

p. 240/ presumed to have put the poems together). A great deal of nineteenth-century research into Homer was colored by the growing prominence of science. Homeric scholars wanted their work to show a lucidity, objectivity, and tightness similar to that exhibited by scientific studies. Hence came the unblinking, unthinking logic that Scott finds so odious. Logic and propriety of the sort which these scholars sought are the properties of prose. Poetry, on the other hand, shares in a kind of mystical ambiguity. Poetic analysis, especially of poems so remote as the Iliad and Odyssey, is perhaps better managed with tentativeness, suggestion and implication as the only possible means of arriving at a proper understanding.

(( Hence the methods of nineteenth-century research could be thought of as still applicable to the prose narrative of the Pentateuch ))

p. 240 The faults of the scholarship of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are sometimes seen in D. L. Page's History and the Homeric Iliad (Berkeley, 1959; also a University of California paperback). An example is the appendix that is occupied with the question of multiple authorship for the Iliad. Professor Page, for example, says in this appendix that the fact Achilles in the eleventh and sixteenth books fails to acknowledge that the Greeks in the ninth book have made considerable efforts at conciliation proves that two versions of the story, or two authors, are in evidence here. Professor Page argues that so short a time has in fact elapsed between the scenes that any man could not keep silent about these details from Book Nine. But this is to assume that Achilles is a real person who must exhibit everywhere every last subtlety of normal human behaviour. Further, it is to assume that a real span of time exists in the story of the Iliad. Neither of these assumptions is likely or relevant. Achilles is a creation of the poet and he will be manipulated like a marionette. He has no other existence. As long as what he does is conventionally human, he is believable and we can overlook what he does not do. Likewise, time is the poet's creation - the distance between the ninth and eleventh books, however small mathematically and logically, is great

p. 241 / by virtue of the interruption which the tenth book provides, for that episode changes the focus and mood significantly. Page understands the theory of oral poetry, but he seems to be overlooking the special emphasis in such poetry upon the present moment.

Furthermore, he seems to ignore the special way in which long poetry must be read, which is so well described by C. S. Lewis in A Preface to Paradise Lost (Oxford, 1942). Still more crucial is the apparent inability of Page or his school to accept what seem to him inconsistencies and contradictions, as in fact intended by the poet himself. It is far more intelligent and realistic to accept the poems as they are and proceed to interpret them on that basis. For whether such passages are by our poet or another is not the question. No one introduces or lets stand marked absurdities or anomalies; to believe so is to misapprehend creation.

Nonetheless, much of this sort of research has had in the end a salutary effect upon Homeric scholarship in general. Men of this school have had generally so profound a knowledge of the texts of the Iliad and Odyssey that they inevitably increase our awareness of the extraordinarily variegated and cunning texture of the two poems. By emphasizing anomalies in the text, they have forced everyone who is concerned with the poems to examine the texts more closely, to avoid simple generalizations. . . .

p. 243 The Parry-Lord theory of oral verse-making is, however, the fashion today. It has been called the new orthodoxy by M. W. M. Pope in an article in the sixth volume (1964) of the Proceedings of the Classical Association of South Africa, entitled "The Parry-Lord Theory of Homeric Composition." This is a corrective essay.