

the collection must be in large part a result of a lack of editorial guidance, though the holes are distressingly similar, and some of the contributors did read each other's chapters. Yes, it is crucial that papyrology and archaeology continue to add new data to our data bank, but the question, as always, is 'What do we do with it?' I am no fan of postmodernism myself, but surely it is customary to list the tenets of a position you oppose and refute them; surely classicists have noticed that there are different kinds of theory and that postmodernism is not a synonym for theory; surely it is no more than courteous to take serious notice of the work of your colleagues. Theory is not going to just go away if ignored; we will all go away, but we are all here now. I can only say that my opinion of British classics from 1954 to 2002 is higher than my opinion of *Classics in Progress*.

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HOMERIC NARRATIVE

I. DE JONG: *A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey*. Pp. xix + 627. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Paper, £27.95 (Cased, £75). ISBN: 0-521-46844-2 (0-521-46478-1 hbk).

It may seem as if the title of this book is self-explanatory, but as the commentator herself points out in the preface, the reader should not be anticipating the provision of a commentary in the 'traditional' sense. According to the methodology of this commentator traditional commentaries 'may be broadly defined as heterogeneous, problem-oriented and micro-textual: they consist of philological, linguistic, literary, or historical notes on mostly small parts of the text'. In contrast, de Jong has constructed a commentary which 'covers the whole text, not only the problematic parts, deals exclusively with its narrative aspects, and includes a discussion of the macro-textual and meso-textual levels'. In achievement of the latter aims, the commentary 'does not proceed word by word but unit by unit'.

It is the above methodology which is the key to this book's success. The first measure of a commentary's efficiency must be its ability to deliver accessible explanations of the text at a basic level. By definition a narratological study of an oral-formulaic composition will be obliged to convey a certain amount of information of a scientific (and potentially arid) variety, but this commentary succeeds in making even the paraphernalia and minutiae of formulae and type-scenes seem interesting. Structural analyses of sections of text are, of course, ubiquitous, but for once such schemas prove to be a help rather than a hindrance to comprehension. The commentary wears its narratological credentials lightly; de J. has developed her own user-friendly vocabulary of narratology, conveniently available as a glossary at the beginning of the commentary. At no point is the reader weighed down by the technicalities of presentation.

But this study of the *Odyssey* also succeeds at a much higher level, offering cogent and detailed interpretations of major episodes and issues within the poem. The quality of scholarship throughout is so high that it is an entirely arbitrary process to single out specific instances, but see, for example, the author's analysis of the Phaeacian episode in the introduction to book 6, or the interpretation of the Helen and Menelaus exchange in Book 4, or the lengthy introduction to the complexities of the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope in the latter stages of the poem (see the introduction to Book 19).

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A particular feature of the book is de J.'s provision of shorter notes that brilliantly elucidate a passage's importance as part of a larger structural or thematic sequence in the poem as a whole. The reader will find no better introduction to the importance of the 'Oresteia story' throughout the *Odyssey* than the commentator's note at 1.32–43. Another example of this type of 'holistic' note may be found at 2.143–207, the unit of text in which the first of many 'omen scenes' in the poem may be found. The accretion of such detailed notes facilitates the reader's navigation through the poem from a myriad of themes and perspectives; just how comprehensive is the range of issues covered in this commentary may be gleaned from the index of narrative subject-headings at the back of the book.

As might be expected, the commentary concentrates on the variety of narrative registers and narrators on display in the *Odyssey*. The prefatory analyses of Odysseus' Apology and the Cretan Lies are outstanding, and particular attention is devoted to elucidation of narratives of the same events by different narrators. See, for example, the comparison of Odysseus' own narrative of his departure from Ogygia (note *ad* 7.240–97) to the earlier third person narrative of Book 5, or the analysis of Amphimedon's account in Book 24 of the death of the suitors.

But perhaps the most important aspect of this book is what it achieves at the so-called 'meso-textual' level. As implied above, de J. has deliberately opted for a more relaxed style than one might normally expect from a commentary; restatement of ideas and re-examination of verses in different contexts are not necessarily precluded. Accordingly, readers are warned in advance that 'when consulting this commentary for a particular passage they would do well to cast their net wide'. The more discursive (for want of a better word) critical analysis applied by de J. reaps its major benefit in her identification of underlying structural rhythms in the narrative that are clearly and demonstrably present in the text, but not necessarily apparent in the reading of it. A perfect example of this is her precise analysis of the tripartite exchange of dialogue between Laodamas, Odysseus, and Euryalus in Book 8 (see note *ad* 8.132–255), or, even more directly, in her discussion of the speeches comprising the recognition sequence in Book 23 (see note *ad* 23.1–240). The subtleties of the rhythms identified by the commentator in this fashion shed new light on both the nature of communication and orality in this poem.

To sum up, this is one of the most important commentaries to be produced on the *Odyssey* for years. It is nothing less than the indispensable handbook of interpretation that all those interested in narrative issues in this poem have been awaiting.

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EPIC AUDIENCES

R. SCODEL: *Listening to Homer. Tradition, Narrative, and Audience*. Pp. x + 235. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002. Cased, US\$49.50/£35.50. ISBN: 0-472-11265-1.

Ruth Scodel is an impressively well-equipped Homerist. She knows the Homeric poems inside out, has read widely in German scholarship as well as Anglo-American, and shows a balanced judgement in the discussion of disputed questions. She is experienced in the sciences of narratology and reception theory; and in addition has a wide field of reference, albeit at second hand, to oral traditions and performance techniques in other societies (South Slavic, Indian, Egyptian, Javanese). There is

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