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**Book review of: Barbara Graziosi / Johannes Haubold (Hrsg., Komm.),  
Homer. Iliad, Book VI, Cambridge / New York (2010): BMCR 2011.11.29**

Bär, Silvio

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**Barbara Graziosi, Johannes Haubold (ed.), *Homer. Iliad, Book VI. Cambridge Greek and Latin classics*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. x, 278. ISBN 9780521703727. \$32.99 (pb).**

**Reviewed by Silvio Bär, Universität Zürich (silvio.f.baer@klphs.uzh.ch)**

## [Preview](#)

Book 6 is perhaps the most frequently studied piece of the *Iliad*, both in grammar schools and at university. In spite of this, it has long – perhaps too long – been awaiting a commentary primarily geared towards students in upper forms of school and undergraduates at university. Barbara Graziosi and Johannes Haubold have now filled this marked gap by publishing in the “Cambridge Greek and Latin classics”-series (unofficially known as the “green-and- yellow”-series) a commentary on this piece which, as the blurb rightly states, “includes some of the most memorable and best-loved episodes in the whole poem.”<sup>1</sup> As a basis for their commentary, Graziosi and Haubold have constituted their own Greek text (pp. 61-75), which does, however, as they state themselves, “not differ significantly from standard editions” (p. 58).<sup>2</sup> The text and the lemmatic commentary (pp. 76-234) are preceded by an introduction (pp. 1-58) that is divided into subchapters, dealing first with some general aspects of the Homeric epics (chapters 1-2, pp. 1-24) before turning to the specifics of *Iliad* 6 (chapters 3-6, pp. 24-58). It is followed by an extensive bibliography (pp. 235-62) and the indices (pp. 263-78).

In chapter 1 of the introduction (“The poet and the Muses,” pp. 1-8), Graziosi and Haubold discuss the question as to how poetics and authorship are established, negotiated and developed in the Homeric epics. They put their emphasis on the complex relationship between the poet and the Muses, the question of how we are to think of the Muses’ presence (cf. esp. *Il.* 2.485 ὑμεῖς γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστε πάρεστε τε ἴστε τε πάντα), and the famous case of the blind singer Demodocus in *Odyssey* 8 as an in-text poet-figure. They further consider some crucial narratological aspects such as the phenomenon known as ‘Zielinski’s law’ which indicates that “Homeric narrative always moves forward,” so that “the poet represents simultaneous actions as sequential” (p. 5), or the regular foreshadowings of the future by way of (external and internal) prolepses, which is lucidly shown in the case of Hector who, in a paradoxical way, declares that Troy will fall (*Il.* 6.447-9) – and almost simultaneously expresses his good hopes for the future (*Il.* 6.475-8). In summary, this chapter offers an excellent first introduction to Homeric poetics; however, it would have been helpful – particularly in view of the fact that students will be using this – to differentiate between the concepts of the real author, the implicit author, and the narrator, in order to avoid confusion between how Homeric narration works on the one hand and how we think of the Homeric poet on the other.

Chapter 2 (“The composition of Homeric epic,” pp. 8-24) gives a survey of some important parameters of Homeric epic poetry: metrics, formulaic language, narrative patterns, language, grammar, vividness. Most of these subchapters are probably not meant as a systematic and exhaustive introduction;<sup>3</sup> rather, they may serve as a starting point for

beginners who wish to deepen their knowledge (there are numerous references for further reading in the footnotes). It is noteworthy, though, how Graziosi and Haubold constantly manage the balancing act between providing vital introductory information on the one hand and proposing their own scholarly stance on the other. The latter can, for example, be seen in their remarks on the Homeric use of particles (pp. 20-21), and their interpretation of Homeric parataxis (pp. 22-3): in these two cases, Graziosi and Haubold are heavily influenced by the studies of Egbert J. Bakker on Homeric language and speech act theory.<sup>4</sup> Further, Graziosi and Haubold's interpretation of the use of the patronymic Ἐκτοπίδην for Astyanax in *Il.* 6.401 is most illustrative: "traditional in meaning and formation" (p. 15) as this patronymic is, it is, in fact, a *hapax legomenon* within the *Iliad*; by inventing a patronymic for Astyanax at the very moment when Hector sees his little baby son for the last time, the poet implicitly foreshadows the untimely death of Hector's child, because the cause for Astyanax's death is precisely the fact that he is the son, and heir, of the prince of Troy. By way of this example, the authors lucidly illustrate the tension and oscillation between non-contextual ('ornamental') and contextual ('particularised') language use.

The subsequent chapter focuses on "Book 6 in the structure of the *Iliad*" (pp. 24-34). First, the complex relationship between humans and gods (especially Athena), as well as between men and women, is analysed. Graziosi and Haubold repeatedly and rightly emphasise the tragic momentum of Book 6, which is constituted by "[t]he clash of feelings and values, the irreconcilable difference between social expectations and individual needs, the ignorance of the characters and the psychological complexity of their speeches, the threat of madness . . . , the aloofness of the gods and the audience's sure knowledge of what will happen" (p. 26). Further, the city of Troy as a space in which the characters (and, above all, Hector and Andromache) act, is examined. Of particular interest is Graziosi and Haubold's combination of a 'gender reading' and a 'spatial reading' by interpreting the city of Troy as a configuration of a female space in which the focus is put on women who try to delay Hector, the representative of a patriarchal aristocracy and its distinctive (and unnegotiable) values; in so doing, the poet is able to question these values without openly criticising them.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the four "Difficult encounters" which constitute the content of Book 6 (pp. 34-47): Glaukos and Diomedes; Hector and Hecuba; Hector, Paris and Helen; Hector and Andromache. The last of these is of course "the most memorable and important in *Iliad* 6," as Hector and Andromache "speak about their deepest needs, fears and convictions" (p. 48). However, in my view, Graziosi and Haubold's analysis of the Glaukos-and-Diomedes-episode is the most insightful of these four. This encounter is, as Graziosi and Haubold put it, "an opportunity [for the poet] to explore, quizzically and unpredictably, some important themes in *Iliad* 6, such as loyalty in marriage and in war, divine inscrutability and human self-deception" (p. 36). Whereas Diomedes' first speech to Glaukos (vv. 123-43) is a typical case of a 'flyting boast,' that is, a verbal assault towards the enemy before he is killed, Glaukos replies in an unexpected way by resorting to deliberations about the inscrutability of gods and humans in the form of an extended genealogy (vv. 145-211). This is the first unexpected turn. The next occurs when Diomedes and Glaukos realise that they share an ancient bond of hospitality (vv. 215-231), as a result of which they exchange their armour instead of killing each other. However, this seemingly "touching example of friendship across battle line" (p. 38) is twisted again when the narrator states that Glaukos is stupid enough to exchange his golden armour for that of Diomedes made of bronze (vv. 232-6). This puzzling *aprosdoketon* has always been a point of contention for both ancient and modern interpreters. After presenting some existing interpretations, Graziosi and Haubold convincingly argue that "Glaukos suffers a symbolic defeat" (p. 39); thus, ultimately the incident serves to illustrate, and foreshadow, similar

cases in which the ‘actual’ and the ‘symbolic’ outcome may not necessarily be congruent.

The next chapter offers an inviting overview of the reception of the Hector-and-Andromache-episode (“The encounter between Hector and Andromache through time,” pp. 47-56), ranging from Sappho, Athenian drama, Plutarch and Roman literature (Seneca) to the ‘renaissance’ of the episode’s reception in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (Dryden; Schiller; Goethe). It is followed by some short remarks on the textual history of the *Iliad* and the problems concerning it (“The text,” pp. 56-8).

The core of Graziosi and Haubold’s book is, of course, their lemmatic commentary on *Iliad* 6. Clearly, it is impossible to discuss the entire commentary at length within the scope of this review. Therefore, I am able to offer only some of the ideas that came to mind when I was using Graziosi and Haubold’s commentary as intended, that is, reading *Iliad* 6 using the commentary alongside it:

– p. 83, on v. 22: The interpretation of the adjective ἀμόμων as “blameless” or “excellent” is only one of various options; cf. Stoevesandt (2008), p. 21 *ad loc.* It is probably one of those words that were no longer etymologically transparent to the poet of the *Iliad* himself and was therefore (by and large) considered a synonym of ἀγαθός (cf. *Il.* 4.194 and 11.518 ἀμόμονος ἱητήρος ~ *Il.* 11.835 ἱητήρ’ ἀγαθῷ, with reference to Machaon and Podaleirios); cf. Anne Amory Parry, *Blameless Aegisthus. A Study of AMYMΩN and Other Homeric Epithets*, Leiden (1973).

– p. 151, on v. 259: I do not understand what the benefit of a lemma like “ἐνείκω: cf. ἦνεια, Attic ἦνεγκον, ‘I carried’” should be. If it is necessary to draw students’ attention to this form, then why not clearly state that (a) the form ἐνείκω is an aorist subjunctive (which is what students will probably find hard to figure out), and that (b) the alpha-thematic aorist ἦνεια is Homeric standard as opposed to the thematic aorist in Attic?

– p. 151, on v. 260: The spelling convention “κε(v)” should be avoided, as κεν is not a variant of κε with a *ny ephelestikon*; in fact, the two particles are etymologically unrelated; cf. George E. Dunkel, “J. Wackernagel und die idg. Partikeln \*so, \*-ke, \*-kem und \*an,” in Heiner Eichner / Helmut Rix (edd.), *Sprachwissenschaft und Philologie. Jakob Wackernagel und die Indogermanistik heute*, Wiesbaden (1990), pp. 100-130.

– pp. 162-3, on v. 298: Theano is also the mother of eleven sons, which adds to her notion of a “positive figure in the Greek imagination” (p. 163); cf. Ingeborg Espermann, *Antenor, Theano, Antenorida. Ihre Person und Bedeutung in der Ilias*, Meisenheim am Glan (1980), p. 50.

– p. 207, on v. 449: Some more information on ἐυμμελίω might have been useful here: this is a distinctive epithet (not generic, *pace* Stoevesandt [2008], p. 145 *ad loc.*) that is used only for Priam and the sons of Panthoos. It is unique in its formation (that is, there are no other Homeric words combining the prefix ευ- with a weapon) and thus probably highly archaic; cf. Denys L. Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad*, Berkeley / Los Angeles / London (1959), pp. 240-41.

– p. 213, on v. 464: One might add the piece of information that the verbal adjective χυτός (from χέω) is restricted to the collocation χυτή γαῖα in Homeric language; χυτή γαῖα always denotes a burial mound; cf. LSJ s.v. χυτός I.2.

– p. 218, on v. 479: Calling the phrase ποτέ τις εἴπησι a “free-standing subjunctive” is, in my view, perhaps not the most appropriate classification for a prospective subjunctive; cf. also David B. Monro, *A Grammar of the Homeric Dialect*, Oxford (1891), p. 252, who

names it “an emphatic Future, sometimes approaching the force of an Imperative.”

It is a commonplace to state that certain scholarly works have a rather short ‘shelf life’ whereas others seem never to become outdated. In the case of Graziosi and Haubold’s commentary on *Iliad* 6, there can be no doubt that the latter category is applicable. A commentary on a popular piece of Greek poetry which is a strong piece of scholarship and at the same time a helpful tool for a wide readership will find its way into many libraries and classrooms. *Tollite, legite!*<sup>5</sup>

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**Notes:**

[1.](#) Its ‘equivalent’ in the *Basler Ilias-Kommentar* was published only two years ago: Magdalene Stoevesandt, *Homers Ilias. Gesamtkommentar* (ed. by Anton Bierl and Joachim Latacz), vol. IV.2: *Sechster Gesang (Z). Faszikel 2: Kommentar*, Berlin / New York (2008). As the two commentaries follow two different traditions and have their own specific accents, the best way to study *Iliad* 6 is to use them both side by side in a complementary way.

[2.](#) The standard editions of the *Iliad* are those of Helmut van Thiel (ed.), *Homeri Ilias*, Hildesheim / Zurich / New York (1996), and Martin L. West (ed.), *Homeri Ilias*, 2 vols, Stuttgart / Leipzig (1998; 2000).

[3.](#) For a more comprehensive introduction, cf. the preparatory volume of the *Basler Ilias-Kommentar*: Joachim Latacz (ed.), *Homers Ilias. Gesamtkommentar. Prolegomena*, Munich / Leipzig (2000).

[4.](#) Cf. esp. Egbert J. Bakker, “Discourse and Performance: Involvement, Visualisation and ‘Presence’ in Homeric Poetry,” in: *ClAnt* 12 (1993), pp. 1-29; *id.*, *Poetry in Speech. Orality and Homeric Discourse*, Ithaca / London (1997).

[5.](#) I would like to thank Mrs. Kathy Courtney for her valued help with my English.

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