

1. How does Griffin characterize the differences between the Homeric poems and the poems of the Epic Cycle? Does Griffin have any reason to fear the "sands of Egypt"?

Griffin, Jasper. "The Epic Cycle and the Uniqueness of Homer" *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 97 (1977) 39-53.

The overarching difference, according to Griffin, between the Homeric epics and the fragmentary works of the Epic Cycle is the level of sophistication. Griffin sees Homeric epics, especially the *Iliad*, as sophisticated in almost every way and the other works of the Epic cycle are not. Griffin says that the *Cycle* exceeds in the fantastic, miraculous, and romantic where Homer treats events that hark to such themes as austere as possible (p. 40). Where the *Cycle* colors scenes with crass supernaturalism where Homer prefers the cold reality of death. Homer represses crude metamorphosis, sundry offspring, and the physical properties of coitus in preference of a muted philosophical realism. Oracles are reportedly rife in the *Cycle* and characteristically un-Homeric. The *Iliad* supposedly consistently excludes "low human types and motives"; whereas the *Cycle* does not. His reasoning here escapes me. When faced with the "uncharacteristic" passages in the Homeric corpus, Griffin cites, *ad hominem*, the hesitancy of a respected scholar to recognize the line as Homeric (i.e., Wilamowitz on p. 47). Griffin's following "logical" explanation is unconvincing. In addition, I frequently failed to see some of the "hints" in Homer (e.g., Od. iii 404) that are supposed to lead a reader to understand the origin "later" corruption of the purer Homeric idiom. Griffin has only to fear "the sands of Egypt" to the extent that his argument is an argument from silence. Most of the characteristics of the Cycle that he highlights are drawn from rather small and incomplete samples. I would like to see an appendix with notated examples of lines from the *Cypria* that show forms that "point to a considerably later date" (i.e., late seventh century). Should larger portions of these epics be found, the fragments might have to be radically reinterpreted. Homer, reduced to a selective few samples, could be characterized as un-Homeric. Much of what Griffin suggests as foreign to Homer is really in Homer, if only in scattered portions.