Martin M. Winkler, *Troy: From Homer's* Iliad *to Hollywood Epic*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Pp. xi + 231. ISBN 1-4051-3183-7. UK £19.99; US$29.95.

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Korfmann begins the first chapter of this book (pp. 20-26) by underlining a shift of the popular attention towards the classical films. He correctly shows that movies like *Troy* stimulate archaeological research, which results in an interaction between art and science. Then he adds an analysis of recent archaeological excavations that prove that Troy was fifteen times bigger than previously assumed. The combination of modern scholars associating details from the *Iliad* with what is known of the later Bronze Age, scholars of Hittitology mentioning thirteenth- and early-twelfth-century military tensions in the area of Ilios-Wilios, and recent evidence on an explosive political situation in western Minor Asia, supplies the archaeologists with evidence to sustain the historicity of the Trojan War.

In the second chapter (pp. 27-42), Latacz addresses two essential questions: what does the *Iliad* tell us about Troy and how does Petersen's movie relate to that? Latacz has compiled a useful table of contents for the complete tale of the Trojan War. Homer's successful innovation is the individualisation of the story and the focus on sentiment and its consequences for the War. His version of the story is a discussion of issues like traditional power, honour, devotion to a common cause, and leadership.

Latacz argues that the story of the *Iliad* can only be understood within the historical and sociological conditions that pertained at the time. Although he interprets Homer's epic as an attempt at dealing with the rights and responsibilities of aristocracy, his viewpoint that the matter of the Trojan War was of secondary importance for the poet and its audience is not convincing. The interpretation of Homer's epics as 'palimpsest literature' in order for ancient myths to be elaborated in a novel way is illuminating though not new. One weak point in Latacz' analysis is his misleading comparison between Homer's lack of historical knowledge about the city of Troy and the inaccuracies of the makers of *Troy*. Even if we ignore the weakness in dialogue and plot, it is not obvious how *Troy* can be described as a 'surprising achievement' (p. 41).

In Chapter 3 (pp. 43-67), Winkler repeats the view that an artistic elaboration of Homer is not necessarily scholarship. However, one might argue that *Troy* will not only be an entertaining movie but it will also be used for didactic purposes. His view of the modern viewer receiving Petersen's *Troy* as a part of the tree of storytelling is a repetition of the narrative palimpsest already analyzed by Latacz in Chapter 2. More challenging are Winkler's reflections on the filming of the *Iliad* and its difficulties: the complexity of the plot, its length, repetitive character, lack of realism, and other historical, cultural, religious and social aspects that need to match the high quality of the text and satisfy a large audience. Winkler later proves the cinematic nature of the *Iliad* by comparing its use of similes and ecphrases with *Troy*. In his suggestion concerning the plausibility of a cinematographic production, he proposes that 'the history of epic cinema can reinforce

our mental construction of a film of the *Iliad*' (p. 63), in order to preserve these stories in the twenty-first century.

Danek proposes in Chapter 4 (pp. 68-84) to understand *Troy* through a procedure of rationalization. The method of allegorical interpretation and rationalization of the story dates back to the sixth century BC. In the name of credibility and plausibility, authors, historians and philosophers have retold the story of Troy by using and reusing the original version. From the first philosophers to Dictys and Dares, the story was widely reworked and reinterpreted, and either greatly historicized or vastly romanticized. An important gap in Danek's account is the Byzantine allegorical interpretation and rationalization of the epics in order for them to be taught to a Christian audience. In this wider tradition of rationalization, Danek includes *Troy*. He analyzes verbal citations, hidden allusions, and variations of the plot, in order to prove that Benioff's scriptwriting in *Troy* closely follows the intertextuality of Dictys and Dares.

In Chapter 5 (pp. 85-98), Jon Solomon explains how the classicists' comments are dominated more by irregularities than by an objective evaluation of the viewing experience of the film which may have a double role: it can be either an intellectual exercise or a procedure of emotional stimulation. By examining some cases of the reception of classical literature (for example, *The Contest Between Hesiod and Homer*) Solomon concludes that popularity has no logical explanation and is dismissed by the intellectuals as the result of a vulgar preference by the masses. Even if the filmmaker pays extreme attention to the technical details of a film, this does not necessarily make the film great in quality. Authenticity is not the correct basis upon which a film can be judged in terms of validity or quality.

Concerning acting, I doubt that for some viewers Brad Pitt managed to capture the essence of Homer's Achilles (p. 94). Solomon's argument that it is more difficult for an actor to portray a literary character is valid, but does not fully justify Pitt's Achilles or Bloom's Paris. The chapter finishes with a comparison between *Troy* and three other films on the Trojan War: Wise's *Helen of Troy* (1955), Girolami's *L'ira di Achille* (1962) and Harrison's *Helen of Troy* (2003). Solomon defends Petersen against the criticism that he has trivialized the *Iliad* by including romantic relationships and by removing the gods. Solomon justifies changes such as that of Briseis replacing Athena. It remains, however, an open question whether the absence of gods, in combination with the introduction of romantic elements, have improved the quality of *Troy* as a spectacle.

In Chapter 6 (pp. 99-106), Fitton addresses the matter of the historical advisor to the film. In *Troy*, the elements of the cultural and religious environment in which the action takes place, compose a multicultural, chronological, and geographical mosaic. The art of film-making overtakes in most cases the art of accurate archaeological reconstruction. Perhaps there is a justice in this since *Troy* is a film and not a documentary, but, on the other hand, the audiences do care about historicity and accuracy; the story of the Trojan War was accepted in Ancient Greece as true and it dominated visual arts which explored their own ways of presentation. However, in a film, the reconstruction of any historical setting is problematic due to the lack of information. Especially for the Trojan War, the lack of written sources leads to the use of imagination by the director. A wide approach to material culture has to be taken into consideration.

Although Fitton does not defend choices like the placement of coins on the eyes of the dead (a purposeless anachronism in the movie), he does sympathize with the use of Archaic statues of the gods, because otherwise 'a purist's attempt at Late Bronze Age authenticity would have the film's protagonists worshipping very small terracotta figures [. . .] looking rather odd' (p. 104). Although I understand Fitton's point that an expansion of the Trojan story to new audiences deserves support from historians and archaeologists, I am not sure whether a greatly altered plot would have positive results. The ancient world knew the traditional story and it also became familiar with different variants of it, but how well does the modern world know Homer? The reservations of the classicists do not concern the liberties taken with the story but rather their impact on an uncritical (especially young) audience.

In Chapter 7 (pp. 107-18) Shahabudin underlines the role of the contemporary active viewer in the different interpretations of the film, together with the off-screen factors which affect our judgement. He describes the way in which the film's publicity directed the audience to the idea of a historical Troy; and although the dominant element of the film's narrative is 'to give viewers the impression that the cinema observes the world rather than creates it' (p. 110), I do not see how *Troy* manages to do this.

Troy presents a linear structure of narrative with a rearrangement of the events from the *Iliad* and attempts to draw the profile of the main characters from a variety of sources. The audience is left with the idea, however, that the end of the film is not the end of the story. Shahabudin mentions omissions, additions, and alterations, together with the omission of the gods and the rationalization of the myth. A more genuine discussion is the one on Achilles' heel and *Troy*'s retelling of the myth.

In Chapter 8 (pp. 119-30), Scully signifies weaknesses of *Troy* in the opening scenes, the plot, the script, and the closing scenes. He underlines the biggest weak spot of the film -- its reduction of epic scale to commonplace. Petersen replaced the ancient tradition of the Palladium with the Sword of Troy which is unsuccessfully introduced in dramatic scenes such as Priam's discussion with Paris.

Chapter 9 (pp. 131-47) is an analysis of the similarities and the differences between *Troy* and the narration of Helen's story in the *Cypria* especially the story of her abduction and the real causes of the war. *Troy* follows the epic tradition in other scenes concerning Helen, such as her marriage with Paris or her reception by Priam. As Cyrino correctly underlines, the *teikhoskopia* proves Helen to be a character who 'has a sense of the larger purpose of the war' (p. 138) and whose 'ability to express her pain let us see her (. . .) removed from time and space' (p. 140). The difference between Helen in *Troy* and Helen in the *Iliad* is that in the film she never feels longing for her ex-husband and her family and also that, in contrast to a naively idealistic Paris, she remains realistically practical. The scene of the duel between Paris and Menelaus serves, according to Cyrino, to reinforce Agamemnon's greed as the main motivation of the war. An interesting parallel between the scene of Helen tending Paris' wounds in *Troy* and the story of the Trojan nymph Oenone who had the power of healing is rather far-fetched. The chapter concludes by noting the diminution of Helen's role at the end of the film and her presentation as an icon.

In Chapter 10 (pp. 148-62), Allen underlines the differences between Briseis, the unimportant slave of the *Iliad*, and the important priestess of Apollo in *Troy*. She notes that Briseis has been already portrayed by Ovid's *Heroides* as the writer of fictional love letters to Achilles. However, in *Troy* Briseis is fused with Cassandra, Polyxena, or Clytaemnestra. Although the quotations from the *Iliad* are long and the style descriptive, Allen gives the reader an overview of Briseis' significance for Achilles in the *Iliad* and associates her with Hecuba, Helen, or Andromache. More interesting is Allen's comment on Briseis' passage from a complaining to an active character, and the description of Achilles in Ovid which resembles either the Iliadic Achilles receiving Agamemnon's ambassadors or Paris. The third section of Allen's chapter (although it unnecessarily describes scenes from *Troy* and quotes many dialogues) is more relevant to the title of the book; it is an analysis of how Petersen's Briseis functions as a multi-character in *Troy* combining Cassandra's religiousness, Polyxena's nobility, Clytaemnestra's revengefulness, and even Athena's wisdom. Especially in the last scene, Allen correctly points out that Briseis achieves an aristeia by assuming her roles as princess, priestess, prize, and romantic heroine.

In Chapter 11 (pp. 163-85), Ahl initially shows the universality of war and its portrayal both as a religious and allegorical figure, and points out that our understanding of the war is depersonalised as a result of our monotheistic perspective. There are certainly positives in the idea that Petersen's *Troy* is a commentary on other wars. In a challenging discussion about Petersen's war film *Das Boot*, Ahl draws a parallel between Sophocles' Antigone burying her brother and Germany honouring her dead; in both cases to honour these dead would be to proclaim the justice of their cause. However, I think it would be more relevant that the parallel includes the case of Hector's burial at the end of the *Iliad* and *Troy*. The discussion on WWII is too long, but the point on the differences between the ancient tragic hero and the stereotypical modern 'good guy' hero is challenging. In comparison to ancient tragedians, Petersen is modest in his modifications. Few would disagree with this. But then again, why should we compare Sophocles (a fifth-century BC poet) with Petersen (a twenty-first century filmmaker)? Concerning the absence of gods, attention is nicely drawn to the fact the Petersen did not want a fantasy film and that there is are discreet traces of divine presence in the film. The comment on Petersen having no right or wrong side in *Troy* seems strange (especially if we consider the good guys versus bad guys approach of the film) but then it is clarified by the comment on the future which in the film lies with the Trojans, not the Greeks. One could not agree more with the Ahl's parallel between *The Sword of Troy* and a dysfunctional *Excalibur* suggesting (in an unsuccessful way) Troy is an idea not a place.

In Chapter 12 (pp. 186-201) Rabel tries to prove that *Troy* deserves our attention for addressing modern concerns and more specifically for its manifestations of four principles of realism: the explanation of the struggle of power by realism as a psychological phenomenon; the distinction between hard power (force) and soft power (attraction through coercion or payment) in the interaction between Agamemnon and Achilles; and their views on extension of geographical power or power over time (although I am not sure whether Rabel's characterization of Achilles as soft power is valid especially if one considers the use of force by Achilles in the movie). Concerning the power of human nature, Rabel cites the realistic theories about the duality of patriotism and idealism and successfully applies them on Hector and Achilles. Another

important point of this theory is the explanation of war as an inevitable part of the human life. The balance of power applies both to the relationship between Agamemnon and Achilles and between the cities of Troy and Sparta. When the state of equilibrium is disrupted, the consequences are catastrophic. Finally, Rabel shows that the true nature of power in Troy is celebrated in an individual level through the fight for honour.

In the last chapter, Winkler adds a brief (but essential) filmography of the cinematic adaptations of the Trojan War. However, this excludes the *Odyssey* and filmed or taped adaptations of classical stage plays and modern films which contain names of mythical characters or TV documentaries.

Overall the book can be read not only by experts but also by the wider public and it makes some good points on the reception and the appreciation of *Troy* by both specialists and an uncritical audience. However, it is repetitive in some areas (for example, the absence of gods) and some of the positions presented are misleading (for example, Homer and modern audience or comparison of Homer and Petersen's treatment of myth). Nevertheless, it does present a well-elaborated study of the impact *Troy* has had on philological and other circles.