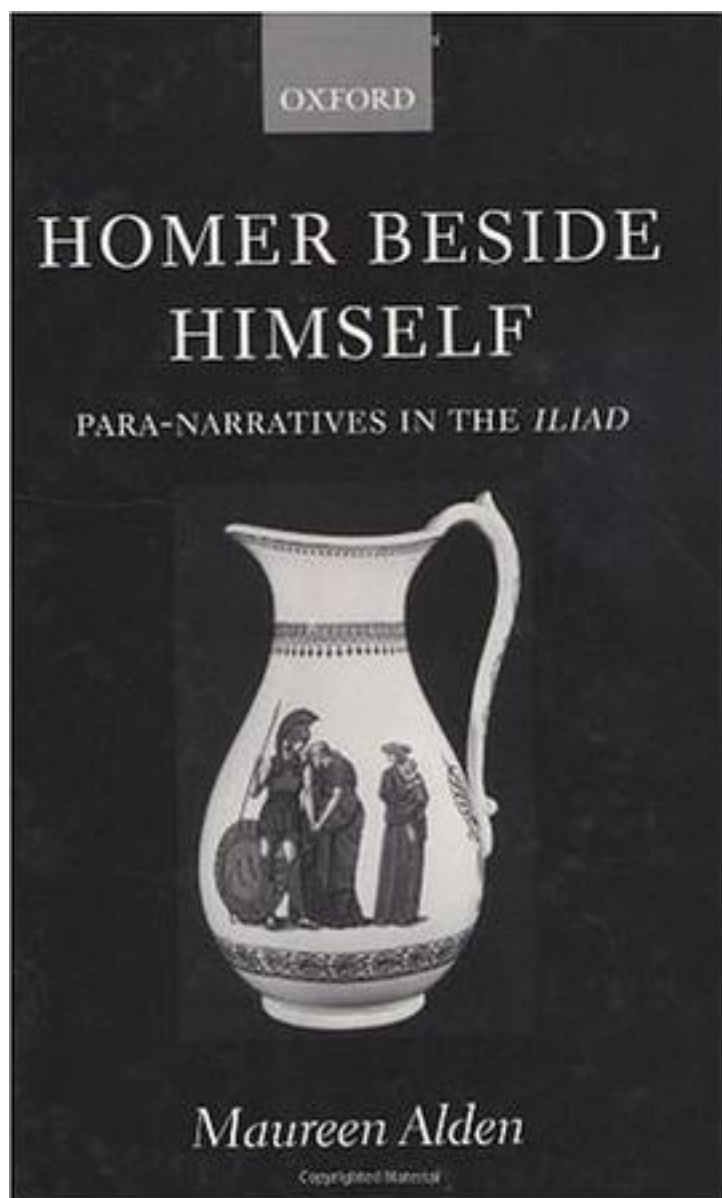


# Homer Beside Himself



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Students reading the Iliad for the first time are often bewildered by the sheer volume of information on apparently unrelated subjects contained in it. The central narrative seems to unfold very slowly, and to be complicated by long speeches containing stories which might be interesting in themselves, but which seem to have no relevance to anything else. In this book Dr Alden offers advice on how to read the Iliad through the relationship of major paradigms to the events of the main narrative. The first section offers the first full-length study in English of the paradigmatic functions of secondary narratives and minor-key episodes in the Iliad. None of these are irrelevant or merely ornamental: rather each is carefully selected and altered if necessary, to reflect on significant episodes of the main narrative and act as guides to its interpretation. The second section offers a general reading of the Iliad arising out of Phoenix's advice to Achilles in Book 9. The allegory of the Prayers illustrates the dire consequences of rejecting prayers, and the paradigm of Meleager presents us with an instance of an angry hero to whom prayers and entreaties are addressed, whilst the primary narrative confines this motif of prayers and entreaties in ascending scale of affection to Achilles and Hector and contrasts their responses. Both heroes suffer terribly for their rejection of entreaties.

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