

have an excellent commentary on *Iliad* 21 that in its careful and methodical readings will encourage further work on this book and the Homeric gods, and new responses to an epic whose tale of care and mutual obligation in the face of death and disinterest is urgently needed.

Christ's College, Cambridge

MATTHEW WARD
mw838@cam.ac.uk

HOMERIC EPIC, FAME AND TIME

L1 (Y.) *Future Fame in the Iliad. Epic Time and Homeric Studies*. Pp. x + 226. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. Cased, £85, US\$115. ISBN: 978-1-350-23919-7.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X22002244

This adventurous, highly sophisticated book is structured around two sets of arguments. The first, its 'conceptual core' (p. 160), explores κλέος as a figure of temporal difference in the *Iliad*. L. argues that the future κλέος, towards which heroic action is oriented, is deferred to the 'song to come' (not identical with the *Iliad*, on L.'s account), and as such is inaccessible to the heroes (pp. 6–8, 45, 160). Despite being unknowable, such κλέος is anticipated in ways that influence characters' action (p. 44). The effects of κλέος are exemplified in Achilles, whose career L. sees as characterised by a shift in understanding, from thinking that he can control his κλέος to realising that he cannot (pp. 45–50). The result of this shift, for L., is the inscription of a radical instability and openness, which he terms a 'generalized division of time': every present experience is non-self-identical because its meaning is reliant on an opaque, always deferred future, and moving through this world entails, for Achilles at least, the recognition that the significance of one's existence is fundamentally uncertain (pp. 49–50).

In the second strand of the book L. connects his arguments about κλέος with discussions in which he traces the varying conceptualisations of time on which modern interpretations of Homer have been premised. Oral theorists such as M. Parry and J.M. Foley promulgate readings informed by a desire for meaning to be transparently and instantaneously available (pp. 36–8, 72–80), a hermeneutic stance that L.'s notion of κλέος as difference problematises; in neo-analytical scholarship, by contrast, self-identity of meaning as presence is undone by the ubiquitous potential for allusivity to other story versions or texts (pp. 61–8). In G. Nagy's conceptualisation of oral tradition, L. identifies a configuration of diachrony as a form of synchrony given by structural predetermination of the possibilities for meaning (pp. 88–9), which transposes earlier oralists' conceptions of semantic 'plenitude' into the functioning of a 'synthetic tradition' (pp. 94, 97). The final chapter draws on G. Deleuze to articulate a transcendental synthesis of temporal conditions. The analytical categories employed are the 'living present' (pp. 132–3), the 'pure past', an *a priori* anteriority not manifest in any chronological prior state (pp. 140–4), and 'time out of joint', in which temporal unfolding is not subordinated to a meaning or logical structure independent of it (p. 154). Concern with what the 'living present' names characterises Parry, E. Auerbach, N. Austin and Foley; a version of the

'pure past' is legible in, for instance, W. Allan's interpretation of Zeus's plan as 'the rational ordering of mythological history' (p. 154), while 'time out of joint' defines L.'s understanding of κλέος as difference.

The method of identifying relations between the text's figurations of time and the conceptualisations of temporality implicit in Homeric scholarship is innovative and valuable. L.'s intricate arguments and insights are more than usually resistant to synopsis, but among the book's many successes are its concise problematisation of the temporal demarcations that structure 'reception' studies (pp. 4–5), its illuminating review of the interpretative techniques employed by Parry and Auerbach and the temporal forms that they produce (pp. 85–6, 133–40), and its account of the temporalities implicit in interpretations of 'Zeus's plan' (pp. 144–8). Throughout these and other analyses, L.'s conceptual exactitude sheds light on the conceptual structures, investments and evasions of the criticism he scrutinises, and ensures that readers will leave his book with a considerably sharpened understanding of the conceptual continuities and fissures between different areas of Homeric scholarship.

Although his interpretations never fail to stimulate, L. is less convincing in his handling of the *Iliad* itself, because his tendency to employ tightly regulated concepts as grounds for interpreting individual passages often results in readings that discount significant features of the text. He thus sees in the contrast between the mortal ('Hill of the Thicket') and divine (σῆμα πολυσκάρθμοιο Μυρίνης) names at 2.813–14 an instance of 'the logic of pure difference', because we are not given 'adequate information' about Myrina to produce a 'meaning context' with which to contrast the human name. What emerges is therefore a difference that is 'virtual or pure' because it arises from interaction between indeterminate terms (p. 122). But numerous imaginative inferences can be drawn from πολυσκάρθμοιο: that, despite her former prowess, Myrina has now been largely if not entirely forgotten by mortals; that her dancing was sufficiently skilled to be the primary quality for which the gods remembered her; that a memory of her vital, abundant movement, legible in the adjective, lingers in the gods' recollection. These inferences imply a 'meaning context' that is differentiated specifically from that given by the human name, and which derives a heightened signficatory force from that difference.

Elsewhere, L.'s interpretation of Achilles as characterised by 'unreadability' (p. 112) leads him to downplay elements that point in other directions. The discussion develops from the claim that Achilles' speech to Thetis at 18.98–126 shows him realising that 'his previous choices and the set of values which led him to make them no longer make sense' (p. 112), but it might equally be argued that at 18.101–6 Achilles grieves because he has not lived up to his obligations, not because he discards the system in which those obligations are couched. Rather than claiming that Achilles' 'past choices cease to be recognizable' to him (p. 112), we might find in his reflections on ἔρις and χόλος (18.107–11) an anguished recognition of precisely what has conditioned his behaviour. L.'s discussion of the similes at 18.207–13 and 22.26–31 (pp. 112–13) stresses 'brightness that overwhelms direct perception' at the expense of attention to the perspectives at work within the poem that figure Achilles as a signifying entity (Priam's meaning-making is acknowledged at p. 113 n. 42, but not fully integrated into the argument): perception is figured here less as 'overwhelm[ed]' than transformed. The argument closes with the claim that both Achilles and his shield converge in a 'negation . . . of human understanding' (p. 115): like Achilles, the shield is unreadable, an expression of 'pure difference' (p. 114). This claim is asserted without argument, and insufficient thought is given to the specific terms in which Achilles' reaction to the shield is described (19.15–19) and to the opacity of his reaction: we are not told what the sources of his 'pleasure' are (although τετάρπετο δαίδαλα λεύσσων at least hints at the shield's crafted complexity being part of what he

responds to), but it does not follow either that the shield is unreadable or is understood by Achilles as such.

Perhaps most open to question are arguments that seem to overestimate the extent to which ‘future fame’ in the *Iliad* is inaccessible to the poems’ actors. While the precise content of ‘the song to come’ is strictly unknowable to the poem’s characters because they will not be there to hear it, the receptive conditions in which such song is imagined to resonate, and certain elements of its content, are often represented in the poem as predictable. Therefore, when L. reads Helen as projecting an ‘anticipated but unknowable meaning’ (p. 56) into the future at 6.357–8, he does not bring out fully the extent to which the contents of Helen’s speech (Paris’ weakness, the suffering that has resulted) grasp in advance what will make her and Hector *αοίδιμοι* (for *κλέος* as predictable on the basis of the kind of songs that are familiar from the past, one might compare e.g. 9.524; see also Achilles’ predictions about the immediate consequences of his conduct at 18.121–5). When evoking ‘men to come’ (*ἔσσομένοις*), Helen posits cognitive continuity between present and future by assuming that what conditions emotional investment in stories now will continue to obtain, and thus grounds the emergence of future song in a transcontextual receptive recognition. Rather than deferring to a ‘future song’ that will ‘pass judgement and give meaning to the events of the present’ (p. 56), Helen participates in that process.

Regardless of how persuasive or not L.’s readings of such episodes might be found, however, the probing intelligence, conceptual subtlety and interpretative ambition of this book ought to ensure it a wide and attentive readership.

University of Manchester

TOM PHILLIPS
thomas.phillips@manchester.ac.uk

HOMER AS AN IDEA

PORTER (J.I.) *Homer. The Very Idea*. Pp. xiv + 277, ills. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2021. Cased, £22, US\$27.50. ISBN: 978-0-226-67589-3.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X22001792

This book is the culmination of P.’s work of two decades on Homer as the history of an idea. His first study on the concept of Homer not as a person but as an idea and cultural phenomenon was published as an article with the same title as this book (*Arion* 10 [2002], 57–86), which he further developed into a chapter entitled ‘Homer: the History of an Idea’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Homer* (2004, pp. 324–43). Through these previous works P.’s formulation of Homer as an idea has already been engaged with in the scholarship of classical reception, for example in the chapter ‘The Idea of Homer’ in L. Jansen’s *Borges’ Classics* (2018).

In the opening chapter, ‘Why Homer?’, P. explains that his interest is not in Homer the historical individual or Homer as a poet, but in ‘a cultural history . . . of an idea, a point of concern, a fascination, and an obsession that was born and reborn every time Homer was imagined as the presumed poet of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*’ (p. 5). ‘This book is not intended as a work of literary criticism’ (p. 5). He asks his own brand of ‘Homeric questions’ (p. 11), represented by chapter titles ‘Why Homer?’ (Chapter 1), ‘Who Was