Brisson covers some fascinating material in this book is to be credited with making this material accessible, much of it for the first time, to the general reader and professional classicist alike. But he does not ask the important socio-political, historical, or theoretical questions that most historians of sexuality in the English-speaking world tend to pose nowadays. For those issues the reader is on his own.

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This is a detailed commentary on the *Odyssey*, applying, as the title states, a narratological approach to the text. This approach, for those who are unfamiliar with it, focuses on the writer’s techniques as a narrator and especially on the recurring patterns in the way the story is told, in the ways characters speak and are spoken of, and so forth. De Jong’s starting point is thus the identification of the *Odyssey’s* many narrative devices (for example, rejected suggestion, distraction) and its recurring motifs (for example, sleep, one against many), type-scenes (for example, god meets mortal, reception of guests), story-patterns (for example, delayed recognition, stranger meets with local inhabitant); narrative techniques (for example, catch-word, description by negation), and many more, including key motifs and such linguistic features as puns, similes and recurring words. With great conscientiousness, and aided by the studies of other narratologists, she notes the appearance of every narrative feature—most broadly interpreted—and applies the appropriate narratological label or labels to every passage on which she comments.

The close attention to pattern and technique that is evidently fostered by the narratological approach yields, in de Jong’s treatment, a wealth of insights on every aspect of the text. For example, commenting on lines 1.96-101, de Jong observes that the insertion of a ‘dressing-type scene’ gives extra weight to Athena’s mission to send Telemachus in search of information about his father; she compares Athena’s dressing-type scene to that of Hermes and notes how her dressing in armor and the ominous tones of the description of her spear ‘alerts the narratees to the fact that her arousing of Telemachus is the first step on the road to Odysseus’ revenge, which will take the form of a battle’ (p. 19). Concomitant with her mention of the epic’s first ‘visit-type scene,’ she briefly relates the significance of visit-scenes in the *Odyssey*, the importance of hospitality, and the various types of hosts (pp. 17f.).

The constant comparison and contrast that is promoted by this method issues in the identification and explanation of typical Homeric procedures—for example her discussion of Homer’s treatment of scenery (5.63-75) and the observation that ‘the device of repeated prolepsis is one of the narrator’s strategies designed to make the bloody outcome of his story acceptable’ (p. 21)—as well as the observation and exploration of variants and anomalies. Thus, from her analyses of visiting type-scenes,
de Jong is able to tell us that Hermes’ reception in Calypso’s cave deviates from the usual pattern and to suggest that the deviation stems from his being there as a messenger rather than a guest. Similarly, by looking at the way different characters are introduced, she is able to tell us that ‘Nausicaa is the only Homeric character to enter the story while lying asleep’ (6.15-19)—a fact that has implications on every level: thematic, dramatic and characterological. The comparisons and contrasts also yield astute observations on characterisation—for example that Telemachus’s characterisation is mostly implicit and that he is the only character who develops in the course of the Odyssey (p. 20). Her comparison between Nausicaa and Telemachus (6.15-19, 7.7-13) is similarly productive, and especially her observation that ‘whereas the Telemachy showed us his family’s longing for Odysseus, the Nekuia reveals Odysseus’ longing for his family’ (p. 271).

Among the richest sources of insight are de Jong’s analyses of Homer’s motifs and linguistic patterns. For example, tracing the ‘forgetting-remembering’ motif in her remarks on 1.57, de Jong shows how forgetting and remembering are determining factors in Odysseus’s return. By following Homer’s application of the word kleos to Telemachus at various points of the epic and combining that with observations of other characters’ reactions to him, she turns her commentary on 1.94f. into a short piece on the place given to the young hero’s search for renown. In the same way, when tracing the various pronouns by which Telemachus refers to Odysseus before he calls him ‘father,’ or by name, she observes that ‘the suppression of Odysseus’ name motif reflects his uncertainty about himself and his father’ and that Mentor’s speaking of Odysseus as his father ‘brings home... that he really is Telemachus’ father’ (p. 18). Her analysis of puns, similes and dramatic ironies is equally informative, insightful and enriching.

The commentary is enlightening, with sharp insights and interesting information on almost every page. For this reviewer, it was nice to see a reading that considers characters’ intentions behind their words and actions as demonstrated in The Odyssey Re-Formed. Even the (very welcome) glossary of literary and narratological terms and the more important narrative devices goes beyond mere definitions to noting, for example, how ‘type-scenes’ may be expanded or condensed, Homer’s methods of bringing about a ‘change of scene,’ the functions of the ‘ring composition,’ and so forth. Adding to the value of the commentary is the care that de Jong takes to point out the continuities of the Homeric text—that is, to trace developments and changes in the story line, characters, narration, events and anything else that can be followed. This mitigates the disconnectedness that results from treating the text line by line and creates a certain sense of flow. So, in a different way, does de Jong’s analysis of overlapping structural units. De Jong often begins by noting and discussing the pattern of a large chunk of text of up to several hundred lines; she then breaks that down into smaller units in which she points to different narratological features; finally, she splits each of those units yet further into sub-units of only a few lines exemplifying

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1 F. Ahl and H. M. Roisman, The Odyssey Re-Formed (Cornell 1996).
yet other narratological features. The method permits analysis of the same text several times from different perspectives, gives a sense of the richness of Homer’s narrative technique, and, at times—but not always—enhances the coherence of the commentary.

Still, I have some reservations. For those of us not well versed in narratological theory, the labelling can become overwhelming. I freely confess that at times I wished that de Jong had offered her insights without the jargon. For example, on 7.233-39, she observes that ‘we are dealing with an exceptional and highly effective combination of the ‘action-perception-reaction’ pattern and the ‘belated reaction presentation’ device (cf. note on 16.190): the action of Odysseus entering in Phaeacian clothes (144f.) is separated from—the presentation of—Areté’s perception (234f.) and reaction (237-39): only now does it become clear that all the time Areté must have been entertaining anxious thoughts in her head.’ I wonder whether the observation following the colon could not have been made without the naming—and demonstration—of the patterns. Tracing and classifying the patterns probably helped de Jong to reach the insight; but her naming and then demonstrating them without explaining their meaning or effect does not add much to my understanding of the Odyssey.

Such presentations of unelaborated narratological information or analysis occur with great frequency and at many levels. At the level of the narratological feature, we read dozens of comments like this one on 1.120, ‘Telemachus’ focalisation triggers the use of xeinos, which belongs to the character type-language; 197 times in speech, seven times in an embedded focalisation (1.133; 3.34; 7.227; 13.48; 20.374), and only thirteen times in simple narrator-text’ (p. 21). There are dozens of content descriptions, like the following from 5.43-148: ‘Hermes’ visit to Calypso is an instance of the ‘visit’ type-scene, he (1) sets off (43-54; expanded by a ‘dressing’ type-scene, description of the journey, and simile); (2) arrives (55-58a; doubled: first on the island, then at the cave); (3) finds Calypso in her cave (58b-75; expanded with a detailed description of the scenery surrounding the cave); (4) is received by Calypso (79-91); (5) is given a meal (92-94), and (6) a conversation follows, in which Hermes delivers his message and Calypso reacts to it (95-148).’ There are also numerous structural breakdowns of chunks of dialogue into letter patterns (for example, ABCAD), as one might analyse a musical score. Often, such information or analysis is followed by astute insights, but the two are rarely connected and all too often the information itself is not connected to meaning. Reading such comments, it was hard for me not to ask ‘so what’ or simply to skim over them.

All in all, though, the book is a stimulating and thought-provoking addition to the previous commentaries on the Odyssey. It is also a potentially useful resource for scholars and advanced graduate students, who can avail themselves of its extensive cross-referencing to examine any number of subjects, including relations between narratology and meaning not considered here.\(^2\) The book’s index of Greek words and

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\(^2\) To profit even more from this resource, one might read it along with de Jong’s earlier book, Narrators and Focalizers: The Presentation of the Story in the Iliad (Amsterdam
six appendixes are also helpful. A number of trade-offs seem to have been made to save space and keep the book, of 627 pages, to a single volume. The cross-referencing is done in the text itself, at the key mention of each narratological element dealt with, and is not repeated in the subject index, which cites only that key occurrence. The footnotes, rare in commentaries and welcome, are restricted to the barest listing of authors and texts—presumably (but this is not clear) those to whom de Jong is indebted for her observations on the passage or point at hand. I would have preferred two volumes to the single bulky tome, with a less abbreviated index and fuller notes. I would also have liked, in both the notes and the text, inclusion of variant interpretations.

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This is an excellent book, lively, thought-provoking, full of insights—a book that will stimulate discussion for many years, both on the broad sweep of Aristophanic comedy and on its meaning, especially its political import. Equally it will generate scholarly heat on the many insights that it offers into stage-management, direction, and the significance of particular words, lines and actions in the plays. Without doubt it will become a sine qua non of Aristophanic scholarship. I want to make all these points up front because I have a number of concerns about the book and some of its arguments. But those concerns are to be viewed in the light of the stimulating variety of ideas that the book throws up. It is an exciting move forward in Aristophanic scholarship; it is likely to be as influential as Dover’s book was in its day, or the commentaries of Sommerstein on Aristophanes (both of which it leans on heavily), in that it develops new fields of criticism deriving from Slater’s earlier book on Plautus.¹

The book focuses on the role of metatheatre in Aristophanes and the unwillingness of Slater to accept that it was purely a technique for parody. He sees it as a much more—a powerful strategic weapon in Aristophanes’ theatrical bag of tricks and one that can be persuasively coupled with the long-standing debate over the poet’s politics—whether ‘conservative or democrat, satirist or clown, even subversive or agent of repression’ (p. ix).