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THE POET OF THE ILIAD

BY

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in the University of Oxford*

THE J. H. GRAY LECTURES FOR 1949



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To V. W.-G.

—ἐκόντι σ' εὖχομαι νόω
κατά τιν' ἀρμονίαν βλέπειν
ἀμφ' ἕκαστον ὅσα νέομαι

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CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	ix
I. THE POET'S CIRCUMSTANCES	
A. Hesiod and Homer	1
B. The Panionia	2
C. Hektor of Chios and Agamemnon of Kyme	6
D. The pedigree of Heropythos	8
E. The alphabet: paper and ink	9
F. The alphabet: a notation for Greek verse?	11
G. The Panegyris	14
II. THE POET'S DESCENDANTS	
A. Homeridai	19
B. Kynaithos and the <i>Hymn to Apollo</i>	21
C. The Homeric pedigree	23
D. Herodotos' date for Homer	25
E. 'Stretched' chronologies	27
F. Later rhapsodes	29
G. Perikles' Panathenaic Law	30
III. THE CREATIVE POET	
A. Norm and innovation	32
B. Homer's knowledge of Troy	33
C. The <i>Iliad</i> is substantially fiction	35
D. Length, unity, language	37
E. Oral technique, and writing	38
F. Gods and men: the Gods serve men	41
G. Gods and men: comedy and tragedy	43

CONTENTS

Appendix A. The Catalogue of Ships	
1. Its place in the narrative	49
2. Its origin	53
3. Aulis and Halos	57
Notes to Lecture I	61
Notes to Lecture II	71
Notes to Lecture III	79
Notes to Appendix A	83
Appendix B. A Selection of Pedigrees	
1. A table of eight pedigrees	88
2. Individual pedigrees	90
3. Comparison	92
<i>General Index</i>	95
<i>Abbreviated Titles</i>	99
<i>Index of passages of the Iliad</i>	101

ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>facing page</i>
Fig. 1 THE PEDIGREE OF HEROPYTHOS	8
Fig. 2 A RHAPSODE OF THE EARLY FIFTH CENTURY Photograph P. E. Corbett (Brit. Mus.)	30
Fig. 3 THE RANSOM OF HEKTOR From Fürtwängler-Reichhold: <i>Griechische Vasenmalerei</i>	81

PREFACE

THE three lectures in this book were prepared and delivered in February 1949, in the festal air of Cambridge. A university not my own has for me always a certain holiday air: in Cambridge that week the nightly performances of *King Oedipus* made almost the illusion of a 'panegyris'. In that air I meant to expound (but not to argue) some convictions at which I had at last arrived about the *Iliad* as a *historic event*—the circumstances of its composition and first performance, its effect on Greek civilization, and its intrinsic nature. Rather extensive notes and two appendices have not, I think, much altered the book's character: their purpose is to explain my meaning in more detail; they attempt no responsible survey of the whole field.

I have several obligations to record. To my wife, who has helped me to form my thoughts at every stage. To four scholars who read through my text and notes and found much to criticize: Sir John Beazley, Sir Maurice Bowra, Dr F. Jacoby, Prof. D. S. Robertson. They gave me much information, much insight, and saved me from some follies. Mr George Forrest helped me with the indexes. I am particularly indebted to Prof. Ashmole and Mr Corbett of the British Museum, for including in their first experiments of polaroid photography the amphora on which the Rhapsode in my Fig. 2 is painted. And it is pleasant to have encountered the skill and courtesy of the Cambridge University Press.

My main assumption (that Homer wrote the *Iliad* substantially as we have it) is now almost fashionable. I like to think that this is not because we wish it was so, but because we begin to see more clearly the face of early Greece: *while it was dawn, and while the bright day grew.*

H. T. W.-G.

Middleton Stoney, Ox.
April 1952.