INTRODUCTION

1. HOMER, THE HOMERIC EPICS, AND LITERARY INTERPRETATION

(a) Homer

The life and times of the poet who created the Homeric epics are shrouded in mystery, as they have been since antiquity. He himself is partly to blame for this, in that he never mentions his name or gives any other personal information.The name Homer at some point in the seventh or sixth century BC came to be connected to the poems that are called *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (the titles are found for the first time we know of in Herodotus *Histories* 2.116), and more than one place in Ionia, most prominently Smyrna and Chios, claimed Homer as its native son. He was supposed to have lived at any time between the fall of Troy (traditionally placed in the twelfth century BC) and the seventh century. Some *Lives of Homer* are known from Roman imperial times, but they are worthless as historical sources because they are largely composed out of elements taken from the poems themselves (the boy Homer is taught by Phemius, a name suspiciously similar to that of the singer in Odysseus' palace, and travels together with someone called Mentes, recalling Odysseus' old friend and advisor of Telemachus, etc.).[1] More than once it has even been suggested that Homer never existed; a recent proponent of this view argues that he was the creation of a group of professional performers called 'the descendants of Homer (*Homeridai*)', who thus endowed themselves with a mythical forefather. The name Homer, not common in Greek, would be their reinterpretation of the designation ὁμηρίδαι, which originally referred to professionals singing at a *ὅμαρος, 'assembly of the people'.[2] Conversely, some think there may have been two 'Homers', one composing the *Iliad*, the other the *Odyssey*.[3]

Modern scholarship concurs with antiquity in placing Homer in Ionia, on account of the predominance of Ionian forms in his language;[4] however, his dates remain contested. Can archaeology perhaps be of help? Here we must distinguish between the world created by Homer in his poems and the world in which Homer himself lived. As for the first, modern opinions vary between considering the setting of the Homeric epics by and large Mycenaean (1600–1200 BC), 'dark age' (1200–900 BC), eighth- or early seventh-century, or an amalgam. The dating of Homer's own world would seem to be revealed by an awareness of

[1] For these biographies see Latacz (1996) 24–30; in general for ancient views on Homer see Graziosi (2002).
[2] West (1999). [3] For a summary of the discussion see e.g. Garvie (1994) 2–3.
[4] One of the few exceptions is West (1988) 166–72, who argues for Euboea, an island opposite the east coast of Attica and Boeotia, as the place of origin of the Homeric epics.

some particular material circumstances not found before the later eighth or early seventh century, including temples, cult statues, and a geography that includes the Black Sea and Sicily.[5] When we turn, finally, to linguistic criteria, the picture again is highly complicated, and features have been differently evaluated.[6] The conclusion must be fairly vague: Homer seems to have lived somewhere between 800 and 700 BC.

(b) The Homeric epics

More consensus than on the date of Homer seems to have been reached on the oral background of his poems. The important figures here are the Americans Milman Parry and Albert Lord. Parry wrote a dissertation in Paris in 1928 in which he argued that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were the product of a long tradition of oral-formulaic poetry. Both ideas, that the Homeric epics were oral and that they for a large part consisted of formulas, recurrent standard phrases employed at the same position in the verse ('swift-footed Achilles'), had been ventured before, but Parry laid bare the system for the first time in great detail. Moreover he went to Yugoslavia to look for comparative material among the still existing oral traditions there, an approach continued by his pupil Lord after his premature death.[7]

Parry's theory of the oral-formulaic nature of Homeric composition put an end to a debate that had divided Homerists ever since Friedrich August Wolf's publication of his *Prolegomena ad Homerum* in 1795.[8] In this treatise the German scholar argued that the poems were put together by a compiler living long after Homer, who himself had been a singer of short epic songs. Before Wolf the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) had already argued that the epics were the products not of an individual poet but rather of an entire people, while the 1769 *Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer* by the British traveller and politician Robert Wood claimed that Homer had been illiterate and the epics had been transmitted orally. Wolf's ideas were worked out by the so-called Analysts, who broke each of the poems up into separate layers and attributed older ones to Homer himself and younger ones to later singers or editors. They used linguistic, historical-archaeological, and also aesthetic criteria to distinguish between different poets. Thus, they pointed to forms deriving from different phases of the Greek language and to incongruities in customs such as cremation

[5] For an overview of the positions in both debates see e.g. Crielaard (1995) or Osborne (2004).
[6] See e.g. Janko (1982), Horrocks (1997), and Ruijgh (1995).
[7] See Parry (1971) and Lord (1960), (1995). A still very readable introduction to the subject is Kirk (1962).
[8] For a translation with introduction see Grafton-Most-Zetzel (1985). For an overview of the debate see e.g. Dodds (1954), Heubeck (1974) 1–130, and Fowler (2004).

versus inhumation. Where aesthetic criteria were concerned, the rule of thumb employed was that good poetry derives from the original poet, bad poetry from a second-rate epigone or redactor. A particularly vexed question concerned the many repeated lines or sets of lines, which already had much occupied critics before them, including the ancient Alexandrian scholar Aristarchus. Attempts were made to determine which repeated lines were original and which were (clumsily) re-used.

Unfortunately, the Analysts could not agree on what was good or bad, and their criticism was often a subjective affair. It was this subjectivism that their opponents, the Unitarians, held against them. They stressed the carefully planned design, consistent artistic quality, and hence essential unity of the poems, which must be the work of one masterly poet. Some Unitarians made lasting contributions to our insight into Homeric artistry.[9] However, often the Unitarian responses to the analytic attacks made use of the same subjective aesthetic arguments: they simply proclaimed beautiful what their opponents had considered bad poetry. Moreover, they were as bothered by repetitions or loosely constructed scenes as the Analysts.

It was this debate between the Analysts and Unitarians which was relegated to the background by the theory of the oral-formulaic composition of the Homeric epics developed by Parry and countless other 'oralist' scholars in his wake. Briefly put, this theory sketches the picture of a singer who, forming part of a long tradition, composed, after long training and some form of premeditation, poems *while performing*. He was able to do so because he could use 'prefabricated' elements, such as the formula and the so called type-scene, a more or less standard combination of narrative elements describing recurrent events like preparing a ship, putting on armour, or receiving a guest.

Parry already suspected that the tradition was ancient, but only the decipherment of Linear B in 1952 enabled scholars to see how old it was: the Homeric epics turned out to preserve expressions current in Mycenaean times, e.g. ἄρουρα (a-ro-u-ra), δέπας (di-pa), φάσγανον (pa-ka-na), ἄναξ (wa-na-ka), etc. Prosodic irregularities likewise could be explained when reconstructing a Mycenaean original (the formula Διΐ μῆτιν ἀτάλαντος, with irregularly long -ι and -ιν, goes back to Διϝεὶ μῆτιν *h*ατάλαντος). Linguistics therefore confirmed what archaeology had already shown for certain objects, places, and customs, i.e. that the Greek epic tradition must reach back at least to that era (and presumably to even older times; see the end of the next section). After the destruction of the palaces around 1100 BC it was transported by migrating Greeks from the Greek mainland, via Aeolia (the north coast of present-day Turkey) to Ionia (the middle and south coast). The contours of this movement can be traced on the basis of the various dialects that together form the Homeric *Kunstsprache* (see 4a).

[9] See e.g. Schadewaldt (1966) and Bassett (1938).

The oral-formulaic theory was able to explain the repetitions and inconsistencies that had so occupied the Analysts and Unitarians. The oral nature of the composition, the singer 'improvising' his song, accounts for the large role played by repetition, while the length of the tradition in combination with the adherence to stock formulas over time explains why old (linguistic, historical, or archaeological) features are found next to late ones. Yet not all problems have been solved, and new ones have arisen. One of the issues not yet settled is the context in which Homer's performance must be situated. Some have wanted to start from the singers depicted in the *Odyssey*, Phemius on Ithaca and Demodocus on Scheria. The latter in particular, the highly esteemed blind singer, has often been taken for Homer's alter ego, albeit an idealised one. If this comparison is valid, we could imagine Homer to be a singer who was based at an aristocratic court, sang epic lays after dinner, and was rewarded by a meal and general esteem. Were the exceptionally long Homeric epics commissioned in the eighth century BC by an Ionian aristocrat who wanted a last, nostalgic depiction of his lifestyle that was about to disappear?[10]

Almost the exact opposite view is that the Homeric epics were composed for one of the Panhellenic festivals that came into existence during the seventh century BC in Ionian places like Delos or Mycale. It was in these new festivals, drawing large audiences from all levels of society, that Homer found the incentive and the occasion to compose not the kind of two-hour lays produced by his predecessors, but long and complex poems.[11] Interestingly enough, this performance setting may likewise be 'illustrated' from the poems themselves, where we see Demodocus sing in the course of athletic games (*Od.* 8.250–369). What does single out the Homeric epics when compared with their fictional counterparts within the texts themselves is their length. More on this will be said in section 2a.

Another question that still is not settled concerns the *exact* origin of the text: how did his performance text become a written text? Did the master himself use writing, did he dictate his poems, did his pupils memorise his texts until they were written down (somewhere between the seventh and the end of the sixth century BC, when the Athenian tyrant Pisistratus instituted the Panathenaic festival where the Homeric epics were recited)? Or should we give up the idea of ever being able to reconstruct Homer's archetype and content ourselves with a multiform text, the final product of a long process of oral *and* textual transmission, attributed to Homer but actually shaped by generations of poets, and not really coming to an end until the classical or perhaps even Hellenistic period? This new 'Homeric question' is – again – a battlefield where scholars cross swords no less fiercely than did the Analysts and Unitarians.[12]

[10] Latacz (1995), (1996) 65–6. [11] Taplin (1992).
[12] See e.g. Jensen (1980) 128–71, Kirk I 10–16, Nagy (1996), Janko (1998), West (2001). For a detailed overview of the debate see Reece (2005).

(c) The literary interpretation of an oral text

Another new problem was that, although the large body of work done since 1928 on formulaic aspects of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* had much increased understanding of these works qua oral compositions, it seemed to have lessened appreciation of Homer's artistry; could one still speak of individual and conscious artistic intent? Parry's main object of investigation was the noun-epithet formula, 'swift-footed Achilles', 'much-enduring Odysseus', and the like. The choice between epithets, he argued, is determined by metrical factors. As a rule, there is one noun-epithet combination for each case of a name or noun, for each metrical slot in the verse and metrical condition. Thus for the name of Odysseus in the nominative we have six different formulas, for four different slots: διογενὴς Ὀδυσσεύς, πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς, πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς (or if a preceding syllable needed to be long: πτολίπορθος Ὀδυσσεύς), ἐσθλὸς Ὀδυσσεύς (or if a preceding syllable needed to be long: δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς). For Parry this implied that literary critics should not attach a specific, contextually determined significance to the epithet. Later critics, generalising this claim, decreed that the Homeric poems *as a whole* could no longer be interpreted according to normal literary standards but required a new oral poetics.

Unfortunately, such an oral poetics was not available. The only thing scholars could come up with was a wealth of negative prescriptions: there was a ban not only on contextually significant epithets but also on long-range cross-references, intentional repetition of lines and scenes, and the concept of an overarching structure. An oral poet could only think some lines ahead, an oral audience only remember some lines before. Thus, at the height of Parryism with its flux of technical studies, a sharp drop in literary studies was discernible.

Only gradually were strategies developed to find a way back to literary appreciation of the Homeric epics. One consists of largely ignoring the oral-formulaic background of the epics.[13] Another, very fruitful and widespread, demonstrates Homer's individual genius precisely in the subtle and effective use he makes of the traditional, oral style: it sees Homer as master, not slave of his tradition.[14] Yet another consists of looking at the texts as narratives: thinking in terms of a narrator telling a story to narratees (rather than a poet of flesh and blood speaking to an audience) makes the distinction between an oral or a written genesis less pertinent and opens the way to a full appreciation of Homer's artistry.[15] More will be said about this narrator and his narratees in section 3a.

Two other actual currents in Homeric literary interpretation deserve to be mentioned. The first is neo-analysis, which seeks to trace back elements in the

[13] An eloquent and influential proponent is Griffin (1980).

[14] The list of scholars who have adopted this approach is too long to be given here but see e.g. Edwards (1980), (1987), Martin (1989), and Taplin (1992).

[15] E.g. de Jong (2004), (2001), Richardson (1990), Scodel (2002), and Grethlein (2006) 160–310.

Homeric epics to other, earlier, putative poems within the oral tradition (for instance an *Aethiopis*, featuring the Ethiopian king Memnon, who comes to Troy as ally of the Trojans, kills Antilochus, close companion of Achilles, and is then killed himself by Achilles). Evidence for these poems is extracted and extrapolated mainly from the so-called Epic Cycle (a group of originally independent hexametric poems by different authors dealing with episodes of the Trojan war and its aftermath, which is known to us only in the form of a few fragments and summaries by a later scholar named Proclus) and painted images from pottery.[16] The poems of the Epic Cycle have traditionally been seen as post-Homeric, filling in the gaps left by the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Recently it has been argued that they may have developed *at the same time* as the Homeric poems, the Homeric and Cyclic traditions mutually influencing each other.[17] Though much must remain speculation in this field, neo-analysis has made clear that Homer was not only working in an *old* tradition (Parry's point) but also in a *broad* tradition, and that his audience would have been familiar with other versions and episodes.

Another important factor to bear in mind when interpreting the Homeric epics is that of their oriental and Indo-European 'roots'. The Greek epic tradition to which Homer belongs was certainly considerably influenced by poetic traditions from the East or, to put it more accurately, formed part of a common Mediterranean literary culture.[18] Shared features include not only motifs, such as the descent into the underworld or the loss of a dear comrade (both also encountered in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*), but also matters of literary technique, such as the epithet or comparison. Before starting to interact with eastern traditions Greek language and culture had formed part of an Indo-European world, including its poetic traditions, as 'Indo-European' formulas like ἱερὸν μένος or κλέος ἄφθιτον witness.[19] This insight only increases the fascination of the Homeric epics: although they are traditionally seen as the first work of Western literature, they must now be understood to encapsulate centuries of Eastern and Indo-European story-telling.

2. BOOK 22 AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE *ILIAD*

(a) Length and pace

One of the hallmarks of the Homeric epics, which probably sets them apart from other epic texts (and certainly from their fictional counterparts, the songs of Demodocus in *Odyssey* 8), is their length and monumental scale. The *Iliad* counts some 15,700 lines, which take up twenty-five hours to perform, the *Odyssey* 12,000. The length is the result of a leisured style of narration: much of the story is told scenically, with the narrator meticulously recording all actions of his heroes and

[16] See e.g. Kullmann (1984), Danek (1998), and West (2003).
[17] Burgess (2001) and (2009).
[18] See e.g. Burkert (1992), West (1997), and Haubold (2002).
[19] See West (2007).

heroines (including such mundane and recurrent ones as dressing or eating) and quoting many of their speeches (in the *Iliad* no less than 45 per cent of the text is taken up by direct speech). Only at times, in the *Iliad* mainly at the beginning and end, does the Homeric narrator accelerate: the nine days of the plague wreaking havoc in the Greek camp are presented in one line (1.53), as are the nine days of lamentation for Hector (24.784). In between, four days packed with dramatic events take centre stage. Indeed, at moments of high tension the narrator may even further decrease his tempo. A famous example is found at the moment when Andromache faints at the sight of Hector dragged lifeless behind Achilles' chariot and the narrator describes in detail her headdress and recalls the glitter of her wedding (22.468–72).

Despite the length of his story the Homeric narrator has managed to give it a tight structure and build up tension, in short to 'enthral' his narratees, much as Odysseus does with his Phaeacian listeners (*Od.* 13.2). The repetition of words, the recurrence of themes and motifs, the parallelism of scenes, and prolepses (anticipations) of events to come or analepses (flashbacks) of events already told are important means of connecting episodes.[20] At the same time, he manages to include the Trojan War as a whole through recollections and anticipations of characters and through scenes which mirror events which must have taken place before and after the *Iliad*: the Catalogue of Ships recalls the departure from Aulis; the Teichoskopia evokes the beginning of the war; the duel between Paris and Menelaus calls to mind the origin of the Trojan war; Hector prophesies Achilles' death; Priam and Andromache foresee the fall of Troy.

Book 22 arguably is the climax of this whole structure, recounting the event to which much of the *Iliad* has been building up: the confrontation between Hector and Achilles, which brings both the revenge for Patroclus (which Achilles had been seeking from book 18 onwards) and the death of Hector (which Andromache had already feared in book 6). At the same time, the death of Achilles himself and the fall of Troy loom large in this book. Thus, although the *Iliad*, famously, covers only a segment of the Trojan War, book 22 is at the heart of both poem and war.

(b) The plot of the Iliad*: Zeus's will and Achilles' anger*[21]

The narrator announces as the subject of his song the anger (*mēnis*) of Achilles, which will lead to the death of many Greeks and Trojans, notably Patroclus and Hector, though their names are not mentioned. Book 1 recounts the origin of this anger: Agamemnon's refusal to give back the captive Chryseïs to her father

[20] For overviews of prolepses and analepses in the *Iliad* see Duckworth (1933) and Reichel (1994).

[21] On the plot see e.g. Schadewaldt (1966), Owen (1947), Mueller (1984) 28–76, and Latacz (1996) 71–133.

Chryses, the priest of Apollo; the plague sent by the god as punishment; and the quarrel between Achilles, who urges Agamemnon to heed the seer Calchas' interpretation of the plague and give back Chryseïs, and Agamemnon, who demands to be given another slave girl and takes Achilles' own captive Briseïs. A furious Achilles resigns from the war and asks his mother Thetis to implore Zeus temporarily to help the Trojans. Reluctantly Zeus accepts Thetis' request and from that point on Achilles' mortal anger has become part of Zeus's divine will (*Dios boulē*). The exact content of the god's plan is not revealed right away: its contours become clear only gradually, probably because the narrator wants to disclose it step by step to his narratees rather than because Zeus devises it slowly. Although not completely informed from the beginning, these narratees of course know more than the mortal characters. At this stage Zeus's plan consists of supporting the Trojans until the Greeks honour Achilles again (1.509–10).

Book 2 sees the start of the execution of his plan: Zeus manages to rouse the Greeks into action via a deceitful Dream. In typical Homeric manner the plot is almost immediately sidetracked (an instance of misdirection),[22] however, in that a duel between Paris and Menelaus threatens to end the war and hence abort Zeus's plan (book 3). When Paris is mysteriously whisked away from the battlefield by Aphrodite, the Greeks proclaim themselves the winners and a pre-ordained truce ensues. At the opening of book 4, the pro-Greek goddess Athena makes one of the Trojans break the truce and general fighting finally starts. But again the plot does not take its expected course, since it is one of the Greek generals, Diomedes, who is awarded an *aristeia* (a moment of excellence, of being the *aristos*) by the narrator, killing many Trojans (book 5). He is so destructive that Hector leaves the battlefield and goes back to Troy in order to ask his mother to bring a sacrifice to Athena, hoping to enlist this goddess's help (book 6). While in town he also meets Helen and his wife Andromache, and this episode, showing Hector as son, brother-in-law, and husband, brings him close to the narratees, who will thereby all the more come to see his death as tragic.

After some skirmishes and the building of a wall around the Greek camp, which will play a central role in ensuing battles (book 7), book 8 sees the start of the second of the four major days of battle in the *Iliad*, which will last until book 10 and finally bring the Trojans their military successes. Zeus not merely supports the Trojans, he actively protects and gives glory to Hector, who is thus clearly marked as the major instrument in executing his plan. But the dire consequences of this role are hinted at almost immediately, when Zeus reveals to the pro-Greek goddess Hera, who complains about the Greek losses, that Hector will only be stopped when Achilles returns to the battlefield to fight over the dead Patroclus (8.473–7). Although it is not yet spelled out, Hector's death is here adumbrated. Zeus's will also turns out to give an entirely new twist to Achilles' *mēnis*: it will come to an end not so much when the Greeks honour him again (Thetis' initial

[22] See Morrison (1992).

idea) but when he has to avenge his beloved friend Patroclus. The insight here provided to the narratees allows them to see the tragic nature of what will follow; the characters involved either never come to understand the true nature of things, or understand only when it is too late (see sections d and e).

The Trojans are very successful and, brimming with confidence, camp outside the city for the first time since the start of the war. Their superiority leads to panic in the Greek camp, and Agamemnon tries to persuade Achilles to join the action again (book 9). He sends an embassy and promises to give back Briseïs, offering many gifts as compensation. This looks like the moment Thetis had hoped for, when the Greeks would honour Achilles again, but Achilles does not accept Agamemnon's offer. He sticks to his decision to refrain from fighting, but makes one concession that contains the seed for later developments: he will return to action when Hector reaches his ships and sets them on fire.

Book 11 then launches the third major day of battle, which will last until the end of book 18. Hector is informed by the messenger of the gods Iris that Zeus supports him 'until he will reach the Greek ships and the sun sets' (11.208–9). As is shown by his subsequent behaviour, Hector primarily understands this to mean that he will reach his goal, i.e. to seize the Greek ships. However, the narratees may pay more attention to the ominous restriction (the 'until' will turn out to mean 'and no longer'), of which they will be reminded by the narrator at 15.596–602. Zeus's promise thus has the ambiguity of an oracle, which also predicts a negative truth while seeming to bring what its recipient desires. Things now rapidly go downhill for the Greeks, with three leading generals, Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus, being wounded and forced to leave the battlefield. Achilles, who is watching the Greek rout, sees Nestor bringing in another wounded Greek and sends Patroclus to find out who it is. The vital moment of Patroclus leaving his tent and hence starting his fatal role in Zeus's plan is awarded a memorable prolepsis by the narrator: 'that meant the beginning of his doom' (11.604). Nestor informs Patroclus about the plight of the Greeks and urges him to ask Achilles to allow him to fight in his armour.

While Patroclus returns the situation gets even worse for the Greeks. Hector is able to destroy part of the wall around the Greek camp, and the battle is now near (and about) the ships (book 12). The situation is completely reversed: it is not so much the Trojans whose city is beleaguered and who have to defend themselves but the Greeks who have to fight for their lives and their 'home'. The pro-Greek Poseidon does what he can to help the Greeks (book 13), but most effective is Hera's seduction of Zeus, which diverts his attention from the battle. The Trojans are rebuffed by the Greeks, and Hector even gets wounded (book 14).

But in book 15 Zeus awakes and, provoked by Hera's attempt to thwart his plan, sets it out once again, revealing new details: Hector will re-enter battle, Achilles will send out Patroclus, who will kill many Trojans (including Zeus's own son Sarpedon) but eventually be killed himself by Hector. Achilles will kill Hector,

and the Greeks will capture Troy through the designs of Athena, probably a veiled reference to the Wooden Horse (15.59–77).[23] We may note how the divine plan again has absorbed mortal ideas, this time Nestor's suggestion that Patroclus act as Achilles' stand-in. By the end of the book Hector is at the height of his glory: he has broken Greek resistance near the ships and is about to set them on fire (the event marked earlier by Achilles as the moment of his return to battle: 9.651–3). In typical Homeric fashion, his zenith is counterpointed by the narrator, who once more recalls that Hector is soon to die at the hands of Achilles (15.612–14).

At the beginning of book 16 Patroclus finally returns to Achilles and begs him to allow him to lead the Myrmidons into battle, dressed in his (Achilles') armour. Achilles agrees but instructs him to return after he has driven the Trojans away from the ships and not to attack Troy itself, for fear that one of the gods, notably pro-Trojan Apollo, might come against him. Praying to Zeus he remarks that the god has granted his earlier request, a temporary setback for the Greeks, and now asks a new favour, the safe return of Patroclus. Zeus's reaction, only disclosed to the narratees, makes clear that Achilles' mortal plans and desires have definitely been superseded by divine intentions: Patroclus is *not* to come back. 'Zeus's mind is always stronger than the mind of men' (16.688) could well be the motto of the *Iliad*. Patroclus is highly successful and kills amongst others Sarpedon (as foretold by Zeus). However, buoyed by his own successes (and, at the same time, according to the principle of double determination,[24] led by Zeus) he does not heed Achilles' instructions and presses on towards Troy. Exactly as foreseen by Achilles, this arouses Apollo, who knocks the armour from Patroclus, allowing a minor Trojan to wound him and then Hector to kill him.

When Achilles is informed about Patroclus' death at the beginning of book 18, he decides to return to battle again in order to avenge himself on Hector, even if, as his mother Thetis informs him, this will entail his own death. For a brief moment he shows himself to the Trojans, who are frightened and retreat, leaving Patroclus' body to be rescued. Then Hera sends the sun down to end this long day of fighting. The Trojans, again camping outside the city, hold a council in which Polydamas advises Hector to return to the city. This would have been the moment for Hector to recall the restrictions of Zeus's support (until nightfall), but instead he fatally dismisses the prudent advice. Thetis goes to Hephaestus and in a celebrated passage, the model for countless later extended descriptions or *ekphraseis*, Achilles' new armour, especially his Shield, is described in detail while the divine smith is making it. The predominantly peaceful scenes which decorate it symbolise the life which Achilles is now renouncing in favour of avenging his friend.

Book 19 starts the fourth and final fighting day of the *Iliad*, which will end at the beginning of book 23. In an assembly Achilles formally renounces his *mēnis*,

[23] Aristarchus athetised 15.56–77; for a discussion see Janko ad loc.
[24] The classic discussion is Lesky (1961).