

full translation of each passage as well as a ‘background’ summary of what has happened before the events in which the bird(s) appear. However, some of the quotations are rather over-long (at pp. 107–8 over 60 lines of Greek are quoted containing one brief appearance of an eagle; frequently passages of 20–40 lines are quoted in full). The ‘background’ summaries which accompany each quotation are extraneous paraphrases of the poem’s content which readers could look up for themselves. The quotations are all followed by tables breaking down the ornithology, interactions and functions of each bird. These tables are somewhat repetitive, since in both the ‘ornithology’ and ‘interactions’ section they often paraphrase parts of the translation already given alongside the Greek as well as the ornithological information given in detail elsewhere; so at p. 121 the table tells us that the vulture ‘sprang out again and then possibly drew something out from a corpse and then possibly shrank back into a throng’. This is a near word-for-word account of the translation of this passage given at p. 120 and it appears a third time in the next section of the same table. The tables also include repetitive references to the *LSJ* entries on various words (for instance we are given the *LSJ* reference and the glossary entry from Cunliffe’s 1924 *Lexicon* for ἵρηξ on p. 126, repeated verbatim at pp. 137 and 187). Each table is followed by a ‘comments and interpretation’ section which sums up the scene and analyses the bird appearance in reference to the four indexes set up at the beginning of the book (ornithology, form, interactions, functions). It is these sections which are the most fruitful and original parts of the book, and it is a shame that they are crowded out by the over-extensive quotation, paraphrase and repetitive use of tabulation.

This book provides a very detailed and easily-referenced guide to the 35 given scenes concerning named species of birds in the *Iliad*; the ornithological identifications remain unproveable, based as they are on (often) vague descriptions of the behaviour, locale and appearance of the birds within the poem. Most importantly, despite a lengthy dissertation on the subject, it still remains unclear *why* we should be so keen to have a Homer (and an audience) who was an expert on birds and wished to include this knowledge in his poetry. This is not to say that J. does not identify many important functions of birds within the *Iliad* – but that these functions are not dependent on species-specific identifications. For instance J. argues that ‘birds in the *Iliad* offer a possibility to learn more about humans’ (p. 17) but it is not clear why we need to identify ornithologically these birds in order to learn more about humans within the poem. Expansion of the thoughtful discussions of the birds’ functions within the poem may have illuminated this point; however it is certainly useful to have drawn our attention to the similarities between these Iliadic birds and some modern species, which will undoubtedly inspire further work and discussion.

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## A NEW TRANSLATION OF THE *ILIAD*

MITCHELL (S.) (trans.) *The Iliad*. Pp. lxxviii + 481, map. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney and New Delhi: Free Press, 2012 (first published 2011). Paper, US\$15.99 (Cased, US\$35). ISBN: 978-1-4391-6338-2 (978-1-4391-6337-5 hbk).

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M. is a poet and writer of fiction as well as a translator. He has previously translated the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Book of Job, the Bhagavad Gita and the Tao Te Ching.

More than 70 translations of the *Iliad* into English already exist, so a first question is whether M.'s adds anything new or different. The 'golden-bronze' coloured cover depicts a warrior crouched behind his shield ready for attack or defence. Since his head is bowed it is also possible to see him as dying and this reflects the character of the translation. M. presents the *Iliad* as a condensed and action-filled war-story that in some parts reminds us of modern movies. The tragic overtones are present but are somewhat dimmed by the emphasis on conveying rapid action. In its direct, contemporary and clear-cut language this shorter version of the *Iliad* may have a good chance of reaching a new generation of first time readers of Greek epic poetry. But is M.'s translation Homer's *Iliad* or is it something else? The answer to this question depends on how we react to M.'s choices and which *Iliad* we choose to identify as the real *Iliad*.

M.'s *Iliad* is well structured. The short summaries of each of the 24 books and the introduction which deals with the poem as a whole, describes some of the main human characters and introduces the themes of 'Honor and Fate', 'Wretched War', 'Man-Glorying War' and 'Poetry' are instructive. The sections that deal with the Greek text and M.'s views on translation are necessary, and the parts that address the pronunciation of Greek names and the geography of the *Iliad* are helpful, as is the map.

This is the first translation of the *Iliad* which is based on M.L. West's edition, in which many passages have been identified as probable interpolations that were added by rhapsodes after the *Iliad* was first written down (M. p. lvii, M. West, *Homeri Ilias I–XII* [1998] and M. West, *Homeri Ilias XIII–XXIV* [2000]. See also M. West, *Studies in the Text and Transmission of the Iliad* [2001] and *The Making of the Iliad: Disquisition and Analytical Commentary* [2011]). Following West's deletions and bracketing of passages M. has chosen to remove more than 1,000 lines, including all of Book 10 from his translation. The effect of omitting the interpolated lines 'is a dramatically sharper and leaner text', according to M. (p. lvii).

All the same, he includes Samuel Butler's translation of Book 10 with a short explanatory note at the end of his own translation of the poem. The decision to include Book 10, even though it has been rejected as not part of the original *Iliad*, appears contradictory and the chances that it will be read, when taken out of its narrative context, are small. Perhaps this choice most of all signifies the difficulties associated with removing it from the 'Iliadic scene' and from Homeric discourse. I would imagine that most contemporary Homeric scholars, while well aware of the inconsistencies and weaknesses of Book 10, would still count it as an intrinsic part of the *Iliad*. Many readers will therefore probably find M.'s translation problematic. In describing the problems with Book 10 in the introduction M. argues that 'its style is different, and it can be excised without leaving a trace' (p. lvii). I cannot agree completely with this view. Book 10 – whether a later addition or not – has certainly left traces and communicated information to a wide group of people for a long time. Without it we would not have learnt, for example, of the fear associated with visiting the enemy's territory during the night, of the courage of Odysseus and Diomedes, of the close bond between Athena and Odysseus, or of Odysseus' attentiveness to bird signs.

M. uses a five beat metre, which gives a rapid and smooth rhythm, and his language is characterised by a powerful simplicity. Together with the deletions of many epithets, this makes his *Iliad* very easy to read. However, I frequently missed important words and epithets from the Greek text. Here is an example from the opening (*Il.* 1.1–7):

The rage of Achilles – sing it now, goddess, sing *through* me  
the deadly rage that caused the Achaeans such grief  
and hurled down to Hades the souls of so many fighters,  
leaving their naked flesh to be eaten by dogs

and carrion birds, as the will of Zeus was accomplished.  
 Begin at the time when bitter words first divided  
 that king of men, Agamemnon, and godlike Achilles.

Both language and rhythm are clear, rapid and elegant, and most of the content is kept. But one vital part is missing in this section, namely the introduction of one of the most important human characters in the *Iliad* as Peleus' Achilles. To be identified as the 'son of ...' is important for the construction of identity in the *Iliad*. We all know that a multitude of epithets of this kind are frequent in the *Iliad*. I see a risk that we today in our written culture may experience these epithets and repetitive words as unnecessary and time-consuming to read and thus dismiss them as uninteresting. The *Iliad* was not, however, originally meant to be read, and if we want to get close to the *Iliad* and its characters as well as to grasp a sense of the oral character of the narrative, these characteristics should be kept. There are other examples of crucial information being lost. For instance, M.'s translation of the bird named ἄρπη as 'sea hawk' in *Il.* 19.350. According to *LSJ* it is an 'unknown bird of prey', but it is unlikely that it is a sea bird since Athena, assimilated to this bird, departs from the mountainous area of Mt Olympus. This is not a natural place for a sea bird of any kind.

M.'s language is contemporary and his characters' speech is informal. Sometimes, however, the language becomes too simplistic, such as in the episode where the gods speak to each other in a way which reminds one too much of a family of today with teenagers round a dinner table: 'These words caused Athena and Hera to seethe with fury as they sat together devising grief for the Trojans. Athena was silent; though angry at Zeus, her father, and though a fierce passion gripped her, she held her tongue. But Hera could not contain herself, and she cried out, "Dread Lord, what are you saying?"' (4.18–23) And further on: 'Greatly annoyed by what she had said, Zeus answered, "How absurd you are!"' (4.29–30).

There are also problems with words such as κύων that M. translates as 'bitch' (*Il.* 9.373). 'Dog' and 'bitch' are not the same, and information and connotations get lost. Many replacements of words, sometimes archaic words, with contemporary words might be a way of reaching a new generation of readers of the *Iliad*, but such choices simultaneously run the risk of moving the text too far from its original meaning. One function of the archaic and formal language in the *Iliad* was surely, already at the time of its creation, to give a touch of a former period of time when the ancestors were stronger and mightier.

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## THE CHRONOLOGY OF EARLY EPIC

ANDERSEN (O.), HAUG (D.T.T.) (edd.) *Relative Chronology in Early Greek Epic Poetry*. Pp. xiv + 277, figs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Cased, £60, US\$99. ISBN: 978-0-521-19497-6. doi:10.1017/S0009840X13002084

The editors have brought together a top team of international experts to create a complex and sophisticated collection of essays looking at the possible internal techniques for dating and its importance for understanding the different levels of interaction between texts and traditions. One of the best features of this collection is its demonstration of progression within Homeric Studies, with influential voices of the late twentieth century revising