

- p. 325 It is also important to remember that the identification of additions is a hazardous business that should be carried out as conservatively as possible; for the oral style is itself cumulative by nature, the singer constantly has afterthoughts which might look like additions - they are additions, in a sense, but ones made by the Homeric singer himself. Sometimes these additions become a convention, for example in the type 'Penelope came downstairs - not alone, but two maidservants followed with her', in which the addition fills a complete extra verse.¹ To classify this kind of cumulation as a later elaboration would be a very serious mistake.
- p.329,330 Fresh composition is most likely to occur regularly in joining-passages designed to lead from one theme to another, where the two have been juxtaposed by the monumental poet. These structural passages must occur frequently throughout the Iliad and Odyssey, and it is a sign both of their skill and of our ignorance that it is almost always hard to be sure which are joining-passages and which are not. . . - all these must include fresh composition by the main composers, but it is impossible to distinguish the point at which fresh transitional material ends and elaborated thematic material begins.
- p. 331 The main result of conflating many different analyses of this kind will probably be anomaly, incomprehension and confusion; but it may also be possible provisionally to assign certain less obvious passages to more clear-cut categories, and to associate certain categories with different stages of development - pre-Homeric, Homeric or monumental, post-Homeric but traditional, decadent and anti-traditional. These analytical processes can only be carried a short way, and will shed but little light, and that possibly deceptive, on the greater part of the poems. . .
- p. 331 Great circumspection is needed both in this kind of analysis and in forming theories about how and in what order each poem was developed. . . . It is undeniable that the Iliad shows signs of aggregation, . . .
- p. 332 These are broad guesses about the construction of the two great poems, some of them based on the kinds of classification outlined above and others inferred less systematically from obvious aspects of the poems. In general such conjectures should be carefully restrained - though neither care nor restraint has been conspicuous in most branches of Homeric study in the past. The growing knowledge of oral poetry, in particular of the Yugoslav singers who can be studied in the Parry-Lord publications as it progresses, shows that the process by which a single song, even a short one, establishes itself in a singer's repertoire and takes on its form of a particular moment is so complex that, without the opportunity to examine his technique over a wide range of themes and without direct information from the singer himself, it is quite impossible to reconstruct. Even such direct information is often extraordinarily unhelpful, since it is characteristic of these and other illiterate poets that they are unselfconscious and naïve about their methods and quite vague about the history and descent of particular songs and particular versions. The situation is further complicated by the facts that some singers vary their vocabulary and style from time to time, . . . If we try to apply analysis by subjects and styles to the Novi Pazar songs, for example, and then to assign different songs or sections of songs to different singers, different influences, and different generations, we shall rapidly be reduced to manifest and demonstrable confusion. Precisely the same danger unfortunately exists with the attempt to analyse and explain the composition and structure of the Homeric poems, at least beyond a certain rather elementary point. An oral tradition is an almost infinitely complex entity; the way in which a particular theme or group