

p. 40 (cont'd) The man who started it all by abducting Helen is named both Alexander, which is Greek, and Paris, which is not (just as his city had two names Ilium and Troy); he is both a contemptible, unheroic coward and a true hero. As usual, later generations began to seek explanations, but not the poet of the Iliad.

p. 40, 41 We may take it for granted that there was a Trojan War in Mycenaean times; more correctly, that there were many Trojan wars. War was normal in the world
 But a ten-year war, or a war of any smaller number of years is out of the question. . . .
 This was a typical "war" as narrated by Nestor, a raid for booty. Even if repeated year after year, these wars remained single raids.

p. 42 The Song of Roland can be checked against written records. The Iliad and the Odyssey cannot, and, insofar as historical detail is concerned, there is no way of reversing the process of distortion and re-establishing the original Kernel. Comparison with other examples of the genre leads to what Rys Carpenter has called the "theorem . . . that the more an oral poet seems to know about a distant event the less he really knows about it and the more certainly he is inventing."²¹ [Carpenter, p. 32]

p. 43 The world of Odysseus was not that of the seventh century, B.C., neither was it the Mycenaean age five or six or seven hundred years earlier. It was much "simpler" in its social and political arrangements; it was unlettered and it was no longer truly monumental in its architecture, for either the living or the dead. It fits neither the Bronze Age nor the city-state world which was to come. If it is to be placed in time, as everything we know about heroic poetry says it must, the most likely centuries seem to be the tenth and ninth.

p. 43 Essentially the picture of the background offered by the poems is a coherent one. Anachronistic fragments cling to it in spots, some too ancient and some, particularly in the Odyssey, too recent, a reflection of the poet's own time. For historical study, the accuracy of the background is quite separable from the demonstrable inaccuracy of the episodes and the narrative detail, the action.

p. 46 In the second book of the Iliad the poet catalogues the contending hosts, The list totals 1186 ships, which, at a minimum computation, means over 60,000 men, a figure as trustworthy as the 400,000 Saracens of The Song of Roland. The world of Odysseus was a small one in numbers of people. There are no statistics and no ways of making good guesses, but the five-acre sites of the archaeologists, together with what is known from later centuries, leave no doubt that the populations of the individual communities were to be reckoned in four figures, often even in three, and that the numbers in the poems, whether of ships or flocks or slaves or nobles, are unrealistic and invariably err on the side of exaggeration.

p. 67 . . . ; the ethics of the world of Odysseus prohibited the practice of trade as a vocation. The test of what was and what was not acceptable did not lie in the act of trading, but in the status of the trader and in his approach to the transaction. So crucial was the need for metal that even a king could honorably voyage in its search. When Athena appeared to Telemachus as Mentis, the Taphian chieftain, her story was that she was carrying iron to Temesa in quest of copper.*

e // * Neither Taphos nor Temesa is otherwise known as a place name, and the many attempts, all failures, to identify them with one or another mining region illustrate once again the futility of such "historicizing" of the Homeric poems.