

Preface to the English Edition

The *Basel Homer Commentary* (*Basler Homer-Kommentar*), established by Joachim Latacz (Chair of Greek Language and Literature at the University of Basel, 1981–2002), can already look back on two decades of successful work. Progress on the commentary continues thanks to a research team, attached to the professorship for Greek philology at the University of Basel (Department of Classics), supported by the University of Basel and funded by the *Schweizerischer Nationalfonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung* (*Swiss National Science Foundation, SNF*), its main sponsor. After Joachim Latacz became Professor emeritus, I joined the team of editors in 2002 when I succeeded him as professor; since then we have jointly managed the project.

Project publications since 2000 are a volume of Prolegomena to lay the groundwork and six double volumes of commentary (*Iliad* Books 1, 2, 3, 6, 19, and 24; each in two fascicules: fascicule 1, text and new translation; fascicule 2, commentary). Two of these volumes (Prolegomena and Volume I: commentary on Book 1) appeared in a third edition in 2009, and another volume (Volume II: commentary on Book 2) in a second edition in 2010. Three more double volumes of commentary (on *Iliad* 14, 16, and 18) compiled in the most recent project phase (2009–2015) are due to be published in 2015. Another three volumes of text, translation and commentary on *Iliad* Books 7, 9, and 22, will be added at yet-to-be-determined dates (ca. 2016/17). Twelve books of the *Iliad* – that is, half of the entire poem, focused on its structural pillars – will thus have received treatment in the commentaries within the near future. A grant application for continuation of the project is currently under consideration by the *Swiss National Science Foundation*.

The research team producing the commentaries currently consists of five post-doctoral ‘Homeric specialists’, each holding a PhD. Four of them (Claude Brügger, Marina Coray, Martha Krieter, Katharina Wesselmann) are producing a commentary on a complete Book of the *Iliad*; Magdalene Stoevesandt serves as the general editor.

Funding in the first phase of the project (1995–2003) was provided solely by the *Swiss National Science Foundation*, joined in the second (2003–2009) and third (2009–2015) phases by the private *Freiwillige Akademische Gesellschaft (FAG)*, the private *Max Geldner-Stiftung*, the private *Frey-Clavel-Stiftung* (all Basel), and the *Hamburger Stiftung zur Förderung von Wissenschaft und Kultur*, all of which we would like to warmly thank again for their support.

To our delight, the commentary was well received in international professional circles. This is shown by the detailed German- and English-language reviews,¹ as well as by the necessity for second and third printings within a mere ten years. The sole fact regretted by all was that the commentary was only available in German, the rise of English as the academic *lingua franca* does of course not exclude the field of Classical Studies.

Early 2011 provided the occasion for a memorable meeting in Princeton between myself and Michiel Klein-Swornink, who had at that time just begun his tenure as *De Gruyter's* general representative in the United States, when I was spending a year at the *Institute for Advanced Study (IAS)*. With the desirability of an English edition of the commentary already in mind – I had just published an English translation of my book on the comic chorus – I spontaneously suggested at the end of our exchange publishing the Homer commentary in English as well. Michiel Klein-Swornink received the suggestion with similarly spontaneous enthusiasm. We quickly became friends over dinner and immediately began to plan the project in greater detail, and he promised to campaign for the project's swift realization at the publishing house.

In early summer of 2011, our publishers *Walter de Gruyter* (Berlin/Boston) officially decided to translate the Basel commentary into English and to distribute the English-language version throughout the world via the various modern means available (including digital versions with interactive features for acquisition in university libraries).

Michiel Klein-Swornink had made clear in our very first discussion that the publishing house would not be able to shoulder the substantial financial expenditures involved in producing the translation – which would, of course, have to be produced by native speakers with a high level of competence in Classical Studies. We were asked to raise third-party funds, with Michiel Klein-Swornink offering his help in developing the concept. While still at the *IAS*, I approached a variety of potential sponsors in the United States. My letter was accompanied by a detailed description of the commentary and the project design by Michiel Klein-Swornink, together with cost estimate provided by the publishing house. After several disappointments, in the fall of 2011 we found an open ear at the *Stavros Niarchos Foundation*, which has provided and continues to provide significant support to promote Hellenism world-wide. At the same time, the *Stavros Niarchos Foundation* set the condition, in line with practices common to major American founda-

¹ Reviews available digitally can be found at: <https://klaphil.unibas.ch/graезistik/griech/bk/rezensionen/>. – In the meantime, our commentary has also been evaluated by Edzard Visser in *Lustrum* 54 (2012) 208–343 (see III.3.a).

tions, that the sum they were willing to grant be matched by further donations of at least the same amount within the space of one year. Shortly before the deadline, two Basel foundations stepped in: the *Freiwillige Akademische Gesellschaft (FAG)* and the *L. & Th. La Roche Stiftung*. *De Gruyter* guaranteed the defrayal of the remaining funds. Both foundations as well as *De Gruyter* are due our sincere thanks.

The next steps were to establish the project infrastructure, find a Coordinating Manager/Editor for the English edition, and identify suitable translators. This turned out to be an enormous challenge. As directors of the *Basel Homer Commentary*, we began our search before the official start of the project on 3 December 2012. Already in January 2013, we held a meeting in Basel with Michiel Klein-Swornink, who had now advanced to the position of Senior Editorial Director for Classical Studies and Philosophy and director of the US branch of *De Gruyter*, and had taken over responsibility for the project on the publisher's side. A thorough discussion took place regarding various practical matters of organisation and management, as well as specific questions concerning the design of the translation in detail. These negotiations resulted in an Editorial Publication Agreement between *De Gruyter* and the editors of the *Basel Homer Commentary* (including all team members).

Over the next few months, we intensified our efforts to find an editorial and translation team that could meet our conditions of linguistic competence in both German and Ancient Greek and experience in Homeric scholarship, and could work within the budgetary restraints resulting from the aim of finishing as many of the thirteen volumes as possible in the time allotted and with the sum available. After a series of meetings and intense negotiations from July to October 2013, we managed to win as General Editor of the English Edition S. Douglas Olson, Distinguished McKnight University Professor at the University of Minnesota. As a specialist in Greek Philology with a particular interest in the commentary-writing process and, among many other accomplishments, the author of a monograph on the *Odyssey* and a commentary on the *Homeric Hymn of Aphrodite*, he is familiar with Homer, a native speaker of English with competence in German and currently, as a result of his association with the Heidelberg Academy-supported *Kommentierung der Fragmente der griechischen Komödie* project, a resident of Freiburg im Breisgau near Basel. The complex series of negotiations between the publishing house, *Basel Homer Commentary* team, Douglas Olson, and the various other persons involved, yielded a happy agreement that Douglas Olson would form and work with his own team of translators, Sara Strack and Benjamin W. Millis, each holding a PhD in Classics. In late fall 2013, they began translating the first batch of three volumes, the Prolegomena and the commentaries on Books 3 and 6.

In concept, there was rapid agreement between our team and *De Gruyter* not simply to translate the volumes that had already appeared in German, but to publish a thoroughly revised new edition. From the start, we made it a point to include supplementary information directed specifically at an Anglophone audience. In addition, the English-language version omits the accompanying text volume with our own translation; the lemmata are instead drawn from Richard Lattimore's popular translation of the *Iliad*.²

Since summer 2013, the authors of the *Basel Homer Commentary* have been revising and updating the German volumes previously produced. I have also written an additional chapter for the Prolegomena that deals with the current trends and developments in international, especially Anglophone, Homeric scholarship.

We now present the Prolegomena volume as the basis for the new *Homer's Iliad: The Basel Commentary*, expanded and updated in the fashion described above. The authors have once again revised their contributions and, where appropriate, made additions, particularly to the bibliography. The volumes on Books 3 and 6 will follow shortly. In the future, approximately three new volumes are projected per year.

We wish to thank once again our sponsors and the individuals who have supported us within the various foundations, namely Dr. Caspar Zellweger (Chairman of the *FAG*), Stefan Schmid (Chairman of the *L. & Th. La Roche Stiftung*), Prof. Dr. Jan Philipp Reemtsma (Founder and Manager of the *Hamburger Stiftung zur Förderung von Wissenschaft und Kultur*) and Matthias Kamm (Director of the managing office of the Hamburg foundation), Oliver Ehinger (president of the *Frey-Clavel-Stiftung*) and Prof. Dr. Peter Blome (treasurer of the *Frey-Clavel-Stiftung*), as well as Dr. Peter Lenz (Chairman of the *Max Geldner-Stiftung*). In addition, we thank the *De Gruyter* publishing house, in particular Michiel Klein-Swormink, for their dynamic support and vision, both managerial and academic; also Dr. Anke Beck (Vice-president, Humanities Program) for guaranteeing the remaining funds, Dr. Serena Pirrotta (Senior Acquisitions Editor, Ancient Studies) for steady support from the Berlin central office, Katharina Legutke (Project Editor, Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies) for ongoing support, and the book production team for their problem-free and professional production. We further thank all contributors to the Prolegomena, who in addition to their administrative and

² See most recently R. Lattimore, R. Martin (trans.), *The Iliad of Homer* (new introduction and notes by Richard Martin; first published 1951), Chicago/London 2011, and the review by K. Chew in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2012.10.04.

research tasks at their home institutions completed the task of updating their texts in a timely fashion; our research team, who despite the heavy claims of their ongoing commentary work shouldered the substantial additional workload without recompense; all the experts, as well as all the associated collaborating projects and individuals; and not least, our *alma mater*, the University of Basel, which has generously provided us with infrastructure and has constantly supported us in the acquisition of bibliographic materials.

Particularly warm thanks are due to the two translators, Benjamin W. Millis and Sara Strack, and the General Editor of the English Edition, S. Douglas Olson, with whom this project allowed me to reconnect 25 years after our collaboration as young colleagues at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (USA) in 1989/1990, for a smooth and collegial collaboration.

At a time when German is unfortunately declining in importance within the humanities and when many academics are only aware of publications in English, the publishing house and the Basel team are convinced that the current effort represents a significant contribution to the study of Classics, literature, and the humanities in general, by providing anyone interested with access in English to our commentary on the *Iliad*, one of the great foundational texts of Western literature.

Basel, January 2015

Anton Bierl

The goal of my team has not been to produce a new Basel commentary on the *Iliad* – although the English-language version has been updated in numerous small but important ways by the commentators themselves – but to offer a faithful, clear translation of the original. Our efforts should accordingly be judged on that basis alone; we claim no credit for the insights the Prolegomena and the individual commentary volumes offer, only for the rendering of the work into English. But we hope that this in itself will be seen as a significant contribution to scholarship, by breaking down some of the artificial linguistic boundaries that separate students of the *Iliad* working in different national and regional traditions.

Texts are fundamentally shaped by the syntax and vocabulary of the language in which they are produced, making translation (as is often observed) as much an art as a science. In addition, the Basel *Iliad* commentary is full of highly specialized linguistic and literary concepts, and engages with a wide variety of academic subdisciplines in the field of classical studies. I accordingly take the occasion of this preface to express my thanks and admiration for the members of my translation team, Benjamin W. Millis and Sara Strack, who have done a

superb job of rendering the original German into clear, colloquial English that nonetheless allows something of the individual voices of the various contributors to be heard.

Those who know Joachim Latacz and Anton Bierl personally will instinctively understand precisely how easy and collegial our collaboration up to this point has been. We look forward to the production of further volumes in the series.

S. Douglas Olson

Freiburg, 22 January 2015