

Scodel, Ruth. **Listening to Homer: Tradition, Narrative, and Audience.** Michigan, 2003 (c2002). 235p bibl indexes afp ISBN 0-472-11265-1, \$49.50. Reviewed in 2003oct CHOICE.

Scodel (Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor), a recognized specialist in Homeric compositional technique, presents an innovative explication of the rhetorical, linguistic, and narrative skills on display in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The book is not a general introduction to the poems, though it analyzes many individual episodes and character interactions. A major focus is the poets' (Scodel believes different authors composed the two works) genius in gauging and capitalizing on the original audiences' (varying) familiarity with elements of available heroic narratives. Careful interpretation of, for example, the embassy to Achilles in *Iliad* 9 and Odysseus' role in the *Odyssey* as "character-narrator" among the Phaeacians or with Eumaeus the swineherd reveals a deft management of audience response in order to enlarge the appeal of the poems. This is achieved mostly by fostering an aura of the traditional through the resources of an artificial poetic language with its distinctive meter and oral formulaic phraseology, together with the adoption of a calculated narrative "disinterestedness." Though this is a work of technical scholarship, appropriately using relevant specialized vocabulary ("referentiality," "traditionality," "multiform," "type-scene"), the argumentation throughout is clear, well reasoned, nuanced, and convincing.

Summing Up: Highly recommended. Ambitious upper-division undergraduates through researchers and faculty.

— J. P. Holoka, *Eastern Michigan University*