This is the paperback edition of Carol G. Thomas’s and Craig Conant’s (henceforth T.&C.) book *The Trojan War* which was published in 2005 as part of the *Greenwood Guides to Historic Events of the Ancient World*.\(^1\) The book is divided into five main chapters and supplemented by four appendices, an index, and contains nine black-and-white photographs, three maps and a table of chronology. The editing is of a very high standard and almost free of errors.\(^2\)

Chapter 1 (pp. 1–19) first offers a short chronological summary of the main narrative of the Trojan legend (pp. 2–9), followed by a broad historical outline of “Troy and the World of the Late Bronze Age”. T.&C. place a specific focus on the ‘globalised’ world within which they see and contextualise the emergence, development, and decline of the Minoan and Mycenaean culture,\(^3\) particularly emphasising the “Role of the Hittites” (pp. 15–17) with whom “the peoples of the Aegean seemingly had little, if any, sustained trading arrangements”, yet they were “very much aware of each other” (p. 15).

Chapter 2 (pp. 21–38) is devoted to “Finding Troy and the Trojan War”: here, the authors give an account of the discovery of Troy-Hissarlik by Heinrich Schliemann, describing the history of its excavations carried out by Schliemann and later continued by Manfred Korfmann and his team (pp. 21–8). Furthermore, they examine the “Evidence from the Hittite Records” (pp. 31–7), that is some of the Hittite documents which contain names such as *Ahhiyawa* and *Wilusiyā/Wilusa* which have been identified with the Greek *‘Αχαί* and *ϝίλις* and *ϝίλιον*, and conclude that these pieces of evidence indicate that “Mycenaean power or powers Ahhiyawa … took a keen interest in the affairs of Wilusa and other west Anatolian states during much of the thirteenth century” (p. 37).

In chapter 3 (“Homer and the Epic Tradition”, pp. 39–62), T.&C.’s aim is to perform “an archaeological excavation of the epic” and to ask what the tale of the Trojan War has at its core, when “stripped of its poetic finery” (p. 40). To this end, they present some inconsistencies and anachronisms in the *Iliad*, such as the reference to weapons use considered inappropriate to the context (pp. 40–1).\(^4\) They make reference to the Akrotiri frescoes on Thera, where they identify various depictions as ‘epic thematic material’, which


\(^2\) The following are the only typing/editing errors I came across: p. 75 and *passim*: “arête” should read “aretê” – p. 75: “virtu” should read “virtus” – p. 144: the titles ‘Document 10. The Battle of Kadesh’ and “Egyptian Accounts” ought to be reversed – p. 193: “on an equal footing” should read “on an equal footing”.

\(^3\) On the aspect of ‘globalisation’ cf., e.g., p. 15: “Strong centralized states such as the Late Bronze Age palace centers that arose on Crete and the Greek mainland did not develop in isolation. Bronze Age Crete and mainland Greece were influenced by the older civilizations of Egypt and the Near East, which, in turn, were influenced by the newer cultures.”

\(^4\) This is based on an article by E.S. Sherratt, “Reading the Texts: Archaeology and the Homeric Question”, in *Antiquity* 64 (1990), pp. 807–24.
they associate with certain scenes and narrative elements in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (pp. 44–51). Finally (pp. 51–60), they turn to a survey of the nature and meaning of oral poetry, the formulaic system and the importance of ‘Homer’ as “a supremely gifted poet working within the context of an already established oral poetic tradition” (p. 55), drawing on the seminal studies by Milman Parry and Albert Lord, lucidly showing that the *Iliad* is referring back to the ‘Heroic time’ of Late Bronze Age, but culturally settled within the late Dark / early Archaic Ages, in order to be accessible to its contemporary audience (“an old tale is told in a manner that is comprehensible to the poet and his audience”, p. 56).  

Chapter 4 (“The Force of Legend”, pp. 63–80) consists of a (highly selective) discussion of the powers, developments, and impacts (*Nachwirkungen*) of the Trojan legend in Antiquity. T.&C. start from an examination of some archaeological sites and findings such as the village of Lefkandi on Euboea, the Cave of Polis on Ithaca and the Cup of Nestor found on Ischia, the inscription of which they present as “almost certainly the oldest literary parody, or indeed allusion, in Europe” (p. 69). Next, they move on to consider the spread of the epic tradition in Italy and Sicily and its importance as tales of origin for various non-Greek peoples, and as a source for Roman nationalism. They conclude with a discussion of Alexander the Great as an historical ‘mirror image’ of the Heroic Achilles and his “corrupt use of Homeric epic in a misguided, and ultimately unsuccessful, attempt to create a Greco-Asiatic Empire on the ruins of Persia” (p. 78).

Chapter 5, entitled “Troy and the Twenty-First Century” (pp. 81–95), consists to a large extent of summaries and amplifications of some of the key issues raised in the previous chapters: a few remarks on the nature and meaning of narrative in poetic garment, on the differentiation between ‘myth’ (completely fictitious) and ‘legend’ (having an historical core), and again, on the history of archaeology and Schliemann’s prime contribution to the rediscovery of Troy.

The subsequent four appendices are probably geared towards undergraduates who need to find basic information in a quick and easily accessible manner, or teachers wishing to find material for their classes, and will prove useful for these purposes. In the first appendix

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5 T.&C.’s presentation and interpretation of the Akrotiri frescoes relies on an article by Sarah P. Morris, “A Tale of Two Cities: The Miniature Frescoes from Thera and the Originis of Greek Poetry”, in *American Journal of Archaeology* 93 (1989), pp. 511–35. However, it should be mentioned that there exist other interpretations of the frescoes which are quite different from Morris’s / T.&C.’s ‘narrative’ view (as acknowledged by T.&C. in their bibliography, p. 192); cf., e.g., Nanno Marinatos, “The Function and Interpretation of the Theran Frescoes”, in P. Darcque and J.C. Poursat (edd.), *L'iconographie minoenne*, Paris (1985), pp. 219–30.

6 Cf. also p. 58: “Even if Homer had known all there was to know of Mycenaean material culture, it is doubtful he would have used this knowledge in order to give a more accurate rendering of the tale. Is is not so much a case of epic poetry and historical accuracy being sworn enemies. Rather, it is simply that Homer’s audience would have had no such knowledge and most likely would have been shocked, confused, and probably not entertained by constant references to authentic Mycenaean artifacts in the poems.”

7 However, T.&C. do not acknowledge the fact that the reconstruction of this inscription, and in particular its beginning, is anything but certain (ε[…]ι does not necessarily have to stand for ε[…]ι – Alfred Heubeck, e.g., rather assumes ε[…]ιν τ[…]ι), and that there are extensive scholarly discussions on whether the inscription presupposes the Homeric *Iliad*, or ‘only’ an oral epic tradition, as its background. Cf., e.g., Rudolf Wachter, art. “Nestorbecher”, in *Der Neue Pauly* 12/2 (2002), pp. 1074–5.
From an overall perspective, it seems evident that T.&C. are primarily concerned with the historical background, the historical ‘core’ of the Trojan War, and the archaeological evidence relating to it. Although they state several times that they do not wish to prove (or disprove) the historical ‘reality’ of a Trojan War, it becomes clear that it is, nonetheless, the dimension of ‘reality’ they are mainly interested in. Of course, for an introductory book of just over two-hundred pages on such a ‘big’ topic, one must necessarily be restrictive and selective and cannot consider the whole range of possible methods and approaches on an equal footing. However, my main concern is not the fact that the authors have this specific focus, but rather their methodology and way of approaching literary texts, oral tradition, and mythology (their differentiation into fictitious ‘myth’ and reality-based ‘legend’ notwithstanding [pp. 85–8; cf. above]) There is, in my view, far more to a poetic text or a mythical narrative than some kind of ‘substructure’ which reveals ‘reality’, as a result of the text being “stripped of its poetic finery” (p. 40; cf. above). Although T.&C. acknowledge at times the poetic value and artistry of the Homeric epics (cf. especially pp. 81–5), they nonetheless see and use them primarily as “documents” (p. 92). Accordingly, their way of tackling the ‘Homeric question’ is similarly uneven: on the one hand, they are fully aware of the problems regarding “the identity of Homer and the circumstances under which the two great poems attributed to him
attained their present form” (p. 51), but on the other, the very fact that Homer features *sub voce* “Historical Personages” next to Heinrich Schliemann in the “Biographies” suggests a biographical approach which may not have been intended, but is prone to be taken so.

Regarding the post-Homeric ‘career’ of the Trojan War, T.&C. have comparatively little to say (cf. my summary of the contents of chapters 4 and 5 above). In places they content themselves with fairly brief references, for example at one point, they simply list the results of an internet search on the keywords ‘Iliad’ and ‘Odyssey’ (p. 82). They broadly trace the factual spread of the Trojan tale over the Mediterranean World (pp. 65–74; cf. above), but pay hardly any attention to literary aftermaths such as the reworkings and redefinitions of the Trojan saga in Attic tragedy, or the topicality of the Trojan War as an ‘area of thinking’ (*Denkraum*), e.g. for the Panhellenic idea in the Second Sophistic.

Another point to raise is the fact that T.&C. rely entirely on anglophone scholarship for their presentation and bibliography, while secondary literature in other languages is ignored. This is regrettable; if the book is primarily intended for study purposes at undergraduate level, it seems misleading if students are left to believe that acknowledging scholarship in only one modern language should be sufficient, which is clearly not the case. Furthermore, as a result of this restriction, not only do the authors fail to mention Friedrich August Wolf’s groundbreaking *prolegomena*, which marks the beginning of modern Homeric scholarship (although this work is easily accessible in a modern English translation), but they also miss some important non-anglophone developments in recent scholarship as, for example, Joachim Latacz’s seminal study *Troia und Homer* (which, by the way, they could have employed in order to strengthen their history-oriented stance). The quarrel between Manfred Korfmann and Frank Kolb over the interpretation of the latest findings in Troy-Hissarlik is mentioned briefly (and the latter’s objections are dismissed as a “current wave of criticism”, p. 27). However, the ‘analogous’ dispute between Joachim Latacz and Wolfgang Kullmann, which is of equal weight, has been totally neglected.

All in all, I remain somewhat uncertain as to who may be the primarily intended reader of this book. On the one hand, for study purposes at undergraduate level, the work seems too one-sided as a general introduction to the topic because of its strong historical focus, but at the same time, too detailed or specialised in some of its (sub-)chapters (cf., e.g., the discussion of the Hittite documents [pp. 31–7] and the frescoes of Thera [pp. 44–51], or the lengthy account of Ramses II and the Battle of Kadesh [pp. 122–6]). On the other hand, specialist readers (i.e., basically, ancient historians and archaeologists interested in the historicity of the Trojan War)

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will, perhaps, rather resort to more specialised studies from the beginning. All the criticism notwithstanding, though, the book does have its merits and remains worth reading, but I have my doubts as to whether *The Trojan War* will establish itself a standard introduction to the Trojan War.¹⁴

¹⁴ I would like to thank Ms Kathy Courtney (University of Coventry) for her valued help with my English.