DEATH AND THE HERO

W.-H. FRIEDRICH: *Wounding and Death in the* Iliad. *Homeric Techniques of Description*. Translated by P. Jones and G. Wright. Appendix by K. B. Saunders. Pp. xviii + 167. London: Duckworth, 2003. Cased, £45. ISBN: 0-7156-2983-2.

The translators of this work and the author of the appendix have impressive credentials. Jones and Wright have already prepared the translations for their fine *Homer: German Scholarship in Translation* (Oxford, 1997), and Jones wrote a long introduction which provided excellent reviews and updates for the important old articles and extracts it contained. Saunders, an Emeritus Professor of Medicine, is already known to Homerists for 'The Wounds in *Iliad* 13–16' (*CQ* 49 [1999], 345–63), a persuasive correction of the commentaries of R. Janko and others, and 'A Note on the Strange Death of Mydon in *Iliad* 5' (*SO* 75 [2000], 24–33), which cuts through generations (or millennia) of uninformed interpretation. Both these articles show not only medical expertise but also a deep understanding of Homeric usage and much common sense.

The merits of the original work are more limited. F., who refers to Arend's work on Homeric type-scenes (p. 104 n. 9 in this volume) but not that of Milman Parry, thought the work of the Analysts was too subjective, and in his *Verwundung und Tod in der Ilias: homerische Darstellungsweisen* (Göttingen, 1956) set out to compare the style of passages similar in content, choosing the battle scenes (which Arend had not treated). His conclusions, he declared, 'are likely to displease analysts and unitarians in the same measure, the latter because the assumption that there are several styles leads to the assumption that there are several, and even several important, poets, unless one wants to understand the *Iliad* as the product of an epigonal eclecticism which used different styles with the mastery of a forger' (pp. 68–9). He categorized the style of the *Iliad* duels as: I. Phantasmata; II. Truth to Life (with following subsections on Pseudo-Realism and on Low Realism—'low' meaning 'below-the-belt'); and III. Strict Style. Four appendixes discuss the duels of Books 3 and 7, Harpalion and Lycaon, Sarpedon, and Books 13, 14, and 16.

Several European journals summarized F.'s argument, but the only full-length reviews were by the distinguished English-speaking Homerists F. M. Combellack (*CP* 53 [1958], 182–5) and J. A. Davison (*RBPh* 36 [1958], 153–6: no review appeared in *CR*). Both were critical of F.'s assumption of 'one style, one author', and (probably as a result) undervalued his comparisons of parallel actions. Nowadays, of course, analysis of the structure and diversified forms of duels has been definitively accomplished by B. Fenik (*Typical Battle Scenes in the Iliad, Hermes* Einzelschriften 21 [Wiesbaden, 1968]). Comparing the two, F.'s categories are now unhelpful (post-Saunders), but his remarks on the elaboration of some passages often raise interesting points, whereas Fenik's work is much more comprehensive (in every sense), much more concise, and concentrates on detailed analysis of the component parts of the action in a much more systematic way than F. did. For appreciation of a particular passage, Fenik's parallels and analyses are far more useful.

Saunders's thirty-six-page appendix begins with a brief account of previous medical literature on Homeric knowledge of anatomy, and he gives 'a full response to all of F.'s findings which involve wounds, writing as a late-twentieth-century physician and physiologist' (p. 131), sometimes summarizing or extracting passages from his earlier articles. His attitude is: 'while I do not expect every wound described by Homer to have

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a realistic explanation . . . the poet is to be believed unless there is strong evidence to the contrary' (p. 132). He makes useful general points: the numerous sudden deaths in the *Iliad* are not realistic but simply a convention, just as in movies 'cowboys . . . drop dead with an Apache arrow impacted in the shoulder-blade' (p. 132); the healing of major heroes who are wounded (e.g. Hector's disabling chest wound, Aeneas' broken pelvis) is miraculously swift—it must be, since they have to resume their activities in the poem's plot (p. 134). He also describes Homeric weapons and the kinds of wounds they cause (pp. 134–7). These few pages show an excellent understanding of Homer, and are incisive, well documented, and valuable.

He then reviews in turn the passages F. lists in his various categories, with cross-references to his own articles. Most of F.'s 'phantasmata' are in fact physically possible. The passages showing 'pseudo-realism' may seem realistic, but usually Saunders agrees that there are underlying problems. F.'s examples of 'low realism' are realistic enough. Saunders adds valuable comments on several other problematic wounds discussed by F. His conclusion is that Homer knew where the major organs were, but not their function; he could not distinguish between tendons, ligaments, and nerves; and 'the rapidity of his narrative style enables him to operate around the limits of credibility . . . Homer uses pseudo-realism to create excitement, and he gets away with it because he takes us through it, or past it, at such speed. Of course we experience the "suspension of disbelief" ' (pp. 161–2).

Jones's preface is disappointingly brief. He gives a clear summary of F.'s purpose and examples of his arguments, admitting that we no longer believe that a different style indicates a different author. He defends, however, F.'s investigation of style: 'If we were to make any case at all for multiple authorship, my sense of the matter is that style would be an important determining factor' (p. xi). He declares that 'oral stylistics is a field that remains, if not exactly virgin, then pretty thinly ploughed' (p. xi). I am not sure exactly what he means by 'style', but it seems to me that its major aspects—use and avoidance of available formulae, choice of vocabulary, disposition of words within the verse, degree of amplification and manipulation of type-scenes, figures of speech, and so on—are discussed fairly fully in the Cambridge Commentary volumes (general editor G. S. Kirk)—though I am not unprejudiced. Jones naturally refers to Fenik, but he does not compare his analyses with F.'s, and an uninformed reader would not guess how much further Fenik's own comparisons of battle scenes go than those of his predecessor.

The value of the volume, in my opinion, is not that it may inspire a new study of Homeric style, but that Saunders's appendix (like his articles) totally eclipses the out-dated medical information given by F., just as Fenik's monograph eclipsed F.'s analyses of the duels. Now we can salute F. for his contribution to the understanding of Homeric battles fifty years ago, and advance confidently beyond him. Future commentators on the *Iliad* may find F.'s observations occasionally useful, but will find Saunders' work absolutely essential.

F.'s style is ungraceful, and the English rendering does nothing to improve it (just one example: 'For the more small units there may appear contained by the matter out of which our *Iliad* is constructed, the more comprehensive and more manifold, the more significant becomes the achievement of him or them who joined the whole together', p. 67). Regrettably, F.'s use of Greek letters to identify books of the *Iliad* (now unfamiliar even to most classicists) is retained, with not even a key, and his Greek quotations are not translated. In Saunders's appendix, however, the modern book notation is used and translations are given (but it is not included in the index, which is

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

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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

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