵⁸ Samos, therefore, lay within the purview of the Homer legend as developed (probably already before 500) by the Homeridai. They claimed as Homer's a poem which the Samians claimed as Creophylus'.⁵⁹

In the pseudo-Herodotean *Life*, while there is no mention of Creophylus, several pages are devoted to Homer's sojourn on Samos, where he composes four of the occasional poems (the 'Epigrams') that are scattered through the work; the section makes detailed allusion to Samian cults and institutions. We cannot tell whether any of this goes back to the sixth-century Homerid legend. We know of a fifth-century Samian historian, Euagon, who wrote about Homer (naming his parents) and who also related the story of Aesop, with which Homer's biography has certain points of contact.⁶⁰ He may have been the source for much of what we hear about Homer in Samos.

It was at the Pythian–Delian festival of 523, it has been argued, that the composite Pythian–Delian hymn which we find in our corpus of Homeric Hymns was performed, and its closing line implies that it was followed by a further epic recitation.⁶¹ It was presented as a work composed long before by Homer; of all the poems attributed to him—at any rate, of all those that survive—it is the only one in which he is made to speak about himself, the blind itinerant bard from Chios.

The presentation was a resounding success. For the Homeridai the hymn evidently held a special status among the poems at their disposal. The *Certamen* relates how

⁵⁴ Ath. 3a; cf. A. Aloni, *L'aedo e i tiranni* (Rome, 1989), 121–2. We hear of a γραμματιστής called Maeandrius who held a position of trust with Polycrates, Hdt. 3.123.1.

⁵⁵ Heraclitus, DK 22 B 129; cf. West (n. 24), 8–9.

⁵⁶ Neanthes, *FGrHist* 84 F 29; cf. Burkert (n. 6), 77–8.

⁵⁷ A risible name in Plato's opinion (*Rep.* 600b), though attested as that of an Ephesian historian (*FGrHist* 417). Burkert (n. 6), 78, observes that the termination -ειοι was typical of hetairiai, clubs, political parties, philosophical schools, and the like, whereas as a patronymic it would be archaic or Aeolic.

⁵⁸ Plato, loc. cit., *Call. Epigr.* 6 Pf., *Certamen* 18, *Procl. Vit. Hom.* p. 100. 11 Allen = 26.16 Wil., etc.; cf. Burkert (n. 6), 76, n. 10.

⁵⁹ Another area of rivalry between the two parties appears in the legend about Lycurgus' reception of the Homeric poems in Sparta. Ephorus (70 F 149 § 19) had Lycurgus meet Homer in Chios, whereas Heraclides Lembus (after Aristotle, fr. 611.10) said that he got the poems from Creophylus' descendants. Cf. Burkert (n. 6), 77.

⁶⁰ M. L. West in *La Fable* (Fondation Hardt, *Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* 30, Vandœuvres-Genève, 1984), 116–19, 123–6.

⁶¹ Crusius (n. 38), 720–1, noting the part played by Apollo at the start of the *Iliad*, suggested that the hymn served as an introduction to that epic.

Homer sailed to Delos for the panegyris, took up his stand at the Altar of Horns, and recited this hymn, whereupon the Ionians made him their *κοινὸς πολίτης* and the Delians wrote out the poem on a white-painted panel and dedicated it in the temple of Artemis. That was Homer's last public appearance. The festival concluded, the old poet sailed south to join Creophylus on Ios and presently died there.

We can infer that the hymn was indeed displayed in Artemis' temple, as a memorial of Homer's historic visit. Why not in the temple of Apollo, the main subject of the hymn? No doubt because people were still aware that Apollo's temple was a new structure—it dated only from the second half of the sixth century—and that the only temple in Homer's time, when the dedication was supposed to have been made, would have been Artemis' (despite the anachronistic references to Apollo's temple in the hymn). That may suggest that the panel was set up, or 'discovered' in the temple, at a relatively early date, not too long after Cynaethus. It betokened the Delians' delighted acceptance of his claims.⁶² Thucydides too accepted them. He knew the hymn and regarded it as an important document; he quotes no other verse text at such length. Sceptics, on the other hand, identified this poem as the outstanding example of Cynaethus' forgeries.

Among the Ionians who congregated for the festival there were no doubt many Athenians. Homer's Assumption at Athens, I mean Hipparchus' institution of the Panathenaic recitations, must be very close in date. Burkert seems to presume that it had already happened, probably because he associates it with the establishment of the tragic contests at the Dionysia and dates that to the 530s:

At Athens, the Peisistratids had recently adorned the Panathenaia with rhapsodic contests, with recitals of 'Homer'. It was just natural for Polycrates to follow suit: Hipparchos had probably dealt with the Homerids of Chios, Polycrates brought them to Delos.⁶³

If we accept (as Burkert does) the statement of pseudo-Plato that it was Hipparchus rather than Pisistratus who established Homer at the Panathenaea, he could as well have done it after 523 as before. The evidence of Attic vase-painting, collected and analysed by K. Friis Johansen, points to a date around 520 as the moment when the artists suddenly began to show knowledge of the whole *Iliad* instead of just a few favoured episodes taken mainly from the last third of the poem.⁶⁴ 'Around 520' does not necessarily exclude a date before 523. But balancing the probabilities of the matter, considering the impression that Homer's Apollo hymn must have made at Polycrates' Delian festival, the death of Polycrates within the year, and the immediate replacement of Samos by Athens as a centre of poetic patronage, we may find it a plausible hypothesis that that was the moment when Hipparchus (besides sending a ship for Anacreon) invited the Homeridai to Athens and arranged for the complete performance of the poems of Homer at the next Athenian panegyris: the Great Panathenaea that began (if the calendar was properly calibrated) on 19 August 522.

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⁶² Janko (n. 17), 256–8, thinks that the (Delian) hymn was composed and posted up much earlier, at a time when Apollo had no temple of his own and was sharing Artemis'. He then has difficulty in explaining the references to a temple of Apollo in the hymn.

⁶³ Burkert (n. 13), 60; cf. id. (n. 19), 53; id. (n. 6), 78, n. 19, 'die Ausgestaltung der Panathenäen stellt sich neben die fast gleichzeitige Ausgestaltung der Dionysien durch die Tragödie'. On the uncertainty of the conventional date for the establishment of tragedy at the Dionysia cf. M. L. West, *CQ* 39 (1989), 251–4.

⁶⁴ K. Friis Johansen, *The Iliad in Early Greek Art* (Copenhagen, 1967), 223–7, 236–40.