RANSOM AND REVENGE

D. F. WILSON: *Ransom, Revenge, and Heroic Identity in the* Iliad. Pp. ix + 236. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Cased, £40. ISBN: 0-521-80660-7.

This book looks at ransom and revenge in the *Iliad*, arguing that they are of crucial importance for our understanding of the poem as a whole. After a general introduction, the book is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1, 'Ransom and Revenge', sets out the characteristics of compensation in the *Iliad*. W. starts by drawing a distinction between ποινή and ἄποινα: whereas ποινή is aimed at redressing an imbalance of status that has arisen as a result of gratuitous harm, ἄποινα merely buys back what has been lost, with no attempt to change the power relationship between the parties. Chapters 2 ('Agamemnon and Chryses') and 3 ('The Quarrel') apply the findings of Chapter 1 to the opening stages of the *Iliad*. W. argues that Agamemnon offends Chryses with his reluctance to accept proper compensation, and that he angers Achilles by insisting that, as the ruler in a fixed system of political power, it is within his right to withhold and exact cultural capital at will. In Chapter 4, 'The Embassy to Achilles', W. argues that Achilles rejects Agamemnon's gifts not because he has come to spurn material goods or because the values of a heroic existence are no longer acceptable to him; rather, Achilles feels that he is owed ποινή for the slight he has suffered, yet he is only being offered ἄποινα. Moreover, Agamemnon uses his ἄποινα to reassert his claim to absolute supremacy. Chapter 5, 'Achilles and Priam', looks at *Iliad* 24 as the moment where Achilles finally renounces his claims to ποινή and accepts ἄποινα in exchange for the corpse of Hector. Chapter 6, 'Unlimited *Poinē*', draws out some wider implications for the interpretation of the *Iliad*. The book is equipped with two appendices on scenes involving ποινή and ἄποινα, and with a general index.

W.'s central claim is both convincing and important: the *Iliad* pays close attention to issues of compensation, and it does so specifically with reference to ἄποινα and ποινή. Whereas older scholarship tended to treat these terms as broadly interchangeable, W. demonstrates not only that there are important differences between them, but also that those differences affect the way in which we read the poem as a whole. Most importantly, perhaps, the author's approach enables her to shed new light on the longstanding question of why Achilles rejects Agamemnon's gifts in Book 9. However, she also explores how Achilles' decision grows out of the confrontations of Book 1, and how it leads to the settlements of *Iliad* 19 and 24. Throughout, W. pays close attention to the ways in which individual characters manipulate the language of compensation (e.g. pp. 49–53 on Agamemnon and Chryseis; pp. 83–5 on Odysseus' speech in Book 9), often illustrating her readings with helpful diagrams (e.g. pp. 30–1, 42, 45–6, 48, 51–2). She also shows how different forms of compensation are intertwined as the plot unfolds. For example, Agamemnon in Book 1 rejects Chryses' offer of ἄποινα, thereby making himself liable to ποινή (pp. 40–9). Likewise, Achilles in Book 19 transfers his demand of ποινή from Agamemnon and the Achaeans to Hector and the Trojans (pp. 110–16) thereby preparing for a further shift in Book 24, where he stops insisting on ποινή for Patroclus and accepts ἄποινα for Hector (pp. 120–33).

I was less convinced by the suggestion that the *Iliad*'s treatment of ποινή and/or ἄποινα is to be seen specifically in terms of the opposition between μῆτις and βίη (*passim*, esp. Chapter 6). We may also wonder whether ποινή in the *Iliad* always has to

The Classical Review vol. 54 no. 2 © The Classical Association 2004; all rights reserved

https://doi.org/10.1093/cr/54.2.277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

be a matter of status: does Achilles for example exact revenge for Patroclus exclusively or even primarily because he is concerned about the 'status disequilibrium' which his death has supposedly created? Elsewhere, W. argues that '. . . although the person who brings *apoina* . . . is usually the victim's father, the rôle has more to do with the hierarchical paternal relationship between one who gives *apoina* and the dependent victim than with biology' (p. 30). Statements of this kind are not uncommon and make W.'s book an example of a theoretically grounded brand of realism which is now fairly common in Homeric studies, and according to which 'soft' factors such as suffering or affection are in principle secondary to power structures and economic exchange mechanisms. Here, W.'s project might have profited from a clearer sense of its limitations. Inevitably, perhaps, the drawbacks of her approach become most apparent in her treatment of the gods. W. is generally careful not to write the gods out of her story, but occasionally she resorts to mere slogans where careful probing would be needed (e.g. Athena as the goddess 'who embodies *mētis*' on p. 60); or feels tempted to sideline the gods altogether (e.g. at p. 48, where Hera's rôle in the assembly scene of Book 1 is dismissed as part of a 'naïve', as opposed to 'political', reading).

Having said that, W. has certainly written an interesting and rewarding book. By focusing on the language of ransom and revenge she has considerably enhanced our understanding of Homeric epic, and in so doing has reminded us of the more general point that even—or perhaps especially—a text as well known as the *Iliad* repays careful engagement with its language.

University of Durham JOHANNES HAUBOLD

A MILLENNIAL CONFERENCE ON HOMER

F. MONTANARI (ed.): *Omero tremila anni dopo. Atti del Congresso di Genova 6–8 luglio 2000. Con la collaborazione di P. Ascheri.* (Storia e Letteratura 210.) Pp. xvii + 722, maps, ills. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2002. Paper, €76. ISBN: 88-8498-059-3.

This volume contains the proceedings of an ambitiously-named 'millennium' conference organized by Franco Montanari in Genoa in summer 2000 to present the multi-faceted condition of Homeric studies almost three thousand years after the poems were composed. The languages used are English, Italian, and French. Longer papers by outstanding scholars are grouped into three major sections: the expression of the text and its context; the transmission of the text; and archaeology and history as context. Sixteen ungrouped shorter papers discuss a variety of issues ranging from agent and instrument in violent death to sacrifice and the symposium. It would have been more convenient for readers if some of the shorter papers had been attached to these major groups: that of Maria Noussia, in particular, should be grouped with the papers of West and Rengakos, which are also concerned with the treatment of the Homeric text in the Alexandrian period. At the end we find summarizing and comment by Joachim Latacz, Richard Janko, and Wolfgang Kullmann for a round-table closing session. Three indices are offered, of modern authors, ancient authors, and Homeric passages cited. The final numbered

The Classical Review vol. 54 no. 2 © The Classical Association 2004; all rights reserved

https://doi.org/10.1093/cr/54.2.277 Published online by Cambridge University Press