

of the cycle, the conflict between the Storm God and the sea, because it did not fit comfortably with their established ideas about the sea. Chapter 12, by J. Haubold, puts questions of transmission aside. Instead, Haubold offers a compelling account of the ways in which the divine narratives of different cultures deploy shifting, often critical theological discourse to address shared concerns about the gods and their relationship with humanity.

In Chapter 13 S. Vanséveren uses a controversial Homeric passage as a case study to assess the value and potential pitfalls of treating apparently shared linguistic features as symptoms of, or evidence for, cross-cultural influence. Chapter 14, by A.M. Bowie, offers a useful survey of fate and its relationship to divine authority in Mesopotamian narratives and the *Iliad*, emphasising key differences. In Chapter 15 B. Ballesteros Petrella examines Hebrew, Egyptian and Mesopotamian parallels for the Hesiodic Pandora narrative. A helpful distinction between the ‘aetiological dimension’ of myths and their ‘concrete narrative instantiations’ (p. 262) allows him to develop a textured reading of the parallels and their implications, emphasising the markedly Greek elements of the Hesiodic scenes. Kelly’s excellent concluding chapter makes a convincing case for comparison ‘by analogy’, focusing on ‘what each culture or text is doing with shared or common elements’ (p. 282). This approach is developed in an interpretation of Near Eastern and Greek succession myths, emphasising the strikingly different roles played by sex and gender in the different traditions.

The volume is a welcome contribution to our understanding of the relationship between the ancient Near East and Greece. It provides fascinating, often compelling perspectives that significantly refine approaches to these difficult questions. Perhaps most importantly, it will offer encouragement and a surer methodological footing to those wishing to explore an area of study that has remained relatively marginal, but is of defining importance for the field of classical studies as its exclusive focus on Greece and Rome (and its relationship with ‘Western’ culture) comes under ever closer scrutiny.

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## ΕΣΣΟΜΕΝΟΙΣΙ ΠΥΘΕΣΘΑΙ . . . A NEW COMMENTARY ON *ILLIAD* 7

†WEST (M.L.), LATACZ (J.) (ed., trans.) *Homers Ilias: Gesamtkommentar (Basler Kommentar / BK). Band XII, Siebter Gesang (H). Faszikel 1: Text und Übersetzung*. Pp. xviii + 31. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2020. Cased, £36.50, €39.95. ISBN: 978-3-11-040573-6.

WESSELMANN (K.) *Homers Ilias: Gesamtkommentar (Basler Kommentar / BK). Band XII, Siebter Gesang (H). Faszikel 2: Kommentar*. Pp. xiv + 240. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2020. Cased, £91, €99.95. ISBN: 978-3-11-040574-3.

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*Iliad* 7 is too often overlooked. Its place in between the intimate and moving events of *Iliad* 6 and the powerful rhetoric of *Iliad* 9 has meant that this book is frequently ignored in accounts of the poem (and skipped over in undergraduate lectures). This attitude towards *Iliad* 7 is the

legacy of the perceived ‘inconsistencies’ – such as the unexpected duel between Hector and Aias or the supposedly unmotivated building of the Achaean wall – and lack of quality that made this book a favourite target of Analytic criticism throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. That long history of denigration has prevented us from appreciating the ways in which *Iliad* 7 helps to produce the imbricated temporality of the *Iliad* as it anticipates a future when those to come (καί ποτέ τις ... ὀπιγόντων ἀνθρώπων, 7.87) will hear of an epic that has become past. *Iliad* 7 articulates this pervasive concern with time and memory by thematising the work of mourning – and the dangers of its failure – in its opposing treatments of the individual heroic body (Hector) and the nameless and hard-to-recognise dead who are buried in an ‘indiscriminate’ mound (τύμβον ... ἕνα ... ἄκριτον, 7.336–7 and 435–6) beneath the ephemeral Achaean wall. *Iliad* 7 thus speaks of the limits of the material, and the contrasting role of *epos* itself, in the preservation of κλέος that is the (only?) compensation the *Iliad* can offer for mortality.

This extensive, detailed and excellent commentary on *Iliad* 7 from Wesselmann attempts to offset *Iliad* 7’s relative neglect by showing the ways in which the events of this book ‘innerhalb der *Ilias* entscheidend wichtige strukturelle Funktionen erfüllen’ (p. vii). The commentary follows the usual format of the *Basler Kommentar* series: a first short volume (*Faszikel* 1) contains the text – the Greek is that of West’s Teubner, with an abbreviated apparatus criticus and facing German translation – whilst a longer second volume (*Faszikel* 2) contains the commentary. The strengths of the series are by now well known, and this important new addition is no exception. Every note contains a wealth of useful information, from larger discussions of the structure of *Iliad* 7 and the scenes within it to detailed accounts of specific etymological, grammatical, textual, material, metrical, ‘formulaic’ and philological elements, all supported by a distillation of over two centuries of Homeric scholarship.

One of the major strengths of this commentary is its attempt to take *Iliad* 7 seriously in a way that would reject both Alexandrian atheteses and the old (and not so old) Analytic arguments that have foreclosed interpretation of this book. Detailed notes on the duel between Hector and Aias, for example, explore how this scene is not ‘without stated or accomplished purpose’ (as G.S. Kirk puts it), but rather both articulates a shift in the war from the private and personal (Paris and Menelaus in *Iliad* 3) to a wider struggle between the ‘best’ of the Achaeans and Trojans in the absence of Achilles (e.g. nn. 1–312 [six pages], 92–122 and 109–19), and traces Hector’s coming death not today (σήμερον, 7.30 and 291) but too soon (e.g. nn. 1–312, 89–90 and 244–73). Where the text has been suspected as an unmotivated ‘repetition’, Wesselmann rightly seeks to show how repetitions and irregularities are constituent elements of the *Iliad*’s production of meaning, for example n. 44–5 on Aristarchus’ athetisation of 53 (though I missed mention of F. Schironi’s work, especially her magisterial *The Best of the Grammarians* [2018], in all accounts of Aristarchus); the retention of 293 against Aristarchus’ objection that Hector should not use the same words as a mere herald; an excellent defence (n. 313–482) of the building of the Achaean wall and its curious ephemerality; n. 334–5 against Aristarchus’ objection to the irregularity of the funeral practice described (followed most influentially by Jacoby); and n. 466–75 on the unjustly-suspected ending of *Iliad* 7. Wesselmann’s wider argument for the integrated, functional importance of *Iliad* 7 within the poem provides a guiding thread as the detailed line-by-line commentary format allows her to show that *Iliad* 7 is not superfluous but rather expressive of some of the poem’s central concerns.

This new commentary therefore constitutes a significant improvement on Kirk’s Cambridge volume, the fullest previous account of *Iliad* 7, in a number of ways. In addition to reading *Iliad* 7 on its own terms, Wesselmann makes up for the long-felt lack

of modern scholarship in the Cambridge commentary by offering copious and wide-ranging bibliography on almost every point. The *Basler Kommentar* series also makes full use of the essential and now-complete *LfgRE*, which Kirk did not (although it appears in the abbreviations, it is never cited in volume 2 of his commentary). The scholia have been used to greater effect, as we continue to integrate this interpretative community into our own reading practices. The volumes themselves have been produced to a high level of presentation and accuracy, which makes them a pleasure to use (readers should note, however, that there are a few minor *corrigenda* in both, and that a large number of items cited in the commentary are missing from the bibliography – these omissions will no doubt be corrected in a second edition and in the forthcoming English translation). All students of Homer will want to consult this account of *Iliad* 7 in detail.

For all of its many strengths, this commentary also suffers from the flaws of the series in its failure to articulate the possibilities of reading and a critical practice that would go beyond the taxonomic toolbox of narratology and (excellent) general summaries of structure, ‘type-scenes’ and ring composition. Homeric language, in particular, is often dealt with simply and cursorily. Commentaries are unique sites of encounter and interpretation, where slow and close attention to form, textual problems, linguistic and metrical irregularities, and language encourages us to see more of a text’s possibilities. Wesselmann’s commentary, however, pays little close attention to the words of epic and to the implications of their repetition. Phrase patterns and formulae are frequently designated simply as a ‘VA’ (Vers-Anfang) or ‘VE (Vers-Ende) Formel’, with a simple ‘= / ≈’ in ways that risk closing down meaning rather than opening it up (this is no doubt due to entrenched anxieties within Homeric scholarship around language, repetition, writing and representation, and the production of meaning in the Homeric text). Yet, giving an account of what Homeric words *do* remains a pressing concern.

To give one paradigmatic example, the note on 118–19, ἀσπασίως γόνυ κάμψειν, begins ‘≈ 19.72f.’, the phrase is then glossed, before we are directed to a scholion and to the similar note in the corresponding *Basler Kommentar* volume for *Iliad* 19. But there is more to be said about this phrase pattern and its significant repetition in a different context. In *Iliad* 7 Agamemnon predicts that Hector will ‘gratefully bend his knee’ upon escaping from single combat with an Achaean hero, but in *Iliad* 19 the same phrase returns in the mouth of Achilles to describe those who will escape him in the coming battle (ἀλλά τι ν’ οἶω | ἀσπασίως αὐτῶν γόνυ κάμψειν, 19.71–2). Repetition creates difference. Hector will, of course, fail to repeat his grateful escape from single combat with ‘the best of the Achaeans’, and the ‘bending the knee’ of those who will escape Achilles suggests the crumpling at the knees of Trojan bodies – and Hector’s body – of those who will not. Beyond the unique iteration of this phrase pattern (only twice in the *Iliad* and once in *Odyssey* 5), a discussion sensitive to its shifting contexts might give an account of the ways in which this passage in *Iliad* 7 anticipates the increasingly thematised role of ‘knees’ in the coming death of Hector. After Achilles’ return, any Trojan ‘whose knees can save him’ gladly makes it into Troy (ἀλλ’ ἀσπασίως [West ἐσσωμένως] ἐσέχυντο | ἐς πόλιν, ὃν τινα τῶν γε πόδες καὶ γούνα σώωσαν, 21.610–11), but although Hector tries to escape in the speed of his knees (22.144, 204) – the same knees on which Astyanax used to sit (22.500–1) –, he cannot. Achilles ‘loosens’ Hector’s knees (ἐγὼ ... ὅς τοι γούνατ’ ἔλυσσα, 22.334–5), and, dying, Hector calls on the knees of Achilles in supplication (22.338 and 345). The *Basler Kommentar* too often misses such opportunities to read across the ever-proliferating *contexts* of repetition and their wider networks, for the meaning they can create (whether we call this ‘traditional referentiality’, ‘interformularity’ or a simple ‘reading’ that is the slow process of receiving the text).

My own desire for closer engagement with Homeric language and the possibilities of its interpretation should not, of course, detract in any way from the exceptional work of

scholarship that is this commentary on *Iliad* 7. Wesselmann's volume is now the standard reference point for *Iliad* 7 and will be useful to both students and advanced scholars interested in the *Iliad* and early epic more widely (how precisely to make full use of it is a difficult question, see review of *Iliad* 21, *CR* 73 [2023], 24–7). There is a great deal to learn about *Iliad* 7 in every note. But there is also more to be said and more to be read in this still under-appreciated book. This excellent commentary will provide a basis, and the impetus, for the interpretative responses that are to come.

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## FORGET THE GODS AND READ THE REST? – A NEW COMMENTARY ON *ILIAD* 21

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CORAY (M.), KRIETER-SPIRO (M.) *Homers Ilias: Gesamtkommentar (Basler Kommentar / BK). Band XIV, Einundzwanzigster Gesang (Φ). Faszikel 2: Kommentar*. Pp. xiv+345. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2021. Cased, £94, €102.95, US\$118.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-070336-8.

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If *Iliad* 7 is too often overlooked (see previous review, *CR* 73 [2023], 21–4), *Iliad* 21 has always had a prominent place in the understanding and appropriations of Homeric poetry. The *Theomachy* in particular has had a long and turbulent reception history that begins (at least) with Xenophanes' criticism of the Homeric gods and their subsequent defence by Theagenes of Rhegium (ὁς πρῶτος ἔγραψε περὶ Ὀμήρου, T4 Biondi) in the sixth century BCE. That criticism of the divine and its various (often allegorising) defences was refracted throughout antiquity in – among others – the Derveni Papyrus, Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Poetics*, Longinus, Philostratus, Porphyry and on into modernity: 'The *Theomachy* . . . is one of the very few passages in the *Iliad* that can be pronounced poetically bad' in Walter Leaf's opinion, or in Derek Walcott's response, "'forget the gods," Omeros growled, "and read the rest"' (*Omeros* LVI.III). These contested receptions have all been concerned with the ways in which *Iliad* 21 explores and problematises the quarrelsome nature of gods for whom nothing is at stake – and who see little point in fighting over ephemeral, leaf-like mortals (21.462–7) – in an epic where for mortals everything is (μη με κτείν', 21.95). *Iliad* 21 is deeply concerned with what is owed to precarious mortals, both to the suppliant in the famous scene between Achilles and Lycaon and to the dead in Scamander's threat to obliterate the memory of Achilles beneath his rushing waters.

This comprehensive and learned commentary, the collaborative product of longstanding *Basler Kommentar* contributors Coray and Krieter-Spiro, offers an excellent account of