

Seymour, Thomas Day, Life in the Homeric Age (New York: Biblio and Tannen) 1963

How Much is True?

p. 18 We cannot determine indeed how much of the Homeric story itself is true and how much is fiction.

p. 19 Three possible views

1. The poet, conscious of his office to please rather than to instruct, depicted a life such as had never been on land or sea, drawing from his imagination his colours as well as his forms. . . .
2. The poet painted the life of the earlier generation of which he had heard, the generation which saw the fall of Troy and knew Odysseus.. . .
3. The poet represented the life which was familiar to himself and his hearers. Each action, each event might be given by tradition, or might be the product of the poet's imagination, but the details which show the customs of the age, and which furnish the colors for the picture, are taken from the life of the poet's time.. . .

Nowhere, does he claim direct or even indirect knowledge of the events which he narrates, but always he appeals to the Muse for inspiration and instruction. His eyes have not seen, and no forbears have told him of the Trojan War. . . .

p. 20 The Muse herself tells the story, and the poet is but her mouthpiece.

p. 35 But no scholar now would set the Trojan War before the age of the palace of Cnosus in which thousands of written documents are found. The art of writing was known, then,

p. 36 not merely in the poet's own age, but also in that of his warriors and his warriors' grandfathers.

Catalogue of Ships

a' p. 65 The relation of the Catalogue to the rest of the Iliad, however, is not clear, and certainly no violence should be used to bring the rest of the poems into harmony with this document. More discrepancies exist between it and the story of the battles than between any other parts of the poems.