

Zitierhinweis

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A. M. BOWIE, *Homer: Iliad Book III*, Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, 206 pp., £ 22.99 (pb), ISBN 978-1-107-69802-4.

If you are interested in book 3 of the *Iliad*, buy this book! (Or at least order it for your library.) Bowie's commentary on *Iliad* book 3 will be of great value to undergraduates who are encountering Homer for the first time, graduate students who seek a high level discussion on many key topics, and Homeric scholars who desire insights into this pivotal book of the epic.

Basic grammatical analysis of forms is complemented by historical, cultural, literary, and linguistic commentary. For first-time Homerists, there is a valuable discussion of verbs, help with linguistics, and the use of—and definitions for—rhetorical and narratological terms.

B. will parse verbs, help with translation, and offer cognates from Latin and other Indo-European languages: for ἔσσο: “the unaugmented 2 p.s. pluperfect indicative middle of ἐννυμι ‘put on’ (< *ἤεσ-νυμι, cf. Lat. *ves-tis*). The pluperfect is sometimes used with ἄν/κε to express something that did not happen in the past” (105 s.v. 3.57). On τέτῃκα: “intransitive perfect of τήκω ‘melt down’, the reduplication conveying an intensifying iterative force” (128 s.v. 3.176). We learn that the word μένος and its cognates (μαίνομαι, μέμονα, μεμαώς) cover “a range of passionate behaviour, such as spirit, strong purpose, fierceness, anger” (93 s.v. 3.8). He distinguishes between ὀφέλλω (‘increase’) and ὀφείλω/ὀφέλλω (‘owe’—107 s.v. 3.62) and helps with verbs such as ἦμι and ἴμι (120 s.v. 3.134 and 125 s.v. 3.152). Also of great value for undergraduates are various examples and explanations of linguistic and rhetorical features, such as *mise en abyme* which is introduced with an explanation (10 note 19) along with examples of synecdoche and litotes (115–16 s.v. 3.113, 120)

On oral poetry, meter, and formulae, we learn that in hexameter verse, fifth-foot spondees appear in only 5% of Homeric verse. (B. even notes and explains “rhopallic verse” (129 s.v. 3.182).) Of great interest are observations such as that on Antenor's description of Odysseus' oratory: “the absence of formulaic language...[and] a number of rare words, suggests the passage is not reworking traditional material but reflecting a new interest in the techniques of oratory” (132–33 s.v. 3.204–24).

Throughout there is a tremendous interest in manifold topics for a very broad audience. We learn that the word for breast plate (θώρακα) is found on twelfth-century Linear B tablets from Pylos and that “Mycenean warriors are depicted with them but, like so much other Greek metal armour, they seem to disappear after the Mycenean period, to be reintroduced in the eighth century” (150 s.v. 3.332).

B. offers very good observations on how Homer concisely suggests character. These comments may be brief, e.g., when a single verb is used to indicate Priam's

reaction (140-41 s.v. 3.259). He also notes that Iris does not “simply do the gods’ bidding...but can show independent spirit: with both Athena (8.413-24) and Poseidon (15.201-4) she adds a boldly expressed comment of her own” (117 s.v. 3.121). More generally he argues that “the economy of Homeric narrative...does not seek to bring its subject matter vividly before the eyes of its audiences, but rather to supply hints as to character, situation or future events. The audience has work to do” (9).

Sometimes B. is more expansive, such as when he notes the first major appearance of Menelaus and usefully demonstrates “the conciliatory and regretful way in which he talks of the conflict [which] contrasts with the more self-centred manner in which the major figures have conducted themselves so far. [Menelaus] will show a similar sense of his responsibilities later when he worries about the Greeks [who had journeyed for his sake]...Such sensibility to obligations is rare among the Greeks” (112 s.v. 3.97-110).

In contrast to his brother’s concern for his fellow soldiers, Agamemnon’s prayer ends on a “more emotive note” in demanding reparations and “finally substitutes himself as the recipient of the reparations...such a personal note is very unusual in public oaths. Agamemnon’s attitude contrasts with Hector’s more humane and measured setting of the conditions for the treatment of the loser’s body before his duel with Ajax (7.76-91), and with Menelaus’ main desire for the war to end (3.97-102)” (142 s.v. 3.275-91).

B. also comments that Helen’s words to Aphrodite are “among the strongest criticisms addressed to a divine figure in Greek literature.” No other character “uses language as free and downright rude as this...The speech offers an insight into the relationship between Helen and Aphrodite: whatever is to be imagined as having happened between them, it has left them close enough for Helen to think she can get away with such an outburst—but not as close as she thinks” (160-61 s.v. 3.395-418). Helen’s worry about the scandal that might ensue among Trojan women if she were to lie with Paris offers us “a glimpse of the claustrophobic world in which Helen lives, her every move scrutinized” (164-65 s.v. 3.410). He also draws on Homeric scholia which note the “epigrammatic nature of Helen’s words” (128 s.v. 3.178-80).

B. links grammar and style as a means of recovering an emotional outburst: “Hector’s anger makes for slightly loose grammar...the relative paucity of formulaic language is notable...alliteration, assonance and repetition indicate rising anger” (with examples from lines 3.40-57). This is followed by comparisons from Indo-European epic (the ‘Thorr/Odinn opposition’ in Norse and Icelandic epic and Arjuna and Bhishma in the *Mahabharata*) in order to talk about the contrasting pair of Hector and Paris (100-101 s.v. 3.38-57).

In addition to the 83 pages of line-by-line commentary, this volume contains an introduction, Greek text (with selective critical apparatus), a glossary of linguistic terms, 15 pages of useful bibliography, and 2 indices (one on subject, one on Greek words).

The introduction is especially valuable on a variety of topics. B. begins with narrative ‘oddities’ in book 3, namely, events “better suited to the first year of the war than to the last” (9), such as the duel itself and describing “a land army preparing for battle in terms of the complements of ships” (11). In discussing the character of Helen, he suggests that the subject of her weaving (the sufferings of Greeks and Trojans) may be thought of as “her focalisation of affairs” (5). Also

he wonders whether at the end of book 3 Aphrodite might be “re-using the trick she originally employed to get Helen together” with Paris (13). Ultimately B. concludes that “we are left uncertain as to [Helen’s] deeper feelings” (5).

The introductory section on the historical background examines archaeology and written evidence (such as the 16th century Hittite “Songs of Istanuwa” with its reference to “Steep Wilusa”) but concludes that “the historical evidence is... silent about any major conflict over” Troy between Greece and the Hittites; “the literary evidence is very slight;” ultimately “it may be better to consider the Trojan War as the result of a highly complex and lengthy interweaving of literary traditions of various peoples, finally focussed on [Troy] by the circumstances of the Greek migrants at the start of the Iron Age” (31).

The section on the cultural background is fascinating. Helen’s two brothers, Castor and Polydeuces, are compared with “supernatural horsemen” from Indian literature (the Ashvins) and “the Baltic Dieva deli, ‘Sons of God’” (32-34). The abduction of Helen is carefully juxtaposed with the theft of Draupadi in the *Mahabharata* (34-37).

The section on Homeric language includes an accessible discussion of Indo-European linguistics, especially roots and vowel gradation (or *Ablaut*—45-47). B. can then usefully explain, e.g., the forms of Zeus from an Indo-European linguistic perspective (48; he explains what “Indo-European” means at 21 note 68).

In a nice section on particles, we learn that one of Homer’s favorite particles is ἄρα/ἄρ/ῥα: “It marks an interest in what is described, either amongst the characters, where it can point to a sudden realization by the character (‘so!’), or amongst the audience, where it can mean ‘as you can imagine’” (64). He concludes with a succinct history of the text (67-71).

B.’s wide-ranging curiosity is reflected in the bibliography. Among nine consecutive items we encounter (a) *Myths from Mesopotamia*, (b) *Dwarfs in ancient Egypt and Greece*, (c) *Greek insects*, (d) *Shahnameh: the Persian Book of Kings*, and (e) *MAKAR-EUDAIMON-OLBIOS-EUTUCHES: a study of the semantic field denoting happiness in ancient Greek to the end of the 5th century B.C.* (178).

The quality and price are attractive features. There are very few typos: the lemma for 112 s.v. 3.99 should read ἐπεὶ...πέπασθε (not πέποσθε) in line with the printed text (the note discusses Aristarchus’ reading of πέπασθε); intrusive s’s appear in “like [not “liske”] Helen with Paris” (34 note 135). And I would have liked a translation for γυναῖμανές (101 s.v. 1.39): Is Paris “woman-crazy” or does he drive women mad? Overall, however, I trust that the great value of this work is revealed by the representative examples I’ve discussed. This volume comes on the heels of B.’s superb commentary on *Odyssey* books 13 and 14.¹ His efforts devoted to Homeric commentaries will be appreciated by all.

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¹ A. M. Bowie, *Homer: The Odyssey Books XIII and XIV*, Cambridge: CUP 2014.