

The judgment of King Paneides to award victory to the verses of Hesiod over those of Homer in the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* (207-10 Allen) led to the King's name becoming proverbial for any foolish vote (Apostol. 14.11). While this posthumous sully of Paneides' name offers some consolation to Homer's partisans, the verses that Homer offers as his "most beautiful" in the *Contest*—a cento of *Iliad* 13.126-33 and 339-44—have excited little enthusiasm; indeed, the lines that the Homer of the *Contest* sings have often been condemned as an Iliadic interpolation, offering only a confused depiction of hoplite combat (e.g., Kirk 1962, 186-88; cf. Latacz 1977, 63-66). I will argue that the verses that Homer performs in the *Contest* are remarkable for their already metapoetic quality: within the *Iliad* itself, these verses already imagine and reflect upon the response of an audience to the poem's conjunction of martial brutality and glory. Moreover, the judgment of Paneides, in its preference for Hesiod's depiction of the farmer's life, responds pointedly to the fundamentally anti-political (or even anti-cultural) impulse of Iliadic poetry.

In the final lines of Homer's recitation from the *Iliad* in the *Contest*, the poet imagines an anonymous spectator of the martial scene he has just narrated and declares that such an observer would have to be "very hardhearted" (*Iliad* 13.343) to take pleasure, not pain, in what he sees. While the preceding lines of Homer's recitation have invoked the hero's *aristeia* with its promise of self-assertion and self-making thru martial exploit, the poet's bravura finale reminds his listeners that the hero's exaltation, his gaining of *kleos*, takes place within a realm of carnage that is unbearable—potentially blinding (13.340-41)—in itself. The "wonder" that is attributed to Homer's listeners in the *Contest* (and that might well be our own) is, then, already recognized as dependent upon the poet's ability to make a unity, a singularity, out of that which is, in experience, fractured, unsettling, unbearable—and which is, finally, consubstantial with death.

King Paneides prefers justice to wonder. Though the Panhellenic audience of the *Contest* repeatedly acclaims Homer, the King awards the prize to Hesiod, declaring it just to prefer the poet of agriculture and peace to war and slaughter (*Contest* 205-10). Paneides' choice enacts the archaic model of the just king, whose sagacity is the very condition of his community's prosperity (Ford 2002, 274-77). But the "wonder" of the people at Homer's recitation from the *Iliad* remains, as does Paneides' intimation of the unsettling force and appeal of an Iliadic poetry that makes vivid not that which is seasonably predictable or politically stable, but that which compels for its very combustibility, for its evocation of desires that might elude the restraints of political order.

King Paneides' vote, then, is an early episode in an ongoing history of reception (beginning with the *Odyssey*) in which Iliadic skepticism about the possibility of cultural forming—or of the sufficiency of culture to consciousness—is contested (or suppressed from above) by the promise of political invention and remediation.