CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Imperial Homer, history, and fiction

Near the beginning of his treatise *Against Celsus*, the third-century Christian scholar Origen conveys the difficulty of his project, a defense of the Gospels' account of Jesus, by an analogy to Greek example:

> Before we begin the defence [of Jesus], we must say that an attempt to confirm almost any story as having happened, even if it is true (πᾶσαν ἱστορίαν, κἂν ἀληθὴς ᾖ . . . ὡς γεγενημένην), and to produce complete certainty about it, is one of the most difficult tasks and in some cases is impossible. Suppose, for example, that someone says the Trojan War never happened (μὴ γεγονέναι), in particular because it is bound up with the impossible story (διὰ τὸ ἀδύνατον προσπεπλέχθαι λόγον) about a certain Achilles having had Thetis, a sea-goddess, as his mother . . . How could we defend [the historicity of the Trojan War] (κατασκευάσαιμεν), especially as we are embarrassed by the invention (ὑπὸ τοῦ . . . πλάσματος) which for some unknown reason is woven alongside the opinion, which everybody believes, that there really was (περὶ τοῦ ἀληθῶς γεγονέναι) a war in Troy between the Greeks and the Trojans?[1]

It is probably no accident that Origen selects the Trojan War to illustrate the difficulty of substantiating "true" stories as fact. The war is poised at the chronological end of the 'mythological' era and the beginning of Greek history, and while the legends surrounding it are more human-centered and less fantastic than those concerning previous heroic generations, they still feature the divine apparatus and enough "invention" or "fiction" (πλάσμα) to render problematic any simple correspondence to historical reality.[2] The anxiety engendered by these problems is well expressed by Origen; like nearly all ancient authors he was caught in an uneasy negotiation between his firm belief in the reality of the Trojan War and a suspicion that the stories told about it were not completely accurate. How then does he propose to verify its truth? Origen can only suggest the following technique: to

[1] Orig. *Contr. Cels.* 1.42.
[2] Origen's other examples – Oedipus, the Seven against Thebes, the return of the Heraclidae – similarly fall into the 'late' period of Greek legendary tradition.

accept a significant portion of the story as true, dismiss other parts as gratification of certain people (διὰ τὴν πρός τινας χάριν), and interpret the rest allegorically (τροπολογήσει).

Origen does not mention Homer by name, but establishing the historical details of the Trojan War naturally hinged on assessing the accuracy of its most important narrative source. Homeric poetry commanded an immense cultural authority throughout antiquity, but was generally recognized, at least implicitly, as *historical fiction* about the people and events of the heroic age.[3] I mean by this simply that Homeric epic was believed to be a basically accurate account of an historical event to which a certain amount of invention and elaboration had been added. The problem, for those who chose to tackle it, was differentiating the historical truth from the poetic fiction – in other words, negotiating a balance between the contrasting images of Homer as poet and historian.

In this book, I look at four Imperial Greek texts that address, in very different ways this question of Homer's historical reliability, that is, of whether or not he told the 'truth' about the Trojan War and Odysseus' wandering (and if so, how much; and if not, why not): Strabo's *Geography*, Dio Chrysostom's *Trojan Oration*, Lucian's satirical novel *True Stories*, and Philostratus' fictional dialogue *Heroicus* (chs. 3–6 respectively). Chronologically, the works, spaced out at intervals of approximately sixty to seventy years, span the first two centuries of the Roman Empire, with the first roughly dating to the later part of the reign of Augustus and the consolidation of the principate, and the last to the waning days of the Severan dynasty and the advent of the third-century crisis. The critical tradition to which these authors belong, however, extends back to earlier eras, and I devote a chapter (2) to two important previous attempts to address the question – by the Classical historians Herodotus and Thucydides, who are the first extant writers to examine Homer critically on historical grounds. There remains, however, at the heart of their efforts a tension between Homer's historiographical and his poetic objectives which is never satisfactorily resolved. As I show in Chapter 3, Strabo, in his long, intense, and convoluted defense of Homer's historical and geographical accuracy, tries desperately to reconcile these two conflicting images of Homer – as diligent historian and 'myth-making' poet. Chapters 2 and 3 are thus primarily focused on elucidating the presumptions about Homeric poetics that underlie these discussions of his historical reliability – for example, how he composed his poems, how he shaped historical matter into fictional form, the nature of his

[3] Veyne (1988), 21. See further Ch. 2 below.

motivations and intentions (aesthetic, historiographical, etc.) – as well as exploring the image of Homer himself implied or explicitly stated by these critics.

Strabo's (inevitable) failure to create a coherent image of Homer could be seen as marking the point at which critics started moving in a different direction, away from the earnest but ultimately futile strategy of attacking the issue head-on, and toward the more self-conscious, oblique, and parodic approach characteristic of the Second Sophistic, and which we find on display in the works of Dio, Lucian, and Philostratus. These three authors expand upon and transform the issues raised in the earlier works concerning Homer, his poetry, and the 'reality' represented and fictionalized in that poetry, and I devote considerable space to mapping out precisely how they reformulate and re-imagine important elements of the Homeric historiographical tradition.[4] The Second Sophistic authors' attitudes toward Homer are profoundly influenced by the vital and authoritative role that the literature and history of the distant past played in defining the Imperial Greek elite sense of self-worth and social identity. As a result, their investigations of Homer's relation to the heroes and the War often raise (to different degrees) more general questions concerning the validity and authority of ancient literary and historical tradition in Imperial culture: what is at stake in believing Homer's account of the Trojan War? What is the place of the past in the culture of the present? What role, if any, should Homer and the heroic age play in the definition of 'Greekness'? In fact, I argue that one of the reasons that Dio, Lucian, and Philostratus choose to write on the topic is precisely because it provides so many possibilities for exploring such broader issues.

As we shall see, exploiting the tension between Homer's capacities as poet and historian becomes an ideal way of wryly commenting on the Imperial Greek obsession with the past and satirically undermining commonplace claims to the poet's authority and sagacity. The historiographical conception of Homer had always courted the risk of deflating Homer's exalted reputation, because it involved thinking about Homer as an actual human being as opposed to a divinely inspired sage. Dio, Lucian, and Philostratus push this further, vividly portraying Homer in a variety of amusing ways: an itinerant, improvisatory liar; a sighted Babylonian consorting with his characters in the afterlife; a traveling poet raising the ghost of Odysseus on Ithaca. Moreover, their re-inventions of Homer are

[4] I should emphasize that I am not interested in answering or exploring the actual historical accuracy of Homeric poetry – e.g., whether the Homeric world reflects Mycenean times, the Dark Age, etc. – but only ancient responses to the question.

situated in self-consciously literary works (epideictic speech, short novel, and fictional dialogue, respectively) that introduce new, fictional 'histories' in competition with those of the poet. The texts thus play with their audiences' notions of belief by destabilizing their investment in the 'truth' of the two cornerstones of the Greek literary and historical past – Homer and the Trojan War – but they also inscribe their authors as the descendants of Homer, as fellow composers of 'fictions' about the ancient heroes.[5]

In the remainder of this introduction, I want to sketch out briefly some of the background against which the texts examined in this book should be viewed: the extent and power of Homer's influence in Greek culture, his status as a symbol of Hellenism, and the variety of interpretative techniques applied to his poetry. The interest my four Imperial texts evince in questions of Homer, history, and fiction sets them within a critical tradition that stands somewhat apart from the dominant trends of ancient Homeric reception, which tend to be preoccupied with moral, theological, philological, or rhetorical matters.[6] I show how this 'historical' approach to Homer (which boasts a distinguished pedigree in antiquity) is closely tied to the post-classical construction of Greek identity and investment in the heroic past. I then narrow the focus onto the three Second Sophistic authors' creative attempts to critique this conception of Homer and the past, and demonstrate how the particular combination of interests found in their texts – in Homer's historiographical qualities, in the figure of Homer, and in explicit commentary on his poetry – marks them as a distinct group within the larger body of Homeric continuations, rewritings, and revisions so popular in the Imperial period.

IMPERIAL HOMER

Throughout antiquity, the influence of Homer upon Greek literature and the authority he exercised over Greek culture were tremendous, so much so that his sheer ubiquity has discouraged any large-scale attempt to chart

[5] After all, Homeric poetry, particularly the *Odyssey*, was often at the center of ancient debates about the nature of truth, lies, and fiction. See, e.g., Pratt (1993), 55–94; Grossardt (1998).

[6] There is no good synthetic account of Homer's place in Imperial Greece; admittedly the topic is an enormous one, and studies tend to focus (as this one does) on more restricted aspects of Homeric reception or criticism. For instance, Kindstrand (1973) examines Dio, Aristides, and Maximus of Tyre; Zeitlin (2001) conveys an idea of the vast quantity of material, despite her focus on Homer and visuality; Buffière (1956) treats primarily the allegorical tradition and is arranged thematically. Hunter (2004), 250–3, is brief but insightful.

his ancient reception.[7] Under the Empire, the reverence for Homer is as enthusiastic as ever; Homer was, to paraphrase Dio Chrysostom, "the beginning, middle, and end" of culture.[8] Similarly, for Heraclitus, the (first century CE?) author of a work defending Homer through allegorical interpretation, the poet accompanies the educated person through every stage of life:

> From the very first age of life, the foolishness of infants just beginning to learn is nurtured on the teaching given in [Homer's] school. One might almost say that his poems are our baby clothes, and we nourish our minds by draughts of his milk. He stands at our side as we each grow up and shares our youth as we gradually come to manhood; when we are mature, his presence within us is at its prime; and even in old age, we never weary of him. When we stop, we thirst to begin him again. In a word, the only end of Homer for human beings is the end of life. (Heraclit. *All.* 1: tr. Russell)

The continuous, even oppressive, presence of Homer suggested by this passage can be compared to Dio's (joking?) claims for the poet's wide-ranging influence as an ambassador of Hellenism to the farthest corners of the globe: so well known is Homer that his poetry has been translated in India and the Indians, who do not even see the same stars as the Greeks, yet listen with rapt attention to the stories of heroes such as Achilles, Priam, and Hector of whom they have no other knowledge.[9] And it was commonplace to assert, as the second-century Platonizing philosopher-rhetor Maximus of Tyre does, that *all* of life and the universe could be found in his poetry:

> It was with his soul that Homer toured every quarter of the world and saw everything that there was to be seen, all the movements of the heavenly bodies, all that happens on earth, the councils of the gods, the different natures of men, the shining of the sun, the dances of the stars . . . household management, war, peace, marriage, farming, horsemanship, all kinds of arts and crafts, different languages and customs, men lamenting, rejoicing, grieving, laughing, fighting . . . (Max. Tyr. *Or.* 26.1)

These passages speak to the pervasive way in which Homer dominated Imperial Greek cultural life, and their claims are supported by a glance at the literature of the period, in which Homer is quoted with the frequency

[7] The comments of Lamberton (1992), vii n. 1, are still valid almost twenty years later: "For the ancient reception of Homer, even general discussion of the influence of the epics is lacking, though admittedly the task would be so enormous that it would require writing a history of Greek and Latin literature from the perspective of Homeric influence." For brief attempts see Richardson (1993) and Lamberton (1997).

[8] Dio Chrys. *Or.* 18.8: Ὅμηρος δὲ καὶ πρῶτος καὶ μέσος καὶ ὕστατος.

[9] Dio Chrys. *Or.* 53.6–8.

and familiarity consonant with his monumental authority: to appeal to an august witness, to prove a point, to spice up one's discourse with a literary allusion, to provide an appropriate moral example.[10] The vision of Homer as source of an eternal wisdom, whether moral, philosophical or theological, particularly inspires the allegorical strand of Homeric interpretation that flourishes in the period, from Heraclitus' *Homeric Problems* and Maximus' *Discourses*, to Ps.-Plutarch's *On Homer* and the writings of the Middle Platonist philosopher Numenius of Apamea.[11]

Homer thus looms large in the Imperial landscape, but it is important to emphasize the significant if subtle differences in the nature of Homer's exalted status from that of previous eras. The distinction lies not so much in the kinds of assertions made about him, which are already found in the Classical period. Homer is called 'divine' in Aristophanes and Plato and frequently referred to elsewhere as the wisest of men;[12] his status as an 'instructor' in technical matters is familiar from the boasts of characters like Plato's Ion and Xenophon's Niceratus, who claim to have learned the arts of generalship, household management, rhetoric, and chariot-racing from the poet;[13] and Plato's famous discussion in *Republic* 2–3 testifies to a widespread ethical interest in the Homeric heroes as *exempla*, one that was also reflected in what we know of lost works such as Antisthenes' Homeric discourses, Hippias' *Trojan Discourse*, or Alcidamas' *Mouseion* (all from the late fifth to the early fourth century BCE).[14] Examples of quoting Homer to reinforce or illustrate one's arguments abound in Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, and Aeschines,[15] and offer a glimpse of the cultural capital that accrued to those among the elite who were able to cleverly sprinkle their discourse with Homeric testimony.[16] Similarly, all of the major modes of

[10] A sample of scholarship studying the Homeric citations of various Imperial authors: Bouquiaux-Simon (1968) on Lucian; Kindstrand (1973) on Dio, Maximus, and Aelius Aristides; Moraux (1987) on Galen; D'Ippolito (2004) on Plutarch.

[11] The literature on Homeric allegory is vast; Buffière (1956) is a general survey, while Bernard (1990) is more specifically attuned to the Imperial period. For an introduction to Heraclitus, see Russell and Konstan (2005); more in-depth are Chiron (2005) and Pontani (2005). On Ps.-Plutarch, see Hillgruber (1994) and on Numenius, Lamberton (1986), 54–77.

[12] Classical references to Homer as "wisest" (σοφώτατος): Pl. *Alc.* 2 147b, *Tht.* 194e, *Leg.* 776e; Xen. *Mem.* 1.4.2, *Symp.* 4.6; Isoc. *C. soph.* 13.2; Aeschin. *In Tim.* 1.141. As "divine" (θεῖος): Ar. *Ran.* 1034; Pl. *Phd.* 95a2; *Certamen* 214, 309, 338 Allen. In general on these issues, see Graziosi (2002), 150–9.

[13] Pl. *Ion* 541b; Xen. *Symp.* 3.6, 4.6–7.

[14] Antisthenes' extant works: *Ajax* and *Odysseus* (14, 15 Caizzi); titles: 1 Caizzi = Diog. Laert. 6.15–18; for discussion, see Giannantoni (1990), 331–7. Hippias: *FGrH* 6 T 3 = Pl. *Hp. mai.* 285d. On the moral content of Alcidamas' *Mouseion*, Richardson (1981).

[15] Halliwell (2000) is an excellent treatment of Plato's use of poetic quotation as testimony; see 95 n. 5 for previous bibliography. On Aristotle, see Hillgruber (1994), 20–1. On the use of Homer and other poetry in Athenian lawcourts, see Ford (1999b).

[16] Ford (2002), 194–7.

reading and interpreting Homer – allegoresis, critiquing verisimilitude or narrative logic, paradigmatic moralizing, ethical and theological critiques, philological inquiry, etc. – can be traced back to the fifth and fourth centuries BCE or earlier.[17]

But while the manner in which Homer was praised, as well as the basic principles of interpreting, using, and criticizing his poetry, remain fairly constant throughout antiquity, the nature of Homer's authority, the symbolic value of his poetry, changes radically in the wake of Alexander the Great's conquest of the Persian Empire and the subsequent expansion of Greek rule throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. Much of this transformation was the result of Homer's position at the heart of the remarkably standardized educational system established throughout the Hellenistic world. In practical terms, the teaching of Greek language and culture was necessary for the continued administration of Greek rule over largely non-Greek populations from Egypt to Bactria. By virtue of its universality and conventionality, however, Greek education also becomes a key marker of Hellenic identity, an acquired trait common to inhabitants of the geographically and ethnically diverse Hellenistic kingdoms.[18] In this context, familiarity with Homer, whose poetry was ensconced at the very beginning of the curriculum, became closely associated with learning Greek, and by extension with *being* Greek.[19] This marks a significant difference from the Classical period, when knowledge of Homer may have been valued (and was probably expected) in an educated elite citizen (at least in Athens), but was not seen as an integral part of citizenship or self-worth among the citizen body at large, much less a defining symbol of an abstract 'Greek' identity.[20]

[17] For overviews of Classical critical approaches to Homer, see Richardson (1992) (=[1993], 25–35), supplemented by Apfel (1938) on the fourth century BCE. Ford (1999a) treats the early development of allegorical criticism; see the discussion of Classical allegoresis below in Ch. 2, 35–7. The genre of Homeric problems and solutions that originated in the fourth century gives a good idea of the variety of classical criticism: no work survives intact, but we possess the 25th chapter of Aristotle's *Poetics*, which summarizes his *Homeric Problems* (F 366–404 Gigon; Hintenlang [1961]), as well as the fragments of Zoïlus of Amphipolis, the so-called *Homeromastix*, or, "scourge of Homer" (*FGrH* 71; Gärtner [1978]), and those of a number of lesser-known authors.

[18] Morgan (1998), 21–5. Marrou (1956), 162–70 is still good on this. For a broader view of the new sense of Greek identity in the Hellenistic period, see Burstein (2008).

[19] Hunter (2004), 246: "Through Homer one learned Greek and Greekness."

[20] The ideological linking of Greek identity and education was, however, articulated in the fourth century BCE by Isocrates (see Too [1995]), whose views had considerable influence in later antiquity. We know very little about Classical education and the curriculum, but from the reticence of the Athenian orators (aside from the special case of Aeschines) to quote or refer to Homer, one can infer that such appeals might not have resonated in the same way with democratic juries and audiences as they would have in elite, aristocratic circles.

The canonization of Homer's poems as the greatest and most important works of Greek culture is another index of this transformation of the poet's symbolic value in the Hellenistic world.[21] The founding father of the new political landscape, Alexander himself, was said to have been an ardent admirer of Homer and Achilles;[22] and while Classical authors call Homer 'divine,' it is only in the Hellenistic period that we hear of *Homereia*, or temples built in honor of Homer and featuring a statue of the poet, in cities such as Alexandria and Smyrna.[23] The well-known allegorical relief by Archelaus of Priene known as the 'Apotheosis of Homer,' where he is shown being crowned by a personified *Chronos* (Time) and *Oikoumene* (the inhabited world) as *Muthos* and *Historia* prepare a sacrifice in his honor, is a surviving testament to Homer's new status.[24] Homer's poems are the twin foundational texts of Greek culture and thus an object of study and prestige; to obtain the 'best' manuscripts or produce the authoritative edition of his poetry is to establish proprietary ownership over the greatest symbol of Greek culture.[25] The critical work on Homer's text by scholars such as Zenodotus of Ephesus, Aristarchus of Samothrace, and Crates of Mallus thus forms an essential part of the cultural projects of Hellenistic monarchies at Pergamum and Alexandria (and to a lesser degree in Macedonia), aimed at establishing continuity with both the Classical and Archaic Greek past as well as advertising the legitimate 'Greekness' of the new regimes.[26]

Whereas the early philosophers and Plato had famously attacked Homer's claims to moral, theological, and philosophical authority, Stoicism, which would become the most influential philosophical movement to arise in this period, valorized Homer as an illustrious predecessor, a stance that would contribute greatly to the increasing faith in the poet's universal wisdom so characteristic of the Hellenistic and Imperial periods.[27] Even the Epicurean philosopher and critic Philodemus of Gadara (first century BCE), despite his sect's well-known disdain for poetic wisdom, wrote a

[21] Succinct overview in Zeitlin (2001), 195–203.
[22] E.g., Plut. *Alex.* 8 (Homer), 15 (Achilles).
[23] Ael. *VH* 13.22 on the temple and statue of Homer set up by Ptolemy Philopator (221–205 BCE); Str. 14.37 and Cic. *Arch.* 9 on the Homereion at Smyrna. For discussion, see Brink (1972).
[24] Newby (2007), 169: the lower register of the relief is an allegorical narrative of "Homer's dominance over all forms of human literature and learning." On the Archelaus relief, whose date is uncertain, see Brink (1972); Zeitlin (2001), 197–200; and Newby (2007), who provides a full bibliography of earlier scholarship.
[25] Erskine (1995) on Homeric philology in Alexandria and the importance of establishing monarchical control over Greek learning.
[26] Too (1998), 115–50, esp. 134–9.
[27] On the Stoics and Homer, see Long (1992).

treatise, *On the Good King According to Homer*, which uses the poet's work as a compendium of precepts and exempla for monarchs.[28]

The prestige enjoyed by Homer in the Hellenistic world continues unabated in the Roman Empire (as demonstrated by the examples from Heraclitus, Dio, and Maximus I quoted above). On the one hand the passage of time and the conservatism of the educational system consolidated the poet's canonical position for each successive generation, but the increased importance of Greek *paideia* ("education" or "culture") in the self-definition of the Imperial aristocratic elite contributes as well.[29] To be labeled *pepaideumenos*, "educated" or "cultured," becomes a social marker of the highest distinction and was dependent on one's mastery of the canonical literature of the Greek past, particularly of the Classical period[30] – a process that had begun in the Augustan era (best on display in the writings of the critic Dionysius of Halicarnassus) and reached its zenith in the so-called Second Sophistic, the renaissance of Greek oratory and letters extending (roughly) from the mid first to the mid third century CE.[31] In fact, so strong is the faith in Homer's role as avatar of Greek culture that he maintains his centrality under the Empire, despite the fact that his non-Attic language and archaic worldview did not always suit the classicizing tendencies of a society more attuned to the style and content of the Attic prose authors of the fourth century BCE.[32] Homer is now firmly established at the heart of Greek *paideia*, a truly colossal figure, the very personification of Greek culture, and even of Greekness itself.[33] In a culture

[28] Asmis (1991).

[29] Cribiore (2001), 140–2; 194–7; 205–10, for the technical details. It is perhaps no accident that the most ardent defenses and panegyrics of the poet occur in texts with a strong pedagogical bent, like Dio's *Or.* 18, Heraclitus' *Homeric Problems*, Ps.-Plutarch's *On Homer*, and Maximus of Tyre's popular didactic philosophical discourses. For the characterization of these texts as 'pedagogical' see Russell (2003) on Heraclitus; Lamberton (2002) on Ps.-Plutarch; Trapp (1997), xx–xxii, on Maximus.

[30] Schmitz (1997) is the most thorough statement of the case; see also Connolly (2001) and Webb (2006) on rhetorical education and declamation; Whitmarsh (2001), 90–130, explores the tensions inherent in the notion of *paideia*.

[31] The continued engagement by Imperial writers with the glorified figures, events, and texts of the distant past was one of the primary means by which they negotiated their sense of what it meant to be Greek under the Roman Empire, whether this nostalgia is seen as resistance to or an escape from the realities of Roman rule. Generally Bowie (1970); Swain (1996), 65–100; Whitmarsh (2001).

[32] Swain (1996), 55–6. Aristarchus had claimed already in the second century BCE that Homer was Athenian (Sch. A ad *Il.* 13.197).

[33] The reverence for Homer *in itself* was not necessarily an anti-Roman position – after all, Homer had been a central part of Roman culture for centuries (cf. Farrell [2004]) and could be seen as the cultural and literary foundational text for both Greeks *and* Romans. Nevertheless, because of the way that Greekness came to be increasingly associated with cultural achievements, 'Homer' signified something slightly different for Greek and Roman Imperial elite, as much as their interests and outlooks matched in other ways.

where elite identity was tied up with the literary authority of the classics, to quote Homer, to appeal to his poetry, was part of the continuous process of asserting one's membership in the 'cultured' and therefore 'Greek' elite.[34]

Homer and heroic history

It bears emphasizing that all of the Imperial authors I treat in this book acknowledge Homer's centrality and authority. Strabo is perhaps the most laudatory; he takes the poet's authority for granted on the basis of his antiquity and cultural pre-eminence and vigorously defends Homer's knowledge of history and geography. But even the others, who are capable of more ambivalent attitudes toward the poet, often effusively praise Homer, display a profound knowledge of his poems, and lay claim to his cultural authority throughout their writing. Dio, for instance, whose *Trojan Oration* is the most anti-Homeric of the three sophistic texts, generally extols Homer's virtues elsewhere in his corpus, as attested by his panegyrical comments on Homer that I quoted above, his encomium *On Homer* (*Or.* 53), and other passages sprinkled throughout his discourses.[35]

What sets the four texts I examine apart from the apologetic and encomiastic readings of Homer that are so prevalent in the period is their focus on the relationship between Homeric poetry and the 'history' that it purports to represent. The absence of interest in the historical underpinnings of Homeric epic is perhaps not a terrible surprise in the case of allegorical interpreters, who proceed on the principle that Homer's narrative is not 'real' but only a symbolic representation of the 'truths' that lie hidden in the text.[36] When Maximus calls Thersites "a perfect allegory of an insubordinate citizenry" or sees the quarreling Agamemnon and Achilles as "allegories of the emotions, of youth and authority" (*Or.* 26.5), it is apparent that he was not particularly concerned about the heroes' historicity. But

[34] On this general idea, Whitmarsh (2001), 26–38.

[35] E.g., *Orr.* 2, 12, 55, 61. The contrast between Dio's historicizing approach in the *Trojan Oration* and his interpretative attitude toward Homer in the rest of his corpus is significant; see further Ch. 5 below.

[36] The matter is a bit more complicated, given the variety of allegorical techniques and practices. For example, in Heraclitus' defenses of Homer, he sometimes finds it more convenient to 'rationalize'; thus the plague scene in *Iliad* 1 is interpreted as the description of a real plague told in symbolic terms (Apollo = Sun, his arrows = the sun's rays, etc.) rather than Homer revealing a general truth about the connection between the sun and disease (*Homeric Problems* 6–16). A similar, but more interesting example is Porphyry's *On the Cave of the Nymphs* where Porphyry insists that there was a real cave on Ithaca, but that Homer composed a complex allegorical description of it that Porphyry proceeds to decode (on this text see Lamberton [1986], 119–33). Nevertheless these are exceptions to the general aversion to history prevalent in allegorical interpretation in antiquity.