F.'s with altered page numbers). Footnotes could be printed as such in 1956, but not in this computer age.

Stanford University MARK W. EDWARDS
doi:10.1093/clrevj/bni004

HOMER REALLY WAS HOMER

B. B. POWELL: *Homer.* (Blackwell Introductions to the Classical World.) Pp. xvi + 176, maps, ills. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004. Paper, £15.99, US$24.95 (Cased, £50, US$59.95). ISBN: 0-631-23386-5 (0-631-23385-7 hbk).

With this volume, Blackwell's launches a new series of Introductions to the Classical World. Within 172 pages, P. manages to cover a great deal of territory in a breezy and informal style that should appeal to the book's intended audience: 'People who are not in Classics, or are just entering Classics' who have read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in translation. But P. also believes that it may benefit 'many professional classicists [who] do not understand the basis to assumptions often repeated about Homer'. According to P., the Homeric poems (and he means both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) 'are the creation, from traditional material, of a single human intelligence' (p. 15).

The first half, like Gaul, is divided into three parts which P. calls 'the philologist's Homer', 'the historian's Homer', and 'the reader's Homer'. For P., the philologist's Homer is first and foremost a physical object, a text, and P. defines the Homeric Question as: 'Where did Homer's texts come from?' (p. 3). P. deftly traces our modern texts back from the OCT to the *editio princeps* to Venetus A to the vulgate and the Alexandrians to *boustrophedon* and early alphabetic writing; and he lucidly lays out the theories of Wolf and the discoveries of Parry and Lord. More controversial is P.'s claim, which he has argued in several books, that early references to Homer must refer to Homeric texts and that the Homeric text can be traced back to the eighth century, when 'Perhaps a bilingual Semite, heir to an ancient tradition of taking down poetry by dictation, tried his hand at taking down Greek song', probably in Euboea, and thus 'invented the first true alphabet' (p. 27). P.'s views, however elegant and economical, have not won many adherents. Indeed, while the trend among many contemporary scholars is to blur the strict dichotomy between orality and writing, P. insists on their radical disjunction, which he traces to the Parry/Lord model (p. 29). (Indeed, even at the end of his life, Lord explicitly exempted Homer from his category of 'transitional texts' in *The Singer Resumes the Tale* [Ithaca, 1995], p. 236.) P. devotes substantial—some would say, disproportional—space to his idiosyncratic views on Homer and the Greek alphabet, which also form the foundation of much that follows.

P.'s second section rapidly reviews the relation of the Homeric texts to the Bronze Age and to the classical *polis* as well as relations with the Near East and colonization. Since he has dated Homer to the eighth century (although many historians are now down-dating the poems to the mid- or even late- seventh), P. minimizes the presence of the phalanx as well as other quasi-*polis* features; he further believes that the depiction of myths in Greek art is due to the circulation of Homeric and cyclical texts. On the other hand, P. emphasizes the prominence of Near Eastern motifs in the poems and in Homer's depictions of the gods 'whose lack of seriousness in Homer's stories about them, reflect their foreign origin as something separate and unrelated to real religious

The Classical Review vol. 55 no. 1 © The Classical Association 2005; all rights reserved

https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni005 Published online by Cambridge University Press

practice' (p. 50). In these fifteen pages, P. tends to emphasize objects rather than institutions; one would, for instance, have liked to see something about *xenia* or the principles of reciprocity that govern both divine and human society.

For P., the form and character of the Homeric poems 'depend on the unique circumstances of the creation of the texts' (p. 30). In the 'reader's Homer', P. rightly stresses the difference between a modern reader's experience of the text and that of its original audience. He signals the repetition, leisurely description, and lack of suspense characteristic of oral style, epic similes, and Homeric plot construction.

Part Two offers a running summary/commentary on the main episodes of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Much useful background information is smuggled in (e.g. on *geras* and on neo-analysis), and there are some arresting observations, for instance: 'there is much humor in the *Iliad* (but almost none in the *Odyssey*)' (p. 70). Some readers will find the tone delightfully informal, while others may find it arch: 'Agamemnon makes mincemeat out of the Trojans in his splendid *aristeia* . . . Over 200 lines later Agamemnon is still chopping away' (p. 89). For P., the fact that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* 'are literary opposites' constitutes 'the best argument that both poems are the invention of one man' (p. 115, cf. pp. 155–8). 'Suggestions for Further Reading' as well as two maps and a chronological chart from 4000 B.C. to 925 A.D. add to the book's utility. P. has managed to pack a great deal of information into an accessible and attractive volume. My only worry is that students and laypersons may consider gospel P.'s somewhat controversial theories of Homeric textualization.

University of Virginia JENNY STRAUSS CLAY
doi:10.1093/clrevj/bni005

ORACULAR?

G. NAGY: *Homeric Responses*. Pp. xii + 100. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003. Paper, US$16.95, £13 (Cased, US$40, £30.50). ISBN: 0-292-70554-9 (0-292-70553-0 hbk).

Aristarchus described his Homeric exegesis as 'clarification'; Panaetius described Aristarchus as a seer. So far, so good—but then, abruptly: 'Aristarchus is oracular, that is, mantic like a seer, in clarifying the meaning of Homer because Homer himself is oracular in clarifying his own meaning' (p. x). It never takes me long to lose the thread of one of N.'s arguments. Perhaps that's a shortcoming in me. Readers of this review should certainly bear the possibility in mind.

N. goes on to take the 'metaphor of clairvoyance . . . even further', noting that '*Homeric Responses* is, after all, a set of Homeric responses to questions, *Homeric* questions'. What have responses to do with clairvoyance? The idea is elaborated in Chapter 1, which begins from a claim about the semantics of ὑποκρίνεσθαι: 'The word means more than simply "respond to a question." It conveys the basic idea of *responding by way of performing*, and this idea links Homeric poetry with the clairvoyant language of seers' (p. 21). Well, sometimes the word is applied to seers, and sometimes it isn't—as N.'s first example, *Iliad* 7.402, shows. And even if we swallow the puzzlingly unmotivated claim that 'the Achaians respond by virtue of the fact that the words of their response have been performed by Diomedes' (p. 21), I am left wondering whether 'performs' here means anything more than 'speaks'. But what, then, is the point of 'responding by way of performing'? How else could a hero respond? (Obviously not in writing!)

The Classical Review vol. 55 no. 1 © The Classical Association 2005; all rights reserved

https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni005 Published online by Cambridge University Press