

apparently a written text or texts of any sort. Thus Bird is content with referring to Nagy's landmark *Poetry as Performance* (Cambridge 1996), but without addressing any of the numerous criticisms that work engendered; one would not know from Bird's citations that its theory was in any way controversial.

The real issue here is the amount and level of variation in the Homeric paradosis, for that is where the crucial evidence lies, and that is where Bird's discussion should have found its focus; but this book – surprisingly – deals with it relatively rarely. Moreover, there is very little here that is new: the examples in chapter 2 are drawn almost entirely from Nagy's previously published work, to which there is constant reference *ad nauseam*. In the end, therefore, this book is a missed opportunity, because it repeats without alteration or significant development the position (and style) of Nagy's 1996 book and it does not engage with the development of the field since then. It consistently fails adequately to discuss or detail the evidence which would lead to the author's conclusions or to place it within the larger question of the transmission of ancient literature. This is a particular disappointment to those – like the current reviewer – who firmly believe that orality needs to play a much larger role in the textual criticism of Homer.

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BUCHAN (M.) *Perfidy and Passion:*

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Buchan presents his book as a new interpretation of the *Iliad*, based on the ambiguity of the poem's characters and language. He identifies his work as a collection of essays, rather than a conventional scholarly monologue, defining himself against recent scholarship which focuses on the poem's conditions of production. After the 'Introduction' follow seven thematically arranged chapters, a 'Conclusion', four pages of notes, a bibliography, and index. The 'Introduction' sets up the interpretations to follow by discussing the proems to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; the latter takes the form of a riddle, and the protagonist is unnamed, while the former names its subject immediately. We are therefore presented with a defining contrast

between the two poems and their protagonists: Odysseus as trickster, Achilles as straight-talker. However, Buchan challenges this with his interpretation of Calchas' speech in *Iliad* 1, which complicates the clearly-defined subject of the proem. Buchan demonstrates that Achilles is not as straight-forward as we might think. The tragedy of the *Iliad* is 'the opacity of desire' (28) – the characters do not know what they want, and when they do discover their desire it is too late for it to be fulfilled.

In chapter 1, 'The tragedy of Achilles: the *Iliad* as a poem of betrayal', Buchan claims that most readings of Achilles fall into one of two camps: a 'romantic, existentialist view' or a 'historicist, culturalist one'. Instead, we should read the poem as 'a critique of the impasses of both, as the efforts of Homeric heroes to avoid their own subjective impasses lead to ruin' (52). In the case of Achilles, his deepest Lacanian desire is for Patroclus to be killed, but he does not realize this until after the latter's death. Chapter 2 sets up a dichotomy between human and divine spheres as tragic and comic respectively, which is then challenged with a study of laughter. Buchan makes use of Freud's theories on jokes to compare the laughter triggered by Hephaestus and Thersites, and then to interpret the scene of Agamemnon's dream as a joke. The war itself is read as a comic farce, an enormous waste of energy.

Chapters 3, 'The politics of poetry', and 4, 'The poetry of politics' examine Achilles' shield and then the funeral games for Patroclus as parallel works of art. The shield is a representation of a world in suspense, fragile and on the point of collapse. This is depicted in its proliferation of circular motifs, which are repeated in the funeral games by chariot wheels and race circuits. Chapters 5 and 6 focus on pairs in the poem. 'Couples: the *Iliad* on intimacy' looks at erotic language in the duel between Hector and Achilles, and compares this pairing with the relationships of Hector with Andromache and Achilles with Patroclus. 'Flirtations' then looks at the meeting between Glaucus and Diomedes; this is Buchan's most sustained piece of literary interpretation. Chapter 7, 'The afterlife of Homer', focuses on the endings of both Homeric poems and returns to Buchan's introductory assertion that the *Iliad* is a poem of ambiguity, not of truth.

Buchan's conclusion is the longest of all the chapters, which perhaps hints at one problem with the book – that it lacks a unified interpretation to bind the disparate readings together. The

conclusion makes use of the story that Homer died after failing to solve a children's riddle as a tool for reading the *Iliad* itself. Buchan encourages us to identify with 'the puzzled Homer' in order to recognize the opacity of the poems and gain worthwhile new interpretations. The success of this book will depend on what the reader thinks of the tools Buchan uses, particularly the psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Lacan. The book's themes of ambiguity and desire do present some interesting readings, but often these are at risk of being lost in essays that are not grounded in an overall interpretation of the poem. His subtitle, 'Reintroducing the *Iliad*', is also something of a misnomer; this book would only be accessible to readers with a thorough knowledge of the poem and its events.

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HOLWAY (R.) **Becoming Achilles: Child-sacrifice, War, and Misrule in the *Iliad* and Beyond.** Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2012. Pp. xiv + 255. £18.95/\$29.95. 9780739146903 (hbk); 9780739146910 (pbk). doi:10.1017/S007542691400144X

Holway offers a reading of the *Iliad* focused on destructive and dysfunctional kinship relations, and above all those of father-daughter and mother-son. The anxieties of these relations are, Holway argues, ultimately redirected in a cathartic process through Achilles' savage *mēnis*.

Holway takes his cue from contemporary psychological research and from Attachment Theory (especially John Bowlby, 1907–1990, and Mary Ainsworth, 1913–1999), which focuses on relationships between infants and their caregivers. One of this theory's arguments is that when parents and care-givers sacrifice the child's needs for their own, the child is forced to confront the conflict between its neglected needs and the need to avoid alienating its caregiver. This gives rise to destructive patterns of behaviour: a daughter (or daughter surrogate), rejected and married off by the father, uses her son to play out the trauma of her rejection; a son, forced into the position of a hero by his mother, redirects his anxiety towards heroic violence and anger. Thetis, Zeus, Achilles, Peleus, Hera, Agamemnon and others play various direct and vicarious roles in Holway's picture of dysfunctional kinship and cathartic transference.

His objective, as he says, is to challenge the view of Achilles as a hero 'who speaks truth to power' (3 and elsewhere) and present him in a much more fragmented, pathological light, as the product of destructive family dynamics.

As Holway acknowledges in the 'Introduction', the *Iliad* does not present matters quite so openly. He argues that the poem, as well as ancient Greek culture, must present its intolerable truths and sacrificial narratives in masked and sublimated form. In principle, an *argumentum ex silentio* is immensely attractive, not least in Homer or in psychoanalytically oriented work. However, this requires meticulous technical and methodological analyses (consider, elsewhere, Porson's *lectiones statariae* for the absent *digamma*, Parry's argument for orality in text or, *mutatis mutandis*, arguments by Freud, Lacan, Žizek, etc.). Without them, the risk of arguing for invisible essence ('proof: you can't see it') is just too great.

Dealing with dysfunctional families comes 'naturally' to the Greeks, to the study of poetry and social structure (see Aristotle's *Poetics*, *Politics*, etc.). Its centrality to psychology and psychoanalysis needs no comment. Combining the two has produced much interesting work (in different ways, G. Devereux, J. Shay, P. Slater, P. duBois, M. Leonard, etc.). But, as a reviewer from the American Psychological Association suggests of this book, invoking 'well-worn oedipal or simplistic attachment theories' is very risky (S.D. Orfanos, 'A hero's aesthetics', *PsychCRITIQUES* 58.6, article 7). The problem, in my view, is not just lack of nuance. Holway assumes that we can equate post-World War II, mostly American families and mythological families whose portrayal is shaped by Archaic Greek experience, Iron Age sensibilities retrojected onto Bronze Age cultures (or fantasies of these) and by the accrued and embedded sensibilities of subsequent cultures. But without a detailed *apologia* this assumption threatens the elision of historical differences and historicity. The universalism of which psychology and psychoanalysis have been (justly and unjustly) accused (although it also marks large segments of Western thought and has partly been revived recently, for example, in so-called Post-Deleuzian philosophy) requires detail and reserve. I say nothing of the fact that the family is one of the fiercest battlegrounds of historical interpretation. As Claude Lévi Strauss, for example (himself a universalist of sorts), notes, the debates on the family are 'sometimes so obscure, often so futile