

Kirk, G.S., The Language and Background of Homer. Cambridge. 1964

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*Interpolation*

p.67 Descriptions, as we find when we try to date them, can fit well enough with real objects of very different character, and at all periods conspicuous discrepancies must have been eliminated; the poems contain few which could be detected without a card index. If an incongruity is immediately apparent, the possibility of interpolation cannot be ignored, but the feeling of a modern reader is an unreliable criterion. Doubt, for instance, whether Homer's sense of fitness would have admitted a gorgoneion among the other ornaments of Agamemnon's shield is confirmed by chronological arguments, but was it Homer or an interpolator who set a hundred men-at-arms among the traditional *φάλαξ* and *φάλαγγες* of Athene's helmet? These are questions of poetic probability, not of antiquarian consistence. The traditional groupings of nouns and epithets and the way they are adapted, interchanged, and supplemented, examined objectively and as a whole, can show something of Homer's method and of the nature of the material from which he drew.

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