HOMER IN BYZANTIUM

by Robert Browning

A good deal has been written on the debt to Homer of this or that writer or group of writers in the Byzantine world. A good example is Agne Vasilikopoulou's recent study of Homer in the literary renaissance of the twelfth century.[1] Most of these studies have failed to distinguish clearly between incidental quotation of Homeric tags, direct acquaintance with the text, and creative use of Homeric motifs – which does not always imply knowledge of the text. What is interesting is not so much who could quote Homer, or even who read him, but the purpose for which Homer was read, the place of knowledge of Homer in the life of Byzantine society, and the extent to which study of Homer led to results, direct or indirect, which go beyond the pleasure of the immediate reader.

The present paper is intended as a preliminary survey of the field in the light of these principles. It does not attempt to be exhaustive, and though textual studies will be touched upon, it is not concerned with studying the history of the text of the Homeric poems in the way in which the pupils of the late Professor Alphonse Dain have studied that of the text of many other Greek writers. In spite of the recent work of Erbse,[2] van der Valk[3] and others, the time is not yet ripe for an *Histoire du texte d'Homère.*

First, let us remember that Homer was always a schoolbook, a prescribed text, from which generation after generation learned to read with understanding.[4] A rather elementary grammatical commentary arranged alphabetically, the Ἐπιμερισμοί, was composed probably in the sixth century;[5] the latest authority quoted is John Philoponus. Constantine, the future apostle of the Slavs, finding difficulty in

[1] Agne Vasilikopoulou-Ioannidou, Ἡ *ἀναγέννησις τῶν γραμμάτων κατὰ τὸν ,β' αἰῶνα εἰς τὸ Βυζάντιον καὶ ὁ Ὅμηρος*, (Athens 1971-1972).

[2] H. Erbse, *Beiträge zur überlieferung der Iliasscholien* (Munich 1960); idem, *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Iliadem* (*Scholia Vetera*) 1 (Berlin 1967).

[3] M. H. A. L. H. van der Valk, *Researches on the Text and Scholia of the Iliad*, (Leiden 1963-1964).

[4] Rhetoricians used him as a model of eloquence too Cf. Tzetzes, *Allegories on the Iliad,* 15.37-41: *ὃς ἂν δὲ χρήζῃ μέθοδον δεινότητος μανθάνειν/καὶ θέλει ῥήτορα δεινὸν καὶ εἶναι λογογράφον/καὶ μεταφράσει χρῆσθαι δέ, τῇ καὶ μεταποιήσει/καὶ λέγων πάλιν τὰ αὐτὰ δοκεῖν ὡς ἄλλα λέγειν/τὸν Ὅμηρον ἐχέτω μοι παράδειγμα τῆς τέχνης.*

[5] Ed. A. J. Cramer, *Anecdota graeca Oxoniensia* 1 (Oxford 1835) 1-451.

understanding the Fathers of the Church, went from Thessalonica to Constantinople to pursue his education. He finished off grammar in three months, according to the Slavonic Life, and then went on to study Homer.[6] Michael, Bishop of Ephesus early in the eleventh century, learned commentator on Aristotle, pupil of Michael Psellos and friend of Anna Comnena, mentions that boys learned Homer by heart at school, thirty lines a day for the average pupil, up to fifty lines a day for the brightest.[7] A little earlier Michael Psellos, who by any standards must have been a bright pupil, began reading Homer at the age of eight, and in one year had gone through the whole of the Iliad, not only the *ἐποποιία* he tells us, but also *σχῆμα καὶ τρόπος καὶ λέξις καὶ μεταφορὰ εὔκαιρος καὶ ἁρμονία συνθήκης*.[8] Interestingly enough his daughter Styliane began her reading not with Homer, but with the Psalms,[9] for which there also existed a body of *Ἐπιμερισμοί* by George Choiroboskos.[10] Even Anna Comnena, fifty years later, was not allowed by her parents to study classical literature, and had recourse to surreptitious lessons in grammar and poetry from court eunuchs.[11] When we turn to the late Byzantine period, we find Homer still a schoolbook, though often only in selections. For instance, Manuel Moschopoulos at the end of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century compiled a commentary on Iliad 1-2.493 as the first item in his teaching selection of classical poetry – which also included three plays each of Sophocles and Euripides, Pindar's Olympians, Hesiod's *Erga* and the first eight poems of Theocritus.[12] The form of this commentary is what the later Byzantines called a *τεχνολογία*, that is, a word for word paraphrase of the text, introducing lexical equivalents by *ἤγουν, ἤτοι, τουτέστι*, syntactical equivalents by *ἀντὶ τοῦ*, words to be understood by *δηλονότι*, and so on. Embedded in this continuous paraphrase are longer notes, either grammatical, and taken from his own *Ερωτήματα*, or dealing with synonyms, and doubtless copied from some work not yet identified.[13] Finally there are many manuscripts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries containing Book I of the Iliad followed by one play each of Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes, some Pindar, some Theocritus, and a brief selection of the poems of Gregory of Nazianzus, all accompanied by interlinear glosses and very elementary grammatical and lexical commentary. These are schoolbooks, embodying the selection of classical poetry read by a particular

[6] Cf. A. Vaillant, *Textes vieux-slaves* 1 (Paris 1968) 5.

[7] *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 20 (Berlin 1892) 613 lines 4-7.

[8] C. Sathas, Μεσαιωνικὴ βιβλοθήκη 5 (Venice 1876) 14.

[9] *Ibid.* 65.

[10] Ed. T. Gaisford, *Georgii Choerobosci dictata in Theodosii Canones, necnon epimerismi in Psalmos* 3 (Oxford 1842) 1-92. On Choiroboskos cf. most recently, P. Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin* (Paris 1971) 79-80.

[11] J. Darrouzès, *Georges et Dèmètrios Tornikès: Lettres et discours* (Paris 1970) 243-245.

[12] Ed. I. Scherpezeel, *Homeri Iliadis lib. I-II cum scholiis Manuelis Moschopuli* (Utrecht 1719); L. Bachmann, *Scholia Lipsiensia* fasc. 3 (Leipzig 1835-1838).

[13] Typical manuscripts of the Moschopulean selection are cod. Vat. gr. 50, cod. Oxon. Laud. gr. 54, cod. Oxon. Auct. F. 3.25, cod. Neapol. Farnes. II F 9, cod. Vat. gr. 1303, cod. Vat. Urbin. gr. 140.

teacher. And they bear witness to the continuing role of Homer in elementary education, ever since, in the fifth century B.C., schoolboys had to learn by heart the meaning of *ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα* and other *Ὁμήρου γλῶτται*. The Odyssey too was read, though less often than the Iliad. There are several introductions to the Odyssey, clearly written for school purposes, perhaps in the twelfth century. Several are still unpublished. One was wrongly attributed by its editor to Nicephorus Gregoras. Here is an extract:[14]

> This godlike man makes reason his guide in all things, so that he says nothing trivial and nothing unprofitable, even though we cannot always grasp the import of his *furor poeticus.* At one moment he teaches us theology, at another reverence for god, at another he expounds the origin of the universe, at another the laws of nature whereby the elements now oppose one another and now combine together, even though he does all this behind a facade of triviality. At other times he descends, as it were, from his lofty vantage point and moves among mankind, systematizing and ordering all arts and crafts so as best to attain their ends. He endows peoples with understanding and guides their ways. He harmonizes men's souls not only with themselves but with one another. He confutes and ridicules folly, and brands ignorance and stupidity as vices alien alike to divine and human nature. In a word, he sets himself up as a public teacher of divine and human learning for all mankind.

This is the tone of voice of the encyclopedia salesman. But the author soon goes on to discuss whether Odysseus really existed, and if not, whether moral lessons could be drawn from an untrue story. This is a real problem of medieval literary criticism. In the end he dodges the issue by saying that Homer's mastery of his craft gives him moral authority even if all that he recounts is not strictly true.

Others struck a higher note in their introductory lectures. Here is how Eustathius began his course on Homer:

> It would perhaps be best to shun the Sirens of Homer by blocking one's ears with wax or turning away in another direction, so as to avoid their spell. If one does not shun them, but reads the poem, he will not pass by willingly even if many bonds restrain him, nor if he did pass by would he be grateful. . . . From Ocean flow all rivers, all springs and all wells, according to the old saying. And from Homer comes if not all at any rate much of the material of later writers. For there is no one, whether his concern be with higher things or with nature or with human affairs or with any subject of profane literature whatever it be, who has passed by Homer's hostelry without being entertained, but all have stopped there.

[14] The pseudo-Gregoras text is published by F. Matranga, *Anecdota Graeca* (Rome 1850) 520-524; extract from 521. On this and the unpublished texts cf. R. Guilland, *Essai sur Nicéphore Grégoras* (Paris 1926) 114-115; S. I. Kourouses, Μανουὴλ Γαβαλᾶς εἶτα Ματθαῖος μητροπολίτης Ἐφέσου (1271/2-1355/60) (Athens 1972) 168-169.

And some have stayed with him to the end of their days, enjoying his catering, while others have merely satisfied some need and taken something from his store to put in their own work.

(EUSTATHIUS, *Comm. in Iliadem*, proem.)

Since Homer was a schoolbook, we are hardly surprised to find quotations from and allusions to Homer throughout Byzantine literature. They need not be evidence of direct acquaintance with the text of the poems. When Synesius of Cyrene, to illustrate the isolation in which his fellow citizens live, says,[15] "They know there is an emperor, for the tax-collector comes every year, but who he is they know not. Some think he is Agamemnon, son of Atreus, since this is a royal name they have known since childhood, and that he has a friend called Odysseus, bald and resourceful," he does not imply that the peasants of Cyrenaica read the Iliad. Many verses were proverbial, and were independently transmitted by the paroemiographers. Others were learned from manuals of rhetoric. But many imply acquaintance with the text on the part of the writer, and presume such acquaintance on that of the reader, particularly those whose meaning depends upon their context. A few examples will suffice to show what I mean. Arethas, Metropolitan of Caesarea in the first half of the tenth century, bibliophile, and scholar, revised and enlarged the commentary on the Apocalypse by Andrew of Caesarea, written about A.D. 600, and published the revised version under his own name.[16] One of the things that he did to make Andrew's work more acceptable to his own polished age was to interpolate into it a number of citations from Homer and Aristotle. Arethas's older contemporary, Peter Bishop of Argos, wrote encomia upon various saints, from Anna the mother of the Virgin Mary to his own near-contemporary Athanasios Bishop of Methone.[17] These pieces of ecclesiastical oratory are decked out with a curious classical decor which is largely due to frequent Homeric quotations and allusions. The protocol of the Synod of 30 January 1166, which condemned Constantine Metropolitan of Corfu, after speaking of *ὁ καθ' ἡμᾶς Ἰσραήλ, ὁ νέος Δαβίδ*, etc., goes on: *ἐν δὴ τούτοις καὶ ὁ τῆς Φαιάκων εἰληχὼς ἀρχιερατεύειν – ἀγνοεῖ δὲ οὐδεὶς ὅτι Κερκυραίους καλοῦσι τοὺς Φαίακας – σύμφρων ἐδόκει γενέσθαι,*[18] a typical example of the adornment of official, even ecclesiastical, documents with antiquarian erudition drawn from Homer and his commentators.

Homer, however, had not always been *salonfähig*. Radical monastic writers in the early Byzantine period often condemn study of the poems as at best frivolous and sometimes positively harmful. It is related of Saint John the Psychaite (early ninth century) that he had no need of *τῆς Ὁμήρου φλυαρίας ἢ τῆς χρυσῆς αὐτοῦ σειρᾶς ἢ*

[15] *Ep.* 148, R. Hercher, *Epistolographi graeci* (Paris n.d. [1872]) 733.

[16] PG 106.493-785.

[17] PG 104.1352-1365; J. Cozza-Luzi, *Nova patrum bibliotheca* 9.3 (Rome 1888) 31-51.

[18] L. Petit, "Documents inédits sur le concile de 1166 et ses derniers adversaires," *Vizantiiskii Vremennik* 11 (1904) 481.

τοῦ ζευγνύειν καὶ ἀποζευγνύειν ἅρματα. τίς γὰρ ἐντεῦθεν ὄνησις τῆς τῶν μύθων καὶ πλασμάτων καὶ δαιμονίων σεβασμάτων εἰδήσεως προσγένηται τοῖς ἐν τούτοις φυσιουμένοις,[19] A last outlier of this critique of classical culture by the burning-eyed dropouts who made the desert a city is to be found in another older contemporary of Arethas, the well-to-do Thessalonican monk John Cameniates, who wrote an account of the sack of his native city by an Arab raiding force from Crete in 904. After describing the choral singing in the great church of Saint Demetrius on feast days, he goes on: "Compared with this singing what is the mythical Orpheus, the Muse of Homer or the deceitful songs of the Sirens, adorned with lying inventions. They indeed merit no praise, for they are illusory words which seduce men and deliver them into the power of error."[20] John Cameniates was perhaps the last defender of a lost cause. Half a century after he wrote, Theodosius the Deacon celebrated the recapture of Crete from the Arabs by Nicephorus Phocas.[21] Again and again he appeals to Homer to inspire his somewhat feeble verses, calling him *Ὅμηρε, πηγὴ τῶν λόγων*. It is interesting to note that John Anagnostes, who left an eye-witness account of the capture of Thessalonica by the Turks in 1430,[22] decks his story out not only with Homeric echoes but also with direct quotations.

Another kind of Homeric reference is that by which events and personages of the writers' own time are described in terms that recall events and personages in Homer. Sophisticated Byzantine literature is full of this kind of thing. A few examples will suffice. When Constantine IX introduced his mistress Skleraina to the court for the first time, a bystander murmured *οὐ νέμεσις*, echoing the words of the Trojan elders when Helen passed by.[23] The lady, I regret to say, had to have the allusion explained to her. When Nicetas Choniates writes of the emperor Andronicus Comnenus, whose life was marked by long years of wandering and endless picturesque adventures and hairbreadth escapes, he regularly attaches to him epithets appropriate to Odysseus. He calls him *πολυμήχανος, πολυπλανέστατος ἀνθρώπων, πόλεις ἀμείψας συχνὰς καὶ πλεῖστα ἐθνῶν ἄστεα κατιδών*, and even says of him that he acts *κατὰ τὸν πολυπλανῆ καὶ πολύφρονα ἐκεῖνον ἥρωα*. The result is to convey to the reader a certain preconception of the character of Andronicus without having to spell things out.[24] A similar effect is produced when Nicetas calls Manuel I *κύδιστος μέγιστος* (206.6), echoing epithets used by Homer of Zeus and Agamemnon: or when Eustathios calls George Palaiologos *τειχεσιπλήτης* (*Expugnatio Thessalonicae* p. 86.29); or when Nikephoros Bryennios describing the pursuit of Basilakes by Alexios I cites Homeric description of the pursuit of Hector by Achilles. At another

[19] P. Van den Ven, "Vie de S. Jean le Psychaite," *Le Muséon* n.s. 3 (1902) 109.

[20] Gertrud Böhlig, *Ioannis Cameniatae de expugnatione Thessalonicae* (Berlin 1973) 12.

[21] N. M. Panagiotakes, *Θεοδόσιος ὁ διάκονος καὶ τὸ ποίημα αὐτοῦ "Ἅλωσις τῆς Κρήτης,"* (Herakleion 1960).

[22] PG 156.609ff.

[23] Michael Psellus, *Chronographia* 6.61.

[24] Cf. Agne Vasilikopoulou, *Ἀνδρόνικος ὁ Κομνηνὸς καὶ Ὀδυσσεύς*, ***EEBΣ*** 37 (1969-1970) 251-259.

level, the anonymous poet in the thirteenth or fourteenth century who adapted a story from the Arthurian cycle, probably from the Italian prose version of Marco Polo's amanuensis Rusticianus of Pisa – *The Old Knight,* 'Ο πρέσβυς ἱππότης – wove into his narrative images and effects of style borrowed from the Iliad.[25] Apart from frequent Homeric words, there are echoes of Homeric similes – for example, the Old Knight stands *ὥσπερ τις λίθος ἀκλινής, σκοπὸς τοῖς βαλομένοις* (or *βουλομένοις*) recalling the picture in Iliad 15.618 of the Achaeans standing their ground against the Trojan attack

ἠΰτε πέτρη
ἠλίβατος, μεγάλη, πολιῆς ἁλὸς ἐγγὺς ἐοῦσα
ἥ τε μένει λιγέων ἀνέμων λαιψηρὰ κέλευθα
κύματά τε τροφέοντα, τά τε προσερεύγεται αὐτήν.

Or Arthur dismissing Guinevere

ἄπιθι
γυναικωνῖτιν εὐπρεπῶς κοσμοῦσα και παιδίσκας

inevitably recalls Hector's dismissal of Andromache (Iliad 6.490ff.)

ἀλλ' εἰς οἶκον ἰοῦσα τὰ σαυτῆς ἔργα κόμιζε.
ἱστόν τ' ἠλακάτην τε, καὶ ἀμφιπόλοισι κέλευε
ἔργον ἐποίχεσθαι.

The outcome is that the Arthurian characters are treated with a certain mocking irony lacking in the solemn original.

To return to the subject of direct quotation, George Lakapenos, schoolmaster in Thessaly in the first half of the fourteenth century, pupil of Maximus Planudes, editor of a selection of the letters of Libanius and author of a commentary on the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus, one of those minor scholars and men of letters in which the late Byzantine world was so prolific, has 76 identifiable quotations of Homer in his 33 letters and the grammatical and stylistic commentaries that he wrote to accompany them.[26] The only classical writer whom he quotes more frequently is Aristophanes, not from a love of classical poetry, but from a desire to write what he fancied was pure Attic, as is shown by the next four sources from which he quotes – Synesius 55 quotations, Demosthenes 51, Libanius 44, Aelius Aristides 40. Classical Greek poetry is poorly represented – Aeschylus is cited once only, Theocritus 5

[25] Cf. P. Breillet, "La Table Ronde en Orient. Le poème grec du vieux chevalier," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 55 (1938) 318-340.

[26] Text in S. Lindstam, *Georgii Lacapeni et Andronici Zaridae epistulae XXXII cum epimerismis Lacapeni* (Göteborg 1924). Lacapenus's life and writings are discussed at length in S. Lindstam, *Georgii Lacapeni epistulae X priores cum epimerismis editae* (Uppsala 1910) ix-xxxv.

times, and even Euripides only 23 times. As for the Bible, Lakapenos quotes it only 8 times. His interest was predominantly rhetorical, yet even he could not resist the song of Homer's Sirens.

With this picture in our mind of the pervasive presence of Homer in Byzantine literature and thought, we will scarcely be surprised to find the empress Eudocia recounting the Gospel story in a patchwork of Homeric quotations,[27] or Theopylact Hephaistos, Archbishop of Bulgaria around 1100 and author of erudite and interminable commentaries on the Bible, arguing in one of his letters for the justice of God by quoting side by side Psalm 66.13-14, Iliad 24.524ff. on Zeus mixing men's destinies from two jars and Hesiod, Works and Days 179 *ἀλλ' ἔμπης καὶ τοῖσι μεμείξεται ἐσθλὰ κακοῖσιν*,[28] and in his Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles pausing to refute the truth of Iliad 6.488-489:

> *Μοῖραν δ' ὄυ τινά φημι πεφυγμένον ἔμμεναι ἀνδρῶν*
> *οὐ κακόν, οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθλόν, ἐπὴν τὰ πρῶτα γένηται.*

Nor, to jump back to the sixth century, need we find it strange that dedicatory inscriptions in churches in Palestine and elsewhere were couched in Homeric verse. The priest Obodianus at Eleutheropolis writes passable hexameters, with occasional false quantities. The afflatus of his colleague Stephanus of El-Boberije does not extend beyond the first half of each hexameter, which then trails off into prose, but with epic vocabulary and morphology.[29]

We have made a preliminary survey of the place of Homer in Byzantine life. Let us now turn to our two main themes – Byzantine scholarship on Homer and the image of Homer in popular belief and imagination.

We know very little of Homeric studies in the early Byzantine period, up to and including the eighth century. There are virtually no uncial manuscripts of Homer on parchment surviving. The two exceptions are in themselves interesting. The first is the Ambrosian Iliad, recently studied with deep sensitivity and impeccable scholarship by Professor Bianchi Bandinelli.[30] It is an illustrated edition – indeed all that now survives are pictures with bits of text on the back – made in Constantinople or possibly in Alexandria about A.D. 500 by a miniaturist who put together illustrations of Homeric subjects formed by iconographic and artistic traditions of very different ages and origins, and used them to accompany a text related to that of the Venetus A. As Bianchi Bandinelli observes, in the fifth century decorative repertory Homeric subjects take the place of mythological subjects, which might have given rise to suspicions of idolatry. In particular Achilles and the events of his life, whether

[27] A. Ludwich, *Eudocia Augusta, Proclus Lycius, Claudianus* (Leipzig 1897) 79-114.

[28] PG 126.537D.

[29] *SEG* 8.119 (El-Boberije near Samaria); *SEG* 8.243 (Eleutheropolis = Beit Jebrin).

[30] R. Bianchi Bandinelli, *Hellenistic Byzantine Miniatures of the Iliad* (Olten 1955). The review of this book by K. Weitzmann, *Gnomon* 29 (1957) 606-616 should also be read.

related by Homer or not, were the subject of many works of art from the fourth century onwards. It is in the context of this movement that we must seek to understand the Ambrosian Iliad, a luxury edition made for a wealthy patron. The other uncial Homer is that palimpsested about 800 in the monastery of Qarthamûn in Syria for a Syriac translation of the Monophysite theologian Severus of Antioch, a few leaves of which are now in the British Museum.[31] One wonders how many other monastic libraries had their copies of Homer side by side with their Psalters, their Evangeliaries, and their Praxapostoli. It appears that Theophilus of Edessa in the eighth century translated "two books of Homer on Ilion" into Syriac.[32] Were they the Iliad and the Odyssey or merely some mythological handbook?

A strange figure in this history of Homeric studies in the early Byzantine period is that of Demo the authoress of a commentary used by John Tzetzes and by Eustathios in the twelfth century. As she quotes Theodoret of Cyrrhus she cannot be earlier than the fifth century. She could well have written in the sixth. She commented on both Iliad and Odyssey, and dealt in allegorical exegesis of a vague physical character, drawing upon the first-century Stoic Pseudo-Herakleitos, but apparently not on Plotinus's pupil Porphyry, whose *Homeric Allegories,* intended to defend the poet against Plato's criticisms, played such a prominent role in later Byzantine Homeric scholarship, as we shall see. At the same time, if Karl Reinhardt is right, she showed common sense in distinguishing between proper and improper use of allegory.[33] One would like to know more about Demo, where she lived, how she obtained her knowledge, whether she taught pupils, and so on, for she is a welcome figure in the masculine world of Homeric scholarship. But all precision escapes us.

Be that as it may, it is not until the ninth century that we find Homeric studies once more in evidence, as part of that revival of learning often called the Macedonian renaissance, though in fact it began earlier, in the reigns of Theophilus and Michael III. The grammarian Kometas is the author of several poems preserved in the Greek anthology. He was a contemporary of Photius, a pupil of Leo the Mathematician, and held some official position as a teacher after 842.[34] His epigrams record some kind of restoration of old copies of the Iliad and Odyssey, though exactly what he did remains uncertain. The books were *οὐδαμῶς ἐστιγμένας* and he *στίξας διεσμίλευσε*; he rejected the *σάπρια* and *γράψας ἐκαινούργησε*; and his aim was that *οἱ γράφοντες* might learn correctly. It sounds like either a transcription into the new

[31] British Museum Additional MS 17210. Cf. W. Cureton, *Fragments of the Iliad of Homer from a Syriac Palimpsest* (London 1851); W. Wright, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London 1871) 2.548. P. Mazon, *Introduction à l'Iliade* (Paris 1942) 40ff.

[32] Cf. A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur* (Bonn 1922) 341. A curious account of the Trojan War also occurs in an anonymous Syriac chronicle; cf. F. Nau, *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 13 (1908) 90-97.

[33] Cf. A. Ludwich, "Die Homerdeuterin Demo," *Festschrift L. Friedländer* (Leipzig 1895) 296ff.; K. Reinhardt, *De graecorum theologia* (Berlin 1910) 57, 74.

[34] Cf. Lemerle (n. 10 above) 166-167, where references are given to the literature on Kometas.

minuscule hand, or the preparation of an exemplar for such a transcription. And it clearly involved questions of interpretation. How otherwise could one punctuate?

The Venetus A of the Iliad, our oldest manuscript of the entire poem, was written at the height of the Macedonian renaissance, in the early tenth century. Attempts by the late Professor Sévéryns[35] and by M. Bertrand Hemmerdinger[36] to identify the main hand have been inconclusive. But it is clearly written by – or more probably for – a scholar deeply interested in the establishment and interpretation of the text of Homer. The text, written in a large early minuscule, is marked with critical signs. Surrounding it is a solid mass of commentary, written in a smaller minuscule by the same hand. Between this commentary and the text, and also in the outer margins, there are a number of fairly lengthy notes, in the same hand, which sometimes repeat the information in the main commentary. And finally there are brief interlinear notes, still in the same hand. In other words, the manuscript is a compilation from several sources. For a variety of reasons it is beyond all doubt that the compilation was not made by the copyist of the Venetus A but by a predecessor. When and where did that predecessor work? The answer depends on an analysis of the sources from which he made his compilation. Much work has been done on this in the last century. We can identify among these sources a compilation of four late Hellenistic works on the text of the Iliad (the so-called *Viermänner-Kommentar*), the Homeric Lexicon of Apollonios Sophista, the *Etymologikon* of Orion, the Lexicon of Oros, the surviving debris of the Lexicon of Methodios, the grammatical works of George Choiroboskos, the Homeric *Epimerismi*, a lexicographical work that survives in a ninth-century manuscript in the Bodleian Library, a body of exegetical commentary that displays an inclination towards allegorical interpretation, and which included considerable excerpts from the *Quaestiones Homericae* of the third century Neoplatonist Porphyrios, and so on.[37] The details are unimportant and often in dispute. What matters is that this is substantially the material that the compilers of the first and longest of the great Byzantine etymological dictionaries – the *Etymologicum Genuinum*, of which only a small part has been published – had before them. We are in the milieu of Photius and of the scholars of a generation before him, men like Leo the Mathematician and Kometas, in the second quarter of the ninth century. Who the compiler was, who the inspirer and, as we should say today, the sponsor, of this enterprise was, we do not know and will probably never know. The names of Apion and Herodorus which Eustathios in the twelfth century gives as the authors of his version of the commentary tell us nothing. But what he was doing is clear enough. He was collecting and putting together in a single text all that he could lay his hands on of the surviving Homeric scholarship of Antiquity, as a fresh starting point for the

[35] A. Sévéryns, *Bulletin de l'Académie Royale de Belgique* (1951) 279ff.

[36] B. Hemmerdinger, "Sur deux manuscrits grecs," *Revue des études grecques* 69 (1956) 433-434.

[37] Cf. H. Erbse, "Zur handschriftlichen Überlieferung der Iliasscholien," *Mnemosyne* (1953) 25.

understanding of the poems. His interest lay not only in interpretation, allegorizing or otherwise, but also in the austere science of textual criticism. Even this is in accordance with the spirit of the age. The Patriarch Nicephorus in some of his theological works written shortly before his death in 829 notes variant readings in patristic texts and suspends judgment on questions of authenticity in the absence of manuscript evidence.[38] And, to take a trivial but amusing example, Photius was accused of having faked a pedigree of the upstart Basil I, which he wrote on an old piece of papyrus, *γράμμασιν Ἀλεξανδρινοῖς, τὴν ἀρχαικὴν ὅτι μάλιστα χειροθεσίαν μιμησάμενος*, bound in an old cover, and planted in the Palace Library.[39] Theological controversy had engendered a respect for documentary evidence and a realization that texts were corrupt. Indeed the very possibility of salvaging the debris of ancient Homeric scholarship may have been created by the collection and assembly in the capital of manuscripts from monasteries in the provinces in preparation for the Iconoclast Synod of 815.[40]

If, as we have suggested, the A-scholia were compiled in the same circle as the *Etymologicum Genuinum,* they were compiled before the *Etymologicum,* the author of which had before him a commentary containing all that is in our A-scholia plus something more, and which he called *ὑπόμνημα Ἰλιάδος* or *σχόλιον*. We can sometimes reconstruct this Byzantine commentary by comparison of the A-scholia and the jejune entries of the *Etymologicum Genuinum,* as Erbse does in his new edition.[41] This *ὑπόμνημα* may have existed as a separate book.

Perhaps we can glimpse another similar compilation behind the BT-scholia. Its author was less interested in textual matters – or perhaps he had less information on them at his disposition – and more concerned with interpretation, and in particular allegorical interpretation, based largely on Porphyry. It is likely enough that there was more than one group in ninth-century Constantinople anxious to provide itself with a sound basis for the understanding of Homer.

What neither of them had was an ancient text of the poems. The Iliad text of the Venetus A is a vulgate text with occasional Aristarchaean readings that can always have been introduced from the commentary. And the battery of Alexandrian critical signs that appear in the margin of the A text are certainly not copied from ancient manuscripts of the Iliad. They are reconstructed – usually rightly but occasionally wrongly – from the information contained in the commentary. This is why one may speak of the work of the compiler as providing a starting point. These scholars did not merely copy and preserve. They hoped to go beyond the *παράδοσις* and

[38] Cf. P. J. Alexander, "The Iconoclastic Council of St. Sophia (815)," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 7 (1953) 40, 53.

[39] *Vita S. Ignatii,* PG 105.568A.

[40] Cf. B. Hemmerdinger, *Essai sur l'histoire du texte de Thucydide* (Paris 1955) 34; idem, "Une mission scientifique arabe à l'origine de la renaissance iconoclaste," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 55 (1962) 66-67; R. Browning, "Notes on the Scriptor Incertus de Leone Armenio," *Byzantion* 35 (1965) 403-404.

[41] H. Erbse, *Scholia graeca in Iliadem* 1 (Berlin 1969) 59, n. 93.

reconstruct the Homer of Antiquity. That they had neither the evidence nor the techniques to realize this aim does not diminish the seriousness of their intention.

What most readers wanted, however, was interpretation, not textual criticism. And they wanted interpretation that squared with what they thought they knew already. Hence the fortunes of allegory. The Byzantines were not the first to see a hidden meaning in Homer. Those who replied to the criticisms of Xenophanes probably already had recourse to this method of avoiding the horns of a dilemma. The Stoics systematized the allegorical interpretation of Homer. And the Neoplatonists made it readily available in handbooks. All that was needed to make Homer entirely acceptable to the most orthodox Byzantine taste was to combine pagan Homeric allegory with Christian Old Testament allegory.[42] And this is precisely what we find happening. Indeed a beginning had been made by Clement of Alexandria. Michael Psellos's friend and older contemporary Nicetas, a teacher in a school under the patronage of the Patriarchate, did not stick to the letter of ancient poetry or to the charm of its meter, but expounded its *ἀπόθετον κάλλος*. So he explained the binding of Ares as a symbol of the victory of *λόγος* over *θυμός*, and the *φίλη πατρίς* to which Odysseus longed to return from the island of Circe as *ἡ ἄνω Ἰερουσαλήμ*, which if men forget they become as beasts.[43] Michael Psellos himself was less thorough-going. His lectures survive on three passages of the Iliad – Pandaros's bow, the Council of the Gods at the beginning of book 5 of the Iliad, and the Golden Chain.[44] Though he allegorizes all three passages in the end, as others had done before him for more than a thousand years, he reaches his goal by a discursive route, with much discussion of etymology and distinction between synonyms. This explanatory material he collects not only from lexica and from Porphyry via a version of the exegetic scholia, but also from his own wide reading, and occasionally, it must be admitted, from his imagination. For by the end of the eleventh century the Byzantine intellectual world was no longer painfully gathering together the debris of the culture of late Antiquity. Men felt at home in the civilization they had inherited. They had confidence in their own judgment and were ready to challenge the ancients and to disagree with them.

This new freedom in the handling of traditional material is more clearly seen in the work of two men who in the following century wrote at length upon Homer, Eustathios of Thessalonica, and John Tzetzes. Eustathios is an attractive character who had a long career first as a teacher at the Patriarchal School in Constantinople and later as Metropolitan of Thessalonika, where he encouraged reform of the monasteries and played a courageous part when the city was sacked by the Normans in 1185. His *Παρεκβολαί* on the Iliad and Odyssey – the word is a Byzantine technical term for a compilatory commentary – survive probably in autograph

[42] Cf. F. Mehmel, "Homer und die Griechen," *Antike und Abendland* 4 (1954) 16-41 P. Lévèque, *Aurea Catena Homeri* (Paris 1959); J. Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie* (Paris 1958).

[43] Michael Psellus, *Epitaphius in Nicetam*, in Sathas (n. 8 above) 87-96.

[44] Ed. C. Sathas, *Annuaire des études grecques* 9 (1875) 187-222.

manuscripts of their author. They are evidently the text of the lectures that he gave at the Patriarchal School before his translation in 1175.[45] He was of course a teacher of rhetoric, not of grammar, and in an earlier age would not have been concerned with Homer except as a source of striking quotations. But the boundaries were long confused. We have a description of his daily lectures from the pen of his former pupil Michael Choniates, Metropolitan of Athens. Michael speaks of the impression produced by his wide-ranging erudition.[46] And indeed the Παρεκβολαί are fantastically discursive, the author's mind working by association of ideas. It takes him twelve quarto printed pages to dispose of Iliad 1.1. He had read everything – or so he would have us believe. In particular he had not only Byzantine exegetical commentaries on Homer but also a version, fuller than that surviving in the Venetus A, of the ninth-century compilation of textual scholarship. It must have been similar to the *ὑπόμνημα* used by the compilers of the *Etymologicum Genuinum.* He attributes this commentary – which must in his library have been a separate book, not a set of notes in the margin of a text – to Apion and Herodorus. The names tell us nothing. In any case Eustathios was a compulsive name dropper. His interest in the criticism of the text, which is rather desultory, is evidence of the seriousness with which he tackled the elucidation of Homer. Equally revealing is the way in which he constantly seeks illustration from his own experience. The spoken Greek of his time, the customs of peasants and townsmen around him, popular beliefs, recent events, are all made to shed light on the poems. Homer in a sense belonged to the same world as Eustathios, and his poetry could be understood by accumulation of information and exercise of reasoning.

John Tzetzes is a very different character. His career marred at the outset by a mysterious error of judgment in which the wife of a provincial governor was involved, he lived the life of a poor scholar, sometimes obliged to sell even his books and to rely on his memory. He wrote on everything, for a variety of patrons, and is one the first men in European society to live by his pen.[47] Three works are particularly concerned with Homer. First his commentary on the Iliad. Intended as a schoolbook, to supply the explanation for the thirty to fifty lines learned daily, it is one of Tzetzes's early works, composed about 1140, when he was no more than thirty years of age. It is much earlier than the great commentaries on Aristophanes and Lycophron but shows some of the same independence of view and readiness to take issue with the giants of the past. The scale is large, like that of Eustathios's commentary. Allegory is Tzetzes's staple, but he backs it up with a pyrotechnic display of not always wholly relevant erudition, gathered from lexica, from exegetical scholia, from a fuller version of the Venetus A scholia – perhaps the same book

[45] M. H. A. L. H. van der Valk, *Eustathii archiepiscopi Thessalonicensis commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem pertinentes* 1 (Leiden 1971) 50.

[46] S. Lampros, Μιχαὴλ Ἀκομινάτου τοῦ Χωνιάτου τὰ σωζόμενα 1 (Athens 1879) 287.

[47] On Tzetzes's life cf. C. Wendel, "Tzetzes," *RE* 7A (1948) 1960-1965.

as Eustathios used a generation later – and from his own wide reading and retentive memory. The commentary does not survive entire, and may never in fact have been completed. Only that on the first 102 lines of Book 1 has been published, and that twice.[48] The complete commentary on Book 1 is preserved in a manuscript in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge. It is remarkable that no Cambridge scholar has yet seen fit to produce an *editio princeps*. It might yield interesting fruit. A French scholar recently edited a number of new fragments of Hipponax from the unpublished part of the commentary.[49]

A work of a different kind, aimed at a different class of reader, are Tzetzes's Homeric Allegories, of which the full text has recently become available.[50] These are two long poems in fifteen syllable accentual verse – the so-called political verses – dedicated to the empress Irene, consort of Manuel I. Irene was born Bertha of Sulzbach, sister-in-law of the Hohenstaufen emperor Conrad III. Brought as a young woman to the dazzling court of Constantinople, she sought an easy introduction to the greatest poet of her new country. Tzetzes supplied it. A long prologue on Homer's birthplace and life, and on the background of the Trojan War, from Hecuba's dream and the birth of Paris, sketches of the leading characters in the Trojan War, and a summary of the plot of the Iliad, are followed by a paraphrase of the story line, accompanied sometimes by allegorical explanations, often at different levels simultaneously – physical, moral, and historical – and every now and then by a display of usually irrelevant learning on such topics as the Nile flood, the philosophy of Anaxagoras, or the Roman augur's staff. The bewildered princess would be familiar with this kind of interpretation of the Bible. Problems of textual criticism and citations of rare authors were above her head.

The Homeric Allegories already treat of matters preceding or following those narrated in the poems. The natural curiosity of man had already called forth a variety of literature purporting to fill up gaps in the story as told by Homer, beginning with the Cyclic epics, and going on to Hellenistic mystifications like the diaries of the Trojan War surviving in Latin translation under the names of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian. This is not the kind of thing scholars worry about. It is rather evidence for the widespread reading of Homer by ordinary men and women. The middle Byzantine world had a healthy appetite for this kind of background to Homer, an appetite to which the third of Tzetzes's works ministered, the *Carmina Iliaca*. These are three hexameter poems summarizing events before, during, and after the Iliad, from the Rape of Helen to the Sack of Troy. The material came ultimately

[48] G. Hermann, *Draconis Stratonicensis liber de metris poeticis, Ioannis Tzetzae Exegesis in Homeri Iliadem* (Leipzig 1812); L. Bachmann, *Scholia in Homeri Iliadem* 1 (Leipzig 1835).

[49] O. Masson, *Les fragments du poète Hipponax* (Paris 1962) 42 52.

[50] Published in part by Matranga (n. 14 above) 43-295, and J. F. Boissonade, *Tzetzae Allegoriae Iliadis* (Paris 1857). The Allegories on the second half of the Odyssey were published almost simultaneously by H. Hunger, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 49 (1956) 249-310 and by Franca Finocchiaro, *Boll. Com. per la preparazione dell'edizione nazionale dei classici gr. e lat.* n.s. 5 (1957) 45 61.

from the Cyclic poems and Attic drama. The immediate sources were probably Quintus of Smyrna, Tryphiodorus, and the early Byzantine chroniclers.

A contemporary of Tzetzes went further. Isaac Porphyrogenitus, who is to be identified with Isaac Comnenus, son of Alexius I, brother of Anna Comnena, and father of the quixotic Andronicus I, wrote a short prose work in very affected classicizing Greek, *Περὶ τῶν καταλειφθέντων ὑπὸ τοῦ Ὁμήρου*,[51] in which he begins with the capture of Troy by Herakles and the Amazons, and its rebuilding by Laomedon, deals at length with Hecuba's dream before the birth of Paris and with Paris's childhood and youth, and carries the story on to the Sack of Troy and the return of Agamemnon and Menelaus. This information the learned prince claims to have extracted from *διάφορα παλαιῶν βιβλία* and speaks repeatedly of the labor involved in its compilation. In fact most of it comes from Dictys and Dares, via the Byzantine chroniclers. Attached to the work on what Homer did not tell is another, shorter treatise, even more indicative of popular interest in Homer. It is a series of *χαρακτηρίσματα* of the principal Greeks and Trojans, rather after the manner of police descriptions of wanted men, for example, *Ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἀγαμέμνων μέγας ἦν, λευκός, εὔρινος, δασυπώγων, μελάνθριξ, μεγαλόφθαλμος, ἀπτόητος, εὐγενής, μεγαλόψυχος.* Such characterizations already existed for the principal biblical figures from Adam to Saint Paul and for the Fathers of the Church. They appear in the *Chronicle* of Malalas, in Tzetzes's *Allegories* and elsewhere, and ultimately go back to Dares and Dictys. They are connected with the science of physiognomonics, and had their influence on the iconographic tradition of Byzantine art.

It is interesting to see how the middle Byzantines envisioned the heroes of Homer. Achilles of course was tall, blond, slender and so on, but he was also *gunaiko-prosopos.* Patroclus, surprisingly, was *prokoilios,* but otherwise good looking. Odysseus is sometimes bald, sometimes *progastor.* Hector was *heterophthalmos,* which must be used in its Byzantine sense of "with eyes of different colors." Such men were often credited with supernatural powers.

Among the strange pieces of information that we pick up from these para-Homeric texts is that Paris, as a young man, studied rhetoric and wrote a poem on cosmogony. This is a typical product of the schoolmasterly mind. The not very edifying story of the Judgment of Paris seems to have been explained allegorically in Hellenistic times as meaning that Paris composed a treatise or poem arguing that love is more powerful than wisdom or strength. In due course the poem was even written for him, though it has since perished. One finds traces of this allegorical interpretation in Sallustius's *Περὶ θεῶν καὶ κόσμου*. Even this was too much for the schoolroom. Love, as every philosopher knew, is the principle that makes the elements cohere together and form the physical world. So Paris is made to while away his idle hours on Mount Ida by writing a philosophical poem on the origin of the universe.

Before we leave the brilliant and civilized world of twelfth-century Constan-

[51] Ed. H. Hinck, *Polemonis Declamationes* (Leipzig 1873) 59-88.

tinople, let us glance at the work of one other Homeric scholar, whose name we shall never know. A group of manuscripts of the Iliad belonging to the thirteenth century or later contains many Alexandrian readings not in the Vulgate text. Walter Leaf believed that a manuscript might actually have survived from Hellenistic times to be copied in the Constantinople of the Comneni.[52] Allen realized that the interesting readings in these manuscripts are selected from those mentioned in the scholia, but thought of this as occurring by chance, since Byzantine scholars were supposed to be uninterested in textual criticism.[53] Erbse has recently shown that the archetype of this group was edited by an unknown scholar, probably of the twelfth century, who used the fuller version of the Venetus A scholia, which Tzetzes and Eustathios consulted, to try to reconstruct the Homeric text of the Alexandrians by careful comparison of the recorded variants;[54] which is after all just what a modern editor of Homer does.

The Latin capture of Constantinople and the breakup of the Byzantine empire destroyed the conditions in which a Eustathios or a Tzetzes could flourish. But Homeric scholarship continued. In the Nicaean empire Michael Senacherim, teacher of rhetoric, imperial secretary, and later army commander and senior minister, composed a commentary on Homer, as yet unpublished.[55] It is said to be largely allegorical and of little interest. Manuel Moschopoulos's commentary on the first two books of the Iliad we have already met. His contemporary John Pediasimos, commentator on Theocritus, writer on mathematics and archivist of the cathedral at Ohrid, composed an allegorizing companion to the first four books of the Iliad.[56] George Lekapenos, the Thessalian schoolmaster whom we found citing Homer so frequently, may be the author of treatises on grammar and figures of speech in Homer, again unpublished.[57] This late Byzantine material, of which these are only a few examples, is a trackless jungle in which the first voyages of exploration have yet to be made. What the explorers will find will be mostly derivative and low-level exegesis for schoolboys. But there may well be more. For Homer was still read by men of great learning, such as the copyist of the Geneva manuscript of the Iliad, with its long and learned commentary, or George Chrysococces, doctor from Trebizond

[52] W. Leaf, *The Iliad,* ed. 2 (London 1902) 2, xxii-xxiii.

[53] T. W. Allen, *Homeri Ilias* (Oxford 1931) 1.210-216; cf. also G. Pasquali, *Storia della tradizione e critica del testo* (Florence 1934) 212-213.

[54] Erbse (n. 2 above) 184-209.

[55] Cf. Amadeus Peyron, *Notitia librorum . . . qui donante Ab. Thoma Valperga-Calusio u. cl. illati sunt in reg. Taurinensis Athenaei bibliothecam* (Leipzig 1820) 23; Anon. "Senacherim," *Rheinisches Museum* 18 (1863) 447; M. A. Andreeva, *Očerki po kul'ture vizantijskago dvora v XIII veke* (Prague 1927) 133; M. Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile* (Oxford 1974) 160, 161, 180, 296.

[56] Cf. S. I. Kourouses, Μανουὴλ Γαβαλᾶς εἶτα Ματθαῖος μητροπολίτης Ἐφέσου 1 (Athens 1972) 269, n. 2.; D. M. Nicol, "The Byzantine Church and Hellenic Learning in the Fourteenth Century," *Studies in Church History* 5 (1969) 38-39.

[57] Cf. Lindstam, *Epistulae X priores* (n. 26 above) xxii-xxiii.

and author of works on astronomy embodying material translated from Persian, who copied the Odyssey in his own hand in 1336 (cod. Vat. Pal. 7).[58]

I now pass to my final topic, the impact of Homer on the popular imagination. Achilles was a figure who lived on in the memory of the Greeks almost as did Alexander the Great. We know from the emperor Julian that libations were still offered at his tomb by the Scamander in the fourth century A.D. by no less a person than the bishop of Ilium.[59] And when, 900 years later, the austere and crotchety monk Nicephorus Blemmydes visited a church by the same Scamander he was horrified to find among the figures in the frescoes that of a young warrior bearing the legend "The Prophet Achilles."[60] In his native Thessaly too he was not forgotten. The popularity of Saint Achilles, who had been bishop of Larissa in the fourth century, probably owed something to his bearing the name of the leader of the Myrmidons. He appears as a supernatural guide and counselor as late as the sixteenth century.[61] Achilles is the hero of a vernacular Greek epic poem of the late Byzantine period.[62] The story it tells has little to do with Homer. It is substantially that of another Greek folk hero, Digenis Akritas. Only at the end, and only in one of the versions, is a short appendix summarizing the events of the Trojan war. Yet the poet knows Homer and claims to draw upon him. And there are some strange echoes. For instance in the Byzantine poem Polyxena says to Achilles:

Πατέρας καὶ μητέρα μου ἡ αὐθεντία σου εἶναι
καὶ ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἀδελφαὶ καὶ φῶς μου καὶ ζωή μου.
(vv. 1268-1269)

Had the poet in mind Andromache's moving words to Hector:

Ἕκτορ, ἀτὰρ σύ μοί ἐσσι πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ
ἠδὲ κασίγνητος, σὺ δέ μοι θαλερὸς παρακοίτης.
(Iliad 6.429-430)

Constantine Hermoniakos was court poet and probably court physician to John II Komnenos Angelodoukas, Despot of Epirus circa 1330. John was an unsavory adventurer, whose real name was Orsini, who reached his throne by murdering his brother and lost it by being murdered by his wife. But he was a patron of letters in his way. And it was at his command that Hermoniakos composed his *Metaphrasis* of the Iliad into the vulgar tongue.[63] This is possibly the worst poem ever written in the

[58] Cf. S. Runciman, *The Last Byzantine Renaissance* (Cambridge 1970) 52-53, 89; E. Janssens, *Trébizonde en Colchide* (Brussels 1969) 188.

[59] Julian, *ep.* 19.

[60] N. Festa, *Theodori Ducae Lascaris epistolae* (Florence 1898) 310.

[61] Cf. F. Barišić, *Čuda Dimitrija solunskog kao istoriski izvori* (Belgrade 1953) 26.

[62] Ed. D. C. Hesseling, *L'Achilléide byzantine* (Amsterdam 1919).

[63] Ed. E. Legrand, *Bibliothèque grecque vulgaire* 5 (Paris 1890). On John II cf. D. M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium 1261-1453* (London 1972) 184-185.

Greek language. Composed in vernacular Greek with a copious admixture of learned forms, generally used without any grasp of their meaning or structure, it is written in the Hiawatha meter, a distant epigone of the anacreontic. When he is short of syllables, the poet ekes out his line with γε, γάρ, or γοῦν. Only about half of the poem is made up from Homeric material. The rest, in which Hermoniakos deals with the life of Homer, the birth and upbringing of Paris, the kidnapping of Helen, the assembly of the Greeks, the Trojans' search for allies, the love of Achilles and Polyxena, the death of Achilles, the quarrel over his arms, the wooden horse, the sack of Troy, the fate of the Trojan women, is derived from Tzetzes and from the Byzantine chroniclers. An example of this last is the Trojan request for help from the prophet David, a request promptly refused because the Trojans were idolaters. The same curious story occurs in the sixth-century Chronicle of John Malalas. It depends on chronological links established by early christian scholars. Some have thought – and they may well be right – that Hermoniakos had never read Homer at all, but only a prose paraphrase of the Iliad. The surge and thunder is gone. But something of Homer's grandeur remains, to be grasped by the unlettered. The inept work had its readers. Three manuscripts survive. And long after the fall of Constantinople a revised version was made by Nikolaos Loukanis and printed in Venice in 1526, without overt acknowledgment of the debt to Hermoniakos.

Very different from Hermoniakos's paraphrase and of far higher quality is a vernacular poem on the Trojan war in fifteen-syllable meter preserved in a manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale, edited for the first time a few years ago in a Ph.D. thesis by Dr. Dimitrios Dedes, and to be published soon. Here too the genuine Homeric material occupies only a part of the poem. The rest deals with the by now familiar pre-Homeric and post-Homeric episodes. The birth and childhood of Paris are treated in particular detail, and with a wealth of invention. The infant Paris is set adrift in a casket on the sea which is found by a citizen of Tarsos named Selenios. Elected leader of a band of children, he is hauled before King Priam for a youthful peccadillo. Priam recognizes the lad as his son, and he and Hecuba shut him up in a castle. His violent conduct causes a riot among the Trojans, and Paris has to flee for his life. He is shipwrecked and given shelter by three monks. Now Helen is introduced, and the story of her suitors and her marriage to Menelaus told. Soon Paris is made commander-in-chief, on the strength of his prowess at the joust. One evening at dinner he helps Helen with her music, and they fall in love. Menelaus goes to visit a distant castle, leaving Paris in charge of his palace. He and Helen consummate their love. When Helen becomes pregnant they decide to leave for Troy, taking all Menelaus's wealth with them.

The Greek chiefs assemble to support Menelaus and the Trojan war begins. Achilles, offended at the loss of Chryseis, disguises himself as a woman and lives unnoticed in the Greek camp until discovered by a stratagem. The war goes on, with many notable single combats. Achilles kills Hector. Priam and Paris offer Achilles the hand of Polyxena, and Achilles enters Troy to claim his bride, only to be slain by Paris and Deiphobos. The angry Greeks build the wooden horse and withdraw. The Trojans take the horse into the city, the Greeks return and Troy is put to fire and

sword. Achilles's body is recovered and buried at the Hexamilion.[64] While the fleet is hindered from sailing by adverse winds, Achilles appears to the Greeks in a dream and tells them they must sacrifice Priam and his family. This the Greeks do on the next day, and the fleet sails for home. The poem concludes with a lament for Achilles, what would be called in Greece today a *μοιρολόγι*, and with some reflections on the inevitability of death.

It is hardly likely that our poet had ever read Homer in spite of his claim to have done so. His material comes from Tzetzes, from the chronicle of Manasses, perhaps from Hermoniakos. And he has introduced material from the story of Apollonios king of Tyre and probably from some of the vernacular Greek romances of chivalry. There is much coincidence of expression and manner with the Byzantine Achilleid, including lines common to both texts, and with later Greek folk poetry. Whether this is oral poetry I leave to wiser heads to decide. But it is certainly poetry for a popular audience, for men who have little acquaintance with Greek literary tradition and who care nothing for textual criticism or edifying interpretation, but for whom the name of Homer and the story of Troy still retain their magic.

Homer was a closed book to the Western world in the Middle Ages. But through the Latin versions of Dictys and Dares, the Latin Little Iliad, Ovid's *Heroides*, and the like, men had some knowledge of the tale of Troy. Out of this, in the later Middle Ages poets fashioned a story that was chivalrous rather than heroic in tone. The culmination of this development was the Old French *Roman de Troie* of Benoît de Sainte-Maure (fl. ca. 1150), which begins with the landing of the Argonauts and carries the tale down to the return of the Greek heroes.[65] It is Benoît, with his interest in romantic passion, who first tells the story of Prince Troilus and the faithless Briseida (whom Boccaccio transformed into Criseida). The French knights and men-at-arms who set up their principalities and dukedoms in Greek lands after the Fourth Crusade brought Benoît's poem with them. A generation or so later their bilingual courts became centers of translation and adaptation of western European vernacular literature into Greek. It was probably in the fourteenth century that someone – we know neither who he was nor where he lived – produced a Greek version of the *Roman de Troie*. Its attraction would lie not only in the additional information it contained, but in a moral tone and social values more in accord with the spirit of the age. The translation is fairly close, though here and there the Greek poet omits or embroiders on passages. The difference in length – 11,000 lines in Greek, 30,000 in Old French – is largely accounted for by the difference in length of line – 8 syllables in French, 15 in Greek – but also to some degree by the tautness of the Greek compared with the rather diffuse Old French. The translator, though no Homer, was a skilled craftsman working in a traditional medium in which he was

[64] On this wall built across the Isthmus of Corinth by Manuel II in 1415 cf. Nicol (n. 60 above) 343; J. W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391-1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick, N.J. 1964) 311-316.

[65] Ed. L. Constans, *Le Roman de Troie*, 6 vols. (Paris 1904-1912).

entirely at home. His language is that of the medieval Greek ballads of chivalry, basically spoken Greek, colored by the prestigious literary tradition. He clearly did not know Homer, and indeed had little acquaintance with classicizing Greek literature at all, as is shown by the strange forms that he gives to his heroes' names, transliterated from Old French – Ἕκούβα, Ἀνδρόμυθα. But he satisfied his public. There are at least five manuscripts of this long poem – by far the longest in Byzantine vernacular Greek. Only a few hundred lines have been published, and that from a single manuscript.[66] Mrs. Elizabeth Jeffreys of the Dumbarton Oaks Center is now engaged on the preparation of a critical edition of the complete text, which will be a major contribution to our knowledge of Greek language and literature in the Middle Ages and to our understanding of the development of European culture.

The Latins were not the only foreigners to be captured by the tale of Troy. A few years after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror passed through Troy and visited the tombs of Achilles and Ajax. He praised them for their memorable exploits and congratulated them because they had Homer to sing their praises.[67]

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[66] D. I. Mavrophrydes, Ἐκλογὴ μνημείων τῆς νεωτέρας Ἑλληνικῆς γλώσσης (Athens 1866) 183-211.

[67] Critoboulos 4.11.5.