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NOTES ON THE NAME OF HOMER AND THE HOMERIC QUESTION

Holger Thesleff

The Homeric question has a distinctly onomastic aspect which is often forgotten today.

After the battles of the analysts and the unitarians had ebbed during the first decades of this century into skirmishing between neo-analysts and neo-unitarians, a somewhat fragile consensus came to prevail among Homeric scholars as to the name and identity of Homer. It is believed that "Ὅμηρος was the name of a prominent singer of heroic epics about whom practically nothing is known (pace Wilamowitz), but to whose original genius we owe the Iliad (or at least a 'Wrath-poem' of some kind) and, perhaps more indirectly, the Odyssey. In spite of the innumerable varieties of this view, most specialists would now agree with what was also believed in antiquity: Homer was a real historical person, and he was a poet; he was not "a mere personification of the genius of epic poetry, or the mythical eponymous ancestor of the Homeridae", nor was he just a reciter of traditional epics, nor indeed a Lönnrothian redactor.¹ The notoriously impersonal Homeric anonymity is considered a matter of style and tradition; contrast Hesiod who speaks in person, and the elegists, iambographers and lyric poets. But Homer was an innovator. This is the main reason why his name was preserved, contrary to the practice of

¹ E. R. Dodds in *Fifty Years*, ed. M. Platnauer, 1954, 2. For more evidence about this consensus, see e.g. A. Lesky, *RE Suppl. XI*, 1967, 687ff., and A. Heubeck, *Die homerische Frage*, *Erträge der Forschung* 27, 1974, esp. 213ff. It is remarkable how reluctant many (and not only Continental) scholars have been to accept the theories of oral composition; see G. S. Kirk, *Homer and the oral tradition*, 1976, and *Homer, tradition and invention*, ed. B. C. Fenik, *Cincinnati Class. St.* 2, 1978.

oral epics all over the world which tends to forget the names of the actual poets, although the names of good reciters are often remembered.² Thus his case is not directly comparable to, say, Phemius or Demodocus, or Arctinus, Lesches and Creophylus and a few other early singers, mythical or real, whose names we incidentally happen to know.

From time to time scholars have found difficulties in accepting this view. The chief queries are: the obvious lack of agreement in antiquity about the biographical facts concerning Homer, and the accretion of fictitious legends around him; the likewise ancient tendency to attribute to Homer obviously different heroic epics; and the explanation of the name itself which seems to have been a stumbling block already in the 4th century B.C. It is the last-mentioned problem that will principally concern us here.

One of the theories current in the 19th century was supposed to solve all these difficulties at a single stroke. The core of it consisted in the assumption that "Ὅμηρος was not originally a proper name at all but a generic appellative meaning something like "composer (of epic poems)". The ὄμηροι were poets who 'put together' the large epics. As has been often stated since, and as will be seen below, this theory is not acceptable as such. It is an interesting theory, however. Its protagonist, F. G. Welcker, was an example of a Hegelian Romantic who managed to believe at the same time in a collective national 'Geist' manifesting itself in poetry, and in the contribution of individual genius. He was also a formidably learned man, and he supported his theory with a copious set of arguments. They were all swept aside with more force than fairness by a younger generation of scholars, beginning with Theodor Bergk and the young Wilamowitz, who tried to prove the existence of an individual Homer.³ But

² Cf. C. M. Bowra in *A Companion to Homer*, ed. Wace & Stubbings, 1962, 41.

³ See Welcker's *Der epische Cyclus oder die Homerischen Dichter*, Bd. I, Rhein. Mus. Suppl. 1, 1835, esp. 122—198; for his dislike of "der Wolf" [F. A. Wolf] and his appreciation of the different, but individual, achievements of the poets of the Iliad and the Odyssey, see p. 127. One of his arguments (which has some roots in the opinions of ancient grammarians and which will be discussed below) was the linguistic derivation of "Ὅμηρος from ὁμοῦ and ἀραρίσκειν. The theory of 'Homer' as a generic denomination was later in the 19th century elaborated by several others, notably A. Holtzmann (*Z.f.vergl.Sprachf.* 2, 1852, 483—491) who following the fashion of the time adduced Sanskrit parallels,

seen in a modern perspective Welcker's arguments are not merely (what Paul Shorey once called) 'part of the history of the aberrations of the human mind'; they are rather (what Hegelians would have called) part of the dialectics of history. I would emphasize the fact that some of them are still worth re-reading today.

In any case, it is the generation of scholars contemporary with and following Wilamowitz (e.g. Eduard Meyer, and Allen, Jebb, Bury, Murray and Mazon) whose opinions still form the backbone of today's reference works. Their and their followers' interpretation of the evidence — clear-cut, data-based, optimistic and sometimes over-positivistic as it was — had from the outset reacted against the Romantic view of the nature of Homeric poetry, as indeed the Romantic view, generally speaking, had reacted against the often over-naïve belief of the 18th century in the individual personality of one Homer (and of one Ossian, of course). With the neo-unitarian fashion of the 1920s and 30s, that continued up to the 1950s and even later, the tendency to individualize Homer became even more manifest, especially among those who tended to minimize the importance of the discoveries of Parry and Lord. I have the impression that a reaction is again likely to come. Disregarding for a moment the question of Homer's name, a sifting and weighing of the various other pros and cons for the view of the generic Homer versus the individual one, suggests to me that the solution to a considerable extent depends on the general attitude of the critic. The changes in the attitudes to Greek epic poetry that necessarily follow from the more recent theories and studies

and G. Curtius who in a Kiel Programm of 1855, *De nomine Homeri*, discussed under the same aspect the whole group of words that are apparently cognate with Ὀμηρος; see below. This method of making Homer an 'abstraction', this "inverted metaphysic which must hail from the land of Hegel ... commended itself to the Anglo-German mind of Grote" and other British scholars too, wrote the venomous Th. W. Allen who bitterly opposed such views (*Cl.Q.* 1, 1907, 142f.). For further references to this line of explanation, see Raddatz, *RE VIII*, 1913, 2199f. The pages on Homer in Th. Bergk's *Griechische Literaturgeschichte*, Bd. I, 1872, esp. 440—447, 930f., are sometimes taken to be the first typical symptoms of a reaction; Wilamowitz' emphatic statements in his early *Homerische Untersuchungen*, *Philol.Unters.* 1, 1884, 378, repeated and elaborated notably in *Die Ilias und Homer*, 1916, 356ff., have been even more influential.

of oral composition, and also from modern notions of group work and collective achievement, might be expected to turn the scales again. There have been only few signs of this so far.⁴ But some reflections of such new attitudes can be seen in the discussion of "Ὀμηρος as a proper name.

An old make-shift, which is also part of the majority's consensus today, is to abstain from all abstruse etymologizing and to explain 'Homer' as a real proper name that may have originally had one of the meanings attested or supposed for the noun ὄμηρος — 'Hostage', 'Bail', 'Attendant' or even 'Blind' — but with the implication that this meaning was not manifestly felt in the name, and "sans cautionner les légendes rattachées à ce nom".⁵

By far the most obvious meaning of the noun is "hostage". Here, however, we instantly meet with serious difficulties. Certainly ὄμηρος meaning "hostage" had predominantly negative connotations in Greek, much more so than e.g. "security", "surety" or "pledge" would have in English (not to speak of "tokens of love" or the like): a Mr. Pledge would perhaps provoke a smile at times, but he would be accepted. Hostages are different. The taking of hostages is normally connected with violence and insecurity — the situation of a Polybius would hardly have applied to the conditions of archaic Greek (as it would certainly not apply to late 20th century terrorism). This fact has not been sufficiently appreciated by those who manipulate notions such as "Bürge", "bail" or "surety" into the noun ὄμηρος:

⁴ Among such signs, note Minna Skafté Jensen, *The Homeric question and the oral-formulaic theory*, *Opuscula Graecolatina*, Suppl.Mus.Tusc. 20, 1980, an original but eccentric attempt to revive the theory of a Pisistratidean redaction, which again pushes 'Homer' very far back in time and gives him an air of collective anonymity. Jensen (who is certainly too harshly treated by P. V. Jones in *Cl.R.* 31, 1981, 284f.) does not, however, discuss the name or identity of her 'Homer'. One of her precursors was E. Bickel (see below, n. 38) who dated his 'Homāros' about 1000 B.C. Cf. also R. Böhme, *Peisistratos und sein homerischer Dichter*, 1983. On the other hand it is customary now to place 'Homer' towards the end of the oral tradition, as e.g. Kirk does (see above, n. 1).

⁵ Chantraine, *Dict.étym.*, 1980, s.v. ὄμηρος. Frisk, *Gr.etym.Wb.* s.v., even more cautiously avoids taking a position, though he prefers not to side with Birt, see below.

in the extant texts such a neutral meaning is not found.⁶ As a proper name, 'Hostage' would have had a remarkably sinister undertone.

Pejorative names, to be sure, are not uncommon in Greece. In most cases such names are probably humorously hypocoristic in origin, when referring for instance to slight physical defects or oddities.⁷ Ominously sinister names are very much contrary to Greek practice, and to what might be expected. As a matter of fact, the rather obviously fictitious stories current in antiquity about how Homer — formerly Melesigenes⁸ — came to be called 'Hostage' or 'Blind',⁹ reflect a feeling that it was far from natural for anybody to have, or to be given, such a name.

The same uneasiness, not to say bewilderment, lies behind much of what has been written since the 18th century about the meaning and implications of the name of Homer. Some references were given above. The most interesting of the more recent contributions are the following: — The veteran scholar Theodor Birt, in an article written shortly before his death (*Philologus* 87, 1932, 376—382), resumed and supported with new arguments the old assumption that the adjective ὄμηρος has been current in the sense of "blind" (cf. below (3)), and that Homer came to be called 'The Blind One' because he was the most famous blind poet known. Birt's argumentation was respectfully accepted by the linguist Paul Kretschmer (*Glotta* 22, 1934, 264), but it has not met with much approval since then. — O. Szemerényi (*Glotta* 33, 1954, 263—266; the

⁶ In my view LSJ misleadingly stress the neutral aspect by giving the meanings "pledge, surety" before "hostage", though 'etymologically' they may be right. The situation of a volunteering hostage (such as is implied in some of the stories about Homer, cf. below under (2) and (4)) cannot, in archaic Greece, have been very much different from that of hostages taken by force; cf. e.g. *Hdt.* 1,64,1; 6,99; 7,165; 9,90. Occasional metaphorical uses such as *Plat.Tht.* 202e are irrelevant here.

⁷ Such as Σίμων, Πλάτων, Μεθύστας, Αἰσχρίων; note Κάλλαισχος (the father of Critias). Αἴσχυλος and Αἰσχίνης probably have more to do with αἰσχύνη than with αἴσχος. Cf. Bechtel, *Die hist. Personennamen des Griechischen*, 1917, 477ff.; Hug, *RE* IIIA, 1929, 1821ff. (I owe the latter reference to Heikki Solin).

⁸ Of course from the verb μέλειν, though 'etymologized' as meaning "Son of the river Meles (near Smyrna)", *Ps.-Hdt.* V.Hom. 3,30 Allen.

⁹ See the references in Raddatz (above, n. 3) and Jacoby, *Hermes* 68, 1933, esp. p. 13f.

reference is sometimes wrongly quoted) tried to derive the noun ὄμηρος, not in the usual manner from *-ar-* (as in ἀραρῖστω), but from *-er-* (as in ἔρχομαι), which would produce an original sense of "going together" (whence "hostage"), "follower", "companion". This would (although Sze-merényi does not make the inference himself) give some support to the old theory¹⁰ that Homer's name meant 'Companion' or 'Attendant', and would free us from relying on the legends. — M. Durante, in an extensive article in 1957,¹¹ adducing also Sanskrit parallels, argued that Ὀμηρος referred to a 'Singer of a πανήγυρις' (cf. also Ζεὺς Ὀμάριος, below (6), and the poet Thamyras, a remote parallel to Orpheus, in whose name some scholars have, not very convincingly, found the adverb θαμά; cf. Hsch. s.v.). He also produced some evidence for the assumption that the term Ὀμηρίδης was not originally thought of as a patronymic. — L. G. Pocock, in 1967,¹² on somewhat similar grounds but rather more in passing (and in fact varying and old theory of Fick), suggested that Homer's name was derived from a non-attested word *ὄμηρία meaning "meeting". — G. Bonfante, in 1968 (*La Parola del Passato* 23, 360f.), was inclined to discard altogether all previous explanations. Considering the (late!) occurrences of the name Ὀμηρος (Ὀμαρος) in Northern Greece (cf. below (1)), he suggested a non-Greek 'Pelasgian' origin for it. — Finally L. Deroy, in 1972 (*L'Antiquité Classique* 41, 427—439), following Durante and others in insisting on the name being generic, argued in detail for an earlier sense of ὄμηρος being "remplaçant", "porteparole", "avocat" or "avoué"; thus any "récitateur de poèmes épiques" (who was not considered the author of the poem!) could be called ὄμηρος. He also adduced *Myc. u-me-ta* and argued that ὄμηρος contains an original *-e-*: so the correct etymology would be 'copulative' ὀ- + **mēr* as in μηρός (cf. Lat. *membrum*), and the original meaning would, consequently, be "qui fait partie d'un même ensemble organisé", "qui est membre d'un même corps".

¹⁰ Refuted by Wilamowitz, *Hom.Unters.* 378, cf. *die Ilias und Homer* 366. But the theory is not so impossible after all, as will be argued below.

¹¹ *Il nome di Omero*, *Atti della Accad.Naz. dei Lincei*, anno 354, Ser. VIII, *Rendiconti*, Cl. di Sc.mor., stor. e filol., vol. 12, 1957, 94—111.

¹² In connection with various notes on the Odyssey, in *Studi Micenei ed Eg.-Anat.* 4 (= *Incunabula Gr.* 23), 92—104.

In order to make yet another, and a slightly more critical, approach to what we may and may not infer about Ὀμηρος as a proper name, it will be necessary to review once more the linguistic evidence.¹³ The facts are briefly as follows:

(1) Ὀμηρος as the proper name of 'Homer' considered as an individual can possibly be traced back to the mid-7th century B.C., if the reference in Pausanias 9,9,5 holds good: τὰ δὲ ἔπη ταῦτα [the Θηβαῖς] Καλλῖνος [Καλαῖνος Mss.], ἀφικόμενος αὐτῶν ἐς μνήμην, ἔφησεν Ὀμηρον τὸν ποιήσαντα εἶναι. Καλλίνω δὲ πολλοί τε καὶ ἄξιοι λόγου κατὰ ταῦτα ἔγνωσαν. The curious Ps.-Hesiodian fragment 357 West will be discussed below. Theagenes (Vors.I⁶ p. 51f.) is said to have allegorized Homer's gods in the late 6th century. The mentions of Homer in Xenophanes fr. 10 and 11 DK and Simonides fr. 59 Page bring us up to about 500 B.C. Of the derivatives connected with the name, only Ὀμηρίδης will concern us here; it is found for the first time in Pindar (Nem. 2,1) and Hellanicus (fr. 20 Jacoby). The rest (Ὀμήρειος, Ὀμηρικός, Ὀμηριστής, etc.) offer nothing of interest in this connection. Some ten cases are known of persons other than Homer carrying the name Ὀμηρος (West Greek or Pseudo-Doric Ὀμαρος);¹⁴ since most of these cases are late and none is earlier than the classical age, these persons were almost certainly named after the famous poet, the 'teacher of Hellas'.¹⁵

(2) ὄμηρος, as a noun, occurs with the well-attested meaning of "hostage" since the middle of the 5th century B.C. (first in IG I² 39.47 and Herodotus; in Lysias etc. also n.pl. ὄμηρα). Corresponding derivatives are ὄμηρεύειν (later ὄμηρευμα; also ὄμηρεῖ· ἐγγυᾶται, ἀκολουθεῖ Hsch.) and ὄμηρεία. Cf. ἄμηροι· ὄμηροι Hsch., E.M.

(3) ὄμηρος is in some of the traditions about the life of Homer said to have been a Cumaean (i.e. 'Aeolic?') word for "blind": see Ps.-Hdt.

¹³ It was first collected by G. Curtius (see above, n. 3); cf. now LSJ (with Suppl.), Frisk and Chantraine.

¹⁴ The list given by Allen, Cl.Q. 1, 1907, 142, seems still to be approximately complete; add Collitz, Samml. IV p. 1033 (Ὀμαρος, Crete, 3rd c.B.C.), SEG II 547.9, XII 120.140.

¹⁵ On this point I am inclined to side with Wilamowitz against e.g. Allen (above, n. 3), Mazon (Introd. à l'Illiade, 1942, 262f.) or Bonfante. Perhaps the same applies to the proper name Homerios (Styra, 5th c. B.C.) which Bechtel, Die hist. Personennamen 532, wants to derive from the epithet of Zeus Homarios.

V.Hom. 13 (164 Allen); cf. ὄμηρος [*sic* Latte]· τυφλός Hsch., and Ps.-Plut. V.Hom. 2 (21 Allen, from Ephorus [fr.1 Jacoby]) referring to ὄμηρεύειν in the sense of "guiding the blind" which is also said to be Ionic. Cf. (4) and (5).

(4) The verb ὄμηρέω occurs twice in early epic poetry: in Od. 16,468 it is commonly understood as meaning "to meet" (e.g. LSJ), and in Hes. Theog. 39 the sense "to agree" is regarded as more suitable; but see below. In the 4th century B.C. this verb was said to have been used παρὰ τοῖς ἀρχαίοις in the sense of ἀκολουθεῖν and to explain ὄμηρος meaning "hostage" (Theopompus fr. 300 Jacoby, in Suid. and Harpocr., and Aristotle fr. 76 Rose, in Ps.-Plut. V.Hom. 3,39ff. Allen; cf. also ὄμηρεῦσαι· τὸ συμβολεῦσαι, συμφωνεῖν Hsch.). Cf. ὄμηρέω (2), (3) and (5).

(5) ὀμήρης, ὀμηρέω, ὀμαρές, ὀμηρέτης, ὀμηρητήρ and ὀμήρησις occur occasionally in late sources in various senses apparently to be derived from ὄμο- and the root of ἀραρίσκω: ὀμήρης "mixed" Nicander Alexiph. 70 (cf. 261); ὀμηρέω "to share in" Oppianus H. 1,421 (cf. (4)); and Hesychius gives the glosses ὀμαρές· ὄμοῦ, συμφώνως; ὀμηρέταις (ὀμηρίταις Phot.)· ὀμοψήφοις, ὀμογνώμοσιν; ὀμηρητηῖρες¹⁶. ἀκόλουθοι, συνήγοροι; and ὀμούρησις ("neighbourhood"?) said to be Attic for ὀμήρησις (not found elsewhere).

(6) Ὀμάριος (presumably -ā-; also written Ἀμάριος) is attested as an epithet of Zeus in various West Greek cities. It is usually interpreted as the 'God of Confederations' (cf. Pape-Benseler s.vv. Ὀμάριος, Ὀμαγύριος, and Bölte, RE VIII, 1913, 2143f.) and understood as containing the root of ἀραρίσκω. But Ὀμηρέων as the name of a month in Ios probably refers to the tradition of Homer's death on that island (Ps.-Hdt. V.Hom. 34ff., etc.), or possibly, more generally, to rhapsodic contests.

(7) ὀμαρτέω and ὀμαρτή (once ὀμαρτήδην), also written ἄμ-, are common in poetry in the sense of "to act together", "to accompany", and "at the same time". Here again a derivation from the root of ἀραρίσκω seems probable.

Considering this evidence it is reasonable to make three points at the outset.

¹⁶ This is the reading accepted by Latte. The form ὀμηρητηῖρες given by LSJ and adopted by Deroy among others, seems to be a modern corruption.

First, there is hardly sufficient ground for distrusting altogether the connections between the name and the other uses of the word ὄμηρος and its cognates (as Bonfante did). Surely a non-Greek origin for the name remains a remote possibility (cf. e.g. Πανύασσις). But the rather wide register of uses attested for the noun and its cognates in early Greek (as will be further demonstrated below) makes it probable that the origin of the name is Greek.

Second, the evidence for ὄμηρος actually meaning "blind" (3) is very scanty, and Birt's additional arguments are not at all convincing.¹⁷ The explanation of this meaning rests chiefly on the (rather artificial) etymological argument that a blind person is 'accompanied or guided by somebody else' with whom he is 'fitted together' (ὄμο- and -αο- in a passive sense), and upon the (rather circular) inference from the legends about Homer being blind. The legends are not consistent even on this point (cf. for instance Ps.-Plut. V.Hom. 4,63 Allen); and it has been rightly doubted whether there are any features in the Homeric poems and the Homeric manner of description which might indicate that the poet (qua innovatory poet) was blind. On the contrary, a close examination of the evidence may suggest that he was not. Blindness, however, is a traditional, often legendary characteristic of god-chosen bards; witness, in Greek legends, Thamyris, Demodocus, Stesichorus, and the notoriously anonyne 'blind man from Chios' who appears to be proud of his stigma.¹⁸ Considering all this, the assumption that Melesigenes the poet was called 'The Blind One' does not seem as natural than assuming, vice versa, with Frisk and others that the name of Homer, once he had become famous and the legends had begun to imply his blindness, was occasionally used¹⁹ as a word for 'blind'. Cf. for instance Ἰλιάς κακῶν Demosth. 19,148, οὕτως εἶ Κρόνος Plat. Euthd. 287b, and Lucian's Προμηθεὺς εἶ.

Third, the chiefly semantically founded doubts of some scholars regarding the derivation of ὄμηρος and its cognates from the root of ἀραρίσκω are not really warranted. This root had a wide range of application in

¹⁷ For a detailed refutation, see F. Jacoby, *Hermes* 68, 1933, 13f.

¹⁸ For the supposed identification of this poet with Homer, see below, n. 31.

¹⁹ First in Kyme? cf. the references under (3). Hesychius' ὄμηρος is problematic; does it come from a Lesbian poem, or a graffito?

early Greek.²⁰ Though no other instances are found of derivatives of ἄρ- terminating in -ηρος, in my view there seem to be no formal difficulties about ὄμ-ηρος thus explained; the compound is of the same type as μετήροος (from -ἄερ-), στρατηγός (from -ἄγ-).²¹ The alternative solutions offered by Szemerényi and Deroy (see above) are too complicated and too narrowly based to be convincing, and they lead to a series of additional complications. To Deroy's explanation in particular it could be objected (apart from Myc. *u-me-ta*²² and other problematic points) that ὄ- can hardly be regarded as a variant of 'copulative' ἄ-.²³

We may, then, focus our attention upon ὄμηρος taken as a derivative of ὄμ(ο)- and ἄρ-.

Though we have almost dispensed with the notion "blind" (explained as 'accompanied by another person', with ἄρ- in a passive sense), we are still left with the well-attested and well-defined meaning "hostage" (2). This is usually explained as 'follower', i.e. 'one who is forced to accompany' or the like.²⁴ Some support for this etymology may seem to be found in the use of some of the formally cognate words listed under (4), (5) and (7). Yet it is open to serious objections. Apart from the difficulties involved with ὄμο- (see below), this explanation would simply identify hostages with all kinds of captives and prisoners of war. It should be made clear, however, that what is characteristic of a hostage, is his or

²⁰ See e.g. Lex.d.frühgr.Epos s.v., and words such as χαλκήρης, εὐήρης, κατήρης, ἄρα.

²¹ The closest parallel is probably the Pythagorean term ὄμ-ἄκοι which is likely to be early though it is not found before Iamblichus; cf. κατήκοος Hdt., πολήκοος Plat. But ἐρήρος (cf. below) comes from ἦρα (B) where there is a digamma; cf. ἐπίηρος and perhaps πολύηρος (usually derived from *ἔρα "earth"); πάρηρος is probably a variant of παρήροος. The suffix of πονηρός, λυπηρός etc. is probably irrelevant.

²² Deroy 433 wrongly accepts the reading ὄμηροτῆρες in Hsch. (see above, n. 16) which makes a connection with *u-me-ta* look somewhat possible.

²³ C. J. Ruijgh, Mnemosyne 14, 1961, 201, rather convincingly argued that (psilotic!) 'Aeolic' ὄ- was generalized from ὄμ- (as in ὄμ-αιχμος) analogously with privative ἀν- : ἄ-.

²⁴ E.g. Frisk and Chantraine; cf. Birt 377, referring to an Ethiopian custom. But (contrary to what Frisk states) Curtius was in fact inclined to see an active sense in ὄμηρος, 'one who fits the conflicting parties together into concord' (following Eustathius in Il. p. 4,33).

her being used as a 'pledge', representing more or less symbolically the dependence of one party upon another party in potential or actual negotiations: in this respect Deroz was after all on the right track when connecting the meaning 'otage' with the meaning 'remplaçant'. The idea of dependence and potential transaction is rather clearly present in Lat. *ob-ses*, 'one who is sitting opposite (his own party, i.e. on the winning side, so as to be used as a pledge)'.

I would suggest that one should not think of an explicitly passive sense in ὄμηρος at all. I believe an indication of where an explanation of the meaning "hostage" is to be looked for can be seen in the word σύμβολον, "tally", an object 'fitting together' with another object of which it actually constitutes a part, with βάλλειν (cf. ὑπέροβολος, καταβολή, etc.) indefinitely conceived as both transitive and intransitive (somewhat like Eng. "fit"). The parallel admittedly is somewhat risky in view of συν-. To be sure, as will be pointed out below, ὄμ- does not denote the same as συν-. Possibly, considering the fact that ὄμηροι (ὄμηρα) are mostly spoken of in plural, we may think of ὄμ- as referring to the 'joint function' of a body of hostages, and of the element -ηρο- as more directly corresponding to the idea of a σύμβολον. A group of ὄμηροι may have been conceived of as 'jointly fitting' into an arrangement — as pledges who 'mutually and jointly (ὄμ-, with special reference to the active part played by human pledges) 'fit in' (-ηρο-) with both parties when claims as to power and dependence are put forward. More probably, however, since hostages are normally dignitaries or family members of dignitaries, the ὄμηροι could be thought of as 'co-operating' with the winning party (indirectly of course, since there is a great difference between collaborators and hostages), implying a (perhaps secondary) association with such 'co-operative' ὄμηροι as will be discussed below. The precise connotations of this word cannot be determined, but I believe the rise of the meaning "hostage" should be looked for somewhere in this direction.²⁵ In any case, whatever be

²⁵ In Il. 1,136 the phrase ἄρσαντες (τὸ γ' ὄμ.) κατὰ θυμόν is used in negotiations for an agreement; cf. Od. 4,777; 10,553 and the (post-Homeric) use of ἄρμενος in the abstract sense of 'agreeable'. Also the noun ἐγγύη "pledge", originally 'what is put in one's hand', illustrates the idea of 'fitting' somewhere a token of an agreement, actual or potential. Note further the explanation of ὄμηρε(ν)εῖν as συμβολῆσαι (συμβαλεῖν = luid) in the references to the stories about Homer volunteering as a hostage, above (4).

the exact truth, hostages are persons who are involved with the interests of both parties in a conflict.

Now, what about the element $\delta\mu(o)$ -? Compounds with $\delta\mu o$ - as their first element are very common and productive in poetry, and probably were so in living speech in the archaic age. The great majority are so-called bahuvrihis with a nominal second element ($\delta\mu\tilde{\eta}\lambda\iota\xi$, $\delta\mu\acute{o}\phi\rho\omega\nu$, $\delta\mu\acute{o}\psi\eta\phi\omicron\varsigma$, etc.). The derivatives of verbal stems have often a 'passive' sense, as Birt pointed out (1932.376, e.g. $\delta\mu\acute{o}\tau\rho\omicron\phi\omicron\varsigma$, $\delta\mu\acute{o}\sigma\tau\omicron\lambda\omicron\varsigma$), but 'active' senses also occur (as in the Pythagorean term $\delta\mu\acute{\alpha}\kappa\omicron\upsilon\iota$ "jointly listening pupils"). What is typical of the $\delta\mu o$ - compounds, however, is not the active or passive notion of their second element, but the fact that $\delta\mu o$ - normally implies 'together with (somebody)', 'jointly', 'co-'. They coordinate two or several subjects (normally persons). They normally denote that somebody shares a function or quality with somebody else.²⁶ The element $\delta\mu o$ - is by no means a synonym of $\sigma\upsilon\nu$ -. As a 'hostage', a $\delta\mu\eta\rho\omicron\varsigma$ is acting 'jointly' with some other person or party. Thus $\delta\mu\eta\rho\omicron\varsigma$ cannot possibly mean just "angefügt" (Birt) or "fitting" or "fitted together". Nor does the old idea of seing in Homer a 'Composer' of epic poetry correspond to the linguistic facts. The first element of $\delta\mu\eta\rho\omicron\varsigma$ rather suggests a 'Joint Composer'!

Then there are the two highly interesting early cases of the verb $\delta\mu\eta\rho\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ (4). Though often commented upon, their full implications have not to my mind been correctly understood.

The general context of Od. 16,468 runs as follows: Telemachus, returning to Ithaca, has left the ship before it reached the town and walked to the hut of Eumaeus (end of Song 15) where he meets his father. Before the $\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\gamma\nu\acute{\omega}\rho\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$ scene he sends away Eumaeus to inform Penelope that her son has safely returned (16,130). His friends also, as soon as their ship has landed in the harbour, send a $\kappa\tilde{\eta}\rho\upsilon\xi$ to the palace to comfort Penelope (328). Then we are told that the two messengers $\sigma\upsilon\nu\alpha\nu\tau\acute{\eta}\tau\eta\nu \dots \tau\tilde{\eta}\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\upsilon\tau\tilde{\eta}\varsigma \acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\kappa' \acute{\alpha}\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\iota\eta\varsigma$ at the palace (333f.), but whereas the $\kappa\tilde{\eta}\rho\upsilon\xi$ proclaimed his message in public, Eumaeus gave Penelope a private record of all that he knew, and returned instantly (338—341). Back in his hut,

²⁶ Adducing $\delta\mu\omicron\upsilon$ "together", "in the same place", as the supposed first element of compounds (e.g. Hsch. s.v. $\delta\mu\eta\rho\omicron\varsigma$, followed by Welcker) would not do.

he is asked by Telemachus about the doings of the suitors. He answers that he does not know very much because he was in such a hurry: τάχιστα με θυμὸς ἀνώγει | ἀγγελίην εἰπόντα πάλιν δεῦρ' ἀπονέεσθαι. | ὠμήρησε δέ μοι παρ' ἑταίρων ἄγγελος ὠκύς, | κῆρυξ, ὃς δὴ πρῶτος ἔπος σῆ μητρὶ ἔειπεν (466—469). But, he adds, he has reason to believe that all the suitors are back in town. — As Deroy (1972.433) and others have rightly observed, the commonly accepted translation of ὠμήρησε, "met", is hardly appropriate. This sense is conveyed by συναντήτην at 332. At 468, however, the idea appears to be a somewhat annoyed 'did the same thing as I (μοι) was supposed to do, before I had a chance (πρῶτος)'. Why did the poet (or the singer) not use ὠμάρησε, "acted together"?²⁷ Perhaps because ὀμηρεῖν meant to him 'reciting the same (important and beautiful) message' (note ἔπος 469), and because he wanted the slightly comical figure of Eumaeus to use, in his agitated state, a high-toned word not strictly to the point.

This idea of 'telling the same story', 'proclaiming the same truth', may also be present in the other early instance of ὀμηρέω. In the Theogony, after the invocatory prooimion and the initiation passage, Hesiod goes on to describe the song of the Muses: ταὶ Διὶ πατρὶ | ὕμνεῦσαι τέρπουσι μέγαν νόον ἐντὸς Ὀλύμπου, | εἰρεῦσαι τὰ τ' ἔόντα τὰ τ' ἔσόμενα πρὸ τ' ἔόντα, | φωνῆ ὀμηρεῦσαι· τῶν δ' ἀκάματος ῥέει ἀυδὴ (36—39). Note the asyndetic coupling of the three weighty participles (all with 'Ionic' -εῦ- for -έου-), ὕμνεῦσαι, εἰρεῦσαι, and ὀμηρεῦσαι. The first refers to the general character of the Muses' song, the second to its contents, and the third apparently to the manner of performance. Here ὀμηρέω is often translated "agreeing". West (ad l.) suggests "with voices in tune" and thinks that the adjective ὀμήρης (attested in Nicander, see (5)) may have been used in early Greek in the meaning 'fitted together in the musical sense' (cf. ἄρμονία, the interesting συνάρησεν ἀοιδὴ H.Hom.Ap. 1,164,²⁸ and ἐπέων ... τέκτονες οἷα σοφοί | ἄρμοσαν Pind. Pyth. 3,113f.). I am not so sure there exists sufficiently early evidence of the root αῠ- referring specifically to music (outside Pythagoreanism, perhaps); the supposedly

²⁷ Being a much more common word, ὀμαρτέω would probably have left a trace in the text tradition if it had been used in this passage.

²⁸ See below; cf. also Lex.d.frühgr.Epos I, s. 1181.

early *ὁμήρης* would, at any rate, rather refer to persons and would mean 'fitting jointly' (because of *ὁμ-*); and the deriving of a verb in *-έω* from a sigmatic stem is not really recommendable since an *-ο-* stem would be the normal basis.²⁹ Why not take *ὀμηρέω* in the sense of "agreeing in speech", "using the same words", with *φωνῆ* extending the agreement to the manner of the performance, i.e. the singing? As in the Homeric passage, however, the verb is likely to convey a special point since *ὀμαρτέω* is not used. I suggest this point is the idea of 'proclaiming the same truth'.

Still more important in this connection is the apparently never emphasized fact that *ὀμηρέω* is a denominative formation, and that it derives from a noun (*ὀμηρος* rather than *ὁμήρης*, see above) that had a special, otherwise not attested sense. We may infer, tentatively, that there existed persons called *ὀμηροί* who were not only 'co-operators' but were 'agreeing in words', 'telling the same story'.

Before following further the drift of this argument, it may be noted that the verb *ὀμηρέω* was never a common word. When its proper sense was later forgotten, early instances such as the two which have been preserved were perhaps wrongly interpreted as *ἀκολουθέω* (4). Probably the seemingly cognate and well-known *ὀμαρτέω* (7) influenced such interpretations.

We have no direct evidence of a noun **ὀμαρτος* (or *-τός*) from which this *ὀμαρτέω* derived, but the adverb *ὀμαρτή* represents the same stem. If it was connected with the root of *ἀραρίσκω*, the noun or adjective **ὀμαρτος* may have had the rather 'passive' sense of "jointly fitted" (e.g. in the same company). This would help to explain the formal differentiation between *ὀμηρος* and **ὀμαρτος*. And the words listed under (5) and (6) suggest that early Greek employed still other combinations of *ὁμ(ο)-* and the root *-αρ-*.

After these considerations of the linguistic evidence we may return to the Homeric question.

It seems reasonable now to disregard the vague and theoretical possibility that somebody actually could have been given the name 'Hostage' (and

²⁹ The *δυσμενέων* type would of course offer a parallel, but the normal basis is *-ο-*, as in *οἰνοχρέω* from *οἰνοχόος*; cf. Schwyzer *Gr.Gr.* I, 724, 726.

'The Blind One' seems practically out of the question). However, the possibility must be faced that Homer's name is a proper name based on a non-attested use of the noun ὄμηρος. What about 'Co-operator'?

The meaning 'co-operator' is indeed possible, and a person could presumably be given such a name. It would seem to suit a son of a craftsman in particular. If this is so, the two early instances of ὄμηρέω would perhaps contain a play on the proper name of Homer, and this would explain the association with oral communication in particular. Presumably some believers in the personality and individuality of one Homer would be inclined to accept this line of thought.

If, on the other hand, one is not altogether averse to the idea of 'collective achievement' as explaining the rise of Homeric epics, one may find it tempting to proceed in the following manner. We may imagine a body of singers called, or calling themselves, ὄμηροι meaning 'Co-operators (in the art of singing epics)', 'Joint composers (of epics)', or perhaps 'Those who perform (the same epics) in the same manner', and hence 'Those who proclaim the same truth (about the past)'. In this word the element ὄμ- may refer to the joint effort of singers and/or to the similar result, i.e. the reproducing of a traditional song with a specifically difficult and complex structure. I would prefer to imagine that both aspects are in some way relevant. The element -ηρ-, then, refers to the 'composing' as such. We may recall the passage in the Homeric Hymn to the Delian Apollo, 163f., where the maiden chorus of Delos is said to be able to imitate all kinds of human speech and dance (φωνὰς καὶ κρεμβαλιαστύν)· οὕτω σφιν καλὴ συνάρησεν ἀοιδή. We also recall the passage in Pindar's Third Pythian, referred to by West (above), which likewise implies a 'putting together' of words (rather than music, in fact). And the same idea of ἀραρίσκειν is also present in the term ῥαψῳδός where ῥάπτειν apparently refers to the 'stitching together' of ἔπη (and epic formulae), and not to a 'combining of songs' as has been sometimes believed.³⁰

The term ῥαψῳδός is not found in extant texts before Herodotus, but it is alluded to in a famous and notoriously problematic fragment of (Ps.-)Hesiod, 357 Merkelbach-West, which has some further bearing on

³⁰ See the discussion of the problem by H. Patzer, *Hermes* 80, 1952, 314—325.

the present theme. The fragment is quoted from Philochorus (328 F 212 Jacoby) by the scholiast to Pind. Nem. 2,1 who is mainly concerned with the Ὀμηρίδαι. The three verses quoted read as follows:

ἐν Δήλῳ τότε πρῶτον ἐγὼ καὶ Ὀμηρος ἀοιδοῖ
μέλομεν, ἐν νεαροῖς ὕμνοις ῥάφαντες ἀοιδήν,
Φοῖβον Ἀπόλλωνα χρυσάορον, ὃν τέκε Λητώ.

Obviously this has something to do with the Homeric Hymn to Apollo where the poet, the anonymous τυφλὸς ἀνὴρ (172) from Chios expresses his hope that he will always be remembered as ἀνὴρ ἥδιστος ἀοιδῶν (169) by the maidens of Delos (whose song καλὴ συνάρησεν, 164). The blind man has sometimes since antiquity been identified with Homer (or it is thought that the poet hoped to be identified with him),³¹ though most scholars find such an identification impossible. At any rate it is customary to assume that the Hesiodic fragment 357 (or the piece of poem from which it derives) was fabricated in order to connect Hesiod with the Delian contests (and perhaps to father on him the Hymn to the Pythian Apollo which follows after the Delian hymn in the manuscript tradition). This would, it is thought, imply a secondary extension of the well-known legend of the contest of Homer and Hesiod at Chalcis.³² The historical core consists of Hesiod's victory at Chalcis. Hesiod, *Erga* 657, mentions this but does not mention his competitors; from the classical period (or possibly the late 6th century) onwards there occur references to a story implying that this contest was a duel between Homer and Hesiod; and later (Dio Chrysost. Or. 2,11) the tripod which Hesiod received as a prize (*Erga*, l.c.) was said to have been provided with the inscription

Ἡσίοδος Μούσαις Ἐλικωνίσι τόνδ' ἀνέθηκεν
ὕμνῳ νικήσας ἐν Χαλκίδι θεῖον Ὀμηρον

³¹ The first explicit identification occurs in Simonides (ap. Stob. 4,34,28, fr. 8 West, sometimes and probably wrongly taken for Semonides of Amorgus); cf. the Certamen story (towards the end, 315ff. Allen). In modern times Wade-Gery among others (*The poet of the Iliad*, 1952, 21) has accepted the identification. Wilamowitz' assumption (*Die Ilias und Homer* 368) that the original text contained the name of the poet has not met with much approval.

³² For the texts relating to the Certamen story, see in addition to Allen's edition of Homer (Vol. V p. 218ff.), *Legende von Homer*, übers. u. erl. v. W. Schade-waldt, 1959. Cf. also n. 36.

(alluding to the wording of the *Erga* passage). In the *Erga* Hesiod adds that crossing the Euripus (from Boeotia to Chalcis) was the only sea voyage he ever made (660, cf. 650), and we have reason to believe him. It hardly had occurred to him to go to Delos.

The words ῥάψαντες ἀοιδήν of the fragment seem to refer to the technical process of composing epic hexameter. But the task (here represented by the preposition ἐν) now was to produce νεαροὶ ὕμνοι: indeed, the 'Homeric' hymn type can be regarded as an innovation, and the Hesiodean school quite naturally was interested in having a share in it.³³ Linguistically the whole fragment is clumsy, partly because it is loaded with too much information. The Attic correptio in the first verse is a minor problem, since τὸ πρῶτον can be read. But there is one point that sounds distinctly strange to my ears: ἐγὼ καὶ "Ομηρος ἀοιδοὶ μέλομεν, "I and Homer, as singers, sang...". I wonder whether any rhapsode, however mediocre, would have produced such a piece of appositional syntax.³⁴

Perhaps we should emend this into ἐγὼ καὶ ὄμηροι ἀοιδοὶ μέλομεν, "I and the Homeric singers sang".³⁵ The ὄμηροι would be the 'joint singers', the 'guild' who followed the 'Homeric tradition', i.e. the 'establishment' of Ionian epic singers. It is to be noted that neither Hesiod in *Erga*, nor the poet of the Hymn to Apollo, imply that the contest in question comprised only two singers. In fact several singers must have normally taken part in such contests. The Hesiodean fragment is certainly post-Hesiodic (first of all because of the reference to Delos), and it is

³³ The fragment might have been inserted after *Erga* 659, with one or two verses preceding it, implying that 'from Chalcis I crossed to Delos'. — Possibly these ambitions of the Hesiodean school occasioned the playful coining of the term ἀρρωδός, meaning ῥάψωδός (Eustathius in *Il.* p. 6,27): cf. Hes. *Theog.* 23, 26.

³⁴ E.g. Schwyzer *Gr.Gr.* II, 613ff. gives nothing of the kind. The notorious λυκαιμία in Alcaeus fr. 130,25 LP is far from clear. The normal way of expressing "being", "acting as", "in the position of" would of course be using ὡς or a participle or both; note the fact that Greek does not use absolute constructions (such as the genitive absolute) with nouns alone.

³⁵ Another solution would be ὄμηρος ἀοιδός, referring to the blind man from Chios, but this is linguistically less satisfactory, I think. Reading ὁ πηρὸς ἀοιδός, with reference both to the Thamyras story, *Il.* 2,599, and to the Chian rhapsode, would probably be too fanciful.

probably (though not necessarily) later than the Homeric Hymn; but, if Ὀμηροὶ is read, it is earlier than the rise of the legends about the one θεῖος Ὀμηρος, author of the Iliad, etc., who once met the unknown shepherd from Ascra — and was beaten by him. The Certamen story cannot reasonably be traced further back in time than to the late 6th century B.C.³⁶ I find it important to note that the fragment does not suggest a duel at all: it only intimates that Hesiod, too, has learnt to compose hymns of the 'Delian type'.

Very similarly, Pindar Nem. 2,1—2 employs Ὀμηρίδαι ... αἰδοί in the general sense of 'reciters of Homeric epics' whose ῥαπτὰ ἔπη begin with a προοίμιον (a 'hymn') — i.e. rhapsodes of the same category as the blind man from Chios. The parallel is noteworthy, whether Pindar has the Hesiodean fragment in mind or not.

Pindar does not seem to imply that the Homeridae are descendants of Homer. The well-informed scholion to this passage, like most later discussions of the term, takes it for granted that Ὀμηρίδαι originally referred to a clan who considered Homer as their ancestor, and that the general use is secondary. Sometimes, however, it has been argued — most recently by Durante³⁷ — that the term could have denoted from the beginning some kind of membership of a 'guild'. I am not so sure about this. Yet I think the term is very likely to refer to a mythical ancestor rather than to a historical one. The ancient sources tend to date Homer about 1000 B.C. (cf. e.g. Ps.-Hdt. V.Hom. 38, Philostr. Heroic. 18,2). If the Chian Homeridae of about 500 B.C. had been the real descendants of a historical person who had lived only six or seven generations before (to choose Wilamowitz' dating), they would presumably have been able to produce pedigrees which could have soon put an end to the ever more flourishing and conflicting legends about the life and home-city of Homer. The case of the Homeridae is not very different from, say, the Ἀσκληπιάδαι, or from Socrates as the 'descendant' of Daedalus (Plat.

³⁶ For references to the discussion, see F. Jacoby, *Hermes* 68, 1933, 1—50, A. Lesky, *RE Suppl.* XI, 1967, 688f.

³⁷ Cf. also Jacoby (above, n. 36) p. 35 with references. The traditional opposite view has been forcibly argued by Allen (see above, n. 3). Wilamowitz, *Die Ilias und Homer* 365f., is remarkably vague on this point.

Euthphr. 11bc, Alc.I 121a; for mythical ancestors of craftsmen, cf. also Plat.Lg. XI 920e).

Though I cannot help being in some sympathy with the 'inverted metaphysic' (Allen) which extrapolates a symbolic Homer from the Homeridae, I believe the truth is not as simple as that. We have found some reason for the assumption that rhapsodes of the Ionian schools were called ὄμηροι ἀοιδοί long after the time when the supposed ancestor of the Homeridae lived. Pindar and later authors (e.g. Plat. Ion 530d, Phaedr. 252b) substitute ὄμηροι with Ὀμηρίδαι (ἀοιδοί). We can see traces of two tendencies here.

The double process might be tentatively reconstructed as follows: Singers of a specific category who preserved the oral tradition of complex epic poems such as the (Proto-)Iliad and the (Proto-)Odyssey, were at an early date called ὄμηροι, 'co-operators' or 'members of a traditional guild of epic singers'. In the 8th and 7th centuries, and possibly under the direct influence of the more personal grip of the Hesiodic school, it became more and more common to imagine one great Ὀμηρος of the past, a πρῶτος εὐρετής, and to create legends about him. So a group of ὄμηροι at Chios began to call themselves Ὀμηρίδαι at some time in the course of the 6th century. There may have been several reasons for this. One was the growing popularity of the Homeric epics. Another reason, at any rate, was the ever more manifest tendency to individualization reflected throughout cultural life in Greece: a need was felt for a personal Homer, the heros of epics, and he had to be provided with biographical data. A third reason may have been the claims of various cities to have a share in these legends — possibly an indication, as such, of the originally generic sense of the term ὄμηρος. Still another reason can perhaps be seen in the change in methods of warfare. It had become more common to take hostages in war (the Homeric epics apparently are not familiar with this practice), and once the term ὄμηρος was established in this sense in ordinary language, calling rhapsodes ὄμηροι was felt to be slightly strange or ridiculous. The application of the word to rhapsodes disappeared from living speech and was forgotten. All singers of the 'Homeric' schools now called themselves Ὀμηρίδαι (witness Pindar). And after the term ὄμηροι had been replaced by Ὀμηρίδαι, the identity of the one θεῖος Ὀμηρος, the 'ancestor' of the Homeridae, became even more

emphasized. Mentions of rhapsodic ὄμηροι which perchance occurred in old texts were given a new interpretation or changed (as in the Ps.-Hesiodian fragment; cf. below, n. 39).

This double tendency, the individualization of one 'Homer', and the replacing of the generic term with the 'Homeridae', is not yet reflected in the Delian hymn. Here the poet makes just one move towards individualization. By introducing himself anonymously he in fact advertises not only himself but his guild in Chios; but he does not give any information about Homer or the Homeridae, nor indeed does he assume the role of Homer, as was believed later. His silence about Homer is illuminating, I think. It is possible that Callinus took the next step by mentioning Homer as the author of the Thebais, but we do not know exactly what he said; nor can we be sure about Theagenes. But to Xenophanes and Simonides, as to Pindar (Pyth. 4,277, Nem. 7,21, etc.), some 150 years after Callinus, Homer was an individual poet.

Some further inferences can perhaps be drawn from what the poet of the Odyssey tells us about the two ἐρίηροι ἄοιδοί, Phemius and Demodocus. The epithet ἐρίηρος, which is normally coupled with ἑταῖροι, is used three times with ἄοιδός (Od. 1,346; 8,62. 471; it probably means "much-pleasing" in this formula). I do not find it unthinkable that it contributed to the coining of, or at least alludes to, the term ὄμηροι ἄοιδοί, though it is not etymologically cognate with the latter. Phemius and Demodocus, however, are no ὄμηροι. Both have a large repertoire, but their best songs are new to the listeners or concern recent events (1,351f.; 8,73. 489ff.). Both are θεῖοι (note 8,43; 23,133), and they have received their song (οἴμη 8,74. 481; 22,347) as a precious gift from the Muse or Apollo (note 8,44. 488f. 498, and 22,347f. where the curious αὐτοδίδακτος seems to imply this); Demodocus (like Thamyris in Il. 2,599; cf. Orpheus) was even blinded by the Muse (8,63f.). They belong to the heroic past (note ἦρω Δημοδόκω 8,483, with a pun on ὄμηρος?). Obviously the poet has no intention of identifying himself with Phemius or Demodocus, although he cannot totally disregard himself when mentioning the fame and social esteem of good singers (note 1,325; 8,83. 479ff. 497f.; cf. the Chian singer). His attitude to the Trojan War is revealing. This was, in the perspective of the Odyssey, a recent event which Phemius and Demodocus were acquainted with because of their exceptional poetic gift

(cf. 1,326, 8,487ff.). In particular the quarrel of Odysseus and Achilles was famous at that time (τότ' ἄρα 8,74; in fact this quarrel was the πῆματος ἀρχή, 81); perhaps we are to understand that the Iliad had not yet taken shape. Yet the poet does not seem to doubt the existence of the Trojan legends, as a general thematic cycle, already in the mythical past with which he is concerned. This becomes particularly clear when he introduces the interesting term κόσμος (8,492, cf. 489) which here means something like 'well-arranged ready theme' or 'story complex'. Upon Odysseus' request Demodocus goes on singing the κόσμος of the Wooden Horse 'beginning at the point' (ἔνθεν ἔλών 500) when Agamemnon and his men pretend to be sailing away from Troy. Here we get a sudden glimpse of the world of Homer the ὄμηρος.

So we have come back to a position not really new, but somewhat more precise than the usual one: Homer's name is likely to have meant 'Co-operator'.

The additional, more tentative theory revived here of the ὄμηροι as 'co-operative singers' — I can well imagine how shocking many colleagues will find this idea — does in fact tell less of the genesis of the Homeric poems than of the name of Homer. It does not exclude the existence of one or (rather) several remarkable poets who at different stages left their mark on the Iliad and the Odyssey as we have them. By emphasizing the aspects of 'tradition' and 'collective achievement', this theory allows for, say, a μῆνις poem by a very early Homer, as well as for the cultural outlook and refined compositional technique of a rather late Homer of the Odyssey. And in any case it suggests the existence at a comparatively early date of a belief that behind this 'Homeric' tradition there lay a remarkable achievement, an original innovation, which was worth being 'co-operative' about. Calling this innovatory genius 'Homer' seems after all quite appropriate. I am sure, however, that he should not be given as late a date as is usual today.

When applying the theory of oral composition and oral tradition — a theory obviously and definitely unavoidable today — to the extensive and highly refined Greek epics, it is also unavoidable, I think, to assume the existence of one and later several bodies of singers, 'guilds', who were able to preserve and to control the tradition, to keep it alive for all

the different occasions at which performances were given, and sometimes to improve on it. Here we have the joint effort to which the term ὄμηροι may have referred originally.³⁸ 'Self-taught' singers such as Phemius or Hesiod lacked this attachment, and they had to rely exclusively on the Muses for their inspiration. Is the term αὐτοδίδακτος (Od. 22,347) intended as a deliberate contrast to the term ὄμηρος?

The Homeric epics were no ἱεροὶ λόγοι. Variations and changes were quite possible to make in the story (and not only in the formulation of the text), and were certainly expected. Great singers may have made great improvements on the traditional themes and the traditional formulations, and their innovations were of course to a varying extent imitated by other members of the same or a rival 'guild'. However, even geniuses do not produce perfect pieces of art (whatever we think 'perfection' to be). After each great Homer there came several minor Homers,³⁹ some of whom may yet have improved considerably on their predecessors' work.

And this is the very heart of the Homeric question which the onomastic problems do not really affect.

³⁸ A somewhat similar view of the Homeric epics as a joint achievement of several brilliant poets was argued by E. Bickel in his rather eccentric book *Homer, Die Lösung der homerischen Frage*, 1949. — As to the term ὄμηροι cf. again Pythag. ὁμάκοι. On the other hand it is hardly possible to see in it a reference to contests of (two or more) singers, or to a 'pair of singers' (as the pair of *laulaja* and *puoltaja* who traditionally performed Finnish folk songs). Nor is the religious aspect so prominent in Homeric poetry as to suggest that the term could refer to a 'singing together with the Muses' (cf. *Thamyris and Demodocus* again, and *Musaeus*); on the contrary the Homeric poets were real ποιηταί, proud of their achievement however anonymous they were (witness the *Blind man from Chios*).

³⁹ After all the Anon.V.Hes. p. 223. Allen is not so wrong in stating "Ὀμηροὶ γὰρ πολλοὶ γεγόνασιν."