



become confused – authorship and originality vs communal property; improvisation vs prepared composition; distance vs presence. This chapter is difficult to summarise, because its value lies in detailed analyses and comparisons on specific points. So, for example, while sentence length and reliance on the intonation unit are markers of medial orality (that is, how the work is composed and transmitted), deictics and interjections create an impression of immediacy and belong to the relationship between performer and audience.

Cognitive approaches have great potential value for Classicists and for students of archaic epic, but at present the distance between what science knows about brains and what they can learn about the workings of minds is still considerable. For the present, cognitive psychology is likely to be more helpful most of the time than neuroscience. It is important to remember that epos was a complex cultural product; and while an understanding of everyday communication can aid understanding, epic performance was not a simple message from sender to recipients.

Homerists, although they will learn from most of these papers, are not going to be inspired to profound rethinking of orality, because they are familiar with these methodologies already. Those who are less familiar with recent work in the area can use this work as a guide before reading more deeply. The chapters that address later authors or issues peripheral to orality will find their own audiences.

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## THE BASLER KOMMENTAR IN ENGLISH

WESSELMANN (K.) *Homer's Iliad: the Basel Commentary. Book VII.* Translated by Benjamin W. Millis and Sara Strack and edited by S. Douglas Olson. Pp. xii + 237. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2023. Cased, £100, €109.95, US\$126.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-068763-7.  
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This translation of the 2020 German commentary by W. is a valuable supplement to the ongoing edition of the English version of the renowned *Homers Ilias. Gesamtkommentar* (also known as *Basler Kommentar*), launched in 2000 by J. Latacz and A. Bierl. By now most Classicists are well acquainted with the series' format: four graphically differing tiers addressing different categories of readership, from the general commentary to the comprehensive philological commentary followed by a more specialised discussion and, finally, by the elementary grammatical commentary to be used by school and university students. These and other conventions are explained in the 'Notes for the Reader' and the '24 Rules Relating to Homeric Language', which conveniently precede the text.

Book 7 is one of the books of the *Iliad* that are least favoured by both scholars and the reading public, and it is not difficult to see why. It falls into two unequal and loosely connected parts, the Duel of Hector and Ajax and the Burial of the Dead, and it concludes with the building of fortifications of the Achaean camp (the so-called Achaean Wall), poorly motivated and more fitting the beginning of the war rather than its tenth year. Most commentators agree that, as M. West put it, 'H in particular falls below the standard

of excellence that has been generally maintained up to this point' (M.L. West, *Making of the Iliad. Disquisition & Analytical Commentary* [2011], p. 187), which probably explains the fact that the present volume is the first book-length commentary dedicated to this book of the *Iliad*. This is not to say that *Iliad 7* is not important from the point of view of Homeric scholarship: some of the heated issues related to the so-called Homeric Question, such as, for example, that of the Achaean Wall, are directly associated with this book. While duly noted by W., these issues are not the prime focus of the commentary (more below); for its main objective lies elsewhere.

This is first and foremost a literary commentary whose purpose is to show that *Iliad 7* is a carefully structured book, which plays an important role in the overall plan of the poem and is possessed of considerable artistic merit in its own right. While it is a debatable question whether W. has succeeded in vindicating the book's reputation, there is no denying that her commentary throws light on quite a few features of *Iliad 7* that usually pass unnoticed. Thus, emphasising the book's role as the last instalment in the large-scale retrospective, which starts with Book 2 and constitutes the longest digression of the *Iliad*, W. also highlights that the fact that it is placed at the end of the first day of fighting, the Hector–Ajax duel, which is often seen as redundant, serves as a counterpoint to the Menelaus–Paris duel at the beginning of the day, thus structurally balancing the entire opening sequence of the poem (pp. 11–13); an additional function of the duel is to anticipate Achilles' duel with Hector and Hector's death (pp. 15, 16–17, 56–7, 137). W. also shows that the symmetrical treatment of the proceedings in the Trojan and the Achaean camps in the concluding part of the book underscores the uneasy balance temporarily established between the two sides, a balance that will be broken in favour of the Trojans already in the next book (pp. 13–14, 191, 207).

At the same time I find it hard to agree with W. that, insofar as the participants of the Hector–Ajax duel are not personally involved in the origins of the conflict, from now on Helen as the cause of the war becomes irrelevant and that 'the war has gained the momentum divorced from its causes' (p. 13, see also pp. 16, 155). This is to ignore the fact that, though physically absent from most of the *Iliad*, Helen looms large in the background of the poem, just as the absent Achilles does. Thus, Helen as the sole cause of the war will feature prominently in Achilles' great speech in *Iliad 9* (9.339; cf. 19.325), and she will emerge again as a character at the strategic point in the concluding part of the poem. Likewise, it seems that W. goes too far in emphasising the indeterminacy of the Hector–Ajax duel in the eyes of Homer's audience (pp. 19, 45–6, 131, 137–8): since it was common knowledge that Hector will be killed by Achilles and that Ajax will commit suicide shortly before the fall of Troy, the audience must have been well aware that neither of the two will die in the course of the duel. Finally, there is a tendency to dismiss all textual problems arising in *Iliad 7*, some of them traced back as far as the Alexandrians, as a residue of the outdated analytical approach (see, e.g., pp. 17–18, 156–7, 164–5). It is more likely, however, that, regardless of the interpretative stance prevailing at a given historical moment, there are textual issues in the Homeric poems that do not tend to disappear; explaining them from a purely literary standpoint can hardly be seen as a robust solution.

The philological commentary is superb. All the characteristic features of Homer's style and diction – type-scenes (the prayer, pp. 102, 110–11; the assembly, pp. 167–8; the delivery of a message, pp. 177–8), speeches (see esp. the analysis of Nestor's speech, pp. 80–95; cf. 181–2), formulaic diction (e.g. on 280–1, 411), metre (with a special emphasis on the role of the enjambment, e.g. 'the enjambment of the couplets 39–42 conveys the sense of rapid speech', p. 37; cf. also on 29–32, 101–2) – receive due attention and are competently accounted for. Narratological high points, such as the characters'

perspective (e.g. on 300–2, Hector’s speech) or the narrator’s text (cf. p. 104 on 182–3, or p. 132 on 247: ‘the narrator’s quasi-X-ray vision’), are regularly emphasised, and the same is true of the characterisation (e.g. pp. 118–19, on Hector’s courage) and the descriptions of material objects (Ereuthalion’s arms, p. 89; Ajax’s shield, pp. 119–23). Users of the commentary will be enlightened not only about the characteristics of the Homeric world in general (e.g. divine epiphanies, pp. 48–9), but also about such features specific to *Iliad 7* as, for example, that the term *σῶμα* is ‘used of a *human* corpse elsewhere only at *Od.* 11.53, 24.187’ (on 79–80; W.’s emphasis); that ‘the notion of the *θυμός* descending to Hades is attested only here’ (on 130–1); that Hector is ‘the only Homeric warrior to compare himself to a woman’ (on 235–41); that ‘this [the Hector–Ajax duel] is the only scene in the *Iliad* where a warrior falls flat on his back without dying’ (on 271–2) and much more. This is a thorough and thoughtful commentary which offers fresh insight into the seventh book of the *Iliad*. Everyone reading *Iliad 7* with its assistance will be amply rewarded.

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## METALEPSIS IN THE *ILIAD*

VON ALVENSLEBEN (L.) *Erzähler und Figur in Interaktion. Metalepsen in Homers Ilias.* (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 139.) Pp. viii + 289. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022. Cased, £91, €99.95, US\$114.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-079064-1.  
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Shortly before Patroklos’ death-scene in *Iliad* 16 the Homeric narrator turns to address him directly, as if he existed not only in the narrated past, but also in the performative present: ‘then it was, Patroklos, that the end of your life appeared’ (*Il.* 16.787). Apostrophes such as this are the most striking and well-known examples in Homeric epic of metalepsis, the narrative phenomenon whereby the boundary between the extradiegetic realm and the intradiegetic realm is blurred or transgressed. In the book under review, a revision of the author’s 2021 Göttingen dissertation, v.A. argues that the narrator’s apostrophes are in fact only one form of the extensive metaleptic interactivity that pervades the epic. On her reading, metaleptic communication goes both ways in the *Iliad*: not only does the narrator ‘descend’ into the realm of the story by apostrophising characters and engaging in dialogue with them, characters also ‘ascend’ to the extradiegetic level, echoing the narrator’s wording, disputing his characterisations and calling attention to their status as intradiegetic characters.

The first chapter introduces the concept of metalepsis and traces the history of the term, first in ancient rhetorical criticism (where it was originally applied to the playful substitution of one word for a technically inappropriate but nevertheless comprehensible alternative), and then in modern narratology, from Gérard Genette’s appropriation of the term to more recent investigations of metalepsis in ancient Graeco-Roman narrative texts.

Chapter 2 examines metaleptic communication between Achilles and the narrator, arguing that their long-recognised affinity can be described in terms of their metaleptic interaction, a function of the ‘particularly high permeability’ (p. 118) between Achilles’