

eighteenth centuries. A great deal about miniature painting in this era will be learned from this carefully researched, abundantly illustrated, and well-presented volume. As the book is placed within a larger series, Baroque miniature specialists may also be interested in reading the other catalogs, featuring the later examples in the Tansey Collection.

Jessica Wolfe. *Homer and the Question of Strife from Erasmus to Hobbes*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015. xvii + 607 pp. + 10 illus. \$110.00. Review by WILLIAM E. ENGEL, SEWANEE: THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH.

To study Homer from antiquity to the Reformation is, in effect, to study literary criticism—its formation and its foundational debates. While these considerations are factored into Jessica Wolfe's magisterial examination of Homeric epic in the development of European literature, especially after the advent of printing, her slant—like that of David Quint before her in *Epic and Empire* (1993)—is politics. More particularly, as her title implies, Wolfe is interested in bringing to prominence the extent to which Homer supplies a lens through which contemporary early modern conflicts were assessed, interpreted, appropriated, and repurposed. The overarching argument eloquently evinced in this book is that Renaissance interpretations of Homeric epic “are shaped by diverse and conflictive responses to its representations of *eris*—of strife, conflict, or discord, as the Greek word has been variously translated” (7). As Wolfe further demonstrates, interpretations of Homeric epic were transformed significantly by the religious and political debates of the Reformation.

Readers of this journal will appreciate that the lion's share of her book concerns the polemical preconditions and cultural inheritance of the Protestant Reformation, with chapters on Erasmus, Melancthon and Rabelais, Spenser, Chapman, Milton, and Hobbes. What unites these diverse authors, each showcased with telling case studies concerning particular aspects of contestation or harmony which Wolfe supports with inspired philological forays and incisive close readings, is the degree to which they all drew on Homer for insight into both the danger and the value of strife. Renaissance readers—irrespective of

religious affiliation, political allegiance, or sectarian leanings—tended to approach Homer's poems as "aetiologies of strife," which is to say "as narratives that identify its causes, anatomize its dangers, and, in certain cases, justify its uses or benefits" (7). What emerges from Wolfe's sensibly arranged chapters on eristic elements of Homer's epics and later literary debates is a kind of mythographic shorthand used to describe and interpret intellectual, theological, and political struggles of the early modern period. At the same time (and this is where Wolfe finds precedent for Homeric irony, satire, and mock-epic conventions), in addition to showing Renaissance readers how serious discord can be, Homer also revealed how absurd it can be.

Wolfe's thorough introduction clarifies how the *Iliad* variously served Renaissance scholars: in some extreme cases, as a typological precursor of Christian history or doctrine, but more usually, as a lens for regarding events in Homer's poems as "refracted in contemporary events" (4). Allusions to the fall of Troy, like those to Eris's apple of discord that disrupted the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, were part of early modern writers' stock in trade, whether to condemn or to find a precedent for the violence and religious strife sweeping across Europe. Wolfe marshals an impressive array of evidence to demonstrate the widespread tendency among translators, commentators, mythographers, polemicists, emblematisers, dramatists, and visual artists to interpret aspects of Homer's epics as having rich and ineluctable contemporary resonance.

Taking as her point of departure Erasmus's inclusion of several hundred Homeric maxims in his *Adages*, she discloses in the first chapter how this compendium succeeded in putting into circulation many Homeric phrases that have quickly become commonplaces and political axioms for all manner of readers. The significance of this collection for the reception of Homer cannot be overstated, playing into the already familiar trope of Homer's uniqueness as the originary and inventive master-poet who had no paragons to follow (whereas Virgil, of course, looked to Homer). Erasmus served up Homer piecemeal, supplying early modern writers with a working knowledge of exemplary and stirring passages, some of whom had limited knowledge of the Greek original, such as it was, given the complicated transmission history preceding this period of humanistic translations and inter-

pretations of both classical and biblical texts. This, in turn, allowed those who had not actually read the epics to use Homer when they commented on Reformation conflicts and culture.

The Erasmian tradition of interpreting Homer as an eirenic and fideistic skeptic is developed in chapter two with respect to its parodic and, at times, ludic implications. While Melanchthon initially found a pessimistic streak in the *Iliad* concerning its human characters' capacity to grasp truth let alone achieve concord, he would go on to maintain that Homer's poems inculcated both civility and concord, because they "teach 'grace and gentleness of manners' and thus make readers' 'minds... become more humane and peaceful'" (119). Rabelais, who in the Prologue to *Gargantua*, slyly calls Homer the "'paragon of all the word-lovers' [*paragon de tous philologues*]," whose *Tiers Livre* situates many of the work's "most pressing hermeneutic dilemmas with this symbolic Homeric ur-author in order to address how best to interpret texts at odds with themselves, and how to grapple with the elasticity of certain interpretive methods" (156). The closing section of chapter two, "Homer, Father of Farts," contains an excursus on mock-epic interpretations during the Renaissance; discussed in passing are Ben Jonson and Thomas Nashe as well as Thomas Coryate and George Chapman (the latter being the subject of chapter four). This section sets up the argument of the ensuing third chapter on Edmund Spenser who likewise would rely on Homeric epic, more specifically, "to expand and complicate his repertoire of heroic virtues in *The Faire Queene*, a poem modeled on Homeric epic as well as on the allegorical commentary tradition that grew up around it" (175).

Spenser, like the writers studied in the previous chapters, challenged and transformed conventional assessments of Homeric heroism. Although Homer was not Spenser's most important or deliberate influence, many episodes and characters in *The Faerie Queene* owe their origins to what Spenser gleaned from Homeric epic as mediated by "Virgil and Statius, by Tasso and Ariosto, and by various philosophical and mythographic works" (177), notwithstanding the fact that he was able to—and did—read Homer in the original language, dating back to his early education at the Merchant Taylors' School under the direction of the pedagogical pioneer Richard Mulcaster. Patterns of discord giving way to concord characterize many of the encounters in

Spenser's epic romance; moreover, vignettes of kinship and cooperation, among the forces of discord on display in *The Faerie Queene*, show readers "how sins and vices many be 'enchained'—interlocking and mutually constitutive—as well as virtues" (205). By carefully examining key episodes and characters' relations with one another, Wolfe points out the extent to which concatenation shapes the moral, rhetorical, and narrative structure of *The Faerie Queene*, "synthesizing the poem's discordant forces into a projected, if not fully realized, vision of order and harmony" (205).

George Chapman's ironic interpretation of Homeric epic provides a carefully constructed bridge chapter between those on Spenser and Milton, both of which are divided into two substantial parts. In addition to "smoothing out some of the most disturbing theological and ethical problems in the poems" (243), Chapman boasted that he alone was "sufficiently attuned to Homer's satirical and ironic tones to translate him correctly" (245). Typical of the bluster of one who had seen military action in the Low Countries, Chapman somewhat overstates the case for he was hardly the first to detect irony in Homer. But where he did surpass his contemporaries and those who had come before him was in noticing how Homeric similes tended to yield a special kind of *concordia discors*. Irony was understood during the Renaissance as a way to reconcile opposing beliefs or perspectives, and Chapman, perhaps more so than others at the time, grasped "the Homeric simile, with its latent irony, as a means of uniting contrary styles and attitudes—high and low, sublime and bathetic, serious and trivial—at play in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*" (260). In a section on "Shakespeare's Ironic Homer," Wolfe both names the medieval sources for Shakespeare's knowledge of the Troy story, which could have helped him shape his satiric drama *Troilus and Cressida*, and also points out his familiarity with Chapman's *Seven Bookes of the Iliades* and *Achilles Shield* (an excerpt from Book 18 of the *Iliad* also printed in 1598). These six pages should be required reading for anyone interested in un-problematizing this so-called "problem play," in which Wolfe looks closely at Shakespeare's subtle understanding of language in general and, more particularly, at the capacity of injurious speech to (quoting Laurie Maguire) "enact power relations as well as reflect them" (302).

Although this chapter accomplishes what it sets out to do (namely, to raise and critically examine the implications of Chapman's admiration of the license enjoyed by Homer's characters to engage freely in blame and vituperation), it also opens the door to further examination of Homer's place in the earliest history of English printing. Wolfe appropriately refers to Caxton's *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* as "two medieval retellings of Trojan legend that debate the ancient originals on which they are modeled" (299), but does not mention that the former was the first book printed in English (Bruges, 1473) and the latter among the very first printed in England (Westminster, 1483). While outside the stated purview of Wolfe's project, this might well be a topic for future study in literary history and early printing, especially considering the social and economic considerations a printer such as Caxton weighed when determining what works warranted the time and expense to translate and produce so as to offer the highest return both commercially and in terms of prestige. For example, it is conjectured from a unique engraved frontispiece to *Recuyell* (at the Huntington Library) that Caxton presented the book to Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy (sister of Edward IV and Richard III of England). The fact that the first book printed in English was a gathering of stories about the Trojan War has much to tell us still about the place of Homer in the development of vernacular literature and the early modern book trade.

There is a way in which the first four chapters bring the reader steadily to the top of Mount Pisgah from where the Promised Land can be viewed in all of its expansive glory, for the final two chapters, on Milton and Hobbes respectively, are splendid to behold. These are also the chapters set squarely in the midst of the seventeenth century. While each previous chapter indeed stands on its own, in retrospect they can be seen as necessary steps toward enabling Wolfe to make good on her broader claims for Milton and Hobbes. Whereas Milton reinvented Homer as a poet who prized rational deliberation and set about thence "to vindicate God from the charges of injustice and partiality," Hobbes reinvented Homer "according to the core principles of his own moral and political philosophy" (375).

When Milton was writing *Paradise Lost* there was a marked increase in the vogue for and printing of "Homeric concordances, lexicons, and

encyclopedias, many devoted to identifying correspondences between Homeric epic on the one hand and the Old Testament on the other” (47). Wolfe draws a connection between the flourishing of Homeric scholarship in England and the period of the English Civil War, Commonwealth, Protectorate, and early Restoration. Homer’s wisdom on political and religious matters transcended political allegiances and was embraced by both republicans and royalists. This made Homeric imagery and turns of phrase safe and fair game for Milton to use in *Paradise Lost*, and he did so repeatedly “to signal decisive moments: characters tottering on a precipice between contrary moral choices; unresolved battles threatening to tilt one way or another; divine judgments hanging in the balance” (306). Milton’s adaptation and transformation of what Wolfe calls “pondering scenes,” whether “internally (within the individual conscience of characters both human and divine) or collectively (in councils, assemblies, and conversations),” offers a way for her to argue persuasively for Milton’s interest in dramatizing the “vexed and imperfect process of deliberation” (307). In this chapter Wolfe opens up a philological treasure trove of insights that makes us all better readers of *Paradise Lost*, especially with respect to her analysis of the larger implications of Milton’s Homeric borrowings and translations. Most notably, concerning the notion of walking on a “razor’s edge”; Milton’s “flexibly complex” re-inscription of the choice of Achilles; his appropriation of Homeric theodicy; and his acute awareness of the “theological significance of the temporal distinctions made possible by Homeric Greek, particularly those tenses and modes (including the imperfect, aorist, optative, future less vivid, and middle passive voice) that denote present or past conditionality—what *may* happen or what *might have* happened rather than what will happen or what has happened” (357–8). In much the same way that C. S. Lewis’s 1942 *Preface to “Paradise Lost”* gave countless readers a passport to the world, mind, and poetry of John Milton (cited incidentally by Wolfe to indicate that even Lewis finally was baffled by what Milton meant by the “ridges of grim war” (307)), Wolfe’s chapter, “Homer, Milton, and the Problem of Deliberation,” will serve future generations well as an abiding and eminently useful work of literary criticism of the highest order.

In her final chapter (and indeed throughout the volume) Wolfe remains considerate of her audience, carefully translating the Greek terms and filling in crucial information where needed. For example, in Hobbes's translation of Alkinous's question to Odysseus (*Od.* 8.547–8): “‘What kind of People, *civil*, or without Law, / Civil [*dikaioi*] or kinde to Strangers, godly or no,’ he renders *dikaioi* [just] as “civil,” repeating the word (as the Greek does not) in order to emphasize how the barbarous groups encountered by Odysseus, such as the Cyclopes, do not constitute civil societies” (389). She goes on to assert that this translation of “*dikaioi* [just]” as “civil” also suggests that “strife and war result from a failure to adhere to the ‘artificial chains’ of civil law” (389). These are the kinds of important subtleties Wolfe brings out that would pass most of us by were it not for her judicious and generous approach to rendering and analyzing the passages in question, and lining them up in rapid succession so as to sustain and advance her larger argument about the impact of Hobbes's turning “to Thucydides and Aristotle to sharpen his understanding of Homer's politics and ethics” (51). In the end, Wolfe identifies in Hobbes's translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (like his earlier mock-epic poem *De Mirabilibus Peccis*) a “profound distrust of wonder and sublimity,” such that his version of Eris is “not a force to be celebrated, or to be marveled at, but rather to be controlled and put in her place” (413).

Homer and the Question of Strife, as Wolfe mentions in her acknowledgments, was a long time in the making, spanning eight consecutive Renaissance Society of America conferences and a decade of fellowships at the premier research venues in Italy and in America. Some of us in the field have eagerly awaited the completed volume, having read the installments heralding this Homeric project (in all senses of the term), beginning with “Erasmus, Homer, and the Problem of Strife” in *Renaissance Papers* (2003). The painstaking care she spent over the years perfecting this transnational and multilingual treatment of classical reception has ensured a clear exposition of the book's main thematic concern with the quaquaversal nature of strife in the West. So thoroughly has she covered the topic that later scholars who return the way she came at best can add corroborative textual sources here or an additional supporting passage there with the result of further buttressing Wolfe's monument to the afterlife of Homeric literature. In

addition to being an exemplary work of comparative literary criticism, *Homer and the Question of Strife* is an indispensable resource on early modern reception history, especially as regards the political concerns that attend it and the critical tradition of which it is a constitutive part.

Sophie Chiari, ed. *The Circulation of Knowledge in Early Modern English Literature*. Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015. xxii + 260 pp. + 1 illus. + 4 photos. \$119.95. Review by KARIN SUSAN FESTER, INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR.

The Circulation of Knowledge in Early Modern English Literature is a collection of sixteen essays devoted to various aspects of how knowledge was circulated and miscirculated through literature and drama—texts functioning as agents of change—in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. The cultural processes of “transmission,” “initiation,” and “transgression” are explored with the aim of demonstrating how these processes are interrelated. Moreover, this collection sets a precedent because “the three concepts of initiation, transmission and transgression have invariably been studied separately in the past, and no monograph or collection of essays has yet been published on their interaction” (4). The volume begins with a Forward by Gordon McMullen, followed by Sophie Chiari’s General Introduction and an Afterword by Ewan Fernie. There are four parts: I. “Theories and Philosophies of Transmission”; II. “Initiation Practices”; III. “Political and Spiritual Issues”; and IV. “Transgressions of Gender and Genre.”

Part I begins with an essay by Richard Wilson where he considers Foucault in a new light and develops an argument for symbolic transgression. The Ship of Fools might have been initially discredited, but Wilson is convinced that there’s more to be learned from Foucault’s later writings. In his *History of Madness* (2006), written in response to hostile critiques, Foucault “reread Shakespeare not as a staging of the triumphant ‘cortege of reason’, but a commemoration of the incorrigible ‘madman within’ the disciplinary order” (24). The madman, who always surfaced, was a “psychopathic maniac in the seat of power” who exposes the hideous, “Ubu-esque terror” flourishing in sovereign power (24). Thus, in Shakespeare’s dramas of *coup d’état*