

Jan Haywood and Naoise Mac Sweeney, *Homer's Iliad and the Trojan War; Dialogues on Tradition*. Bloomsbury Academic: New York 2018. ix + 224. \$114. ISBN 9781350012684.

This “Classical Receptions” volume offers five chapters in two parts by two authors, intending dialogues but only tangentially achieving any. Paired case studies explore epic poetry, images, drama, historiography, and concepts of Troy arising from ancient, medieval, and modern perceptions of Trojan War traditions. The text of the extant *Iliad* and responses in various media stimulated the authors’ “monumental, tentacular series of cross-cultural dialogues” (6). The chapters range broadly with less connection to each other than expected. Herodotus’ polemical exposition of Helen’s absence from Troy barely relates in method or substance to Schliemann’s excavation of “her” or Priam’s jewelry-horde.

The first chapter addresses poetry, early Greek and roughly contemporary Babylonian, and meta-poetry, situations in which poets and characters force our attention to their words. Treating the *Iliad* first, Haywood emphasizes celebratory elements, especially lament and mourning. Helen as well as Achilles serve as surrogates for the poet. Helen’s lament for Hector crowns and suddenly ends the poem. The purpose of fighting appears to be *kleos* (27), and poetry constitutes such fame. *Erra and Ishum*, an Akkadian epic, narrates undramatically how the god Erra angrily raves and rampages, despite his herald and adviser Ishum’s calming advice: “You hold the nose-rope of heaven” (25). The more obvious parallel to Hellenic heroic epic, *Gilgamesh*, is puzzlingly ignored (9). The *Erra* presents three accounts of the same event in less than a thousand lines: Erra’s wrath, violence, and aftermath (25). Three parties declaim the sequence in three tenses. Egomaniacal Erra, unpredictable and vengeful, wishes to unseat the now senile divinity Marduk—not much of an enemy. Jan (their casual system of reference) contrasts the scribal tradition of the earlier civilization to the oral of the Greeks. Both critics discuss self-presentation of the narrators, poetic activities of characters, and poetry’s celebratory function for *kleos* transmission, especially lament.¹ The poem “commands *kleos* for itself” (32), or better, Erra commands the poem’s *kleos* for himself. Erra, assuaged by this poem, will benefit those who honor it, the physical tablets. The poem presents itself as a thing, tablets and amulets, but its self-report of provenance exemplifies a trope found already in *Gilgamesh* (*SBV* I.1). This trust-building trope, elsewhere denominated the “documentary fallacy,” also ornaments Antigonos Diogenes’ *Wonders Beyond Thule* (Photios’ summary, 111a). *Erra* is emphatically scribed on clay while the *Iliad* presents itself as oral. Neither, it is claimed, celebrates human agency in poetic composition (37, but cf. *Il.* 9. 186–91, 524–5, 18.324–42, or *Ody.* 8.63–82, 487–91).

¹ Ann Suter’s *Lament. Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond* (Oxford 2008) could have bolstered their arguments, since it too compares Near Eastern, Mycenaean, Homeric, and Athenian texts and images.

Naoise introduces the Akkadian text, arguably closer to Hesiod's theomachic *Theogony* than the mortal heroic *Iliad*. The composer Kabti ilani Marduk names himself and credits Ishum who "caused him to see it." In addition to translations, readers of Akkadian find the texts in Latinized transliteration as well as the *Iliad*'s Greek. Kabti, like Hesiod, in another trope, valorizes the poetic product by crediting divine inspiration. Naoise finds (38) both poems more "metapoetic" than this reader discerns.

The second chapter explores visual culture, pre- and post-Iliadic canonicity. They compare one example of late Archaic Athenian red-figure pottery (Hector donning armor in his parents' presence) and Dante G. Rosetti's oil portrait of the Trojan immigrant "Helen." The Euthymides painter's vase juxtaposes images of heroic arming and contemporary Athenians' revel-dancing. It "engage[s] in political games," and thus it "creates an ideological instability." What should prominent males be doing? Naoise well points out that Hector's arming is not in our *Iliad*—although five arming type-scene analogues appear there. "Peri-Iliadic" moments are common on archaic red-figured pots, almost as if the "Pioneer group" of potters wanted to make the epic new, focus on moments before, after, or unreported during the closing days of the Trojan conflict. Readers may disagree that the painters were more focused on "meta-artistry" than on daily-life vignettes, either Iliadish (like the hoplite Hector's armoring) or contemporary street-life.

Rosetti's Helen portrait also "challenges the social norms" (41–2), but here those of the Victorian age. Rosetti's Helen is desirable and dangerous. She is confusingly said to be both active and passive, even "cataleptic"—an agent and a victim (64). The pendant image of a torch that she fingers strikes me rather as Eros' weapon than symbolic of Troy (the city flames in the background, anyway) or of herself as firebrand, but one happily concedes its multivalence. Jan well emphasizes how popular a subject Helen was for pre-Raphaelite Victorian artists, although only Rosetti's is illustrated here. Those Englishmen had a yen for "torpid, vacant, and scantily clad female figures" (70). The authors might have compared ancient images of Helen to Rosetti's 1863 vixen.

The third chapter juxtaposes rather than compares two unsettling Trojan dramas, namely, Euripides' *Troades* and Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*. Word wars, not martial combats, dominate both. The critics' usual lens identifies for them an emphasis on "wordsmiths" (76)—the (deceptive) power and limits of speech. Jan notes how many (ten) Euripidean plots arise from the Trojan conflict. *Troades*' Cassandra, Hecuba, and Helen challenge any Homeric "take." *Trojan Women* like *Persian Men* perceive the war from the victims' perspective of violation and total disruption (84). Jan deems the tragedy an "alternative *Iliad*," although there is no triumphalism in Homer's, either. Naoise, like everyone else, has trouble categorizing Shakespeare's disturbing *Troilus*—"history," tragedy, some cynical and disillusioned hybrid, or none of the above (95)? What did Shakespeare directly know of Homeric

poetry or Attic drama is a legitimate but unanswerable question. Chapman and Hall had published partial English translations of epic before *Troilus* was composed, but Priam's son Troilus barely pings Homer's radar (24.257). Ancient vases that handsome Troilus populates (like the unmentioned François *krater*) were entirely beyond Shakespeare's ken. Boccaccio and Chaucer were this dramatist's obvious sources, so the drama is probably playing with late, medieval Trojan War traditions, not Homer's. The play arguably shows how little Homer is necessary to allow a prestigious Trojan War setting for any human dilemma.

Chapter Four examines history, Herodotus and Heinrich Schliemann on the "truth" of the Trojan War. Both writers mine but also correct "Homer," while confirming his "absolute centrality" (5, 109). Herodotus and, for that matter, Thucydides, did not deny the war's historicity, although both begin their continuous narratives much later (Croesus, Corcyra), after a revisionist critique of their parochial contemporaries' unconsidered assumptions about major past conflicts. Herodotus, like Homer, following Homer, will intrude into his own narrative by various proleptic and analeptic devices. Haywood focuses on Herodotus' relocation of Helen to Egypt, perhaps more a humorous, revisionist, and polemical dig at Hellenic gullibility and lack of *historie* than palinode or crucial exposition of method for mythical times. Proteus' interrogation of Menelaus is compared to Periander's of his Arion-shiping and -jettisoning crew.² Herodotus' forensics and revisionism establish a distance from Homer's epic thrust, Haywood's good point (124). Haywood's rhetoric bites off more than he can chew with a phrase like "an age [the ancient past] that is largely beyond the grasp of even the most credulous of inquirers" (126).

Mac Sweeney quickly summarizes Schliemann's shenanigans and his "rhetoric of authority," all the more amusing since his archaeological skills, as opposed to his divinatory acumen, trundled behind others even in his own day. Exact measurements of find-spots record locations where nothing was found. Schliemann bit-by-bit gathered in the "treasure of Priam." He did not dig it up dramatically at one time and place—or even in one year—as an (ancient) assemblage. Sophie was not present to hide from local Turks the depositional trove in the folds of her garments. Schliemann's use of Iliadic terminology for excavated objects added to the *Iliad's* authority as a Baedeker for his excavations—a "rhetorical sleight of hand" (cf. 138–40). As if, "Oh, this chest resembles that sung in *Il.* 24. 228," or "this entrance must be Homer's Scaean Gate!" Schliemann emerges as W. C. Calder and D. Traill's Aristophanic *poneros*,³ a topic on which Mac Sweeney has concurrently published another book (*Troy: Myth, Site, Icon; non vidi*). Schliemann's "historicizing approach to the *Iliad* continues to have widespread appeal" (144), true enough but we must also credit that monomaniacal liar's positive results. Perhaps Troy was not really

² Matthew Christ, "Herodotean kings and historical inquiry," *CLAnt* 13 (1994) 167–202, collects and discusses investigating autocrats.

³ William Calder III, "Schliemann on Schliemann: A study in the use of sources," *GRBS* 13 (1972) 335–53; David Traill, *Schliemann of Troy: Treasure and Deceit* (New York 1995).

Homer's Troy or Homer not Troy's Homer, but both hypotheses have produced progress in material culture and literary understanding. The unexpected juxtaposition of these two authors is certainly innovative, and Schliemann's successes survived his dubious methods.

Chapter 5 creates an odder couple, the Italian or German Godfrey of Viterbo's twelfth-century *Speculum Regum* (prose and verse) and the American Brad Pitt's Hollywood vehicle, *Troy* (2004). How could Godfrey find his Western European contemporaries Trojan? He knew no *Iliad* in Greek, much less anything really "Trojan." How Achaean is Brad Pitt's Achilles when assuming an "alignment between America and ancient Greece" (148)? Benoît de Ste Maure utilized Dares Phrygius for his epochal fantasy *Roman de Troie* (161). Neither subject engages Homeric data as much as the *concept* of the Trojan saga (6, their italics). The medieval/Renaissance myth of Troy is primarily a "non-Homeric Trojan War tradition" (149). Not only Virgil but Frankish and other exotic European pseudo-genealogies contribute to Godfrey's participation in the European "historical mania for Trojan descent." "Bruts" were Brit accounts of descent from Brutus (156, n17). Godfrey did not claim to have read Homer whose poem was nowhere to be found before Petrarch. Ancient historians may struggle with this half-chapter.

The movie, a product that Haywood calls "composite" media, shows more sympathy to the defending Trojans than to the aggressive and imperialistic "Greeks." This slant deserves note (167) because the usual East-West dichotomy invites political and personal sympathy for the [Danaan] Hellenes, our choice of cultural forebears, as in *300*. The Atreids' "cynical realpolitik" (175) gets a "relentlessly negative presentation" (175), compared to the "moral superiority" of the Trojans. Our authors contrast the tilt to the *Iliad's*, although I would not. Peterson's alleged "clash of civilizations" seems less marked to me than to the authors, if I correctly remember this forgettable blockbuster. Any such clash is admittedly starker in Hollywood than in Homer's more even-handed take. We can happily agree that the present generation sides with those whom we perceive as victims of aggression, when the lines seem adequately clear. Haywood provocatively but reasonably sees the movie as more engaged with George W. Bush's Iraq wars than with the *Iliad* itself, more moral indolence here than *kleos* combats.

The epilogue starts from Alice Oswald's noteworthy poem *Memorial* (2011), asking anew how ancient and modern texts examined here engage the monumental *Iliad*. Three interrelated points emerge. First, one now focuses on details—revision and supplement; second one chooses different themes, contrasting Homer's perspective to others; third, later texts embody reversal—lamenting Troy and demoting heroism for sympathy for minor warriors whom berserker Achilles ground up. We prefer the Vietnam Memorial to equestrian Lees or Grants. Both the *Iliad's* text and its cultural iconicity, a privileged place in values Hellenic and modern, force Westerners to triangulate him/herself with the text and its mutating offshoots.

Results are mixed for ancient historians. The humanistic promise of the dialogic method remains unfulfilled. The *comparanda* that the authors have chosen stimulate interrogations of tradition, but the analogues compose neither a coherent set in themselves nor generalizable examples. Treatment of each chosen analogue or competitor seems sketchy; more issues are described as “subtle” or “complex” than necessary. One wishes for more analysis of other literary strategies and fewer identifications of questionable textual self-referentiality.

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