

- p. 272 Still less is it evidence for difference of authorship that one part of the poem may differ in tone from another. It is indeed remarkable that the poet of Hector and Andromache can also be the poet of the $\Delta\iota\omicron\varsigma$ $\epsilon\upsilon\mu\epsilon\tau\eta$, but for such wonders gratitude, not doubt, is the right answer. Such a range of tone as Homer possesses can only be paralleled in Shakespeare. These two alone among great poets have fully explored both laughter and sorrow. Milton's majesty excludes laughter, and Dante's laughter is only occasional and sardonic. But Shakespeare and Homer make humour an absolute value which needs no other justification. When they are amused, it is enough for them. They, too, have the rare gift of laughing sometimes at what they love and loving none the less because of it. Homer may smile at the heroic simplicity of his most charming heroes, but he does not falter in his belief that they are all that men should be. Shakespeare in his most tragic moments can fling a joke at destiny and still keep the sublimity of his heroes fighting against fate. The combination of the tragic and the comic is so rare in great poetry that it may well give us pause, but it is foolishness to announce that the two can never be combined in a single man. Still less is it possible to distinguish various strata in the Iliad by tests drawn from other varieties of temper. The sentimentality, which Wilamowitz finds characteristic of the author of $\Sigma\tau$, may well be combined with the 'sly undertone' which he finds in the author of A and \bar{E} .¹ After all, the same man composed Leporello's Song and the Statue Music. But these distinctions of temper are useful and indeed important, because they show the great range of Homer's poetical gifts. Some other great poets impose on their material the masterful impress of an intense personality, but Homer, like Shakespeare, is multiple and various.
- p. 268 If Homer lived in Asia Minor in the eighth century, it remains to decide how he knew and wrote of events which took place in the twelfth. In this question as in so many others analogy gives the best help. The Nibelungenlied was written in the twelfth century, but it treats of events dating back to Attila and Theodoric. The Song of Roland may have been written in the reign of William the Conqueror, but it tells of Charlemagne who lived nearly three hundred years earlier. These two poems got their facts not from contemporary chronicles, but from local traditions and earlier poems on the same subject. The fight at Roncasvalles was a tradition of the Pyrenees, and the story of the Nibelungs was an old story told often before in short epic lays like the Song of Hildebrand. Homer's material must have been must the same as these. Perhaps the site of Troy was connected with the story of a great siege; it must anyhow have been celebrated often before in poetry. Perhaps, too, he used other short poems, like the later Shield of Heracles or even much simpler and more rugged ballads, which the Greeks allowed to die once their stories had been told by Homer. But in this shadow-land it is impossible to move with certainty. Of poetry before Homer no trace at all survives. But it certainly existed, and there we must leave the problem . . .
- p. 268 The fact remains that all we know of Homer comes from the poems he wrote, and we are not likely to know more. He lived before written history, and he belonged to a class whose business was to tell of the doings of others, not to blazon himself to posterity. His name survived, and in this he was luckier than the great poets who wrote the Edda poems or the Border Ballads. His memory, too, was revered, even if competition for his origin obscured his history. And in this he was luckier than the author of Beowulf, whose fame rests on a single anonymous and charred manuscript. Even the Elizabethan dramatists, who lived in an age which valued individual personality more than any other thing, failed singularly to acquaint posterity with their lives. We know very little of Shakespeare, and almost nothing of Webster or Beaumont. So it is hardly surprising that we know nothing of Homer.