The Classical Review
VOLUME 55 NO. 1

2005

THE *ILIAD*

P. V. JONES: *Homer's* Iliad. *A Commentary on Three Translations*. Pp. 345, ills. London: Bristol Classical Press, 2003. Paper, £12.99. ISBN: 1-85399-657-2.

Peter Jones's *Homer's* Odyssey*: A Companion to the English Translation of Richmond Lattimore* (Bristol, 1988) is widely used for courses on Homer in translation, so his new commentary on the *Iliad* in translation is very welcome. Though the two volumes have a largely similar approach, the *Iliad* commentary has a more extensive introduction, reflecting the growing need for good materials for students approaching Homer in translation. It is also longer than Willcock's useful *A Companion to the* Iliad*: Based on the Translation by Richmond Lattimore* (Chicago, 1976), which has no general introduction. J. has widened the market for this commentary by looking at three popular translations, those of Lattimore, Rieu-Jones, and Hammond. He describes the purpose of the book as 'to elucidate the plot, explain references, say something about the techniques of oral poetry and discuss some of the main issues that lie at the heart of this masterpiece of Western literature' (p. 7). I would say he carries out these aims admirably. The general introduction has sections on poetry and history, heroic values, the human and divine worlds, and features of Homeric plotting and narrative, with subsections within these categories. J. offers a clear outline of the characteristics and techniques of oral poetry, heroic values and the rôle of the gods. He has particularly interesting sections on narrative and plot. I found interesting the list of reasons for the size of the poem, and the analysis of the plot in terms of the objects of desire of main charcters (he finds seven such plots in the *Iliad*). This shows J.'s interest in narratological theories, as does the following section on 'Homer as narrator and "focaliser" '. There is also a useful concise list of the main characteristics of battle narratives, derived from the works of Van Wees and Albracht. J. has the knack of presenting the material in a concise and lively way; and throughout he increases clarity by the use of bullet points and divisions into small sections.

These virtues of clarity and pithiness are dislayed through the whole book. J. has an introduction for each book, and these could be read on their own to give an interesting book-by-book account of the *Iliad*'s narrative. In fact they seem to have been written this way, since the introduction to Book 24 begins 'Lines 1–18 of book 24 make it clear that "no" is the answer', which refers back to the end of the introduction to Book 24. J. does a good job of keeping track of the story, showing how books look back to earlier action and forward to what is to come. He often phrases his discussions in terms of a narrative problem Homer faces, and how he solves it: for example, in his introduction to Book 8 he asks how the poet can bring about the promised victory for the Trojans without relying simply on interventions by Zeus, and in the introduction to

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

https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Book 11 he says that one way the poet achieves this is by having several Greek heroes get wounded and retire from the action. He also analyses how individual books are constructed: he has a good discussion of the tragic characteristics of the plot of Book 16.

It could be rather unwieldy to comment on three translations: J.'s method is to take his comment lemma from Rieu-Jones 'where the translations are so similar as to require no differentiation', but where the translations differ he generally cites all three versions. Sometimes he comments on the translations, stating which he finds preferable, or criticizing a particular translation. For instance, on 9.197 he (I think rightly) comments on Lattimore's 'greatly I need you' that 'Achilles would never say that!' and prefers the other two translations. The comments range from explanations of names and places to discussions of well-known problems like the duals in Book 9 (on 9.182), and analyses of typical scenes and narrative patterns. J. is good on the latter. Some (almost) random examples: 2.28—the repetition of messages in oral poetry; 5.1—the typical pattern of a heroic *aristeia*; 8.470—how Homer uses Zeus to reveal the future piece by piece; 9.182-224—on patterns of welcome and hospitality scenes.

J.'s wide knowledge of the *Iliad* and of modern literature on it is evident throughout the book. As I have said, he is especially good on the plot and narrative techniques of the poem, and conventions of Homeric storytelling. Throughout the commentary he lists the works he has used most for each book, and has a broader bibliography at the end. There is also a useful index, which lists all the passages where there are comments on a character or topic. All in all, this is a helpful, readable and reliable guide to the *Iliad*, and should be useful for anyone who is teaching or studying Homer in translation.

London MIKE CHAPPELL
doi:10.1093/clrevj/bni002

ILIAD II

J. LATACZ (ed.): *Homers* Ilias*: Gesamtkommentar. II. Book 2, fasc. 1. Text und Übersetzung; fasc. 2. Kommentar.* Pp. xviii + 57, xv + 346. Munich and Leipzig: K. G. Saur, 2003. Cased, €98. ISBN: 3-598-74305-X, 3-598-74306-8.

The first fruits of this great undertaking, consisting of *Prolegomena* and *Iliad, Book 1, 1. Text and Translation, 2. Commentary*, were published in 2000 (reviewed in *CR* 52 [2002], 229–31). Now we have Book 2 in the same double form. The commentary, even longer than that of Book 1, fills 288 pages (twice the size of Kirk's in the Cambridge commentary), and is followed by over fifty pages of bibliography, four of corrigenda to the previously published parts, and two maps inserted in the back cover.

What will concern many is the rate of future publication. At an earlier stage Professor Latacz left open the possibility that after an extensive beginning it might happen that future volumes would contain more than one book; but it now seems likely that they will continue to appear one by one till the end is reached. We are told that five more are to be published by 2009—not, as one might expect, Books 3–7, but 3, 6, 9, 19, and 24. The reason given for this is that these are books particularly required in school and university teaching. This somewhat worrying development must complicate the

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

https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni002 Published online by Cambridge University Press