Henoch) in Vergils Unterweltbuch. Ein klug aufgebauter Index erschließt das Buch.

Etwas Besonderes liegt darin, dass das Buch fest gebunden auf Papier gedruckt erscheint, aber gleichzeitig als open access auch (kapitelweise) digital im Internet frei zugänglich ist. Für wissenschaftliche Texte ist die Version auf Papier noch bei weitem die bessere Form: Man muss nachschlagen können im Inhaltsverzeichnis, Literaturverzeichnis, die Fußnote im Blick haben können sowie auf gerade vorher (‘linke Seite unten’) Gelesenes noch einmal zurückblättern. Aber geteilte Bildschirme und mehrere Ebenen sind wie ein Schreibtisch voller aufgeschlagener Bücher, und man bedarf nicht des Regals einer gut bestückten Bibliothek.


Bremen

Christoph Auffarth

---


Bowie’s commentary stands out for its engrossing literary interpretations, as well as for the grammatical, syntactical, and metrical instruction necessary for a student reading a Homeric text for the first time, and both helpful and enriching for those who have some familiarity with the Homeric epics. Additionally, the notes contain ample cultural, historical, and archaeological information supporting the literary interpretations, as well as comparisons to near-eastern epics. It is impossible to do justice to the wealth of information available in this commentary. It is abundant. I will try to give just a taste of the richness of the work.

Bowie declares in the Preface that he wishes to contribute to the rehabilitation of the second half of the *Odyssey*, which is usually seen as less engaging than the first half. He claims that the second part of the epic takes a «new direction for epic, by giving major roles to ‘lower status’ figures and the facts of everyday life, with some aristocratic figures acting as the arch-villains of the piece. This goes along with a critical view of what was achieved by the Trojan War» (p. ix). Books Thirteen and Fourteen in particular «are the ones which in the past have received the least complimentary criticism, as being too leisurely and devoid of incident» (p. ix), but Bowie sees them as offering a transition from the world of magic that

GNOMON 6/89/2017
had been enveloping Odysseus and the reality that he faces upon his arrival in Ithaca.


The first chapter gives an excellent literary overview of the two books and the second half of the epic, as well as the various literary devices and plot motifs that serve the poet in effecting the suspense as to whether or not Odysseus will succeed in reclaiming his house and wife after his return to Ithaca. Similar devices from other parts of the epic and from the Iliad are adduced for comparison. The various literary strategies fuel the audiences’ imagination and anticipation by constant deferral, while insinuating that risks and dangers still await him. This chapter also discusses the matrix of disguise, recognition, and narrative (relaxed conversation and story-telling), as the thematic building blocks of the rest of the poem. The notes frequently refer to this part of the Introduction.

The second chapter focuses on the ‘lower-status’ figures that appear in the Odyssey. It sketches the way the epic foregrounds these ‘lower status’ characters, taking examples from Book Fourteen. Four methods are pointed out. First, the descriptions of the servants’ activities are longer and more detailed than similar activities in the Iliad. Second, the Odyssey’s reflections of Iliadic passages suggest that «the doings of the poor are of equal value to the more grandiose acts of the rich» (p. 20). For example, the language in 14. 528–31 used to describe Eumaeus slinging his sword over his shoulders, putting on his cloak to keep himself warm in the wind, and taking up his javelin to protect himself against dogs and men may recall Il. 3.334–8, where Paris prepares himself to face Hector in a duel. However, Paris’ sword is studded with silver nails, and his spear is huge, while Eumaeus has at his disposal a sword and a javelin that are merely ‘sharp’. Third, Eumaeus’ high-style entertainment of Odysseus is described in as much detail and employs the same kind of language as the grander feasts of the elite, but this feast occurs at Eumaeus’ farmstead rather than in a general’s tent or a palace. The fourth element is the story-telling, which is no longer the preserve of characters like Nestor, Glauclus and Diomedes, etc., but of a swineherd (p. 21).

The third chapter of the Introduction shows the extent to which the Odyssey is critical of the Trojan War and the victory of the Greeks. It does this by minimizing the war, as Eumaeus does in 15.374–9 when he describes the negative effects of the war on Odysseus’ household, or by having Odysseus start his story in the Phaeacian court from the moment he left Troy. Furthermore, when the Odyssey features stories about Troy, they are not episodes that appeared in the Iliad, but rather those that emphasize the unrelenting suffering of the Greeks whether at Troy or during their nostoi. The war is usually depicted not as a great victory, but as the reason for the loss of a great many men and devastation for their families. Against this background of gloom and sadness, the reunion of Odysseus...
with Penelope, his son, and servants, and the repossession of his household, emphasize the importance of family and personal ties rather than the glory of war. Bowie concludes: «The meetings of Odysseus with a shepherd and swineherd in Books 13 and 14 signal the importance of everyday existence» (p. 26).

The fourth chapter, in which the reader learns the basics of Homeric hexameter, is followed by the excellent chapter about Homeric language. The complex features of Homeric dialect are explained with exquisite accuracy and clarity, starting with the basic phenomena and leading the reader to a comprehensive understanding. All the linguistic remarks and terminology used in the notes are explained in detail in this part of the Introduction, so students have a reference tool in their hands. Especially helpful is section 5.3 on the Homeric dialect, where the author explains each part of speech: demonstratives, articles, relatives, pronouns, and prepositions. There follows an exposition of the syntax of verbs, tenses, moods, complex sentences, and particles. Section 5.4, where the student can find a list of all the more common features of the Homeric dialect that differ from Attic usage, is invaluable. This fifth chapter of the Introduction should be recommended to any student reading a Homeric text for the first time, and as an auxiliary tool when s/he returns to it. The final part, on the history of the text, discusses the possible date at which the poem was put into writing, within the context of the Homeric Question, and gives a clear overview of how the text of the Homeric epics we have today was transmitted over the centuries.

As to the text used for this commentary, the author says it is his own but «does not depend on fresh scrutiny of the manuscript evidence» (p. 57). Readability governed the punctuation, and the small *apparatus criticus* is intended only for the «more important cases where manuscripts and/or scholars disagree on what should be printed» (p. 57).

The notes are divided into content-segments, each Book split into 14 episodes (with some further division within a segment). Book 13 is divided into: lines ‘1–15 The reaction to Od.’s story’; ‘16–62 Sacrifice and prayers for mutual prosperity’; ‘63–92 The journey to Ithaca’; ‘93–125 The arrival in Ithaca: Od. is left on the shore and the Phaeacians depart’; ‘125–64 The anger of Poseidon against the Phaeacians’; ‘165–87 The end of the Phaeacians?’; ‘187–216 Odysseus awakes to a disguised Ithaca’; ‘217–49 Appearance of Athena in disguise’; ‘250–86 Od.’s cautious use of a false tale’; ‘287–310 Athena’s exasperation at Od.’s continual trickery’; ‘311–28 Odysseus justifies his cautious use of trickery and complains at the lack of help from Athena during his wanderings’; ‘329–60 Athena justifies her behavior and reveals the island’; ‘361–91 Discussion of the situation on Ithaca’; ‘392–440 Disguise of Odysseus’

This detailed division is a welcome device. It presents the lines in manageable plot segments, whose titles give the students an idea of what is ahead, guiding them through the plot without overwhelming them. At the same time it demonstrates the cohesiveness of the story line. Furthermore, each episode is prefaced by a literary analysis, some of them rather lengthy, with references to the relevant bibliographic entries. The analyses demonstrate commendable literary perspicuity and sensitivity. Additionally Bowie suggests themes for inquiry, hints for interpretation, and encouragement for students to look for irony and humor as tools for suspense, while providing abundant references to analogous scenes or themes, and sometimes to the literary influence of a passage on later writers. Here are just a few examples. In the lengthy note on ‘13.63–92 The journey to Ithaca’, the author notes that while half of the lines in the previous section are in direct speech, largely Odysseus’ tales and prayers, all of a sudden we move into a third-person narrative, and Odysseus becomes «a silent figure borne magically home» (p. 107). The preface to ‘93–125 The arrival in Ithaca’ says that «the matter-of-fact description of the Phaeacians’ depositing of their cargo on the shore before leaving is reminiscent of the pattern found in the description of Odysseus’ departure in 13.63–92. The importance of disguise in Book 13 is mentioned in the preface for ‘187–216 Odysseus awakes to a disguised Ithaca’: «The disguise of the island may seem gratuitous, but disguise is emblematic of the second half of the poem, and Homer announces its importance by the way that everything in this book is disguised, island, goddess, Od.». The comment pointing out the similarly cautious approaches taken by Odysseus and Penelope, who of course share other characteristics as well (on 13.333–8), is a valuable guide to the student.

Within the short, demarcated plot-segments, there are also longer literary notes for the reader’s benefit. For example, in the longer note on the ‘Harbour of Phorcys’ (13.96–112), B. says «That the harbour is sheltered from the wind and ships can keep their position without any restraint (97–100) marks it as a place where the sea, which has for so long dominated Od.’s existence, is temporarily at least stilled» (p. 113), which alerts the audience to the fact that from now until his reunion with Penelope, Odysseus will no longer have to battle the sea and Poseidon. The notes also frequently focus on Odysseus’ rhetorical skills and point out the ways in which his speeches are tailored to his audience, especially his fourth speech to Eumaeus, when the disguised hero attempts to create a bond with the swineherd (14.191–359).

Notes that sharpen students’ literary appreciation are abundant. For instance on l. 63 ὑπὲρ οὐδὸν ἐβῆσετο, the reader is told that the phrase recalls Od. 7.135, where Odysseus crossed the threshold upon his arrival. Such a reminder based on vocabulary is useful because it indicates how diligent the poet was in creating literary echoes and cross-references to his own creation. The note also tells us that «Crossing thresholds can have a symbolic significance, here marking Od.’s leaving of the fantasy world of the Phaeacians for good». Equally valuable is the comment on the use of the epithet πολύμητις for Odysseus (13.311): «the formulaic epithet is particularly appropriate to Od.’s diplomatic skills here», while
other examples of a «significant choice of formula» are also provided. This comment is especially instructive for students who may previously have been introduced to hard-core formulaic approach. A comment on Eumaeus’ second speech includes the following observation (on 14.55–71): «The early part of the speech (56–61) contains a good deal of enjambment, which suggests a warm enthusiasm and a certain confidence. Once he gets to the subject of his master however the lines become end-stopped as a graver tone descends...». One rarely finds such interpretation applied to literary devices, which are barely noticed in most commentaries. Bowie often connects descriptions of customary activities with the larger story line. Thus he comments on the sacrifice at Eumaeus’ farmstead after the other swineherds have come in the evening (14.409–56): «This detailed emphasis on sacrifice is important, because in Od. correct performance of sacrifice is one of the great indicators of the moral status of those whose homes Od. comes to: the Cyclops... Calypso... the Companions... the Suitors» (p. 218).

Besides such gems, constant help with syntax and grammar is provided to the student, as are frequent comments on verbal and thematic similarities with other passages (e.g., on 14.72–9, etc.). There are also helpful explanations such as «κόδ δ' = κοτά δε', by ἀροσορε» (ad 13.73); «ἀρόνω: syncopated form of πόντικον», and that aside from metrical consideration this kind of use of the noun appears «to be connected with moments of great seriousness» (on 13.391); that the initial epsilon of ἔδεσσαν is scanned long «because the root was *δειτ with two initial consonants» (ad 13.184); or that φιλος in Homeric epic has a possessive force (13.40). Observations such as these are useful to students at every level.

The commentary also offers cultural, historical, and archeological notes that are valuable for their own sake. For example, the reader learns from the comment on the chariot simile in 13.81–5 that the four-horse chariot was the «fastest and most glamorous means of land transport the Greeks knew. It appears on monuments from the Late Geometric period onwards. A chariot-race is the first event in the Funeral Games for Patroclus [although I must say that these chariots are not four-horse], and it was also the grandest competition at the Olympic games». Bowie continues, explaining the possible logic behind this grand comparison by stating «Its grandeur suits the nature of the escorted return given Od. by the Phaeacians». Similarly, the explanation on 13.181–2 about the significance of the Phaeacian sacrifice to Poseidon, after they notice that the ship that was returning from ferrying Od. home was suddenly bound in place (13.168): «twelve bulls is a grand offering of the most expensive sacrificial animal». The depiction of the inside of the cave in the Harbor of Phorcys is also rich with cultural significance that may provide intentional foreshadowing. While the mixing-bowls and the amphoras «point to sympotic activity, the main locus of male social life» the looms, we are told, signify weaving and point to one of the main female tasks in the household. The conclusion is that «A feast and weaving are two of the principal ways in which Od. and Penelope thwart the Suitors. The cave is a sort of microcosm of events past and future in Od.’s oikos therefore, and looks forward from this earliest moment of his time back on Ithaca to his eventual success» (p. 115). The only thing one would expect to read further is whether there is a connection between Od.’s overpowering magic sleep (which equals death) to his sleeplessness in his own household during his first night there, and the bed-test
posed to him by Penelope. In a comment on 14.133–6, Bowie offers a helpful note which explains the horror Greek culture often expresses about being drowned, and then eaten by animals or fish «because this rendered proper burial and the subsequent tending of the tomb impossible». The conventional act of supplication and its ramifications are clarified in 14.279. See also notes on 14.64, etc.

The notes are adorned with brief but rich archaeological comments and observations about social customs. Thus on 13.96–112 we are told that the 1930s excavation of a cave on Polis Bay on the island of Ithaca, which is identified with the cave in the Harbor of Phorcys, revealed ninth- and eighth-century BCE bronze tripods. Odysseus received from the Phaeacians thirteen tripods. The question as to whether the knowledge of the Nymphs’ cult in this cave has led the poet to construct the episode, or whether an earlier version of the story brought the cult into being is still unresolved. The note refers the reader to various scholarly views on the issue and its literary ramifications. Social conventions are discussed in the notes concerning the hospitality Eumaeus offers Odysseus in Book Fourteen (esp. on 14.111–14, 111, 140–1, 148–64). A ‘Glossary of Linguistic Terms’, which would be handy for a reader unfamiliar with the terminology, follows the notes. A full bibliography ends the book.

The commentary combines intriguing literary observations with the fundamental help a student needs for an informed reading of a Homeric text. In the difficult task of writing a commentary that will appeal to a diverse audience of undergraduates, graduate students, and scholars, A.M. Bowie has succeeded.

Waterville

Hanna M. Roisman

