

Beye, Chas. Rowan, The Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Epic Tradition, 1966

p. 97 As we have noted earlier, approximately one third of the Iliad and Odyssey is made up of repeated lines, a high number. Before the process of oral poetry was well understood most scholars who were raised on the rhetorical principle of variety considered the two epics to be largely patchwork. In their theory a number of individually created episodes were loosely and unartistically joined together with appropriate lines taken from anywhere in the several episodes. The touchstone for determining the authenticity of any passage was its freedom from repeated lines. The theory is, of course, dubious since there is no way to determine which occurrences of any given line are the repeated ones. On the modern reader the Iliad, especially, can produce an impression of being stuck together, for the repetitions - particularly in the battle sequences - are frequent and often stark.

The Iliad

p. 112 Currently the fashion in Homeric studies is to find evidence of symmetry. Many have long since observed that the events of Book One occur in reverse order in the twenty-fourth.

Further Reading

p. 235 Luckier still, almost all significant and informative books and articles that have to do with Homer's poems are written in English. This is a development of the past fifty years; before then, almost everything of consequence on the subject of Homer came from Germany.

If the reader wishes, however, a detailed exposition of the trends and innovations in Homeric research, he had best consult the essay by E. R. Dodds, entitled "Homer" in Fifty Years of Classical Scholarship, edited by Maurice Platnauer (Oxford, 1954). There is also a very witty and penetrating article by F. M. Combellack, called "Contemporary p.236 / Homeric Scholarship" in the forty-ninth volume (1955) of the journal Classical Weekly (now renamed Classical World).

p. 236 Entitled A Companion to Homer, edited by A. J. B. Wace and F. H. Stubbings (London, 1963) this book is scholarly and authoritative. Every kind of topic is covered - from oral poetic technique to archaeological excavation. . . . Much the same material which this handbook presents in difficult professional essays is simplified and made more readable in G. S. Kirk's The Songs of Homer (Cambridge, 1963), recently revised and abridged and retitled Homer and the Epic for the Cambridge University Press paperback series.

p. 236 The Iliad and Odyssey stand as valuable, illuminating documents for historians, archaeologists, and students of comparative literature. Moreover these poems form the basis for one of the most elaborate and enduring games of classical scholarship. Known as "the Homeric question," it flourished in the nineteenth century, principally in Germany, and, indeed, continued active until Germany's eclipse in the Second World War. While the majority of English-speaking Homeric scholars no longer take its tenets too seriously, almost every writer still speaks subconsciously of those tough, arrogant German scholars of long ago who set the tone of much Homeric research.

p. 237 Therefore, it is worth while to learn something of these men and their ideas.