



CENTER FOR  
HELLENIC  
STUDIES  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

**CLASSICS@: Issue 3**

The Homerizon: Conceptual  
Interrogations in Homeric Studies

## Cretan Homer's Fragment of Tradition

T.R. Walsh

Armstrong, Richard and Dué, Casey, eds, *Classics@* Issue 3. For the full citation for this article please consult [www.chs.harvard.edu/publications.sec/classics.ssp](http://www.chs.harvard.edu/publications.sec/classics.ssp)

## Homer's Fragment of Tradition

T. R. Walsh

"Get you home, you fragments."

*Coriolanus* I.1.221

This essay is theoretical in keeping with Homerizon's goal of asking each of the contributors "why Homer is done in a certain way." As I gaze at the Homerizon, I see the poet's demesne as bounded by tradition, a line that we can make out only through the texts that we have, beyond which is an expanse, perhaps a realm of gold, that is not available to us, not really. What is available are the remains of those texts and the inferences we can make from them, carefully and dynamically in the course our millenia-long conversations with our predecessors--scholars, poets, citizens of the intellect. The world to which we can gain access in this way is of necessity fragmentary. Acknowledging that fragmentariness is fraught with perils, in part because the "fragment" has accompanied the discourse of modernity, at least since F. Schlegel. "Soul-searching about our motivations and assumptions concerning Homer," as Homerizon's project boldly declares, implicates not only the small bits of antiquity which it is our privilege to host as scholars and readers, but the implications extend to us as moderns (and post-moderns) precisely because modernity identifies the fragment with itself. I offer here an exploration of the concept of the fragment for the significance it may have for the readership of Homer.

This essay concern, then, the concept of "the fragment" as a theoretical tool for understanding Homer, given that the term itself has a different meaning in its modernist context and in its classicist context. At the end of the theoretical portion of this paper there will be pointers to arrays of problems that the notion of the fragment can help us understand. But my intention of this paper is not teleological. I am not intending to "solve a problem." A better metaphor for what I am doing here continues Homerizon's central metaphor: By a shining a light

refracted through the notion of “the fragment” I try to keep the lighthouse beam lit so that it can give some badly needed visibility over one fundamental assumption about a key term for us Homerists, the word “tradition” and what I will take to be its necessary relation to the fragmentary.

I begin with an assertion: the fragment manifests itself in two distinct modes of discourse:

a.) the “romantic” theory of the fragment.

b.) the “classical” fact of the fragment.

The romantic theory of the fragment is a mode of thinking about literature that we can locate in the thinking of Friedrich Schlegel and others in the romantic period of European intellectual history. The fact of the classical fragment acknowledges that classical literature has, for one of its sources, the remains that are by chance and circumstance dealt to us as fragments of texts (as well as of other artifacts) and, that *as* fragments, constitute the material basis for a significant part of the corpus of ancient literature.

An immediate goal for homerists if they set beside each other these two views of the fragment, the theory and the fact of the fragment, is to consider how the congruences or incongruences—the harmonies and the dissonances—that are produced by contemplating closely both of these perspectives, affect our own perceptions of the Homeric texts. In essence, I want to ask if, to some extent unconsciously, we reproduce those very same harmonies or dissonances even as we make advances in other aspects of our approaches to the Homeric treasures that continually come to light, whether those treasures be facts of performance, discourse, evolution, textual production, poetic interpretation, anthropological insight, putting the phorminx in Demodokos’s hand, etc. etc.

A second goal is to suggest that such congruences or incongruences affect the way the notion of tradition comes to be framed with respect to Homeric discourse. So I will distribute my discussion down those two paths of thought. In Part 1a, I look at the theory of the fragment as it is deployed by F. Schlegel followed by an observation in Part 1b that the heritage of early romanticism’s theory of the fragment splits in two, first manifesting itself as high-modernist

anxiety and then post-modern exuberance. In Part 2, after a brief reassessment of the relationship between classical scholarship and the fragment, I will discuss the “fact” of the fragment in the light of the romantic theory presented in Part 1.

Finally, in Part 3, I turn to the Homeric text in order to take up, using a case-study approach, some places where the idea of fragmentation shines a different light on Homeric discourse than we commonly read by. My claim will be, as I said, not that the “fragment” solves any particular crux, but rather that the way we perceive Homeric discourse is colored by how we, as moderns and post-moderns, view the relation of part to whole, in the context of an idea of the tradition. My point will be that, when the tradition is considered the “whole,” each performance and each text is necessarily a fragment of that whole. To put it in that way helps us understand the resistance that there has been on the part of many of our friends in classical scholarship to some Homerists’ predilection for foregrounding the tradition when issues of interpretation and meaning are being addressed. It is not merely that tough-minded non-Romantics are wary of invoking the “folk-poet,” but that truly to accept the tradition seems a diminishment--in some eyes--of a full and rich text to a status subordinate to some merely, on this view, putative tradition, thereby to make a whole text into a “mere” fragment of “the” (where “the” implies “wholeness”) tradition. To conclude, I will suggest that such anxieties are the result of a kind of paradigm shift that happens when traditional forms and attitudes are supplanted by post-traditional (“modern,” if we will) forms and attitudes.

### **Part 1a: The Fragment and its Doubles**

The fragment is amphibious. It swims in the depths of ancient oceans and it roams our modern desert terrain, carefully footing its way through the newly formed vales and crags of post-modernity, even as it emerges from antiquity’s seas, a castaway with but the few items it could rescue from the shipwreck of history. The German romantics and philhellenes, from F. Schlegel on, set the stage by identifying the fragment not with the exuberance of the incomplete--the way

some do now.<sup>1</sup> Indeed Schlegel's fundamental gesture in establishing the fragment as a cognitive tool hardly despairs of fragmentation, even as he secures for antiquity pride of wholeness:

Alle klassischen Gedichte der Alten hängen zusammen, unzertrennlich, bilden ein organisches Ganzes, sind richtig angesehen nur Ein Gedicht, das einzige in welchem die Dichtkunst selbst vollkommen erscheint. (*FSKA* 265)

All the classical poems of the ancients are coherent, inseparable; they form an organic whole, they constitute, properly viewed, only a single poem, the only one in which poetry itself appears in perfection.<sup>2</sup>

It is not merely that the classical is the emblem of wholeness, of literal integrity, but that all of antiquity is one whole--the anti-fragment.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, how extravagantly Schlegel's claim for the wholeness of antiquity flies in the face of the very fragmentary nature of the ancient record, the scraps of Sappho, the lyricists whose reputation we garner from the testimony of those who had some greater amount of those fragments than we do, the few bits of ancient tragedy that we have from more than a century of extraordinary productions! Against this background, F. Schlegel not only idealizes the Greeks but in so doing he identifies them with an idealized notion of the whole.

It is in contrast to this notion of "wholeness" that we find the notion of the fragmentary,<sup>4</sup> promoted along with its doppelgänger, the aphorism, to an art form.<sup>5</sup> Thus, in the following

-----

<sup>1</sup>A concise summary of this view of the fragment is found Carl 2000: 2-30, to which add the authoritative Behler 1993: 150-153. Chaouli 2002. On the relation of the classics to Schlegel's thinking see Behler 1981; 1982, and, once again, the important introduction to Barnett 2001.

<sup>2</sup>Translation, Barnett 2001: 3; cf. his discussion at 2-14.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Barnett 2001: 3-8.

<sup>4</sup>For now I will leave aside the difference between the "aphorism," and "the fragment." A good discussion of the "literary aphorisms" is in Behler and Struc 1968. See note 5.

<sup>5</sup>I do not draw distinctions here between the aphorism, the fragment, the maxim, and the like. For the general purposes of this essay, the distinction can be set aside, though I note in passing the difference might lie precisely on the self-consciousness of the notion of the fragment in each instance. In other words, an aphorism is not acknowledging its fragmentation in the same way as its counterpart does. On fragment and aphorism see Watson 1992; on aphorism most recently see Morson 2005.

statement, we see a crucial preliminary stage in the movement towards idealizing the fragment (*Kritische Fragment* 93):

In den Alten sieht man den vollendeten Buschstaben der ganzen Poesie; in den Neuern ahnet man den werdenden Geist. (*FSKA* 158)

In the ancients, we see *the perfected letter* of all poetry, in the moderns we see its *growing spirit*.

Schlegel's fragment here reproduces the theory that his brand of idealism locates in literature, which he (and many have followed in his wake) named, metonymically, poetry, drawing parallel lines between antiquity and modernity, perfection and growth, the wholeness that he wants to claim as a major characteristic of antiquity and the fragmented character of modernity.<sup>6</sup> In this aphorism, note that perfection is contrasted with growth as letter is with spirit. The associations between the whole and its perfection and antiquity do not need any further corroboration, except for our purpose of pointing out that "in process," "becoming," and "what-is-short-of-perfection"--all of these are put at a distance from antiquity and assimilated for reasons yet to come clear, to the modern project, as for example in this entire fragment. Here we should retain the association of antiquity with a teleological form of poetics ("accomplished) which implies wholeness ("entire") and its setting in the past ("accomplished"), over against the modern which is located in the future ("presentiment") with an explicit association of the new idealism ("spirit" over against "letter"). Throughout, I point to the fact that the dichotomy that is being drawn not only sets past beside present, letter beside spirit, present beside future, but the whole beside the fragment.

It is important to note that the distinctions that are being worked out here are not in the service of a mimetic theory of the literature of the ancients with respect to the moderns, something that would in effect be a kind of "neo-classicism." That this is true can be seen from fragment 44 (*FSKA* 152):

-----

<sup>6</sup>For Schlegel and idealism, see the Chaouli 2002 and the introduction to Behler and Struck 1968; for Schlegel's relation to other forms of romanticism, see Eichner 1956 and Behler 1993.

Man sollte sich nie auf den Geist des Altertums berufen, wie auf eine Autotität. Es ist eine eigene Sache mit den Geistern; sie lassen sich nicht mit Händen greifen, und dem andern vorhalten, Geister zeigen sich nur Geistern. Das Kürzeste und das Bündigste wäre wohl auch hier, den Besitz des alleinseligmachenden Glaubens durch gute Werke zu beweisen.

We should never invoke the spirit of antiquity as our authority. Spirits are peculiar things; they cannot be grasped with the hands and be held up before others. Spirits reveal themselves only to spirits. The most direct and concise method would be in this case as well, to prove the possession of the only redeeming faith by good works.

The alignment of literary thinking with the critical issue of redemption by faith or good works is noteworthy, but for now I want to emphasize that the idealism of antiquity in this version of philhellenism does not lead to the conclusion that antiquity presents a *model* to be emulated. This will be significant when we come to think of the relationship between the whole and the fragment, which I will argue elsewhere is not that between model and copy but between asymmetrical pairs which we have learned to call the relationship of the marked to the unmarked.

But all this from the literary aphorisms is prelude to the extravagant project that Schlegel proposes as the goal of a “Romantic Literature.” The claims and assertions are typically big in this often-cited fragment (*AF* 116, *FSKA* 182-83):

Its [=romantic poetry’s] aim is not merely *to reunite* all the *separate* species of poetry and put poetry in touch with philosophy and rhetoric. It tries to and should mix and fuse poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism, the poetry of art and the poetry of nature; and make poetry lively and sociable, and life and society poetical; poeticize wit and fill and saturate the forms of art with every kind of good, solid matter for instruction and animate them with the pulsations of humor. ...*It alone can become, like the epic, a mirror of the whole circumambient*

*world, an image of the age.* And it can also--more than any other form--hover at the midpoint between the portrayed and the portrayer, free of all real and ideal self-interest, on the wings of poetic reflection, and can raise that reflection again and again to a higher power, can multiply it in an endless succession of mirrors.....

*Other kinds of poetry are finished and are now capable of being fully analyzed.*

*[Andre Dichtarten sind fertig, und können nun vollständig zergliedert werden.]*

The romantic kind of poetry is *still in the state of becoming* that, in fact, is its real essence: that *it should forever be becoming and never be perfected.* [Die romantische Dichtart ist noch im werden; ja das ist ihr eigentliches Wesen, dass sie ewig nur werden, nie vollendet sein kann.]

*Athenaeum fragment 116* has been mined for its character as a Romantic manifesto and precursor of the exuberance and dynamism of romantic ideology, but my perspective now is to tend to the surface of Schlegel's manifesto with its contrast of poetry that is "finished" and hence "capable of being *fully* analyzed." And note Schlegel's insistence that Romantic poetry take up as its goal the reuniting of disparate elements ("separate species of poetry" and "philosophy and rhetoric"). But how does this all fit in with the idea of the "fragment"? There seems to be a tension between the idea of the fragment and what seems to be a vigorous attempt to subsume all discourse into one kind of poetry, Romantic poetry.

My interest in the development of the notion of the fragment compels me to set aside what are the philosophically most weighty implications of the 116th fragment, in particular the idea of artistic freedom within such a conception and turn to how such a poetry deals with the "fragments" that it finds in the post-classical world. Elsewhere (*Athenaeum Frag. 22*) Schlegel suggests, within the idealist tradition that he is shaping, that the fragments are precisely what "Romantic Poetry" can "idealize":

Das Wesentlich ist die Fähigkeit, Gegenstände unmittelbar zugleich zu idealisieren.

Da nun transzendental eben das ist, was auf die Verbindung oder Trennung des



Idealen und des Realen Bezug hat; so könnte man wohl sagen, *der Sinn für Fragmente und Projekte sei der transzendente Bestandteil des historischen Geistes.* (FSKA 169)

What is essential is to be able to idealize and realize objects immediately and simultaneously: to complete them and in part carry them out within oneself. Since transcendental is precisely whatever relates to the joining or separating of the ideal and the real, one might very well say that the *feeling for fragments and projects is the transcendental element of the historical spirit.*” (my emphasis)

Here then fragmentation is fully formed as a modernist project, one that involves the transcendent and the ideal. Indeed, the fragment is not just the present but something for the future. The fragmentation that Schlegel posits for poetry is, thus, far removed from our notion of fragments in the ancient world. Before moving on to discuss what happens to this notion of the fragment at the heart of Schlegel’s romanticism, I cite a succinct restating of Schlegel’s point:

What is crucial in Schlegel’s conception of art is its deliberate fragmentariness, for it is through this incompletion that the ideal presents itself in the real. Insofar as romantic literature is a fragment, the philosophical idea of literature is present in the work itself. The fragment *as fragments* (author’s emphasis) (for in its synthetic nature the fragment is plural) is what unites the work and the philosophy of the work, or in the words of the passage quoted above: it makes of poetry a transcendental poetry. And given that -- as AF 116 has it--“only a divinatory criticism would dare try to characterize” the romantic poetic ideal, then the fragment Schlegel has in mind--the fragment as synthesis of the concrete and the ideal--might well be regarded as a mixture of transcendental or “divinatory” *poetry as well as criticism.* (Verstraete 1998: 34, author’s emphases italic, with my emphases underlined.)

Before adumbrating how the fragment is transformed following its launching in the late 18th century, I want to suggest what this paper wants to retain from the Schlegelian notion of the fragment:

a.) The fragment emerges precisely in the context of a distinction to be drawn between antiquity and modernity, where antiquity comes to be characterized as a “whole” and “perfect.”

b.) The fragment is an approach to culture in which are fused the separate elements of *modernity* (romantic, high-modern, and postmodern), in varying relationships to the wholeness of *antiquity*.

### **Part 1b: The Fragment as Loss, the Fragment as Gain**

That notion of the fragmentary that points to a future and a transcendental ideal, while the notion of the whole refers to a perfection of antiquity, has changed more than once since it left the hands of the Jena Romantics, and before it reached us. I highlight two characteristics of those transformations:

a.) The first characteristic is that the transformatory power of the fragment is lost and instead of a utopian project seeking to link literature to a transcendental ideal, the fact of fragmentation presents itself as a disappointing legacy, one that falls short of unity; in dealing with antiquity, this results in a kind of elegiac nostalgia for the past which then forms a backdrop against which we moderns must make do with our bits and pieces, with our fragments.

b.) The second characteristic is distinct from the first, since instead of seeing the legacy of the fragment as a disappointment. It strives to recreate the exuberance of Schlegel’s formulation by reveling in the fragment, still as bits and pieces, but bits and pieces that are liberatory, that freed from closure, from wholeness, from the oppressive ideal of the past, in a word, from the “whole” which is then no longer viewable, as it was for Schlegel, as a grand synthesis to be admired however much it could not re-created.

The first of these is easily identifiable with a high-modernist elegiac tone concerning our fate as moderns, exiled from the wholeness of antiquity doomed to rearrange the fragments on the deck of our age as it sinks into the sea. No modernist is unfamiliar with the fragment at the center of modernity's view of itself, for which one can take the end of Eliot's *Waste Land* as emblematic if not programmatic:

I sat upon the shore  
 Fishing, with the arid plain behind me  
 Shall I at least set my lands in order?  
 London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down  
*Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina*  
*Quando fiam uti chelidon--O swallow swallow*  
*Le Prince d'Aquitane à la tour abolie*  
These fragments I have shored against my ruins  
 Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.  
 Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

Shantih. shantih. shantih. (Eliot, *The Waste Land*, ad finem)

Famously, the fragments here dramatically presented come in the service of supporting ruins, themselves fragments of the past, and fragments of the self. The fragments that are texts are called into service for this project, one that follows the refrain of a children's song miming the collapse of London Bridge itself in ruins iconically represented in the repetition of the words "falling down," linked in its fall with the "swallow swallow" and the incantatory "Shantih/ shantih. shantih." The opening contemplative deliberative question, "Shall I at least set my lands in order?" points to the project that the fragments are meant to undertake. If we can put the fragments to work keeping back the ruination that we find in the modern world, then those fragments serve a purpose.

There is a strange harmony between Eliot's programmatic sense of the fragment as part of a project that one might receive as a duty ("Shall I set my lands in order") and

Schlegel's sense that the fragment is sign pointing towards the future, as part of a "Projekte" (der Sinn für Projekte, die man Fragmente aus der Zukunft ennen Könnte..." AF: 22). In both cases, the fragment is a mark of our current and future state, although in the first it seemed the mark of a robust sense of future projects, whereas in the latter case, fragments are gloomy marks of duty and the need for order.

Fragmentation as consolation for a diminished if not doomed world is also found in so many formulations of modernity's predicament, that I will only select as exemplary these lines from Yeats' *The 19th Century and After*:

Though the *great song* return no more  
 There's been a delight in what we have:  
 The *rattle of pebbles* on the shore  
 Under the receding wave.

Here the contrast between the "greatness" and "pebbles" is reinforced by the auditory contrast of the "song" to the "rattle." From a past ("return not more") characterized by tremendous mass joined to high art ("great song") to a present ("what we have") that features mere fragments of rocks making insensible noise ("rattle of pebbles") the position of our time is characterized as a mere fragment in contrast to that past, though Yeats is quick to suggest a consolation ("delight in what we have")

The great songs, the *Iliads*, the *Odysseys*, the *Aeneids*, the *Cattle Raids* (from Cooley and elsewhere), the *Mahabharatas* and *Ramayanas*—none of these are going to return, nor are the poets, nor are their gods. The consolation is what we have: pebbles, fragments of rocks, not great but small. Schlegel's antiquity, completed, faced by modernity in process (a "growing spirit") is now made into a kind of nature. The small pebbles are against the backdrop of the sea; the great song (gone like an Odysseus, who will not return) is contrasted with mere rattling, not just unverbalizable noise, but small noise, not made but merely sounded, perhaps a muted version of the Aeolian lyre. And the

sea itself, taking with it the great songs, recedes. Instead of an eternal return, an eternal departure.

For Eliot, fragments and ruins are both ours to lean one against the other. The fragmentary products of a despairing moment and the ruins that are the bequest of antiquity, are here evidence of one's own desperate condition, one that only mirrors the shards of culture left by antiquity. For certainly the archaeological advances that had but recently come to yield the ruins of Troy itself, made the image of ruins, the incompleteness of broken stones and holey-writ, betoken antiquity. The result was the widening of the chasms that continue to divide modernity from antiquity. Eliot and the other modernists rested far short of the exuberance of the post-modern, even as they were moving slowly away from the luxuriant bequest of a nostalgically viewed perfection of grandeur and glory.

For both Yeats and Eliot, and I suspect for all of high-modernity, the idea that fragments (as in *Athenaeum Fragment* 116, *FSKA* 182-83, quoted above) could work the way epic does seems quite foreign. Even Pound in his *Cantos*, for all his claim to making a modern epic, delighted in the fragmentariness, the lyric flavor, that his style begot. And he reaped a harvest of fragments.

These examples need to suffice, in this context, for the high-modernist mode of theorizing the fragment. For this mode represented by Eliot and Yeats embraced a notion of the fragment that was merely the "ruins" of some long-ago, implicitly rejecting a transformative fusion of philosophy and literature that could actively engaged in taking up the cultural task, leaving antiquity's wholeness to itself. Another modern mode takes a different approach.

There is another change that transforms the notion of the fragment, one which exults in the very thing of which its congener despairs, its incompleteness. In some formulations the fragment is not only an accomplishment of the impossibility of reaching a

*telos* but also a directive speech-act indicating the one *should* not reach a *telos* even were it available:

‘Fragment’ designates an exposition that makes no claim to exhaustiveness, and it corresponds to the doubtlessly quite modern idea that the unfinished work can or even should be published (or to the idea that what is published is never altogether finished).<sup>7</sup>

This second deviation from Schlegel’s notion of the fragment, is present also in Adorno’s observation about the very fragmentation of philosophical propositions and how, as fragments, they provide a kind of validation:

Kant’s famous dictum that the critical path is the only one still open to us belongs to those propositions constituting a philosophy that proves itself *because* the propositions, as fragments, survive beyond the system that conceived them.<sup>8</sup>

Here, in a formulation that is iconic of its very proposition, fragmentation is a kind of proof of the validity of philosophical statements, since--and this is important--they “survive beyond the system that conceived them.” We are not fishing on the shore or watching the receding waves, consoling ourselves with pebbles and shards of pottery: rather the fragment itself is a kind of secure answer to the problem of human discourse. What survives is good and, in itself, proof of its own validity.

This kind of elation in the fragment recurs in postmodern thought:

“L’écriture fragmentaire serait le risque même. Elle ne renvoie pas à une théorie, elle ne donne pas lieu à une pratique qui serait définie par *l’interruption*.

Interrompte, elle se poursuit. S’interrogeant, elle ne s’arroge pas la question, mais la suspend (sans la maintenir) en non-réponse. Si elle prétend n’avoir son temps que lorsque le tout, -- au moins idéalement--se serait accompli, c’est donc

-----  
<sup>7</sup>Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1988: 62.

<sup>8</sup>Adorno, “Why Still Philosophy” p. 7 in *Critical Modes*. Emphasis added.

que ce temps n'est jamais sûr, absence de temps en un sens non privatif, antérieure à tout passé-présent, comme postérieure à toute possibilité d'une présence à venir.

Fragmentary writing is risky, it would seem: risk itself. It is not based on any theory, nor does it introduce a practice one could define as *interruption*.

Interrupted, it goes on. Interrogating itself, it does not co-opt the question but suspends it (without maintaining it) as nonresponse. Thus, if it claims that its time comes only when the whole--at least ideally--is realized, this is because that time is never sure, but is the absence of time, absence in a nonnegative sense, time anterior to all -past-present, as well as posterior to every possibility of a present yet to come. ...The fragmentary imperative, linked to the disaster. That there is, however, practically nothing disastrous in this disaster: this is surely what we must learn to think, without perhaps ever knowing it.<sup>9</sup>

As with other interventions from postmodernity, the fragment is pressed into the service of indeterminacy, and this usage in some way calls to mind Schlegel's notion of the "growing spirit" and the notion that the fragment as romantic poetry is all about "becoming." Indeed the philosophical interests of post-modernity make formulations that take up similar causes to the ones that Schlegel took up. For example, time clearly arises as an issue whenever one discusses fragmentation, because of the notion that the fragment is an anticipation of a finished product, or the remains of a product that was finished in the past but is now broken. Blanchot here strives to deny those parts of the problematic of the fragment, by declaring victory in the battle between the part and the whole. But for Schlegel there is never a contestation of "wholeness"; there is no risk that the alternative is cooptation. The postmoderns see the fragment neither as consolation for a lost wholeness in the past, nor as the reunion of literature and philosophy in a gesture of transcendental idealism. Rather the fragment is considered a response both to what it sees as despair

-----  
<sup>9</sup>Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster. L'Écriture du désastre*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln University of Nebraska Press, 1986): 59-60

(about lost texts, about lost time) on the one hand, and to complacency (about discourse, about history) on the other.<sup>10</sup>

In summary, in contrast to the literary-philosophical task of grounding Romantic Poetry in the fragment so that the ancients and moderns stand in a relationship to each other, both the high moderns and the post-moderns use the fragment, on the one hand to shore up the pitiful legacy left to us after an inspiring past, and on the other as a flag by which indeterminacy is acknowledged as the great secret of discourse that we celebrate whenever we have an uncompleted text.

## **Part 2: Classical Gaps: The Fragment as Fact**

But the problem is wholly other--and this matters--for those of us who study antiquity. For us, the fragment is fact, not theory. The fragment is central to the classical task, not at all an object in need of consolation for the loss of its wholeness. The wholeness of F. Schlegel's notional antiquity turns out, for us who deal with ancient texts, to be riddled with quite real gaps, fragmentariness producing wealth, whose capital we reinvest with our labor in a quest to restore wholeness.

Thus, for those who venerate the ancients, Schlegel's antiquity, directly indebted to Wincklemann as much as to the nascent idealism of German *Frühromantik*, postulates a wholeness that turn out to be the most transparent of illusions. Nothing at all is whole about antiquity. Is it a paradox that the rise of philhellenism anticipates the first stirrings of archaeology, where fragments are the name of the game? For in ancient studies it is the texts that are fragmented, but for moderns the texts are typically whole--even Finnegans Wake is a whole, a book that ends with the sentence that begins it, although the sense it

-----

<sup>10</sup>Foucault too often invokes implicitly the fragmentary character of discourse as in his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France (1970, Foucault 1972: 215), where his aversion to beginnings consists of a kind of longing for the fragmentary in a context, the academic lecture, where completeness and wholeness is a first-order value. At times it sounds as if he identifies the producer of discourse ("the author") with the fragmentary: "...no beginnings instead, speech would proceed from me, while I stood in its path--a slender gap--the point of its possible disappearance" (215). This discussion of the post-moderns is exemplary and not exhaustive.



gives is that the culture of this modernist text is fragmentation writ large in a dream's sleep.

To summarize the matter briefly, the fragment is central, a fact of life, to classicists' (to our) understanding of antiquity, though the meaning of this fact has often seemed less interesting to some than has amassing as many pieces of the puzzle as possible. For the philologist, the fragment is not merely a way of speaking about a text, a clever metaphor to indicate one's despair or exuberance. It is, rather, a central way in which antiquity is filtered to us. Indeed the fragment provides a pragmatic reason for the existence of the scholar, as witness the feeding-frenzy that attends the mummy cartonnage that periodically emerges from Egyptian sands. Indeed, that wholeness that Schlegel identified and idealized, and that he assumed to be the true antiquity, is seen not as the given of the past to the present, but as a future and enticing goal of the philologist: to restore that very wholeness. It is not merely that fragments, literally, provide us with texts. For the classicist the fragment is a sign of what is missing, to be restored by industry and instinct through the labor of generations of scholars. The discipline of the classics takes up, as one of its major charges, to restore the missing pieces of a fragmentary history. Indeed, this story--running parallel to the story that I just told---turns the fragmentary paradigm on its head: Where Schlegel saw antiquity as "whole" with modernity producing the fragment, the tradition of classical scholarship identifies the fragmentary with an antiquity that needs us moderns to restore what is missing, assuming the while (however often unstated) that modernity's wholeness is a privilege accorded to those whose texts are, in fact, quickly recoverable from autograph to last printing.

Before turning to Homer, I want to discuss an extended meditation on the issue of fragmentation by a classical scholar, in this case, as might be expected, by a theoretically informed classical scholar. In her book on Sappho, Page DuBois applies the sensibilities of the second transformation of the fragment (described above), to the material of fact of fragmentation that faces any reader of of Greek lyric. In *Sappho is Burning*, DuBois

challenges the desire for wholeness that drives restorations of textual matter based on the fragments that we have by suggesting that

What remains to us of the past, what we know of the present, of the consciousness of others, for example, is fragmentary. One way of responding to this recognition is to pursue a dream of wholeness, transparency, perfect access to what we desire to know. Another is to accept the partiality of our experience, to seek even as we yearn for more, more facts, more words and artifacts, more lines of Sappho, more poems of Sappho, to read what we have.<sup>11</sup>

In this insistence on dealing with “what we have,” DuBois avoids the elegiac tone of the high-modernists and is close to the post-modern celebration of the fragment. But as a classicist, before she goes on to give moving interpretations of Sapphic fragments on their own terms *as* fragments, DuBois delineates the deep problems that attend the fact that we approach much of antiquity through its fragments, be they archaeological or textual.<sup>12</sup>

Those problems are not only that often what we have to study is incomplete, but that our own desires for wholeness take over and make reading a text a search for what is missing:

One of the impulses of philology has been to attack the problem of the fragment directly. Classical scholarship and biblical scholarship have always been in part efforts of restoration. Philologists have tried to make whole what was broken--to imagine and guess at the missing parts, to repair what was transmitted inaccurately to change, excise, add, to return to the original and perfect text that we can never know. Their work has been immensely valuable, in reading, deciphering, presenting to us in legible form much that would be inaccessible without the interventions of centuries of erudition. Their efforts at restoration must continue as labor over textual mysteries, as supplementation of our ignorance. But until the day of glorious resurrection, when all the bodies of ancient poems are miraculously

---

<sup>11</sup>DuBois 1995: 39.

<sup>12</sup>DuBois 1995: 31-39.

restored in their integrity, what are we to do with the fragments of such a poet as Sappho? Are we to continue to long for wholeness, to imagine, for example, what the whole poem that surrounds a two-line fragment must be?<sup>13</sup>

This formulation by DuBois of this central problem in reading texts from the ancient world is more measured than a yearning for fragmentation, an a priori decision that fragmentation is the way things are and should be, no doubt because, as a post-modern classicist, DuBois sees both fragments and non-fragments. We classicists have a sense that there is a difference even if we cannot always be so articulate about what that difference is and what it means.

Finally, I want to acknowledge that DuBois sees the reader of classical fragments as benefitting from the postmodern (“recent literary theory”) and its fragment-affirmative position on these questions:

Recent literary theory, in celebrating the fragmentary, offers the possibility of another kind of reading, renders it more pleasurable, allows as well for the reading of the fragment, the line, the image, with a study of the culture of the whole, a study based less on literary forms than on cultural practices.

DuBois does not want to “discard the truly fragmentary as illegible” but to accept the broken lines and provide readings.<sup>14</sup> In this way, she sees fragments in Greece, the ostraka, broken *korai*, and other statuary that came to be incorporated into new buildings, as well as the broken bodies that litter the texts of war and violence that make up so much ancient literature (her example being Polyneices’ body broken before Thebes) as mimetic of the fragmentation that also manifests itself in the material of our texts. In a way, DuBois brings us full circle, from Schlegel for whom the past was a whole to which our response could well be fragments--vital and dynamic, but fragments for all that--to the high-modernists who yearned in nostalgia for a past--whole, complete--but resigned

-----  
<sup>13</sup>DuBois 1995: 37-38.

themselves to fragments, and, finally, to the celebratory counter-holists who distance the past by rejoicing in an anti-past fragmentation of their own world. My last stop on this tour, then, is a heralding of “the fragment” against the sober backdrop of all-too-real historical contingencies--war, prejudice, the onslaughts of time and history--that produce those fragments. DuBois’ argument is not confident postmodern celebration, but a recognition not only of fragmentation in the world, but also of our own stewardship of the real fragments of antiquity.<sup>15</sup>

### **Part 3. Enter Homer.**

The work of the above sections needs to be repaid with a discussion of what the notion of the fragment has to do with Homer. For Schlegel was wrong from an empirical perspective: the ancient world is fragmentary as we receive it, sad to say and idealism aside. And if the post-moderns’ glorying in the fragment seems to elude the sheer facticity of fragmentation in the case of the ancient world, is there any work for classicists, especially Homerists, to do in interrogating the fragment any further?

First, is there a notion of the fragment that is alive in antiquity? Is there an ancient concern with the fragment and do the ancients have anything to teach us from within antiquity about the fragment, so as to help us out with the confusing inversions just presented, where fragments are good, idealistically, or something to mourn, positivistically, or something to celebrate as Dionysian *membra disjecta*?

I suggest that the ancients indeed had their fragments, but they tended not to be acknowledged as fragments per se.<sup>16</sup> Despite the fact that there are few texts that seem less fragmentary than Homer, this may only *seem* to be the case because we are working with too narrow a definition of the fragment. Yet, even with a broad description, can texts 24 scrolls long teach us anything about what it means to be a fragment? Antiquity, it might be said, hardly thought of its cultural products as fragments: the fragments of the Greek

-----  
<sup>15</sup>Cf. DuBois 1995: 63.

<sup>16</sup>The reasons for this will close my discussion.

lyric poets did not exist until the ancient Greeks ceased to exist. So the challenge for me is to ask: Can a culture that did not “see” fragments, theorize about them?

An instantiation of something like the fragment as part of a whole can be found in the famous assertion of the relationship of enthymeme to syllogism in Aristotle’s

*Rhetoric*:

ὅτι μὲν οὖν τὸ ἐνθύμημα συλλογισμὸς τίς ἐστίν, εἴρηται πρότερον, καὶ πῶς  
 συλλογισμὸς, καὶ τί διαφέρει τῶν διαλεκτικῶν· οὔτε γὰρ πόρρωθεν οὔτε πάντα  
δεῖ λαμβάνοντας συνάγειν· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἀσαφές διὰ τὸ μῆκος, τὸ δὲ ἀδολεσχία διὰ  
 τὸ φανερὰ λέγειν.

Aristotle *Rhetoric* II 22.2-3

It has already been said that the enthymeme is a kind of syllogism, how it is a kind of syllogism, and in what it differs from the dialectic syllogisms; for the conclusion must neither be drawn from too far back, *nor should it include all the steps of the argument*. In the first case its length causes *obscurity*, in the second it is simply a waste of words, because it states much that is obvious.

Here the enthymeme’s relationship to the syllogism is explicitly that the enthymeme is missing pieces of the syllogism, and those pieces are missing precisely for rhetorical reasons, namely to avoid obscurity (*tò asaphés*) and “wordiness” (*adoleskhía*). Indeed, for Aristotle, the wholeness of the full syllogism is a cause of unclarity (*asaphes*), at least in terms of suasion. That is to say, to cite the entire syllogism is simply *adoleskhia*, and hence rhetorically ill-advised. I take Aristotle’s pointing to the enthymeme as a syllogism missing a piece, as an identification of the fragmentary principle in rhetorical art. The syllogism absent a term, made thus fragmentary, is the more useful for the orator, because of its absent piece. Quite explicitly, it seems to me, Aristotle recommends the fragmentary

form as more appropriate for certain kinds of discourse.<sup>17</sup>

Plato too thought about the fragmentary, as when he imagined the demiurge dealing with fragmentary bodies in contrast to the “unfragmented” stable *ousia* (Plato, *Timaeus* 35a.1-5):

τῆς ἀμερίστου καὶ ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτὰ οὐσίας καὶ τῆς αἰὶ περὶ τὰ σώματα γυγνομένης μεριστῆς, τρίτον ἐξ ἀμοφοῖν ἐν μέσῳ ξυνεκεράσατο οὐσίας εἶδος. καὶ κατὰ ταῦτα ξυνέστησεν ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ τε ἀμεροῦς αὐτῶν καὶ τοῦ κατὰ τὰ σώματα μεριστοῦ.

Plato *Timaeus* 35a 1-5

From the *unfragmented* and ever unchanging being and from that being which is *fragmented* into bodies, a third he fashioned in the middle of both of them a *third form* of being . And along these lines, he came to set up [them] up together, between the one of them that is *unfragmented* and the one of them that is *fragmented* into bodies.

For the project of the *Timaeus* wholeness and fragmentation is a major issue, but I will only cite this one passage where it is at least clear that the distinction is part of ancient thought.

As to Homeric poetics, the relationship of any given cultural artifact to its tradition is that of part to whole. Homeric poetic artifacts, if we accept that they are traditional, must have a part to whole relationship to that tradition. Indeed, that relationship underlies anything that we say about the unity of a poem, the competence of the singer, the role of the audience, the connection of one text to another, the performance context that

-----

<sup>17</sup>I do not enter here into the scholarly debate on the relationship of the syllogism to the enthymeme, since my main point is not whether it is “a kind of syllogism” as opposed to a “syllogism of a kind” (Burnyeat 1996:97); it is sufficient for the current argument that the relationship is capable of showing a contrast between a whole and a part in Aristotle’s formulation. A good review of the discussion is in Walzer, et al. 2000: 197-199; cf. Burnyeat 1996; Grimaldi 1972: 84-93 (“The Enthymeme as Syllogism”).

produces any particular cultural instance, or poem, the evolution over time of the performance tradition, the fixation, or lack thereof, of the text, etc. etc. Every possible answer given to any question that arises about performance, orality, textuality, that is to say, will ultimately have an assumption about the relationship of the part being studied to the whole of which it is a part. This relationship has not been adequately theorized. After having suggested the importance of the fragment in literary history, and having pointed to the importance of the fragment to classics as a discipline, let me try to make some theoretical interventions in well known parts of the *Iliad*, interventions that try to reveal one approach to answering the question: what is the relationship of Homer to the tradition?

The way I want to do this is not by selecting one crux after another which such an approach will “solve.” Rather, I will look at familiar items of Homeric discourse that can be rethought by way of thinking about the relationship of part to whole, and the rethinking of which gives us a better grasp of what the texts we read are or were meant to be with respect to their *whole* tradition.

In turning to the Homeric material I confront the question of how “my Homer” presents itself as fragments of tradition. That question, I acknowledge, displays a paradox, in that this seemingly most unfragmented of antiquity’s cultural bequests, insists from its own vantage-point, that it is an instance of tradition, an orally-performed moment in a tradition of *kléa*. To reformulate it in terms that theorizing the fragment has given us, from the point of view of the tradition, each and every instance of a text is a fragment of that tradition. The “tradition,” like Schlegel’s “ancient world,” is a whole, perfect, really only “one poem.” In order to talk about this I use the case study method, where the goal is not complete review of bibliographic and scholarly apparatus of select passages, but the

observation of those passages in the light of the theoretical perspective that I have been outlining.<sup>18</sup>

**Case Study 1: The proem to the catalog of ships.** One way that the early Greeks had for conceptualizing the tradition was through the figure of the muse; this figure typically instantiated a conception of the “whole” to which the muse or muses had access. The following famous line from the proem to the catalog of ships in *Iliad 2* demonstrates this point (*Il.* 2.485):

ὕμεις γὰρ θεαί ἐστε, πάρεστε τε, ἴστε τε πάντα

The *pánta* marks a feature of prooimial style that claims for the muses’ source, for the tradition, a “wholeness” against which each performance is a part, a fragment.<sup>19</sup> Such a prooimial device as the *pâs-polús* device “encapsulates a vast quantity of material essentially, the *traditional* elements of a given story.”<sup>20</sup> Here I draw attention to the formal reference to the tradition as *pánta*, which, by indicating the vastness of that same tradition, in the process identifies the current song as only a part of that tradition.

-----

<sup>18</sup>I accept the risk here of not giving full bibliographical service to these passages; my interest, again, is to see *how* thinking about the fragment alters our view of certain well-worked passages; at another time, I will ride the fragment-horse into battle with the hosts who have to different degrees illuminated these passages with more modernist and classicist views of Homeric poetics. The “case-study” approach allows me the freedom to see what readings we can extract when examining the fragment.

<sup>19</sup>On *pâs* as a mark of prooimial style, see Walsh 1995: 404. with literature.

<sup>20</sup>Walsh 1995: 404n (emphasis added 2005). On the *pâs-polús* theme see the still incisive words in *Studia Pindaria I* (Bundy 1986 [1968]: 15-20). This theme is associated with the “givens” that are, in Bundy’s terminology, “foil” for the “cap” to be emphasized in the current passage. What is important for me here is that the foil is considered as a “whole,” from which I infer that the cap is “the part.” Compare the way in which the Aristotelian description of the relationship of enthymeme to syllogism maps onto the relationship of the tradition as *pâs-polús* in contrast to the individual song as a part. In referencing Pindar *N.* 10.19-22, Bundy refers to the “incapacity of the laudator to relate... and that of the audience to endure the *full* tale of Argive glory” (*op. cit.* 13, with my emphasis); the relationship of all this to the proem of the catalog of ships is obvious. But this incapacity, in the terms I am trying to develop here, is exactly that of the fragment’s incapacity, by definition, to be the whole.



Moreover this identification of *pánta* with wholeness points to the motivation for the qualification *oíon* in the singers' reference to themselves as "the hearers *only* of *kléos*" (*Il.* 2.486):

ἡμεῖς δὲ **κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν** οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν

"We" *only* hear *kléos* because of its contrast to the tradition, and this is descriptive of the relation of the fragment to "the whole." Indeed this prooimial device succeeds in filling out two claims about the catalog that is to follow.

*Il.* 2.485 ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαί ἐστε, πάρεστε τε, ἴστε τε πάντα

*Il.* 2.486 ἡμεῖς δὲ **κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν** οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν

The claims, as emphasized in these two lines, have to do with the capacities and responsibilities of the two parties, muses and singers. Besides the well-known opposition of seeing (*ísté* and *oudé ti ídmen*) over against hearing (*akoúomen*), there is the further opposition of whole to part seen in the items bold faced above, namely *pánta* and *kléos oíon*, "all" vs. "*kléos* only."<sup>21</sup> A proportion can be set up where "all" is to "mere kleos" as "seeing" is to "hearing," with the divinity having the greater portion, and the mortals having the smaller, that is to say the "fragment."<sup>22</sup> But the capacity for dealing "merely" with hearing *kléos* is not that of subordinate to superior; rather the propriety of the relationship is shown when we set out the two lines beside each other, but beginning with the adonic clausula in 485 (*ísté te pánta*) down to the end of the next line (486) that concludes with the negative of *ísté te pánta*, that is to say, *oudé ti ídmen*, thus:

ἴστε τε πάντα / ἡμεῖς δὲ **κλέος οἶον ἀκούομεν** οὐδέ τι ἴδμεν<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup>Taking *oion* as adverbial yields the same effect.

<sup>22</sup>The literal sense of fragment is caught up in the metaphor of an unbreakable voice, *phōnè árrektos* (*Il.* 2.490).

<sup>23</sup>Bold face underlined italics link the whole with the part; plain underlined items link the notion of "sight/knowledge"; boldface italics indicate the notion of "hearing" and its subject; plain boldface, here in the center, indicates *kléos* (itself a species of hearing) and the "partial" nature of its mortal form.

The hearing of *kléos* is framed by the muses' knowledge and the singers' lack of knowledge, with the *pánta* that the muse has access to finding its negative in *oudé ti*; I emphasize that the verb of seeing/knowing *ísté/idmen* frames the whole complex. Thus *kléos oíon akouómen* has pride of place in the center of a poetic verbal structure that is designed to mark the contrast between hearing and seeing, and to mark the contrast, as well, the singers and muses, the mortals and the gods, between the part and the whole.

**Case Study 2. The story of Meleager.** It's hard to think of a more worked-over term than *kléos*, and for good reason. In the passage just cited as in many others, *kléos* is a key term in Homeric poetics. In *Iliad* 9, Phoenix makes it clear that the tale of Meleager is told as one of the many *kléa andrôn* that are available for reflection as rhetorical exempla (*epeuthómetha*, *Il.* 9.524).<sup>24</sup> Phoenix seems to mean that there are a number of epic topics or loci that come to mind in contemplating the persuasion of Achilles through example. In particular, since it seems to be the *khólos* of Achilles that has placed them in danger of losing the war to Hector and the Trojans, and since that *khólos* should be amenable to persuasion by Agamemnon's gifts, it is Phoenix's rhetorical task, even as a non-professional bard, to advance a poetic parallel that is closely analogous to the case of Achilles. It is this process of selection that interests me in reference to the issue of fragmentation. The task is not to invent a story, but to select the one of the *kléa andrôn* that would with the most decorum best fit Phoenix's purpose of persuading Achilles to accept the gifts and to return to the war (*Il.* 9.519-528).

νῦν δ' ἅμα τ' αὐτίκα πολλὰ διδοί τὰ δ' ὀπίσθεν ὑπέστη,  
 ἄνδρας δὲ λίσσασθαι ἐπιπροέηκεν ἄριστους  
 κρινάμενους κατὰ λαὸν Ἀχαιϊκόν, οἳ τε σοὶ αὐτῶ  
 φίλτατοι Ἀργείων· τῶν μὲ σύ γε μῦθον ἐλέγχῃς  
 μηδὲ πόδας; πρὶν δ' οὔ τι νεμεσσητὸν κεχολῶσθαι.

-----  
<sup>24</sup>For a full study of the Meleager legend, see Grossardt 2001.

οὔτω καὶ τῶν πρόσθεν ἐπευθόμεθα κλέα ἀνδρῶν  
ἠρώων, ὅτε κέν τιν' ἐπιζάφελος χόλος ἴκοι.                    525  
 δωρητοί τε πέλοντο παράρρητοί τ' ἐπέεσσι.  
 μέμνημαι τόδε ἔργον ἐγὼ πάλαι, οὐ τι νέον γε,  
 ὡς ἦν· ἐν δ' ὑμῖν ἐρέω πάντεσσι φίλοισι.

The stylistics of the Homeric proem make clear how the selection process is displayed in the above passage, as Phoenix justifies choosing one among the whole panoply of *khólos* tales to the story of Meleager. The process begins at 519, with the focusing temporal adverb *nûn* indicating the real-world target of Phoenix's version of the narrative of Meleager, namely Agamemnon's offering of gifts to Achilles. There is an emphasis on the rhetorical ethos that is called upon by selecting Phoenix, Odysseus and Ajax to make the entreaty (*ándras dè líssesthai epiproéhken arístous / krinámenos katà laòn Akhaiikón, hoí te soì autōi / phíltatoi Aregeíōn*); that is to say that Phoenix in his approach to the beginning of "the Meleager" locates it as referring to a particular moment in the embassy's progress, as well as to a particular part of the narrative tradition that has relevance to *these* specific members of this audience. Note the location of *arístous* (end of the line) and *phíltatoi* (beginning of the line), a collocation that underscores the decorum of the embassy both with reference to the Achaian host as a whole (*arístous*) and to the local interests of Achilles (*phíltatoi*). This, then, is the performance occasion for the *kléos* of Meleager, a song that is part of class of artifacts called *kléa* at line 524. Phoenix, after noting the audience, finally localizes the relevance of the song of Meleager as to its force relative to the particular moment of the embassy when Achilles has refused to stop having *khólos*--before the present moment (*nûn*) the *khólos* of Achilles was appropriate: thus 519-523 are a rhetorical unit that precedes the *kléos* of Meleager and secures the rhetorical target of Phoenix's performance. We can thus read these lines as part of the paranarrative of the Meleager story or as part of the pragmatics of the proimial material leading up to the song itself.

νῦν δ' ἅμα τ' αὐτίκα πολλὰ διδοί τὰ δ' ὀπίσθεν ὑπέστη,  
 ἄνδρας δὲ λίσσασθαι ἐπιπροέηκεν ἀρίστους  
 κρινάμενους κατὰ λαὸν Ἀχαιϊκόν, οἳ τε σοὶ αὐτῷ  
φίλτατοι Ἀργείων· τῶν μὲ σύ γε μῦθον ἐλέγχῃς  
 μηδὲ πόδας; πρὶν δ' οὔ τι νεμεσσητὸν κεχολῶσθαι.

Following this identification of the moment in Achilles' experience that Phoenix wishes to affect with his song (*houtō*), he refers us to the tradition, for it is from here that the following song is to come, where the *houtō* links the current situation (519-523) to the tales of those that, being part of the tradition, are localized in the past (cf. *nûn* [519] vs. *tôn prósthēn* [524], and note *pálai* [527]). What is important for the notion of the fragment is the way in which the story of Meleager belongs to an already existing group that Phoenix has learned, or better that both performer and audience (note the plural *epeuthómetha* [524]) have learned, the closed set of material that constitutes songs of heroes in the past (*tôn prósthēn...kléa andrôn* [524-525]). It is consistent with what this paper has been developing that tradition, *tôn prósthēn ...kléa andrôn / hērōōn*, is the whole from which the following song, as a part, is to be selected, and that it entails a particular song, a part of that tradition.

But what criteria does Phoenix use in making the selection? Would one song do as well as another? As it turns out the identification of the song is linked to the performance occasion: just as the performance occasion was the point at which Achilles' *khólos* has ceased to be appropriate (since before this point his *khólos* was within cultural bounds (*prîn d' oú ti nemessētòn kekholôsthai* [523]), so too the moment, the temporal moment, within the stories of heroes that have *khólos*, at which point the *khólos* becomes excessive, and thus steps outside the bounds of cultural acceptability, identifies the particular song to be selected (*hóte kén tin' epizáphelos khólos híkoi* [525]).<sup>25</sup> There is a

-----  
<sup>25</sup>On *khólos* in Book 9, see Walsh 2005, Chapters 7 and 10.

further indexical link between the paranarrative that constitutes the circumstance for the song (525-523) and the proem proper (524-528):

519 νῦν δ' ἅμα τ' αὐτίκα πολλὰ διδοί τὰ δ' ὀπίσθεν ὑπέστη,

526 δωρητοί τε πέλοντο παράρρητοί τ' ἐπέεσσι.

where *dōrētoi* links to *polla didoi*, and *parárrētoi epéessi* corresponds to *opisthen hupéstē*, both based on the figure of *ergon* and *logos*. This figure then is expanded into the goal of the proem, the selection of the song:

οὔτω καὶ τῶν πρόσθεν ἐπευθόμεθα κλέα ἀνδρῶν

ἠρώων, ὅτε κέν τιν' ἐπιζάφελος χόλος ἴκοι. 525

δωρητοί τε πέλοντο παράρρητοί τ' ἐπέεσσι.

μέμνημαι τόδε ἔργον ἐγὼ πάλαι, οὐ τι νέον γε,

ὡς ἦν· ἐν δ' ὑμῖν ἐρέω πάντεσσι φίλοισι.

All the rest of Phoenix's introduction was preparatory to these lines, when he invokes the poetics of memory in order to select this version (*tóde érgon*) of the traditional story (*pálai*).

This entire passage, though it is not presented by a professional bard, such as Demodocus or Homer, is nonetheless exemplary of the partitive relation of tradition and song. As a collection of *kléa*, certain narratives lines include the song of Meleager that is about to follow, which is a single instance of those *kléa*, and thus a part of that whole. It is in this sense that we can come to terms with the famous Horatian tag “in medias res,” except to say that, from the post-traditional point of view, it seems as if one is jumping *into* the plot of a narrative, whereas from the point of view of the traditional singers and audience, where the relation of whole to part is differently conceived, it is more like a leaping *out of* a vast whole in a manner appropriate to the occasion of song.

**Case Study 3: *The Iliad*.** It is all well and good to find song segments within the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, declare them fragments, putting notches, one by one, on the hypothesis in order to shore up the theory. But is there any evidence that the poems we

have, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, were thought of as pieces of a larger whole, and that that concept is helped at all by our theory of the fragment?

At the beginning of the *Iliad*, in our familiar proem of the *Iliad*, the *mênis* of Achilles is declared the subject, the muse is invoked, and the opening moment of the poem is selected to be the moment of Apollo's sending Agamemnon and Achilles into discord. So familiar is this most famous of openings in world literature, that few of us turn to the apparatus criticus to marvel at a different proem presented as that of Aristoxenus, where "pro vv. 1-9 hos tres versus-- :<sup>26</sup>

ἔσπετε νῦν μοι, μουσαι, Ὀλυμπία δώματα ἔχουσαι,  
 ὄππως δὴ μὴ μῆνις τε χόλος θ' ἔλε Πηλείωνα  
 Λητοῦς τ' ἀγλαὸν υἱὸν· ὁ γὰρ βασιλῆϊ χολωθεὶς"

All the elements are here, the *mênis* of Achilles, Apollo, the complaint against the king, the invocation to the muses. Elsewhere I have characterized proemial matter that begins as does this alternate proem of the *Iliad* as "narrative proems," by which I distinguish such proems from the style of proem that we have at the beginning of "our" *Iliad*, "the inceptive proem." The well-known opening of the *Iliad*, is suited to the absolute beginning of a narrative poem, and the second ("the narrative proem" or "the internal proem"), such as the alternate proem of Aristoxenus, is suited to a continuation of narrative material *within* a narrative.<sup>27</sup> The material provided us through the witness of Aristoxenus has congeners in the *Iliad* itself, one of which we have seen above, the internal or narrative proem of the catalog of ships *Il.* 2.484ff., and the others at *Il.* 11.218-220, and *Il.* 16.112-113.<sup>28</sup>

-----  
<sup>26</sup>Indeed, there are two alternates including this one: *Μούσας αείδω καὶ Ἀπόλλωνα κλυτότοκσον* (ed. Apelliconis), and that of Aristoxenus. See Muellner 1996:96-98.

<sup>27</sup>Walsh 1995: 395-396.

<sup>28</sup>On the proemial issues involved see also W. Race. "How Greek Poems Begin, 20-22, in *YCS* 29 (1992). Cf. the literature cited in Walsh 1995:386-386. Muellner (1996) makes important use of Aristoxenus's proem in the development of his argument for the *Theogony-Iliad* sequence.

The *Iliad* is provided with both a narratival and an inceptive proem, because any traditional narrative (including the *Iliad*) can either function as a fragment of tradition that *begins* a narratival portion of that tradition, or that *continues* a portion of the tradition already started. But where is the evidence that the *Iliad* can be so conceived? Is it not the case that our *Iliad* is a whole and not a fragment of some larger entity?

To answer that question and conclude this paper I turn to two Homeric analyses that point in the direction of traditional performances being, traditionally, parts of sequences. The first scholar I enlist as ally is Leonard Muellner, whose 1996 book, *The Anger of Achilles: Mênis in Greek Epic* (1996) set on an even keel our understanding of the central emotion of the *Iliad*. Another important demonstration in that book is that of the continuity between the *Theogony* and the *Iliad*.<sup>29</sup> For, following an analysis of the *Theogony*, Muellner argues that the *Theogony* is a *prooímion* (“prologue”) to the *Iliad*. Along with making use of the work of Laura Slatkin regarding the way that Theogonic themes and Hesiodic style emerge in the Homeric text, Muellner develops a strong case that the concerns of the *Theogony* for the kingship of Zeus and the central place of Achilles in the *Iliad* entail continuing the genealogical crisis that only seemed concluded at the end of Hesiod’s poem. Among the numerous dramatic possibilities inherent in the sequence *Theogony*-->*Iliad*, is the implication that there is “an archetypal competition between Achilles and Zeus in Theogonic terms, which is inherent in this performance sequence” (Muellner 1996:95).

Muellner’s closely argued defense of this hypothesis cannot receive proper treatment here, but I cite his conclusion about the sequencing of Theogonic narrative because it can be given a theoretical underpinning with an approach to the whole and the part derived from a theory of the fragment. That is to say, the opening of the *Iliad* has alternate proems, in my view, because the *Iliad* can be presented as a sequence, one with a

-----  
<sup>29</sup>“...the continuity that I wish to identify and articulate between the *Theogony* and the *Iliad* (Muellner 1996:121).

*prooimion* preceding the heroic narrative, or, alternately, as a single heroic narrative, minus the *prooimion*. The latter, with the appropriate proem, is the *Iliad* that we find in our texts; it is a fragment not only of the tradition, but also a fragment of the sequence *prooimion*--->*heroic narrative*.

The issue of sequencing--the positioning of something we take as a separate next, next to another--has received much needed attention of late. This is important because my argument depends more on the concept of parts being connected *potentially* than on any one particular example of a linked set of songs. Thus my discussion of the fragment's relationship to the tradition or, in particular, my analysis of the alternative proems does not depend entirely on Muellner's important conclusion about the relationship of the *Theogony* to the *Iliad*. Rather, I look to the now well-understood notion that *prooimia* preceded epic. Consider, for example, the work on narrative sequencing by my second scholarly ally G. Nagy, whose work on rhapsodes shows that they "had to take turns following the narrative sequence" of Homeric poetry (Nagy 2002: 42). In the performance context of the Panathenaia, the sequencing of Homeric narrative involves both competition among singers, but also a kind of cooperation at the juncture of a narrative sequence, when one singer cooperates (at the relay-moment) and competition (during the performance-moment).<sup>30</sup> The *prooimion* is identified as part of the sequencing pattern

-----

<sup>30</sup> "The rhapsodes at the Panathenaia not only competed with each other in performing the poetry of Homer: they also had to take turns following the narrative sequence of that poetry in the process of competition" (Nagy 2002:xx.) Implicitly, I note, there is an interesting complementarity between the "taking turns" (cooperation) and the performance (competition). In either case the challenge has to do with the singer's handling the crucial juncture between narratives moments (fragments, I want to call them), and the performance of those fragments. See also Nagy 2002: 22: "not only must the rhapsodes take turns as they perform the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in sequence, they must also compete with each other in the process." One way in which the *hupolêpsis* or relay is handled is by having alternate transitional forms (such as the precious example of the Aristoxenus proem), so that the singer is ready to perform a fragment either outside a sequence or within a customary sequence. See Nagy's discussion of the parts (here I will call them fragments) of Homer presented in Plato's *Ion* Nagy 2002: 23ff.) See also Nagy 2002: 64-69 on rhapsodic practice and "breaking [!] the narrative" at certain points.



of Homeric poetic production (Nagy 1996: 82-88), with a crucial discussion of the term in Pindar *N. 2* at page 80-82. This latter discussion of *prooimia*, along with a connection to weaving through the word *oimê* is also brought into focus through Nagy's discussion of *humnos*. You can see why Nagy's summary formulation of his study of sequencing and song attracts my interest: "It is as if the entire corpus of Homeric poetry were the notional equivalent of a single continuous--and gigantic--*humnos* performed for the goddess Athena on the occasion of her Feast at the Panathenaia" (Nagy 2002: 83). Not only does this phrasing sound like F. Schlegel's conception of the "classical," it also happily leaves open the question of what it is that one experiences if one experiences (as audience or singer[s]) a non-Panathenaic performance. (After all, probably most of the performances that were, are, or will be experienced, were outside the "monumental" [to use a term hallowed in Homeric studies] context of the great festival.) I submit that one way of conceptualizing the missing term for the object of that experience is "a fragment of tradition."

I mean to say that my discussion has come full circle, from the early-romantics, the Jena Romantics, the "first avant-garde,"<sup>31</sup> and their conception of antiquity as one continuous single poem, to Homerists who are typed often as radicals championing a tradition that also has claims to continuity and wholeness, but with arguments now buttressed by rigorous analysis coming from the fine art of Homeric poetics and verbal artistry, supported externally by anthropological, linguistic, and historical research. That "new" research has led us to the concept of the oral-traditional composition in performance, a notion that I argue insists implicitly on itself as a fragment of tradition. The way that the notion of tradition comes to be framed with respect to Homeric discourse has led us to a strange place. Can we live with the notion that the Romantic theory of the fragment reproduces what we claim for a (most unromantic) traditional

-----  
<sup>31</sup>Lacoure-Labarthe and Nancy 1988.

culture's self-perception of its practice in its own terms? To put the question more directly, does our analytical view of the tradition and its performances recognize as its own what amounts to a traditional notion of part and whole that is in harmony with the native notion of Homeric tradition as we read it in the poems?

To be brief, I will conclude by saying that one parallel to the mirroring of ancient modes in modern contexts is Walter Ong's notion of secondary orality, where the elements of an oral culture are reproduced at the post-literate stage, aided by technology and other factors in the modern world. So tapes of oral singers can be exchanged in a modern context assuring the distribution of a song-tradition, using neither purely oral nor written means. Second, despite the seeming similarities, the relationship between fragment and whole are different in an oral or performative cultural base than it is in a modern cultural base. That difference needs further exploration than I can give here, but an exploratory question can be formulated: Because we champion tradition and its fragments, have we homerists turned out to be Homeric after all?

The early Romantics standing "on a peak" in Jena, were able, with wild surmise, to imagine a "whole continuous poem" that was antiquity, reinventing it, even as they transformed it, with the wild surmise that first conceived of a vast inherited and living tradition as one continuous *humnos*. But we know better, our fragments are our texts, and how we treat them locates the spot from which we gaze at the Homerizon.

=====

#### Works Consulted and Works Cited

Adorno, T. 1998 <1963, 1969>. *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*. N.Y: Columbia University Press.

- Barnett, Stuart. 2001. Ed. *On the Study of Greek Poetry by Friedrich Schlegel*. Albany: State University of New York.
- Behler, Ernest. 1993. *German Romantic Literary Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- , 1981. "The Impact of Classical Antiquity on the Formation of the Romantic Literary Theory of the Schlegel Brothers," in *Classical Models in Literature*, Zran Konstantinovic, Warren Anderson and Walter Dietze, eds. Innsbruck: Amoe.
- , 1982. Ed. *Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie, 1795-1797*. Friedrich Schlegel. Paderborn: F. Schöningh.
- , 1968. "The Origins of the Romantic Literary Theory." *Colloquia Germanica*. 42: 109-126.
- , and R. Struc. Eds. 1968. *Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms*. Friedrich Schlegel.
- Blanchot, Maurice. 1980. *L'écriture du désastre*. Gallimard
- , 1986. *The Writing of Disaster*. Tr. Ann Smock. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press.
- Bowie, Andrew. 1997. *From Romanticism and Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Burnyeat, M. F. 1996. "Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Rationality of Rhetoric." In *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric edited by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty*. Berkeley: University of California Press: 88-115.
- Carl, David. 2000. *Fraying the Selvage: The Fragment as a Literary Genre*. Ph.D. diss. UC. Davis.
- Chaouli, Michel. 2002. *The Laboratory of Poetry: Chemistry and Poetics in the Work of Friedrich Schlegel*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Clark, Timothy. 1992. "Modern Transformations of German Romanticism: Blanchot and Derrida on the Fragment, the Aphorism and the Architectural." *Paragraph* 15.3: 232-247.
- "Problemes de l'oeuvre fragmentale: Valéry." *Poétique* 31 (1977), 354.
- DuBois, P. 1995. *Sappho is Burning*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Eichner, Hans. 1956. "Friedrich Schlegel's Theory of Romantic Poetry." *PMLA* 71 1018-1041.
- Foucault, Michel. 1971. *L' Ordre du Discours*. Gallimard.
- FSKA see Schlegel. All references are to Volume 2.
- Grimaldi, William M. A. 1972. *Studies in the Philosophy of Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Weisbaden.
- Grossardt, Peter. 2001. *Die Erzählung von Meleagros: Zur Literarischen Entwicklung der Kalydonischen Kultlegende*. Leiden: Brill.
- Immerwahr, Raymond. 1980. "Classicist Values in the Critical Thoughts of Friedrich Schlegel" *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 79: 376-89.
- Lacque-Labarthe, Philippe and Jean-Luc Nancy. 1988. *The Literary Absolute: the Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*. Albany: The State University of New York Press.
- Lange, Victor. 1955. "Friedrich Schlegel's Literary Criticism" *Comp. Lit.* 7: 289-305.
- Malinowski, Bernadette. 2004. "German Romantic Poetry in Theory and Practice: The Schlegel Brothers, Schelling, Tieck, Novalis, Eichendorff, Brentano, and Heine." In *The Literature of German Romanticism*. Ed. Dennis F. Mahoney. Rochester, N.Y: Camden House: 147-169.
- Morson, G. 2005. "Genre, Aphorism, Herodotus" in *Ancient Narrative: The Bakhtin Circle and Ancient Narrative*, ed. R. B. Branham (Groningen: Barkhuis Publishing): 74-104.
- Muellner, L. 1996. *The Anger of Achilles: Mēnis in Greek Epic*. Ithaca : Cornell University Press.
- Nagy, G. 1996. *Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge.
- 2002. *Plato's Rhapsody and Homer's Music: The Poetics of the Panathenaic Festival in Classical Athens*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies.
- Schlegel, F. 1967. *Athenäum Fragmente*. Ed. Hans Eichner. In Vol. 2 of *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*. München: Ferdinand Schöningh; Zürich: Thomas, 165-255. Cited as FSKA.
- , 1967. *Ideen*. Ed. Hans Eichner. In Vol. 2 of *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*. München: Ferdinand Schöningh; Zürich: Thomas, 256-274. Cited as FSKA.
- , 1967. *Kritische Fragmente*. Ed. Hans Eichner. In Vol. 2. of *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*. München: Ferdinand Schöningh; Zürich: Thomas, 147-163. Cited as FSKA.

- . 1982. "Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie, 1795-1797." Edited by Ernst Behler. Paderborn: Schöningh.
- . 1991. *Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. by Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Verstraete, G. 1998. *Fragments of the Feminine Sublime in Friedrich Schlegel and James Joyce*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Walsh, Thomas R. 1995. "Odyssey 1.6-9: A Little More than Kine." *Mnemosyne* 48: 385-410.
- . 2005. *Fighting Words and Feuding Words*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books.
- Watson, Stephen H. 1992. "On the Rationality of the Fragment." In *Extensions: Essays on Interpretation, Rationality, and the Closure of Modernism*. Albany: State University of New York Press: 245-260.