

SETH L. SCHEIN, *Homer. Iliad book I*, Cambridge Greek and Latin classics, Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022, xiii-242 pp., £19.99, ISBN 978-1-108-41296-4.

The first Book was the most-read part of the *Iliad* in antiquity and still is one of the most-studied ones of the epic today. Although there is hardly a shortage of commentaries on it, Seth Schein, himself a life-long expert on the Homeric epics, has written an up-to-date book, which is a welcome supplement to the existing volumes. Produced primarily for students Schein's work will surely facilitate the access to this particular Book of the *Iliad* and the Homeric Poems in general as well as provoke the thoughts of experts.

The Introduction is divided into six main chapters, which provide the reader with a solid overview over central issues. The short subchapter on the poetic context (1-4) discusses the genesis and history of the text of the *Iliad* in Antiquity. Unfortunately, there is no balanced overview of the different positions on the Homeric Question, which are summarized in one single note (2 n. 6); Schein himself favours the by no means undisputed theory that Homer wrote or dictated the poem toward the end of the eight century after the introduction of the alphabet (1-2, with n. 4). The argumentation for a late-eight-century date is continued in the following subchapter, where Schein discusses the Homeric Society as well as the multiple connections between the *Iliad* and other Greek and non-Greek epic poetry (4-8). Here one misses the works of Martin West; the complete absence at least of his monographs *The East Face of Helicon*, Oxford 1997 and *Indo-European Poetry and Myth*, Oxford 2007 from the bibliography is surprising.¹ Taking into account legitimate caveats against all too hastily postulated connections between type-scenes, thematics, etc. the topic of the connections between the *Iliad* and ancient Near Eastern poetry is underrepresented at all in this commentary; a complementary reading of the commentary-section of West's *The Making of the Iliad*, Oxford 2011, where many references at least to his own books on the topic can be found, is recommended for any reader interested in this aspect. After a short explanation of the structure of the *Iliad*, in which Schein highlights the poem's symmetrical patterns (9-11), follows a longer chapter about the significance of the first Book within the whole poem. It deals mainly with Achilles and the issue of his mortality (11-19).² The main aspects are adequately pointed out, but the subchapter about honour (16-18) skips essential information about this very topic as it is focused on Achilles feeling offended and the deadly consequences which evolve subsequently. Surely there are integral connections between honour and mortality; but it is indispensable for any reader of the Homeric epics to be familiar

¹ This is particularly evident in the commentary section, e.g. on verse 145, where a reference to *Indo-European Poetry and Myth*, 117-19 would have been necessary.

² Achilles's gradual inner development has now splendidly been analysed by Ernst-Richard Schwinge, whose book *Achill contra Achill. Interpretationen zum zweiten Teil von Homers Ilias*, Baden-Baden 2022 unfortunately appeared too late for Schein to be taken into account.

with the aristocratic system of honour that underlies and drives the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon on a basic level. It is vital to understand that honour in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is the representation of one's social status, visualised e.g. by the place at the dinner table, the portion of meat, and special prizes and gifts, awarded for outstanding achievements. The constant striving for supremacy is summarized by the famous verse αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων, (*Il.* 6.208 = 11.784) cited by Cicero in a letter to Caesar (*fam.* 13.15). Thus, every member of the Homeric Society, especially every aristocratic leader, aspires to increase and represent his honour, for which symbols which strikingly depict the status are essential.³ Such a display of honour are the girls who were assigned to the several leaders. This is why Agamemnon is reluctant to give back Chryseis and this is the main reason Achilles feels his honour diminished by losing Briseis.⁴ Schein explains the intervention of the gods in human actions following Lesky's concept of "double determination", which means that the human in question wants to do what the god in question advises or commands; he rightly points the reader towards the consistently evoked gulf between the mortal and powerless humans and the onlooking and powerful gods (20-4). Schein gives most space (25-58, more than half of the Introduction's pages) to metre, language and style. After an explanation of the most basic principles which apply to the Hexameter, Schein is obviously writing for an advanced readership when he provides a deeper analysis of the distribution of different types of caesurae, word-end and colometric structure of the Homeric verse (26-30). Careful reading of these explanations will be rewarded as Schein later repeatedly refers to them in the commentary section and often demonstrates how important aspects and good interpretations can be gained by a close look at the metre. The synopsis of the Homeric language is concise and will be helpful for any novice (35-47).⁵ The subchapter on formulas not only summarizes Milman Parry's theory but goes beyond his comprehension of the phenomenon as sole metrical utility as Schein picks up on a current trend by proposing the possibility of meaning in formulas dependent on focalization and referentiality in the poetic tradition (47-53). The subchapter on Homeric style is rounded off by succinct surveys of focalization (53-4), similes (54-5), speeches (55-6), and mythological allusions to figures or events that lie outside of the poem (57-8). The short final chapter deals with the transmission of the text, scholia, and the division of the poem into 24 Books as well as their titles (58-61).

³ See esp. C. Ulf, *Die homerische Gesellschaft. Materialien zur analytischen Beschreibung und historischen Lokalisierung*, München 1990, 48-9; H. van Wees, *Status Warriors. War, Violence and Society in Homer and History*, Amsterdam 1992, 101-25.

⁴ See C. Ulf, *Die homerische Gesellschaft. Materialien zur analytischen Beschreibung und historischen Lokalisierung*, München 1990, 85-117.

⁵ The only rather serious omission here is an entry on the formation of athematic stems, especially of sigmatic aorists, which in the third person singular do not only end in -ητι but sometimes in -ησι(v); such forms do occur in the first Book, e.g. 408 (ἐθέλησιν) and 519 (ἐπέθησιν); unfortunately there is no comment on these in the commentary section either.

Schein's text and abridged apparatus criticus are based on Martin West's Teubner edition (vol. i, Stuttgart-Leipzig 1998). Deviations from this text are discussed and justified in the commentary section (see e.g. on 65 or on 91).

The accurate and up-to-date commentary leaves hardly a verse, hardly even a word unexplained. Numerous entries illuminate grammar, vocabulary, and etymologies and offer much useful guidance in reading the original text. In addition to explanations of mythological and historical aspects as well as references to other parts of the poem there is a main focus on metrical peculiarities, from which Schein derives attractive interpretations, for example from the first two lines of Thetis's response to Achilles (415-16), where he shows how Thetis's emotional disturbance is reflected by several metrical irregularities.⁶ But sometimes there is too much focus and too lengthy a note on grammar, word meanings, and metre at the cost of neglecting references to the larger context or to other Books:

ad 4-5: It could have been added that the climax of the threats of exposing corpses to be eaten by dogs or/and birds are the ones Achilles utters about the dead Hector in 22.348-54.

ad 64: Already at this point it would have been necessary to point out that Homer occasionally lets his characters know things that they actually cannot know. This notice is not given until 380-1.

ad 92: Heubeck's important article on ἀμύμων in *Glotta* 65, 1987, 37-44 is surely worth a mention.

ad 133: It would have been important to point out that the notion of γέρας is the first allusion to Briseis.⁷

ad 138: Not a word is said here about the fact that nothing is known about a γέρας in the form of a girl for Odysseus.

ad 175: Schein fails to remark that Agamemnon's particular error lies in the assumption that Zeus is on his side.

ad 185: There is no discussion of the problem that, although he announces that he will come for Briseis himself, Agamemnon then only sends messengers; the brief note on 325 is not enough to fully deal with this peculiarity.

ad 191: It would have been important to note that the fixed epic tradition makes it impossible for Achilles to kill Agamemnon (as well as to return home to Phthia).⁸

ad 213: A reference to 9.121-57 is missing.

ad 255-8: There is no note that the reference to the danger of pleasing one's enemies is a typical rhetorical device; cf. 2.160-2, 3.51, 6.82.

ad 313-14: Regarding the ritual purification, Schein should have cited R. Parker, *Miasma. Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion*, Oxford 1983, esp. 210 and 229 n. 130)

⁶ Cf. the remarks on 505.

⁷ Cf. K. Reinhardt, *Die Ilias und ihr Dichter*, Göttingen 1961, 47.

⁸ Cf. H.-G. Nesselrath, *Ungeschehenes Geschehen. 'Beinahe-Episoden' im griechischen und römischen Epos von Homer bis zur Spätantike*, Stuttgart 1992, 21-2.

ad 306-487: The issue of depicting the simultaneity of events is of great importance to the Homeric epic. Schein should have addressed this, as well as mentioned at least the relevant work by Zieliński.⁹

ad 348: Two important points are missing regarding Briseis's behaviour: (i) she expected to become Achilles's wife (see 9.336-43 and 19.295-9) and (ii) her reluctance is a reflection of Achilles's feelings; the latter aspect is particularly important in this context.

ad 348-57: While the verbal echoes of the Chryses scene (34-43) are pointed out, the difficulty of interpreting this finding is not discussed: Are they deliberate allusions or rather a sign of the limits of the oral poet's technique?¹⁰

ad 352-6: A reference to Achilles's own choice of a short life (9.410-16) is missing as are references to other instances of Achilles's knowledge of his imminent death (21.276-8 and 24.540).

ad 366-7: Not a word about Thebe and its conquest, although the king Eetion mentioned here is the father of Andromache. A reference to 6.414-28, where the conquest is more fully reported, would have been appropriate. It also begs the question of why Chryseis was captured there and not in her native Chryse.¹¹

ad 409: An indication that the described situation will be reached in Book 15 would have been important.

ad 516: A reference to Thetis's longer complaint about her being dishonourably treated by Zeus in 18.429-43 is missing.

These are missed opportunities to delve into issues which surely fascinate the experienced scholar as well as the novice; notes like these which look at the big picture, show the common threads, and create a larger context are at least as important as explanations of grammar and word meanings to fully appreciate the poem and to spark the Homeric and philological fire.

Regarding controversial passages, Schein always has his own opinion; there are only few instances where he prefers it to possible alternatives in an unbalanced way:

ad 6: The discussion of the possible connections of ἐξ οὗ δῆ with either the previous line and the plan of Zeus or the imperative ἄειδε (1) plays down the latter possibility (with the likes of G.S. Kirk, *The Iliad. A Commentary, vol. i: books 1-4 ad loc.* and M.L. West, *The Making of the Iliad, ad loc.* being summarised under

⁹ T. Zieliński, "Die Behandlung gleichzeitiger Ereignisse im antiken Epos", *Philologus*, Suppl. 8, 1899-1901, 405-49. The issue has since been addressed by many others; see e.g. A. Rengakos, "Zeit und Gleichzeitigkeit in den homerischen Epen", *A&A* 41, 1995, 1-33; G.A. Seeck, "Homerisches Erzählen und das Problem der Gleichzeitigkeit", *Hermes* 126, 1998, 131-44; R. Scodel, "Zielinski's Law Reconsidered", *TAPhA* 138, 2008, 107-25.

¹⁰ See E.A. Havelock, "The Alphabetization of Homer", in E.A. Havelock, J. Hershbell, eds., *Communication Arts in the Ancient World*, New York 1978, 14, not cited by Schein, and Kirk *ad loc.*

¹¹ On this see K. Reinhardt, *Die Ilias und ihr Dichter*, Göttingen 1961, 62.

‘some ancient and modern scholars’) as a rather negligible position, labelling it ‘unlikely, if not impossible’.¹² This is too unbalanced; both is possible.

ad 425: Schein points out the parallel between the eleven-days interval of the gods’ absence from Olympos and the same interval during which the gods supporting the Greeks refuse the burial of Hector’s dead body in 24.23-32. This is surely right and fits the general pattern of similarities between Book 1 and Book 24.¹³ But there is a caveat, which Schein does not mention: The interval of eleven days is convenient in the Homeric formula-system; there is even another one in Book 24: the truce for Hector’s burial envisaged by his father Priam (24.667). This makes the proposed parallel less likely.¹⁴

But these are minor criticisms. Overall, Schein has produced a reliable companion for reading the first Book of the *Iliad*, which in the future will not be missing from any desk on which Homer is studied. The extensive bibliography provides an excellent starting point for anyone wishing to delve into the relevant topics; the division into editions, commentaries and translations on the one hand and books and articles on the other seems to be more of a hindrance than helpful, especially since the former does not only contain books specific to Homer. Two excellent indices facilitate the accessibility.

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MARCUS RECCHIA, *Pindari et Bacchylidis Hyporchematum Fragmenta*, Romae: in aedibus Athenaei, 2022, 234 pp., €144.00, ISBN 978-88-8476-134-7.

This survey is a welcome contribution to the study of early classical lyric poetry. The author concentrates on a subgenre of lyric poetry that lacks extensive commentation although it has received considerable attention in previous scholarship. The originality of the enterprise lies in the fact that he ventures a subgeneric summation of what is transmitted as *hyporchema* [= song that works as a prime act of dance in connectural accompaniment of verse] and attributed to Pindar and Bacchylides (caution about authorship is expressed in a single case). The texts that are presented as *hyporchemata*, are characterised as fragments in accordance to how issues of form come to the fore with regard to extent and metre. Fragmentary poetry of lyric provenance has been endowed with a remarkable instrument for subgeneric acclaim and further exploration.

¹² In this he follows, even in the choice of words, M.M. Willcock, *The Iliad of Homer. Books i-xii*, London 1978, *ad loc.*

¹³ Cf. C.W. MacLeod, *Homer. Iliad Book xxiv*, Cambridge 1982, 32-3.

¹⁴ Cf. G.S. Kirk, *The Iliad. A Commentary*, vol. i: books 1-4, *ad* 1.493-4.