

Heitman, Richard. **Taking Her Seriously: Penelope and the Plot of Homer's Odyssey**. Michigan, 2005. 136p bibl index afp ISBN 0-472-11489-1, \$45.00 .
Reviewed in 2005dec CHOICE.

Heitman (Carthage College) provides a sensitive critical study of the *Odyssey* in which he strives to better appreciate the poem by focusing on the familial interactions in Ithaca (especially in books 1-4 and 16-23). The author contends that one must pay particular attention to the character of Penelope, whose "strikingly accurate and straightforward accounts of her own feelings, intentions, and beliefs ... square with the logic of the narrative." Although this proposition may seem commonsensical, the author shows that most other critics have rejected it on grounds of literary theory, psychoanalytic plausibility, and textual criticism (unfortunately, Heitman devotes a little too much space to attacking critical straw men). The meat of the book is a series of helpful and perceptive explications de texte that are informed by a solid familiarity with Homeric scholarship and unmarred by trendy jargon. This book is less intricate than Nancy Felson-Rubin's *Regarding Penelope* (CH, Jun'94, 31-5276) and Marilyn Katz's *Penelope's Renown* (1991) but no less cogent in its argumentation. Although Heitman's interpretations will not bring a sea-change in understanding of Homer's epic, they are unfailingly clear and thought-provoking.

Summing Up: Highly recommended. Lower-/upper-division undergraduates; general readers.

— J. P. Holoka, Eastern Michigan University