

Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters

Edited by

Maren R. Niehoff

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Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of
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SETTING THE STAGE

WHY COMPARE HOMER'S READERS TO BIBLICAL READERS?¹

Maren R. Niehoff

This book is neither about Homer nor about the Bible. Instead, it treats the ways in which both texts were understood and appropriated at different times in specific cultural circumstances. The difference between these two approaches is significant. Scholars focusing on either Homer or the Bible, as they were received throughout tradition, regularly assume a given meaning of each text, which was then transmitted with varying degrees of accuracy. The notion of influence is crucial in such scenarios. Focusing on the readers, by contrast, we appreciate the active construction of the texts' meanings. Moreover, we inquire into the rich and delicate connections between interpretation, identity and topical concerns. Homer and the Bible were appropriated over the centuries for very different purposes, playing a significant role in discussions and controversies, which they themselves could never have anticipated.

Readers of Homer and the Bible are usually not studied together. Scholars tend to be trained in separate disciplines and languages, which often determine the horizons of their investigations. Students of Homeric interpretation and students of biblical exegesis thus still tend to go their own way, assuming that the Other material is so different from their own to render it irrelevant to their particular endeavours.² Moreover, it is often thought that there is an unbridgeable gap between the essentially literary and secular enterprise of Homeric exegesis and Jewish or Christian interpretations of a divinely inspired text, which is considered to be absolutely true.³

Why then should we compare Homer's readers to readers of the Bible? Are we not exposing ourselves to charges of "parallelomania", of seeing similarities where there are none? This book breaks new ground by focusing on a particular type of reader in a particular cultural context. While it

¹ Thanks to Margalit Finkelberg and Yakir Paz for their useful comments on a draft of this chapter.

² See, for example, Montanari and Pagani 2011; pioneering exceptions are Borgen 1997:80–101 and Kamesar 1993, 2009.

³ See, for example, Siegert 1996.

is not very profitable to compare the author of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* to Aristarchus, the foremost Homer scholar in Alexandria, or Montaigne to Philo, it is very meaningful to look at scholarly readers of Homer and the Bible operating in the milieu of Hellenistic culture. In more than one sense these readers had a common language. Most obviously, the authors investigated in this volume shared a knowledge of Greek. While some mastered it to the level of mother tongue, composing their own treatises in this language, others read it more or less well, and used numerous Greek loanwords.⁴ For Aristarchus, Philo and the rabbis in the Land of Israel, Greek was the *lingua franca*.

In a broader sense the authors studied in this volume share a common language, because they approach their texts with a scholarly attitude, whether or not they were directly affiliated with an institution of higher learning, such as the Museum in Alexandria. This means that they clearly distinguish between the canonical text and their own interpretation or commentary, taking seriously the author's intention and thus the literal meaning of the text. Moreover, they are highly educated readers who have devoted a significant amount of their time to studying and teaching. They are often aware of and well informed about discourses in adjacent textual communities. Aristarchus famously knew by heart virtually all of Classical Greek literature and reacted to alternative interpretations offered by Crates of Mallos in Pergamum. While Philo and Origen mastered not only the Greek Bible and rejected other exegetical approaches, the rabbis produced running commentaries on the Bible, which strikingly resemble the Byzantine collections of Homeric scholia, and engaged the views of many rival interpreters.

Focusing on scholarly readers we privilege the intellectual elites, who in Antiquity were also the socio-economic elites. While our picture certainly cannot claim to be representative of Antiquity as a whole, it is highly significant in the overall mosaic, showing the dynamics and dialectics of some ancient discourse. True intellectual encounters took place among scholarly readers of Homer and the Bible, sometimes leading to agreement and at other times to fierce controversy. The authors studied in this volume did not operate in an intellectual vacuum, but in a broader cultural context, characterised by many different voices. None of them can be properly appreciated without taking those other voices into account.

⁴ Regarding the rabbis' familiarity with the Greek language, see Lieberman 1950.

A comparative approach enables us to understand each author's cultural horizons as well as his unique contribution or similarity to others.

Moreover, the questions raised and the problems tackled in the different textual communities were often animated by similar concerns. Whether the solutions were the same or perhaps even contrary to each other remains to be seen. In any case, the landscape we are looking at is extremely complex and deserves careful attention, based on a willingness to transcend traditional categories of investigation. We often discover that the dividing line between ancient interpreters does not follow the conventional dichotomy of Greek versus Jewish-Christian. On the contrary, many boundaries emerge within the Greek community, crossing over into Jewish and Christian quarters. Plutarch, for example, emerges on the same side of a basic divide as the Jewish exegete Philo, both of whom fervently opposed the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus. While some Alexandrian Jews impatiently dismissed certain biblical stories as mere myth, the Greek scholar Longinus spoke with great respect about the biblical creation account.⁵ Finally, some rabbinic scholars eagerly investigated the authorial intention of their Scriptures and even considered textual criticism, while Cornutus and Ps.-Plutarch believed that the Homeric text expressed nothing but the truth and the whole truth, which can be discovered through allegory.

This book focuses on the Hellenistic period, framed by Alexandria on the one hand, and rabbinic literature on the other. Alexandria plays a key role. It was here that Homer's epics became the focus of intensive study, which resulted in a standardisation of the number of songs and lines as well as a sophisticated literary analysis.⁶ Aristarchus applied Aristotelian notions of literature and left a visible impact on his many students.⁷ It was also in this city that the Bible in its Greek translation was for the first time systematically commented upon, thus being exposed to the literary methods of Homeric scholarship that had developed at the Museum.⁸ Even after the zenith of these centuries, Alexandria remained influential and hosted many intellectuals from the Greek East, including Plutarch, Origen and several rabbis.⁹

⁵ Niehoff 2011:133–51; Männlein-Robert 2001.

⁶ Schironi 2011; Fraser 1972: 1.447–79; Most 1990; Finkelberg 2004; Nünlist 2006, 2009.

⁷ Schironi 2009.

⁸ Niehoff 2011.

⁹ On the rabbis' Alexandrian connections, see esp. Bar Ilan 1999.

The hermeneutic achievements of Alexandria were singular and need to be distinguished from other forms of interpretation in other cultural centres. In particular, the literary approach of the Alexandrian scholars must be contrasted to Stoic allegory as it developed in Pergamum and Rome. A previous collection of articles, *Homer's Ancient Readers* (1992), attempted to deny such differences. James I. Porter argued that Aristarchus and Crates of Mallos adopted similar academic methods, while Anthony A. Long suggested that the Stoics were concerned with etymology rather than with allegory.¹⁰ Recent scholarship has re-established the notion of Stoic allegory and characterised it by a conscious and systematic departure from the author's original intention.¹¹ While we should certainly be aware of identifying with the negative image of Stoic exegesis, which was evoked by ancient polemicists, we must accept the latter's insistence on a fundamental difference between Stoic and other approaches.

We challenge the prevalent scholarly image of Stoic hegemony in Antiquity. Scholars still tend to think that most, if not all forms of allegory, must somehow derive from this school and, moreover, that virtually all Hellenistic interpreters, especially those of Jewish and Christian background, followed their approach either in a pure or a syncretistic form.¹² The picture which emerges from our studies is far more complex. Looking at the ancient evidence from a historical perspective, we are able to uncover other forms of interpretation and allegory which were influential before and even during the time when Stoicism established itself in Rome and ultimately triumphed. The Platonists in particular were staunch opponents of the Stoics, who contrasted their own allegories of the soul to Stoic interpretations. This book pays special attention to Platonic exegetes, such as Philo, Plutarch and Galen. Many Platonists in the Imperial Age, whether pagan or not, were inspired by Aristotelian literary concepts which enabled them to incorporate the tradition of literal scholarship into their readings and offer an innovative, yet hitherto scarcely studied approach.¹³

This book appreciates the Hellenistic period as a crucial turning point. It was a time of significant change, when ancient ideas and traditions

¹⁰ Porter 1992; Long 1992.

¹¹ Boys-Stone 2001; Brisson 2004:41–9.

¹² See esp. Pépin 1958 whose influential study gave paramount attention to Stoic exegesis.

¹³ Notable exceptions to the general scholarly neglect of Platonic exegesis are Lambertson 1986; Brisson 2004:87–106.

were reshaped and appropriated anew. In many ways the Hellenistic period laid the foundation for the image of Antiquity we have now. The canonisation of texts crucial for Western civilisation and the commentary culture that developed around them are central aspects of this general transformation.¹⁴ Paradoxically, the commentaries and hermeneutic disputes which we study in this volume, both contribute to the canonisation of their respective texts and are at the same time an expression of it.¹⁵

Stressing the innovations of the Hellenistic period, we also challenge some prevalent views of rabbinic literature. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has prompted many scholars to interpret rabbinic literature as a seamless continuation of Second Temple sources. According to this view, virtually all the ideas were already extant in the last centuries B.C.E., with only their formulation undergoing slight modernisation.¹⁶ The rabbis of the second to the fifth century C.E. are thus seen as conservatives, who repeated and revived earlier forms of Judaism without engaging in contemporary discussion. Steven Fraade has already questioned these conclusions and stressed the differences of exegetical genres: while Second Temple sources regularly interpret the Bible by paraphrasing it, thus concealing the difference between canonical text and interpretation, the rabbinic sages produced for the first time in the Land of Israel systematic and explicit commentaries.¹⁷

The present collection of original articles breaks new ground by placing rabbinic exegetes in a contemporary Hellenistic context, asking whether their particular approach to the Bible is comparable to that of exegetes in other textual communities. The picture which emerges from our studies reinforces the pioneering research of David Daube and Saul Lieberman.¹⁸ The rabbis are appreciated here as innovative and sophisticated readers, who were naturally familiar with the cultural world around them. As commentators on the Bible they were more similar to their Homeric and Christian colleagues than to their predecessors in the Land of Israel. Moreover, their particular appropriation of current exegetical notions as

¹⁴ See also Hadot 1998, who stressed the importance of commentary, but dated the latter's beginning too early, for details see Niehoff 2007.

¹⁵ See also M. Finkelberg and G. G. Stroumsa 2003.

¹⁶ See, for example, Bernstein 2000; Kister 2007 responding to Niehoff 2006, Kister 2009.

¹⁷ Fraade 2006, 2007, 2011.

¹⁸ Daube 1949; Lieberman 1950; see also Alexander 1998; Satlow 2003; Boyarin 1993, 2009.

well as their own development of scholarly methods will be carefully studied in order to understand their singular voice in the broader discourse.

This volume is polyphone, representing different scholarly perspectives on different authors and intellectual encounters. It is divided into three sections, the first providing some over-arching essays to set the stage for the subsequent studies of particular texts. The latter are divided according to the languages in which their authors expressed themselves, one section dealing with Greek-writing authors, the other with Hebrew or Aramaic speakers.

The stage is set by three essays which introduce central questions arising whenever we study the interpretation of canonical texts in the Hellenistic period. In particular, these essays address the question of how a canonical text functions in society and shapes collective identity in both a cultural and a religious sense. Margalit Finkelberg opens the discussion by asking in what way Homer's epics were canonical, as well as when and why this canonicity was challenged. She argues for the exceptional status of Homer and shows that unlike Euripides' tragedies, for example, his works functioned like "the Bible of the Greeks". They enjoyed paramount authority in the education system, being read according to the principle of charity and consolidating collective identity. Finkelberg moreover argues for a dramatic change effected by Rome. While the Greek East continued to cherish Homer as a canonical text in the strong sense, Rome replaced Homer with Virgil and thus introduced the notion of the Classical epics as ornamental literature, a role they were fated to play in the West from then until modernity.

Guy G. Stroumsa investigates the relationship between Scriptures and *Paideia* in early Christian contexts as part of a great cultural transformation that shaped late Antiquity. He stresses the ambivalence of Christian writers to both the Jewish Scriptures and Greek education, showing that even Christian intellectuals, who in principal were open to Greek culture, submitted it to their religious truth and thus initiated fundamental changes. It emerges that religious identity can prompt a community to preserve a canonical text of another community, while radically subverting its contents by using allegorical interpretation.

Filippomaria Pontani studies the relationship between philology applied to a canonical text and the rise of grammar, comparing for the first time Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Arabic discourses. While Greeks and Romans, the Jews of Alexandria and those of the Land of Israel, as well as medieval Arabs and Jews operated in geographically and historically very different situations, their hermeneutic projects can be meaningfully

compared. Each is concerned with a canonical text, the gap between the "Classical" language of that text and contemporary parlance, as well as with notions of cultural identity stemming from scholastic endeavour. Pontani reaches an intriguing conclusion: Greeks and Arabs independently developed a grammatical system in connection with philological work on their canonical texts, ascribing to their respective languages a crucial role in cultural self-definition, while Jews did not develop grammar until they came under Arabic influence. Hebrew, the language of the Jewish canon, did thus not have the same role in shaping cultural identity or, for that matter, in promoting philological study.

The essays in the following section treat Greek-writing authors on Homer and the Bible, ranging from Zenodotus, the first librarian in Alexandria, to an anonymous author in Byzantium. Francesca Schironi opens this section with an innovative and comprehensive study of the critical signs as they were developed among Alexandrian scholars and then appropriated by Origen. This comparison is based on the assumption that Homer was as sacred to the Greeks as the Bible was to Jews and Christians. Schironi argues that the work of the Alexandrians can be illuminated by Origen and *vice versa*. While Aristarchus in particular made significant progress in editing and commenting on the epics, his use of the critical signs was difficult to follow for a wider audience who would have struggled over the ambiguity of certain signs and found it physically challenging to get hold of an independent scroll of commentary. Moreover, a wider audience would have found it hard to identify the precise place in the commentary, relating to a critical sign in the margins of a Homeric line, and to understand the explanation of its particular use in this context. Origen is shown to have rendered the system of critical signs much more user-friendly. He used only the relatively unambiguous signs, which were easily understandable without a commentary, and appropriated the signs for altogether new purposes, namely the marking of differences between the LXX and the Hebrew text of the Bible.

René Nünlist's study of Aristarchus throws further new light on Alexandrian scholarship and complements the previous article with an in-depth study of two specific scholarly principles, which have hitherto not been investigated. Aristarchus' implied notion of a *topos didaskalikos* and his explicit use of the *anaphora* were meant to help the reader find his way between the critical signs in the edition of Homer's text and their explanation in the accompanying commentary. Whereas the *topos didaskalikos* draws the reader's attention to a central passage, apt to settle a problem that arises in several other places, the *anaphora* identifies the precise

word to which the critical sign refers in the Homeric line discussed in the commentary.

The next two articles deal with Philo of Alexandria as a reader of Homer and the Bible, contextualising him in the Platonic tradition. While both articles stress Philo's positive attitude to Homer as well as his intellectual proximity to the Platonists rather than the Stoics, their focus is different and complementary. Maren Niehoff places Philo in the context of Alexandrian scholarship with its characteristic combination of Aristotelian literary notions and Platonic philosophy and draws parallels to Plutarch, who thus far has not been studied in this light. Niehoff stresses the common tendency of Philo and Plutarch to rely on literary notions in order to transform Homer into a teacher of Platonic ethics, overcoming for the first time in a systematic fashion Plato's own reservations about Homer as a philosopher. Whereas Philo's approach to Homer can be understood against the background of his apologetic attitude towards the Jewish Bible, Plutarch goes considerably further in his literary investigations and shows direct familiarity with Aristotle and Aristarchus. His particular appropriation of these scholarly traditions suggests that he was close to the exegetical scholia on whose obscure origins he throws important new light.

Katell Berthelot focuses on Philo's allegories in light of Neo-Platonic readings of Homer's epic, both of which stress the soul's mystical ascent. Elaborating on Robert Lamberton's previous research, Berthelot adds new examples of such hermeneutic connections, such as the allegorisations of the Sirens and the phenomenon of multiple allegories on one *lemma*. She also places Philo's readings of Homer into the broader context of his biblical exegesis, showing that he uses the epics much like the Platonists, namely in order to interpret his primary canonical text.

Sharon Weisser introduces into the discussion Galen, whose writings are difficult to access and have rarely been studied in the context of ancient hermeneutics. She argues that Galen must no longer be studied only as a reservoir for earlier traditions, but as an independent polemicist who shaped traditions and expressed his own ideas about them. In the present essay she shows how Galen criticises Chrysippus for relying on a poet in support of philosophical arguments, for selecting the wrong Homeric lines and, worse still, for completely misunderstanding those lines. Despite his reservations regarding the use of Homer in philosophical discourse, Galen offers his own Platonic interpretations of epic lines, thus aligning himself with an already existing tradition of Platonic exegesis. Weisser concludes by placing Galen in the context of second century Rome where Christians were busy engaging in similar discursive fights over the Bible.

The section on Greek-writing authors concludes with an essay on the *Graecus Venetus*, a Greek translation of the Bible from 14th century Byzantium. Cyril Aslanov notes the exceptional style of the translation regarding the Aramaic sections of the *Book of Daniel*, which he interprets as an attempt to offer an archaizing alternative to the LXX by introducing numerous Homericisms. The result is a “paganisation” of the Holy Writ, which is interesting both as a culmination of previous encounters between Homer and the Bible and as a harbinger of Renaissance traditions.

The last section of the book treats Hebrew or Aramaic speakers from the Land of Israel, whose main exegetical concern was the interpretation of the Bible in its original language. The six essays assembled here discuss to what extent and in which ways these readers may have engaged in the hermeneutic discourses of their Hellenistic environment. Guy Darshan opens the discussion by arguing for early Alexandrian influences on biblical scribes in the Land of Israel, thus contributing to the prolonged scholarly debate about the relationship between the Jewish homeland and the Diaspora.¹⁹ Darshan investigates evidence from Qumran as well as other Second Temple sources and suggests that the Ptolemaic occupation of the Land of Israel in the third century B.C.E. had a deep cultural impact. It prompted Jews to adopt the Homeric division of 24 books and to standardise the biblical text by using critical signs. Darshan furthermore uses the comparison between Alexandria and Qumran to support the early dating of the Hebrew canon, which is highly controversial.

Yonatan Moss surveys recent achievements of scholarship in the fields of the Homeric scholia and rabbinic literature, thus preparing the reader for a detailed analysis of a passage in *Genesis Rabbah*. In this midrashic passage Rabbi Huna addresses a problem of chronological sequence in the *Book of Daniel*, distinguishing between Scripture and “the words of the *piyutin*”. Moss offers a detailed and highly original analysis of R. Huna’s statements, comparing his approach to Homeric and Christian exegesis, which also encounters the problem of disorder in the canonical text. Moss concludes by stressing that the rabbis, like Origen, appropriated text critical methods for their own educational purposes.

Yakir Paz offers an in-depth study of early rabbinic exegesis in light of the Homeric scholia, both of which are difficult to access and are compared here for the first time in their details. Paz argues that the rabbinic exegetes were methodologically and conceptually far removed from their

¹⁹ See esp. Hengel 1974; Feldman 2006.

predecessors in the Land of Israel, while significantly resembling Homeric scholars. One feature of this resemblance is a phenomenon Paz identifies as “rescripturizing”. He shows that both rabbinic exegetes and Homeric scholars made an ideologically motivated effort to link self-standing traditions to a certain word or verse in their respective canonical texts.

Yair Furstenberg discusses the motif of the ignorant author-messenger, who is outwitted by his interpreters both in rabbinic and contemporary Hellenistic literature. Re-evaluating the work of Lieberman and Daube, he argues for more substantial connections between the rabbis and their Greek speaking colleagues. In particular, the rabbis are shown to have significantly departed from the exegetical conventions of the Second Temple period and openly celebrated a deep rupture between the canonical text and their interpretation of it. Indeed, the famous story in the Babylonian Talmud about Moses visiting the rabbinic school and finding the discussions there about his own text incomprehensible, is shown to have much earlier and wide-spread roots in tannaitic literature. The novel approach expressed in these rabbinic stories is best understood in the context of similar positions among the writers of the Second Sophistic in the Roman period.

Ishay Rosen-Zvi asks how the study of rabbinic exegesis can profit from comparisons to Philo’s hermeneutics. While noting general similarities in their approaches, such as their tendency to deconstruct the overall narrative and analyse redundancies in the text, Rosen-Zvi points to a problem with comparisons that strive to go beyond formalities: while Philo offers methodological reflections on his own work, it is generally assumed that the rabbis work with a blessed naivety, leaving no account of what they thought they were doing when significantly departing from the literal meaning of Scripture. This imbalance is redressed in the present article by an innovative study of the term *kishmu’o*, which is dominant in the *midrashim* associated with the School of Rabbi Ishmael. This term refers to the literal meaning of a verse, which is dismissed in favour of an ideologically more suitable one.

Concluding the volume, Joshua Levinson argues that rabbinic literature, both halakhic and aggadic, relies on completely new strategies of representing the inner self, which can be meaningfully compared to notions of the self both in Homer and late antique literature. While biblical law and narrative focus on a person’s action, without delving into her motivations or deliberations, the rabbis give new significance to intention and inner-speech, celebrating the individual in the dialectics of decision-making. This new awareness is contextualised with the help of Richard Sorabji’s

work in late antique discourses where a similar shift towards interest in the inner self is apparent.

Last but not least, this collection of essays derives from a workshop at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2010, which was generously supported by the ISRAEL SCIENCE FOUNDATION (grant no. 435-08) as well as by the Center for Literary Studies and the Research Authority of the Hebrew University and facilitated by Hanan Mazeh's organisational skills. This workshop brought together scholars from very different fields, previously mostly unknown to each other. The encounter was very lively and productive. The proceedings of the workshop, which have been skillfully copy-edited by Susan Kennedy and complemented by an index prepared by Ofer Zak, will hopefully stimulate similar encounters. The reader is encouraged to read the book as a whole rather than picking the essays pertaining to her field of expertise, thus exposing herself to new territory with perhaps familiar contours. The contributors to this volume followed a similar pattern and often dared go beyond their original specialisation: an expert on the scholia studied for the first time rabbinic literature, while several students of rabbinic literature developed their arguments in light of the Homeric scholia.

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CANONISING AND DECANONISING HOMER:
RECEPTION OF THE HOMERIC POEMS IN ANTIQUITY
AND MODERNITY

Margalit Finkelberg

Although it is generally taken for granted that in antiquity the Homeric poems enjoyed the status of canonical texts, their canonicity is usually approached in terms of the Greek literary canon. It seems to me, however, that it would be incorrect to treat Homer's canonicity as being of the same order as the canonicity of, say, Euripides. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* functioned in antiquity not merely as literary texts, but as literary texts that were highly privileged in the civilisation to which they belonged—in this respect, their status was closer to the status of the Bible and similar ancient corpora than to that of other works of literature produced in ancient Greece.¹ As I argue in this essay, the reason why this attitude did not last into the modern period is that, in the case of Homer, we should speak of two reception histories rather than one.

I

Let me start by outlining the reasons why I believe that it would be more profitable to approach Homer's status in antiquity against the background of canonical texts of other civilisations rather than that of the ancient Greek literary canon. The points to which I am about to refer stem from the results of the comparative study of canonical texts carried out by the research group on Mechanisms of Canon-Making in Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Societies, which was active at the Institute of Advanced Studies, Jerusalem, in 1999–2000. In the course of our attempts to find a common denominator that would allow us to overcome the split between the 'literary' and the 'religious' canons, it was proposed that we use the term 'foundational texts', which would embrace both Homer and the Bible (i.e. both the Hebrew scriptures and the Christian Bible). The

¹ Cf. Long 1992: 44: 'Throughout classical antiquity and well into the Roman Empire, Homer held a position in Mediterranean culture that can only be compared with the position the Bible would later occupy'. See also Finkelberg 2003: 91–96.

all-inclusive character of such texts, namely the fact that they address the entire community rather than a specific section of it, helps us to draw a distinction between different categories of canonicity. Indeed, not only Homer and the Bible, but also some literary corpora, codices of law, philosophical or mystical texts privileged by exclusive groups of the initiated, are often referred to as 'canonical'; yet, while the latter are characterised by different degrees of social, ethnic, or religious exclusivity, only the former are envisaged as universally applicable vis-à-vis the community as a whole. The result of our work has been, among other things, to highlight the fact that there are two categories of canonicity rather than one: a stronger canonicity as embodied in foundational texts and a weaker one represented by various cultural sub-canons, the literary canon being the most obvious example. It goes without saying that despite the literary nature of his text, Homer belongs to the former category.

To be elevated to the status of a foundational text, a text should meet the following criteria: (1) it should occupy the central place in education; (2) it should be the focus of exegetic activity aimed at defending it from any form of criticism; (3) it should be the vehicle by which the identity of the community to which it belongs is articulated. I shall address these points one by one.

(1) Occupying the central place in education has proven to be one of the salient characteristics of foundational texts. There is no need to dwell upon the role of the study of Torah at every level of Jewish education. Suffice to say that Homer's role in Greek education was not dissimilar. To quote Reynolds and Wilson, 'the [Homeric] epics enjoyed an inviolable position in the school curriculum which put them in a class apart from all other poetry'.² Plato's iconoclastic attempts to transform Greek education by supplanting the authority of Homer with that of the philosophers left no lasting impression, and the educational reforms he proposed were overshadowed by those of Isocrates (436–338 B.C.E.), who built on the foundations laid by the traditional *paideia*.³

Starting with elementary school, Homeric poems were the primary object of study at every stage of education; indeed, it was the very text through which children in the Hellenic world learned to read. But Homer was also the focus of attention in the grammatical schools, which formed

² Reynolds and Wilson 1968: 55. See also Wilson 1983: 18–27, 67; Browning 1992: 136.

³ Cf. Marrou 1964: 128: 'It was Isocrates, not Plato, who became the educator of the fourth-century Greece and, after that, of the Hellenistic and then the Roman world'. My translation.

the first level of higher education, and in the rhetorical schools, its second and highest level. Small wonder, then, that no less than a thousand papyri containing segments of the Homeric poems, first and foremost the *Iliad*, have been unearthed in the sands of Egypt, which amounts to ten times the number of papyri with texts by Euripides, the next most favoured author. Among these, about one hundred are the so-called school-texts, with Euripides, again, coming second with twenty texts to his credit. The dominant position of Homer in Greek education is further corroborated in the vast number of Homeric quotations found in ancient authors.⁴

The medieval manuscripts exhibit a similar picture. In spite of the acrimonious criticism of early Christian apologists, the transition to Christianity did not affect the position of the Homeric poems in the system of education, and the *Iliad*, side by side with the Psalms, served as the principal school-text up to the end of the Eastern empire.⁵ Our text of Homer originates in the Byzantine manuscript tradition (the so-called 'medieval vulgate'), which was fixed once and for all in the course of the transliteration of books triggered by the transition from uncial to minuscule writing in the 9th–10th centuries C.E. As is often emphasised, this event had a bottleneck effect on the manuscripts that had circulated in the Greek-speaking world.⁶ Yet the general assumption concerning the transliteration of books, namely, that one minuscule copy was made from one uncial copy and became the source of all subsequent copies of a given text, does not apply to Homer. There is little doubt that more than a single manuscript of the Homeric poems was transcribed into minuscule writing at the end of the first millennium C.E.⁷ Just as in the case of the papyri, this was due to the fact that the Homeric poems occupied a place of honour in the Byzantine school curriculum.

(2) Another distinctive feature of the texts that are canonical in the strong sense of the word is the hermeneutical attitude developed towards them within the community to which they belong. To use the terminology introduced by Moshe Halbertal, in order to produce the best possible reading of such texts, the 'principle of charity' is adopted:

⁴ On Homer's place in education see esp. Marrou 1964: 244–245; Wilson 1983: 18–19; Haslam 1997: 60–61; Morgan 1998: 69, 105; Cribiore 2001: 140–142, 194–197; Morgan 2011.

⁵ On early Christian reception of Homer see now Kaldellis 2011; on Homer in education see the previous note.

⁶ See e.g. Reynolds and Wilson 1968: 51–52; Wilson 1983: 65–68; Finkelberg 2006: 246–247.

⁷ Haslam 1997: 92–93.

In the case of the Scriptures, there is an a priori interpretative commitment to show the text in the best possible light. Conversely, the loss of this sense of obligation to the text is an undeniable sign that it is no longer perceived as holy. Making use of the principle of charity, the following principle can be stipulated: the degree of canonicity of a text corresponds to the amount of charity it receives in its interpretation. The more canonical a text, the more generous its treatment.⁸

This would be equally true both of the interpretation of the Bible in Jewish exegetic tradition and, *mutatis mutandis*, of the interpretation of Homer in the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods.

The beliefs and values that initially informed the Homeric poems altered considerably in the course of time. The Homeric religion especially, with its too human-like and human-behaving gods, soon began to be felt inadequate by many. Already in the 6th century B.C.E. the philosopher Xenophanes accused Homer and Hesiod of having attributed to the gods ‘everything that is a shame and reproach among men’, and Plato’s attack on Homer in the *Republic* was very much in the same vein. Plato was also first to actually recommend the systematic censoring of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.⁹ Yet, the rival claims of the philosophers had not been endorsed by the community as a whole, and their attempts to decanonise Homer ended in total failure (see also above, on education). It was by interpreting the standard text of the poems rather than by interfering with it that Homer’s adaptation to changing circumstances normally proceeded.

As early as the end of the 6th century B.C.E., Theagenes of Rhegium applied allegorical interpretation to Homeric religion. As far as we can judge, Theagenes approached the battle of the gods, the Theomachy of *Iliad* 20 and 21, in terms of the conflict of physical and cosmic elements. In the 5th century, Metrodorus of Lampsacus interpreted the whole of the *Iliad* in the vein of the cosmological doctrine of the philosopher Anaxagoras.¹⁰ The allegorical approach was also favoured by early Stoics: their chief purpose seems to have been the identification of the gods of Homer and Hesiod with cosmic elements and forces. The Neoplatonic and Neopythagorean allegorisation of Homer, which explicitly aimed at defending the poet against Plato’s criticism, begins to emerge in the first centuries of the Christian era and reaches a climax in the 5th century, in the work of Proclus.¹¹

⁸ Halbertal 1997: 29; on ‘the best possible reading’ see *ibid.*, 32–33.

⁹ Xenophanes 21 B 11 DK (cf. also 21 B 1. 19–23); Pl. *Resp.* 607a, 398d–400d.

¹⁰ D-K 8.2; 59 A 1 para. 11. Cf. Richardson 1993: 27–29.

¹¹ On Neoplatonic interpretation of Homer see Lambertson 1992 and 2011; on Stoic interpretation see Porter 2011; on allegorical interpretation in general see Struck 2011.

Another way to obtain 'the best possible reading', closely connected with allegory but not identical with it, was to update Homer by reading into his text the scientific and practical knowledge that accumulated in later epochs. The Stoics especially were notorious for their attempts to turn Homer into an advanced astronomer and geographer. Thus in his readings of Homer, the founder of the Pergamene School, Crates of Mallos (2nd century B.C.E.), ascribed to the poet the knowledge of a spherical earth and universe, of the Arctic Circle and regions of the Far North, of the Atlantic Ocean and the western lands in general, and so on.¹² Strabo's polemics against Eratosthenes (275–194 B.C.E.), the initiator of another failed attempt to decanonise Homer, was in a similar vein. In spite of the fact that Eratosthenes' rationalistic criticism of Homer's geographical competence, anticipating in more than one respect the Enlightenment criticism of the Bible, was sensible enough, Strabo (ca. 64 B.C.E.–23 C.E.) did his best to adjust Homer's picture of the world to the geographical horizons of Augustan Rome.¹³ The same strategy permeates the influential *Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer* (2nd century C.E.), a compendious treatment of the Homeric poems as the ultimate source of all knowledge, once believed to be authored by Plutarch.¹⁴ It is not difficult to discern that both the allegorical interpretation and the retroactive updating of the Homeric poems are in fact two different aspects of the same interpretative strategy aimed at protecting the canonical text in order to keep its authority untouched.¹⁵

(3) Finally, in that they embody the essentials of a given community's self-consciousness, the foundational texts are one of the principal factors by which the ethnic, cultural, or religious identity of the community in question is articulated. Again, this would be true not only of the Hebrew and the Greek Bible, the Avesta, or the Qur'an, but also of the poems of Homer. 'Like the Bible for the Jews, Homer offered the Greeks the foundation of their cultural identity.'¹⁶

¹² On Crates see Porter 1992 and Nagy 2011.

¹³ Strab. 7.3.6–10, pp. 298–303. On Strabo and Homer see Dueck 2000: 31–40 and Dueck 2011.

¹⁴ Kindstrand 1990; Hillgruber 1994–1999; Keaney and Lamberton 1996. Cf. Hillgruber 2011.

¹⁵ Cf. Long 1992: 44: 'Such texts [the Bible and Homer], however, can only remain authoritative over centuries of social and conceptual change if they can be brought up to date, so to speak—I mean they must be capable of being given interpretations that suit the circumstances of different epochs.'

¹⁶ Long 1992: 44. Cf. Finkelberg 2003: 96.

Over two millennia, from the emergence of historical Greece in the 8th century B.C.E. up to the dissolution of Byzantium in the fifteenth century C.E., the Homeric poems acted as the privileged text of Greek civilisation. The case of the Christian state of Byzantium seems to be especially illuminating. Just as their pagan forefathers, the Byzantines not only saw the Homeric poems as essential to the education of their children but they also perpetuated the pagan Hellenic tradition of studying and interpreting the text of Homer. The reason for this unique symbiosis of Homer with the Bible is obvious: the Byzantines regarded themselves as both Christians and Greeks, and Homer was perceived as an integral component of their national identity thus understood.¹⁷ It is not by mere chance, then, that it was the Byzantines who bequeathed the text of the Homeric poems to modernity.

II

Playing the key role in education; being read according to the principle of charity; being essential in consolidating collective identity are, then, the three conditions that I consider necessary and sufficient to identify a given text as canonical in the strong sense. These conditions ceased to exist when, with the fall of Byzantium, no self-sustained community remained whose identity could be perpetuated by means of Homer.

In the Latin West, since the Age of Augustus, Rome had seen Virgil's *Aeneid*, which both imitated the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and emulated them, as its own national epic that answered its educational and ideological needs much more adequately than the Homeric poems. Moreover, with the rise of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, when the tradition of the Trojan origins of Rome and its rulers had become the dominant one, the Trojan saga underwent a radical re-interpretation. As a result, the Greek participants in the Trojan War came to be seen in a negative light—so much so that Dio Chrysostom could afford, in his *Trojan Oration*, to represent the Trojans rather than the Greeks as the victors in the Trojan War. This

¹⁷ Cf. Browning 1992: 147: 'The Byzantines were well aware that their own culture and their own peculiar identity had two roots—pagan and Christian. . . . History and tradition had made Homer the very symbol of a complex and tenacious culture that distinguished the Greek from the barbarian and also from the non-Greek Christian, Orthodox though it might be.'

Roman tendency to discredit Homer's story of the Trojan War also persisted in the popular literature of the Latin Middle Ages.¹⁸

Small wonder, then, that Virgil was universally read throughout the Middle Ages whereas Homer became a mere name. For Dante (1265–1321), he was still 'Homer, the sovereign poet' (*Omero poeta sovrano*), but Dante never had the opportunity to read the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*. The first modern translation of Homer, into Latin prose, was made by Leontius Pilatus (d. 1364) several decades after Dante's death. And even when the humanists reintroduced Greek into Western Europe, it was on the New Testament rather than on Homer that their Hellenic studies were focused.¹⁹ The true modern reception of Homer began only in the 17th and 18th centuries, with the appearance of the first translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into modern languages.²⁰

It is generally recognised today that every act of reading is culturally conditioned, in that it involves an implicit agreement, shared by the members of the community, about what a given text is supposed to deliver. This agreement is communicated through cultural codes that encapsulate what Wolfgang Iser has defined as 'contractual terms between author and reader', thus signalling the way in which the text is to be approached.²¹ By the time of the appearance of the first modern translations of the Homeric epics, the contractual terms according to which they had been read in the ancient world were irrevocably lost. For the Western cultural tradition, heavily imbued with Virgil and Latin poetry in general, Homer was an acquired taste, and not an effortlessly acquired one at that. This can be observed in the early humanists' embarrassment upon first encountering Homer, an embarrassment that gradually evolved into open rejection, as apparent in J. C. Scaliger's (1484–1558) famous condemnation of Homer as rude, primitive, and vulgar.²²

The problematic position of Homer within Western tradition was brought to the fore at the end of the 17th / start of the 18th century when

¹⁸ On the Roman reception of Homer see Erskine 2001: 30–36; Hertel 2003: 274–301; Harrison 2011. On Dio's Julio-Claudian attitude see Erskine 2001: 255–256; on Homer and Latin Middle Ages see King 2011.

¹⁹ Pfeiffer 1976: 76. On the history of the humanist reception of Homer see Sowerby 1997 and below, with n. 22.

²⁰ Cf. Finkelberg 2011.

²¹ Iser 1993: 11–12.

²² Cf. Sowerby 1997: 37: 'A taste for and appreciation of the distinctively Homeric were not a part of the rich legacy bequeathed to modern Europe by the early humanists'. On Scaliger see *ibid.*, 179–180.

the Homeric poems, and especially the *Iliad*, found themselves the focus of a great controversy over the cultural canon. I mean the so-called *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, dubbed in English by Jonathan Swift 'The Battle of the Books'. Let me dwell at some length on the main events of this important yet underestimated episode in the cultural history of early Enlightenment Europe.²³

On the 22nd January 1687, in a poem read before the *Academie Française*, Charles Perrault presented a comprehensive argument for the superiority of modern literature over those of Greece and Rome. Perrault opened the poem, entitled *Le Siècle de Louis le Grand*, by extolling the scientific achievements of the modern age. Why, he asked, should we be surprised at the numerous flaws in Aristotle's physics? After all, Aristotle lived in the age of darkness, without recourse to modern scientific discoveries such as the telescope and the microscope. The central part of Perrault's poem dealt with Homer. Perrault enumerated the shortcomings of the Greek poet, such as his numerous digressions and the excessive brutality and capriciousness of his characters. Such shortcomings were only natural, he argued, for Homer was a product of his underdeveloped age. Had he been fortunate enough to have been born in the age of Louis XIV, he would have become a much better poet ('Cependant, si le ciel, favorable à la France, / Au siècle où nous vivons eût remis ta naissance, / Cent défauts qu'on impute au siècle où tu naquis, / Ne profaneraient pas tes ouvrages exquis').

A scandal broke out when Perrault's presentation was still in progress. Especially vociferous were the protests of Nicolas Boileau, royal historiographer and one of the leading theoreticians of 17th century neo-classicism. This was the first act in the dramatic confrontation between the partisans of the Greco-Roman legacy and the supporters of the idea of progress in literature and art, a confrontation which would occupy the minds of the reading public all over Europe for more than three decades and which would eventually be given the name *La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*.

Two questions were of especial importance for the *Querelle*. One, which issued from the accumulation of scientific knowledge, concerned the superiority of the modern age over antiquity as far as the natural sciences were concerned; the other, often presented as supplementary to the former but in fact pertaining to the core of the debate, concerned literature and arts.

²³ In the subsequent treatment of the *Querelle*, I am heavily indebted to DeJean 1997.

The argument in favour of the superiority of modern science originated in the efforts of Descartes and Bacon to make their contemporaries adopt the new methods of scientific inquiry. Both rejected the authority of the ancients in the matters of science, but Descartes and his followers also refused to draw a distinction between science and philosophy on the one hand and literature and art on the other, pouring scorn on the legacy of Greece and Rome in both areas. The first to come under attack was Aristotle, whose authority as scientist and philosopher had been seriously undermined. Homer came next. It seems that Homer's critics presumed that if they managed to overthrow that cultural icon, the superiority of the modern age over antiquity would be proven once and for all. In this ambitious project to decanonise Homer, the absence of contractual terms, which might well have procured a more charitable reading of his poems, served as the Moderns' most powerful tool.²⁴

Perrault's poem already contained *in nuce* all the main arguments of the Moderns. Later; Perrault further elaborated his thesis in the four volumes of the *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes en ce qui regarde les arts et les sciences* (1688–1697). Here too, Homer enjoyed pride of place. According to Perrault, the composition of the Homeric poems was poor, their plots weak, their morals gross, the heroes brutal, the manners appalling, and the theology odious. In addition to all this, Homer was said to be entirely ignorant of philosophy and science. It should be taken into account in this connection that shortly before the events of the *Querelle*, Abbé François d'Aubignac (1604–1676) started circulating a critical essay in which he argued that Homer's style, the plots of his poems and his characters were below standard, while his morality and theology were simply abominable. But there was more in d'Aubignac's essay than just disparagement of Homer's morals and of the literary merit of his poems. Homer, d'Aubignac claimed, could not serve as a model of poetry for the simple reason that no-one named 'Homer' had ever existed. The poems transmitted under Homer's name were nothing more than a collection of disparate lies.²⁵ D'Aubignac's manuscript, which was published only after his death, was widely known at the time, and Perrault's attack on Homer should be read against this background.

²⁴ Cf. Halbertal 1997: 40: 'Texts are given readings varying from a minimal degree of charity, which implies the effort to make sense, to the extreme charity that is typical of the reading of canonized texts. Loss of charity in its primary sense is a form of decanonization of the text.'

²⁵ On d'Aubignac see e.g. Heiden 2011: 704; West 2011: 47.

The poem read by Perrault at the *Academie Française* launched seven years of bitter controversy, which officially ended in 1694, at a reconciliation ceremony at the *Academie* between Perrault and Boileau. But the conflict was resumed in 1711 with the publication of a translation of the *Iliad* by Anne Dacier Lefèvre, the first woman scholar in the history of Homeric studies. Madame Dacier's Introduction was an open challenge to the Moderns. Like the other Ancients, she tried to re-canonise Homer by adopting an apologetic stance not dissimilar to that of Homer's ancient interpreters. Approaching Homer with timeless standards of truth and beauty, she regarded his poems as the embodiment of every possible virtue and the model of literary perfection. Madame Dacier was full of admiration for the heroic qualities of Homer's characters, which sharply differed from the over-sensitivity and cult of romantic love characteristic of contemporary literature.

It did not take long before the reaction of the Moderns was heard. It was again a translation—or, to be more precise, an adaptation—of the *Iliad* by Antoine Houdar de La Motte, published in 1714. La Motte's Introduction propelled the debate to a new level. In addition to reiterating the arguments already made by d'Aubignac and Perrault, La Motte claimed that it was necessary to apply to Homer the judgement of reason. According to La Motte, the pleasure aroused by Homer was based on the new literary experience to which readers found themselves exposed, their interest in antiquities, respect for authority, and prejudice. None of these stemmed from reason, the only criterion on which aesthetic judgement should be based. La Motte admitted that it would be unfair to censure Homer for lack of harmony with later and 'more noble' epochs. Yet, he insisted that the Moderns were fully justified in criticising Homer's age for its barbaric mores and in pointing out that the picture of this age painted in the *Iliad* did not fit the much more refined standards of the modern time.

A year later, Abbé Jean Terrasson published two volumes which dealt with criticism of the *Iliad*. For Terrasson, philosophy was above everything, and Descartes its only true proponent. The only thing needed to achieve progress in literature was to banish Homer from literature just as Aristotle had been banished from science. While he acknowledged that the critics of Homer should take into account that the poet lived in an age of darkness and ignorance, this was not reason enough to spare him their criticism. Since humans have always been possessed of common sense, nothing should have prevented Homer from trying to improve himself, even within the limitations of his time.

The last significant contribution to the *Querelle* was made by Abbé Jean-Baptiste Du Bos, whose book *Critical Reflections on Poetry and Painting* was published in 1719. Like his younger contemporary Giambattista Vico (1668–1744), Du Bos was among those 18th century intellectuals who had gradually freed themselves of the influence of Descartes. This is why Du Bos, for whom heart rather than reason was the supreme judge of the beautiful, strove to separate literature and art from science and philosophy. He saw only too clearly the essential difference between basic knowledge founded on fact and experience and knowledge founded on heart and imagination, as enshrined in poetry, history, rhetoric, and morality. Du Bos is not sympathetic to the prejudice that causes people to prefer their own age and country, and he is ready to forgive Homer his flaws, for they belong not to the poet himself but to his age. At the same time, like the other Moderns, Du Bos saw the standards of his own age as universally valid. This is why, even if he had no doubt that Homer's great merit was to bring pleasure and supply knowledge about the conditions of life in his age, eventually he could only pity Homer for his primitive and ignorant ways.

It is hardly by accident that Vico started formulating his ideas on Homer in 1722, in close proximity to the events of the *Querelle*.²⁶ In 1730, he was already prepared to dedicate a chapter to Homer in the second edition of *La scienza nuova*. The expanded version of this chapter, entitled 'On the discovery of the true Homer', appeared in the third, standard edition of the book. It is, however, highly symptomatic that, sympathetic as Vico certainly was towards Homer, his literary taste actually did not differ from that of the Moderns. Consider for example the following:

Not wisely behaved was he who aroused in the hearts of the vulgar crowd the feeling of pleasure stirred by the coarse actions of gods and heroes, as for example when we read [in the *Iliad*] of how, in the middle of the strife [of the gods], Mars calls Minerva a 'dogfly' [21.394] and Minerva punches Diana [21.424], whereas Achilles and Agamemnon, one the greatest of the Greek heroes and the other the leader of the Greek league, call each other a 'dog' [1.225], the name that in our times would barely appear on the lips of servants in the comedy.²⁷

²⁶ On Vico and the *Querelle* see Levine 1991.

²⁷ *La scienza nuova* 782. Third edition. Quoted from Nicolini 1953: 730. My translation.

At the same time, Vico's position is much more nuanced than that of the Moderns. On the one hand, he agrees with the Moderns that Homer was a primitive who lived in a barbaric age and depicted a society whose beliefs and values were no longer valid or acceptable. On the other hand, he adopts the claim of the Ancients that Homer was a supreme poet: he is just not ready to see him either as the source of philosophical wisdom or as the spiritual leader of modernity. He agrees with d'Aubignac that Homer the man never existed, but at the same time sees the entire Greek people as the true author of the Homeric epics. But above all Vico differs from both the Ancients and the Moderns in the new approach he developed. Contrary to the Ancients' uncritical belief in an unchanging human nature and from the Moderns' anachronistic positioning of their own times as the absolute standard of aesthetic judgement, Vico maintained that each historical period should be treated as a phenomenon *sui generis* and interpreted on the basis of its own criteria.

In view of the aforesaid, it should come as no surprise that the perpetrators of the historical approach in Homeric studies, such as Richard Bentley (1662–1742) and Robert Wood (1717–1771) in Britain and Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729–1812) and Friedrich August Wolf (1759–1824) in Germany, approached Homer from the standpoint of the Moderns. It was the Moderns, then, who laid the foundations of Homeric studies as a scholarly discipline. The birth of this new discipline signalled the final stage in the decanonisation of Homer. It was not merely the fact that Homer became an object of impartial scholarly inquiry that decanonised him once and for all; higher criticism of the Hebrew Bible which started at the same time did not significantly affect its status as a canonical text in the strong sense, at least not in the eyes of true believers. The reason why attempts to re-canonise Homer, like those undertaken by the Ancients of the *Querelle*, were doomed to failure was that, as distinct from the Bible, there remained no community which would educate its young or perpetuate its identity by means of Homer, no 'true believers' who would strive to achieve the best possible reading of the Homeric poems by applying to them the principle of charity. In other words, the Homeric poems no longer met the criteria to which a foundational text would answer.

This is not to say that having ceased to function as a foundational text, Homer was denied any form of canonicity. The radical change in the reading public's taste occasioned by nascent Romanticism at the end of the 18th / start of the 19th century, in itself also a result of the historical approach, granted Homer canonicity of a different order. Together with Shakespeare, he was now universally admired as the embodiment of

natural genius, and the *Iliad* became the very text on which the German critics, first and foremost Schiller, built their influential theories of the objective and the naïve. From then on, Homer's place in the Western literary canon has been firmly guaranteed.²⁸

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²⁸ I would like to thank Ruth Scodel for her stimulating remarks.

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SCRIPTURE AND *PAIDEIA* IN LATE ANTIQUITY

Guy G. Stroumsa

EVELYNE PATLAGEAN *IN MEMORIAM*

In the fourth book of his *De Doctrina Christiana*, written in 426, Augustine insists on the fact that the canonical writings (that is those considered to be authoritative) are notable not only for their wisdom, but also for their eloquence. He goes on to discuss one particular kind of eloquence which is typical of those authors who are the most authoritative and of those who receive the fullest divine inspiration.¹ Note here that this idea is strikingly similar to the Islamic concept of the “inimitability” of the Qur’anic language (*i’ajāz al-Qur’ān*).²

By focusing on the literary qualities of sacred texts, Augustine is able to emphasise their major role in Christian education, an education which teaches us not so much to shine in this world, but rather to move from it to a world of pure happiness.³ This education is, of course, completely different from traditional *paideia*, based on classical authors and *artes liberales*, and Augustine’s attitude towards *paideia* retains an essential ambivalence throughout.⁴ A new form of education, Christian by nature, appeared in Late Antiquity. It focused on the sacred texts and their commentaries and functioned alongside, not in opposition to, Graeco-Roman *paideia*. This Christian “*paideia*” represents a central aspect of the great cultural transformation of Late Antiquity, which went hand in hand with the gradual adoption of Christianity as the state religion in the fourth century.⁵ In this paper, I would like to reflect on both the preconditions

¹ His aliquis forsitan quaerit utrum auctores nostri, quorum scripta divinitus inspirata canonem nobis saluberrima auctoritate fecerunt, sapientes tantummodo an eloquentes etiam nuncupandi sunt... Nam ubi eos intellego, non solum nihil eis sapientius, verum etiam nihil eloquentius mihi videre potest. *Doct. Christ.* IV. 6. 9. See the edition of Green 1995. I am grateful to Lorenzo Perrone for his wise comments on my text.

² On the concept of *i’ajāz al-Qur’ān*, see Martin 2002.

³ *Doct. Christ.* IV. 6. 10.

⁴ See especially Marrou 1983: 211–275 and Chin 2005, as well as Hagendahl 1967.

⁵ The complex question of Christianity and *paideia* has given birth to a vast literature. Let us only mention here the seminal work of Jaeger 1961 as well as some more recent

of this new *paideia* and its implications for the transformation of the concept of the authority of both sacred and literary texts in Late Antiquity.

Christian *paideia* constituted the kernel of medieval culture, in Byzantium as well as in the Latin West. It was established at the point of intersection of two corpora, each one complex and fundamentally different from the other. On one side stood the Biblical Scriptures, defined as the texts which constituted the canonised New Testament with the addition of the Septuagint, and regarded as the culmination of the Biblical prophecies. On the other side stood the Greek (and, later, the Latin) literary corpus, especially those texts which came from the philosophical tradition, and above all those of the Platonic and Stoic schools. It was harder for Christians to accept this latter corpus as authoritative: it was less clearly defined than the first, and it never gained (in Greek society at least) the authority that the revealed books of Christians, Jews or Muslims enjoyed. It included texts which would retain a highly ambivalent status in early Christian literature, such as the epics of Homer. All literary education right up to the very last days of Byzantium was based on these texts: a child would learn to read by studying the Homeric verses. But these texts were also the foundational texts of ancient Hellenic (and hence pagan) culture. Of course, the Homeric texts do not present themselves as having been in any sense 'revealed,' and play no part in Greek religion (although they certainly reflect religious practice and tradition of the Mycenaean age)—in this respect at least they are very different from the Biblical Scriptures. Nevertheless, they were viewed by Christian intellectuals as the pagan counterpart to their own sacred books. As the 'Bible' of the pagan pantheon, Homer was not very well received in ancient Christianity, but Christian scholars were able to overcome their own ethical objections to the texts by using the hermeneutical traditions which had been developed by Greek grammarians since the 6th century BCE (such hermeneutical traditions had already been applied to the Biblical text by Alexandrian Jews). Thus Christians were able to find some food for thought in the works of Homer, despite their instinctive mistrust of them.⁶

There are two competing attitudes towards 'pagan' or Hellenic literature in Patristic thought. The first demands the radical rejection of all texts other than those which have been revealed or canonised. Thus, in

studies: Kaster 1988; Marksches 2007: 43–109; Clark 2004: 78–92, Young 2004, and Dawson 2004. See in particular Rappe 2001.

⁶ On Homer in early Christian literature, see Rahner 1984: 241–328; Cameron 1998; Browning 2000. On the status of *paideia* in late antique society, see Brown 1992.

the third century, the *Didascalia Apostolorum* forbids Christians from reading any “foreign” (i.e., pagan) literature. Similarly, at the start of his *Oratio ad Graecos* Tatian (died c.185) distinguishes between the wisdom of the barbarian peoples and Greek philosophy, which exposes odd ideas in elegant language. This attitude, to use Tertullian’s pungent formulation, rejects any compromise between Athens and Jerusalem.⁷ It did not disappear with the Christianisation of the Empire, and we can follow traces of it in, for example, the literary output of late antique monasticism.⁸

However, this ‘fideist’ attitude, which retained the radical character of earliest Christianity and its opposition to surrounding culture, remained a minority party. The vast majority of Patristic authors proposed various solutions to the problem of the relationship between divine wisdom, revealed in the sacred books, and human wisdom, neatly preserved on the shelves of libraries. Clement of Alexandria and Origen revealed in their work a deep ambivalence towards Greek culture, yet they did not seek to achieve a radical break with knowledge as it was perceived in their culture, or with the old pedagogical methods through which this knowledge had traditionally been imparted. They used various strategies which allowed them not just to avoid a radical rejection of Greek *paideia* but to actually integrate it into the hermeneutics of the Scriptures: if the same God is the ultimate source of both the Bible and of the individual traditions of folklore and wisdom of each nation, there should be some sort of correspondence between these two sources.

All in all, these strategies derive from Christian scholarly presentations of Christianity. As far as Christian scholars were concerned, their new religion had to be presented as a philosophical school just like the more traditional schools of philosophy, yet one which was in possession of a wisdom superior to that of the philosophers precisely because, *qua* barbarian, it was expressed in different conceptual language.⁹ Most Christian theologians were very keen to present themselves as being part of a wisdom movement: they could thereby justify their existence legally and avoid being identified as followers of a *religio illicita*. This conception of Christianity as a wisdom movement meant that Christian revelation could be seen as the culmination, the end, of the universal search for truth, the last piece in the jigsaw puzzle. Through such an approach,

⁷ Tertullian, *De Praescr. Haer.* 7.

⁸ On this literature, see for instance Harmless 2004.

⁹ See for instance Wilken 1984; Le Boulluc 2006; Stroumsa 1999b.

Christ's message could be seen as a complementary teaching which did not replace the knowledge transmitted by traditional education, but rather was added to it.

The Church Fathers decided that the simplest way to think about the similarities between the teaching found in the Scriptures and that found in the foundational texts of the Hellenic tradition was to conceive of the latter as a copy of the former: so they coined the term "the theft of the Greeks".¹⁰ This idea occurred rather frequently from the second century onwards, in the writings of Tatian, and then of Clement. It accepted that the teachings of the Greek philosophers sometimes seemed to agree with those of the Scriptures, but explained it by suggesting that pagan philosophers had pilfered ideas from these sacred texts. Most usefully, the idea of "the theft of the Greeks" allowed Christian authors to avoid having to reject offhand any similarities between Christian teaching and that of the philosophers.

This approach reappeared in the East towards the end of the fourth century, for instance in the epistle of John Chrysostom on the role of Greek literature in Christian education. It allowed the great patrician families to give their children an education which was 'traditional' yet also thoroughly Christian.¹¹ Thus these families (such as that of the brothers Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, and that of their cousin Gregory Nazianzen, in Cappadocia) established the foundations of European culture, a culture based on both traditional *paideia* and on the divine books.

A second Patristic strategy made use of a strikingly different and indeed Biblical metaphor, one which refers to the Egyptians' riches, stolen from them by the Israelites during their flight from Egypt.¹² According to the Christian as well as to the Jewish tradition, the children of Israel had legitimate, moral grounds for this action. In opposition to the Greek theft, which had resulted in the dispersion of Hebrew wisdom into a pagan culture, this theft of Egypt's riches by the Hebrews themselves allowed them to 'ornate' their own teachings with elements of elegance and sophistication taken from a pagan culture. In order to give Christian wisdom an attractive appearance, Christians needed to use both intellectual (and scientific) traditions and the literary frameworks which they had found

¹⁰ On this concept, see Ridings 1995; Löhr 2000; Droge 1989.

¹¹ For Chrysostom's text, I am using Malingrey 1972. See further Laistner 1951, as well as the introduction of Naldini 1990.

¹² Beatrice 2006.

in pagan literature: one could talk of “the beauty of Japheth in the tents of Shem”. We must read Augustine’s *De Doctrina Christiana* with all these considerations in mind: Christian wisdom, although quite different from human wisdom, must be judged according to the criteria of pagan culture. Hence Christian literature cannot avoid evaluation by aesthetic principles, any more than Greek literature can. The two theft metaphors go a long way in explaining the ‘mixing of genres’ between the Hebrew Scriptures and Greek culture, with their stress on either form (the Israelites’ theft from the Egyptians) or content (the Greek theft from the Hebrews).

One must note here that the complex attitude of the Church Fathers towards Greek literature was to some extent parallel to their attitude towards the Hebrew Bible. In a sense, both these literary corpora, written before the coming of the Lord, were Christian *avant la lettre*. More precisely, they both announced Christian truth beneath the surface: Christian scholars had to read between the lines of their texts, something which the Jews could not do (and which prevented Jews from reading their own Holy Scriptures properly). In this way, the Church Fathers placed Jews and Greeks in opposition to each other, stripping them both of their identity, cultural history.

For Christian thinkers, “Greek literature” referred, first of all, to the writings of the philosophers: the metaphysics of Plato, of course, and the ethics of the Stoics. Although the Aristotelian and Pythagorean schools did not have such a direct impact upon Patristic thought, a great number of Aristotelian and Pythagorean traits can be found in later Platonic and Stoic works, written in the Roman Empire. The texts were thus relatively easily incorporated, but others were not. If Christians were to accept Greek *paideia*, they could not avoid confrontation with the Homeric epics, with the embarrassing behaviour displayed not only by the mortals but also by the gods of dubious mores who littered the pages of these tales. There was, however, a solution: as we saw above, since the grammarians of old, the Greek hermeneutical tradition had guided Christians in a method of interpreting Homer which was both metaphorical and spiritual. In a sense, then, Christians both accepted the whole system of Greek *paideia* yet also deeply modified it through a religious teaching based on the Scriptures. Even if one retained, *grosso modo*, the principles of Greek education, the importance of these principles changed a great deal as they were subsumed to the Scriptures, and as the Homeric texts began to be understood only through reference to the Biblical books. Long ago, I applied to

this dual system of foundational texts the metaphor of the ‘double helix’ originally used by Francis Crick and James Watson in order to describe the structure of DNA.¹³ The ‘double helix’ of late antique Christian culture, upon which all European culture was established, presents Homer and the Bible as two parallel helices with an infinite number of correlations between them. As is the case with all metaphors, the heuristic value of this metaphor disappears if we take it at face value. Moreover, the fundamental (and implicit) intuition of the Christian system, at least since the conversion of Graeco-Roman culture, is the cross-pollination between the two cultures, one reflecting the other.

Most late antique Christian thinkers did not wish to erase Greek culture, or to replace it with the Jewish Scriptures. One must therefore ask what the impact of this attitude was on the formation of a Christian culture. Let me explain: Christianity presents itself not only as a school of thought, but also as a religion based on a revealed book (or a series of revealed books, a canon). Such a self-perception invites the question of the relationship between the sacred books and all other books. The Church Fathers seem to have made a conscious decision to mix the genres: they agreed to establish their new Christian culture on the basis of Classical culture. In other words, we may ask what effects a “religion of the Book” would have on an already bookish culture.¹⁴ Let us not forget that the description of Christianity as a “religion of the Book” implies that the Bible, a book with a very special status as ‘revealed’ and containing all divine wisdom, would soon become, in itself, a cultic artifact. The ritual aspects of the holy book (both among Jews and Christians, as well as among Muslims) are only now becoming the object of intensive study, but even at this early stage we can confidently state that these aspects belong to the very core of these religions: the radical opposition between “cultic religions” and “religions of the Book” (*Kultreligionen* and *Buchreligionen*) made by the Egyptologist Jan Assmann must be modified.¹⁵

Thus the “double helix” of Homer and the Bible reveals the new Christian culture of Late Antiquity as representing both a *sacralisation of culture* and an *acculturation of religion*. In its insistence upon its identity as an intellectual and spiritual school, Christianity paradoxically presented

¹³ Stroumsa 1999a.

¹⁴ On ancient Christianity as a “religion of the Book,” see Stroumsa 2003.

¹⁵ See for instance Assmann 2003: 145–51.

itself as a school which was reflecting an aspect of Graeco-Roman culture, yet also transforming it.

I shall not discuss here the canonisation process of the writings of the New Testament. It is more important for our purposes to emphasise the radical complexity of the holy text. For the Christians (as for the Jews, of course, although the Christians deny it), the Bible must be read at different levels, each fitting another kind of human intelligence. Moreover, the holy text of the Christian Bible is already double, since the Old and the New Testaments are constantly echoing one another. The Old Testament, when read correctly, reflects the divine promise made explicit in the New Testament: it is called, in Patristic jargon, *testamentum futuri*. So the very first battle of the Christian thinkers, even before the conflict with Graeco-Roman *paideia* and paganism became explicit, was the one they fought with the Jews. Only one of the two 'sister' religions (I use this metaphor, rather than the traditional filial metaphor, as Rabbinic Judaism was really born simultaneously with Christianity) could offer the correct interpretation of the Biblical texts. In a sense, then, ancient Christianity defines itself as being in opposition at once to both Judaism and Hellenism. It denies both the authority to interpret the founding texts of their own cultures.

It would be a methodological error to describe the mechanisms through which a corpus of religious texts becomes canonised without calling attention to the fact that such a canon represents only the bones, the skeleton, as it were, of the whole body of the religious community. The 'flesh' of this body is the hermeneutical life of these texts. It is, therefore, the whole "ecosystem" of the Scriptures and the constant dynamic of this system within the life of the community which needs to be analysed and understood. The Christian community defines itself both through and in the Scriptures, by the correct interpretation of these texts, and by constant argumentation with heretics of all stripes. The Christian Biblical canon includes the canonised texts which constitute the New Testament along with the Septuagint. Strikingly, the birth of the concept of a 'New Testament' in the last decades of the second century came about at the same time as the redaction of the Mishna (I have elsewhere examined this intriguing synchrony to which scholars have not yet given the attention it deserves).¹⁶ At the end of the second century, Jews and Christians already

¹⁶ Stroumsa 2005a: 79–91.

formed two distinct communities, both conscious of the fact that they defined themselves to a great extent through their opposition to the other. Each community therefore needed to find the key to the correct reading of their common literary inheritance, the Biblical text. For the Christians, this key was the New Testament, for the Jews, it was the Mishna, *deuterosis* in Greek. But as soon as this new canon had been established, another series of texts emerged and established the hermeneutical rules by which this initial canon had to be read (the Talmud among the Jews, the writings of the Church Fathers among the Christians).

We can therefore see that the formation of a canon is followed by necessity by that of a *secondary* canon. The latter, in its turn, is eventually supplemented by a commentary (or by commentaries) which also becomes canonised. The cycle is broken only by the appearance of a movement of revolt within the community, demanding a “return to the sources.” Thus it is clear that the concept of a canon represents much more than a *list* of sacred texts, seen in opposition to all apocryphal books (which are condemned to remain in the limbo of collective memory). A canon obtains its full significance when understood as the very driving force of the hermeneutical life of a religion, as its principle of authority. This authority belongs to the community, which itself invents, transforms and preserves the rules according to which the holy writings should be read in order that their true meaning be revealed. As the Scriptures are invested, by their very definition, with an infinite number of meanings, their divine author is divested of the authority of the author of a literary text. The meaning of sacred writings is given to them not by their author, but by the community of their readers. The *regula fidei* also becomes, then, a *regula legendi*.

Long ago, the Canadian Medievalist Brian Stock, through his analysis of some medieval heresies, coined the term “textual communities”.¹⁷ Furthermore, his compatriot, the historian of religions Wilfred Cantwell Smith, talked about a “scriptural movement” in order to describe the proliferation of “religions of the Book” in the Roman and late antique Near East.¹⁸ We must here note that the term “religions of the Book” seems to have appeared for the first time in 1873, in Max Müller’s *Introduction to the Science of Religion*. Müller manifestly forged the concept on the basis of

¹⁷ Stock 1983.

¹⁸ Smith 1993.

the Qur'an's *ahl al-kitab*.¹⁹ The huge number of religious writings and of communities organised around these writings throughout the Near East, from the birth of Christianity to that of Islam, indeed represents a striking phenomenon. However, from the Avesta to the Orphic Hymns, similar texts had also been redacted at an earlier date. What seems characteristic of our period is the high level of activity of the communities organised around a sacred book, which receives a central place in the ritual, and which must be constantly interpreted and reinterpreted against the false readings in circulation. In his ground-breaking study of the polemical milieu within which the Qur'an took shape, John Wansbrough has proposed the term "midrashic communities".²⁰

The most striking among the late antique "textual communities" were of course the Christian monastic communities.²¹ I should like here to call attention to the status of the Bible amongst the early monks in the Christian East, in the hope that this may help to refine our understanding of the Christianisation of Greek *paideia*. The adoption of silent reading, which started in Late Antiquity, and of which Augustine is our very first witness, would be a very long process, not to be completed until the Middle Ages. It seems, however, that it started with prayer, meditation, and a very personal reading of the bible in the monastic communities of Late Antiquity. I am referring here in particular to the reading or singing of the Psalms, a corpus which also played a major role in public cult.²² The silent reading of Biblical texts and their memorisation allowed them to be internalised and led to the concept of an 'interior book', written not on papyrus or parchment, but stored in the heart of the believer. Indeed, the metaphor of 'the book of the heart' would have a rich future in the history of spirituality. In other words, the development of silent reading amongst the Christian *virtuosi* of Late Antiquity—and here too, Augustine's testimony is capital—reflects the transformation of the status of the individual within the new religious system, and is linked to this system as it is to the growing usage of the codex (instead of the roll), a phenomenon first observed amongst Christians.

More than in any other milieu, it is in the monastic movement that the new roles of the book took shape and that a new culture of the book was

¹⁹ Stroumsa 2005b: 71–73.

²⁰ Wansbrough 1977.

²¹ Stroumsa 2008.

²² See Burton-Christie 1993.

born. *Prima facie*, this claim seems paradoxical. As far as we know, the early Christian monks, in Egypt, in Syria or in Palestine, even if we accept the findings of recent studies which stress the Greek culture of some of the first Egyptian monks, were far from being the carriers of a literary culture.²³ Huge differences (in terms of attitudes towards education and reading) existed between the desert monks and the Christian intellectual urban elites, from Clement of Alexandria and Origen to the Cappadocian Fathers (in the East), or from Tertullian to Augustine (in the West). Amongst others, Peter Brown has insisted upon the fact that the new *cultura Dei* which the monks sought to establish represented nothing less than an alternative cultural model, which often remained oral, and which usually expressed itself in the vernacular (Coptic, Syriac or Armenian) rather than in the *lingua franca*, Greek. It would be a mistake, however, to regard the new culture emerging from the monasteries as essentially different from a bookish culture. Despite the centrality of the oral relationship between spiritual master and disciple, the monastic milieu did not give up on either writing or reading, and it placed great importance on the role of *listening to the book*.²⁴ Indeed, it soon conceived of itself as offering a new culture of the Book, different from traditional culture as transmitted through the educational system of *paideia* inherited from Antiquity. More precisely, the new culture focused on one single book, or more precisely on a single literary corpus. There is here a clear parallel with the Rabbinical *beith ha-midrash*, or house of study. The Bible was not only read, copied and recited: some passages were learned by rote and/or commented upon. For the monks, then, the “religion of the Book” necessitated the existence of a community of, in Weberian parlance, religious *virtuosi*. In the monastic communities, however, the reading or reciting of Scripture acquired a function very different from the conventional function of reading: the transmission of knowledge. The repetition of texts learned by heart—a practice very common, for instance, in Pachomian monasteries, and what will in the Middle Ages be called *lectio divina* (or *sacra pagina*)—represents an activity belonging more to soteriology than to epistemology. This method allows intellectual and spiritual concentration, or a pattern of prayer, so that the divine *logos* might enter either the spirit or the heart and drive out the evil thoughts brought there by Satan.

²³ See Rubenson 2002.

²⁴ See Stroumsa 2008.

More than anyone else in the ancient world (with the important exception of Origen) Augustine spent his life reading, writing about, and meditating upon the corpus of Biblical texts. He knew that our world had been formed through a particular book, the Bible, and that the never-ending interpretation of this book was the single most important factor in the shaping of our lives. One of the huge paradoxes of Augustine's life was that despite his immersion in the world of Scripture, he never forgot that the divine source of its authority remained beyond the text, even beyond language itself. Thus our relationship with God could only be fully expressed in a *visio Dei*, a total revelation of divine glory. What links did Augustine conceive between God's Book and human books? Henri-Irénée Marrou has dedicated much of his vast knowledge and admirable *esprit de finesse* to both Augustine and the literary culture of his age.²⁵ In *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, Marrou explicitly locates Augustine at the end of a long Graeco-Roman tradition: his magisterial synthesis on the history of education in Antiquity has little to say about the transformation of *paideia* under the impact of Christianity. Moreover, it barely deals at all with the highly significant development of education in Rabbinic Judaism. But as we now know (and to a large extent thanks to Marrou himself), Augustine ushered one period out as he ushered the next in. Whereas the culture of Late Antiquity was focused on books (plural), that of the newly-born Middle Ages found its source in only one book. This book, however, was quite unique: it had been revealed by God, and constantly required new interpretation.

As we have seen, the authority of the Scriptures had passed to the hands of the community of believers, or more precisely to its elite, who knew (thanks to the rules of interpretation) how to transform it into a 'sound box'. The authority of Scripture allowed these *religious* elites, a class to which the monks certainly belonged and which was highly distinct and separate from the old *cultural* elites, to effect the deep transformation of traditional, Classical education through a reading of the great Greek and Latin texts alongside the Scriptural corpus. In order to insist upon the non-hieratic approach to Scripture among the Christians, I have suggested that we should call early Christianity, the new "religion of the Book," a "religion of the paperback." Christianity was able to transform the traditional frameworks of education through the establishment of a system in which the single great book of God and the whole library of

²⁵ Marrou 1938–1949.

human books constantly called upon and echoed each another.²⁶ This system would develop and flourish up to the end of the Middle Ages: within it, the authority of the text officially belongs to God, but in practice it remains in the hands of the community of believers.

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²⁶ See Stroumsa 2005b. On the fact that the classical Greek authors remain part of *paideia* among the Christians, see for instance Brown 1971: 115–125.

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"ONLY GOD KNOWS THE CORRECT READING!"
THE ROLE OF HOMER, THE QURAN AND THE BIBLE IN THE RISE
OF PHILOLOGY AND GRAMMAR

Filippomaria Pontani

My language flies with me to our eternal unknown
on both sides of the shattered past behind us . . .
(M. Darwish)

Abstract

This paper, written by a Hellenist with no direct competence in Semitic languages, attempts an elementary comparison between forms and meaning of the development of grammatical thought in three linguistic traditions: Greek, Arabic and Hebrew. Special attention is devoted to the role of the respective foundational texts (Homer, the Quran and the Bible) within (and behind) this process, especially as far as their philological reconstruction and the identitarian value of their language are concerned. As a result, it will emerge that some analogies link the early interplay between philological approach and description of language in the Greek and Arabic worlds, whereas the Hebrew tradition, because of historical and partly of ideological reasons, followed a rather different path.

INTRODUCTION

Grammar is not an obvious discipline in the realm of human thought and knowledge. Not many civilisations in the history of mankind can be shown to have developed tools of linguistic analysis autonomously, i.e. without borrowing them more or less wholesale—through various adaptations—from a foreign, pre-existing tradition.¹ In this respect, the three major cultures of the Mediterranean world (the Greco-Latin, the Jewish and the Arab) followed rather heterogeneous paths. What influenced the main features of the process most deeply were three elements: the role of canonical (holy or less holy) texts in the shaping of the "standard" language; the various degrees of continuity between old and new linguistic *facies* (spoken contemporary language vs. traditional written language of

¹ See e.g. a nice overview in sections I–V of Koerner—Asher 1995, and a more succinct (though not always precise) one in Campbell 2001: 81–84.

the canonical text); the identitarian purport of linguistic and grammatical lore as a means of shaping scholastic praxis and thus the average public culture in general.

In what follows, we shall attempt to outline some of the most relevant features of the early stage of each of the three grammatical traditions, which will then enable us to draw some analogies as well as point to differences between them. This is not an easy task: the phenomena we are dealing with took place in different historical ages (spanning from early Hellenism down to the late Middle Ages), they were far from sudden or consistent, and above all the contact between the three cultures inevitably led to reciprocal influence and contamination. However, shared elements such as the central role of one canonical text, the more or less continuous shift in the spoken standard, and the broader cultural and historical (i.e. not only technical) significance of linguistic description, represent a common ground that justifies a comparative approach.

1. GREEK

1.1. *The Rise of Greek Grammar*

Recent studies have shed considerable light on the controversial mechanism which raised Greek grammar from its ambiguous beginnings to the status of a real *technè*:² the date of this consecration is debated, all the more so as what is commonly regarded as the first manual of grammar in Western culture should probably not be ascribed—at least not in its present form—to the scholar whom manuscript tradition claims as its author, the grammarian Dionysius Thrax.³ Yet, whatever the exact contents of Dionysius' *Techne grammatike*, we can safely assume that it did exist, and that some sort of systematic treatment of the basic linguistic issues was in place by the early 1st century B.C.E.

Dionysius may or may not have been a Thracian himself, but he certainly studied in Alexandria at the school of Aristarchus of Samothrace (2nd cent. B.C.E.), by common consent the greatest philologist of antiq-

² Good overviews of the main modern trends in the history of Greek grammar can be read in Swiggers-Wouters 2002 (esp. the editors' introduction, pp. 9–20, and the ambitious essay by Prencipe 2002); Swiggers-Wouters 2005; Ildéphonse 1997 is more theoretically oriented.

³ See the opposite views held by Di Benedetto 1958 and Erbse 1980, as well as the discussions in Law-Sluiter 1995 and Schenkeveld 1994.

uity, and the most influential editor of the Homeric poems.⁴ This is an important factor: Dionysius was the pupil of a philologist, i.e. of a man who did not aim at creating a philosophical theory in order to describe how language worked, but rather sought to establish a sound text of the most influential authors of Greek literature—a task he accomplished not only through internal and linguistic analysis, but also through an extensive collection and collation of authoritative manuscripts of the poems.⁵ However, despite his chiefly “philological” background, the categories employed by Dionysius in the description of language in his *Techne* (as, for that matter, in the *Technai* of all times) grew out of philosophical concepts and ideas, witnessed both in the Stoic tradition and, to a remarkable extent, in the Peripatetic one.⁶

Stephanos Matthaïos, following an idea put forth by such illustrious scholars as Wolfram Ax and Hartmut Erbse,⁷ has demonstrated through a painstaking analysis that “grammatical” terminology is in fact far from unknown to Dionysius’ master Aristarchus. On the contrary, the adoption of philosophically grounded terminology in what little we have of Aristarchus’ commentaries on the Greek poets, suggests that Alexandrian philologists had developed a true *Grammatik im Kopf*, which—even if it was not *per se* framed into a consistent theoretical paradigm—helped them in the difficult task of choosing the correct variant reading in any given literary passage.

Matthaïos’ inquiry has concerned primarily the parts of speech, which of course represent the basis of any attempt to linguistic description, and also the easiest items to be compared with the corresponding philosophical concepts: in this respect the key text is Quintilian’s claim (*inst. orat.* 1.4.18–20) that Aristarchus and later his Latin colleague Remmius Palaemon had developed a system of eight *partes orationis*. But to which *corpus vile* did they apply this system? As it happens, a large number of the fragments of Alexandrian scholarship we possess today derive from Aristarchus’ recension of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, known to us through a series of exegetical materials assembled and stratified on the margins of

⁴ On Dionysius’ place of birth and education see Dion. Thr. test. 1–3 Linke.

⁵ See e.g. Montanari 1997; other scholars (most notably M. L. West and earlier M. van der Valk) rather emphasise the Alexandrians’ conjectural activity: see e.g. West 2001, and the debate in Montanari 2002.

⁶ See Blank 1982; Frede 1987; Lallot 1989, as well as the texts quoted above note 2.

⁷ See Matthaïos 1999; Ax 1982 and 1991; Erbse 1980.

medieval manuscripts, most conspicuously ms. Venetus A of the *Iliad*.⁸ This state of affairs obviously reflects the pre-eminence enjoyed by Homer throughout Greek culture as the pivotal text, the real *livre de culture* even after the end of orality, as well as its leading role in school and in literary studies.⁹

Thus, while arising in the late Ptolemaic era at the crossroads of philology and philosophy, grammar operated from the start above all on the “body” of one canonical author, whose language—a stratified and artificial mixture of various dialects and historical layers—differed widely not only from the spoken idiom of Hellenistic times (which never seriously became an object of research for grammarians), but also from the contemporary educated *koine*, the Greek used by both the high administration and by most literary authors, i.e. the Greek that evolved after the early consecration of Attic by the Macedonian rulers and by the poets and writers of Hellenistic times.¹⁰

In other words, a remarkable gap spans between the Greek language first investigated by means of grammatical rules, and the average (written) Greek of educated speakers in Hellenistic and Roman times. The dangers inherent in this gap are well represented by a humorous fragment of Strato’s comedy *Phoenicides* (fr. 1 K.-A.) depicting a cook who actually speaks like Homer and thereby exposes himself to ridicule. True, Strato belongs to the pre-Hellenistic era (4th century), when grammar had not yet emerged as a separate *techne*; but the teaching of Homer was current in Athens at least as early as the 5th century, and the distance of Homeric language from contemporary usage is beautifully attested e.g. by a fragment of Aristophanes’ *Banqueters* (fr. 233 K.-A.). That Strato’s linguistic paradox had some bearing on education probably explains why the *Phoenicides* fragment was included in the earliest known syllabus of Greek antiquity, the 3rd century book known as *Livre d’écolier*.¹¹

But let us take the issue more seriously: how did grammarians, starting with Aristarchus, deal with this gap between their own contemporary Greek and Homer’s? In order to answer this question, we must turn to a later source, where this phenomenon is most conspicuous, and where

⁸ On this manuscript see e.g. Dué 2009; Pontani 2005: 149 (with further bibliography).

⁹ See e.g. Finkelberg 2003; Hillgruber 1994: 5–35; on the breadth and multiplicity of Homeric scholarship Dickey 2007: 18–28.

¹⁰ See Janko 1995: 232; Alexander 1998; Versteegh 2002; Colvin 2009.

¹¹ See Guéraud-Jouguet 1938; Cribiore 1996: 121–28; Bing 2009: 28–32; Pontani 2010: 95–97.

Hellenistic doctrine on the topic is followed, refined and put to a peculiar practical and normative use: Apollonius Dyscolus (2nd century A.D.).

1.2. *Homer in Apollonius (and Aristarchus)*

Homer still plays a pre-eminent role in Apollonius Dyscolus' linguistic *summae* (*De pronomine, De coniunctione, De syntaxi*), where approximately 90 per cent of the literary examples come from either *Iliad* or *Odyssey*. Apollonius, albeit compiling works which he deems “essential for the explication of the poems”,¹² is not writing an Homeric grammar. His approach is not descriptive, but utterly normative,¹³ and his rules are designed for all speakers of Greek aiming at *katallēlotes*, suitable expression.¹⁴ Then why does he resort systematically to examples extracted from Homer's epics?

Apollonius shares (and quotes) Aristarchus' belief that “the poet” is the author “in whom the rules of *hellenismos* are clearly spelled out”:¹⁵ Aristarchus was even ready to refute some conjectures of his earlier colleague Zenodotus by appealing to the poet's *hellenismos* and defending him from the danger of *barbarismos*.¹⁶ This is a major claim: “die drei Normprinzipien, die aus Aristarchs Argumentation deutlich werden, nämlich syntaktische Verträglichkeit, Flexionsanalogie und Homerische Sprache, nicht mehr auf den Dichtertext, sondern auf den Sprachgebrauch allgemein, auf den Hellenismos also wirken sollen”.¹⁷ Homer's authority thus yields an essential help towards the solution of modern linguistic controversies.

The next step, i.e. the presentation of Homeric language and speech as *the* standard paradigm for contemporary speakers, was indeed a dangerous one, and Apollonius stopped short of it. But it had been taken long before Apollonius by a pupil of Aristarchus named Ptolemy Pindarion, the object of a heavy satire by the Sceptic philosopher Sextus Empiricus,¹⁸

¹² Ap. Dysc. *synt.* 1.1, p. 2.2 Uhlig ἀναγκαιοτάτην πρὸς ἐξήγησιν τῶν ποιημάτων. Cp. also Dion. Thr. *ars* 1.1.

¹³ Normative trends in Aristarchus are discussed by Siebenborn 1976: 30–31 and Ax 1991: 287–88.

¹⁴ See Ap. Dysc. *synt.* 1.60, p. 51.10 Uhlig, with Blank 1982; van Bekkum-Sluiters-Versteegh 1997: 208–19; Lallot 1995: 113. See also Schenkeveld 1994: 293–98.

¹⁵ See Ap. Dysc. *pron.* 71.22–25 Schneider (τὸν ποιητὴν... παρ' ᾧ τὰ τοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ ἠκριβώται; Aristarch. fr. 125A Matth.); 72.16.

¹⁶ See schol. A Il. 1.68 (Zenodotus οὐκ ἐξ ἑλληνίζειν τὸν Ὅμηρον) and 15.716. Schneider. Schenkeveld 1994, 286 underscores the purport of this Aristarchean stance.

¹⁷ Ax 1982: 106; see also Siebenborn 1976: 30–31.

¹⁸ Sext. Emp. *adv. math.* 1.202–208. See Latte 1915: 623; Montanari 1995; Boatti 2000; Pontani 2010: 94–95. Pindarion was also nicknamed Πτολεμαῖος ὁ ἀναλογητικός, see Ap. Dysc. *coni.* 241.14 Schn. (with Boatti 2000: 277–78 and Pontani 2010: 95 note 21).

who was the fiercest opponent of analogy and grammar and the strongest advocate of the appeal to “common usage” or *synetheia*—two stances in which he received partial support from Galen.¹⁹ Even if Sextus, probably inspired by an Epicurean source²⁰ and certainly hostile to grammar as traditionally conceived by grammarians,²¹ forcefully exaggerates Pindarion’s claims, there can be no doubt that Homer’s model could be presented as a reasonable, non-obsolete norm in grammarians of the 2nd century C.E. We even possess another piece of evidence—though of uncertain date—which explicitly equates “the poet” with *hellenismos* itself: even if the manuscript ascription to Herodian cannot be taken seriously, there is a chance that the work preserving this idea, a treatise about barbarism and solecism, goes back to imperial times, and thus represents another link in the chain Aristarchus—Pindarion—Apollonius: a line of continuity between Homer and the present.²²

True, the aforementioned stance does not prevent Apollonius from acknowledging in a couple of passages that epic diction belongs to an “earlier” stage in the history of Greek language: but hints in this direction are extremely rare in his entire oeuvre,²³ which by and large justifies a negative answer to Jean Lallot’s rhetorical question “Les grammairiens alexandrins avaient-ils le sens de l’histoire?”²⁴ However, Apollonius has a different goal from Aristarchus: his aim is not to defend Homer’s text,²⁵ but to fit Homeric passages into a general pattern of language: “while the early Alexandrians used grammar to understand Homer, Apollonius uses Homer to understand grammar”.²⁶ Apollonius simply explains away problematic forms or constructions by ascribing them to “poetic licence”,²⁷ and judging them as perfectly rational and rationally explicable through

¹⁹ See Swain 1996: 56–62; on Sextus’ views see Blank 1998 and Dalimier 1991.

²⁰ See Blank 199: xlvi–l.

²¹ Sext. Emp. *adv. math.* 1.90.

²² See Ps.Hrd. *sol. barb.* 311.5–10 Nauck (esp. 5–6 εἵνοι μὲν λέγουσιν ἑλληνισμόν εἶναι τὸν ποιητήν): see Reitzenstein 1897: 379; Siebenborn 1976: 31; Versteegh 1987: 264–65 favouring a milder interpretation; Pontani 2010.

²³ See e.g. Ap. Dyc. *pron.* 44.11–13 Schn. (τὰ γούν’Ομηρικά, ἀρχαϊκώτερα ὄντα); *synt.* 2.90, p. 193.17 Uhlig; *synt.* 3.34, p. 300.12 Uhlig.

²⁴ Lallot 2010.

²⁵ This will rather be the concern of his learned son Herodian: it suffices to open at random H. Erbse’s edition of the scholia to find out how much grammar is employed by the *Vier Männer* to defend and discuss the variant readings in Homer, clearly in the wake of Aristarchus: see Erbse 1960: 354–64.

²⁶ Schironi 2002: 154, who might however be too rigid in denying the Alexandrians an autonomous grammatical thought.

²⁷ Ap. Dyc. *synt.* 1.62, p. 52.8–10 Uhlig (ποιητική ἄδεια).

the mechanism of “pathology”, a system by which a word or a sentence can change its external appearance by undergoing various *pathe*, themselves all perfectly comprehensible.²⁸ The four basic forms of pathology are codified as addition, subtraction, mutation and transposition, the so-called *quadripertita ratio*,²⁹ and the operation leading to the analysis of these linguistic phenomena is named—by Apollonius as well as by his son Herodian—*katorthosis*.³⁰

By imposing on Greek language what has been termed a “totalitarian approach”,³¹ Apollonius takes Aristarchus’ approach one step further, and *de facto* transforms Homeric diction into a variation of prosaic discourse. This is an altogether different option if compared with Varro’s theory of analogy, where poetic discourse is awarded a peculiar status, not just as the beneficiary of poetic licence, but also as the basis for neologisms, new structures etc.³² Varro’s position, surfacing but sporadically in Apollonius,³³ openly differentiates modalities of speech in order to sort them out and thus avoid ridicule.³⁴ This might be compared with Sextus’ strictly empirical distinction of acceptable customary usages (or *synetheiai*) according to the situation of speech:³⁵ it is well-known that large portions of *De lingua latina* books 8 and 9 share a common Greek source with Sextus’ *Against the Grammarians*, even if this source cannot be identified—as it once used to be—in Crates of Mallos.³⁶

1.3. *Homer and Atticism*

But then: is Apollonius’ peculiar stance an exception? Let us broaden our perspective. The linguistic trends that dominated the first centuries of the Christian era were analogy (the formation and evaluation of morphological and syntactical patterns by way of comparison with existing ones), and Atticism (the canonisation of the language of 5th century Athenian

²⁸ See Blank 1982: 45; Lallot 1995; Brucale 2003: 21–44; Nifadopoulos 2005.

²⁹ See Ax 1987; Desbordes 1983.

³⁰ See Ap. *Dysc. adv.* 147.5 Schn.; *synt.* 1.60, p. 51.12 Uhlig; *Hrd. μὲν λέξι*, 909.12–20 Lentz; cp. Dalimier 1991: 28; Sluiter 2010.

³¹ Lallot 1995: 121.

³² See *Varr. l. Lat.* 9.5; 9.114; 10.74, with Piras 1998: 94–96; Taylor 1974: 50–51 and 98–100.

³³ When an ἔθος τὸ παρὰ ποιηταῖς is separated from the κοινόν: *synt.* 2.157, p. 251.7–10 and 2.49, p. 162.4–8 Uhlig.

³⁴ See Blank 1998: 227.

³⁵ *Sext. Emp. adv. math.* 228–35; see Dalimier 1991: 21–23 and Swain 1996: 62–63.

³⁶ See Blank 1982: 3–5 and 62–5; Montanari 1995: 49 note 9; Blank 1998: xxxvi–xl.

writers as a model for stylistic imitation).³⁷ These two phenomena are linked by a common thread—one might argue that Atticism is in fact a special case of analogy—and they both serve a major purpose, namely the establishment of a norm of linguistic correctness, the so-called *hellenismos*, which was made the object of so many treatises by outstanding grammarians, from Trypho to Seleucus to Philoxenus, perhaps since as early as the 3rd century B.C.E.³⁸

In theory, the authority of Homer within this system should face serious challenges: Homeric words and phrases can hardly provide the basis for analogical formations, or fit into a frame defined by the usage and style of Plato or Demosthenes. And yet, Homer does not disappear from Atticist grammar, *loin de là*. Even before Apollonius, we find that among the scanty fragments of Trypho's *Peri hellenismou* no less than half (two out of four) deal with Homeric terms;³⁹ and Ps.Herodian's *Philetairos* (242.8 Dain) still resorts to the authority of *Odyssey* 2.227 in order to support the construction of verb *πείθομαι* with the dative. These texts show the tendency, "die alte Atthis als *ἄκρωσ ἐλληνίζουσα* durch die *συνήθεια* des ältesten hellenischen Schriftstellers zu erweisen",⁴⁰ the "old Atthis" being *de facto* identical with a form of the Ionic dialect.⁴¹ This idea lives down to the age of Hadrian, as can be argued by the title of a lost work by Telephus of Pergamon, the teacher of Lucius Verus and himself an important Homeric critic: *ὅτι μόνος Ὅμηρος τῶν ἀρχαίων Ἐλληνίζει*, "That Homer alone, of all ancients, uses sound Greek".⁴²

It has been argued that Homer was a "particular danger" to Atticist writers, and that most of them referred to Homeric usage in order to reject it to the benefit of the Attic one.⁴³ But in fact a form of conscious

³⁷ I shall refrain from addressing here the controversial issue of the relationship between grammatical Atticism and rhetorical Atticism: see Dihle 1957; Wisse 1995; Strobel 2009.

³⁸ See Reitzenstein 1897: 379–83; Latte 1915: 622; Siebenborn 1976; Schenkeveld 1994: 281–92; Ax 1996: 116; Matthaios 2010.

³⁹ Frr. 105–106 Velsen, on *δίσκος* / *σῶλος* and *χλαίνα*: see Reitzenstein 1897: 379–80.

⁴⁰ Reitzenstein 1897: 380.

⁴¹ See Strab. 8.1.2, 333 C.; Choerob. in *Th. can.* II.86.1; 13–14; 20, a particularly interesting case insofar as it blames Aristarchus for confusing the old and the recent Attic idiom when choosing in Homer's text *ῥῖθι* for *ῥῖθει* (see Didymus' *schol. A in Il.* 5.64c): see Schironi 2004: 73 note 5. A different canon of "old Attic" authors appears in *schol. Thuc.* 1.30.1.1 = Suid. τ 1049.

⁴² See Suid. τ 495; Schrader 1902; Latte 1915: 626; Swain 1996: 54–55.

⁴³ Swain 1996: 52–56, stressing especially Phrynichus' alleged "firm rejection" of "all other dialects, including Homeric Greek"; see already de Borries 1911: xxiv–xxv and Latte 1916: 627, with some pertinent examples; more correctly Dalimier 1991: 27.

archaism—regardless of any specific dialectal or literary flavour—was fairly common in Atticist authors, as we can gather from Lucian’s satire, both in the *Lexiphanes*, where the parodied speaker “abandons” his interlocutors and speaks a centuries-old language, and in the *Demonax*, where Agamemnon’s language is paired with Attic, and Homerizing and hyper-Atticism thus appear as the combined hallmarks of grammatical snobbery.⁴⁴

Even if we turn to more serious-looking Atticist lexica,⁴⁵ the avoidance of Homer might hold true for some items, but not as a general rule: we also have clear-cut proof that grammarians still felt Homer, even when his vocabulary or style was not accepted, an integral part of the canon which determined linguistic correctness. The assessment of Homer’s relationship to Atticism must take into account that many authors—starting with Aristarchus himself and with his pupil Dionysius Thrax (fr. 47 Linke)—argued that Homer was an Athenian, and that his language was bulging with Atticisms: the remarks of the scholia match later assessments such as can be found in Ps.-Plutarch’s *De Homero* and in Aelius Aristides.⁴⁶

A case in point is Phrynichus’ *Praeparatio Sophistica*, a work otherwise rather strict in defining the standard authors to be imitated: here the syntax of ἔστι^αν is explained by analogy with Homer’s use of the synonym δαινύναι, already noted in the scholia and later in Eustathius;⁴⁷ and the non-contracted form of the common word ὦδῆ, namely ἀοιδῆ, is deemed wrong “even if Homer has used it”,⁴⁸ which *e contrario* credits Homer with a certain authority in orthographical matters. Furthermore, in Phrynichus’ other work, the *Ekloge*, the morphology of present optatives in contracted verbs is also defined by means of Homeric examples.⁴⁹ The so-called *Antiatticista*, a fierce opponent of Phrynichus, also quotes Homer along with a comic fragment for a special meaning of the preposition πρό as ἀντί—a meaning plainly contradicted by the bT-scholium to the relevant Homeric line.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ See Luc. *Lexiph.* 20 (with Camerotto 1998: 86 and 197) and *Demon.* 26; Dalimier 1991: 22; Blank 1998: 231.

⁴⁵ On these lexica see Strobel 2009 and esp. Matthaios 2010: 168–69 and 186–97.

⁴⁶ *Schol. A Il.* 13.197 (Ἀθηναίων γὰρ ἴδιον); *schol. BHX Od.* 18.17 etc. (ἀττικίζων ὁ ποιητής); Ps.-Plut. *de Hom.* 12; Ael. *Arist. or.* 1.328 Lenz. See Heath 1998: 26–28.

⁴⁷ See Phryn. *praep. soph.* 66.7; cp. *schol. A Il.* 9.70b, Eust. *in Il.* 736.38.

⁴⁸ See Phryn. *praep. soph.* 67.10–11.

⁴⁹ See Phryn. *ecl.* 324 Fischer.

⁵⁰ See *Antiattic.* p. 112.7 Bekker and *schol. bT Il.* 24.374; the comic fragment (Philemon fr. 57 K.-A.) is understood differently by Arist. *pol.* 1.7, 1255b29.

Appeals to Homer for lexical, morphological or syntactical reasons crop up in Pausanias, Aelius Dionysius, Moeris, Orus' Atticist lexicon.⁵¹

However, in most authors from Philodemus down to the Second Sophistic, Homer's language was perceived not as pure Attic, but rather as a mixture of the four dialects (Ionic, Attic, Aeolic and even Doric):⁵² this view is codified by Ps.-Plutarch and hinted to by Dio Chrysostom and Maximus of Tyre, who both insist on Homer's desire to make himself understood to everybody in the Greek-speaking world, but also—especially Dio—on Homer's quest for a precious ornament made of a variety of lexical elements drawn from the dialects, from barbaric idioms and from his own onomatopoeic skill.⁵³

Thus, as far as we can tell from the scanty and oscillating remains of ancient Greek dialectological science, we can affirm that Homer's language was mostly seen as a mixed bag with prevalence of an Attic substratum, whereas the *koine* was interpreted as a neutral mix of the four dialects, devoid of any autonomous essence, or else as the first and original language, from which all other dialects derive⁵⁴—the latter view can be interestingly compared with the idea that *hellenismos* is in fact the common language of the heroes at Troy.⁵⁵ Be that as it may, precisely the non-dialectal (or inter-dialectal) connotation of his poetry, and the acknowledgment of its dominant Attic background, give Homer pride of place in linguistic speculation, and allow grammarians to establish him as a paradigm of the *koine* and as one of the parameters of Atticist Greek.

⁵¹ See Paus. att. α 11 Erbse on the meaning of ἀγείν as “to enhance”; Ael. Dion. π 47 Erbse on the meaning of verbs ending in -σειω; Moeris η 9 Hansen on the subscript iota in the dative (to be compared with Aristonicus' *schol. A Il.* 8.453a); Orus *lex. fr.* A 38 Alpers (= Zon. *lex.* 640) on the syntax of εἰθε.—For the sake of clarity, I should like to stress that many other non-Atticist lexica, from Cyrillus to Hesychius down to the Byzantine etymologica, are structured on different principles, and thus do embrace a lot of Homeric material, but without any special focus on its relevance to contemporary linguistic usage.

⁵² See Philod. *poem.* 1.187.21–24 Janko (ἐκ πάσης ἐξελέξατο διαλέκτου τὰς ὀνομασίας Ὅμηρος: “Homer took names from all dialects”).

⁵³ See Ps.-Plut. *de Hom.* 8 (with Hillgruber's invaluable notes); Dio Chr. *or.* 12.66–67; Max. Tyr. *diss.* 26.4a–b Koniaris.

⁵⁴ The different views of *koine* are expounded in *gramm. Leid.* p. 640 Schaefer and *gramm. Meerm.* p. 642 Schaefer, and discussed in *schol. Dion. Thr.* 462.37–463.30 Uhlrig (see also Greg. Cor. *dial.* 12.1). On the delicate issue see Bolognesi 1953; Thumb 1901: 2–5; Versteegh 1987: 256–60.

⁵⁵ This idea is put forth as an alternative by the same Ps.-Herodianic passage we have already discussed above: Ps.-Hrd. *barb. sol.* 311.5–7 Nauck. See Reitzenstein 1897: 383 note 2; Blank 1998: 221–22; Pontani 2010: 98–100.

1.4. *Homer and Grammatical Education*

We have seen that the place of Homer in the Greek grammatical tradition is an extremely important one, both at its outset—when the problems connected with the constitution of his text catalyse the philosophical inputs of Stoic and Peripatetic thinkers and precipitate them towards the creation of a new *technē*—and at its peak, when he contributes vital, if partial, elements to the creation of a new linguistic standard, and thus remains perfectly integrated as a pillar of Greek linguistic consciousness for centuries. Defending the text of Homer soon amounts to defending Greek grammar and therefore Greek identity; and this process of standardisation, of creation of a linguistic norm—just like the broader phenomenon of *hellenismos*—is certainly connected with the political explosion of Greek domination, and the need to protect language and culture from foreign threats.⁵⁶

As far as we can judge from its scanty attestations—mostly consisting of papyri and ostraka unearthed in the sands of Egypt—the teaching of Homer was not significantly influenced by high-brow philology, and displayed a remarkable continuity throughout the ages.⁵⁷ But it is interesting to see that, to the best of our knowledge, no special grammar of the Homeric language was ever compiled: on the other hand, from Aristophanes’ times onwards, the exegetical approach to the epics was chiefly a lexical one, based on lists of words and glossaries, designed to explain difficult Homeric terms by means of more common, Attic (or *koine*) equivalents; we even find grammatical compendia (such as *PLondLit* 182) where Homeric examples have the lion’s share.⁵⁸

Now, there are two ways of interpreting the evidence: either we maintain that grammatical education had as its primary goal the reading of poets, the *poëtarum enarratio*, without any contact with the world outside the classroom;⁵⁹ or we consider literate instruction as functional not primarily to the reading of authors, much less to a basic familiarisation with Greek language, but rather to the acquisition of skills in the correct usage of educated Greek, the language of power and elites, endowed with an important ethical and social meaning: instruction would thus become a

⁵⁶ See Atherton 1996: 250–53; Versteegh 2002.

⁵⁷ See e.g. Morgan 1998: 71; 75–78; 107–111; Criboire 1996: *ad indicem*.

⁵⁸ See Wouters 1979: 90.

⁵⁹ See Criboire 1996: esp. 52–53; Criboire 2001: 205–15.

form of *recte loquendi scientia* reaching well beyond the mere *krisis poiematon* (“judgment of poems”).⁶⁰ I cautiously side with the latter view, since it accounts better for several phenomena, above all the coexistence of Attic grammars and Homeric readings in the same schools, and the value of the rational, Stoic ordering of language as a symbol of the corresponding ordering of the world.⁶¹ “from Stoic writers education took the idea of correct language as a guarantor of truth and authority; from Alexandrian theory it took the application of grammar to literature”.⁶²

This very state of affairs unveils the ideological discourse of continuity in which Homer is framed: he is presented as an author who does not belong to a different world, nor speaks a different language (at the most, he employs some old-fashioned terms or peculiar phrasings, related to the “common” ones by means of the simple mechanism of pathology), indeed as the author embodying the shared identity of the Greek-speaking people. His relentless presence in school curricula is part and parcel with his adoption at the heart of a grammatical system; but it is only through the aforementioned ideological colouring that such an adoption could live on for centuries.⁶³

In what follows, we shall briefly look for possible analogies to the development of Greek linguistics in two other Mediterranean cultures marked by the pre-eminent role of a single canonical book. A preliminary objection, namely that Homer, unlike the Quran and the Bible, is no holy text after all,⁶⁴ could be partially countered in the light of the above paragraphs.⁶⁵ The well-known relief of the *Apotheosis of Homer* by Arche-laus of Priene is eloquent enough, but I shall point to two further pieces of evidence: the “high-brow” grammarians’ statements depicting Homer’s language as divinely inspired and close to the gods’ idiom (at least more

⁶⁰ See Morgan 1995: esp. 77–81 and 1998: 152–89. On the *krisis poiematon* see e.g. D. Thr. *ars* 1.1 (p. 6.2 Uhlig) and fr. 13* Linke; S. Emp. *adv. math.* 1.250 (with Blank’s commentary); but also the definition by Asclepiades of Myrlea in Sext. Emp. *adv. math.* 1.72 γραμματική ἐστὶ τέχνη τῶν παρὰ ποιητῶν καὶ συγγραφέων λεγομένων “grammar is the art of what is said by poets and writers”. The terms *poëtarum enarratio* and *recte loquendi scientia* are taken from Quint. *inst. or.* 1.4.2.

⁶¹ See Blank 1993a.

⁶² Morgan 1995: 89. For a fuller discussion of the issue see Pontani 2010: 95–97.

⁶³ Colvin 2009: 42 insists on the role of Homer and the Attic inscriptions as contributing to an identitarian view of pan-Hellenism in different (earlier and later, respectively) chronological spans, but I believe that Homer’s centrality in that respect never really ceased.

⁶⁴ And could thus be criticised and even ridiculed by Greek exegetes, as opposed to what happened in Muslim and Jewish quarters: see Alexander 1998: 130–32.

⁶⁵ See Heracl. *qu. Hom.* 3.1, with Pontani 2005: 183; Buffière 1956: 10–13 (“Homère Bible des Grecs”); Siegart 1996: 133.

so than the human ones),⁶⁶ and the sentence scribbled by schoolboys on their clay tablets: “Homer is a god, not a man”.⁶⁷

2. ARABIC

2.1. *The Textual Fixation of the Quran*

Classical Arabic, a language surprisingly similar to present-day standard Arabic, is above all the holy tongue of the Quran and of the Bedouin speakers of the mid 7th century C.E. Whether it stems (as Arab grammarians themselves like to report) from a unitarian language later differentiated through interaction with local substrata, or whether it derives from a poetic *koine* that obfuscated the multiplicity of pre-Islamic dialects,⁶⁸ one thing seems likely: the codification of this language was performed over the first decades following Mohammad’s death, and it went hand in hand with the textual fixation and canonisation of the Quran.

On the historical level, much of this process is still clad in darkness, chiefly the paramount role of oral transmission before and after written standardisation,⁶⁹ the exact date of the textual fixation (thought by some to have occurred much later than in the traditional accounts, by others even earlier),⁷⁰ and its concrete dynamics with respect to the vocalisation of *rasm* (the consonantal outline)—with respect to the latter it should be stressed that the Uthmanic text presented more or less the same problems

⁶⁶ See *schol. bT in Il.* 2.813–4 τὴν μὲν δημωδεστέραν ἀνθρώποις, τὴν δὲ ἀληθῆ θεοῖς προσάπτει. ἢ ὡς μουσοτραφῆς σίδε τὴν τῶν θεῶν διάλεκτον (“he assigns the popular language to men, the true one to the gods; or, being bred by the Muses, he knew the gods’ idiom”). See also the controversial expression of Dio Chr. *or.* 11.23a, crediting Homer with the knowledge of all dialects and with the ability to διαστὶ διαλέγεσθαι (“speak like Zeus”); more generally on the relationship between Dio and the scholia see Hunter 2009.

⁶⁷ θεὸς οὐκ ἀνθρώπος Ὀμηρος: *PMich* VIII, 1100 = MP³ 2746 (ostrakon, 3rd century A.D.); *T. Bodl. Libr. inv. Gr. cl. d.* 159 (p) = MP³ 2710 (ostrakon, Roman Age); see Crihiore 1996, nos. 200 and 209.

⁶⁸ See Versteegh 1997: 154–57; Ferrando 2007; Al-Sharkawi 2008. A peculiar view of the development of Arabic is held by Larcher 2005, and of course by Luxenberg 2000.

⁶⁹ The recent findings in the Sana’a mosque and closer study of the earliest preserved manuscripts of the Quran show that we have to reckon with a high degree of textual fluidity: this process matches to some extent the tradition of Homer, insofar as both texts seem to mark the transition of the respective societies from prevalent orality to a higher degree of literacy.

⁷⁰ Wansbrough 1977 argues for the 9th century, whereas Burton 1977 argues for Mohammad himself as an author: this debate is part of the wider controversy about the reliability of Medieval Islamic historical accounts, on which see Radtke 1992 and especially the essays collected in Ohlig-Puin 2005.

as Biblical Hebrew, lacking most vowel signs and diacritics (the so-called *scriptio defectiva*).⁷¹

Given that on each of these problems Quranic critics are still divided in mutually incompatible groups,⁷² I will not focus here on the “true history” of the holy text, but rather on the way early Arabic sources sketch this history, at least since as early as the 9th century: however possibly reconstructed *a posteriori*, this narrative can hardly be entirely devoid of an historical basis, and anyway it represents an account the Arabs themselves have been believing in for centuries. That it should have arisen by mere analogy with other cultures (e.g. the Greek one) is *per se* very unlikely, as will be briefly argued below.

The mainstream narrative assumes two stages in the process: the first collection of the written and memorised records of the revelation took place under Abū Bakr in 633 by the hand of Zayd ibn Thābit, a former scribe of the Prophet; some 15 years later, under the caliph ‘Uthmān, a definitive text (*al-mus’haf al-‘Uthmāni*) was obtained by collating Abū Bakr’s text with various exemplars, and by a thorough work of selection of dialectal variants (from Syria to Iraq), partition of the text, and solution of the main orthographical questions. This copy was then sent as the standard text to various cities (Mecca, Damascus, Basra, Kufa).

Variant readings, however, persisted in non-normalised manuscripts, both in terms of vocalisation and in terms of *rasm*, and as early as the 10th century a scholar named Ibn Mujāhid (d. 936) grouped the most important of them in 7 systems of readings (corresponding to different city-editions, one for each of the seven Companions of the Prophet), which were awarded an official status as *qirā’āt*.⁷³ Boasting grammatical correctness and some kind of manuscript support in Uthmanic copies, they could be discussed by scholars, and in certain cases even logically justified, but they ought not to alter in any detail ‘Uthmān’s consecrated text: they simply represented the variants associated with readers and copies of the Uthmanic text attested in various cities of the Islamic world.⁷⁴

⁷¹ A neat and critical overview of the traditional accounts is given by Burton 1977 and more succinctly by Motzki 2003. See also Leemhuis 2001, Bellamy 2006.

⁷² See notes 70 and 82. An overview of the different positions—though perhaps too critical of Kees Versteegh’s “optimistic” stance, which I incline to follow in the present paper—is given by Warraq 2005.

⁷³ See Shah 2009: 4–7. Leemhuis 2004. A peculiar perspective on *qirā’āt* in Fedeli 2005.

⁷⁴ See Schoeler 1989: 19–23; Gilliot 1990: 163–64; Warraq 1998; Rippin 2001, I; Pormann, forthcoming (esp. on Ibn-al Gazari and his discussion of *qirā’āt*).

We are confronted, as Villoison already suspected,⁷⁵ with a rudimentary form of philological activity, or with an orientated philology that responded to theological, religious (and by extension political) needs more than to linguistic or grammatical demands. But what matters here is that grammatical science, as a tool of philology but also as the parameter of correct speech, immediately saw the light. Much like what had happened in Hellenistic Alexandria, the need for a textual fixation entailed a corresponding need for a linguistic system: the latter, in its turn, rang in Arabic quarters on a more clearly normative tone—the definition of standard Arabic being a vital issue to the newborn Islamic world.

2.2. *The Rise of Arabic Grammar*

A well-known anecdote has it that Abū al-Aswād († ca. 688 C.E.), hearing someone speak a Quranic verset incorrectly, shuddered and decided to go to any length in order to prevent any more such sacrileges; a second anecdote—presented by the same source as an alternative to the first one—tells that the same Abū al-Aswād was urged to study and propagate grammar by the fourth caliph Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.⁷⁶ If we follow the traditional narrative of the development of Arabic we can read behind these stories two concurring ideological stances: firstly, the need to protect *kalām al-'Arab*, the correct Arabic language,⁷⁷ from the inevitable corruption brought about by contact with other populations and languages—this is the struggle against *lahn*, or solecism, a constant threat in a multilingual metropolis such as 8th and 9th century Basra;⁷⁸ secondly, the need to protect the Quran, which possessed the divine gift of inimitability (*ḥijāz*) and thus represented the basis of teaching to pupils, from impious alterations and potentially heterodox variants. This state of affairs is powerfully depicted in the earliest preserved history of the Arabic language, outlined by the 14th century historian Ibn Khaldūn.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ See Villoison 1788: xxiii note 1.

⁷⁶ Ibn al-Anbārī († 1181), *Nuzhāt al-'alibbā*, pp. 4–6 Amer (in Versteegh 1997: 3–4).

⁷⁷ As superior to all other languages: see Kallas 2008: 345–46; Ayoub 2007: 628.

⁷⁸ The Bedouins of the desert earned in this context the greater authority, and came to be idealised as paradigms of good Arabic: see Versteegh 1997: 41–42.

⁷⁹ Ibn Khaldūn († 1406), *al-Muqaddimā*, ed. Beirut 1967: 546 (= Versteegh 1997: 153): “But when Islam came, and they left the Hijaz in order to conquer the empires that were in the hands of the nations and states and when they mingled with the non-Arabs, their habit started to change as the result of the different ways of speaking they heard from those who attempted to learn Arabic, for hearing is the source of linguistic habits. Arabic became corrupted by the deviating forms, because they started to get used to what they

The first Arab grammarians used a closed corpus (Quran and pre-Islamic poetry), but for some time they remained open to the authority of contemporary Bedouin usage. They might have mutated some categories from foreign traditions,⁸⁰ but they developed an utterly original system, by no means indebted to Dionysius Thrax (then still unknown in Arabic quarters) and consecrated in the first scientific book on any discipline to be composed in Arabic, namely Sibawayhi's *al-Kitāb* (late 8th century).⁸¹

Kees Versteegh has persuasively argued for an early dating of the embryonic stages of Arabic grammatical thought, sifting early *tafsīr* to find relevant terminology.⁸² Versteegh, however, has never denied the role of Greek words and ideas in shaping the early Arabic praxis, perhaps via the mediation of the Hellenistic tradition surviving in Syriac educational practice.⁸³ Among the most easily comparable concepts he singles out *'rāb* and ἑλληνισμός (both focusing on the idea of the correct declension of nouns and verbs),⁸⁴ *ma'nā* and λεκτόν (in semantics), *'ilāl* and πάθη τῆς λέξεως. It is also tempting to read Muqātil's († 767) listing of stylistic features of the Quran⁸⁵ in comparison with the exegetical principles outlined by René Nünlist in his recent book on Homeric scholia:⁸⁶ stylistic peculiarities recognised as semantic (rather than strictly linguistic) hallmarks include redundancies, omissions, implicit elements, and *taqdīm*, apparently covering the meanings of *hysteron proteron*, prolepsis and hyperbaton.

On the other hand, in a penetrating analysis G. Endress has acknowledged the importance of Hellenistic *humus* for the rise of Arabic culture, but has held a very skeptical position about the possibility of loans from the Greco-Syrian tradition. Denying the Aristotelian origin of Sibawayhi's tripartite system (*ism / fīl / ḥarf*, "noun / operation / neither"), as well as the Greek flavour of linguistic description, and stressing the originality of

heard. Their scholars began to fear lest the language become completely corrupted and people grow accustomed to it, so that the *Qur'ān* and the Tradition would become incomprehensible . . .".

⁸⁰ Though the exact amount of Greek or Graeco-Syrian loanwords is a hotly debated issue, and we should probably side with Ernest Renan in assuming the Arabs' originality in this field: see Goldziher 1994: 4–6 and 82.

⁸¹ See Carter 1981.

⁸² See Versteegh 1993, vigorously countered by Rippin 2001: 310–23, who follows Wansbrough in the general skepticism vis-à-vis the sources' chronology, and thus does not believe in an early origin for grammatical principles; see also, on the skeptical side, Berg 2000.

⁸³ See Versteegh 1977: 1980 and 1993.

⁸⁴ See Dévényi 2007: 401–405, who however rules out that the Arabic term should be a calque of the Greek one.

⁸⁵ See Versteegh 1997: 11 and 16.

⁸⁶ See Nünlist 2009 and Nünlist, this volume.

the pivotal system of *‘amal* (“Rektion”), Endress has highlighted that the early development of a rigid, normative grammar in the decades before the translation movement, is largely independent of Greek models both on the technical niveau and in terms of its motivations: the latter proceed “aus inneren Erfordernissen der jungen islamischen Kultur”, i.e. “der Aufstieg des Arabischen als der Sprache des Islams und des islamischen Reiches”,⁸⁷ in the frame of the general tendency of Islam towards an imposition of norms on every field of public life (the juridical thought, the *sharia* etc.).

Endress’ argument is sound, though it does not take into account all the texts investigated by Versteegh (but of course the real date of these texts is again debated, and many more still unknown texts may be awaiting closer scrutiny). Even if Versteegh’s parallels are true, I believe the two views converge on the following points: a) Arabic grammar, even if it did undergo some kind of direct or indirect influence from Greek linguistic doctrine, did not grow wholesale out of it; b) the development of a *technē grammatike* in Basra and even more so in Kufa (the hometown of Al-Farrā, † 822), was tightly connected with the early exegesis of the Quran; c) this process had clear social and political implications in early Islamic society.

The message of the Quran was too important to be subject to formal doubts, and the language of the Quran was considered—along with the corpus of pre-Islamic poetry and the contemporary usage of the Bedouins—as the touchstone for linguistic correctness of *kalām-al-‘Arab*, and thus the core of the entire grammatical system.⁸⁸ “The Quran is in fact the source for all branches of Arab knowledge” (As-Suyūṭī, † 1105), so that grammatical teaching—as the very heart of Quranic exegesis⁸⁹—has maintained a paramount importance in curricula ever since the opening of Cairo’s Al-Azhar University in 972. It is not by chance that grammar soon became one of the cornerstones of Islamic instruction⁹⁰ and one of the main disciplines in Arabic culture, numbering over 4000 known grammarians in the course of 7 centuries⁹¹ (a sudden boom hardly to be matched in any other culture): in a word, “die Grundwissenschaft des Islams”.⁹²

⁸⁷ See Endress 1986: 167–77: 174.

⁸⁸ See Versteegh 1993: 41.

⁸⁹ See Gilliot 2002: 104–110.

⁹⁰ Carter 2007: 185–86.

⁹¹ See Versteegh 1997: 5.

⁹² See Endress 1986: 176.

2.3. *Arabic Grammar in Action*

As in the Greek tradition, we see Arabic codifying itself through the canonisation of a text in bad need of stability, for public readings as well as for teaching in the madrasa; a self-sufficient text, at that (“to explain the Quran through the Quran”), which in previous years had undergone only a lexical analysis at the microscopical level.⁹³ The big leap forward was made by Sibawayhi, a Basran grammarian who devoted special attention to the structure of the language as such (syntax, phonetics and morphology, in this order) as opposed to the structure of the text: this process marked the metamorphosis of a branch of Quranic exegesis into a new, independent discipline.⁹⁴

In Sibawayhi’s *Al-Kitāb*, also known as “the Quran of grammar”, a norm is established for the declensional system and—in connection with this—for the syntactical mechanism of *‘amal*, or “governance”;⁹⁵ but no room is left for a diachronic exam of either linguistic evolution (all changes due to the language’s evolution are viewed as mere linguistic errors),⁹⁶ or the vernacular usage (which is simply doomed as corrupt and unworthy of any description), not to mention the contribution of other languages. These omissions are common to Alexandrian grammatical practice, and so is the principle of *qiyās* (by and large a synonym of *ἀναλογία*, or *κανών*), implying that all linguistic phenomena can be described according to certain rules, and their apparent deviations can be explained in view of their resemblance to other phenomena.⁹⁷ However, it must be kept in mind that the Quran is not a work of poetry, so that the principle of “poetic licence”

⁹³ I am referring to the alphabetical glosses of Quranic words established by Sibawayhi’s teacher (and revisor of the Quran’s vowel-markers) Al-Khalīl († 791), but already, to a certain extent, to the glossographical material in Muqātil’s *Tafsīr*: see Versteegh 1997: 13–15 and 21–35.

⁹⁴ In this respect the competing school of Kufa shows closer links with the Quran readings and the analysis of the text *stricto sensu*, as well as greater openness to variant readings as long as they do not infringe the sacrosanct nature of the Uthmanic text.

⁹⁵ See Versteegh 1997: 44–47.

⁹⁶ Versteegh 1997: 104–105 advocates for the Greek tradition a knowledge of diachronic development that is far from evident, see above.

⁹⁷ *Qiyās* means primarily “similarity between two things”, but then “erhält . . . den strengen Charakter einer logischen Figur” (Endress 1986: 176–77), and amounts to “a generally accepted rule, standard, measure, canon”: see Maróth 2009. “The task of the 8th-century grammarians was to reveal the causes and circumstances of these changes, to find satisfactory explanations for *ʿrāb* on the basis of the vast corpus that was partly collected by the philologists and partly memorized by the transmitters” (Dévényi 2007: 402).

(or *darura*), otherwise surfacing in Arabic exegesis, cannot possibly be applied to it, save rare exceptions.⁹⁸

What is at stake in Sībawayhi's use of analogy, is his strict refusal to use linguistic data to emend the transmitted text of the Quran—a practice in which earlier scholars had apparently indulged, to their blame.⁹⁹ Sībawayhi does resort to *qirā'āt* (or "variant readings") in order to confirm or demonstrate the plausibility of certain grammatical forms within the diction of the Arabs, but he has to eschew the charge of judging the holy text by measure of profane speech;¹⁰⁰ as a matter of fact, suspicion was raised against those who dared explain the language of the revealed text by means of comparison with profane authors.¹⁰¹

This textual orthodoxy is fundamentally at variance with Alexandrian criticism. The status of God's revealed word, sent to mankind as *qur'ānan 'arabiyyan* ("an Arabic recitation": *Quran* 12.2) and needing just to be decrypted, could ultimately not be compared with a collection of songs by bards such as Demodocus and Phemius. The language of the Quran was presented as clear (*bayān arabīyyun mubīn*: *Quran* 16.103 and 26.195) and as the prototype of Arabic, itself a part of God's creation: literal exegesis, devoted to a text whose precellence is beyond doubt, thus acquired an honourable role in society; the fixation of readings satisfied linguistic demands, but also the principles of clarity and economy presiding over all divine utterances.¹⁰²

Some ancient sources insist on a methodological gulf separating the schools of Basra and Kufa about the reliability of Quranic readers and the plausibility of variant readings;¹⁰³ this dispute has been compared with the alleged *Streit* between analogists and anomalists in Hellenistic grammar. Although both these controversies have been deemed by some

⁹⁸ See van Gelder 2008.

⁹⁹ Versteegh 1993: 37–39; 1997: 47–51.

¹⁰⁰ Shah 2009: 7–8.

¹⁰¹ A case in point is Abū-'Ubayda's († 825) *majāz*, a method for establishing a linguistic symmetry between the *Quran* and the language of the Arabs, highlighting through a series of correspondences the immense potentialities and variety of the unsurpassable Quran, to which no level in language remains ultimately foreign: see Almagor 1979; Heinrichs 1984.

¹⁰² See Al-Tabāri († 923), *Tafsīr* 1.184 (Gilliot 1990: 166): "Même si le but que nous nous sommes fixé dans ce livre est de présenter l'exégèse des versets du Coran, nous avons tenu à discuter en détail les diverses manières d'analyser grammaticalement ce passage. Nous avons été contraints de le faire, afin que celui qui en veut connaître l'exégèse voie les différentes manières de l'interpréter, en fonction des divergences d'interprétation et de lecture".

¹⁰³ See e.g. Suleiman 1995: 30–32; Versteegh 1997: 19–22; Carter 2007: 185–86.

modern critics as fanciful inventions or critical exaggerations, it is epistemologically interesting to see that—whatever their historic kernel of truth—they run parallel in the two different cultures.¹⁰⁴

Essential motivations for the development of Arabic grammar as a science on the body of the Quran were the intention to counter heterodox sects and movements, and the caliphs' need for written summaries of their legislation.¹⁰⁵ While describing Classical Arabic, grammarians standardised the language, which remained virtually unchanged down to our own day.¹⁰⁶ The immutability of the Quranic text went hand in hand with the immutability of the linguistic system, alien from any interference of new or foreign elements: “most grammarians regarded Arabic as a given fact, which it was their task to explain as best they could. The absence of diachronic thinking in Arabic linguistics is partly responsible for this lack of interest. The grammarians dealt with a fixed corpus and maintained that this language never changed. The question of its origin was of no importance to them”.¹⁰⁷

As we have seen, Arabic grammar—as opposed to the Alexandrian one—received no philosophical input in the first place: however, it faced serious theoretical issues as early as the 10th century, when the spreading of Hellenic culture had become more capillary thanks to the massive translation activity of the Abbasid period, and when the confrontation between grammar and logic involved the most brilliant intellectuals.

Cases in point are the Mutazilite doctrine, pleading for a rational approach to science and to the truth of the Quran;¹⁰⁸ the Peripatetic and Stoic influence surfacing in Az-Zajjājī's († 949) *Explanation of linguistic causes*; the superiority of Greek terminology proclaimed by al-Fārābī († 950), the “second Aristotle”, who also promoted the adoption of the Greek partition of the parts of speech in substitution for the threefold subdivision (noun, verb and particle, itself of debated Aristotelian origin)¹⁰⁹ that had imposed itself in Arabic grammar since Sibawayhi.¹¹⁰ In short, by the 10th century, above all for pedagogical reasons, grammarians filled in

¹⁰⁴ See Pontani 2010: 92–93.

¹⁰⁵ Schoeler 1989: 17–19.

¹⁰⁶ See Fischer 2006: 397.

¹⁰⁷ Versteegh 1997: 113.

¹⁰⁸ An important date is the 932 debate between Mattā ibn Yūnus and as-Sirāfi on the respective weight and significance of logic and grammar: see Versteegh 1997: 52–63; Endress 1986: esp. 196–99.

¹⁰⁹ See Endress 1986: 170.

¹¹⁰ See Versteegh 1997: 64–81.

the gaps of Sībawayhi’s system, drove their attention away from *kalam* down to the unit of sentence (*jumlā*), and strove to promote grammar’s scientific status also on the philosophical niveau.¹¹¹

Arabic grammar had the undisputable merit of giving Quranic exegesis the appearance of a “hard science”, providing commentators of all times with the essential tools of *tafsīr*: after Sībawayhi, the normative thrust of Arabic grammar proved particularly effective.¹¹²

2.4. *Diglossia*

The Arabic world was and is a diglossic community, just like the Greek one until a few years ago. Yet the origins of Arabic diglossia are deeper and to a certain extent different: even if we do not believe—as we probably should—that a sharp differentiation between a poetic *koine* and the spoken language of the Bedouins goes back to the pre-Islamic era (*Jāhiliyya*), we must admit that the diglossia already existed in the 10th century, and was well rooted in the earliest and most important texts of Arabic culture, immediately consecrated as standard texts, and capable to relegate all deviations to non-existence. “Middle Arabic” and regional varieties of Arabic down to our own day, after being neglected for centuries as degenerated and faulty forms, have received scholarly attention only in recent times,¹¹³ whereas throughout the ages the entire community (not an elite, as in the Hellenistic and Imperial world) has been instructed with admirable continuity in the language of the holy text.

In comparison with Greek, things are relatively easier in the Arab world, for no major gap subsists between the “high” standard of educated speakers and the language of the canonical text; this relationship remains substantially unaltered throughout the centuries, from the Middle Ages down to the post-colonialist revival of Arabic as an international language, carrying a strong identitarian bias.¹¹⁴ Yet of course—partly because of tradition, partly because of the weight of religious authority (if the former is to be distinguished from the latter)—the synchronic and monolithic approach to language becomes even more “totalitarian” than the Greek one: any attempt to detect foreign influence in the Quran is looked upon

¹¹¹ Carter 2007: 185–89.

¹¹² See Gilliot 1990: 167–69 and 184–86, insisting on the role of al-Farrā and of the so-called Kufan school—including al-Tabāri—in the development of a normative grammar and in the codification of the relationship between readings, grammar and exegesis.

¹¹³ See Versteegh 1997: 157–60; Ferrando 2007: 265–66. Suleiman 2003a.

¹¹⁴ See Suleiman 2003b.

with hatred or suspicion,¹¹⁵ the comparative approach remains substantially foreign to Arab grammarians as opposed to their Hebrew colleagues,¹¹⁶ and even in the narrow field of grammatical description attempts to simplify the sophisticated system of *ʿamal* meet with ideological hostility and eventual failure.¹¹⁷

3. HEBREW

3.1. *Masoretes and Alexandrians*

The acknowledged father of Classical philology, the German scholar Friedrich August Wolf, had planned to devote the second part of his *Prolegomena to Homer* (1795) to a comparison between the exegetical approaches and tools of the Alexandrian critics and those applied by the Masoretes (8th–10th cent.) to the text of the Hebrew Bible.¹¹⁸ Wolf's ambition was to attempt a comparison of the Hebrew and the Greek Masorah in order to gain "a more profound knowledge of the beginnings from which the emendation of manuscripts and the art of criticism develops, as well as of many other things crucial to an understanding of ancient literary scholarship".¹¹⁹

That essay never saw the light: on the one hand, as we shall see presently, it is not surprising that the relevant inquiry has not yet been carried out;¹²⁰ on the other, it is more striking that until Anthony Grafton's important studies it had been hardly realised how deeply Wolf was indebted to the European scholarly tradition of Old Testament studies, in particular to the then pathbreaking theses of J. G. Eichhorn.¹²¹ However, similarities in modern critical approaches (chiefly, the 18th- and 19th-century idea that canonical, and even sacred texts should be treated historically as stratified

¹¹⁵ The most conspicuous and controversial recent case being that of Luxenberg 2000.

¹¹⁶ See Versteegh 1997: 164–65 and 173–78.

¹¹⁷ I am referring to the new grammar developed in Egypt in 1958 (I. Mustafa, *Liberating Arabic grammar*) partly on the basis of the doctrine of the old Andalusian grammarians like Ibn Ḥazm (11th century) and Ibn Madā († 1195), who advocated the criterion of *zāhūr* ("manifest meaning") against *qiyās*: see Versteegh 1997: 151–52 ("As in most diglossic societies almost nobody was able to talk freely in the high variety of the language and schoolchildren generally hated the rigour of grammar training in Classical Arabic which was felt to be nothing more than learning by rote and lacking any practical use").

¹¹⁸ Wolf 1963: I.7.

¹¹⁹ Wolf 1963: I.4.

¹²⁰ Stroumsa 1998: 10.

¹²¹ See Grafton-Most-Zetzel 1985.

documents of human activity) do not necessarily entail close analogies in the respective objects of inquiry.

Let us start from the manuscripts. The two most illustrious extant manuscripts of Homer and the Bible are virtually contemporary, as they both belong to the first half of the 10th century: yet the difference between the Venetus A of the *Iliad* and the so-called Aleppo Codex of the Bible,¹²² is *prima facie* quite remarkable. It is not only a matter of layout or *mise en page*, but a matter of content: even if we look at the second and most widespread edition of the Hebrew Bible in the Western Renaissance (the ben-Hayyim Bomberg edition printed in Venice in 1524), the rich marginal apparatus (even richer than in the Aleppo Codex), largely relying on the Jerusalem Talmud and partly also on the large and small Masorah,¹²³ displays an altogether different nature from the excerpts of Alexandrian *hypomnemata* which ended up in the margins of Venetus A.

Now, it is a truism that the Masoretes had to be deeply familiar with the Biblical text and with its language and style in order to punctuate it or to choose the appropriate vocalisation;¹²⁴ it may also be true that their operation—though relying on a long-standing practice of vocalisation rooted in earlier centuries¹²⁵—was prompted by the need to reply to Christian (and later Islamic) charges against the integrity of the Holy Text.¹²⁶ However, little has survived of the Masoretes’ guiding principles in the otherwise bulky Talmudic exegesis;¹²⁷ and we have no evidence of theoretical writings setting out the basis for their analysis of Hebrew, or for anything that could come close to a grammatical system.¹²⁸ To quote Wolf’s derogatory judgment in the *Aufzeichnungen* to the second part of his *Prolegomena*, “the Masorah is full of all sorts of absurdities and feeble, superstitious inventions; this mass of scholia [*scil.* the Greek one] has no lack of similar contents. True, Greeks rave in one way, Jews in another.”¹²⁹

In Masoretic exegesis, grammatical categories remained implicit, whereas—as Wolf himself wrote when dealing with the oscillations of

¹²² See reproductions, an historical overview and bibliography at the site <www.alep-pocodex.org>.

¹²³ See G. Tamani, in Pelusi 2000: 61. Merlo 2008: 37.

¹²⁴ Bacher 1895: 8 called the Masorah “die Wiege der hebräischen Grammatik”.

¹²⁵ See Saenz Badillos 1993: 77–79.

¹²⁶ See Greenspahn 2000a: 60.

¹²⁷ Official notes from the authoritative masters of 8th-century Tiberias were collected in the form of special lists: see Weingreen 1982: 11–12.

¹²⁸ See Law 2003: 10; Alexander 1999: 77 note 11; Revell 2000; Bacher 1895: 8 and 13.

¹²⁹ Wolf 1963: II.1.

early Greek grammar—“ab Aristarcho repetenda sunt *initia omnis subtilitatis grammaticae*”,¹³⁰ a sentence chiming in admirably with what we have been saying in the first part of this essay. A similar idea is spelled out by another outstanding 18th century scholar, Jacob Ernesti, who refers to the “Judaici doctores”, including Philo, as showing little grammatical awareness, and rather committed to following Greek models in other fields of exegesis, such as allegory.¹³¹ Do these views still hold true today?

This is of course not the right place for an extensive overview of Biblical exegesis, a phenomenon that started very early, to whichever date we assign the canonisation of the Bible as the pivotal text of the Jewish community.¹³² What concerns us more directly is a peculiar aspect of this trajectory, namely the fact that even in the earliest stages of its formation and transmission the Biblical text did not become the object of a philological or linguistic inquiry.

To be sure, knowledge of the philological method is well attested in Jewish quarters. Maren Niehoff has recently collected and illustrated several passages of Alexandrian authors in order to prove an extended philological activity on the text of the Septuagint in Jewish milieus of the Egyptian metropolis, from Aristobulus and Demetrius down to Philo and his anonymous “quarrelsome colleagues”:¹³³ whether or not we follow Niehoff’s ambitious theses about the existence of textual criticism on the Bible itself, the least one can say is that those passages do point to familiarity with Greek exegetical approaches, such as the Peripatetic zetematic method, Stoic etymology, lexicography, and allegory, which also enjoyed some popularity in Rabbinic scholarship.¹³⁴

A serious consideration of Alexandrian criticism on the Septuagint would imply tackling thorny issues such as the famous chapter 30 of the *Letter of Aristeas*, where the Greek—as the text stands now¹³⁵—implies circulation in Palestine of copies (not translations) of the Hebrew Bible ἀμελέστερον σεσημασμένα, most probably “carelessly transcribed”, although Niehoff recently insists on the text-critical meaning of σημαίνω as “mark

¹³⁰ Wolf 1963: I.43.

¹³¹ Ernesti 1764: 296.

¹³² On these thorny issues see the recent overviews in *HB*; Hauser-Watson 2009.

¹³³ See Niehoff 2011.

¹³⁴ See e.g. Alexander 1998: 137–38; Wyss 2011.

¹³⁵ τοῦ νόμου τῶν Ἰουδαίων βιβλία σὺν ἑτέροις ὀλίγοις τισὶν ἀπολείπει· τυγχάνει γὰρ Ἑβραϊκοῖς γράμμασι καὶ φωνῇ λεγόμενα, ἀμελέστερον δὲ καὶ οὐχ ὡς ὑπάρχει σεσημανταί, καθὼς ὑπὸ τῶν εἰδότην προσαναφέρεται· προνοίας γὰρ βασιλικῆς οὐ τέτυχε.

with a σημεῖον”.¹³⁶ Again, this is not the right place to argue whether this should be taken as a faithful or symbolic account,¹³⁷ nor whether Aristeas’ letter itself reflects a Greek or a Jewish initiative of translation of the Bible in the 3rd or the 2nd century B.C.E.,¹³⁸ nor to assess Honigman’s bold reconstruction of the “Homeric paradigm” as the *Vorlage* of Jewish textual activity on the Bible.¹³⁹ I should simply like to stress that, while a Hellenised Jewish source numbers among the three-four primary ancient authorities on the history of the Homeric text in antiquity,¹⁴⁰ very little (if anything) is to be found in Greek-speaking Jewish authors about the history of the Biblical text. I think one is entitled to wonder whether this state of affairs proceeds from a different epistemological approach.¹⁴¹

3.2. *Pondering on the Hebrew Text of the Bible*

Intersections between Greek and Jewish doctrine were to be expected in Alexandria, and they certainly took place; the evidence of Jewish Hellenism, however, contributes but collaterally to the main thread of our present inquiry, whose focus lies primarily in linguistic exegesis. It seems in fact that, at least until the times of Origen (whose knowledge of Hebrew is itself disputed),¹⁴² debates began and ended with the Greek text of the Septuagint, the Hebrew original remaining largely ignored by Hellenised scholars.

If we are looking for hints in the field of Jewish Scripture, we must turn to Rabbinic Judaism, the movement which attained cultural and intellectual supremacy in the Jewish Palestinian community during the first centuries of the Current Era.¹⁴³ The Rabbis share with Philo and with almost all Jewish exegetes the idea that “the Bible is a fundamentally cryptic document”,¹⁴⁴ even though some passages in the *peshat* style of the

¹³⁶ See Niehoff 2011: 32–34, and 19–37 for her broader argument on the *Letter of Aristeas*.

¹³⁷ See Honigman 2003: 44–49.

¹³⁸ The two alternatives in Collins 2000 and Honigman 2003 respectively.

¹³⁹ See Honigman 2003: 119–43.

¹⁴⁰ I am obviously referring to Jo. Flav. *c. Ap.* 1.12; Josephus *ibid.* 2.155 picks up Zenodotus’ argument about the absence of the word νόμος in Homer (cp. *schol. Od.* 1.3e, p. 11.85–87 Pontani).

¹⁴¹ See Dawson 1994: 74–75; Siegert 1996: 135.

¹⁴² See Carleton Paget 1996: 505–507. On Origen’s methods see Neuschäfer 1987.

¹⁴³ For a thorough reappraisal of the controversial status and authority of early rabbis, see Cohen 1999.

¹⁴⁴ See Kugel 1998: 15; van der Horst 2006.

Mishnah argue that “the Torah spoke in the language of ordinary men”¹⁴⁵ and that “a verse cannot depart from its plain meaning”.¹⁴⁶

First of all, there are various traces of the Rabbis’ awareness of the stratification of the Biblical text, both in its critical *facies* and in its linguistic form. These traces are valuable hints of a critical consciousness, although they hardly do justice to the complexity of the Bible’s textual tradition, whose early stages—in terms of *variae lectiones* but also of the canonisation of a given *corpus*—have received new light, amongst other things, from the Qumran scrolls.¹⁴⁷

Rabbis did single out mistakes in what is currently called the “proto-masoretic text”, although they limited interventions to a minimum, and preferred scribal flaws to be corrected orally and by heart so as to leave the sacred text unchanged.¹⁴⁸ This practice has been compared to the Alexandrian use of athetesis, which left obelised lines of Homer in the text;¹⁴⁹ but the analogy cannot be pushed much forward, since in ancient Homeric copies many lines did in fact disappear from the “official” text without leaving traces (witness the papyrological evidence from before and after the Alexandrian era),¹⁵⁰ and at any rate editorial corrections and conjectures were normally adopted in each scholar’s *ekdosis*, without an *a priori* respect for a particular, older *facies* of the epic text.

The Torah scrolls did carry some critical signs, such as dots on doubtful words and *antisigmata* on transposed sections,¹⁵¹ and textual interventions of earlier scribes, the so-called *Sopherim*, were actually detected as such: the material collected by Lieberman and Alexander in this respect is valuable,¹⁵² and concerns both the critical *semeia* employed in the Torah and the discussion of allegedly deliberate textual alterations by the *Sopherim*, apparently aiming at avoiding improper representations of God.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁵ *Berakot* 31b.

¹⁴⁶ *Shabbath* 63a.

¹⁴⁷ See Tov 2008; Merlo 2008; Würthwein 1980; Weingreen 1982: 11–15.

¹⁴⁸ See Weingreen 1982: 7–12; 15.

¹⁴⁹ See Alexander 1998: 133.

¹⁵⁰ See Pasquali 1962: 201–247; West 1967; Bird 2010.

¹⁵¹ See Bab. Talmud, *Shabbath* 115b–116a: “for this section the Holy One, blessed be He, provided signs above and below, to teach that this is not its place”.

¹⁵² See Lieberman 1962: 38–46; Alexander 2000: 176–81. See also (albeit in a perspective I largely disagree with) Darshan, this volume.

¹⁵³ See e.g. *Midrash Tanhuma* 16, pp. 432–34 Berman: “They are called scribes because they counted every letter in the Torah and interpreted it. Thus they amended *And lo, they put the branch unto My nose* (Ezek. 8.17) to read *their nose*. Likewise, they altered the verse

We also see Rabbis occasionally noting variations between Torah scrolls, and the very proto-Masoretic vocalisation is sometimes called in question:¹⁵⁴ indeed, the Babylonian Talmud presents a quarrel between partisans of the non-vocalised Scriptural text, and those of the traditional reading.¹⁵⁵ An anecdote about three diverging copies of the Torah found in the Temple Court, and judged by the ("Lachmannian") criterion of majority, points to a certain awareness of textual discrepancies, and to a need for authoritative reference copies.¹⁵⁶ We finally encounter some strictly philological discussions that do show familiarity with some mechanisms of corruption.¹⁵⁷

Yet not only could some of these parallels with Alexandrian philological practice proceed from independent developments rather than from direct borrowings: more importantly, it looks as if the goals of Jewish and Alexandrian critics remained different. "The Rabbis never suggest a correction of the text of the Bible. In the entire rabbinic literature we never come across divergences of opinion regarding Biblical readings".¹⁵⁸ Philology was one of the fields in which the Rabbis displayed their limited propension to theorizing about hermeneutics.¹⁵⁹ A major obstacle to the blossoming of this exegetical method was immanent to the Holy Text, which notoriously claims for itself immutability (*Deut.* 4.2), an idea received and shared by later Jewish sources,¹⁶⁰ and not seriously challenged by apparently contradictory statements in the Talmud.¹⁶¹ "The rabbis were not only interested in explaining difficult words or passages, in identifying places, in solving

we are discussing *Surely he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of My eye* (ibid.) to read *His eye*. This was to teach us that everyone who rises up against Israel is considered as rising up against the Shekhinah"; Lieberman 1962: 28–37.

¹⁵⁴ Lazarus Yafeh 1992: 10; Porton 1979: 134.

¹⁵⁵ *Sukka* 6b ("The Rabbis hold that the traditional Scriptural text is authoritative, while R. Simeon holds that the traditional reading is authoritative."); Weingreen 1982: 16.

¹⁵⁶ *Sifre* II.356 ("Three Scrolls of the Law were found in the Temple Court... In one of them they found written... and in the other two they found written... The sages discarded (the reading of) the one and adopted (the reading of) the two") and *Ta'anit* IV: see Weingreen 1982: 13–14; Lieberman 1962: 20–24.

¹⁵⁷ *Shabbath* 103b; Weingreen 1982: 21.

¹⁵⁸ Lieberman 1962: 47; see also Alexander 1998: 132–35.

¹⁵⁹ See Alexander 1998: 138.

¹⁶⁰ *Jos. Fl. c. Ap.* 1.42; *Aristae. epist.* 311, on which see Collins 2000: 128–35.

¹⁶¹ On *Yebamoth* 79a ("It is better that one letter be removed from the Torah than that the Divine name be publicly profaned") as a stereotyped proverbial expression see Lieberman 1962: 35–36.

problems within the text. They did these things because it led to salvation, not only of the Jews, but of the whole world".¹⁶²

Even more importantly, a purely scholarly handling of variant readings "might have given rise to schools of variant readings, each one defending its own conclusions with reasoned arguments, as is the situation today among textual critics".¹⁶³ this was of course unacceptable to Rabbinic ideology, much keener on the recovery and preservation of a single, "original" text than on its questioning. As a penetrating essay by Philip Alexander on the theological and apologetic reasons of this choice has shown, "it is no accident that textual criticism is absent from Midrash. Its absence was one of a range of strategies which together constitute the textual culture of the rabbis. Its absence is inextricably linked to the very essence of the midrashic enterprise".¹⁶⁴ Whatever the reason, no history of the Biblical text was envisaged in Rabbinic or Talmudic times, and this state of affairs—which provoked lively surprise in Muslim critics—remained substantially unchanged until well into the western Middle Ages.

3.3. *Education, Language, and Identity*

More or less recent overviews¹⁶⁵ on the methods of language learning in Jewish schools, both at the elementary level (*Bet Sefer*) and at the *Bet Talmud* (9–13 years of age), remind us a couple of important facts:

- first and foremost, Biblical Hebrew started its decline as a spoken language immediately after the return from the exile: it remained in use until approximately 200 B.C.E., but by the 2nd century C.E. even Mishnaic Hebrew, its successor and the language of the greater part of the Talmud, had been replaced as the mother tongue of most speakers by Aramaic (already well present in the Second Temple period, and in the later Biblical books). Therefore, students and even future rabbis acquired a barely passive competence of Hebrew, useful for the preservation of a liturgical language (*leshon ha-qodesh*, "the holy tongue"), but not for everyday life, even at the level of official communication and speeches;¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Porton 1979: 135, and in the same spirit Lieberman 1962: 27.

¹⁶³ Weingreen 1982: 14.

¹⁶⁴ Alexander 2000 (quote at 187).

¹⁶⁵ See Alexander 1999; Safrai 1976: 950–58; Hengel 1974: I.78–83.

¹⁶⁶ See Bar-Asher 2006; Saenz-Badillos 1993.

- language teaching did not embrace any analysis other than a somewhat quirky approach to words, to etymologies (a feature conspicuously present in the Bible itself) and to some syntactic structures:¹⁶⁷ no declension theory, no triradicalism, no parts of speech, no codification of a speech system; at most, lists of rare or problematic lexical items. High reading skills were of course the goal of this kind of education, and requirements grew with the advancement of curricular studies, but the sources do not mention the teaching of writing (a professional skill to be acquired separately), and grammar was virtually unknown even to the highest degree of education, the *Bet Midrash*. In general, the role of *verbum de verbo* translations into Aramaic of the Holy text (Targum), even in conjunction with the reading of the Hebrew original, was paramount. Furthermore, before the Masorah, partial vocalisation entailed the need to memorise and repeat the oral tradition conveyed by the schoolmaster.¹⁶⁸

Though some of the mechanisms used in Jewish schools are matched by evidence about the learning of foreign languages in other areas of the Hellenistic and Roman world,¹⁶⁹ I believe the accent should be laid on the differences: we have briefly hinted in the first chapter of this essay to the importance of Greek grammatical papyri less in the process of primary acquisition of the language than as a tool for the deeper cultural appropriation of a shared, "high" linguistic standard.

This is, I believe, the heart of the problem: due to the political history of the Jewish people, and to the early loss of a hearth after the destruction of the Second Temple, there was hardly any room for a revival of Hebrew as an official or literary language. Therefore, the linguistic situation was not *stricto sensu* diglottic, because precisely the active, performative use of Hebrew remained confined to a very peculiar (if meaningful and conservative) portion of life, namely religious ritual: all that was required was a passive comprehension of both the Biblical language and the Mishnaic Hebrew of the Talmud.¹⁷⁰ It has been said, perhaps too rashly, that "whereas Greek education was designed to produce gentlemen amateurs, Eastern education was designed to perpetuate a guild of professional scribes".¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ See Alexander 1999: 77.

¹⁶⁸ See Alexander 1999: 80; Safrai 1976: 950–52.

¹⁶⁹ See Alexander 1999: 83–86.

¹⁷⁰ See Bar-Asher 2006; Saenz Badillos 1993: 202–203.

¹⁷¹ Hengel 1974: I.67. This is of course not to diminish the value of Jewish society as an "education-centred society" (see Safrai 1976: 945–50).

Attempts to revive Hebrew as communication language punctuate the history of the Jewish people from Nehemiah (13.23–25) down to the Middle Ages, when in some centres of the diaspora the target had become Middle Hebrew. But none of these proved successful before ben Yehuda, i.e. before the establishment of Modern Hebrew as a national language in the frame of 19th century Zionism and then of the new state of Israel.

This is the exact opposite of what happened in both the Greek and Arabic world. Such an evolution inevitably prevented the language of the Bible¹⁷² from acquiring the “identitarian” value carried by Homeric/Attic Greek or Quranic Arabic throughout the centuries. Biblical Hebrew, even in the written tradition, was never felt as (or incorporated in) the “standard language in a linguistic continuum”, to borrow Kees Versteegh’s useful terminology;¹⁷³ the very linguistic fluctuation just described inevitably contributed to the lack of a comparable grammatical tradition.

3.4. *The Rise of Hebrew Grammar*

When grammar did arise in Jewish quarters, it was borrowed wholesale from Arabic models, and (once again) it was designed to illustrate the linguistic form of the canonical text. Saadiah Gaon († 942), the “father of Hebrew grammar”, was primarily concerned with Biblical Hebrew, and did not “attempt to encourage the use of Hebrew as a living language, but rather to describe its grammar and vocabulary in the best way possible”.¹⁷⁴ Of course, the creation of grammatical rules provided an essential background for the aforementioned attempts to a revival of Hebrew in medieval and even in modern times; but this did not mean that grammar easily acquired or claimed the normative value it enjoyed in other cultures, such as the Greek or the Arabic one. This is all the more striking as the anecdote Saadiah provides in order to explain his decision to tackle the difficult discipline of grammar, explicitly refers to Aswād’s story (see above § 2.1):¹⁷⁵ the distance between the deeper meaning of Aswād’s and

¹⁷² Not the Bible itself, of course: see Alexander 1998: 136–37.

¹⁷³ See Versteegh 2002.

¹⁷⁴ Saenz Badillos 1993: 204.

¹⁷⁵ See Bacher 1895: 60–61: “Sowie die Araber erzählen, dass Einer ihrer hervorragenden Männer, als er sah, dass gewisse Leute die arabische Sprache nicht correct handhabten, darüber betrübt wurde und für dieselben ein Compendium verfasste, aus welchem sie sich über Sprachrichtigkeit belehren könnten: ebenso sah ich Viele unter den Israeliten, welche nicht das Einfachste im correcten Gebrauch unserer Sprache kennen, und um wie viel weniger das Tieferliegende... wodurch ich mich verpflichtet fühlte, dieses Buch zu verfassen”.

Saadia's stories shows in the bare fact that, while referring to “our language” (namely Hebrew), Saadia himself is writing in Arabic.

The birth of grammar as a discipline did not necessarily ensure it a place in exegesis, much less in an impressive exegetical tradition that had been following different paths over the previous centuries: Jewish scholarship “was never of a purely linguistic type, but remained largely within the context of religious and legal interpretation”.¹⁷⁶ The principle, so familiar to Quranic *tafsīr* and to Greek commentators, that “I shall investigate the grammatical form of each word with all the power at my command; then I shall explain it according to the best of my ability”, is stated by a Jewish scholar (Abraham ibn Ezra) as late as the 12th century,¹⁷⁷ and marks a clear parting from the very methods of Saadia.

This brings us to the last part of our enquiry, and in a sense to the beginning of our paper: the relationship between philology and the rise of grammar.

The absence of a systematic philological enquiry on the Biblical text went hand-in-hand with the lack of attempts towards a systematic consideration of variant readings, or towards their assessment in the frame of a linguistic description. As we have seen, no special tool was needed for teaching in the classroom (not even dictionaries, as the text had to be memorised), even though an acute consciousness of the distance between rabbinic and Biblical Hebrew does surface here and there in the Talmud.¹⁷⁸ a case in point is Bab. Talmud, *Abodah Zarah* 58b, where the discussion of the verb *mazag* and *masak* leads to the conclusion that “The language of the Torah is distinct and so is the language of the Sages”.

Yet precisely the non-integration of Biblical Hebrew in the linguistic usage of Jewish communities, together with the lack of a philosophical speculation devoted to the nature of linguistic categories, entailed the absence of a grammatical thought. In other words, it looks as if a more wide-ranging interpretive approach, partly oblivious of any distinction between *peshat* and *derash*,¹⁷⁹ had been far more important to Jewish sages than the textual one, in a way that certainly did not match the methods of the *tafsīr* or those of Alexandrian and Imperial Greek criticism.¹⁸⁰ “Jews

¹⁷⁶ van Bekkum—Sluiter—Versteegh 1997: 40.

¹⁷⁷ The quotation from ibn Ezra's introduction to the commentary on *Genesis* is in van Bekkum—Sluiter—Versteegh 1997: 26.

¹⁷⁸ See Lieberman 1962: 52; Greenspahn 2000a.

¹⁷⁹ See Reif 1998: 149.

¹⁸⁰ See Lazarus Yafeh 1992: 11. In general, Alexander 2000.

were not preoccupied with authentication of an authoritative text that was believed to have become corrupted. Rather than attempting to edit old classics for a new age, they were seeking to interpret the new age in light of their own old classic".¹⁸¹

This is why philology and linguistics both had to wait a long time before becoming independent disciplines in their own right. As we have seen, after the crucial though imperfectly known work of the Masoretes, Saadiah Gaon was the first author of a grammar and a lexicon of Biblical Hebrew, and he wrote in Arabic, the language whose (by then well-established) grammar he was largely imitating.¹⁸² Saadiah had the great merit of bringing to the foreground the idea that the Torah can also be studied in order to appreciate the simplicity of its expression. Further impulse to the cause came from the so-called Karaite exegetes, who in the 8th and 9th centuries had developed a peculiar linguistic tradition aiming at a "purification" from rabbinic doctrines.¹⁸³

Later on, Saadiah's successors in Northern Africa and Spain picked up single aspects of his methods, e.g. the comparative stance (Jodah ben Qoraish's *Risala* was in the early 10th century the first systematic comparison between Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic),¹⁸⁴ or the combination of linguistic studies with the exegesis proper, which thus shaped a new type of *peshat* (Menahem ben Saruq and Dunash).¹⁸⁵

In Gaonic times some refined forms of textual criticism had been applied to the Talmud by the Tosafists (12th–14th century).¹⁸⁶ But only Jewish exegetes in Andalusia started to develop an attention to strictly philological issues on the text of the Bible, proceeding from the assumption that in the scriptural text words "have correct meanings which the interpreter must discover, using whatever tools are available, including, potentially, other texts and other languages". Of course, linguistic interest was fostered by the belief in the sanctity of Hebrew as the language of God (well rooted in etymological studies and in all the literal exegesis of the Talmud), but a decisive input came from the constant dialogue with Arabic models.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸¹ See Dawson 1994: 75.

¹⁸² See Brody 2000.

¹⁸³ See Frank 2000.

¹⁸⁴ See Greenspahn 2000b: 85–95.

¹⁸⁵ See Saenz Badillos 1996; Reif 1998: 151–53.

¹⁸⁶ See Goodblatt 1982: 270.

¹⁸⁷ See Greenspahn 2000a: 57–58.

Both Menahem and Dunash, when discussing grammatical issues, refer to variant readings, but whilst the former prefers to trust the Tiberian codices, and argues that "only God knows which is the correct reading", Dunash is ready to discuss the Sopherim's interventions, and shows in general a more open attitude.¹⁸⁸ The flourishing of Jewish exegesis in Spain follows immediately upon these two grammarians, and bears the names of Hayyuj, ibn Janah and above all Moses ibn Ezra (ca. 1055–1138). The theory of triradicalism, new linguistic categories and figures of speech, comparisons with Arabic patterns: all these developments take place within a few decades, and Moses ibn Ezra does not hesitate to acknowledge the Jews' historical debt to the Arabs in the field of linguistic analysis.¹⁸⁹

It is not by chance that Moses ibn Ezra has become the most famous Hebrew grammarian in the West: Baruch Spinoza identified him as a forerunner of the critical method he himself applied to the Torah in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*.¹⁹⁰ Spinoza's interpretation of ibn Ezra's words as betraying philological doubt about the authorship of the *Deuteronomy* is slightly far-fetched,¹⁹¹ yet ibn Ezra probably did pave the way to Biblical textual criticism by going beyond the Talmudic practice. This philological awareness, once again, might display an Arabic origin: Ibn Ezra was certainly influenced in Spain by Ibn Hazm († 1064), one of the Muslim critics who offered a tentative, if tendentious, history of the Hebrew Bible, arguing that only one copy of the Pentateuch had been preserved in the Jerusalem Temple, and that this copy had been largely tampered with by the priests, especially by Ezra the Scribe.¹⁹² Ibn Hazm also managed to single out three different versions of the Bible (the Jewish version, the Septuagint, and the Samaritan Pentateuch), with an insight that partially still holds true today.¹⁹³

It might be remarked in passing that the charges of unreliable textual transmission brought by Muslim critics against the Bible, however polemic in tone, display a certain acquaintance with the basic principles

¹⁸⁸ See Saenz Badillos 1996: 100.

¹⁸⁹ See Cohen 2000b: 286.

¹⁹⁰ See Spinoza 2007: 8.3: "... de scriptore Pentateuchi; quem fere omnes Mosen esse crederunt, imo adeo pertinaciter defenderunt Pharisei, ut eum haereticum habuerint, qui aliud visus est sentire, et hac de causa Aben Hezra, liberioris ingenii vir et non mediocris eruditionis, et qui primus omnium, quos legi, hoc praejudicium animadvertit, non ausus est mentem suam aperte explicare, sed rem obscurioribus verbis tantum indicare, quae ego hic clariora reddere non verebor, remque ipsam evidenter ostendere".

¹⁹¹ See Totaro in Spinoza 2007: 535 note 70; 601–602.

¹⁹² See Lazarus Yafeh 1992: 41–45 and 67.

¹⁹³ See Lazarus Yafeh 1992: 137.

of philology, or at least with the mechanisms of textual traditions in their connection with social and political developments,¹⁹⁴ all issues less than familiar to the Jewish sages.

Our survey ends with a family of grammarians. Joseph Qimhi (ca. 1105–1170) moved from Andalusia to Narbonne in Christian Provence: he opened his commentary on the *Torah* by stating that grammar was in fact an essential and preliminary exegetical tool, not one to be used *ad libitum*. His son David (also known as Radak, 1160–1235), the author of a very important grammar (*Sefer Mikhlol*), not only contributed to linguistics a categorisation of the Hebrew verbal tense system, but also showed an unusual attention to strictly philological matters, probably proceeding from a direct inspection of different manuscripts. Radak is perhaps the first Jewish scholar to sketch a rudimentary history of the text of the Bible, which is intended to account for some of the discrepancies still to be found, and he is also the first to collect variant readings in a specific treatise called *Et Sofer*.¹⁹⁵ In the Qimhis' view, "One who does not know Hebrew linguistics thoroughly, his interpretation is not credible; his *peshat* is not *peshat*".¹⁹⁶

4. CONCLUSIONS

The goal of our inquiry was to investigate the relationship between philology on a canonical text and the rise of grammar in three linguistic traditions. Crucial elements in this field have been identified in the nature and linguistic *facies* of the pivotal text, in the role and weight of classroom teaching, in the evolution of the spoken linguistic standard, and in the identitarian value of the considered texts and languages for the respective communities.

Broadly speaking, we can conclude that both Greek and Arabic grammar rose independently (the latter being only partially influenced by the former) in close dialogue with the philological reconstruction of the respective canonical text, adapting their tools to the literary language of that text, and finding one of their essential goals in the assessment of its

¹⁹⁴ See the case of Samau'al al-Maghribi, who frames Ezra's textual criticism in a narrative that is clearly modelled on the traditional legend of the Quran collection by the Caliphs: Lazarus Yafeh 1992: 45–46 and 68–70.

¹⁹⁵ See Cohen 2000: 388–415.

¹⁹⁶ See Cohen 2000: 391.

variant readings—a process that lasted long with Homer, whereas in the case of the Quran, due to the religious bias, came to an end soon after leading to the fixation of a standard, unquestionable recension. Homeric Greek, dramatically at variance with Hellenistic and *koine* usage, was never (or hardly ever) seriously proposed as a linguistic paradigm in normative terms, and it owed its survival and success in grammar, erudition and education mainly to Homer’s identitarian value for the Greek-speaking world. On the other hand, Quranic Arabic—as established and described in early times for ideological, political and religious reasons (solecism could mean impiety, and one language could mean one law)—became the language of the landslide Islamic conquest, and remained the basis for standard Arabic down to our own day.

Hebrew grammar, by contrast, was modelled after Arabic grammar with a delay of many centuries from the codification of the community’s sacred text, and from the beginning of exegetical activity on that text. Due to historical reasons (above all the tragic exiles and diasporas of the Jewish people), Biblical Hebrew never became a linguistic standard, nor did it acquire a real “identitarian” value, nor was it taught in schools. Furthermore, rabbinic exegesis did not favour a strictly philological approach to the text of the Bible: while terms and approaches of Greek philology and linguistics were known to (and to a certain extent even practised by) both Hellenised Jews in Alexandria and the Rabbis in Palestine, Jewish exegetes never felt the need to lay down theoretical principles of either discipline, or to apply them systematically to the correction or critical assessment of the Holy Text. Yet it is not by chance that the creation of a Hebrew grammar by Saadiah Gaon († 942) brought about in due course a fresh interest in the linguistic, stylistic and rhetorical description of Hebrew, and in the vital role of grammar for the interpretation and—in some cases—even the textual criticism of the Bible. This is further proof that grammar and philology on a canonical text inevitably influence each other, indeed they often proceed hand in hand.

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GREEK-SPEAKING INTERPRETERS

THE AMBIGUITY OF SIGNS:
CRITICAL ΣΗΜΕΙΑ FROM ZENODOTUS TO ORIGEN

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Critical signs (σημεία) as a philological tool were invented in Alexandria¹ when grammarians started working on the ‘past’ literature of the Greeks, preparing scholarly editions and forming a canon of Greek authors. Later on, scholars working on less canonic or non-Greek authors also employed the Alexandrian σημεία: Valerius Probus, for example, used them in his editions of Lucretius, Virgil, and Horace² while Galen mentions a certain Dioscorides, who under the Emperor Hadrian made an edition of Hippocrates where he marked the spurious passages with *obeloi*.³ This ‘marking’ system was also adopted by Origen in his study of the Bible.

Even if critical signs were apparently popular among ancient scholars working in different fields, their real function and physical appearance in ancient ‘books’ are highly debated. The problem is worsened by the lack of direct evidence for the Alexandrian scholars, as none of their editions or commentaries has reached us by direct tradition.⁴

In order to shed new light on this question, I would like to approach it from a comparative point of view, focusing in particular on Origen’s use of these σημεία. In one respect, Origen offers better evidence because, unlike for the Alexandrian scholars, we do have many of Origen’s original works, at least in the exegetical realm—for example, we have some of his commentaries, while those of the Hellenistic scholars are lost. We also

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¹ On critical signs see Gudeman 1922; Stein 2007; and also Pfeiffer 1968: 115, 178, 218.

² Cf. *GL* 7.534.5–6: *Probus, qui illas in Virgilio et Horatio et Lucretio apposuit, ut <in> Homero Aristarchus*. See also Suetonius’ *De grammaticis* 24; on Valerius Probus’ *sigla*, see Jocelyn 1984, 1985a, 1985b.

³ Galen, *In Hipp. Nat. Hom.* in *CMG* 5.9.1, p. 58, 7–9: Ταύτης ὄλης τῆς ῥήσεως Διοσκοριδῆς ἐκάστῳ στίχῳ προσέγραψε σημεῖον, ὃ καλοῦσιν ὀβελόν, οἷα σημεῖω και Ἀρίσταρχος ἐχρήσατο παρά τῷ ποιητῇ πρὸς τοὺς ὑποπτενομένους ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ στίχους.

⁴ No Alexandrian edition has reached us in its original form. The only Hellenistic commentaries that have reached us through direct tradition are the ‘polemical’ commentary of the astronomer Hipparchus (2nd century B.C.E.) on the *Phaenomena* of Aratus and the commentary on the Hippocratic treatise *On Joints* by Apollonius of Citium (70 B.C.E.).

have his own testimony on how and why he used critical signs. The analysis of Origen's use of Alexandrian critical signs aims at two goals: first, Origen might help us to understand better how the Alexandrians used critical signs; second, the analysis of Origen's editorial work and of how he used and—in part—changed the system of Alexandrian *σημεῖα* will also highlight the 'necessary' improvements that the Alexandrian system needed. This analysis will show how Origen to some extent introduced these improvements by creating a more reader-friendly system of critical signs.

This comparative analysis will focus mainly on the manuscript evidence for the *σημεῖα* in manuscripts of Homer (for the Alexandrian scholars and in particular for Aristarchus) and of the LXX (for Origen). While critical signs were used by Greek and Latin scholars on many different authors, I will focus my attention on the signs used on Homer for two reasons. First, we know more about them as they are better preserved in ancient manuscripts and papyri. Second, Homer is the best parallel for Origen's text of interest: the Bible. In a sense, Homer can be seen as the 'sacred text' of the Greeks, who for centuries recognised his greatness and placed the Homeric poems at the core of their education. We can even speculate that Origen decided to adopt the Alexandrian critical signs for his edition of the Bible precisely because they had been used for Homer, ὁ ποιητῆς καὶ τῆς Ἑλλάδος διδάσκαλος. Moreover, Homer's tradition (like that of the Bible) was extremely complex and problematic due to the many centuries of its oral and written transmission. Thus, the Bible and the Homeric poems presented similar problems to the philologist who wanted to prepare an edition of them.

ALEXANDRIAN CRITICAL SIGNS

Between the third and second century B.C.E., the Alexandrian grammarians, and in particular the triad of librarians Zenodotus, Aristophanes and Aristarchus, invented the so-called critical signs (*σημεῖα*), which became the staple of their philological activity. They probably started using them in their editorial work on Homer but they seemed to have used these markings for other authors too, as papyrological evidence as some ancient and medieval sources seem to prove. In particular, later compendia like the so-called *Anecdotum Romanum*,⁵ the *Anecdotum*

⁵ *Cod. Rom. Bibl. Naz. Gr.* 6 (10th century), in Montanari 1979: 43–64, spec. 54–55; West 2003: 450–555; see also Nauck 1867: 271–273, and Dindorf 1875: xlii–xliv. The *Anecdotum*

*Venetum*⁶ and the *Anecdotum Harleianum*⁷ give a list of the critical signs used by the Alexandrians on Homer. We also have a passage from Diogenes Laertius (3.65–66) and a papyrus (*PSI* 1488)⁸ that mention critical signs used on the text of Plato.⁹ In the short treatise entitled *Περὶ σημείων* the grammarian Hephaestion¹⁰ (2nd century C.E.) clearly says that critical signs were used for comedy, tragedy and lyric poetry. Latin sources like the *Anecdotum Parisinum*¹¹ and Isidorus of Seville (*Et.* I 21) incorporate the old material on Homer with some other critical signs of various meaning.

The first scholar to use critical signs to mark the Homeric text was Zenodotus of Ephesus, the first librarian of Alexandria between ca. 285 and 270 B.C.E. He used the *obelos* ('spit' in Greek) to mark those lines that he considered suspect, but did not want to delete completely from the text—the latter operation being carried out when he was certain that they were not authentic. The *obelos* was a short line (—) placed next to a line that he considered spurious, and thus marked an *athetesis*. Aristophanes of Byzantium, librarian at Alexandria between ca. 204 and 189 B.C.E., introduced other signs: the *asteriskos* (⌘) indicated a line repeated elsewhere;¹² the *sigma* (C) and the *antisigma* (D) were used together to mark two consecutive lines of identical content.¹³ Finally, Aristarchus of Samothrace, who was librarian between ca. 175 and 145 B.C.E., introduced the *diple* (>), a sign with an arrow-like shape which marked lines where Aristarchus had some comments to make (regarding language, content, myth, style, etc.).¹⁴ The *diple* thus had a very generic meaning, equivalent

Romanum is definitely the most important among the lists of Homeric critical signs. Very close to this list is the one preserved in the Cod. Matrit. 4629 copied by Costantin Lascaris and edited by Montanari 1979: 65–71, spec. 69–71.

⁶ *Cod. Ven. Marc. 483* (14th century) in Nauck 1867: 274–276, and Dindorf 1875: xlv–xlv.

⁷ *Cod. Harl. 5693* (15th–16th century) in Nauck 1867: 277, and Dindorf 1875: xlvi.

⁸ Cf. Plato 142 T *CPF* (2nd century C.E.), Bartoletti 1964 and Gigante 1998.

⁹ On the philological activity on Plato at Alexandria see Schironi 2005.

¹⁰ Hephaest. *De signis*.

¹¹ *Cod. Par. Lat. 7530* (780 C.E.), in *GL* 7, 533–536 (*Fragmentum Parisinum De Notiis*), Nauck 1867: 278–282, and Dindorf 1875: xlvi–l.

¹² *Sch. Od.* 3.71 ὦ ξείνοι τίνες ἐστέ] τοὺς μετ' αὐτὸν τρεῖς στίχους ὁ μὲν Ἀριστοφάνης ἐνθάδε σημειοῦται τοῖς ἀστερίσκοις, ὅτε δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ Κύκλωπος λέγονται, καὶ ὀβελίσκου τοῖς ἀστερίσκοις παρατίθησιν, ὡς ἐντεῦθεν μετενηνεγμένων τῶν στίχων. On the *asteriskos* in papyri of Homer and other authors, see now Nocchi Macedo 2011.

¹³ *Sch. Od.* 5.247 τέτρηνεν—ἀρμονίησιν ἄρασεν] Ἀριστοφάνης τὸ αὐτὸ ᾤετο περιέχειν ἄμφω. διὸ τῶ μὲν σίγμα, τῶ δὲ ἀντίσιγμα ἐπιτίθησιν.

¹⁴ *An. Rom.* 54.11–15: > ἢ μὲν οὖν διπλῆ ἀπερίστικτος παρατίθεται πρὸς τοὺς γλωσσογράφους ἢ ἑτεροδόξως ἐκδεξαμένους τὰ τοῦ ποιητοῦ καὶ μὴ καλῶς ἢ πρὸς τὰς ἀπαξ εἰρημένας λέξεις ἢ πρὸς τὰ ἐναντία καὶ μαχόμενα, καὶ ἕτερα σχήματα πάμπολλα καὶ ζητήματα.

to a 'N(ota)B(ene)' for us. Aristarchus also used a particular type of *diple*, the so-called *diple periestigmene*, the 'dotted *diple*' (>:), to mark those passages where he argued against his predecessor Zenodotus and against his Pergamene contemporary Crates of Mallos.¹⁵ Of the *σημεῖα* employed by his predecessors, Aristarchus kept the Zenodotean *obelos* for *athetesis*¹⁶ and the Aristophanic *asteriskos* for repeated lines.¹⁷ Like Aristophanes, Aristarchus also used a combination of an *asteriskos* with an *obelos* (⌘ —) to mark repeated lines that he wanted to athetise because they did not belong to that specific passage.¹⁸

These were the most common signs used by the three greatest Alexandrian scholars. The compendia and the scholia mention other signs as well, but the picture is more complicated because their function is not clear and their use in manuscripts and in scholia is not very frequent. According to the *Anecdota Romanum*, for example, Aristarchus used the *antisigma* (⊖) alone for lines whose order was transposed and that were unfitting for the context;¹⁹ the use of the *antisigma* to mark the wrong ordering of lines seems to be confirmed by the scholia.²⁰ Aristarchus used the *antisigma periestigmenon*,²¹ the 'dotted' *antisigma* (⊖̣), for passages which contained tautologies. In one instance, however, a tautology is marked with the *antisigma* and the *stigma*, if we trust the scholia in the *Venetus A*: according to *Sch. Il.* 8.535–7,²² Aristarchus marked three lines (*Il.* 8.535–7) with the *antisigma* and marked the following three lines (*Il.* 8.538–40) with a *stigma*, a simple 'dot', because they had the same content, and he added that one should keep either one of the two groups. In this case, the *antisigma* does not seem to have the same function as explained by the *Anecdota Romanum* (for transposed/unfitting lines) but

¹⁵ *An. Rom.* 54.16–18: >: ἡ δὲ περιεστιγμένη διπλὴ πρὸς τὰς γραφὰς τὰς Ζηνοδοτεῖους καὶ Κράτητος καὶ αὐτοῦ Ἀριστάρχου καὶ τὰς διορθώσεις αὐτοῦ.

¹⁶ *An. Rom.* 54.19–20: — ὁ δὲ ὀβελὸς πρὸς τὰ ἀθετοῦμενα ἐπὶ τοῦ ποιητοῦ, ἡγουν νενοθευμένα ἢ ὑποβεβλημένα.

¹⁷ *An. Rom.* 54.21–22: ⌘ ὁ δὲ ἀστερίσκος καθ' ἑαυτὸν ὡς καλῶς εἰρημένων τῶν ἐπῶν ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ τόπῳ ἔνθα ἐστὶν ἀστερίσκος μόνος.

¹⁸ *An. Rom.* 54.23–24: ⌘ — ὁ δὲ ἀστερίσκος μετὰ ὀβελοῦ ὡς ὄντα μὲν τὰ ἔπη τοῦ ποιητοῦ, μὴ καλῶς δὲ κείμενα ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ τόπῳ, ἀλλ' ἐν ἄλλῳ.

¹⁹ *An. Rom.* 54.25–26: ⊖ τὸ δὲ ἀντίσιγμα καθ' ἑαυτὸ πρὸς τοὺς ἐνηλλαγμένους τόπους καὶ ἀπάθοντας.

²⁰ *Sch. Il.* 2.188a (Ariston.): πρὸς τὴν τάξιν τῶν ἐξῆς (sc. B 203–5) τὸ ἀντίσιγμα.

²¹ *An. Rom.* 54.27–28: ⊖̣ τὸ δὲ ἀντίσιγμα περιεστιγμένον παρατίθεται ὅταν ταυτολογῆ καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν διάνοιαν δεῦτερον λέγῃ.

²² *Sch. Il.* 8.535–7 (Ariston.): αὐρίον ἦν ἀρετὴν <—έταιροι>: ὅτι ἡ τούτους δεῖ τοὺς τρεῖς στίχους μένειν, οἷς τὸ ἀντίσιγμα παράκειται, ἢ τοὺς ἐξῆς τρεῖς, οἷς αἱ σιγμαὶ παράκεινται (sc. ⊖ 538–40). εἰς γὰρ τὴν αὐτὴν γεγραμμένοι εἰσι διάνοιαν.

rather it is used according to Aristophanes' system since Aristophanes too used the *antisigma* (together with a *sigma* and not with a *stigma*) to indicate lines with the same content.²³ Another very rare Homeric sign is the *kerounion* ('sign shaped like a thunderbolt': Τ) whose meaning is uncertain. With reference to Homer, the *kerounion* is mentioned only in *Sch. Od.* 18.282, a line marked by Aristophanes because it was εὔτελής 'mean'.²⁴ The *Anecdota Romanum* remarkably says that such a sign is used very rarely and indicates "many types of philological questions beyond those already mentioned".²⁵

Greek literary papyri provide a wider array of critical signs, as Kathleen McNamee has demonstrated,²⁶ but it is impossible to trace most of them back to Alexandrian scholarship and give them a specific meaning. In contrast, the *Venetus A*, the 10th century manuscript containing the *Iliad* and which in the margins and interlinear spaces of the text supposedly preserves traces of Aristarchus' *ekdosis* and *hypomnema*,²⁷ uses overwhelmingly the securely attested Aristarchean signs: the *obelos*, the *asteriskos*, the *asteriskos* with *obelos*, the *diple*, and the *diple periestigmene*, and only in very few instances other signs appear.²⁸ For the present analysis I will thus focus on these five *sigla* which are better attested and more clearly defined in their philological meaning.

ARISTARCHEAN CRITICAL SIGNS AND MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE

There is an important difference between how Zenodotus and Aristophanes used critical signs on the one hand, and how Aristarchus used them on the other. As far as we know, neither Zenodotus nor Aristophanes ever wrote a commentary;²⁹ still, they used critical σημεῖα. This

²³ Other Aristarchean scholia mention *antisigma* and *stigma* (*Sch. Il.* 2.192a) or simply *stigmai* (*Sch. Il.* 2.203a) but the meaning of these signs is quite obscure.

²⁴ *Sch. Od.* 18.282: παρέλκετο] ἀντί τοῦ ἐφέλκετο. εὔτελής τοῦτο, διό και κεραῦνιον παρέθηκεν Ἀριστοφάνης.

²⁵ *An. Rom.* 55.29–30: Τ τὸ δὲ κεραῦνιόν ἐστι μὲν τῶν σπανίως παρατιθεμένων, δηλοῖ δὲ και αὐτὸ πολλὰς ζητήσεις πρὸς ταῖς προειρημέναις.

²⁶ McNamee 1992.

²⁷ On the 'Aristarchean' tradition and the *Venetus A*, see Erbse 1969: xlv–lix; Schironi 2004a: 11–14.

²⁸ Bird 2009: 92–94, gives the following figures (taken from Allen 1931) for the critical signs in the *Venetus A*: *diple* (1875), *diple periestigmene* (292), *obelos* (440), *asteriskos* (73), *asteriskos* and *obelos* (52), *obelos* and *asteriskos* (14), *antisigma* (5), *antisigma periestigmenon* (2), *sigma periestigmenon* (3), *stigma* (3).

²⁹ Cf. Pfeiffer 1968: 115, 212.

means that, at least in their original conception, critical signs were linked only to the ecdotic process and their meaning should have been clear within the *ekdosis* of Zenodotus or of Aristophanes, without any further aid like a separate commentary to explain their function and meaning.

Aristarchus was the first of the Alexandrians to write a commentary (*hypomnema*) on Homer in addition to his editorial work (*ekdosis*). This new way of presenting philological work provided a new vehicle by which a scholar could discuss in detail his editorial choices and interpretative issues in the Homeric texts. For modern scholars, however, Aristarchus' innovation has raised the question of how, in practical terms, he intended the critical signs, the *ekdosis* and the *hypomnema* to be used together and what these two products (the *ekdosis* and the *hypomnema*) looked like.³⁰ An additional problem in Aristarchus' system is that the specific meaning of the critical σημεῖον, especially the newly introduced *diple* with its wide and undetermined meaning, was impossible to know unless the philologist added some clarification that explained why he marked a specific line with such a sign.

In a fundamental article on Aristarchus' scholarship, Erbse³¹ successfully demonstrated that the *ekdosis* and the *hypomnema* were two components of the same work, at least in the mind of Aristarchus. The *ekdosis* was a 'preparatory' text of Homer which he used as a starting point for his philological and exegetical remarks. The *hypomnema* instead contained the 'real' philological work of Aristarchus: linguistic analysis, grammatical and syntactical remarks, polemical arguments against his predecessors, variant readings, and proposals of *atheteseis*. Pfeiffer³² explained the function of the critical signs within this reconstruction: Aristarchus would write a critical sign in his *ekdosis* next to a line where he had some comments to make and then would write his comments about that line in another roll, which contained the commentary. The critical signs were thus the link between the edition (*ekdosis*) and the commentary (*hypomnema*): they alerted the reader of the *ekdosis* that a line had a special interest and indicated the corresponding comment in the accompanying *hypomnema*. The reader could easily find the scholar's note in the *hypomnema* since this was ordered as a running commentary by lemmata (represented by

³⁰ See Erbse 1959; van Groningen 1963: 16–17; Pfeiffer 1968: 218–219; Van Thiel 1992; Schmidt 1997; Van Thiel 1997; Montanari 1998.

³¹ Erbse 1959.

³² Pfeiffer 1968: 218.

the lines commented upon) preceded by the same critical signs that were used in the *ekdosis*.

We can visualise the application of Pfeiffer's hypothesis by comparing the Homeric *ekdosis* with remnants of Aristarchus' *hypomnema* in Plate 1. For the text, I use the OCT edition of the *Iliad* and 'reconstruct' Aristarchus' *hypomnema* from the Aristarchean scholia³³ preserved in the *Venetus A*. I made this 'facsimile' easier because the Greek text has word-divisions and diacritics instead of being written in *scriptio continua*, as in a real text on papyrus.³⁴ This choice, which goes against a faithful paleographical reconstruction, was made to allow the reader to recognise more easily the lemmata in the *hypomnema* and how they work with the reference text of Book 2 and with the critical signs.

Pfeiffer's explanation, illustrated here, is the most rational way to account for such an editorial product. Nevertheless, it cannot be proved by any evidence, because no papyrus fragments have ever been found that provide an example of the presence of two rolls, one containing an *ekdosis* with critical signs, and the other containing the *hypomnema* referring to the same *ekdosis* with the critical signs as links between the two rolls.

I will now briefly review the evidence for Aristarchean critical signs in ancient commentaries on papyrus and in papyri containing the text of Homer. As Kathleen McNamee has shown,³⁵ the papyrological data we have are very disappointing if we look for Aristarchean signs. The closest we can get to an 'Aristarchean' *hypomnema* is *P.Oxy.* 1086, a fragment of a commentary dating to the first half of the first century B.C.E.³⁶ that, in what has been preserved, covers *Iliad* 2.751–827. *P.Oxy.* 1086, however, is only a commentary and no *ekdosis* has been found that can be associated with it. Certain parts of the text mention or indeed have attached some

³³ That is: the scholia by Aristonicus, who between the first century B.C.E. and the first century C.E. wrote an entire treatise to explain the meaning of each sign used by Aristarchus and the reasons for its use in each passage of the Homeric text where it occurred. The scholia derived from the work of Aristonicus confirm that the explanations of the meaning of the critical signs in the *ekdosis* were the core of the Aristarchean *hypomnema*. The phrasing in Aristonicus' scholia is probably different from the original *Wortlaut* of Aristarchus' commentary, but it is the closest we can get to what Aristarchus wrote.

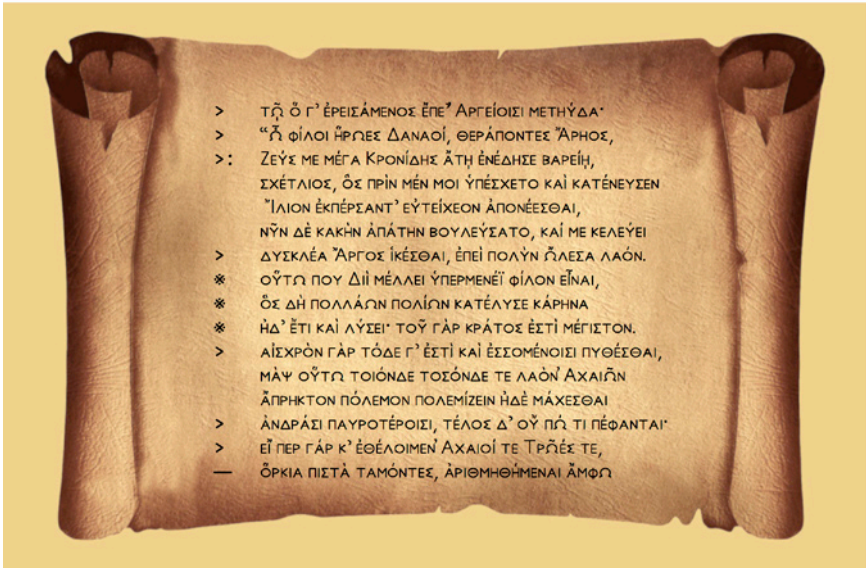
³⁴ For example the first three lines of the facsimile of *Iliad* 2 (ll. 109–111) would have looked like this:

ΤΩΟΓΕΡΕΙCΑΜΕΝΟCΕΠΑΑΡΓΕΙΟΙCΙΜΕΤΗΥΔΑ
 ΩΦΙΛΟΙΗΡΩΕCΔΑΝΑΟΙΘΕΡΑΠΟΝΤΕCΑΡΗΟC
 ΖΕΥCΜΕΜΕΓΑΚΡΟΝΙΔΗCΑΤΗΙΕΝΕΔΗCΕΒΑΡΕΙΗΙ

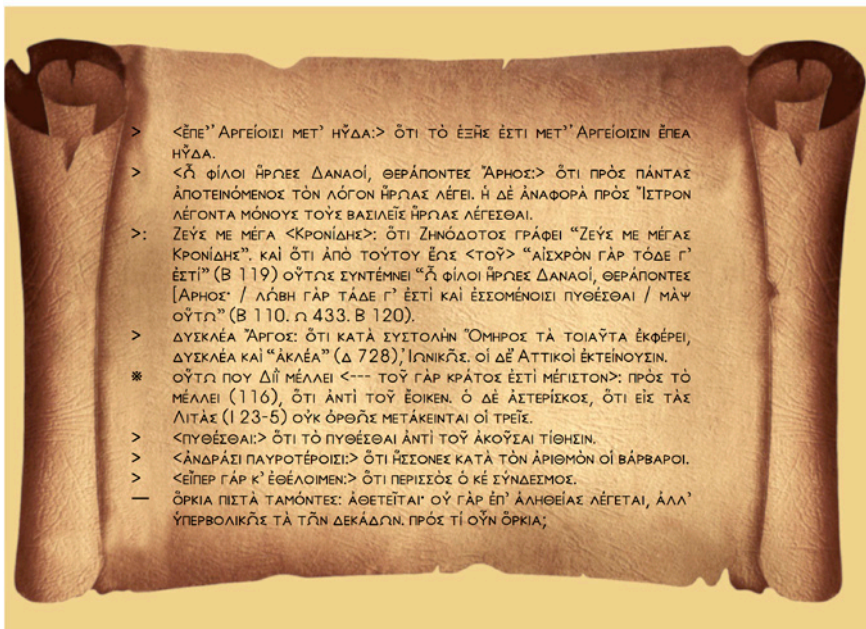
³⁵ McNamee 1981 and *ead.* 1992.

³⁶ This is the new dating proposed by Lundon 2002: 17, in his new edition of the text.

ΕΚΔΟΣΙΣ (L. 2.109-124)



ΥΠΟΜΝΗΜΑ



critical signs, but they are not consistent: the *diple* is present before lemmata only four times (at ll. 27, 54, 97 and 114 corresponding to *Il.* 2.767, 785, 809, and 819) and Ludson adds this sign in lacuna in three other places where the commentary speaks of a *σημείον*.³⁷ Still, at least in one place the *diple* has been omitted, at l. 44 (which is fully preserved and refers to *Il.* 2.782) while the commentary mentions it (l. 47). Three *obeloi* are present in the papyrus at ll. 61–62 for the *athetesis* of lines 791–795 in *Iliad* 2.³⁸ While it is certainly interesting to see at least one ancient *hypomnema* showing lemmata with critical signs, a total of seven signs for seventy-seven Homeric lines, of which forty-six are lemmatized, is quite small. We could reasonably expect sigla in several places, for example, marking the many cases of ‘intra-lingual’ translation (that is: a translation of a Homeric expression into koine Greek) such as appear at ll. 9–10 (on *Il.* 2.757), at ll. 35–38 (on *Il.* 2.776), at ll. 40–41 (on *Il.* 2.779) etc. There are also many entries consisting of a paraphrase of a Homeric line because Homeric syntax is different from koine syntax (e.g. ll. 19–20 on *Il.* 2.764; ll. 51–54 on *Il.* 2.784...). In none of these cases, however, is there a trace of any sign before the lemma (entirely preserved), nor any mention of a *σημείον* in the entry. Such lack of critical signs to indicate linguistic problems is not what one would expect in an Aristarchean *hypomnema* because Aristonicus, who wrote about the critical signs used by Aristarchus on Homer and their meaning, in many scholia specifies that both ‘intralingual’ translations and paraphrases were marked by a critical sign, the *diple*.³⁹ *P.Oxy.* 1086, therefore, does use critical signs, but sporadically and not as consistently as the ‘original’ Aristarchean *hypomnema* would have used them. *P.Oxy.* 1086 thus seems already a rather poor version of the original *hypomnema*, in which critical signs would have accompanied all the lemmata and not just a small fraction of them, as here.

³⁷ At ll. 11 (on ll. 2.763; here however also the expression τὸ σημεῖον is in lacuna and is restored by Ludson), 82 (at on ll. 2.801) and 106 (at on ll. 2.816).

³⁸ Line 794 is omitted altogether and the *obelos* at line 791 is missing.

³⁹ For example in the case of ‘intralingual translation’ see Sch. ll. 16.142a (Ariston.): {πάλλειν} ἀλλὰ μιν οἶος ἐπίστατο πῆλαι: ἢ διπλῆ, ὅτι ἀντὶ τοῦ ἐδύνατο, μόνος ἐδύνατο χρῆσασθαι τῷ δόρατι: [...]. A [The *diple* because (ἐπίστατο is used) instead of ἐδύνατο: only he was able to use the spear]; for an example of syntactical paraphrase see Sch. ll. 18.283a (Ariston.): οὐδέ ποτ' ἐκπέρσει <πρὶν μιν κύνες ἀργοὶ ἔδονται>: ἢ διπλῆ, ὅτι τοιοῦτόν ἐστι τὸ λεγόμενον, πρότερον αὐτὸν οἱ κύνες κατέδονται ἢ ἐκπέρσει. καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἑλληπῆς ὁ λόγος, ὥσπερ οὐδ' ἐπ' ἐχείνου. “τὴν δ' ἐγὼ οὐ λύσω· πρὶν μιν καὶ γῆρας ἔπεισιν” (A 29). |... A [The *diple* because this is the meaning: ‘the dogs will eat him before he will sack the city’. And the sentence is not elliptical, as it not (elliptical) in this line: τὴν δ' ἐγὼ οὐ λύσω· πρὶν μιν καὶ γῆρας ἔπεισιν (ll. 1.29)].

As McNamee⁴⁰ and Landon⁴¹ have shown, *P.Oxy.* 1086 is a product of higher quality because it goes beyond the simple paraphrase and the fundamentals of Homeric scholarship. Yet, *P.Oxy.* 1086 is not a 'pure' excerpt of the very *hypomnema* of Aristarchus, because, even if much of the content is indeed Aristarchean, at least one sign is not among those that the sources attribute to him: the X sign (to be understood as meaning *χρηστὸν* or *χρήσιμον*, 'useful', or *χρήσις*, 'passage')⁴² which appears in margin at ll. 43 (on *Il.* 2.780), 57 (on *Il.* 2.788) and 112 (on *Il.* 2.816). The overlap with many scholia from Aristarchus leads us to conclude that *P.Oxy.* 1086 was written by someone who had philological interests and probably had access to the original *hypomnema* of Aristarchus as well as to other commentaries. Therefore *P.Oxy.* 1086 is the result of excerpting many good scholarly sources, among which Aristarchus' *hypomnema*, but it is unlikely to be an 'excerpted' copy of only Aristarchus' *hypomnema*.⁴³

The case of *P.Oxy.* 1086 is important for our analysis because the papyrus is dated to the first half of the first century B.C.E., which means that it was written within ca. 100 years from Aristarchus' activity. Thus, *P.Oxy.* 1086 shows how already at a very early stage the original signs tended to be omitted or only partially reported.

Ancient *ekdoseis* of Homer provide richer evidence, because quite a few of them have critical signs, though they are a minority if we count them among all the Homeric papyri found in Egypt. McNamee counted a total of thirty-two papyri⁴⁴ that present the critical signs of Aristarchus. While *obeloi* and *diplai* are quite frequent, the other signs are far less numerous; of these thirty-two papyri, for example, only five have other Aristarchean signs in addition to the usual *obeloi* and *diplai*: *P.Tebt.* 1.4 (*diple periestigmene*, *asteriskos* with *obelos*, and *antisigma*, but no *diple*),⁴⁵ *P.Lond.*

⁴⁰ McNamee 1981: 249–250.

⁴¹ Landon 2002.

⁴² Cf. McNamee 1992: 19–21.

⁴³ Cf. Landon 2001: 839. Landon 2002 does not explicitly say so, but the title of the monograph (*Un commentario aristarcho al secondo libro dell'Iliade: POXY VIII 1086*) is revealing.

⁴⁴ Originally McNamee 1981: 247, fn. 2, had a list with only seventeen papyri, but McNamee 1992: 28–29, has a more complete list.

⁴⁵ Turner-Parsons 1987: 38–39 (no. 12).

Lit. 27 (*asteriskos*),⁴⁶ *P.Hawara* (*diploi periestigmenai*),⁴⁷ *P.Oxy.* 3.445 = *P.Lond.Lit.* 14 (*antisigma* and *asteriskos* but no *obelos*),⁴⁸ *PSI* 1.8 (*asteriskos* with *obelos* together, but no *diple*).⁴⁹ Among these five papyri, the most ancient and thus for us the first text preserving critical signs is *P.Tebt.* 1.4, dating back to the 2nd century B.C.E., but *P.Hawara* is certainly the richest among them. For this reason I will focus on the latter manuscript alone, as well as because among these five Homeric papyri *P.Hawara* is the only one that partly overlaps with the portion of *Iliad* 2 covered by *P.Oxy.* 1086.

P.Hawara, a luxury edition of Book 2 of the *Iliad*, has many critical signs.⁵⁰ However, when compared with the *Venetus A*, the number of Aristarchean critical signs in *P.Hawara* is quite slim. The following table lists the critical signs reported by the *Hawara* Homer, the *Venetus A* and *P.Oxy.* 1086 for *Iliad* 2.751–827 (the lines covered by *P.Oxy.* 1086); blank spaces indicate where the lines (or the lemmata in the case of the *hypomnema*) are fully preserved and no sign is in evidence.⁵¹

P.Hawara has fewer signs than the *Venetus A* and the *hypomnema* in *P.Oxy.* 1086. This is probably because it is not a scholarly product like either of the other two. As McNamee has rightly pointed out,⁵² the signs might have been added in *P.Hawara* just because it was a luxury copy with intellectual ambitions. From the table, we could even speculate that, even when the text was copied in a roll with intellectual pretensions, not all the signs were preserved because they were not essential to the text itself; a scribe might have limited himself to copying only some ‘samples’ just to make the text appear more ‘learned’. In fact, the critical signs preserved

⁴⁶ For additional bibliography on and an image of this papyrus see Schironi 2010: 108–109 (no. 12).

⁴⁷ Cf. Sayce 1889; McNamee 2007: 269–271. For additional bibliography on and an image of this papyrus see Schironi 2010: 140–141 (no. 28).

⁴⁸ For additional bibliography on and images of this papyrus see Schironi 2010: 146–147 (no. 31).

⁴⁹ Cf. Manfredi 1979: 47–51 (no. 6).

⁵⁰ As reported by McNamee 2007: 269, *obelos* at *Il.* 2.737, 794, 860–861, 875–876; *diple* at *Il.* 2.481, 659, 701, 722, 727, 730, 741 [followed by a single dot], 742, 802, 807, 809, 827, 830, 838, 839, 856, 858, 863, 872; *diple periestigmenai* at *Il.* 2.484, 634, 658, 674–675, 697, 724, 746, 801. There are also *antisigmai* but they are not used in the Aristarchean way, that is, to mark lines which are not in the right order; rather, they signal textual variants.

⁵¹ Data are taken from Lundon 2002: 25–26. McNamee 2007: 269, covers only *P.Hawara* and her data have some discrepancies with those reported by Lundon for this papyrus (cf. footnote 50).

⁵² McNamee 1981: 253.

Iliad Book Two (line numbers)	P.Hawara	Venetus A	P.Oxy. 1086
763		Diple	Lemma in lacuna; diple restored by Lunden in the lacuna
767		Diple	Diple
782			Mention of a σημείον in the explanation, but no diple in the fully preserved lemma
785	Diple		Diple
791		Obelos	No obelos in the fully preserved lemma
792		Obelos	Obelos
793		Obelos	Obelos
794	Obelos	Obelos	Line missing
795		Obelos	Obelos
801	Diple	Diple	Lemma partly in lacuna; diple restored by Lunden in the lacuna; mention of a σημείον in the explanation
802	Diple	Diple	
807	Diple	Diple	
809	Diple	Diple	Diple
816			Lemma partly in lacuna; diple restored by Lunden in the lacuna; mention of a σημείον in the explanation
819		Diple	Diple
820		Diple	Line missing
827	Diple	Diple	

in papyri often are those dealing with very basic linguistic explanations while those addressing more difficult and philologically-oriented questions were often omitted.⁵³

More importantly, a closer look at the function of critical signs within the text raises a significant question because in all those Homeric papyri the signs are extremely difficult to interpret. This is certainly true for the *diple*, as already pointed out by McNamee,⁵⁴ because the *diple* covers a wide array of topics and without the original accompanying commentary it is impossible to determine its meaning. In order to interpret a *diple* in

⁵³ Cf. McNamee 1981: 248–251.

⁵⁴ McNamee 1981: 252; ead. 1992: 8.

Homeric papyri, modern scholars can consult the corpus of the scholia in the *Venetus A*, and in particular the scholia derived from Aristonicus. If medieval scholia have preserved a note by Aristonicus referring to the line at issue, they can explain the 'silent' *diple* in the papyrus. But, if no note by Aristonicus is preserved in the scholia maiora, then the *diple* in the papyrus will remain silent.

However, even the *obelos* or the *asteriskos* are ambiguous, though to a lesser extent than the *diple*. The *obelos* alerts the reader that those lines are suspicious, but only in a *hypomnema* could the reader understand why Aristarchus did not like them. Similarly, the *asteriskos* indicates that some lines are repeated elsewhere, but again without a commentary there is no way to know where else these lines occur in the text unless one reads through the entire edition (in the hope that the repeated line occurs somewhere close to where the *asteriskos* has been found).

No doubt, Aristarchus' philology was a formidable achievement in his time. Aristarchus improved on the work of his predecessors: for example, he reinserted in his editions lines that Zenodotus had deleted without any compelling reason. More importantly, even when expressing very subjective judgments, Aristarchus based his decisions on the text itself and on internal consistency, rather than adopting preconceived 'aesthetic' criteria like the *decorum* (πρέπον) which were common before his time. In this sense, his activity represents a step forward compared to his predecessors, and it is for this reason that he was considered a model in the centuries to come.⁵⁵ But although Aristarchus' philological approach to critical and editorial work was sound, there were difficulties associated with the physical presentation of his work. The *ekdosis-hypomnema* system is in itself a complete and rather sophisticated philological tool, but it is useful only if a reader can access both texts and in particular the *hypomnema*, because critical signs are 'mute' in themselves. The *ekdosis* alone with the *sigla* is mostly useless from a philological point of view.

This was not a problem for the 'average' reader of Homer because, as it has been abundantly shown,⁵⁶ common readers were not interested in subtle philological discussions but rather in having a sound text of

⁵⁵ This does not mean that Aristarchus' activity was not criticized; scholars in Pergamum, especially Crates of Mallos, had opposite views on philological and critical issues, though they often employed the same type of methodology; see Schironi 2004b. Papyri also show critical signs which do not derive from Aristarchus' work: see McNamee 1981: 253–254.

⁵⁶ See Erbse 1959: 296; McNamee 1981: 250.

Homer—that is: a text in which spurious lines had been either taken out or marked with the *obeloi* by the Alexandrian scholars. The *ekdosis* alone was enough for this readership. Other critical signs that might be present in such *ekdoseis* would likely be ignored by the average reader, who would not be interested in them in the first place: it was enough that the *ekdosis* could claim a scholarly ‘pedigree’, which in the late Hellenistic and Roman periods meant the Aristarchean Homeric text at least in terms of *numerus versuum*.⁵⁷ Such lack of interest in philological details in the general audience probably led later copyists to omit Aristarchean signs from the majority of Homeric copies. This is the reason for the meager evidence for critical signs in Homeric papyri, both in commentaries and in texts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

ORIGEN’S CRITICAL SIGNS

If Aristarchus’ system of *sigla/ekdosis/hypomnema* was not able to reach a wide audience and ultimately disappeared from the common book market,⁵⁸ why were these signs adopted by later critics both in the Roman and the Christian worlds? While we do not know much about the work of Probus on Latin poets and of Dioscurides on Hippocrates, we have more information about Origen.

Origen (185–254 C.E.) adopted the Greek system of *σημεία* within his editorial work of the Bible, and he explicitly explains why he adopted the critical signs in various passages of his own work. He was born and educated as a *grammatikos* at Alexandria and he probably worked there until the 220s, so his familiarity with Alexandrian scholarship is beyond doubt. Indeed Origen himself traces back his adoption of the *σημεία* from the

⁵⁷ This ‘preparatory’ *ekdosis* by Aristarchus circulated outside the Museum and contained a text of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* that had been purged of securely spurious lines which crept into the textual tradition due to oral recitations over the centuries. Oral performances led to the proliferation of different texts of the Homeric poems, which, though basically identical in terms of plot and structure, had different or additional lines (the so-called ‘plus verses’), as Homeric quotations in Plato, Isocrates, Aristotle as well as Ptolemaic Homeric papyri demonstrate. After 150 B.C.E. papyri show a standardized text of Homer in which the number of lines is similar to our vulgate. This significant change has been persuasively connected with the editorial activity of the Alexandrian grammarians and in particular of Aristarchus. Cf. Pasquali 1952: 201–247; West 1967; Haslam 1997. In particular, on oral recitations of Homer and its pre-Alexandrian transmission, see the very different theories proposed by Janko 1994: 29–38, Nagy 1996, and West 2001: 3–32.

⁵⁸ For a clear summary of the question relating to the book trade and book production in antiquity see Johnson 2004: 157–160 (with bibliography).

Greeks in his letter to Africanus (*Ep. Afric.* in *PG XI* 56.25–57.4), in which he talks about the *obeloi* as τοὺς καλουμένους παρ' Ἑλλήσιν ὀβελούς. The following passage from his *Commentary to Matthew* is key to understanding Origen's use of the Greek critical signs:

Comm. Mt. 15.14 (387.27–388.24 Klostermann): νυνὶ δὲ δῆλον ὅτι πολλὴ γέγονεν ἡ τῶν ἀντιγράφων διαφορά, εἴτε ἀπὸ ῥαθυμίας τινῶν γραφέων, εἴτε ἀπὸ τόλμης τινῶν μοχθηρᾶς <εἴτε ἀπὸ ἀμελούντων> τῆς διορθώσεως τῶν γραφομένων, εἴτε καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν τὰ ἑαυτοῖς δοκούντων ἐν τῇ διορθώσει <ἢ> προστιθέντων ἢ ἀφαιρούντων. τὴν μὲν οὖν ἐν τοῖς ἀντιγράφοις τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης διαφωνίαν θεοῦ διδόντος εὕρομεν ἰάσασθαι, κριτηρίῳ χρησάμενοι ταῖς λοιπαῖς ἐκδόσεσιν· τῶν γὰρ ἀμφιβαλλομένων παρὰ τοῖς Ἑβδομήκοντα διὰ τὴν τῶν ἀντιγράφων διαφωνίαν τὴν κρίσιν ποιησάμενοι ἀπὸ τῶν λοιπῶν ἐκδόσεων τὸ συνᾶδον ἐκείναις ἐφυλάξαμεν,⁵⁹ καὶ τινὰ μὲν ὠβελίσσαμεν <ὡς> ἐν τῷ Ἑβραϊκῷ μὴ κείμενα (οὐ τολμήσαντες αὐτὰ πάντῃ περιελεῖν), τινὰ δὲ μετ' ἀστερίσκων προσεθήκαμεν, ἵνα δῆλον ᾖ ὅτι μὴ κείμενα παρὰ τοῖς Ἑβδομήκοντα ἐκ τῶν λοιπῶν ἐκδόσεων συμφώνως τῷ Ἑβραϊκῷ προσεθήκαμεν.

Now it is clear that among the manuscripts there was great discrepancy, [and for various reasons]: because of the carelessness of the scribes, or because of evil daring of some [copyists], or because of the correctors of the text already written down who did not care [to correct it properly], or because some added or took away whatever they decided when they were correcting it. Therefore with God's will, we contrived to fix the discrepancy in the manuscripts of the Old Testament, using as a guiding principle the other editions. Judging what is in dispute in the Septuagint because of the discrepancy of the manuscripts we kept what the other editions agreed upon. And we marked with an *obelos* some lines because they were not present in the Hebrew version (not daring to delete them altogether); other lines we marked with *asteriskoi*, so that it was clear that they were not present in the Septuagint and we took them from the other editions which agree with the Hebrew Bible.

Origen wanted to 'fix' the textual discrepancies among various manuscript traditions of the Bible,⁶⁰ and the choice of those two signs and their meaning is quite interesting.⁶¹ The *obelos* is used to mark lines or longer passages that were present in the LXX but not in the Hebrew Bible. According

⁵⁹ On the correct interpretation of this sentence, see Neuschäfer 1987: 91–92.

⁶⁰ On Origen's evaluation of the Biblical tradition, see Sgherri 1977.

⁶¹ It must also be noted that these are the only signs which Origen himself says he used in his editorial work in the Bible. However, Epiphanius, who had probably never seen the original edition of Origen, also mentions the *lemniskos* (∓) and the *hypolemniskos* (⊖); similarly the combination of *asteriskos* and *obelos* is attested only in Biblical manuscripts or later sources, but never in Origen. See Field 1875: I, lii–lx; Stein 2007: 147–152.

to the modern terminology,⁶² the *obelos* in Origen's system marks a 'plus' with reference to the 'text of departure', which in this case is the Hebrew Bible. This is quite interesting because, if Origen used the signs with the original Alexandrian meaning, the *obelos* in the LXX marked lines considered suspicious *qua* absent in the Hebrew Bible. Thus Origen seems to use the LXX as the reference text on which his διόρθωσις operates, and to use the Hebrew Bible as a 'corrective' text, so that when a passage or phrase is missing in the latter, the philologist needs to be alerted.

The *asteriskos* is more complex to analyse. Aristophanes of Byzantium and Aristarchus used it to indicate a line repeated elsewhere. Did Origen keep that meaning? Since he used the Greek text of the LXX as a reference text and used both *obeloi* and *asteriskoi* on it rather than on the Hebrew text, we first need to understand how he could 'mark' passages that were not present in the LXX. As Neuschäfer demonstrated,⁶³ the *ekdoseis* that Origen says he used to correct the LXX when the latter was missing parts of the Hebrew Bible ("ἵνα δῆλον ᾖ ὅτι μὴ κείμενα παρὰ τοῖς Ἑβδομήκοντα ἐκ τῶν λοιπῶν ἐκδόσεων συμφώνως τῷ Ἑβραϊκῷ προσεθήκαμεν") are the other Greek versions of Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus whose text was closer to the Hebrew original⁶⁴ and thus could supplement the omissions of the LXX. The only way in which Origen could mark these omissions in the LXX with an *asteriskos* was to insert the missing passages directly in the text of the LXX by using excerpts taken from the other Greek versions. This means that Origen's 'edition' with critical signs must have been different from the original LXX: it was an 'enlarged' LXX with additions from the Hebrew Bible taken from the other Greek versions. Used in this way, then, the *asteriskos* does not mean repetition but indicates a 'minus': that is, these are lines missing in the reference text—the LXX—and added from Aquila's, Theodotion's, or Symmachus' versions of the Hebrew Bible.⁶⁵

⁶² I am adopting the definition of Tov 1992: 236.

⁶³ Neuschäfer 1987: 94–96.

⁶⁴ On these three translations, see Jellicoe 1968: 76–99.

⁶⁵ Interestingly, this new meaning of the *asteriskos* is attested in Isidorus of Seville (*Et.* 1.21.2: *Asteriscus adponitur in his quae ommissa sunt, ut inlucescant per eam notam, quae deesse videntur*). In his explanations Isidorus indeed seems to mix the Alexandrian use of critical σημεία with the later Christian use. Some scholars (Neuschäfer 1987: 125 and 388, fn. 175; Stein 2007: 146 and now Nocchi Macedo 2011) have tried to find a similarity in the use Origen makes of the *asteriskos* with that of Aristarchus by saying that this sign in both authors marks 'versus iterati'. In particular, in the synoptic edition of the *Hexapla*, the *asteriskos* would have alerted the reader that certain passages, missing in the LXX, were instead to be found 'repeatedly' in the other Greek versions of Theodotion, Symmachus and Aquila and in the Hebrew Bible. I cannot share this view for at least two reasons. First,

Such an application of the *asteriskos* is an innovation: it is Origen's adaptation of Aristarchus' system, and was dictated by the different kind of analysis that Origen was interested in. Origen needed to mark differences between two versions of the same text; for Aristarchus, however, rather than a comparison between two (or more) manuscripts, the philological work instead consisted in a study of the internal consistency of the poem itself.⁶⁶

Why did Origen choose only the *obelos* and *asteriskos*? These two signs were not the only ones introduced by the Alexandrians. There were many others, like the widely used *diple*. Origen does not give us any reason for his choices, but it is worth exploring this issue because Origen's choices can give us some indication about how the Alexandrian signs were used. Among the signs securely used by Aristarchus (the *obelos*, the *asteriskos*, the *diple* and the *diple periestigmene*), the *obelos* and the *asteriskos* are the only ones that have a rather unequivocal meaning and can be understood even without a *hypomnema*. The reader of an *ekdosis* with *obeloi*, for example, may still wonder why a certain line is athetised, but he nevertheless knows that such line is considered spurious, and this is an unambiguous piece of information. In the same way, the *asteriskos* alerts the reader that the line is repeated elsewhere; only if he is interested, the curious reader will try to find out where the repetition occurs, but in itself the information given by the *asteriskos* is sound. The case of the *diple* is very different, because this sign gives only a very generic piece of information: 'nota bene', leaving the reader in great disappointment because without a *hypomnema* he can only wonder what such an interesting point might be. Similarly, the *diple periestigmene* hints at a scholarly polemical debate but provides in itself no detail. The *diple* and the *diple periestigmene* made the availability of a *hypomnema* absolutely necessary. The reason why—I think—Origen chose to use only the *obelos* and the *asteriskos* is that his edition was not meant to be accompanied by a *hypomnema*. In this sense,

this meaning of *versus iterati* is not what the Alexandrians meant by 'repeated lines', which for them were lines occurring elsewhere in the *same* poem, not in other editions of the same poem. Second, as my reconstruction will show, I do not think that Origen's critical signs were written in the synoptic *Hexapla*.

⁶⁶ The question of whether or not Aristarchus used manuscript evidence to prepare his edition is debated. There is no positive evidence that he collected many different texts of Homer for his *constitutio textus* (all the references to editions *κατὰ πόλεις* or editions *κατ' ἄνδρα* come from Didymus; see West 2001: 50–73, esp. 67–72). In any case, Aristarchus' atheteseis or notices of repeated lines stem mostly from an internal analysis of the text of Homer, which is a different operation to what Origen was doing.

we might even say that Origen took over the system of Zenodotus or Aristophanes of Byzantium rather than the one of Aristarchus, whose work and system of critical signs seem to be closely related to the existence of a commentary.

Certainly Origen's neglect of the *diple* did not arise from his lack of interest in 'commenting' upon the text. In fact, Origen's exegetical work on the Bible was extensive and he wrote several commentaries to books of the Septuagint. Although many of his exegetic works are lost and those which reached us are often very fragmentary,⁶⁷ a search through the TLG#E has shown that Origen never mentions critical signs in an exegetic context—that is, he never links them with a specific passage in his edition of the Old Testament. The passage from the *Commentary to Matthew* reported above is a very useful source for the understanding of Origen's use of critical signs, but it is somehow an excursus outside the aim of the commentary itself, which was not focused on the Septuagint but on the Gospel of Matthew. Similarly, the use of *σημεία* is mentioned in Origen's *Commentary to John*⁶⁸ and in his *Commentary to the Romans*⁶⁹ but again outside the context of the exegesis to the Gospel of John or *Romans*. The only exegetical work on the Septuagint where Origen seems to connect his exegesis to his critical signs is the *Fragments on Psalms* transmitted under his name, where on *Psalm 144* one reads (*In Psal. 144, v. 13, vol. 3, 356.9–10*): 'Ὡβέλισται δὲ τό: "Ἡ βασιλεία σου, βασιλεία πάντων τῶν αἰώνων" (*Psal. 144.13*). This work, however, is probably interpolated,⁷⁰ and this suggestion might even be confirmed by the fact that elsewhere Origen never links his exegesis with his *sigla* on the text; rather, a later commentator using Origen's edition could have made that observation about the presence of the *obelos* next to line 13 of *Psalm 144*. Origen seems thus to keep the use of the critical signs strictly limited to the ecdotic process, with no link between the editorial activity and the exegetical one.

⁶⁷ For a full list of Origen's exegetic works and how they are preserved (i.e. by direct tradition, in Latin translations, as fragments in *catenae* and scholia, or completely lost except for the title), see Nautin 1977: 242–260.

⁶⁸ *Comm. Jo.* 28.16.137: τὸ δὲ "Ἐγενήθη πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπ' αὐτῶν" (*Num. 23.7*) ὠβελίσσαμεν, μήτε αὐτὸ μήτε παραπλήσιόν τι αὐτῶ εὐρόντες ἐν ταῖς λοιπαῖς ἐκδόσεσιν.

⁶⁹ *Comm. Rom.* 192.17–20 Scherer: Σ|αφῶς | δὲ ἡ γραφή λέγει: "Ἐπ[ίστευσ]εν δὲ Ἀβραάμ τῷ Θεῷ καὶ ἐλογίσθη[ι αὐτῶ] | εἰς δικαιοσύνην" (*Gen. 15.6*) καὶ . [. . .] τῶν ἄλλων ἐκδό[σ]εων [.] τα ἐν τῇ Γενέσει τὸ Ἀβ[. . .] α ὠβελίσσαμεν ἐπέπερ π[.]; and in *Comm. Rom.* 134.3–5 Scherer: τοῦτο δὲ ζητήσεις ἐν τῷ Ἡσαία, ἢ ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις τῶν Παροιμιῶν ἐκδόσεσιν, ἐν τῷ "Ταχίνοι ἐχχέαι αἷμα" (*Is. 59.7*; *Prov. 1.16*), ὃ μετὰ ἀστερίσκων προσετέθη ἐν τῇ ἐκδόσει τῶν Ἐβδομήκοντα. See also Origen, *Comm. Ep. Rom.*, Section XIII, l. 20.

⁷⁰ Devresse 1970: 1–88, spec. 3 and 6.

ORIGEN'S CRITICAL SIGNS AND MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE

Where were Origen's signs placed and what was their relationship with Origen's philological masterpiece, the *Hexapla*, a comparative edition collecting the texts of the Bible in six synoptic columns?⁷¹ This is a long-debated question. Some scholars⁷² think that the signs were in the *Hexapla*: the fifth column of the *Hexapla* would have consisted of the 'corrected' version of the LXX with the critical signs. The main objection to such a reconstruction is that in a synoptic edition there is no need of critical signs to mark the differences between the Hebrew and Greek versions because they are self-evident from a synoptic comparison. Rather, critical signs would have been useful in a text where only the 'enlarged' Greek version was present and would have highlighted what was present in the original LXX, but absent in the Hebrew version (*obelos*), and what was present in the Hebrew version and in other Greek versions like Theodotion, Aquila, and Symmachus, but absent in the original LXX (*asteriskos*). With such a Greek text, furnished with unambiguous and clear critical signs, a reader would have been perfectly equipped to debate with a Jew and know what the textual differences between his own sacred text and that of his opponent were.⁷³

Such a picture⁷⁴ is confirmed by the ancient sources which talk about the *Hexapla* but never mention the presence of the *σημεία* (Eusebius,⁷⁵ Jerome,⁷⁶ and Rufinus)⁷⁷ or, if they mention the critical signs, we doubt

⁷¹ The order and content of the six columns of the *Hexapla* is generally reconstructed as follows: the Hebrew Bible, the Hebrew Bible transcribed into Greek letters, Aquila, Symmachus, LXX, and Theodotion. The problems connected with the *Hexapla*, its function and physical appearance are many and much debated; for a useful summary, see Jellioe 1968: 100–133; Fernández Marcos 2000: 204–220; and Grafton-Williams 2006: 86–132. More specific bibliography pertinent to the present topic will be quoted in the following footnotes.

⁷² Nautin 1977: 456–457; Neuschäfer 1987: 96–98; Schaper 1998: 9–10. Also Field 1875, whose edition of Hexaplaric fragments is still authoritative, has critical signs in his text.

⁷³ That this was the main scope of Origen's undertaking is testified by Or., *Ep. Afric.* in PG XI 60.20–61.7. Cf. Sgherri 1977: 16–17.

⁷⁴ Already suggested by Devreesse 1954: 113–115; Mercati 1958: xxxiv–xxxv; Kahle 1960: 115–116; Jellioe 1968: 124; cf. also Grafton-Williams 2006: 88, 108, 116–117 (but Williams 2006: 72 and 149 is ambiguous about whether she thinks critical signs were in the *Hexapla* or not). For a brief summary of this debate (with additional bibliography) see Fernández Marcos 2000: 213–215.

⁷⁵ Euseb. *HE* 6.16. Cf. Nautin 1977: 311–316; Neuschäfer 1987: 97.

⁷⁶ Hieron. *Comm. in Pauli Ep. ad Tit.* 3.9 in *PL* 26.595B. Cf. Nautin 1977: 328–331.

⁷⁷ Ruf. *HE* 6.16.4–3 (sic) in *GCS* 9, p. 555, 8–18. Cf. Nautin 1977: 332–333.

whether they ever saw the *Hexapla*, like Epiphanius.⁷⁸ More importantly, such a picture is confirmed by manuscript evidence. The fragments we have of the *Hexapla* are preserved in two palimpsests: the so-called Cairo-Genizah Palimpsest (Cambridge, University Library Taylor-Schechter 12.182, dating to the 7th century and containing portions of *Psalms XXII*)⁷⁹ and the so-called Mercati Palimpsest (Bibl. Ambr. O 39 sup., dating to the 9th–10th century).⁸⁰ The Cairo-Genizah Palimpsest has a synoptic text which has been reconstructed as follows:⁸¹ original Hebrew (col. 1—nothing has been preserved), Hebrew transcribed into Greek letters (col. 2), Aquila (col. 3), Symmachus (col. 4), LXX (col. 5) and Theodotion (col. 6—nothing has been preserved). Similarly the Mercati Palimpsest has the synoptic Hexaplaric text of some Psalms⁸² in five remaining columns: original Hebrew (col. 1—nothing has been preserved),⁸³ the Hebrew version in Greek letters (col. 2), Aquila (col. 3), Symmachus (col. 4), a Greek version different from both LXX and Theodotion (col. 5) and another Greek version that might be the so-called ‘Quinta’ (col. 6).⁸⁴ This manuscript, unlike the Cairo-Genizah one, also alternates the text of each Hexaplaric Psalm with its Septuagint version and with a *catena* commenting on the psalm. Despite the differences in layout and content, in none of these Hexaplaric manuscripts is there any trace of critical signs. On the contrary, the medieval manuscripts which preserve the critical signs of Origen, like the Codex Marchalianus (Vat. Gr. 2125, 6th century C.E., containing all the Prophets)⁸⁵ and the Codex Colberto-Sarravianus (Voss. Gr. Q. 8 + Cod. Par. Gr. 17 + Cod. St. Petersburg v.5, 5th century C.E.), have only the Greek text.

⁷⁸ Epiph. *De mensuris et ponderibus* 7; on the *Hexapla*, see also Epiph., *Panarion* 64.3–5 in *GCS* 31, p. 407.3–408.11; cf. Neuschäfer 1987: 97.

⁷⁹ Cf. Taylor 1900; see also Jenkins 1988: 90–102, and Grafton-Williams 2006: 98–99.

⁸⁰ Cf. Mercati 1958; Kahle 1960; Jellicoe 1968: 130–133; see also Jenkins 1988: 88–90, and Grafton-Williams 2006: 98, 100–101 (but their reconstruction is not precise especially in terms of the content of the sixth column).

⁸¹ Taylor 1900: 3.

⁸² In particular *Psalms* XVII, XXVI, XXVIII–XXXI, XXXIV–XXXV, XLV, XLVIII, LXXXVIII.

⁸³ Some scholars even suppose that this first column was never present in this manuscript, as well as in the Cairo-Genizah (and hence in the original *Hexapla*); on this question see Jenkins 1988; Norton 1988; Flint 1988.

⁸⁴ The nature of this edition and the problematic content of the fifth and sixth columns are discussed in Mercati 1958: xvi–xxxv. See also Fernández Marcos 2000: 213.

⁸⁵ Cf. Ziegler 1952: 32–36. The Hexaplaric labels and the marginalia seem to have been added by a second hand; see Ziegler 1952: 62.

This evidence suggests that critical signs were not written in the *Hexapla* but in a stand-alone Greek edition of the ‘enlarged’ LXX by Origen. I have called this Greek Bible edited by Origen an ‘enlarged’ LXX because it consisted of the original LXX with additions from Theodotion, Aquila and Symmachus for the passages missing in the LXX but included in the Hebrew Bible and marked with *asteriskoi*.

Such a reconstruction seems now to be confirmed by a papyrus (*P.Grenf.* 1.5) which, though edited over a century ago,⁸⁶ has been overlooked by scholars interested in Origen. My forthcoming study on this papyrus⁸⁷ has shown that this is likely to be a very old copy of the edition of the Greek Bible by Origen. The papyrus, written very close to the time of Origen (it has been dated to the late 3rd century or early 4th century), contains a passage of Ezekiel (5.12–6.3). The text is marked by critical signs (*asteriskoi*) that correctly indicate passages absent in the LXX but present in the Hebrew Bible. This papyrus—I argue—is a testimony for the edition of the Bible developed by Origen, for which the *Hexapla* was a preparatory (though extremely important) step. Critical signs were only necessary in this Greek-only text. Moreover, they were very useful in their clarity and lack of ambiguity.

ORIGEN: IMPROVING ON THE PAST

Origen had an extensive knowledge of Alexandrian critical and exegetical methodology, as Neuschäfer demonstrated.⁸⁸ Indeed his being at Alexandria certainly facilitated his familiarity with all this scholarly material and he made full use of Alexandrian technical language and criteria. Yet, Origen’s use of critical signs and exegetical technique seems to go against what we think of Alexandrian and in particular Aristarchean practice, which required a close link between the *ekdosis* and the *hypomnemata*. In fact, Origen seems to improve on the Alexandrian system as developed by Aristarchus by selecting the least ambiguous signs and getting rid of over-meaningful *diple*. In this, he goes back to the system of Zenodotus and Aristophanes, but he also gives a personal contribution by making the critical signs even less ambiguous.

⁸⁶ The first edition was by Grenfell 1896: 9–11. See Ziegler 1952: 36.

⁸⁷ Schironi (forthcoming). For an overview of papyri containing Origen’s works (but not the *Hexapla*), see McNamee 1973.

⁸⁸ Neuschäfer 1987.

In Origen's edition, the meaning of the *obelos* and the *asteriskos* is very clear as soon as the reader sees them in the margin of the text: they just mean an omission or an addition to the LXX compared to the Hebrew Bible. Moreover, these additions and omissions are not the result of a philological choice like in the *atheteseis* of the Alexandrians. In fact, when Aristarchus obelised a line, he had to write the reasons for his choice in a commentary because that was a 'personal' choice, whether or not supported by manuscript evidence. Origen's *obeloi* and *asteriskoi*, on the contrary, do not refer to a subjective choice, but rather report 'a fact': the manuscript evidence. This is an important difference because, when used in this sense, these σημεία are self-explanatory: they state a fact, rather than marking a judgment.

In Origen's system, critical signs finally speak on their own because they are part of the edition and deliver their message with no need of commentaries. This does not mean that Origen did not write commentaries dealing with philological and textual problems; in fact, Origen was quite interested in textual criticism in his exegetical work.⁸⁹ Despite that, even when dealing with philological questions of additions and omissions, his commentaries do not refer to the critical signs but can be used alone, with any edition of the LXX. In the same way, Origen's edition of the Bible provides critical information about the differences with the Hebrew Bible without the need of a commentary. Both works, the *ekdosis* and the *hypomnema*, are independent. This, I argue, is an improvement on the Aristarchean system because Origen's use of the σημεία is clear, economic and unambiguous.

This change in format was due to the different focus of Origen and of Aristarchus. The goals of the two scholars as well as their audiences were different. While Aristarchus's critical activities were addressed to a specialised audience that was interested in and could appreciate philological details, Origen in principle wrote for all Christians in order to provide them with a good textual tool to debate with the Jews. To reach a wider audience Origen needed to be direct, clear and simple, and indeed his system proved to be fit for this scope. Anyone can read *P.Grenf.* 1.5 and understand its content fully, provided that he knows the equation *obelos* = 'plus' and *asteriskos* = 'minus' in the original LXX with respect to the Hebrew Bible.

⁸⁹ Cf. Neuschäfer 1987: 103–122.

Origen's critical signs were useful in the absence of a synoptic edition because they could 'summarise' the 'quantitative' content of the *Hexapla* in one Greek-only text. They also were unambiguous because they clearly indicated 'pluses' (the *obelos*) and 'minuses' (the *asteriskos*) between the reference text (LXX) and the comparandum (the Hebrew Bible). They were economic because all the information was included in one book with no need of other devices like the *hypomnema*, which instead was necessary in the Aristarchean system. Therefore, if the Alexandrians had the merit of being the *πρώτοι εὑρεταί* of a system that had great potential in scholarship, Origen improved on his Alexandrian predecessors and made this system part of a scientific language which, by definition, is standardised, economic and unambiguous.

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TOPOS DIDASKALIKOS AND ANAPHORA—TWO INTERRELATED
PRINCIPLES IN ARISTARCHUS' COMMENTARIES

René Nünlist

The greatest of the Greek scholars in Alexandria, Aristarchus of Samothrace (approx. 216–144 B.C.), is famous, among many other things, for his running commentaries on several Greek authors.¹ The present article attempts to elucidate two of the methodological principles that underlie these commentaries, the *topos didaskalikos* and the *anaphora*, and how they are interrelated. Since Aristarchus regularly resorts to these principles without naming them, a substantial part of this paper will be devoted to the question of how they can be identified in the absence of the actual term. This last point is particularly relevant in the case of the *topos didaskalikos*, which term occurs only once in the extant fragments of Aristarchus' commentaries. This unusual situation might even trigger the question whether it is actually appropriate to identify an Aristarchean principle under this name. It will, therefore, be best to tackle this question first.

In *Iliad* 5, Diomedes has the courage to fight even against the war god Ares himself. He does so, not least, because he has the divine support of Athena, who 'leaning in on it (sc. Diomedes' spear), drove it into the depth of the belly where the war belt girt him (sc. Ares)'.² The details of the Homeric arms posed a number of difficulties, but the present passage appeared to provide the key to one of the riddles, namely the location of the belt (μίτρα):

¹ Best known are his commentaries on poets such as Homer, Hesiod, Pindar or Aristophanes, but it is worth mentioning that he also wrote a commentary on Herodotus, an abridgment of which has been discovered on a papyrus (P. Amh. ii. 17). The commentaries themselves are no longer extant and must be reconstructed on the basis of such papyrus finds and scholia (marginal and interlinear notes) in medieval manuscripts (see e.g. Dickey 2007: 19). For papyrus commentaries on Homer see Lundon (2011: esp. 164–5, 174–7 on Aristarchus).

² Hom. *Il.* 5,856–7 (trans. Lattimore).

(1) ὅτι κατὰ τὰ κοῖλα μέρη ἐζώννυντο τὴν μίτραν· καὶ ἔστιν διδασκαλικὸς ὁ τόπος.³

<There is a *diplē*,> because they (sc. Homer's fighters) girt themselves with a belt around the hollow parts (sc. of their bodies, i.e., the abdomen) and <because> the passage is instructive.

In other words, *Il.* 5.857 is the passage that is apt to settle the question because its evidence can be applied to all the cases that are doubtful or disputed. For this reason it is called a *topos didaskalikos*.⁴ As has already been mentioned, this is the only attestation of the term in this form, but comparable terminology does occur elsewhere.

A case in point is a note that discusses the meaning of the verb ἐξεναρίζειν. Its literal meaning is 'to strip the armour (of a dead fighter)', as the crucial passage *Iliad* 6.417–18 makes clear. Achilles 'did not strip his (sc. Eëtion's) armour . . . but burned the body in all its elaborate war-gear'. The relevant note reads:

(2) ὅτι διδάσκει, τί τὸ ἐξενάριξεν· ἐπιφέρει γὰρ "ἄλλ' ἄρα μιν κατέκηε σὺν ἔντεσιν" (*Il.* 6.418).⁵

<There is a *diplē*,> because he (sc. Homer) teaches what the word *exenarixen* means. For he adds "but burned the body in all its elaborate war-gear".

The polar expression in *Il.* 6.417–18 establishes the literal meaning of the verb ἐξεναρίζειν as 'to strip the armour (ἐναρὰ)', which can thus be applied to the other attestations as well.⁶ It is interesting to note that, according to Aristarchus, it is Homer himself who 'teaches' (διδάσκει) his readers

³ Schol. A *Il.* 5.857*b* (unless indicated otherwise, all the A-scholia on the *Iliad* quoted in this article can be attributed to Aristonicus, the Augustan scholar who excerpted Aristarchus' commentaries, see e.g. Pfeiffer 1968: 214). Aristarchus marked noteworthy passages with the *diplē*, a wedge-shaped sign (>), in the left margin and explained them in his commentary. In order to save space, the medieval A-scholia often omit the phrase 'There is a *diplē*' and simply begin with 'because' (ὅτι). These and other omissions (e.g. of the grammatical subject) are typical. Where necessary, my translations add such information in brackets.

⁴ The first modern scholar to identify the *topos didaskalikos*, Lehrs (1833: 128 n. ≈ 1882: 123 n. 70), renders it with *locus classicus*, which made its way into LSJ s.v. διδασκαλικός 3. The factual information given in ex. (1) is repeated in schol. A *Il.* 4.135, without, however, referring to the *topos didaskalikos*.

⁵ Schol. A *Il.* 6.417*a*; for διδάσκει cf. also schol. A *Il.* 1.364*a*, 24.8*a* (both attributed to Herodian; in the latter case διδάσκει appears in a quotation from Aristarchus' commentary, = fr. 92 A Matthaios).

⁶ If this meaning were restricted to the present passage, the note would say so (vūv, lit. 'now' and thus 'here, in this passage'), e.g., schol. A *Il.* 7.146*b*, which points out that ἐξεναρίζειν is used literally (κυρίως) here (vūv). Conversely, schol. AGe *Il.* 21.485*a*' argues that ἐναίρειν (θῆρας) is used catachrestically ('to kill'). The distinction between

that this is the case, in that he provides the crucial point about Achilles burning Eëtion's body in full gear. In all likelihood, this idea is best read against the backdrop of Aristarchus' view that interpretation should be *textimmanent*. The best guide for a proper understanding of Homer (or any other author) is the text itself.⁷ More specifically, the notion that an author explains his own text has a parallel in what ancient critics call ἐπεξηγήσεις (lit. 'subsequent explanation'): a difficult word or expression is explained by the text that immediately follows.⁸

Next, there are two notes in which Aristarchus uses the adverb διδασκαλικῶς ('instructively').⁹ They are both concerned with a differentiation that the Homeric text tellingly makes. In the first case (*Il.* 15.437–8), the text juxtaposes the two forms of the comparatively rare personal pronoun of the first person dual ('we two'), νῶϊν (genitive and dative) and νῶϊ (nominative and accusative), and thus 'instructively' shows that there is a difference between them.

(3) ὅτι παραλλήλως καὶ διδασκαλικῶς ἡ διαφορὰ τοῦ νῶϊν (l. 437) καὶ νῶϊ (l. 438).¹⁰

<There is a *diplē*,> because the difference between *nō̄in* and *nō̄i* <is made clear> by juxtaposing them and in an instructive manner.

The other note deals with the semantic difference between two verbs that both have the meaning 'to hit (an enemy)'. While βαλεῖν (aor.) means 'to hit (with a missile)', that is, from a distance, τυψαί (aor.) means 'to strike (with a sword or the like)', that is, in close combat. The latter meaning is expressly brought out by Homer in *Il.* 20.378 because he 'instructively' adds the adverb σχεδόν ('close by') and thus keeps the two verbs apart.

the literal and catachrestic use of the verb is also made by Apollonius Sophista 68.6–7 (Lehrs 1882: 145).

⁷ The well-known phrase for this is Ὅμηρον ἐξ Ὁμήρου σαφηνίζειν (lit. 'to elucidate Homer from Homer'), which adequately describes Aristarchus' method, irrespective of whether he actually used the phrase in question. It is important to note, however, that Aristarchus is not a die-hard advocate of this principle and can use other poets in order to explain Homer, for example, Hesiod in schol. A *Il.* 23.638–42, see Nünlist (forthcom.).

⁸ For examples see Nünlist (2009: 202–4).

⁹ It was again Lehrs (1865: 123 n. ≈ 1882: 123 n. 70) who recognised their relevance (cf. n. 4).

¹⁰ Schol. A *Il.* 15.437–8, listed in the *test.* to fr. 113 Matthaios.

(4) ὅτι διέσταλκε τὸ βαλεῖν καὶ τὸ τύψαι, διδασκαλικῶς προσθεῖς σχεδόν.¹¹

<There is a *diplē*,> because he (sc. Homer) has differentiated *balein* and *tupsai*, by instructively adding (sc. to *tupsai*) *schedon*.

In light of these notes it is justifiable to refer to Aristarchus' interpretative principle as *topos didaskalikos*, if only for practical purposes. Conversely, the alternative term that modern scholars sometimes use, *topos exēgētikos*, upon closer examination turns out to be a phantom. The term seems to have been introduced into secondary literature by Roemer.¹² Although he does not say so explicitly, Roemer probably depends on Aristonicus' note that Carnuth (1869: 137) prints with reference to *Od.* 16.18 (on the meaning of ἀπίη γαίη). The problem is that this note has no manuscript support, but is merely reconstructed on the basis of schol. *A Il.* 3.49a¹ (on the same question). That note, however, does not contain the crucial phrase καὶ ἐξηγητικός ἐστὶν ὁ τόπος ('and the passage is exegetical'), which Carnuth apparently added by himself.¹³ Since the expression *topos exēgētikos* has no other ancient support, it is best dropped from our critical vocabulary.¹⁴

The term *anaphora* is much less problematic than *topos didaskalikos*. At least 39 Iliadic notes that can be attributed to Aristonicus expressly mention it.¹⁵ In spite of the general problem of terminological fidelity among the excerptors, it seems likely that *anaphora* represents Aristarchus' own wording. Its purpose is to identify the 'reference' that the note in question has. The *anaphora* expressly identifies the reason why Aristarchus marked the line with one of his signs. This reason can be a problem or aspect of the line itself, or it can be related to another problem or passage which the line under discussion helps explain in one way or the other. The scholion on *Il.* 1.477, for instance, which describes the beginning of a new day, reads:

¹¹ Schol. *A Il.* 20.378a¹.

¹² Cf. Roemer (1893: 5), sim. (1924: 16–17). It was taken up, e.g., by Dimpfl (1911: 39) and Schmidt (1976: 159 n. 2).

¹³ I am grateful to Filippomaria Pontani, who is editing the scholia to the *Odyssey*, for confirming my analysis of the relevant note in Carnuth's edition.

¹⁴ The term ἐξηγητικὸν appears in a T-scholion (on *Il.* 18.265a²), but the corresponding A-scholion has the participle ἐξηγούμενος (of Homer). Roemer uses both *topos didaskalikos* and *exēgētikos* when he explains the principle (1893: 5, 1924: 16–17), but in actual practice he clearly favours the latter (e.g. 1924: 17, 26, 40, 49, 58, etc.). This 'error' pales in comparison with his gratuitous conviction that Aristarchus *always* provided a *topos didaskalikos* (1893: 5, 1924: 16). Whenever the evidence does not corroborate this assumption, Roemer does not hesitate to alter or supplement the text, blame Aristonicus for his inadequate report, etc.; cf. e.g. Roemer (1924: 23, 26, 40, 49, 58, etc.).

¹⁵ See Erbse (1983) Index II s.v.

(5) ὅτι τῇ ἐξῆς ἐκ τῆς Χρύσης κατέρχονται. ἡ δὲ ἀναφορὰ ἀπὸ τῆς σημειώσεως πρὸς τὸν τῶν ἡμερῶν ἀριθμὸν.¹⁶

<There is a *diple*,> because they (sc. Odysseus and the other Greek ambassadors who returned Chryseïs to her father) are returning from Chryse the next day. The reference of the marginal sign is to the number of days.

As other notes confirm, the Alexandrian critics were in disagreement over the day structure of the *Iliad*.¹⁷ According to ex. (5), the dawn mentioned in *Il.* 1.477 shows that Odysseus' embassy does not return the same day, which, as the *anaphora* indicates, is relevant for the correct calculation of the days. Other critics seem to have overlooked this.

Likewise, a longer note on *Il.* 6.459 draws the reader's attention to the fact that in this passage the subjunctive εἴπησιν (without the particle ἄν) is used in the sense of a potential (εἴποι ἄν). The reference (*anaphora*) is, as the note explains, to *Il.* 21.126, where Philitas of Cos read a text that Aristarchus attempts to reject. His rejection is based, among other things, on the grammar of the present passage.¹⁸

Another note underscores that in *Il.* 13.299 Phobos is expressly called Ares' son, which helps solve an ambiguity elsewhere.

(6) ὅτι ῥητῶς Ἄρεως υἱὸς Φόβος. ἡ δὲ ἀναφορὰ πρὸς τὴν ἀμφιβολίαν τοῦ “καὶ ῥ’ ἵππους κέλετο Δεῖμόν τε Φόβον τε | <ζευγνύμεν>” (*Il.* 15.119–20).¹⁹

<There is a *diple*,> because Phobos <is> expressly <called> Ares' son. The reference is to the ambiguity of “and he (sc. Poseidon) ordered Deimos and Phobos to harness the horses” (*Il.* 15.119–20).

As the note there (schol. A *Il.* 15.119) makes clear, some readers of Homer understood that passage in the sense that Deimos ('Fear') and Phobos ('Terror') referred to Ares' horses and not to the sons who were being asked to yoke them. *Il.* 13.299 solves the ambiguity because Phobos is explicitly called Ares' son.

These examples will suffice to illustrate the purpose of the *anaphora* in Aristarchus' commentaries. It expressly identifies the subject or passage

¹⁶ Schol. A *Il.* 1.477a. The note is unusual because it expressly speaks of the *anaphora* of the *sēmeiōsis* (lit. 'marking'), which is normally presupposed (cf. n. 3). Cf. schol. A *Il.* 9.241a, which curiously speaks of the *epanaphora* of the *sēmeiōsis*.

¹⁷ For the details of the disagreement see Nünlist (2009: 69–73).

¹⁸ Schol. A *Il.* 6.459 (= Philitas fr. 57 Kuchenmüller, Spanoudakis, Lightfoot); for the grammatical details see Matthaios (1999: 372).

¹⁹ Schol. A *Il.* 13.299a. As usual, the parallel passage is identified by simply quoting it (e.g. Nünlist 2009: 9–10). For the modern translator this has the unpleasant side effect that the ambiguity of the Greek text cannot be retained.

for which the information that is provided by the note (or the line itself) is relevant, but it does not necessarily spell out why or in what respect this information is important.²⁰ In such cases it remains for the reader to determine what exactly the point is.²¹

At the same time, the examples will also have made it clear that an interrelationship exists between the *topos didaskalikos* and the *anaphora*. The *anaphora*, on the one hand, indicates that there is a connection between the present note and a particular question, without necessarily explaining the specifics of this connection. *Topos didaskalikos*, on the other, designates a passage that provides the key to a particular problem, but the relevant note does not necessarily explain where or in what way this problem plays a role.²² Needless to say, there are cases of *anaphora* that show some resemblance to a *topos didaskalikos*, for instance, the first part of ex. (6). It is, nevertheless, important not to blur the difference between the two concepts as described in this paragraph.

It has already been mentioned in the opening paragraph to this article that several notes can be explained in terms of an *anaphora* or a *topos didaskalikos*, even though the term as such is not expressly mentioned. It is now time to turn to these alternative expressions. As a general *caveat*, it should, however, be said at the outset that the subsequent argument only works in one direction. Certain expressions can point to a *topos didaskalikos* or an *anaphora*. The argument does not automatically work in the opposite direction. The presence of such an expression is no guarantee that a *topos didaskalikos* or an *anaphora* is actually meant. Each case must be judged on its merits.²³

The focus on providing the decisive clue helps identify alternative expressions that, as it were, hide a *topos didaskalikos*. A case in point is a note on the adjective *νήδυμος* ('sweet, gentle') because it nicely explains the principle.

²⁰ Exx. (4) and (6) only mention the general point of reference.

²¹ It is impossible to decide whether this 'laconism' (for which see also n. 3) reflects that of the original commentaries or is due to the abbreviation process that they underwent in the course of the transmission. Perhaps one need not assume that Aristarchus followed a rigid rule for this. Modern commentators are not fully consistent either when it comes to telling the reader (or not) what the relevance of, say, a parallel passage ('cf.') is.

²² Ex. (1) does not expressly state that or in which context the location of the *μίτρα* poses a problem. Nor does ex. (2) indicate that or where the meaning of *ἐξεναρίζειν* is disputed.

²³ Incidentally, this even holds true for the term *anaphora* itself, which can indicate various kinds of references, e.g., the relationship between a word and its referent (schol. A Il. 1.129a').

(7) ὅτι σαφῶς νήδυμον μετὰ τοῦ ν. καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀμφιβόλων ἄρα τόπων σὺν τῷ ν ἐκληπτέον.²⁴

<There is a *diplē*,> because *nēdumon* (acc.) <is> clearly <written here> with the letter *nu* (sc. at the beginning). It must therefore be taken with the letter *nu* in the ambiguous passages too.

As several other notes confirm (cf. n. 24), there was a discussion among ancient critics whether the letter *nu* was part of the adjective or not, with the second alternative making it cognate to ἡδύς ('sweet'). When the adjective is preceded by a word that can take a movable *nu* (e.g. in *Il.* 2.2), it is not automatically clear to which of the two words the *nu* belongs. In *Il.* 16.454, to which ex. (7) refers, the adjective is preceded by a word that cannot take a movable *nu*. The correct form of the adjective must therefore be νήδυμος. Consequently, this is how the words must be divided in all the disputed cases too. This second part of ex. (7) is unusual because it expressly states the applicability to other cases, which proves its character as a *topos didaskalikos*.²⁵ The first part, however, argues that the stated fact is 'clearly' (σαφῶς) the case, which occurs elsewhere.²⁶

For example, in a comparable instance of disputed word division Aristarchus held the view that the name of the lesser Ajax' father is Oileus, not Ileus, as maintained by post-Homeric poets and Zenodotus. The crucial line is *Il.* 13.694, which is commented on as follows.

(8) ὅτι σαφῶς Ὀϊλεὺς σὺν τῷ ο· πρόκειται γὰρ ἄρθρον, ὁ μὲν νόθος υἱός. πρὸς Ζηνόδοτον γράφοντα κτλ.²⁷

<There is a *diplē periestigmenē*,²⁸> because Oileus <is> clearly <written here> with the letter *omicron*. For the definite article precedes <in the phrase> "the bastard son". Against Zenodotus, who writes ...

Since the sentence in question already contains a definite article, Aristarchus argues, the *omicron* in Oileus cannot be interpreted as another definite article and must therefore be part of the name, which obviously determines its form in the entire epic. The present *topos didaskalikos*

²⁴ Schol. A *Il.* 16.454, cf. schol. A *Il.* 2.2b (with the *test.* collected by Erbse).

²⁵ A rare parallel is provided by schol. A *Il.* 10.187 (also on νήδυμος).

²⁶ On σαφῶς pointing to a *topos didaskalikos* see Roemer (1924: 17).

²⁷ Schol. A *Il.* 13.694a, cf. schol. A *Il.* 10.335b, where the adverb is ἀναμφισβητήτως ('undisputably').

²⁸ The *diplē periestigmenē* has two additional dots (>) and indicates passages where Aristarchus disagreed with Zenodotus specifically.

proves that Zenodotus is wrong. The same idea is expressed elsewhere by means of the verb ἐλέγχειν ('to refute, prove wrong').²⁹

In light of the use of σαφῶς ('clearly') in exx. (7) and (8), it is not surprising that its virtual synonym φανερώς ('manifestly') can equally indicate a *topos didaskalikos*. The meaning of many Homeric words was disputed, for example, the noun πρυλῆες (plural). In order to establish its meaning, Aristarchus scrutinised the Homeric text for a *topos didaskalikos* and found it in *Il.* 11.51–2. The πρυλῆες, mentioned two lines before (49), are said there to have 'come to the ditch well ahead of the horsemen', which identified them as footsoldiers:

(9) ὅτι φανερώς πρυλῆες οἱ πεζοί· ἀντιδιέσταλκε γὰρ τοὺς ἵππεῖς.³⁰

<There is a *diplē*,> because *prulees* manifestly means footsoldiers. For he (sc. Homer) has distinguished them from the horsemen.

In a comparable move, a passage can also be said to be 'demonstrative' (ἀποδεικτικόν) of a particular fact.³¹ Or it 'demonstrates' (δείκνυσι) that something is the case.³² Likewise, one passage can make another 'clear' (εὐκρινές). In *Il.* 4.159 Agamemnon mentions 'libations of unmixed wine'.

(10) ὅτι εὐκρινές γίνεται ἐντεῦθεν τὸ "κρητῆρι δὲ οἶνον | μίσγον" (*Il.* 3.269–70)· οὐ γὰρ κεκραμένον ἔσπενδον.³³

<There is a *diplē*,> because from this passage the <expression> "in a wine-bowl they (sc. the heralds) mixed the wine" (*Il.* 3.269–70) becomes clear. For they (sc. Homer's characters) did not pour libations of mixed wine.

The 'libations of unmixed wine' in *Il.* 4.159 allow readers to decide that the mixing mentioned in 3.269–70 is not with water, as was customary in post-Homeric times. In preparation of the truce before the duel between Menelaus and Paris the heralds are mixing Greek and Trojan wine.

Two additional points can be made regarding the *topos didaskalikos* in general. Firstly, the decisive passage that solves the riddle need not be the same that is actually commented on. The relevant note can identify another passage as the *topos didaskalikos*. For instance, a note on who

²⁹ Schol. *A Il.* 9.638, 10.106^b, 19.15, also schol. *A Il.* 2.867a (against Thucydides).

³⁰ Schol. *A Il.* 11.49, sim. 12.77b (σαφῶς); for φανερώς/-όν cf. e.g. schol. *A Il.* 1.164, sim. φαίνεται with participle (schol. *A Il.* 23.822).

³¹ Schol. *A Il.* 17.49a. The Homeric passage is said to 'demonstrate' that the word στόμαχος in *Il.* 17.47 refers to the trachea (βρόγχος), cf. schol. *A Il.* 17.47a *Ariston.* (?).

³² Schol. *T Il.* 8.26, attributed to Aristonicus by Friedländer, Lehrs and Erbse.

³³ Schol. *A Il.* 4.159a (with the *test.* collected by Erbse; cf. Schmidt 1976: 261); for εὐκρινές ('clear') marking a *topos didaskalikos* cf. schol. *A Il.* 5.191a, 8.266a, 12.442a, also διακρίνειν ('to decide') in schol. *A Il.* 23.509a¹.

Hephaestus' parents are admits that there may be a certain ambiguity in the passage under consideration (*Il.* 14.338), but the case is settled in the *Odyssey*.

(11) ὅτι ἐκ Διὸς καὶ Ἥρας καθ' Ὁμηρον ὁ Ἥφαιστος. καὶ νῦν μὲν ἴσως τις ἐρεῖ ἀμφιβολίαν εἶναι, ἐν Ὀδυσσεΐα (sc. 8.312) δὲ αὐτὸ σαφῶς λέγει ὁ Ἥφαιστος. ὁ δὲ Ἡσίοδος (sc. *Th.* 927–8) ἐκ μόνης Ἥρας.³⁴

<There is a *diplē*,> because according to Homer Zeus and Hera are Hephaestus' parents. And perhaps one will say that there is an ambiguity in the present passage. In the *Odyssey* (sc. 8.312), however, Hephaestus says it clearly. Hesiod, on the other hand, <says that he stems from Hera alone.

Ideally, such references to a *topos didaskalos* are better kept separate from those cases where the note simply mentions a parallel passage that supports the point made, but does not have the force to decide the question once and for all.³⁵ Admittedly, this distinction can at times be difficult.

The second general point is that, under certain circumstances, there can be multiple *topoi didaskaloi* for the same problem. Thus, in discussing the disputed question whether the noun πρόμος means βασιλεύς ('king') or πρόμαχος ('one who fights in the forefront'), Aristarchus identified at least two passages which 'clearly' (σαφῶς) show that the latter is the correct meaning.³⁶

Moving on to alternative expressions for *anaphora*, the most common is an abbreviation of the longer phrase from which the concept derives its name. In ex. (5) and (6) the phrase is ἡ δὲ ἀναφορὰ πρὸς τὸν/τὴν/τὸ ('the reference is to the...'), followed by the problem or passage in question. It is therefore no surprise that the scholia contain many examples where the prepositional expression πρὸς τὸν/τὴν/τὸ ('to the...') has the same function as the full phrase. Thus a note deals with the same general problem as ex. (5) in the following way:

³⁴ Schol. A *Il.* 14.338b. The note presupposes that *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are by the same poet, as Aristarchus maintained against the 'separators' (cf., e.g., Pfeiffer 1968: 230 n. 7, 290). For the reference to another *topos didaskalikos* see also schol. A *Il.* 2.2b, which argues that it is 'clear' (δῆλον) from *Il.* 14.253 that νήδυμος must be written with ν (cf. ex. 7); see also schol. AbT *Il.* 2.341 on the same problem as ex. (10). For δῆλον cf. e.g. schol. A *Il.* 23.94, Ap.S. 38.24.

³⁵ Cf. e.g. schol. A *Il.* 9.165a (on the meaning of κλητός).

³⁶ Schol. A *Il.* 15.293a, 22.85c. The argument is directed against the so-called 'Glossographers' (fr. 28 Dyck).

(12) πρὸς (τὸν) (add. Villoison) τῶν ἡμερῶν ἀριθμὸν, ὅτι τρίτη καὶ εἰκοστή.³⁷

<The reference is> to the number of days, because it is the twenty-third (sc. day of the *Iliad*).

Likewise, there are short references to the problem of ambiguity dealt with in ex. (6), for instance:

(13) πρὸς τὴν ἀμφιβολίαν, πότερον ὁ Μέγης ἀπέκησεν ἢ ὁ Φυλεύς, ὃ καὶ ᾿Ομηρικώτερον· Ὅμηρος γὰρ αἶει πρὸς τὸ δεύτερον πρότερον ἀπαντᾷ.³⁸

<The reference is> to the ambiguity, whether it is Meges who emigrated or, and this would be more Homeric, Phyleus. For Homer always takes up the second item first.

Within the large group of prepositional *anaphorai*, recurrent examples such as πρὸς τὸ σχῆμα ('<the reference is> to the form/figure') with 34 attestations can be singled out.³⁹ Its purpose is to draw the reader's attention to the fact that Homer is using a particular word or expression that is noteworthy for its σχῆμα. Since the term covers a wide range of meanings, this type of note can refer to virtually any passage that differs from standard language in terms of morphology, syntax or rhetoric.

It goes without saying that the brevity and unspecificity of the preposition πρὸς can occasionally make it difficult to identify those that mark an *anaphora*. Such an identification is less problematic when the relevant note begins with the preposition (e.g. exx. 12 and 13). Obviously, this need not be the case, as the following example shows:

(14) ὅτι τῶν Δαρδάνων ἦρχεν Αἰνείας καὶ αὐτὸς ὦν Δάρδανος. πρὸς τὸ "τὸν δ' ἔκτανε Δάρδανος ἀνήρ" (*Il.* 2.701).⁴⁰

<There is a *diplē*,> because Aeneas, himself being a Dardanian too, led the Dardanians; <the reference is> to "him (sc. Protesilaus) a Dardanian man had killed" (*Il.* 2.701).

This *anaphora* also helps fill a gap in the evidence. The A-scholion on *Il.* 2.701 has not been preserved, but ex. (14) shows that Aristarchus rejected identifications of the anonymous Dardanian with Hector (Erbse *ad loc.*). Its function therefore resembles that of a *topos didaskalikos*.

³⁷ Schol. A *Il.* 2.48a.

³⁸ Schol. A *Il.* 2.629a, cf. e.g. schol. A *Il.* 11.456, 23.263–4a. For Aristarchus' treatment of the Homeric 'principle of reverse order' (ABBA) see Nünlist (2009: 326–37).

³⁹ Schol. A *Il.* 1.218a, 1.324–5, 2.36c, 2.242, etc. A complete list can easily be obtained by means of the TLG.

⁴⁰ Schol. A *Il.* 2.819. For the ancient practice of quoting the passage in question see n. 19.

The A-scholia show that, when the same phenomenon recurs within a few lines, Aristarchus (or his excerptor Aristonicus) sometimes decides not to repeat the explanation. Instead he simply refers to the identity of the problem (e.g. schol. *A Il.* 5.264). In the case of the *anaphora*, the result can be a mere *πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸ* ('<the reference is> to the same').⁴¹

A particular version of the prepositional *anaphora* reads *πρὸς τὰ περὶ + genitive*. It is best understood, in my view, as meaning '<the reference is> to the problem regarding . . .', with the genitive expressing the subject of the problem. This particular phrase is of some interest because it forms the background to two similar hypotheses that have recently been put forward, namely that Aristarchus wrote an entire monograph *περὶ πατρίδος* (*On the homeland* [sc. of Homer]) and another *περὶ ἡλικίας Ἡσιόδου* (*On the lifetime of Hesiod*).⁴² At first sight, the comparable case of *πρὸς τὰ περὶ τοῦ ναυστάθμου* ('<the reference is> to *On the anchorage*') seems to lend support to these hypotheses.⁴³ Closer examination, however, reveals that the same prepositional phrase is used for several topics that were not the subject of a separate monograph. The following topics are identified by means of *πρὸς τὰ περὶ + genitive*: (i) Olympus, (ii) Pylaemenes, (iii) the Sirens, (iv) the nature (*φύσις*) of Actor's sons, (v) the Molionidae, (vi) Hebe, (vii) the wanderings (*πλάνη*, sc. of Odysseus).⁴⁴ In the notes regarding (i) Olympus Aristarchus argues that it is a mountain in Macedonia and must not be equated with 'heaven' (*οὐρανός*).⁴⁵ (ii) Pylaemenes is the Iliadic character who triggered the fundamental question of homonymous characters, which were consistently marked in Aristarchus'

⁴¹ Schol. *A Il.* 1.578 (on the meaning of *ἐπίηρα*), the reference must be to the treatment six lines before (schol. *A Il.* 1.572a); cf. also schol. *A Il.* 22.239.

⁴² Homer's homeland: Janko (1992: 71) based on schol. *A Il.* 13.197; Hesiod's lifetime: Schroeder 2007 based on schol. *A Il.* 10.431a (= Hes. fr. 334 Merkelbach-West). Both topics are long-time *zētēmata* among ancient (and modern) scholars (Pfeiffer 1968: 164). According to Aristarchus, Attic features in Homer's language such as the dual pointed to Athenian origin (Pfeiffer 1968: 228, with lit.). In the dispute over the relative chronology, he sided with those who considered Hesiod the younger poet (Rohde 1881: 416 n. 1).

⁴³ The phrase *πρὸς τὰ περὶ τοῦ ναυστάθμου* can be found in schol. *A Il.* 10.110, 10.112, 11.6, 13.681a. The existence of a separate monograph is proven by schol. *A Il.* 10.53b, 12.258a/b (*b* attributed to Nicanor), 15.449–51a, 18.68–9 *Nic.*, etc. The monograph attempted to reconstruct the Trojan battlefield, especially the arrangement of the Greek ships, and included a plan (*διάγραμμα*); cf. Lehrs (1882: 221–4), also Goedhardt (1879).

⁴⁴ Olympus: schol. *A Il.* 1.593a', 8.393a, etc.; Pylaemenes: schol. *A Il.* 2.517c, 2.837–8, 4.295, etc.; Sirens: schol. *A Il.* 13.66a; nature of Actor's sons: schol. *A Il.* 11.751; Molionidae: schol. *A Il.* 23.638–42; Hebe: schol. HM^a *Od.* 3.464b; Odysseus' wanderings: schol. PQ *Od.* 5.55.

⁴⁵ Cf. Schmidt (1976: 81–7, with lit.); more recently Schironi (2001), Noussia (2002), Nünlist (2011: 113).

commentaries.⁴⁶ (iii) The Sirens are dealt with because of their number, two, which can be deduced from the Homeric use of the dual.⁴⁷ Items (iv) and (v) must refer to the same problem, the physical appearance of Actor's sons, who are also called Molion(ida)e. Aristarchus held the view that they were not regular twins, but Siamese twins.⁴⁸ (vi) As a virgin, Hebe cannot be Heracles' wife. The relevant passage (*Od.* 11.601–3) must therefore be spurious.⁴⁹ (vii) Attempts to locate Odysseus' wanderings must be rejected.⁵⁰ None of these problems was the subject of a monograph. The conclusion is that, unless a monograph is explicitly referred to in the evidence (as in the case of *περὶ τοῦ ναυστάθμου*, cf. n. 43), it is preferable to treat *πρὸς τὰ περὶ* + genitive as a simple *anaphora*. The note on the Molionidae (schol. *A Il.* 23.638–42), specifically, provides an additional argument. It is the only one that reads *πρὸς τὰ περὶ* + gen. *ζητούμενα* ('<the reference is> to the problem about...'). The participle *ζητούμενα* identifies the note as dealing with a *ζήτημα*, which is the most plausible explanation for all the examples mentioned above, including Homer's homeland and Hesiod's lifetime.⁵¹

The common denominator of all these *anaphorai* is the preposition *πρός*. In addition, there are scores of examples where the *anaphora* remains entirely implicit. For instance, no fewer than 21 Iliadic notes draw attention to the fact that the other name for Troy, Ἴλιος, is feminine in Homer, but only two of them make it explicit that the reference is to *Il.* 15.71, where it is a neuter. This line must therefore be spurious.⁵²

By way of summarising the preceding argument, it will perhaps be best to conclude with a final example that nicely combines the two phenomena under consideration. A passage in Aristotle's *Poetics* (1461a10–12) shows that ancient readers of Homer wondered what the word οὐρήεις meant, which describes the first victims of the well-known plague in

⁴⁶ Cf. Nünlist (2009: 240–2); the hypothesis that Aristarchus wrote a monograph on the subject is untenable (Ludwich 1884: 23 n. 28, with lit.).

⁴⁷ Cf. Lehrs (1882: 187), Matthaios (1999: 381 with n. 409).

⁴⁸ Cf. Lehrs (1882: 175), van der Valk (1964: 253–4). Aristarchus' argument is based on (pseudo-)Hesiod (cf. n. 7).

⁴⁹ Cf. Lehrs (1882: 183).

⁵⁰ Aristarchus is here in agreement with Eratosthenes, cf. Lehrs (1882: 241–5).

⁵¹ Cf. *πρὸς τὸ ζητούμενον* in schol. *A Il.* 3.65, 4.138a, 9.347a, etc. As to Hesiod's lifetime, specifically, Schmidt (1976: 226–7, with lit.) demonstrates that schol. bT *Il.* 23.683b *ex.* does not reflect Aristarchus' views (*pace* Schroeder 2007: 140–1).

⁵² Schol. *A Il.* 3.305b (with the *test.* collected by Erbse, cf. also schol. *A Il.* 16.92b, 16.174); the explicit *anaphora* is in schol. *A Il.* 4.46b² and 12.115; see also the note on the relevant passage itself (schol. *A Il.* 15.71a).

Il. 1.50. Aristotle argued that perhaps the word did not mean ‘mules’ (ἡμίονοι) but ‘watchmen’ (φύλακες). Aristarchus disagreed and defended the meaning ‘mules’, which won the approval of modern scholars too. For him the crucial passage is *Il.* 23.111. There Agamemnon urges ‘mules and men’ (οὐρήας τ(ε)... καὶ ἀνέρας) to collect wood for Patroclus’ pyre, narrated in the subsequent lines. The relevant note reads:

(15) ὅτι σαφῶς οὐρήες οἱ ἡμίονοι, πρὸς τὸ “οὐρήας μὲν πρῶτον ἐπώχετο” (*Il.* 1.50).⁵³

<There is a *diplē*,> because *ourēes* clearly <are> the mules; <the reference is> to “First he (sc. Apollo sending the plague) went after the mules” (*Il.* 1.50).

In *Il.* 23.111 the word οὐρήες must mean ‘mules’. It is therefore the *topos didaskalikos* that solves the riddle in *Il.* 1.50 (*anaphora*).

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⁵³ Schol. A *Il.* 23.111a', cf. schol. A *Il.* 1.50a (with *test.*).

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PHILO AND PLUTARCH ON HOMER¹

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Philo and Plutarch have much in common. Both grew up in the Greek East under Roman rule, Philo dying at approximately the time that Plutarch was born (ca. 45 C.E). Both spoke reverently of Plato as “most sacred” or “divine” and gave special attention to the *Timaeus*, defending its literal meaning against metaphorical interpretations.² Both moreover wrote treatises against the Stoics and criticised especially the eccentric doctrines of Chrysippus, while showing considerably more respect for Panaetius’ updated theories.³ Finally, both thinkers acted as ambassadors to Rome and were deeply committed to traditional forms of religion, Philo to the worship of the God of Israel, Plutarch to the cult of Apollo at Delphi.⁴

Given these parallels in their lives and philosophical outlook, it is not altogether surprising that Philo and Plutarch also shared a similar approach to Homer. This is no small matter. The way Greek-speaking

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² See Philo, *Prob.* 13 κατὰ τὸν ἱερώτατον Πλάτωνα; Plut., *De Cap. Ex inim.* 8 (*Mor.* 90C) κατὰ τὸν θεῖον Πλάτωνα; for a comparison of their views on the *Timaeus*, see Niehoff 2007. On Philo and Plutarch as Platonists, see Runia 1986, 1993, 2001; Sterling 1993; Niehoff 2010; Froidefond 1987; Dillon 1977: 139–230; Bonazzi 2011 and forthcoming.

³ Philo devoted a whole treatise to attacking the doctrine of conflagration, advocated especially by Chrysippus (*Aet.* 48–9, 90–8; Niehoff, 2010: 45–53), while acknowledging that Panaetius was a laudable exception to this Stoic doctrine (*Aet.* 76) and probably using some of his ideas on the Self to write his biographies of the Biblical forefathers (Niehoff 201b). Plutarch similarly focused his criticism of the Stoics on Chrysippus’ views (see esp. *Mor.* 1052B–E, where he offers similar arguments as Philo), while relying in other contexts on Panaetius’ theory of the Self (Gill 1994).

⁴ On Philo’s embassy and commitment to Judaism, see Harker 2008: 9–47; Niehoff 2001; Niehoff 201b; on Plutarch’s political involvement and priestly function, see Ziegler 1964: 19–26. Lamberton 2001: 52–9, and Brisson 2004: 61–71 noted already a similarity between Philo and Plutarch regarding their commitment to religious practice, Platonism and tendencies to mysticism; cf. also Hirsch-Luipold 2005, who rightly points to significant similarities between Philo and Plutarch in their combination of Platonic philosophy and a specific religion, but over-emphasises monotheism as a common factor.

thinkers viewed Homer's epics defined to no small degree their overall attitude towards Greek culture, identity and religion, which had traditionally been shaped by this canonical text.⁵ Both Philo and Plutarch held positive opinions about Homer, considering him useful for philosophy even though his poetry was not always seen as literally true. Their position is remarkable in view of the fact that Plato had severely criticised the poet as an imitator of mere images, who produced harmful lies. Philosophical truth was in his view not to be gained by reading the epics. Plato instead advised the young philosopher to engage in logical argument and appreciate the absolute goodness of the Divine, which had remained unknown to Homer.⁶

Philo and Plutarch chose a different path and offered sophisticated arguments to justify the poet's philosophical value.⁷ They are the first known authors in the Platonic tradition to reintegrate Homer into the philosophical discourse, thus anticipating the Neo-Platonists. The latter generally admired Homer next to Plato, arguing that the epic expresses the same philosophical ideas in different literary garb.⁸ The blending of Plato and Homer reflected their broader interest in traditional religions, which they considered to be part of their intellectual heritage.

The dramatic change in the Platonic tradition, first visible in the writings of Philo and Plutarch, reflects the particular impact of Alexandria. In this vibrant metropolis two philosophical traditions were dominant, namely Aristotelian literary criticism, which was visible especially in the context of Homeric scholarship, and Platonism, the foundational texts of which were critically edited in Alexandria and began to be discussed by the anonymous commentator of the *Theaetetus* as well as Eudorus.⁹

⁵ On the centrality of Homer in Greek education, see Morgan 1997, 1998: 74–8, 94–100; Criboire 2001: 194–7, 204–5; as well as Finkelberg and Pontani in this volume.

⁶ See esp. Pl., *Rep.* 376E–378E; Weinstock 1927; Lodge 1928: 425–441; Most 2003, Männlein-Robert 2010; see also Pontani 2005: 33–4; Clay 2011, who point to Plato's personal passion for Homer as a poet, while condemning him as a philosopher.

⁷ Regarding Plutarch's departure from Plato's position, see also Russell 1973: 51–3; Konstan 2004; *contra* Zadorojnyi 2002, but far more nuanced in Zadorojnyi 2011.

⁸ See esp. Porph., *De Styge* (*apud* Stob. 2.14.10–15); see also Lamberton 1992: 115–33. Lamberton 1986: 44–54, points to Philo as a forerunner of the Neo-Platonic allegorists, but mistakenly denies him any originality; Lamberton, 2001: 46–51, appreciates Plutarch in light of Neo-Platonism.

⁹ Regarding Aristotle's influence on the Museum in general and Alexandrian scholarship in particular, see Fraser 1972, 1: 312–35, 1: 447–79, Pöhlmann 1994: 26–40; Canfora 2002; Montanari 1993: 259–264; Montanari 1995; Richardson 1994; Schironi 2009. Regarding the edition of Plato's texts in Alexandria and their interpretation, see *D.L.* 3: 61–2; Tarrant 1993: 11–7, 98–103; Schironi 2005; Bonazzi 2007.

The revival of Platonism in the Imperial Age, with its emphasis on Plato's positive dogma, was intricately connected to the special intellectual climate of Alexandria. The city facilitated a blending of Platonic and Aristotelian approaches as well as of philosophy and literature. This wedding of traditions proved to have a long-lasting effect on the development of Platonism in the Greek East, which differed from the contemporary discourse in Rome, where Stoicism was triumphant at a much earlier stage.¹⁰

I shall argue that both Philo and Plutarch were able to overcome Plato's criticism of Homer by virtue of their familiarity with Aristotelian literary criticism. Philo directly encountered it in Alexandria, the centre of Homeric scholarship, where many of his Jewish colleagues had engaged the techniques of Aristotle, Aristarchus and other scholars to interpret the Jewish Scriptures.¹¹ While Philo himself was more conservative and identified with the Platonic tradition, he was familiar with these literary techniques and used them in support of his own allegorical readings of Scripture.¹² Having negotiated the nature of the Bible with his Jewish colleagues, Philo also applied his arguments to Homer and thus offered a new approach to the poet within the Platonic tradition.

Plutarch had access to Alexandrian traditions via his teacher Ammonius and also more directly on his visit to Egypt.¹³ His treatise on *Isis and Osiris* indicates that he had a keen interest in things Egyptian.¹⁴ Plutarch's overall work reflects a paramount interest in Homer as well as a surprisingly deep familiarity with Homeric scholarship as it developed in Alexandria. He often answers Plato's queries about the poet by relying on Aristotle's methods, by either directly quoting him or adducing Aristotelian hermeneutics, which had been largely accepted and further developed by Aristarchus, the greatest of the Alexandrian scholars.¹⁵ Moreover, Plutarch stood at the threshold of a new kind of Homeric scholarship, which was deeply rooted in Alexandrian traditions, but ultimately

¹⁰ Crucial for the positive reception of Stoicism in Rome was Cicero's favourable presentation of Stoic spokesmen, who tended to express the more moderate views of Panaetius and Posidonius rather than Chrysippus' previous doctrines. On Stoicism in Rome, see also Inwood 2005: 7–22; van Nuffelen 2010.

¹¹ For details, see Niehoff 2011: 38–129.

¹² For details, see Niehoff 2011: 133–51.

¹³ On Plutarch's indebtedness to Ammonius, who was of Egyptian origin, see Ziegler 1964: 15–7; Dillon 1977: 184–5, 189–92; on his visit to Egypt, see Ziegler 1964: 18; see also Russell 1973: 47, who points to Plutarch's special familiarity with Alexandrian poets, and Pontani 2005: 74, who draws attention to Plutarch's use of philological traditions.

¹⁴ For Plutarch's reverential attitude towards Egypt, see esp. *Mor.* 354D–F.

¹⁵ Regarding Aristarchus, see Schironi 2011, Schironi in the present volume.

transcended them towards philosophical and educational goals. It is thus highly significant that he parallels the scholiasts in the so-called exegetical tradition and anticipates the views of Porphyry.¹⁶ The latter two tended to reject Aristarchus' method of "athetesis", which marked a Homeric line as spurious and thus departed from Peripatetic models.¹⁷ They instead revived Aristotle's solutions and literary techniques. Plutarch emerges as a crucial witness to the development of exegetical scholarship, which is still largely unknown.¹⁸ While scholars have already noted that the exegetical scholia do not belong to the allegorical milieu of Pergamon, the evidence of Plutarch now encourages us to consider them in a Platonic context with a strong orientation towards Aristotelian scholarship.

PHILO ON HOMER

I am not primarily concerned here with Philo's allegorical readings of Homer's epics, which have often been discussed.¹⁹ Such allegorisations have resulted from Philo's particular conceptualisation of Homer as a theologian and it is therefore the latter which must first be investigated. We have to understand why and how Philo as a committed Platonist and exegete of the Jewish Scriptures embraced Homer.²⁰ That he embraced him is clear from such laudatory expressions as Homer "*the Poet*" and "Homer the poet most highly esteemed among the Greeks".²¹ Philo moreover assumed that Greeks and barbarians are raised on the poets, initially acquiring basic reading skills and then launching into a "detailed investigation" (*Congr.* 74). "The Poet" provided him not only with many winged expressions, but also with an authoritative proof-text for Jewish monotheism (*Conf.* 170).

For Philo, Homer was among the significant teachers of mankind:

¹⁶ Regarding the differences between the Alexandrian or A-scholia, and the exegetical scholia ("bT scholia"), see Schmidt 2002: 165–76; Nünlist 2009 *passim*, 2011.

¹⁷ On the method of athetesis, see Schironi 2011b; West M. 2001: 35–7, who stresses that Aristarchus relied on text-internal considerations rather than on a comparison of manuscripts.

¹⁸ For first analyses, see Erbse 1960: 171–2; Schmidt 1976, 2002; Richardson 1980.

¹⁹ See esp. Pépin 1958, 1967, 1987; Amir 1971; Lamberton 1986: 44–54; Kamesar 2004, and Berthelot in this volume.

²⁰ For a more detailed version of my argument in Hebrew, see Niehoff 2012.

²¹ *Abr.* 10, *Mut.* 178. Note that Philo does not call Homer "sacred", an epithet reserved for Moses and Plato.

For grammar teaches us to study literature in the poets and the historians, and will thus produce intelligence and wealth of knowledge (νόησιν καὶ πολυμάθειαν). It will teach us also to despise the vain delusions of our empty imagination (κεναὶ δόξαι) by showing us the calamities, which heroes and demi-heroes celebrated in such literature are said to have undergone.²²

Philo argues in this passage that epic literature teaches the truth. The failure of its heroes conveys important moral messages and provides useful lessons for the reader. Such instruction resonates with Platonic philosophy, because it protects the reader from “the vain delusions of our empty imagination”. Δόξα, of course, is a key-term in Plato’s epistemology, which distinguishes a merely temporary notion based on the senses from true insight, νόησις, derived from the mind’s contemplation of the Ideas.²³ Philo thus implies that the Homeric epics prompt intellectual and moral progress along the same lines as Plato had recommended.

Philo moreover endeavours to show that the Homeric gods live up to Platonic expectations. This is a key-element in his approach, seeing that Plato had made theological issues his main criterion for expelling Homer from the city of the philosophers. The Homeric gods, Plato argued, have nothing to do with true deity, but instead convey false images of whimsical, unstable and immoral creatures (*Rep.* 379C–380A). Homer was exposed as lying about the gods. Plato insisted that “no poet must be allowed to tell us that the ‘gods, in the likeness of strangers, many disguises assume as they visit the city of mortals’”.²⁴ Rejecting such anthropomorphic images, the true philosopher must understand that god is transcendent, perfectly good and benevolent, never submitting to change and corruption (*Rep.* 379B–382E). In a way the deity must be thought of as similar to the Ideas. In Plato’s view, the gods themselves never wished it otherwise and will not tolerate that man imagines them in concrete terms, which falsify the reality of the Divine (*Rep.* 381E–382C).

Philo discusses precisely those anthropomorphic images in the epic, which Plato had identified as prime examples of the poet’s lies. Directly taking issue with Plato’s interpretation of *Od.* 17.485, Philo makes the following comment on the “old saying” (παλαιὸς λόγος) which is still current:

The current story [about the gods disguising themselves when visiting the cities] may not be true, but it is at all events good and profitable

²² *Congr.* 15; the translations in this article are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

²³ See esp. *Pl., Rep.* 478B–E, *Phaedr.* 246A–248E; *Tim.* 28A, 69C–70E.

²⁴ *Pl., Rep.* 381D, citing *Od.* 17.485.

that it should be current" (Καὶ τάχα μὲν οὐκ ἀληθῶς, πάντως δὲ λυσιτελῶς καὶ συμφερόντως ἄδεται, *Somn.* 1.233).

While Philo admits with Plato that the Homeric story is philosophically not true, he nevertheless insists on its benefit for education. His theological interest is immediately conspicuous. Philo has changed Homer's plural formulation θεοὶ into a discrete neuter singular, τὸ θεῖον, thus rendering the poet more monotheistic and more Platonic. Moreover, Philo at once connects the issue of anthropomorphism in Homer to the same problem in the Jewish Scriptures. While "holier and more august in its notions about Him That Exists", the Bible, too, likens God to man (*Somn.* 1.234). This was done, Philo stresses, out of a longing "to provide instruction for the life of those who lack wisdom" (*ibid.*). For those "incapable" of grasping the true nature of God, especially His utter transcendence, such instruction is necessary even though it is "not true" (οὐ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν).²⁵ Homer is thus integrated into Philo's discussion of the Jewish Scriptures, seeing that the problem of anthropomorphism appears in both. The same solution is moreover offered for the two canonical texts and the educational value of concrete images is highlighted. The author of each text is thus granted the license to express his philosophical theology in any form that pleases him. The literary means of expression need to be appreciated as such, rather than being dismissed as if they were identical to the ideas themselves.

Philo's solution to the problem of anthropomorphism in *Od.* 17.485 resembles the approach of the Homeric scholiasts. One anonymous scholar asked about the verisimilitude of this line and concluded that "it is not unbelievable that one of the gods likens himself to a beggar".²⁶ Another interpreter suggested that it is left open "if he is a god".²⁷ For both Homeric scholars, however, as well as for Philo, the focus has shifted from the text itself to the reader or from the content to the author's style. Taking for granted that the ideas conveyed in a text are not identical to the form in which they are transmitted, all three of them explore the literary space that opens up between the author, his work and the interpreter. The approach to the Homeric gods consequently becomes more flexible than Plato had allowed.

²⁵ Philo, *Somn.* 1: 235

²⁶ Schol. *Od.* 17.485; the critical edition of the scholia to the *Odyssey* is now being prepared by Pontani 2007ff.

²⁷ Schol. *Od.* 17.484.

Philo and the Homeric scholiasts approached Homer in a way very different from that of Plato. Instead of dismissing the poet for telling anthropomorphic lies about the gods, they relied on Aristotelian notions of literary criticism. Aristotle had argued that language is the result of both the author's creative choice and social convention (*Poet.* 1457–61). The meaning of a word is thus not inherent, but depends on its context. A text is properly understood if its author's intention and use of language are investigated in view of his time and circumstances. One moreover has to take into account that words can change their meaning over time, usually assuming a more general signification. Metaphors are prime examples of a transfer of meaning from the concrete to the abstract (*Poet.* 1457b6). Aristotle's approach had already been embraced by the Jewish philosopher Aristobulus, who lived in Alexandria in the 2nd century B.C.E. and dealt with problems of Biblical anthropomorphisms.²⁸ Aristobulus suggested that Moses had used concrete images in order to teach a lesson to un-philosophical minds. Two centuries later Philo uses the same Aristotelian method of literary criticism to interpret both Homer and the Bible in distinctly Platonic terms. Plutarch, too, subsequently adopted Aristotelian notions of language in order to solve problems in the Homeric text by reference to the multiple meanings of words (*Mor.* 22D–E).

Philo was able to make such an argument about the Homeric lines, because he had already thought about the Bible in relation to Platonic philosophy. Confronting Plato's criticism of epic literature as a mere mimicry, Philo salvaged the canonical text of his own religious community by arguing that the Bible conveys the same philosophical truth as Plato had expounded in his dialogues. In his view, Scripture and Platonic philosophy went hand in hand. Yet the hierarchy between them had radically changed, as the following passage shows:

And indeed just as the school subjects contribute to the acquirement of philosophy, so does philosophy to the getting of wisdom. For philosophy is the practice or study of wisdom, while wisdom is "the knowledge of things divine and human" as well as their causes (*Pl., Rep.* 485a10–b3). And therefore just as the culture of the schools is the servant of philosophy, so must philosophy be the servant of wisdom. Now philosophy teaches us the control of the belly and the parts below it and control also of the tongue. Such powers of control are said to be desirable in themselves, but they will assume a grander and loftier aspect if practiced for the honour and service of God. (*Congr.* 80)

²⁸ For details, see Niehoff 2011: 58–73.

Philo offers here an innovative interpretation of Plato's definition of philosophy. Plato had argued against tradition that it is not Homer who conveys "the knowledge of things divine and human", but the philosopher who thinks independently about theology and ethics.²⁹ Philo reverses the Platonic move, submitting philosophy once more to traditional religion.³⁰ He explicitly says that morality is not desirable for its own sake, but receives its proper meaning in the service of God. Philo undoubtedly thinks here of the God of Israel. He is the ultimate object of man's epistemology as well as his guide on the way. This interpretation of Plato's definition of philosophy allows Philo to blend the Jewish religion with the philosophical theology of Plato. By reintroducing a canonical text to the philosophical discourse Philo suggests that this text conforms to Plato's standards of truth and must therefore not be dismissed as a false literary invention.

The Jewish Scriptures as well as Homer convey in Philo's opinion the same philosophical truth as that advocated by Plato. Regarding the Bible, Philo sought to show that the God of Israel is a transcendent, unchanging and truly beneficial deity. He opposed Jewish colleagues in Alexandria, who accepted a literal interpretation of the Biblical references to God's changing moods and erratic feelings.³¹ *Gen.* 6.6, for example, which says of God that He "was sorry that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him to His heart", became the object of a heated discussion. Philo insisted that the utterly transcendent God of Israel cannot change and did therefore not regret the creation of man (*Deus* 21–2). Moreover, the Bible was shown to recommend a Platonic flight from the material and inherently evil earth to heaven, as explained in the *Theaetetus*. Quoting Platonic and Biblical lines side by side, Philo offers an allegorical interpretation of ancient heroes, such as Cain, who were permanently on the run, but were at the same time granted unlimited survival (*Fuga* 58–64). God's protection of Cain is thus said to demonstrate the persistence of evil in the material realm from which the true philosopher and student of Moses altogether escapes.

Into this rich tapestry of intertextuality Philo introduces a Homeric verse relating to the monster Scylla. In his view this image, too, shows what is meant by the persistence of evil on earth:

²⁹ See Pl., *Rep.* 486A; Männlein-Robert 2002.

³⁰ Wolfson 1947: 87–114; and Sandness 2009: 71–7, stressed already Philo's preference of theology over philosophy, but did not recognise Philo's reaction to Plato's position.

³¹ *All.* 2.89, *Deus* 28, 51–6; see also Calabi 2008: 1–38.

Because, I suppose, impiety is an evil that cannot come to an end, being ever set alight and never able to be quenched, so that we may apply to wickedness the poet's words "No mortal is she [the Scylla], but a deathless ill" (*Od.* 12.118). It is deathless in the life as we know it, for in relation to the life in God it is a lifeless corpse. (*Fuga* 61)

Offering the first extant spiritual interpretation of the Scylla, Philo is able to argue that the poet, Moses and Plato were in perfect agreement regarding the nature of the world and man's role in it.³² In order to highlight the common message of these three authors, Philo quotes the Platonic lines from the *Theaetetus*, which explicitly state that "evils can never pass away, for there must always remain something antagonistic to the good" (*Theaet.* 176A). In a way, Plato's text provides the literal meaning, which Moses and Homer are said to have dressed in a more poetic and concrete form. Plato the philosopher presents the signified in its nakedness, while the legislator and the poet express the same idea in their own, more cryptic language.

Philo's achievement must be appreciated in the context of Alexandria, where Platonists prior to him are not known to have taken an interest in epic literature. While Eudorus already integrated some Aristotelian thought into the Platonic tradition, he focused on the *Categories* and the *Metaphysics*.³³ As far as the extant fragments can tell, Eudorus seems to have remained truthful to Plato in Homeric matters, leaving the poet outside the philosophical discussion. Philo thus emerges as the first known Platonist, who overcame Plato's criticism of Homer and re-integrated him into the city of philosophers. Philo was able to do so because he, as a relatively conservative Jew, was committed to maintaining the holiness of Scripture, a text of similar mythological nature as Homer's epics. In addition, Philo was familiar with the Aristotelian approach to the epics, which enjoyed considerable popularity in the Jewish community of Alexandria. While Philo rejected their radical literary perspective, which was rooted in the Aristotelian tradition, and instead adopted Platonic ideas, he still took their arguments seriously and used Aristotelian strategies to interpret both Homer and Moses as Platonic thinkers.

Philo formulated his views on Homer in the context of a series of works called the *Allegorical Commentary*, which I have interpreted as an early

³² A similar interpretation of Homer's Scylla resurfaces in Heraclitus, *Homeric Problems* 70: 11 (ed. Russell and Konstan); see also Pontani 2005b:165, note 198.

³³ For details on Eudorus' work, see Männlein-Robert and Ferrari forthcoming.

work addressing Jewish colleagues in Alexandria.³⁴ Philo developed his innovative approach in discussions within the Jewish community, which was naturally interested in the relationship between these two canonical texts. This internal context also accounts for the fact that Philo's views hardly became known among a wider pagan audience even though they were likely to have resonated very well. His Christian readers, on the other hand, regularly took a far more negative view of Homer, identifying him as a symbol of pagan polytheism.³⁵ Plutarch stands out as a Platonist from the Greek East, who re-addressed the issue of Homer in the philosophical tradition and unknowingly continued Philo's approach.

PLUTARCH ON HOMER

Homer was of central importance for Plutarch. As a relatively young father he devoted a whole treatise to poetry, focusing almost exclusively on Homer, and in addition regularly referred to epic lines throughout his voluminous work.³⁶ Plutarch's approach to the poet was explicitly anti-Stoic. He left no doubt about the fact that in his view Stoic interpreters went wrong. Cleanthes is dismissed as a childish allegorist, who revels in his "puerility", while Chrysippus is accused of petty and forced interpretations.³⁷ Cleanthes and Antisthenes are moreover shown to have manipulated the Homeric text. Instead of producing corrected versions (*παραδιοθώσεις*) they "interpolated" (*παραβάλλων*) and "rewrote" (*μεταγράφων*) Homer in their own image – a fact, which Plutarch highlights by presenting the original text side by side with the Stoic versions (*Mor.* 33C–D). As if this was not enough, Plutarch makes a special point of ridiculing Stoic interpretations by stressing that the poet never fathomed their notion of divination (*Mor.* 23D–24C). Homer, he sarcastically adds,

³⁴ For details, see Niehoff 2011: 133–151, 169–85; cf. the later and distinctly more Roman context of the *Exposition*, discussed by Niehoff 2011b.

³⁵ Clem., *Exhort.* 5–7; Orig., *CC* 7: 37, 4: 48, 1: 42; Sandness 2009: 124–59.

³⁶ Schenkeveld 1982 rightly stressed the importance of Plutarch writing as a young father to other educators. See also Plutarch's now lost work *Homeric Studies*, of which some fragments have survived (fragm. 122–27).

³⁷ *Mor.* 31E, cf. *Mor.* 34B, where Plutarch once approvingly mentions an interpretation of Chrysippus, which, however, lacks any specific characteristics of Stoic theology, instead referring to the assumption that some Homeric statements can be read as applying to additional situations. Regarding Galen's criticism of Chrysippus' hermeneutics, see Weisser in this volume.

also “says farewell” to Stoic ethics, according to which a man is either altogether righteous or altogether wicked.³⁸

Given this outspoken opposition to Stoic hermeneutics, how does Plutarch approach Homer? Like Philo, he was familiar with the division of Homer’s epics which had been standardised at the Museum.³⁹ He moreover conceives of his exegetical work as literary “criticism” and considers himself as providing “solutions” to textual problems (*Mor.* 20E). Like Philo and Strabo, Plutarch thought that the purpose of poetry resides in education (παιδείας ἔνεκα) rather than pleasure.⁴⁰ He, too, was highly aware of Plato’s criticism of Homer and offered a solution from Aristotelian literary criticism. Hinting at Homer’s expulsion from Plato’s ideal city, Plutarch insists that “close-shut gates do not preserve the city from capture”.⁴¹ If young men, especially those given to “thought and reason”, are attracted to poetry more than to strictly philosophical treatises, they must be taught how to read Homer properly (*Mor.* 14E–15A).

Plutarch proposes a method of “conjuring and reconciling” (συνάπτειν καὶ συνουκτιοῦν) Homeric lines with the doctrines of the philosophers, which “brings the poet’s work out of the realm of myth and drama and, moreover, invests its helpful sayings with seriousness”.⁴² Reading Homer with philosophical attention and solving problems in the text by literary devices, the young man will receive a foretaste of philosophy and prepare himself especially for Plato.⁴³ Indeed, while philosophers use known facts as examples of their instruction, “poets accomplish the same by themselves inventing actions and recounting mythical tales”

³⁸ *Mor.* 25C. This is the view of Chrysippus, which is attacked in more detail in *De Stoic. Repug.*, 12–3 in *Mor.* 1038A–1039D. See also *Mor.* 19E–20B, where Plutarch criticises Stoic allegorisations without attributing them to any particular interpreter.

³⁹ *Mor.* 29A, cf. Philo, *Cont.* 17; on the Alexandrian division of the epics into twenty-four songs each, see Ps.-Pl., *On Homer* 4; Nünlist 2006; West St. 1967: 18–25.

⁴⁰ *Mor.* 30E; see also Russell 1981: 84–91, who places Plutarch’s position into the context of apologetics on behalf of Homer; cf. Strabo 1.2.3, 1.2.14, 1.2.30, who formulated his views in contrast to the Alexandrian scientist, geographer and critic Eratosthenes; for details, see Fraser 1972, 1.525–9; Dueck 2000: 31–40; Biraschi 2005: 76–7.

⁴¹ *Mor.* 14E–F; see also *Mor.* 15D, 16C, where Plutarch invokes Socrates as the “champion of truth all his life”, who was induced by a dream to take up poetry.

⁴² *Mor.* 36D; see also *Mor.* 15C–F, 17D–E, 35F–36A; *contra* Konstan 2004: 7–9, 12–17, 20–1, who suggests that Plutarch assumed an indeterminacy of meaning and compares him to modern deconstructionists. In line with this interpretation Konstan considers Plutarch to be a skeptic, while I perceive of him as a mild dogmatist.

⁴³ *Mor.* 35F, 36D, 37B; *contra* von Reutern 1933: 68–74, who limits the Aristotelian influence on Plutarch by stressing that it was both indirect and contaminated by many Stoic doctrines.

(*Mor.* 20C). Lines from Homer and Hesiod are thus found to express “identical [ideas] to the dogmas (δόγμασι) of Plato in the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*” (*Mor.* 36A–B). Plutarch concludes, with another look to Plato, that the young man accepting his method of interpretation will “not be harmed by the opinion of the poets”.⁴⁴

“Seeking the useful (τὸ χρήσιμον)” in poetry must lead the young man to consider the literary qualities of the epic (*Mor.* 16A). Aristotle is mentioned as a guide to solve problems in passages “that are suspect of what is base and improper”.⁴⁵ Agamemnon, for example, who is described by Homer as having accepted the gift of a mare in return for releasing a rich man from army service (*Il.* 23.297–8), receives the following charitable interpretation:

He [Agamemnon] did right, as Aristotle says, in preferring a good mare to that type of a man. For a coward and a weakling, fallen away by wealth and soft living, is not, by Zeus, worth a dog or even an ass. (*Mor.* 32F)

Plutarch quotes Aristotle’s brief solution to the moral problem of a bribe and adds his own rather enthusiastic comment, which reinforces the argument about Agamemnon’s rational behaviour.⁴⁶ The reader is thus invited to imagine another motivation of the hero, which is not mentioned by the poet. Identifying a gap in the Homeric text and filling it in creatively, Aristotle and Plutarch are able to portray Agamemnon in a positive way. His function as an ethical role model for young men is shown not to be jeopardised by the Homeric lines in question. While Plutarch is the only extant writer in Antiquity to mention Aristotle’s name in this context, other interpreters followed the same path. Porphyry as well as an anonymous interpreter in the exegetical scholia offered the same interpretation of the Homeric lines.⁴⁷ They stressed that “Agamemnon considered a war-horse better than a man incapable of serving in the army”.⁴⁸

Other Aristotelian traces are visible in Plutarch’s treatise on poetry. Foremost among them is the recognition that poetry is a separate art,

⁴⁴ οὐκ ἄν ὑπὸ τῆς δόξης βλάπτοντο τῶν ποιητῶν (*Mor.* 18F).

⁴⁵ καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν φαύλους καὶ ἀτόπους ὑποψίας ἐχόντων (*Mor.* 32F).

⁴⁶ See also Rose 1886: 131, who identifies only the first sentence of the above quoted passage as Aristotle’s solution.

⁴⁷ Of Aristarchus only a grammatical remark on *Il.* 23.297 has survived (Schol. *Il.* 23.297A). See also Nünlist 2009: 246–8, on methods of characterisation in the exegetical scholia.

⁴⁸ Porph., *Quaest. Hom.* on *Il.* 23.296–7 (ed. Schrader 1880: 263); Schol. *Il.* 23.297b1–2 (ed. Erbse 1969–88, 5.416).

“which is not greatly concerned with the truth”, and whose nature can be grasped by comparison to tragedy.⁴⁹ Aristotle is the first known interpreter of Homer who discussed the epic in the context of tragedy and stressed their similar literary qualities.⁵⁰ This view established itself in Alexandria, where Aristarchus assumed that epic and tragedy are “strictly connected”, as well as among the exegetical scholiasts, who pointed to numerous instances of Homer’s “tragic” style of writing.⁵¹ Aristotle had moreover stressed that the poet is free to present either “the sort of things which were or are the case, the sort of things men say and think to be the case or the sort of things that should be the case”.⁵² Plutarch was familiar with this hermeneutic tradition and acknowledged that the poets may sometimes “intentionally invent” scenes, while at other times transmit what “they think and believe themselves, thus communicating to us something false”.⁵³ Indeed, neither Homer nor Sophocles felt obliged to depict historical truth:

And neither Homer nor Pindar nor Sophocles believed that these things are so (πεπεισμένοι ταῦτ' ἔχειν οὕτως), when they write . . . [for example] “on past Ocean’s streams they went (*Od.* 24.11).⁵⁴

Plutarch furthermore stresses that poets are not concerned with historical truth, but with “the likeness of truth”, which must appear “plausible” (πιθάνους) to the audience (*Mor.* 25C). The criterion of plausibility was central to Aristarchus’ work.⁵⁵ While he agreed in principle with Aristotle about the poet’s license to write in an imaginative fashion, he also went his own way by suggesting numerous atheteses, marking lines as spurious, because they appeared to him implausible.⁵⁶ It is highly significant that the exegetical scholiasts, on the other hand, followed Aristotle on this issue as closely as Plutarch. They, too, insisted that the poet either

⁴⁹ *Mor.* 17C–E; see also *Mor.* 18A–19F, 28B, *et passim*.

⁵⁰ See also Heath 2011.

⁵¹ Regarding Aristarchus, see Schironi 2009: 281–2; regarding the exegetical scholiasts, see Richardson 1980: 270–1; von Franz 1943: 14–7.

⁵² *Poet.* 1460b10; see also *Poet.* 1460b13–21; Bywater 1909: 323–4; Dupont-Roc and Lallot 1980: 387–90; Richardson 1992.

⁵³ *Mor.* 16F, see also *Mor.* 17B.

⁵⁴ Plut., *Mor.* 17C.

⁵⁵ Regarding Aristarchus’ maxim of plausibility, see esp. *Schol. Il.* 1: 100A, 19: 416–7A, 1: 129A, 2: 55A, 2: 76A, 2: 319A, 2: 667A, 3: 74A, 16: 666A; and also Lührs 1992: 167–94; Schironi 2009: 284–9.

⁵⁶ See esp. *Schol. Il.* 5:385A, *Od.* 9.279.

presents the truth or a “fantastic image of the truth”, accepting as authentic even shocking myths about the gods.⁵⁷

The notion of poetic license led Plutarch to affirm another Aristotelian maxim, namely that “poetry is a mimetic art and faculty analogous to painting”.⁵⁸ Plato, of course, first introduced the analogy of the painter, using it to dismiss the poet as an imitator of mere images, because he is removed by several degrees from the realm of the Ideas (*Rep.* 377E). Plutarch, however, does not repeat the precise Platonic formulation (γραφεὺς), but instead resorts to Aristotle’s innovative rephrasing of it. He thus speaks of the τέχνη of poetry and compares this art to that of the ζωγράφος.⁵⁹ Moreover, like Aristotle, Plutarch uses the image of the painter to illustrate that moral judgments do not apply to Homer’s poetry in a simplistic or straightforward manner. As much as we admire the accurate drawing of something ugly, because we appreciate the value of the mimetic art rather than love the ugly itself, we should also approve of poetic presentations of wicked actions, if these suit the character in question (*Mor.* 18A–B). For Plutarch, this is a central point, which he highlights for special consideration:

Since then poetry also often gives an imitative recital of base deeds or of wretched experiences and characters, the young man must not accept as true what is admired and successful therein, nor approve it as beautiful, but should simply command it as fitting and proper to the character in hand (ὡς ἐναρμόττον τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ προσώπῳ καὶ οἰκείον).⁶⁰

In this and other passages Plutarch closely follows Aristotle’s literary analysis of Homer’s epic in the 25th chapter of the *Poetics*.⁶¹ Aristotle had suggested solving problems of immoral action in the epic by examining “not just if the deed or utterance is good or evil, but also to look at the identity of the agent and speaker, at the person with whom he deals, and the occasion, means and purpose of what is done” (*Poet.* 1461a5–8). Aristotle applied these theoretical insights to the interpretation of Paris, who had provoked much criticism among ancient interpreters, because

⁵⁷ See esp. Schol. *Il.* 14.342–4bT; see also Richardson 1980: 271–2; von Franz 1943: 18–9, and Nünlist 2009: 185–93, discussing the notion of plausibility in the exegetical scholia.

⁵⁸ ὑπογράφοντες τὴν ποιητικὴν ὅτι μιμητικὴ τέχνη καὶ δύναμις ἐστὶν ἀντίστροφος τῇ ζωγραφίᾳ (*Mor.* 17F).

⁵⁹ Cf. Arist., *Poet.* 1460b7, 23.

⁶⁰ *Mor.* 18B; see also *Mor.* 18C–F.

⁶¹ See also *Mor.* 20D–E.

he was depicted by Homer as escaping from the battle field and making love to Helen (*Il.* 3.441). The following question had been raised:

Why did he [Homer] present Paris in such a miserable situation with the result that he is not only unfit for the duel, but even escapes and immediately thinks of sexual pleasures? (Arist. *Quaest. Hom.* on *Il.* 3.441, ed. Rose 1887:124)

Aristotle solved this difficulty by stressing that the portrayal is “suitable (εἰκότως)”. Paris initially has an “erotic disposition” and then further acts on it (*ibid.*). Adding a psychological explanation, Aristotle suggests that situations of stress, such as a war, often increase a man’s erotic desires. “The war”, he concludes, “did this to that one [Paris]” (*ibid.*). It is striking that Plutarch, an anonymous exegetical scholiast and Porphyry interpreted the Homeric scene in exactly the same way as Aristotle had done, adding an emphasis on the educational value of the characterisation. Plutarch identifies Paris as a prime example of an “undisciplined and adulterous man” (*Mor.* 18F). Homer’s educational message, however, must not be overlooked on this account. Having fashioned only Paris in this manner, “it is clear” to Plutarch that Homer “classes such sensuality as a shame and reproach”, which appropriately teaches the young reader about his own life (*ibid.*). The exegetical scholiast similarly raises the problem of why Paris was portrayed “with such shame”, solving the problem by insisting that Homer thus “exposes his sensuality, the patron of all evils”.⁶² Finally, Porphyry directly quotes Aristotle’s solution, adding that Homer wishes to show “what kind of person Paris was”.⁶³ Homer thus “characterizes (χαρακτηρίζει) by these actions the nature of the source of evils, which pertains to all men through licentiousness” (*ibid.*).

Plutarch moreover suggests to his readers that “one must investigate whether the poet himself gives any hints against the things mentioned to indicate that they are untenable by him”.⁶⁴ Homer is praised for having left much clearer hints of this sort than any other writer, because “he discredits in advance (προδιαβάλλει) the base and praises beforehand (προσυνίστησι) the useful in what is said” (*Mor.* 19B). Plutarch is perfectly aware of the fact that the poet does not explicitly teach morality, but insists “that this

⁶² Schol. *Il.* 3.441Γ.

⁶³ Porph., *Quaest. Hom.* on *Il.* 3.441 (ed. Schrader 66). Porphyry also cites traditions close to the exegetical scholia in Schol. *Il.* 3.441a.

⁶⁴ Προσεκτέον εἴ τινας ὁ ποιητὴς αὐτὸς ἐμφάσεις δίδωσι κατὰ τῶν λεγομένων ὡς δυσχεραينوμένων ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ (*Mor.* 19A).

kind of teaching is silently present in Homer (παρὰ δ' Ὀμήρῳ σιωπώμενον ἔστι).⁶⁵ Intimations of Homer's value judgements can be found, according to Plutarch, in authorial comments, such as the introduction of a speaker as offering a "gentle and winning speech" or as restraining someone "with mild words".⁶⁶ *Vice versa*, the reader is alerted to wicked actions by introductory formula, such as someone speaking with "vehement words", or by direct authorial remarks on "baneful deeds" or "bad actions".⁶⁷ In these rather subtle ways Homer communicates to the reader clear moral messages and lessons for life.

In the above-mentioned passages Plutarch assumes Homer's distinct personality as a writer as well as his characteristic style, which can be identified by studying his whole work from within itself and comparing different lines. This view of the epic as a closed literary corpus directly echoes the work of Aristarchus, who was indebted in this respect to Aristotle. Whether or not the Alexandrian scholar ever pronounced the famous principle, preserved by Porphyry, that "Homer is to be elucidated from Homer", he paid special attention to the internal coherence of the epic as well as the particular style of its author.⁶⁸ Aristarchus focused Homeric studies even more than Aristotle on internal textual interpretation. Arguing that both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* stem from Homer's pen, he inquired into their linguistic and poetic characteristics as well as their presentation of dramatic figures. Homer's ἔθος, or literary habit, became a key notion.⁶⁹ Moreover, Aristarchus assumed that the poet had left significant things unsaid and that the reader is invited to fill in these gaps by applying the principle κατὰ τὸ σιωπώμενον.⁷⁰

Unfortunately, we no longer possess Aristarchus' comments on those Homeric lines which Plutarch presented as examples of the poet's hints at his own value judgments. It is unthinkable, however, that the

⁶⁵ *Mor.* 19E. Note also that Plutarch speaks of Homer as "intimating his own judgment (ὑπειπών)" and "as though adding a sort of verdict" (*Mor.* 19C–D).

⁶⁶ *Mor.* 19B, referring to *Od.* 6.148 and *Il.* 2.189; see also Nünlist 2009: 317, who compares Plutarch's position to that of Porphyry. Plutarch's comments assume that speeches provide clear expressions of character, an assumption shared by the exegetical scholiasts as well as Aristotle, on the latter two, see Richardson 1980: 272–3.

⁶⁷ *Mor.* 19C–D, referring to *Il.* 1.223, 23.24, *Od.* 8.329.

⁶⁸ For details, see Fraser 1972, 1: 464; Porter 1992: 70–80; Nünlist 2009: 180–1.

⁶⁹ See esp. Schol. *Il.* 10: 10A, 14: 37A, 10: 515A; 5: 269A; 9: 338A, 2: 435A, 3: 152A, 6: 160A, 6: 400A, 7: 149A, 8: 107A, 14: 58A, 16: 123A, 22: 322A; note also that Aristarchus accused his predecessor Zenodotus of ignoring certain Doric forms in Homer's Greek and instead Hellenizing his language (Schol. *Il.* 1: 56A, 1: 68A, 3: 99A, 3: 206A).

⁷⁰ See e.g. Schol. *Il.* 21: 17A; see also Nünlist 2009: 157–173; Meinel 1915.

Alexandrian scholar would have used these Homeric lines to draw such explicit moral lessons as Plutarch did in his pronouncement that “nothing spoken with anger or severity can be good” (*Mor.* 19C). It is precisely this move from Alexandrian scholarship to a more overtly educational approach to the epic, which characterises Plutarch. By a stroke of luck we are able to determine that Porphyry and some anonymous scholiasts in the exegetical tradition took precisely the same step. Porphyry confronts the difficulty of Achilles abusing Agamemnon and asserts that “Homer denounces the wicked deeds contrary to virtue”.⁷¹ Similarly, an exegetical scholiast addresses the image of Athena persuading Pandarus to eject the fateful bow, which restarted the Trojan War (*Il.* 4.85–104). The interpreter uses the Homeric description of Pandarus as having “folly in his heart” in order to argue that the poet “teaches us not to rely on a god when he agrees to what is wrong”.⁷² More generally, the exegetical scholiasts were as keen as Plutarch to identify hints at the poet’s “own judgment (τὴν ἰδίαν γνώμην)”.⁷³

The issue of character portrayal also prompted Plutarch to criticise Aristarchus regarding the presentation of Phoenix:⁷⁴

Now Aristarchus removed (ἔξεῖλε) these words through fear (φοβηθείς). Yet they are right (ὀρθῶς) in view of the occasion, Phoenix teaching Achilles what sort of thing anger is and how many things men dare to do from temper, if they do not use reason or are persuaded by those exhorting them. (*Mor.* 26F–27A)

The notion of Aristarchus removing Homeric words out of fear is rather surprising and contradicts what we know about his methods of text criticism. Unlike Zenodotus, Aristarchus was generally committed to preserving the text, even if he considered a particular verse inauthentic and marked it thus in the margins of the manuscript. Von Reuterer solved the problem by suggesting that Plutarch expressed himself inaccurately and actually meant the well-known method of athetesis.⁷⁵ Plutarch, however, was familiar with the technical vocabulary of Alexandrian criticism and referred once to the “marginal signs” by which suspect lines had been

⁷¹ *Quaest. Hom.* on *Il.* 1.225 (ed. Schrader 10).

⁷² Schol. *Il.* 4.104aT.

⁷³ Schol. *Il.* 1.430bT; see also von Franz 1943: 36–7; Sluiter 1997, who points to pedagogic tendencies among a variety of Ancient commentators on Homer.

⁷⁴ These lines are no longer preserved in the standard Homeric text, but some editions have printed them on the authority of Plutarch at *Il.* 9.458–61.

⁷⁵ Reuterer 1933: 37.

marked.⁷⁶ Moreover, when he speaks in another context about “removing” (ἐξελεῖν) a line from Hesiod, he contrasts this procedure to “inserting” (ἐμβάλειν) a verse to Homer’s epic, thus indicating that he refers to real text emendations (*Thest.* 10.2). In the above-quoted passage we furthermore deal with lines which are only known to Plutarch and are not attested anywhere else. Stephanie West rightly argued that there should have been some echo of these lines in the scholia, if they were indeed an original part of the epic.⁷⁷ As this is not the case, she concluded that Plutarch knew the longer text from an external, perhaps cyclical tradition and assumed that Aristarchus had shortened the text. It is highly significant for his overall approach to Alexandrian scholarship that Plutarch attributes ideological reasons to Aristarchus. He charges the foremost Homeric scholar of emending the text “through fear”. Plutarch seems to imply that Aristarchus worried about the negative impression that Greek heroes may evoke in the reader. Phoenix almost committed patricide, subduing his anger only out of considerations for his reputation and thus failed to provide a moral example. His friendly appeal to Achilles would, Plutarch insinuates, have been equally disturbing to Aristarchus.

Plutarch almost uses Aristarchus as a straw-man to reject the philological approach characteristic of the Museum and to contrast it to his own hermeneutics, which insist on the moral value of the epic. In the above case, he stresses, Homer is concerned to show the danger and nature of anger, using a realistic portrayal in order to convey a lesson to real man. Plutarch has touched here on an important issue, namely the image of the Greek heroes, especially that of Achilles. Immediately preceding the above-quoted passage Plutarch discussed Achilles’ character, pointing to his contradictory traits. Sometimes he behaves “rightly, moderately and properly”, while at other times he loses his temper and speaks boastfully to Agamemnon.⁷⁸ Plutarch praises his sense of repentance and celebrates his gradual control of anger, stressing that Homer thus teaches moderation.⁷⁹ Looking at the overall epic, Plutarch is satisfied with the portrayal of Achilles, who in his view attains a sufficient degree of self-control.

⁷⁶ παράσημα (Pl., *Plat. Quaest.* 1010D).

⁷⁷ West S. 2000; cf. West M. 2001: 208, 251–2, who suggested that Plutarch may have relied on Seleucus.

⁷⁸ *Mor.* 26 C–E, referring to *Il.* 1.59, 1.90, 1.220.

⁷⁹ *Mor.* 26E, 29B; note that Plutarch proceeds similarly with regard to Agamemnon, who is criticised as being most ridiculous on one occasion, yet dignified and kingly on another (*Mor.* 26E).

Challenged by the loss of his dear friend Patroclus, he does not mourn to the extent of becoming “inactive and neglecting his duties” (*Mor.* 33A). Receiving Briseis near the end of his life, he does not rush to enjoy love’s pleasures (*ibid.*).

Plutarch is able to appreciate the complexity of Achilles’ character in the Homeric epic, because he relies on a sense of the inner Self, which had been inspired by the ethic theories of Panaetius.⁸⁰ Avoiding orthodox Stoic notions, Plutarch highlights individuality and regular self-examination as part of making progress towards the goal of tranquility and moral perfection. Achilles is appreciated because even though “given to anger and of a rough nature, he is not blind to his own weakness” and resolves to “to exercise caution and be on his guard against possible sources [of anger]” (*Mor.* 31B). Moreover, Plutarch stresses with Panaetius the development of a person over the span of a whole life.

Plutarch’s view of Achilles significantly differs from that of Aristarchus, who solved many problems of his image by athetesis. His boastful words to Agamemnon, which Plutarch used to show the dangers of anger, seem to have been less than acceptable to Aristarchus. While his own comments on *Il.* 1.128, 166 are no longer extant, he marked Agamemnon’s somewhat cowardly response as spurious, “because they do not suit Agamemnon”.⁸¹ Moreover, the lines portraying Achilles in his deep grief over the death of Patroclus are athetised, because they overly expose his sorrow.⁸² Other lines are marked as spurious because “they are contrary to Achilles’ dignity (παρὰ τὴν ἀξίαν Ἀχιλλεῶς)”.⁸³ These interpretations indicate that Aristarchus was not willing to envision the foremost of the Greek heroes as morally flawed. Symbolising Greek culture and values, he had to be freed of compromising “additions” by a supposedly later editor, who no longer understood Homer’s poetry.

The scholiasts in the exegetical tradition as well as Porphyry, by contrast, adopt a similar approach as Plutarch and recall that Aristotle already identified Achilles’ character as “irregular”.⁸⁴ The exegetical scholiasts

⁸⁰ Regarding Panaetius, see esp. Cic., *Off.* 1.107–112; Sen., *Ira* 1.7.1–1.9.4; 2.2.2, 2.3.1–2; Sorabji 2006: 115–36, 157–71; Sorabji 2000: 55–75. Plutarch and Seneca were familiar with Panaetius’ ideas on the Self, each developing them in his own direction (for details, see Gill 1994: 4624–31; Inwood, 2005: 23–64).

⁸¹ Schol. *Il.* 1.133–4A.

⁸² Schol. *Il.* 24.6–9A.

⁸³ Schol. *Il.* 22.393–4A.

⁸⁴ Schol. *Il.* 24.569bT; Porph., *Quaest. Hom. Il.* 24.569 (ed. Schrader 277); see also Schol. *Il.* 18.98bT, where a scholiast asks “why did he [Homer] depict him [Achilles] as so irregu-

moreover reject the athetesis of the lines describing his grief, insisting in no uncertain terms that such a procedure bespeaks frivolity and shows a lack of understanding.⁸⁵ This is so because Patroclus was Achilles' associate in virtue and his loss must therefore have provoked deep grief. While Porphyry's comments on these lines are no longer extant, we do know that he justified Achilles' cruel treatment of Hector's corpse as resulting "not from cruelty", but from a sense of revenge, seeing that Hector had previously maltreated Paris.⁸⁶ It is significant that Porphyry supports his interpretation by an overall study of character, comparing Achilles' behaviour towards Hector with his much milder treatment of Eetion's corpse (*Il.* 6.417). Like Plutarch, he had a keen interest in character, yet did not apply the notion of individual Self and gradual progress to the solution of Homeric problems. This philosophical idea had enabled Plutarch to solve the problem of Achilles' image in such a sophisticated manner.

One last aspect of Plutarch's discussion of Homeric characters deserves our attention: he interprets the epics in light of a clear dichotomy between the good Greeks and the barbarian Trojans. In a revealing passage of his treatise on poetry he lists characteristic "differences between the two peoples" (*Mor.* 29D–30D). While the Trojans advance with shouting and confidence, the Greeks are silent and cautious. While prudence is typical of a Greek and a man of refinement, as demonstrated by Diomedes, the Trojans and Hector foremost among them are easily affected by emotion. The Trojans tend towards prostrations and easily start begging, whereas the Greeks do not make such supplications, because they consider such behaviour "as a trait of barbarian peoples" (*Mor.* 30C). Such stereotypes about the prudent, restrained and self-respecting Greeks had already been celebrated by Aeschylus in his influential play *The Persians*.⁸⁷ Subsequently, they were also applied to the interpretation of Homer's epics. While Eratosthenes in 2nd century B.C.E. Alexandria had insisted on a universal vision of shared culture, the more nationalistic tendencies prevailed and inform many interpretations in the exegetical scholia. As N. J. Richardson aptly put it: "this notion (ἀεὶ φιλέλλην

lar in character?"; see also Richardson 1980: 273; Nünlist 2009: 249–50; and Schmidt 2002: 173, who stressed the difference between the A Scholia and the bT Scholia with regard to athetesis.

⁸⁵ Schol. *Il.* 24.6–9bT, see also more critical comments there.

⁸⁶ Porph. *Quaest. Hom. Il.* 24.15–6 (ed. Schrader 267–8).

⁸⁷ On the construction of the barbarian Other in Aeschylus' play, see esp. Hall 1989.

ὁ ποιητής) seldom appears in the A Scholia, whereas in runs through the BT Scholia".⁸⁸

Like Philo, Plutarch wishes to show that the gods of his religious tradition conform to Platonic expectations. For this purpose he generally quotes Homeric lines which support his philosophical approach to religion.⁸⁹ In his treatise on poetry Plutarch moreover offers a solution to verses that do not conform: they can be interpreted by using another device of Alexandrian scholarship, namely inquiries into contradictions. While Aristotle in the extant fragments of his *Aporemata Homerica* addressed two problems of contradiction, this subject was not yet central to him and is thus not discussed in the 25th chapter of his *Poetics*.⁹⁰ Aristarchus, by contrast, focused on an internal text analysis and made considerations of consistency a pivotal point of his research.⁹¹ While he solved some problems of contradiction by literary devices, he acknowledged the real contradiction between other lines and consequently rejected some of them as spurious.⁹² Philo had already applied this typically Alexandrian method of inquiry to the Biblical text, solving textual problems by offering allegorical interpretations with spiritual messages.⁹³ Plutarch adopts a similar approach, using contradictions between Homeric lines for his particular educational purposes. Unlike Philo, however, he does not regularly resort to allegories of the soul, but instead suggests that only one of the contradictory lines expresses the poet's real point of view, while the other serves dramatic purposes. As Plutarch puts it:

But whenever anything said sounds preposterous (ἀτόπως), and no solution is found close at hand, we must nullify these by something said elsewhere by them [the poets] to the contrary effect (τοῖς ἀλλαχόθι πρὸς τοῦναντίον εἰρημένοις), and we should not be offended or angry at the poet (*Mor.* 20E, transl. G. P. Goold)

Following these theoretical considerations, Plutarch shows how Homer's overly anthropomorphic accounts of the gods, such as their being cast forth by one another or being wounded by men, must be balanced by

⁸⁸ Richardson 1980: 273; see also Schmidt 2002: 173.

⁸⁹ See e.g. Pl., *De Is. and Os.*, *Mor.* 351D–E, 361A–C; *De E. Mor.* 393C–D, 394A.

⁹⁰ Arist. *Apor. Hom.* fragm. 146, 149.

⁹¹ See esp. *Schol. Il.* 4: 339A; 8: 562A; 7: 330A; and also Schironi 2009: 288–90; van der Valk 1963–1964, 2: 417–24; Lührs 1992: 13–17, 194–202.

⁹² For examples of Aristarchus' atheteses on account of contradictions, see esp. *Schol. Il.* 2: 45A, 20: 269–72A.

⁹³ For details, see Niehoff 2011: 139–45.

explicit references to their carefree existence.⁹⁴ Juxtaposing such passages as *Il.* 15.14–33 to *Il.* 6.138 and *Il.* 23.525, Plutarch declares that only the latter contain “sound opinions of the gods” (*ibid.*). The other, more problematic lines, on the other hand, are explained with Aristotle as “having been fabricated to excite men’s astonishment (πρὸς ἔκπληξιν ἀνθρώπων).”⁹⁵ Looking for Homer’s “real” views on the gods, Plutarch is thus able to show that there is no tension between Platonic philosophy and theology, on the one hand, and Homeric religion, on the other.

CONCLUSION

Philo and Plutarch have emerged as congenial Platonists in the Imperial Age, who were both concerned to reintegrate Homer’s epic into the philosophical discourse. While Philo did so within his overall interpretation of the Jewish Bible, Plutarch devoted a whole treatise on poetry mostly to Homer. While both thinkers overcame Plato’s philosophical reservations about the poet by using Aristotelian literary devices, Plutarch clearly went much further than Philo in the direction of literary criticism. He not only compared the epics to tragedy and cited previous scholars, such as Aristarchus, but also offered the first known theoretical discussion after Aristotle’s *Poetics*. Whereas Philo is the first known Platonist to embrace Homer as a philosopher, Plutarch closely resembles the exegetical scholiasts as well as Porphyry, throwing crucial new light on the background of this unique type of scholia as well as Neo-Platonic hermeneutics.

Philo and Plutarch both focused on the author, interpreting his text from within itself. They had a keen interest in the reader as an interpreter who is personally addressed by the author and invited to make moral progress as a result of reading the epics. The special contribution of these two Platonists can be further appreciated by comparison to Ps.-Plutarch’s *Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer*. At first sight this author shares some insights with Plutarch, especially his distinction between the author and the dramatic characters as well as his emphasis on the educational value of representing bad action.⁹⁶ Yet his overall approach to Homer is remarkably different from that of Plutarch. Rather than trying to understand the text from within itself, Ps.-Plutarch judges the poet by external

⁹⁴ *Mor.* 20E–F.

⁹⁵ *Mor.* 20F; cf. *Arist., Poet.* 1460b25; see also Nünlist 2009: 278–9.

⁹⁶ *Vit. Hom.* 5–6; see also Hillgruber 1994: 73–6, 94–8.

criteria and seeks to show that Homer knew “every kind of wisdom” (*Vit. Hom.* 6). While Plutarch studied the epics with special attention to problems arising from the text itself, Ps.-Plutarch typically opens the discussion by stating what is accepted as true and then shows that Homer knew this before everybody else.⁹⁷ Homer is thus examined for his knowledge of natural science and geography, theology as well as arithmetic and music.⁹⁸ In all these areas he is found to be impressively knowledgeable and thus relevant to Ps.-Plutarch’s own time.

Ps.-Plutarch concludes his treatise with a remark that has puzzled modern scholars, stating that his high appreciation of Homer is further corroborated by the fact that some “have even found in his poetry all the things he did not himself think to include” (*Vit. Hom.* 218). Ps.-Plutarch is willing to accept the idea that the interpreters of the epics may read into the text whatever they like, thus ignoring Homer’s own intention. He himself takes the epics to express the contradictory doctrines of the different schools.⁹⁹ This position closely echoes the approach of the Stoics, who also sought ancient wisdom in the epics. Ignoring Homer’s intention, they felt entitled to “translate” his lines into topical terms of natural science.¹⁰⁰ Given this hermeneutic orientation, it is not surprising that Ps.-Plutarch most frequently identifies the Stoics as followers of Homer. Most notably, their notion of fate and divination was in his view shared by Homer as well as their physics and ethics.¹⁰¹ Plutarch, as we recall, had made a special point of stressing that Homer “says farewell” to Stoic ethics and generally opposed their world-view.

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⁹⁷ See e.g. *Vit. Hom.* 6, 92, 151, 218; for a similar approach in rabbinic literature, see Paz in this volume.

⁹⁸ See esp. *Vit. Hom.* 107–10, 112–20, 145–49.

⁹⁹ See esp. *Vit. Hom.* 134–7; see also Keaney and Lamberton 1996: 12–3, who pointed already to the diversity of doctrines expressed in *Vit. Hom.*

¹⁰⁰ For details, see Boys-Stones 2001; for a discussion of a similar approach in rabbinic literature and the Second Sophistic, see Furstenberg in this volume.

¹⁰¹ *Vit. Hom.* 115, 119, 127, 130, 134, 136.

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PHILO AND THE ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION OF HOMER
IN THE PLATONIC TRADITION (WITH AN EMPHASIS
ON PORPHYRY'S *DE ANTRO NYMPHARUM*)

Katell Berthelot

Much has been written on Philo's allegorical interpretation of the Bible and numerous studies have shown the similarities as well as the differences between his exegesis and the Stoics' allegorical method known in particular through Heraclitus' *Homeric Problems*.¹ Philo's philosophical affinities with the Academy have been acknowledged to a growing extent² and the connections between Philo's allegorical interpretation and that of Middle or Neo-Platonic authors have therefore come under scrutiny as well.³ In his book *Homer the Theologian*, in particular, Robert Lamberton dedicates a few pages to Philo, and so does Luc Brisson in *Sauver les mythes*, albeit in a much briefer way;⁴ but more research needs to be done on that topic. In this article, I wish to analyse Philo's affinities with the Neo-Platonic allegorical readings of Homer, and to show that even if several aspects of Philo's allegorical reading of the Bible may be compared to the Stoic use of allegory, Philo can nevertheless be considered closer to the Neo-Platonic tradition of allegorical interpretation that will later be found under the pen of Porphyry, than to the Stoic one.

¹ See Bréhier 1908: 37–39; Pépin 1958: 231–242; Amir 1984; Dawson 1992: 73–126; Dillon 1994; Long 1997 (in his view, Heraclitus was not a Stoic); Matusova 2010, who summarises the history of research and analyses in a very insightful way the problems raised by the theory of a Stoic influence on Philo's allegorical exegesis. On the importance and the meaning of allegory in Stoicism, see in particular Lévy 2004, with a summary of recent debates. For a detailed analysis of Philo's approach of Scriptures, including the way he combines allegorical interpretations with scholarly inquiries into textual problems, see Niehoff 2011.

² Notably thanks to John Dillon, David Runia, and Carlos Lévy.

³ See in particular Dillon 1983. For a survey of these attempts among Philonic scholars, see Matusova 2010, 14–16. See also her illuminating analysis of the affinities between Aristobulus' and Philo's allegorical interpretation of the Bible and the tradition of the allegorical interpretation of the Orphic *hieroi logoi*, which is first found in the Derveni papyrus, as well as her comparison of Philo's allegorical reading of the Bible with the allegorical interpretation of the Pythagorean symbols among Neo-Pythagorean or Neo-Platonic writers (on which see also below).

⁴ See Lamberton 1986: 44–54; Brisson 1996: 88–90.

I shall first compare Philo's and the Platonic school's knowledge and use of Homer in the Roman period (I will use the term Platonist or Neo-Platonist in a broad sense to include both Pythagorising Platonists—such as Numenius—and Middle or Neo-Platonic writers such as the author of the *Anonymous Commentary to Plato's Theaetetus*,⁵ Plutarch, Porphyry, Plotinus, etc.). Secondly, I shall compare a few characteristics of Philo's allegorical exegesis of the Bible with the allegorical interpretation of the Homeric corpus in Neo-Platonic writings in general and in Porphyry's *On the Cave of the Nymphs* in particular (even though the latter was of course written much later than Philo's works).

I. PHILO'S KNOWLEDGE AND USE OF HOMER COMPARED TO THE PLATONISTS' KNOWLEDGE AND USE OF THE POET'S WORKS

Plato's criticism of Homer and of poets in general is well known.⁶ The allegorical interpretation of Homer therefore did not develop first and foremost in the Academy,⁷ but it eventually did, maybe under the influence of Neo-Pythagoreanism. Plato himself engaged in the creation of myths, such as the myth of Er or the myth of the cave in the *Republic*, for instance. An allegorical interpretation of Platonic myths developed as well, and it was often combined with the allegorical interpretation of Homer. The use of Homer's work for the purpose of interpreting Plato, of course, strongly differentiates the Neo-Platonic approach from that of the Stoics, as Heraclitus' attacks against Plato in his *Homeric Problems* abundantly show.⁸

The purpose of the Neo-Platonists' exegesis of Homer was twofold: first, they defended Homer against a criticism that, with the passing of time, became increasingly Christian—a fact which led Neo-Platonists to defend Homer not only for the sake of the Homeric corpus but also in order to defend Greek pagan culture and religion in general. Second, Neo-Platonists used Homer in their attempt to explain Plato's writings and to show the truth of his teaching.

Where does Philo stand in this regard?

⁵ On Philo and the *Anonymous Commentary*, see Runia 1986.

⁶ See in particular the end of Book 2 in the *Republic*.

⁷ According to Diogenes Laertius (2.11), Metrodorus of Lampsacus (5th century B.C.E.) was the first to study Homer's "physical doctrine." Metrodorus apparently used physical allegory in connection with gods and heroes in the Homeric epic. See Long 1996: 61–62.

⁸ See for instance §§4 and 76–79, in Russell and Konstan 2005: 7, 123–129.

1. *Philo As a Supporter of Homer*

First, although Philo could obviously not defend Homer as one of the main representatives of Greek paganism, he clearly stands by the Stoic or the Neo-Platonic writers who defended Homer against those who accused the poet of having written immoral and impious stories about the gods. One simply needs to refer to the passage from *De Providentia* (2.40–41) reporting a discussion between Philo and Alexander, a discussion in which Philo explicitly answers charges of this kind and argues that Hesiod and Homer must be read allegorically. It should be underlined, though, that Philo at times expresses fierce criticism of Greek myths in other passages of his work,⁹ but he never attacks Homer himself. On the contrary, Philo often refers to Homer in extremely laudatory terms, describing him for instance as “the greatest and the most well-known poet” (*Conf.* 4);¹⁰ however, he refrains from calling Homer “divine.”¹¹

2. *Philo's Use of Homeric Verses to Corroborate his Interpretation of Scriptures*

Second, just as the Neo-Platonists would quote Homer as a kind of proof text in their commentaries on the Platonic corpus, Philo sometimes uses Homeric verses in order to support or corroborate his interpretation of Scriptures.¹² Let us recall that he has a predecessor: in a paragraph on the holiness of the seventh day, the Jewish philosopher and exegete from the 2nd century B.C.E., Aristobulus, quoted verses which he attributed to Homer (either by mistake or as a deliberate forgery).¹³ Homeric verses were thus considered by some Jewish writers a convenient tool in some exegetical or apologetic debates.

⁹ See for instance the beginning of *De Opificio Mundi, Praem.* 8 or *Aet.* 57–59; see also Philo's comments on the story of Oedipus in *Spec.* 3.15.

¹⁰ See also *Abr.* 10 and *Mutat.* 179.

¹¹ In *Provid.* 2.39, Alexander himself describes Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Empedocles as theologians and “divine” men (*divini viri* in Aucher's translation of the Armenian text).

¹² On Philonic exegesis and Platonic commentaries, see Dillon 1983, in which he argues that Philo and the Neo-Platonists share a similar tradition of commentary going back to the Stoics. See also D. T. Runia 1986: 101–103.

¹³ See Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 13.12.13–15 and Clement, *Stromata* 5.14.107; Holladay 1995: 188–189. On Philo's use of Homer to support his interpretation of biblical texts or his philosophical views, see also Dawson 1992: 109; Koskenniemi 2010: 305–311, 322; Berthelot 2011.

In *De Fuga* (§61), while commenting on Genesis 4:15—about the sign God placed on Cain to prevent him from being killed—Philo explains that impiety, symbolised by Cain,

is an evil that cannot come to an end, being ever set alight and never able to be quenched, so that we may fitly apply to wickedness the poet's words: 'No mortal is she, but a deathless ill' (*Od.* 12.118). It is in life as we know it that it is 'deathless,' for in relation to the life in God it is a lifeless corpse, 'more utter refuse than dung,' as one has said.¹⁴

In this passage, Philo quotes the *Odyssey* 12.118, as well as a saying attributed to Heraclitus of Ephesus.¹⁵ In the context of the *Odyssey*, the expression "a deathless ill" refers to the monster Scylla. Philo therefore offers a double allegorical interpretation of Scylla and Cain as impiety or vice. Paradoxically enough, the quotation of the Homeric verse, which can be connected to the biblical passage through the idea of an absence of death, creates some problems since it suggests that Cain will not die at all, not simply that other human beings will not kill him. Philo therefore hastens to add that it is only insofar as one speaks about life in the body that vice cannot die, whereas in the realm of life "in God," vice or impiety have no existence at all. This passage shows that Philo is so familiar with Homeric verses or expressions, which come so naturally to his mind, that he quotes them even when they tend to complicate his hermeneutical task. This passage also offers an example of the way in which Philo could produce or refer to an allegorical reading of Homer along with his allegorical interpretation of Scriptures.

Along the same lines, Philo sometimes even quotes Homeric verses with a clear polytheistic connotation to support his interpretation of biblical stories. This is the case in *Quaestiones in Genesin* (4.2), in which Philo comments on the three angels' visit to Abraham, and more specifically on Genesis 18:2. After justifying and explaining the appearance of singular forms alternatively with plural forms in the biblical text as well as the reference to a single speaker followed by a reference to three men—meaning that Abraham excelled both in piety towards God and in kindness towards human beings—Philo adds that some "have gone astray in their beliefs." That mention is unclear, but it implies that the biblical story was discredited by some as being inconsistent and lent itself to criticism. To show how wrong this opinion is, Philo refers to Homer:

¹⁴ Trans. by G. H. Whitaker and F. H. Colson, LCL, 43.

¹⁵ See Diels 1906²: 1.76, fragment 96.

As the clever and considerably learned Homer with beauty of sound describes the conduct of life, it is not right to be harmfully arrogant, for he says that the Deity in the likeness of a beautiful human form is believed to appear many times, (in this) not diverging from the belief of a polytheist. His verses are as follows: 'And yet the gods in the likeness of strangers from other lands, in all kinds of form go about unknown, seeing and beholding the many enmities of men and their lawlessness and also their good laws' (*Od.* 17.485).¹⁶

Although Philo cannot agree with the plural ("the gods") in the Homeric passage, he nevertheless finds it worth quoting alongside the biblical text he is commenting on, and compliments Homer on his useful statement, which is meant to warn human beings not to behave unjustly, but also confirms that Abraham was worthy of praise for the way he reacted to the divine apparition. In a passage from *De Somniis* (1.233) which deals with Genesis 31:13, Philo quotes the same Homeric verses but does not mention Homer by name: "Indeed an old saying is still current that the deity goes the round of the cities, in the likeness now of this man now of that man, taking note of wrongs and transgressions." Philo then comments: "The current story may not be a true one, but it is at all events good and profitable (for us) that it should be current."¹⁷ This is the extent to which Philo allows himself to criticise Homer.

3. *Philo's Knowledge of Interpretations of Homer That Are Also Found in Neo-Platonic Writings*

Third, not only does Philo quote Homeric verses or expressions in numerous passages of his work but, as several scholars have shown, he has a good knowledge of Greek allegorical explanations of Homer and sometimes appropriates them for his own exegetical purposes.¹⁸ Very few of

¹⁶ Trans. by R. Marcus, LCL, 273–274. The Armenian text is unclear and Marcus' translation differs to a great extent from the Latin translation by Aucher rendered into French by Mercier (1984: 157–159) as: "De même le sévère Homère à la grande science expose avec harmonie la façon de se comporter, à savoir qu'il ne convient pas de s'enorgueillir à son détriment [i.e., *au détriment d'Abraham*], car, dit-il, assimilant la divinité (à un homme), certains pensent que, souvent, elle est apparue avec des formes humaines belles et ils n'abandonnent pas la croyance au polythéisme. (...)"

¹⁷ Trans. by G. H. Whitaker and F. H. Colson, LCL, 421.

¹⁸ See Lamberton 1986: 49: "Although Philo's references and allusions to Homer are many and his quotations of Homer—generally not identified as such—are frequent, the direct evidence for an allegorical understanding of the passages cited is slight. Most of his citations of Homer are purely rhetorical and decorative, and give little indication of what Philo may have thought the lines meant—if anything—beyond the literal. *Nevertheless,*

these allegorical explanations, however, can be considered exclusively shared by Philo and the Platonists. A case in point is the interpretation of Hagar and Sarah as the preliminary or encyclical studies on the one hand, philosophy or wisdom on the other—an allegory analysed at length by Monique Alexandre in her introduction to the French edition of *De Congressu*, and analysed by Yehoshua Amir as well.¹⁹ Indeed, this interpretation is drawn from an allegorical reading of Penelope and her maid-servants that does not belong to a specific Academic or Neo-Platonic tradition of interpretation. The reference to this allegorical reading in Pseudo-Plutarch's dialogue on the education of children and the fact that he attributes it to Bion of Borysthenes (3rd century B.C.E.)²⁰ shows that in the 1st century C.E., the allegorical reading of Penelope and her maid-servants probably belonged to a well-known tradition of interpretation shared by different supporters of Homer. Epictetus, for instance, knows another allegorical reading with similar implications: the Sirens of the *Odyssey* represent the preliminary studies one has to leave behind in order to learn philosophy proper (*Discourses* 2.23.41).

But even if few allegorical interpretations can be considered shared by Philo and by the Platonists in an exclusive way, Robert Lamberton nevertheless convincingly argues that “the allegorized Odysseus was known to Philo” just like it was known to the Neo-Platonists.²¹ In *De Somniis* (2.70), Philo criticises Adam for having preferred the dyad (the created world symbolised by the tree in the Garden of Eden)²² to the monad identified with the Creator. Philo then exhorts the reader: “But as for yourself, pass ‘out of the smoke and wave’ (the *Odyssey* 12.219) and flee the ridiculous concerns of mortal life as you would that frightful Charybdis and do not touch it even with the tip of your toe (as the saying is).”²³ In Lamberton's view, one may connect this passage with the Neo-Platonic allegory

as we shall see, the ghosts of familiar and unfamiliar allegories of Homer stand behind many passages of Philo” (emphasis mine).

¹⁹ See *Congr.* 77ff.; Alexandre 1967: 61–71; Amir 1984: 15–18. See also Dillon 1979–80; Berkowitz 2010.

²⁰ See Pseudo-Plutarch, *De liberis educandis* (*The Education of Children*) 7d: “And it was a clever saying of Bion, the philosopher, that, just as the suitors, not being able to approach Penelope, consorted with her maid-servants, so also do those who are not able to attain to philosophy wear themselves to a shadow over the other kinds of education which have no value. Wherefore it is necessary to make philosophy as it were the head and front of all education” (trans. F. Cole Babbitt, LCL, 35).

²¹ See already Boyancé 1963, esp. 76–77.

²² See Gen 2:9 or 3:3.

²³ Trans. by Lamberton 1986: 53.

of “Odysseus as rational man passing through the created sublunary universe (*genesis*),” that is, the material world, “and returning to his celestial home,” an allegory found in Numenius and then in Porphyry, as we shall see further on. Although “this theme is never explicitly tied to the Odysseus story in Philo,” as Lambertson admits, “passages such as the one just quoted strongly suggest that he was well acquainted with such an understanding of the *Odyssey*.”

I would like to draw attention to another passage that shows similarities with the Neo-Platonic tradition. In *Quaestiones in Genesin* 3.3, Philo explains Genesis 15 (the covenant between God and Abraham) and more specifically verse 9, “Take for me a heifer three years old and a she-goat three years old and a ram three years old and a turtle-dove and a dove.” Concerning the birds, Philo affirms that there is a correspondence between the dove and the turtle-dove on the one hand, the planets and the stars on the other, and justifies his allegorical interpretation by explicitly referring to Plato and to the idea, found in *Phaedrus*, that the sky is a chariot flying like a bird²⁴—a Platonic image Philo is rather fond of. Philo then adds that through the birds, the prophet (Moses) alludes to the perfect music in heaven that emanates from the movement of the stars. Here, Philo must have had in mind the myth of Er which appears at the end of the *Republic*, and more specifically the passage that describes the spheres in heaven and says that the music of the spheres emanates from the Sirens.²⁵ Moreover, Philo compares this celestial music—which God does not allow human beings to hear—with the songs of the Sirens in the *Odyssey* (12.39–45), songs that drive people crazy and can lead them to death because those who hear them forget everything, even to eat and drink. In this passage of *Quaestiones in Genesin*, there is probably another reminiscence of Plato, from *Phaedrus* 259 b–c, which tells the myth of the cicadas, who used to be human beings, but who, once the Muses were born, were so pleased by music that they forgot to eat and drink and passed away; later on, they became cicadas. In *Phaedrus*, this myth is told immediately after a reference to the Sirens of the *Odyssey*, to whom the cicadas are compared. As for Philo, he concludes that it is because of God’s providential care for humankind that human beings are not allowed to hear the celestial music

²⁴ See *Phaedrus* 246e. More exactly, Zeus drives a winged chariot in the sky.

²⁵ See *Republic* 617b: “And the spindle turned on the knees of Necessity, and up above on each of the rims of the circles a Siren stood, borne around in its revolution and uttering one sound, one note, and from all the eight there was the concord of a single harmony” (trans. P. Shorey, LCL, 503–505).

of the stars, which would have an even more devastating effect on the human mind than the Homeric Sirens.²⁶

Now, in a passage of his *Table-Talks* (in *Moralia*, 745c ff.), Plutarch tells of the way Menepylus the Peripatetic opposes Plato's use of the word "Siren" in the *Republic*. In Menepylus' opinion, Plato should have spoken about the Muses and not about the Sirens, who are not benevolent to men, as the *Odyssey* demonstrates. Ammonius answers that the Sirens in Plato certainly represent the Muses, and recalls yet another interpretation (which Ammonius himself does not completely follow), partly inspired by Plato's *Cratylus* 403 c–d, according to which:

Homer's Sirens, it is true, frighten us, inconsistently with the Platonic myth; but the poet too conveyed a truth symbolically, namely that the power of their music is not inhuman or destructive; as souls depart from this world to the next, so it seems, and drift uncertainly after death, it creates in them a passionate love for the heavenly and divine, and forgetfulness of mortality; it possesses them and enchants them with its spell, so that in joyfulness they follow the Sirens and join them in their circuits. Here on earth a kind of faint echo of that music reaches us, and appealing to our souls through the medium of words, reminds them of what they experienced in an earlier existence. The ears of most souls, however, are plastered over and blocked up, not with wax, but with carnal obstructions and affections. But any soul that through innate gifts is aware of this echo, and remembers that other world, suffers what falls in no way short of the very maddest passions of love, longing and yearning to break the tie with the body, but unable to do so.²⁷

That the voice of the Sirens, both Platonic and Homeric, could be benevolent and even divinely inspired to the point of bringing the souls back to their heavenly home (instead of keeping them away from home, as a literal reading of the *Odyssey* would have it), seems to have been a particular characteristic of the Platonic tradition, which was probably influenced by Neo-Pythagoreanism to a certain extent.²⁸ This passage of Plutarch's

²⁶ Similarly, referring to the harmony of the spheres in heaven, Philo writes in *De Somniis* 1.35: "man is the recipient of a privilege which gives him distinction beyond other living creatures, that, namely, of worshipping Him that is; while heaven is ever melodious, producing, as the heavenly bodies go through their movements, the full and perfect harmony. If the sound of it ever reached our ears, there would be produced irrepressible yearnings, frantic longings, wild ceaseless passionate desires, compelling to abstain even from necessary food (...)" (trans. G. H. Whitaker and F. H. Colson, LCL, 313–315). In this passage from *De Somniis*, Pierre Boyancé rightly recognised an allusion to the Sirens from the *Republic*, and the same allusion can be found in *Quaestiones*.

²⁷ Trans. E. L. Minar and F. H. Sandbach, W. C. Helmbold, LCL, 279–281.

²⁸ See Buffière 1956: 476 ff.; Pépin 1958: 234–235. According to Lamberton: "(Homer) is said to have held such Pythagorean doctrines as the existence of a lunar paradise, and his

Table-Talks is in any case quite congruent with the allegorical interpretation of Odysseus found in later Neo-Platonic writings, particularly in Porphyry's *De antro*.

Although Philo does not exactly provide an allegorical explanation of the Sirens or the heavenly bodies, and does not, like Ammonius, equate or connect the Homeric Sirens with the Platonic ones,²⁹ the passage in *Quaestiones* is striking because: 1) it contains references to both Plato and Homer; 2) it combines an allusion to the heavenly Sirens at the end of the *Republic* with a reference to the Sirens in the *Odyssey*; and 3) it suggests that the voices of the former are superior to those of the latter, all this in a way highly reminiscent of the Neo-Platonic traditions about the Platonic and the Homeric Sirens.³⁰ For the sake of comparison, one may recall that in §70 of his *Homeric Problems*—a paragraph in which he gives a kind of overview of his allegorical interpretation of Odysseus' wanderings—Heraclitus merely interprets the Sirens in the *Odyssey* as a source of knowledge. He writes that Odysseus listened to the Sirens, "learning from them the varied history of all ages."³¹ Moreover, in §12 of his *Homeric Problems*, Heraclitus argues that Homer already spoke about the celestial sounds and the music produced in heaven when he described the sound emitted by arrows in the *Iliad* 1.46. Heraclitus adds that Homer presented the sound as a natural phenomenon and that there was no need to invent a "pretentious myth."³² Although Heraclitus does not refer explicitly to Plato in this paragraph, he may have had in mind the Platonic description of the heavenly Sirens in the myth of Er. He refers to it explicitly in the following lines, in order to underline that Plato, "the very man who banishes Homer from his own private Republic," confirms the truth of the Homeric epic.³³ Finally, at the beginning of §13, Heraclitus insists that the doctrine about

Sirens are transformed into the benevolent Sirens of the Pythagoreanizing myth of Er in the *Republic*. This last instance is a striking one, illustrative of the central position of the dialogues of Plato in the establishment both of the canonical versions of 'Pythagorean' myths and of the connections between those myths and Homer" (1986: 37).

²⁹ Contrary to what Lambertson writes (*ibid.*, 52), Philo does not identify the Platonic and the Homeric Sirens and does not give an allegorical interpretation of the latter. Rather, his way of comparing the two groups of Sirens is based on a kind of *qal vahomer* (*a fortiori*) principle.

³⁰ On this point, see Lambertson, *ibid.*

³¹ See Russell and Konstan 2005: 113. Similarly, Cicero writes that "it is knowledge that the Sirens offer, and it was no marvel if a lover of wisdom held this dearer than his home" (*De Finibus* 5.18.49, trans. H. Rackham, LCL, 451).

³² See Russell and Konstan, *ibid.*, 23.

³³ *Ibid.*, 25.

the celestial music originally comes from Homer. He obviously means that it was not Plato's discovery, and the whole passage is clearly polemical. To come back to Philo, the passage from *Quaestiones* shows that even if Philo does not suggest exactly the same reading as the Neo-Platonists (who themselves had various interpretations), he is nevertheless on their side.

To sum up our conclusions so far, let us emphasise that Philo's knowledge and use of the Homeric work is similar in many ways to those of the Neo-Platonists: he defends the poet against his detractors, he quotes him in his commentary on Scriptures as the Neo-Platonists would do in their commentaries on Plato, and he uses allegorical interpretations of Homeric verses in his own work. Whereas these points may be considered very general in nature and applying to Stoic authors as well, what distinguishes both Philo and the Neo-Platonic philosophers from the Stoics is their tendency to reconcile Homer and Plato, as can be seen in the passage quoted from *Quaestiones*. Noteworthy in this respect is Lambertson's affirmation that "the use of the myths of Plato to explicate the myths of Homer and the idea that the two bodies of storytelling had like structures of meaning were perhaps the most important developments in the history of the reading of Homer in Platonic circles."³⁴

Obviously, the place attributed to the works of Plato and Homer differs in Philo's works and in the Neo-Platonic writings. Philo generally quotes Plato in order to support his interpretation of Scriptures, as an additional proof text and quite similar to his use of Homer, whereas the Neo-Platonists' aim consists first and foremost in commenting on Plato's works. Similarly, when Porphyry refers to Numenius' quotation of Genesis 1:2 in §10 of *De antro*, it remains an isolated reference in a commentary focused on a passage of the *Odyssey*, this commentary itself probably part, originally, of a larger commentary on the myth of Er by Numenius.³⁵ According to Origen in *Contra Celsum*, Numenius not only quoted the Bible but also produced allegorical interpretations of biblical passages.³⁶ However, these were probably isolated cases, and we do not know in which context Numenius developed such an interpretation.

³⁴ 1986: 37.

³⁵ See Lambertson 1986, *ibid*. In my opinion, there is no conclusive evidence that Numenius wrote an "allegorizing commentary on the Old Testament," as Ekaterina Matusova writes (Matusova 2010: 20).

³⁶ See Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4.51 in particular; Places 1973: 42–43, fragments 1b and c.

Finally, what differentiates Philo from both the Stoic and the Neo-Platonic commentators of Homer is that Philo never dedicated a particular book to “Homeric questions,” unlike Heraclitus and Porphyry—the latter having composed both the *Homeric Questions* (which are more philological than allegorical) and *De antro* (*On the Cave of the Nymphs*), which is thoroughly allegorical, and to which we shall now turn.

II. PHILO’S ALLEGORICAL EXEGESIS OF THE BIBLE COMPARED TO THE NEO-PLATONIC INTERPRETATION OF HOMER

While the examples given so far focused on passages in which Philo referred to Homer and his work, I would now like to compare Philo’s allegorical interpretation of Scriptures with Neo-Platonic interpretations of the Homeric corpus in a more general way, in terms of method, overall approach, and philosophical-religious meaning.

I will leave aside aspects of Philo’s allegory that have been studied in depth and that were common to nearly all allegorical interpreters in Antiquity, such as the use of etymologies,³⁷ or the fact that the allegorical interpretation grounds itself on apparently absurd statements in the text.³⁸ One should also bear in mind that from the 1st century B.C.E. onwards at least, writers affiliated to different philosophical schools shared many allegorical interpretations. Thus, Heraclitus’ interpretation of the Sirens as knowledge may already be found in Cicero, who belonged to the Academy but who knew Stoicism very well. His teacher, Antiochus of Ascalon, already appropriated some Stoic notions in his renewed interpretation of Platonism, an interpretation that was far more dogmatic than that of the New Academy. In short, boundaries between schools should not be regarded as insuperable or too rigidly defined. Influences were numerous and reciprocal.

This being said, let us turn to Porphyry’s *De antro nympharum*,³⁹ which represents “the only continuous piece of exegesis of a single Homeric text that we have,”⁴⁰ as well as the only Neo-Platonic allegorical commentary on Homer that was passed down to us. It consists of a commentary on the

³⁷ See Runia 2004.

³⁸ See in particular the article by Pépin 1957.

³⁹ I am using the translation by Lambertson 1983. The translation is based on Nauck’s Teubner text (Leipzig 1886) but incorporates some of the readings proposed by the group “Seminar Classics 609” (Buffalo 1969).

⁴⁰ Runia 1987: 116.

Odyssey 13.102–112, the description of the so-called cave of the nymphs, where Odysseus meets Athena and hides his clothes as well as the gifts of the Phaeacians, when he finally reaches Ithaca after having wandered at sea for so long. In his commentary, Porphyry repeatedly writes that he depends heavily on the interpretation of this passage given by Numenius and his pupil Cronius. Much has been written in connection with Numenius about the contribution of Neo-Pythagoreanism to the Neo-Platonic tradition of interpretation, but I will not tackle this issue here.

When one compares Porphyry's *De antro* with Philo's allegorical exegesis, some differences can of course be noted. Porphyry, for instance, does not comment on the passage from the *Odyssey* 13.102–112 verse by verse.⁴¹ Philo, both in his *Allegorical Commentary* and in *Quaestiones*, follows the order of the biblical verses and repeatedly quotes the lemma he is commenting on, usually at great length.⁴²

But in other respects there is a great deal of similarity between the two types of commentary. As David Runia emphasises, "Porphyry extols the virtues of Homer and defends the poet's allegorizing intent (§36), just like Philo does in the case of Moses. The *quaestio* method is again in evidence (§15 διὰ τί; §32 λείπεται δὴ παραστήσαι . . . ὅτι ποτέ μῆνύει). Words are etymologised (§15) and names explained (§35) with allegorical intent. Stress is placed on the appropriateness of the symbolism (§19 οἰκέλα σύμβολα etc.)."⁴³ Maren Niehoff has recently shown that Porphyry is the first exegete after Philo who combines Aristotelian scholarship with Platonic allegory as Philo did. She also underlines that Porphyry resembles Philo because he draws a connection between the problem of verisimilitude and spiritual allegory.⁴⁴

Additional examples of similarities between the two authors may be given, even though these similarities are not specific to Philo and Porphyry. In their commentaries, both Philo and Porphyry similarly quote additional texts stemming from other authors. As we saw earlier, in *De*

⁴¹ After the initial quotation of the Homeric text, Porphyry quotes again a verse from the section he is commenting on in §14 (v.108: "weave sea-purple cloth, a wonder to see"), in §20 (vv.111–112), and in §32 (vv.102–103).

⁴² See already Runia 1987: 116, who aptly remarks about *De antro* that "the very first line of the text is dealt with last (§32), because in this way he [Porphyry] can organize the work so that it reaches a climax in the psychological allegory of Odysseus, the wandering soul." Maybe one should rather speak about a mystical allegory than a psychological one, in this case. See Buffière 1956: 394.

⁴³ Runia 1987: 116.

⁴⁴ Niehoff 2011: 133–51.

Fuga 61, Philo quotes Genesis, Homer, and Heraclitus of Ephesus; in *Quaestiones in Genesis* 3.3, he comments on Genesis but also explicitly refers to the *Odyssey* and to *Phaedrus* while alluding to the *Republic* as well; in *De Migratione Abrahami* 156–157, Philo comments on Numbers 11:4 and then quotes the *Iliad* 6.484 and then two passages from the Book of Psalms. In *De antro*, Porphyry refers to numerous exterior sources too, quoting for instance Artemidorus of Ephesus (§4), a hymn to Apollo (§8), Empedocles (§8), Plato (the *Republic* 514a–515b, in §8), the Book of Genesis (1:2, in §10), Heraclitus of Ephesus (at least three times, in §§10–11), Orphic traditions (§16), and Sophocles (§18). The diversity of the sources quoted in *De antro* is thus greater than in Philo's works. In *De antro*, §8, the quotations from various texts are inspired by the common reference to a "cave," which is interpreted as a symbol either of the sensible cosmos or of the noëtic universe (§9). Philo similarly refers to exterior sources when there is a thematic link between them and the passage he is commenting on, often through the use of a common or similar term.⁴⁵ As far as cross-references are concerned, Philo's quoting other biblical verses in his commentary on a particular biblical passage can be compared to Porphyry's quoting Homeric verses or expressions stemming from other parts of the corpus as well: the *Odyssey* 6.201 in §10, the *Iliad* 19.38 and the *Odyssey* 5.93 in §16, the *Iliad* 5.698 in §25, the *Iliad* 20.224–225 in §26, the *Iliad* 9.583, the *Iliad* 5.751 (= 8.395) and the *Iliad* 5.749 (= 8.393) in §27, the *Odyssey* 24.12 (twice, two different expressions) in §28, the *Iliad* 24.528 in §76, the *Odyssey* 11.122–123 in §34, and the *Odyssey* 13.96 in §35. Such abundance of references is all the more remarkable since *De antro*, which focuses on the interpretation of eleven verses, is a very short work. Philo's treatises in the *Allegorical Commentary*, which deal with a comparable amount of text, are generally much longer.

Another possible comparison between Philo and Porphyry lies, according to Robert Lamberton, in the use of the term "theologians" in connection with the complex symbolism of honey (mentioned in v.106 of the *Odyssey* 13) in *De antro* §§15–16, where the term is apparently applied to Homer and Orpheus (see §16). Philo similarly characterises Moses as a *theologos* in connection with the obscure symbolism of the vestments of the high priest in *De Vita Mosis* 2.115.

⁴⁵ See for instance *De Fuga* 61 quoted above. In most cases, though, Philo quotes other biblical verses rather than non-biblical works. See Niehoff, *ibid.*: "(...) the *Allegorical Commentary* offers numerous cross-references to other Biblical verses. Such additional verses are usually drawn into the discussion on the basis of an association of words."

Philo and Porphyry can also be compared for the care with which they deal with the literal meaning of the text. At the beginning of *De antro* (§4 in particular), Porphyry tries to show that the description of the cave cannot be completely symbolical and cannot be a pure product of Homer's imagination, but that there must be some concrete geographical data behind the Homeric description, even if the latter is not exact in every tiny detail. As Jean Pépin explains,⁴⁶ the allegorical meaning attributed to the description of the cave does not discredit the literal meaning nor does it empty it of its significance. On the contrary, it seems that Porphyry, and the Neo-Platonists in general, attached importance to the literal meaning and to the historical or geographical exactness of the texts they interpreted. Moreover, this attention to the literal meaning of a text can be compared to the care with which Pythagoreanism produced allegorical interpretations of the *akousmata*, while insisting at the same time on the necessity of observing the rules or the rites they prescribed.⁴⁷ Plutarch too insists that his readers must simultaneously practice religious rituals and look for their philosophical—that is, symbolic—meaning.⁴⁸ This kind of

⁴⁶ Pépin 1965: 239–240.

⁴⁷ The origin of this tradition of interpretation was attributed to a Pythagorean philosopher named Androcydes, who apparently lived at some point between the 4th and the 2nd century B.C.E. See Corssen 1912; Burkert 1962: 150–175. In his *Table-Talks* (728 d–f), Plutarch tells how Lucius the Pythagorean kept silent as other people were discussing Pythagorean symbols (or *akousmata*) during a banquet. Folker Siegert has interpreted this silence as a manifestation of disapproval, the allegorical-ethical meaning of the *akousmata* being perceived as entailing a risk of abandoning the actual practice of the rite (Siegert 1996: 141). However, Plutarch explicitly writes that Lucius did not disapprove, nor approve, and kept silent only because the true meaning of the symbols had to remain secret. Moreover, he adds that Lucius, far from being hostile to the interpretations suggested by the guests, encouraged them to put forward their ideas. Plutarch's testimony rather confirms that Pythagoreans considered the allegorical interpretation legitimate, alongside the practice of the rites. On the other hand, as Stéphane Toulouse explains, the Neoplatonic curriculum gradually became more and more similar to a kind of initiation into the mystery cults, and poetic texts like the ones by Homer became associated with symbols and rites; a consequence of this analogy between poetic myth and the rites of the mystery cults was that epic poetry was attributed a hidden religious meaning that had to be interpreted like the rites, symbols, images, or formulas of the cults (see Toulouse 2000, esp. 26–27). As far as Philo is concerned, Bréhier already underlined that the comparison between allegory and initiation into the mystery cults could be found in his works (Bréhier 1908: 41). More recently, this point has been emphasised by Matusova, who also makes the connection between Philo's allegorical interpretation of the Bible and the allegorical interpretation of the Pythagorean symbols (Matusova 2010: 45–50).

⁴⁸ See for instance *De Iside et Osiride* 11; and Brisson 1996: 93. In *De aud. poet.* 19e–f, Plutarch criticises allegorical interpretations, apparently because he thinks allegorising is not the right way to make poetry useful for the youth (poetry being full of problematic discourse and wrong ideas about the gods [16–17b]). He underlines that Homer himself made

approach, which emphasises the necessity of combining a literal and an allegorical reading, or which calls for the necessary practice of religious rites even while one studies their mystical meaning, is very similar to Philo's exegesis of the Mosaic commandments.⁴⁹ It certainly brings him closer to the Neo-Platonists than to the Stoics.

Another point deserves brief mention: Philo's allegory is multiple and depends on the exegetical context in which it is produced; the Promised Land symbolises virtue, for instance, but Canaan (the same geographic land) symbolises vice.⁵⁰ This double allegory can actually be compared to the double allegory of the cave mentioned by Porphyry, who interprets it in two opposing ways, as referring either to the material cosmos or to the noëtic universe, that is, the world of the intellect (§9). In the context of the *Odyssey* 13.102–112, however, Porphyry thinks that the first interpretation of the cave is more appropriate.

The most striking similarity between Philo and the Neo-Platonic tradition of interpretation is the overall reading of the biblical narrative or of the Homeric epic as a mystical allegory pertaining to the journey of the soul.⁵¹ The end of *De antro* (§34) makes it very clear that Odysseus symbolises the soul which descended from heaven into the *genesis*, the material world, but which is called to return to its celestial home. In a similar way, Plotinus writes in his treatise *On Beauty* (1.6.8) that one should not love physical or bodily beauty but rather follow the advice Homer gives

clear that he told certain stories about the gods in order to condemn immoral behaviors (19f–20). My impression is that for Plutarch, allegorical interpretations of stories about the gods in the *Iliad* for instance are different from the symbolical meaning of religious rituals, just as entertainment differs from philosophy. Porphyry, on the other hand, will argue that a certain allegorical reading of Homer, which leads to a deeper knowledge of the divine and to virtue, is comparable to the interpretation of the symbols used in the mysteries. I thank Filippomaria Pontani for drawing my attention to the passage in *De aud. poet.*

⁴⁹ It is also quite similar to the exegesis found in the *Letter of Aristeeas*; see Berthelot 2001. As far as Philo is concerned, see in particular *Migr.* 89–93, as well as his justification of circumcision in *Spec.* 1.1–11 and his analysis of the dietary laws in *Spec.* 4.100–118. See also Dyck 2002.

⁵⁰ For the Promised Land as virtue, see *Somn.* 2.76, in connection with Leviticus 23:10, “When you come into the land which I give you. . . .” The entrance into the Land is also said to be “an entry into philosophy” (*QE* 2.13). See Schaller 2001, esp. 15. For Canaan as vice, see *Congr.* 85, *Sobr.* 31–48; see also *Sacr.* 90.

⁵¹ Bréhier adequately writes that even if Philo uses physical allegories like those of the Stoics, in the end it is the moral (or, one could say, mystical) allegory that has the upper hand, and this moral allegory consists first and foremost in an “odyssey of the soul” (Bréhier 1908: 42–43). Buffière rightly underlines that “la véritable exégèse pythagoricienne, celle qui retrouve dans les tribulations d’Ulysse sur les mers odysseennes un symbole des errances de l’âme au pays de la matière, Héraclite ne la connaît pas” (Buffière 1956: 69).

in the *Iliad* (2.140, 9.27): “Let us flee to our dear homeland” (Φεύγωμεν δὴ φίλην ἐς πατρίδα) and imitate the example of Odysseus who fled far away from Circe and Calypso. Plotinus then adds: “Our homeland is the place we come from, and the Father is there” (Πατρὶς δὴ ἡμῖν, ὅθεν περ ἤλθομεν, καὶ πατὴρ ἐκεῖ).⁵²

The Stoics’ less elaborate allegory of Odysseus as the sage who resists the temptations of pleasure (*hèdonè*) (Heraclitus, §70) can be found here and there in Philo concerning biblical characters,⁵³ but the most pervasive and all-encompassing allegory in his work is the one which interprets the wanderings of Abraham, Jacob, and the people of Israel as the journey of the soul, or of different types of soul. Thus, for instance, Philo writes in *De Confusione linguarum* 77–78, in connection with Genesis 23:4 (where Abraham says about himself that he is only a stranger and a sojourner in the Land):

This is why all whom Moses calls wise are represented as sojourners. Their souls are never colonists leaving heaven for a new home. Their way is to visit earthly nature as men who travel abroad to see and learn. So when they have stayed awhile in their bodies, and beheld through them all that sense and mortality have to show, they make their way back to the place from which they set out at the first. To them the heavenly region, where their citizenship lies, is their native land; the earthly region in which they become sojourners is a foreign country (πατρίδα μὲν τὸν οὐράνιον χῶρον ἐν ᾧ πολιτεύονται, ξένην δὲ τὸν περιγίγειον ἐν ᾧ παρῳήσαν νομίζουσαι) (...).⁵⁴

In this passage, the allegory of Odysseus as the soul is perceptible in the background (although the tone here is less dramatic than in *De antro* for instance),⁵⁵ and it also recalls Cicero’s interpretation of Odysseus as the sage who wants to learn from the Sirens in *De Finibus* 5.⁵⁶

Along the same lines, the exodus from Egypt in the Bible can be read as the return to its true home of a soul which had fallen into the body

⁵² Compare with Philo, *Heres* 27, in which Abraham says that he is a foreigner and that God is his true homeland (*patris*).

⁵³ Jacob in particular symbolises the ascetic lifestyle.

⁵⁴ Trans. G. H. Whitaker and F. H. Colson, LCL, 53.

⁵⁵ Compare also this passage with Plutarch’s words quoted below (*Moralia* 943 c), which present the incarnation of souls as a dramatic and negative event.

⁵⁶ Compare with *Migr.* 216 on Abraham (Gen 12:6): Abraham represents the intellect (the νοῦς), which, for the sake of science (as in *Conf.* 77, the term φιλομαθής is used), does not want to leave anything unexplored. According to *Heres* 274, the intellect, the νοῦς, comes down from heaven into the body but finds the way back to its homeland (πατρίς) at the end of its migration. As for the “journey of the soul,” Philo somehow applies it both to the soul and to the intellect.

and its passions, the soul's true home being variously interpreted as philosophy, virtue, or communion with the divine. Actually, it is easier to read the story of the Exodus than the migrations of Abraham and Jacob, for instance, through the lens of the journey of the soul. As a matter of fact, the biblical migrations of the patriarchs differ to a great extent from Odysseus' travels (especially when the biblical characters go back and forth, as in Jacob's traveling to Mesopotamia to find a wife, then coming back to Canaan, and then going down to Egypt...). As a consequence, the interpretation in terms of the descent of the soul into the body does not always match the biblical data. In the case of Abraham, Philo's allegorical reading works better if one disregards Abraham's original move from Mesopotamia to Canaan, considers Canaan his homeland, and sees his trip to Egypt as the migration symbolising the fall of the $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ into the body. However, one must also pay attention to the fact that whereas Philo explicitly calls Egypt the land of the body, he does not present the Promised Land as "heaven," as far as I know. In short, Philo is familiar with the notion of the "journey of the soul" from heaven into the body and then back to heaven, and appropriates it, but his allegorical reading does not systematically match this hermeneutical model. Rather, Philo's allegorical reading tries to fit the biblical text it comments on and develops itself in several directions and on different levels.⁵⁷

A detailed comparison of the conceptions of the journey of the soul in Philo's writings and in those of the Neo-Platonists lies beyond the scope of this paper, but I would like to conclude this survey of the similarities between Philonic and Neo-Platonic allegorical readings with a few words about the origins of the allegorical tradition of heaven as the homeland (*patris*) of the soul. In spite of a relative lack of concrete textual evidence dating from the 1st century C.E., most commentators consider that as far as the "journey of the soul" allegory is concerned, Philo was influenced by a Platonic tradition, maybe through Eudorus of Alexandria, who studied with Antiochus of Ascalon.⁵⁸ But in an extremely stimulating article,⁵⁹

⁵⁷ The earth is generally opposed to heaven, and Abraham can be said to be in exile on earth even when he dwells in the Promised Land. On the other hand, Egypt more particularly symbolises the body in which the soul is exiled and in that context, the Promised Land receives a new meaning: rather than a place of exile, it represents virtue (see note 50 above). In *Fuga* 76, the cities of refuge for those who killed someone unwillingly (Numbers 35), located within the Promised Land, are interpreted as the knowledge of God.

⁵⁸ See Boyancé 1967, esp. 171.

⁵⁹ See Alekniènè 2007.

Tatjana Aleknienè recently suggested that Plotinus' notion of a celestial *patris* (as in the passage quoted above) may have been indirectly influenced by Philo's writings, through contacts with the Gnostics, who had some knowledge of Philo's work. The idea that the soul's original home is heaven can already be found in Cicero,⁶⁰ however, and the use of the term *patris* does not necessarily come from Philo—who, by the way, could not have picked it up from the Septuagint, since the word almost never appears there. As a matter of fact, in his treatise *Concerning the Face Which Appears in the Orb of the Moon* (*Moralia* 943 c), Plutarch already uses the term *patris* in connection with the destination of the soul after it has been set free from the body. Plutarch writes that "Unjust and licentious souls pay penalties for their offences; but the good souls must in the gentlest part of the air, which they call 'the meads of Hades,' pass a certain set time sufficient to purge and blow away (the) pollutions contracted from the body as from an evil odour. (Then,) as if brought home (εἰς πατρίδα) from banishment abroad, they savour joy most like that of initiates (...)." ⁶¹ Note that here, as in Philo's *De confusione linguarum*, only the good souls (or the souls of the sages) can consider heaven their homeland. ⁶²

In conclusion, it is highly probable that Philo adopted an existing tradition stemming from Platonic circles (a tradition which may have had Pythagorean roots), and fitted it freely to his commentary. He thereby contributed an original development to the tradition of the wanderings of souls, based on biblical stories rather than on the *Odyssey*. The adoption of such a tradition of interpretation shows that the similarities between the Philonic and the Neo-Platonic allegorical readings were deeper than between Philo and the Stoics, insofar as these similarities pertained not only to technical aspects or selective motifs, but also relied on anthropological and spiritual notions that were to a great extent shared.

⁶⁰ See Boyancé 1967: 171. The idea that heaven is our original or former home (*domicilium*), our residence (*sedes*), can be found several times in Cicero's writings (see *Somnium Scipionis* 29, *De legibus* 1.9.27, *Hortensius* frag. 93 Ruch, in Augustinus, *Trinit.* 14.26).

⁶¹ Trans. H. Cherniss, LCL, 201. Compare with Plato, *Phaedo* 81 b–c, and Porphyry, *De antro* 11–12. In his introduction, H. Cherniss indicates that the authenticity of Plutarch's dialogue has sometimes been questioned, but "without any plausible reason" (LCL, 2).

⁶² See also *Agric.* 65 (on Gen 47:4): the soul of the sage is at home in heaven and sojourns only temporarily on earth; however, it has to dwell in the body for a while (τῷ γάρ ὄντι πᾶσα ψυχὴ σοφοῦ πατρίδα μὲν οὐρανόν, ξένην δὲ γῆν ἔλαχε, καὶ νομίζει τὸν μὲν σοφίας οἶκον ἴδιον, τὸν δὲ σώματος ὀθνείον, ᾧ καὶ παρεπιδημεῖν οἴεται). Compare with Plotinus 4.8 on the descent of the soul into the body.

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THE DISPUTE ON HOMER:
EXEGETICAL POLEMIC IN GALEN'S CRITICISM OF CHRYSIPPUS

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In antiquity polemic played a valuable role in the construction of one's philosophical standpoint or identity. The doctrine of the other thinker or tradition challenged the philosopher to formulate and consolidate his own doctrine vis-à-vis alternative views. Philosophical polemics are thus a dialogical process, often resulting in the adoption and integration of elements derived from opposing viewpoints, from specific terminology to larger philosophical issues and interrogations.² Although there is no question about the need to study the content of philosophical polemics, less attention has been paid to their forms and mechanisms. Yet, the attitude towards a rival philosopher or tradition embraced multiple forms. From dialogue to systematic refutation, from doxographical exposition to correspondence, a wide repertory of genres and rhetorical devices present themselves to the polemicist. Thus, for example, in Cicero's *Moral Ends*, the staged dialogue between three philosophers and himself, in which each acts as the spokesman of one of the important philosophical traditions of his time, enables the philosopher to highlight the argumentative flaws in each of the doctrines, and to prompt his reader to adhere to his own method.³ The synthetic exposition of the different views formulated on a specific topic, or in other words, the doxographical sequence, which often opens a philosophical work, allows the philosopher to inscribe his discussion into past and present philosophical debates, and turns his own treatment of the subject into an approval or rejection of the aforementioned doctrines.⁴ Likewise, letters can also be invested with controversy. Thus, Seneca uses the writing of a letter of consolation as an opportunity to criticise the philosophical assumptions and consolatory strategy of the

¹ I would like to thank Maren Niehoff for her valuable suggestions as well as the anonymous reviewer for his very helpful comments.

² On this topic see, for instance, Dillon 1982.

³ That is the method developed by the New Academy. See Annas 2001: ix–xxvii.

⁴ See for example, the first book of Aristotle' *On the Soul*; Plutarch, *On Ethical Virtue* 440E–442C or Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* I 18–22.

Epicurean philosopher Metrodorus.⁵ These examples are not exhaustive, nor do they take into account the various aspects (epistemological, traditional, methodological, etc.) of these genres, but they serve to stress the fact that multiple and diverse options were available to a polemicist in antiquity.

Another genre of philosophical polemic which has not received due scholarly attention should be added to this list, which I shall call exegetical polemic. Exegetical polemic does not only engage with ideas, but also, and mainly, with the modality of constructing a specific discourse. The object of criticism does not directly aim at the philosophical content, but is directed towards the sources, that is, towards the manner in which they are treated and interpreted. Exegetical polemic positions itself on another level of philosophical debate, namely that of the correct use and understanding of the sources. Such sources can either be philosophical (e.g. the text of a precursor) or literary (e.g. Homer and the poets).⁶ It is the latter instance which is the subject of this paper.

Galen's dispute with the third century B.C. Stoic philosopher, Chrysippus of Soli, in his *On the doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato (PHP)*, provides us with a valuable example of this genre of polemic. The first part of this paper is focused on Galen's strategy in refuting Chrysippus' readings of Homer. In the second part, the question of how Galen's contempt for "arguments from the poets" is compatible with his indulgence in exegetical polemic will be addressed.

Although Galen's independent and critical mind led numerous scholars to question his adherence to any of the philosophical schools of his time and milieu,⁷ it is beyond any doubt that it is as a follower of Plato and as a fervent defender of the Platonic concept of soul that he rejects

⁵ *Letters to Lucilius* 99.

⁶ Therefore, a difference is to be drawn between exegetical philosophy understood as the interpretative reading of the texts of the founders of a philosophical school, which blossoms from roughly the first century B.C. onwards (on this subject, see Hadot 1987: 13–64) and a philosophical discourse which uses and interprets Homer and the poets.

⁷ In the *De propriorum animi cuiuslibet affectuum dignotione et curatione (CMG 5.4.1.1)* Galen claims that he does not belong to any of the philosophical schools. On Galen's criticism of wrongly motivated adherence to a philosophical school, see *On the Order of his Own Books* 4; on Galen's criticism of contemporary philosophers, see *On his Own Books* XIV 3–7; and for expression of his freedom of mind, even from Plato, "the first of all philosophers," in the *PHP*, see III 4.30–32. As Moraux states concerning Galen's attitude as a philosopher "Elle n'a rien de celle d'un homme d'école qui croit à un système et entend le défendre contre d'autres. Quelles que soient sa sympathie pour Platon et son admiration pour Aristote, il se garde bien de se rallier sans réserve à tout ce qu'ils ont écrit." (1981: 105).

Chrysippus' monistic psychology in his *PHP*.⁸ Written in Rome during the years 165–176 C.E.,⁹ the *PHP* has long been considered fundamental to the study of the Chrysippean doctrine of the soul and the passions of the soul. The impressive number of *verbatim* quotations of Chrysippus' *On the Soul* and *On the Affections*, as well as the extensive discussions of his doctrine, make Galen's *PHP*¹⁰ an invaluable testimony to the history of Stoicism. Nevertheless, if the documentary importance of Galen's *PHP* has often been recognised, it is only in recent years that scholars have begun to re-evaluate Galen's role in the presentation, selection and quotation of Chrysippus' oeuvre.¹¹ Indeed, the polemical aspect of this book should not be underestimated.

Galen's polemical presentation of Chrysippus serves the general aim of the nine books of the *PHP*, namely, to show that Plato's doctrine of the soul was not only the correct one from a philosophical and scientific point of view, but that it is also the doctrine championed by Hippocrates. In fact, the treatment of Chrysippus' theory of the localisation of the soul and of the passions in books three to five¹² appears as a digression from the main argument, triggered by a friend's request that he address and refute Chrysippus' localisation of the governing part of the soul in the heart:

but when one of the most eminent sophists said to me that it was not possible to refute all that Chrysippus had written concerning the fact that the heart alone in the body of an animal is the source of the governing part

⁸ On Galen's Platonism, see, for example, De Lacy 1972, who remarks that in *PHP* V 6.42, Galen refers to the Platonic principles as "our philosophy." Nevertheless, numerous scholars consider him as an eclectic, as Frede 1981, who points to an eclecticism similar in kind to that of the Academic Sceptics, and id. 2003, where he acknowledges Galen's particular admiration for Plato: "it seems to me obvious that it is Plato who for Galen plays the role in philosophy which Hippocrates plays for him in medicine." (p. 75); see also Hankinson 1992, who understands Galen's eclecticism as a careful selection of what is best in every system and not as a random blend of tenets; cf. Donini 1992; Singer 1998; and Chiaradonna 2009, who claims that Galen should not be considered a Middle Platonist on account of his cosmogony and epistemology.

⁹ The first six books were written during the years 162–166, i.e., during Galen's first Roman period, while the last three, sometimes between the years 169 and 176, during Galen's second sojourn in the capital. De Lacy 1978: 46–7. On Galen's two Roman sojourns, see Boudon-Millot 2007: liv–lxxiv.

¹⁰ And especially books II–V.

¹¹ See, for example, Tieleman 2003: 1–6; Gill 1998: 113–148.

¹² This does not imply that there is no treatment of Chrysippus in the preceding or following books. Chrysippus' method and tenets are already questioned in the first and second book (as in I 5.6; II 1.2, 2.5–7) and are still subject to sustained criticism in book VI, VII and VIII (e.g. VI 8.78–83; VII 2 and VIII 1.10 ff.).

(τοῦ ἡγεμονικοῦ), he forced me to present in this third book a full discussion of the things I had passed over.¹³

Thus, from the beginning, the polemical tone is clearly stated. Challenged by the sophist's affirmation concerning the impossibility of refuting Chrysippus' theory, Galen sets out to prove him wrong in a long and detailed refutation of Chrysippus' argument.

It is the mechanism of this refutation which is the main concern of this paper. Topics such as the philosophical content of the controversy, the degree of modification of the Chrysippean material and the assumptions that underpin Chrysippus' use of the poets are beyond the scope of this paper. In other words, the search for the historical truth of the controversy is set aside. Instead, the focus of this essay is the polemical strategy set forth by Galen against Chrysippus and especially his recurring argument relating to the misuse of Homer and the poets.

ON IMPROPER USAGE OF HOMER

He is betrayed by the very witnesses he invokes. (*PHP* III 3.30)

[Chrysippus and his followers] are convicted by their own witnesses. (*PHP* III 4.14)

Chrysippus quotes a multitude of verses, most of which contradict him. (*PHP* III 7.47)

He has no success even with the very witnesses he invokes. (*PHP* III 2.16)

These sentences expose the kernel of Galen's main criticism of Chrysippus' use of Homer and the poets. In Galen's eyes, Chrysippus failed to notice that the lines of the poets, especially Homer, which he quotes in support of his arguments, in fact bear witness to the contrary viewpoint. This kind of misuse of Homer is one of the pervasive reproaches that Galen leveled at Chrysippus in the third and fourth books of his *PHP*.

In order to make his criticism cuttingly clear and to show the extent of Chrysippus' misuse of Homer, Galen quotes at length Chrysippus' own quotations of Homer. For instance, in a few paragraphs of the second chapter of the third book (*PHP* III 2.1–16), no fewer than twenty-eight Homeric quotations cited by Chrysippus in his *On the Soul*, supporting

¹³ *PHP* III 1.7. Trans.: De Lacy, slightly modified. (If not mentioned otherwise, the translations of *PHP* are taken from De Lacy 1978–1984). Cf. *PHP* III 7.18. However in III 8.39 it is no longer one friend, but a few, moved by the love of strife, who asked Galen a refutation of Chrysippus.

the view that the hegemonic part of the soul is in the heart are mentioned by Galen, before he reaches the conclusion that:

Now all these verses and in addition to them still others, numbering in thousands, from among those that Chrysippus cites say that the spirited [part] (τὸ θυμοειδές) is in the heart. If I were to copy them all I would fill my book with them, just as Chrysippus filled his. (*PHP* III, 2.16)

The complaint that Chrysippus' treatises are packed with lines from the poets (not only from Homer, but also from Euripides, Hesiod, Orpheus, Empedocles, Tyrtaeus and Stesichorus)¹⁴ which is frequent under Galen's pen,¹⁵ is commonly found among ancient authors. Diogenes Laertius recalls that the second century B.C. Epicurean philosopher Apollodorus of Athens mocked Chrysippus' numerous quotations, stating that without them his pages would be empty.¹⁶ What is more, Diogenes recalls that Chrysippus quotes so extensively from Euripides' *Medea* in one of his treatises that the book was ironically called "the *Medea* of Chrysippus."¹⁷ Galen's attack on Chrysippus' excessive employment of poetic verses thus echoes a commonplace. He went further, however, in claiming that Chrysippus did not understand his own quotations of Homer and that the very quotations were testimony against him.

As a philosopher who posited the heart as the seat of all activities of the soul, Chrysippus cited lines from Homer and the poets referring to different psychic activities located in the region of the heart (this includes the chest and breast) as proof of or testimony to the validity of his view. Homeric verses such as:

Just so Aeneas' spirit (θυμός)¹⁸ rejoiced within his breast (ἐνὶ στήθεσσι)
(*Il.* 13.494)

¹⁴ *PHP* III 3.2; cf. III 2.17, 4.30 and 32.

¹⁵ See, for instance, *PHP* III 2.16, 3.24, 3.30, 2.1, 4.15; IV 1.1.

¹⁶ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* VII 181.

¹⁷ *Op. Cit.* VII 180.

¹⁸ The translation of the word *thumos* may be misleading here for the Homeric *thumos* does not have the same meaning than the Stoic or the Platonic one. In the Homeric poems, *thumos* has a wide range of meaning, it designates the soul, the heart or, in a general manner, the seat of all emotions (there is abundant literature on this subject, suffice it to refer to Autenrieth' Homeric Dictionary). For Chrysippus, however, the *thumos* is one particular type of desire (the Stoics posit four main passions—sadness, fear, pleasure and desire—under which they subsume all others). But since the Stoics also identified the Homeric *thumos* with their concept of *pneuma*, as noted by Buffière (1956: 257–265), De Lacy's translation by "spirit" should be maintained. For a Platonist as Galen however, *thumos* refers obviously to Plato's spirited part of the soul (θυμοειδές). See also Tieleman 1996: 236–244.

or

For you know which spirit (θυμός) dwells in a woman's breast (ἐνὶ στήθεσσι)
(*Od.* 15.20)

or again

Telemachus nourished great grief (πένθος) in his heart (ἐν κραδίῃ).
(*Od.* 17.489)

were adduced and exploited by Chrysippus as testifying to the localisation of the hegemonic part of the soul in the heart. For the Stoic philosopher, these lines bear witness to his cardiocentric account of the soul for they depict anger (θυμός), distress, fear and the like, which, in his view, belong to the hegemonic soul (ἡγεμονικόν),¹⁹ as occurring in the heart or chest. For an adherent of Plato's tripartite soul they prove, on the contrary, that the heart is the locus of the spirited power: "In all these [lines]," says Galen, "it is not the rational (τὸ λογιστικόν) but the spirited [part] (τὸ θυμοειδές) whose presence is revealed in the heart."²⁰

As shown by Galen's testimony, Homeric verses were extensively used by Chrysippus to shore up his claims, and especially in the exposition of his monistic account of the soul. We learn from Galen that in order to support his view of the identical location of the rational (τὸ λογιστικόν), the spirited (τὸ θυμοειδές) and the desiderative (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν) faculties, Chrysippus quotes Homeric verses such as:

But the mind (νόος) and blameless wisdom (μητις ἀμύμων) in his breast (ἐνὶ στήθεσσι) [said] something else.²¹

But she could never persuade the spirit (θυμόν) in my breast (ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν)
(*Od.* 7.258)²²

But Hera's breast (στήθος) could not hold the anger (χόλον), and she spoke out (Il. 4.24)²³

*For never yet did love (ἔρος) for goddess or woman
so flood my breast (ἐνὶ στήθεσσι) and overcome my spirit (θυμόν)*
(*Il.* 14.315–6)²⁴

¹⁹ Cf. *PHP* III 1.25 and 2.5.

²⁰ *PHP* III. 2.12.

²¹ Actually this line is absent from our actual text.

²² *PHP* IV 1.8.

²³ *PHP* IV 1.10; cf. III 2.11 and 7.52.

²⁴ *PHP* IV 1.9; cf. III 7.51.

For Chrysippus these lines clearly indicate that thought and passions occur in one unified place, the heart, that is, the hegemonic soul (*hégemonikon*). As Chrysippus states, according to Galen's quotation:

The poet, who says more than enough about these (things), presents in many verses the view that both the rational (τὸ λογιστικόν), and the spirited [parts] (τὸ θυμοειδές) are in this region, and he joins the desiderative (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν) with them in the same place, as indeed he should.²⁵

Nevertheless, according to Galen, these same quotations prove nothing but the fact that Chrysippus, like Plato and Hippocrates, admitted a plurality of powers in the soul. Indeed, Galen criticises Chrysippus for not having noticed that his quotation of *Il.* 14.315–6 indicates that love is a passion derived from the desiderative part, and that *Il.* 4.24 shows that bitter anger (χόλος) is a passion of the spirited soul.²⁶ Galen thus reproves Chrysippus for his failure to understand the obvious meaning of the Homeric verses that he cites.

Thus Galen argues with Chrysippus over the correct *interpretation* of Homer. So far, this interpretation is not allegorical since no hidden meaning is imputed to the text which the philosopher has to uncover. The epic poem is read in a *literal* manner, as a witness to the localisation of psychic activities such as reflection, interior discourse, meditation, anger, wrath, sadness and the like.

Untangling Chrysippus' original discourse from the criticism surrounding it is no easy task. But his use of Homeric verses was surely not as contrary to common sense as Galen wants his readers to believe.²⁷ Galen's employment of Chrysippus' own quotations of Homer is motivated by his intention to show that each of them supports the Platonic and Hippocratic concept of soul. In order to contest Chrysippus' monistic psychology, Galen insists that his quotations of Homer and the poets testify that his adversary in fact admitted a plurality of powers in the soul and

²⁵ *PHP* IV 1.7. Although it is difficult to infer the context from Galen's citation, there is no doubt that Chrysippus is speaking the Platonic language of the tripartite soul in this passage, a language that eventually he did not approve. Cf. *PHP* III 7.49.

²⁶ *PHP* IV 1.11–12. What is more, this will help Galen to highlight what he presents as an important contradiction between *On the Soul* and *On the Affections* in which Chrysippus speaks of passion as judgment; see *PHP* IV 1.14–15.

²⁷ Galen responds Chrysippus as if it was obvious that reason and passion are different entities (a question that will be treated later in book IV and V), while Chrysippus' choice of lines is prompted by a monistic concept of the soul, which posits reason and passion in the same *locus*. On this point see Donini 2008: esp. 192–3.

therefore did not depart much from the ancients' partitive psychology.²⁸ By pointing out that Chrysippus' argument led to a different conclusion to the intended one, Galen makes him an unwitting supporter of Plato and Hippocrates.²⁹ The claim that one's adversary does not make a valid case for his views, but in fact lends support to the opposing thesis, was an effective and commonly used strategy in polemical discourse. Through exegetical controversy, that is, by using the same sources as Chrysippus but interpreting them in line with Platonic psychology, Galen offers a Platonic presentation of the Stoic philosopher. The dispute surrounding the correct understanding of Homer thus serves three purposes: it divests Chrysippus of his peculiar reading of the poet, it makes him appear to support the Platonic conception of the soul and it lampoons a philosopher as so bad as to not even understand his own sources.

ON THE RIGHT OMISSION AND SELECTION OF VERSES

Galen does content himself with stressing the poverty of Chrysippus' understanding of his own sources, but goes so far as to blame Chrysippus for *not* having omitted quotations which do not support his claims. According to Galen, Chrysippus should have excluded verses which, in his view, clearly indicate a plurality of powers in the soul. Thus, lines depicting the quelled anger of Odysseus at the sight of the shameless behaviour of his servants³⁰ or portraying Medea hesitating before succumbing to her anger (θυμός)³¹ should have been completely ignored.³² Galen moreover does not hesitate to express his praise for the Stoic philosopher when, according to him, he avoids citing verses, testifying that the desiderative part of the soul is located in the liver.³³

Nevertheless, the voluntary omission of some verses is not enough. Chrysippus should have selected his sources more carefully:

Chrysippus should have selected (ἐκλέγειν) from the poets whatever testifies to (ὅσα μαρτυρεῖ) the doctrine he favors and omitted lines that contradict and at times prove the complete opposite.³⁴

²⁸ See esp. *PHP* IV 6.

²⁹ Cf. *PHP* III 1.29–33; IV 6. 30–43 and esp. 38, 6.47–48; IV 7.25–34; see also II 8.19–25.

³⁰ *Il.* 20.17–8; cf. *PHP* III 3.2.

³¹ Eur. *Med.* 1078–9; cf. *PHP* III 3.16.

³² *PHP* III 3.22 and 2.18.

³³ *PHP* III 7.27–32.

³⁴ *PHP* III 2.18. Trans.: De Lacy, modified.

Galen is surprised that Chrysippus, who was well acquainted with the poets and knew therefore that “they are the witnesses to all doctrines,”³⁵ did not select lines which supported his argument more effectively. More strikingly, Galen now turns to offer Chrysippus such quotes that indicate rational activity occurring in the heart, among which: *Always is such a thought (νόημα) in your breast (ἐνὶ στήθεσσι) (Od. 13.330)* or *You know, Shaker of Earth, the will (βουλὴν) in my breast (ἐν στήθεσι) (Il. 20.20).*³⁶ Of course, Galen’s readiness to endorse Chrysippus’ role and to provide lines from the poets that attest to the validity of his theory serves his general purpose of invalidating the readings and arguments of the Stoic philosopher.

ISSUES OF METHODOLOGY

It is necessary to understand the context in which Galen’s criticism of Chrysippus’ misinterpretation of Homer and the poets takes place. In fact the emphasis on Chrysippus’ misunderstanding of the verses that he quotes appears in the context of a wider claim which pertains to Chrysippus’ methodology as a whole. In Galen’s eyes, Chrysippus’ writings display all possible defects. First and foremost, they lack coherence and consistency.³⁷ Their opacity, resulting from the author’s “deficiency in his ability to express himself” makes them “a riddle contrived in amazing obscurity along with inopportune conciseness.”³⁸ Furthermore, they are too short or too long. Chrysippus’ concision hides that which he himself knows to be a mistake or occurs only when he ventures into some kind of scientific argument.³⁹ Conversely, his ill-founded discussions spread into interminable arguments having more in common with an old woman’s prattle than with any philosophical discourse worthy of the name.⁴⁰

³⁵ *PHP* III 2.18. This idea is attributed to the now lost Plutarch’s *Homeric Studies* and is also echoed in Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Grammarians (Against the Professors, I)*, 281, as noted by De Lacy 1984: 635. Cf. Seneca, *Letters to Lucilius* 88.5

³⁶ *PHP* III 2.18–3.3.

³⁷ Galen’s denunciation of Chrysippus’ inconsistency and self-contradictions is one of his most pervasive lines of attack. See, for example, *PHP* II 6.3–13, 7.22; III 7.40, 7.48; IV 1.5–6, 1.15–17, 4.1–4; V 1.10, 1.12–13, 2.43, 3.12–23, 4.6–7, 4.14; VII 1.8 and VIII 1.14.

³⁸ *PHP* III 4.6–8. Trans.: De Lacy, slightly modified.

³⁹ *PHP* III 4.9–10 and 5.33.

⁴⁰ *PHP* III 4.15, 7.18–19. Cf. *PHP* III 5.34. In fact, Chrysippus gave Galen the stick with which to beat, as he himself wrote: “They will say that this is the prating of an old-woman, or perhaps of a schoolmaster who wishes to list as many verses as possible under the same thought” (*PHP* III 4.16).

Galen attacks what he presents as the ineptness,⁴¹ the shamelessness⁴² and the mental obtuseness⁴³ of a thinker who not only “does not understand entailment and mutual incompatibility”⁴⁴ but lacks wisdom to such an extent that he does not realise that he is calling on witnesses that testify against him:

But even if all the non-specialists (οἱ ἰδιῶται) are mad in all respects and disagree with each other and themselves, they have, I believe at least this much sense, that they do not summon on behalf of their views witnesses who will testify against them. But the wisdom of Chrysippus transcends the ignorance of ordinary men; thus he summons witnesses (μάρτυρας) by whom he is condemned.⁴⁵

Galen rejects Chrysippus' method altogether. In his eyes, Chrysippus presents arguments without bringing valid proof, taking for granted the views that he asserts.⁴⁶ On many occasions, Galen exposes the manner in which Chrysippus should have fashioned his discourse. First and foremost, before discussing matters such as the localisation of the intellect in the heart in his *On the Soul*, he should have provided his reader with what we may call a *status quaestionis*. Indeed, one of the pervasive attacks against Chrysippus concerns the fact that he does not refer to the convincing arguments advanced by his predecessors, especially Plato.⁴⁷ According to Galen, the Stoic philosopher should first have presented persuasive arguments in favour of the tripartite soul and its localisation formulated by Plato;⁴⁸ then he should have refuted and disproved them. Only at that point should he have established his own opinion on the basis of scientific and demonstrative premises.⁴⁹

T. Tieleman has already underlined the importance of the question of methodology in Galen's oeuvre in general, and especially in the *PHP*. According to him, it is in that domain that Galen's contribution is most important.⁵⁰ In the second book of the *PHP*, devoted mostly to discussion

⁴¹ *PHP* II 5.94; III 3.2, 3.23, 3.25; V 6.13.

⁴² *PHP* III 7.16.

⁴³ *PHP* III 4.37.

⁴⁴ *PHP* III 7.32.

⁴⁵ *PHP* III 4.34–35. Trans.: De Lacy, slightly modified. Cf. *PHP* VI 8.78 where Galen also mocks the “amazing wisdom” of Chrysippus.

⁴⁶ *PHP* II 2.18, 2.7–9, 7.19; III 2.4–6 and 8–9; IV 1.4; VIII 1.11–12.

⁴⁷ *PHP* III 2.7–8, 4.36; IV 1.15, 2.1, 2.6; 2.15.

⁴⁸ Cf. *PHP* VIII 1.11.

⁴⁹ *PHP* III 1.20–21. Cf. III 2.7–9, 4.18; IV 1.15–16, 2.1; V 7.43.

⁵⁰ Galen has devoted a long work to the exposition of the scientific method, the now lost *On Demonstration*, in 15 books, in which, says Galen, “I show what scientific method

of methodological issues and exposition of the tenets of his method, Galen contrasts the scientific method expounded by Aristotle and Theophrastus in their *Posterior Analytics* with the rhetorical and non-expert premises (τὰ ἰδιωτικὰ τε καὶ ῥητορικὰ λήμματα) with which Chrysippus filled his books.⁵¹ In Aristotelian fashion, Galen distinguishes between four kinds of premise: a) demonstrative and scientific (ἐπιστημονικόν τε καὶ ἀποδεικτικόν); b) “suited for training” (γυμναστικόν) or dialectical; c) persuasive and rhetorical (πιθανόν τε καὶ ῥητορικόν) and d) sophistical (σοφιστικόν).⁵² According to Galen, every investigation should adhere to the norms of scientific premises, since only these are appropriate and pertain to the nature, essence and properties of the matter under investigation.⁵³ Galen acknowledges that there is some utility in dialectical premises, for training or for refuting the sophists.⁵⁴ Rhetorical premises, however, which are based on human opinion, external witnesses—such as that of the poets—on etymology, everyday examples, etc. are far less reliable. They are twice removed from scientific premises and as such do not differ much from the sophistical premises, which are at the bottom of the scale.⁵⁵

The second book of *PHP* is replete with criticism of Stoic methodology, especially that of Chrysippus.⁵⁶ Chrysippus attracts Galen’s criticism for founding his discourse on etymology, ordinary language, interpretation of gestures and for referring to non-experts, among which the poets figure prominently.⁵⁷ Thus, Galen portrays Chrysippus as an adept of the worst methodology, established on weak premises and unsuccessfully at that.

(τὴν ἀποδεικτικὴν μέθοδον) is in its entirety; and throughout the first book of these treatises, I exhorted everyone who undertakes any demonstration first to train himself in that method” (*PHP* II 2.3; trans. De Lacy, slightly modified; cf. *PHP* II 2.23, 3.27. See also Tieleman 1996: 8–61 and id. 2008: 49–65). Chrysippus’ erroneous methodology was also found faulty in this work, as well as in *On the Correctness of Names* (*PHP* II 2.23).

⁵¹ *PHP* II 2.5.

⁵² *PHP* II 8.2; cf. *PHP* II 3.9–11, 4.3–4; III 1.3–5. See Tieleman 1996: 14–23; Gill 2010: 57 ff.; Morison 2008a.

⁵³ On the properties of scientific premises see, for example, *PHP* II 2.3, 3.9, 4.3.

⁵⁴ *PHP* II 3.10.

⁵⁵ *PHP* II 3.11, 3.4 and 8.2.

⁵⁶ See, for example, *PHP* II 2.9, 2.13, 2.23. Cf. II 3.3, 3.19–22, 3.25, 4.1, 5.37–18, 5.64–7, 7.2, 7.12–4, 7.16, 3.8–11.

⁵⁷ For instances of Galen’s criticism of the use of etymology, see, *PHP* II 2.9–23 and Morison 2008b: esp. 123–127; of expressions of language: III 4.1–11, 5.14–18; of gestures: III 5.8–10 and of non-experts: *PHP* II 2.5–7, 4.4; III 7.23; VI 8.78.

For what could be more like old-women's prating, more like idly talk, more proper to a schoolmaster, or further removed from the demonstration that a philosopher ought to use [...] than to mention the poets and to call in a multitude of non experts as witnesses, and to write what the women say, and to have no success even with the witnesses he invokes?⁵⁸

Thus, Galen's attacks on Chrysippus' incorrect interpretations of Homer emerge as part of a series of objections raised against the methodology of the Stoic philosopher and aimed at undermining the validity of his discourse and arguments. Galen, the physician-philosopher, presents himself as the paragon of the best methodology, based on scientific premises far removed from any mythological and exegetical mode of thought (or, in Galen's words, from rhetorical premises).

One may ask why Galen, who pays so little heed to arguments from the poets, nonetheless devoted time and effort to providing alternative readings of the verses. Though Galen's position on the use of the poets in philosophical discourse seems to oscillate between rejection⁵⁹ and acceptance under certain conditions,⁶⁰ there is no doubt that he holds them in contempt.

While testimony from the poets belongs to the category of weak premises, Galen nevertheless offers a sustained discussion of Chrysippus' improper arguments by offering variant interpretations, in line with Platonic psychology. Galen thus engages in the very methodology that he dismisses. Is Galen only "descending into the arena" as he himself states, in order to completely undermine Chrysippus?

Chrysippus' books sometimes call non-experts as witnesses to the premises that he postulates; sometimes they are poets, or a most excellent etymology,

⁵⁸ *PHP* III 4.18. Trans.: De Lacy, slightly modified.

⁵⁹ As we have seen, arguments from the poets are presented as superfluous and irrelevant (II 3.8); they are removed from the scientific premises and are even said "to be completely despised" (III 5.22). Galen depicts them as a waste of time, a pointless occupation and repeatedly claims that Chrysippus should have refrain from basing his arguments on such inappropriate premises (see especially III 8.33–37).

⁶⁰ At the end of book V, he spells out rules for adducing the poets' testimony. Firstly, testimony from the poets should not open an argument, but they can be called upon as a supplementary proof to a well-established scientific demonstration. It should moreover not concern obscure subjects but evident phenomena, already known through experience, such as the plurality of the soul's parts. They are however inappropriate for more obscure matters, such as the localisation of these parts (*PHP* V 7.83–8). Galen seems ready to accept the entry of the poets into philosophical discourse under certain conditions which, of course, "his" Chrysippus did not meet. It seems more likely that Galen accepts testimonies from the poets when they support his own views, or when they are used by philosophers who are believed to share his ideas, as, for example, Posidonius (*PHP* IV 5.35–46).

or something of the sort, things that come to nothing but spend and waste our time to no purpose, as we make this one point clear to them, that the premises of their syllogism are not scientific, and then descend into the arena and wrestle with them in order to demonstrate that the non-experts and the poets testify for us no less, and sometimes even more, than for them.⁶¹

Is Galen's reply to Chrysippus by way of alternative exegeses aimed only at showing Chrysippus' followers that he can easily defeat their master, even with his own tools?⁶² There is an inherent contradiction in responding to and in criticising Chrysippus' non-scientific discourse, based on poets, etymologies and non-experts, by exploiting, at length, this very same kind of discourse.⁶³ It is worth noting that Galen seems aware of his paradoxical attitude since he repeatedly assigns the responsibility of his long discussions of the poets and of other non-scientific arguments to Chrysippus: "It is impossible that the one who discusses with chatterers, completely avoids all chattering."⁶⁴

Nonetheless, Galen's dispute with Chrysippus on the right interpretation of Homer is not attributable only to his polemical stance. His involvement in exegetical polemic discloses a more complex attitude than a stark opposition between scientific discourse on the one hand and mythological or poetic discourse on the other. In the absence of Chrysippus' original texts, it is hazardous to evaluate the real place and function played by Homeric quotations, and it is impossible to determine if they were adduced as the only support for his philosophical claims, as Galen would have us believe.⁶⁵ What we do know is that Galen chose to refute them at length. This long exegetical polemic which occupies large portions of book III and book IV of the *PHP* reveal Galen's debt to the long tradition of the philosophical reading of Homer and the poets.

⁶¹ *PHP* II 2.5. Trans.: De Lacy: slightly modified.

⁶² The contemporaneous aspect of Galen's criticism of Chrysippus should be stressed. If Galen engages in a controversy with a philosopher dead for more than 300 years, it is because Chrysippus was read, studied and interpreted by philosophers of his own days. Galen even refers to some Stoics who refuse to reveal their interpretation of Chrysippus' writings, on account of it being esoteric! *PHP* III 4.12–13. Cf. *PHP* IV 5.1–2; VIII 1.14; 1.16. See also Tieleman 2009: 282–99.

⁶³ Even if Galen can surely state that his own theory of the soul is not based on poetic verses, and that the rhetorical premises that he uses follow a demonstrative argument. Though it is true that Galen's account of the soul does not rely on the testimony of the poets, his refutation of Chrysippus mainly does.

⁶⁴ *PHP* III 4.28. Cf. VII 1.1–3; III 7.18; IV 1.1, 1.5; V 6.44–45; VIII 1.16.

⁶⁵ Although some indication on Chrysippus' method is given in *PHP* III 5.21.

GALEN'S INTERPRETATION OF HOMER

The following examples shed some light on Galen's debt to the tradition of exegetical philosophy and more precisely, to Platonic interpretations of myths.⁶⁶ Indeed, Galen at times does not hesitate to use and quote Homer at length. On one occasion, for example, even without having being challenged by some Chrysippean citation of Homer, he quotes the Homeric verses describing Tityos' agony with the aim of shoring up his position on the desiderative part of the soul.

*And I saw Tityos, son of glorious Earth,
Lying on the ground; he spread over nine stadia.
Two vultures, sitting on either side of him, were tearing his liver,
Plunging their beak inside his bowels, and he did not defended himself with
his hand*

*For he had assaulted Leto, illustrious wife of Zeus
As she went to Pytho trough Panopeus, a land of beautiful dancing lawns⁶⁷*

For Galen the poet clearly indicates that the desiderative part of the soul (τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπιθυμητικὸν μέρος) is situated in the liver: "Tityos desired (ἐπεθύμησεν) to violate (ὑβρίσαι) Leto, therefore vultures tear his liver, punishing him most in the very member that initiated the violation."⁶⁸ We observe that the Homeric passage quoted by Galen has been given a complex interpretation. The tearing out of the liver by vultures is seen as punishment for having *desired* to violate Leto (ἐπεθύμησεν ὑβρίσαι). Galen paraphrases the Homeric verse "*for he had assaulted Leto* (Λητώ γὰρ εἴλκυσε)⁶⁹ which enables him to link the desiderative part of the soul to the liver. What is more, this interpretation is repeated in an even more detailed fashion in the sixth book. There, Galen explains that Tityos' assault was motivated by erotic desire (δι' ἐρωτικὴν ἐπιθυμίαν); he sees in the fact that the poet mentioned neither the brain nor the heart as being eaten, a strong clue to the identification of the liver as the offending organ.⁷⁰ Moreover, he compares this story to the custom in his own day of punishing the body part by means of which an offence has been committed: the legs for those who run away, the hands of thieves or the

⁶⁶ On the integration of Homer in the philosophical Platonic tradition in the light of Alexandrian tradition of Aristotelian literary criticism see Niehoff in this volume.

⁶⁷ *Od.* 11.576–581.

⁶⁸ *PHP* III 7.30, trans.: De Lacy, slightly modified.

⁶⁹ *Od.* 11.580 (the standard Homeric text reads εἴλκυσε); cf. *PHP* III 7.29.

⁷⁰ *PHP* VI 8.77–83.

belly of gluttons. Then he concludes with the fact that his interpretation is the only authoritative one:

If any admirers of the [words] of Chrysippus can give some other reason why Homer portrayed Tityos as being punished in this way, I would gladly hear it. Since they give no good reason to be sure and do not find any, I think it is reasonable to praise Homer for having anticipated in this way the view of Hippocrates and Plato, and to enlist him also as a witness to what we have confirmed through scientific demonstration.⁷¹

In fact, Galen's interpretation of Tityos displays striking similarities to that of Heraclitus, author of the *Homeric Problems*. With a view to showing that Homer is truly the source of the Platonic localisation of the parts of the soul, he states that:

Besides, Tityos, since he loved (ἐρασθέντα) the wife of Zeus, is represented as being punished in the part where began the plan [of his offence]⁷²

Two vultures, sitting on either side, were tearing his liver,

What for, Homer?

For he had assaulted Leto, glorious wife of Zeus.

So, just as lawgivers amputate the hands of father-beaters, thereby cutting off precisely that part of the limb that committed the offence, so Homer punishes the liver of the man who offended because of his liver.⁷³

As is the case with Galen, the tearing of the liver is interpreted as punishment directed towards the part of the soul responsible for the offence.⁷⁴ As with Galen, the myth points to the existence and location of the desiderative part of the soul.⁷⁵ It seems likely, therefore, that at least some of Galen's alternative interpretations draw on traditional Platonic readings of Homer.

⁷¹ *PHP* VI 8.83; trans.: De Lacy, slightly modified.

⁷² According to Buffière 1962: *ad loc.* and p. 98, there is no need to correct νοεῖν, by νοσεῖν, as suggested by some editors and followed by Russel and Konstan 2005: *ad loc.*, who translate: "in the organ where the disorder originated".

⁷³ Translation: Russel and Konstan, slightly modified.

⁷⁴ Heraclitus, does not explicitly mention the ἐπιθυμητικόν but the reference is obvious from the context. As noted by F. Buffière 1962: 99, the idea that the punishment of a certain part of the body does not occur by chance in Homer is also found in Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 50.20–22.

⁷⁵ For Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* III 984–994, Tityos' punishment symbolises the troubles of distress (*angor*) and desire (*cuppedo*). In Sextus Empiricus, *Against the physycists* I 67–68 (*Against the Professors* IX), Tityos' story is used to prove that stories on Hades are pure fictions and in *Against the Grammarians* (*Against the Professors* I), 286, Tityos' liver is said to have been eaten because of his desire (ἐπιθυμία). Cf. Apollodorus, *The Library* I 23.

Some passages from the poets were traditionally taken by philosophers of a certain tradition or philosophically-orientated intellectuals or grammarians to reflect one or another doctrinal tenet. J. Dillon has already shown the popularity of the Euripidean character Medea. For Stoics such as Chrysippus or Epictetus, Medea's hesitation-scene before killing her children⁷⁶ was analysed in terms of the unified soul. Epictetus took it to exemplify the decisional aspect of passion or, in other words, the process by which it is the assent (*συγκατάθεσις*) to an impression which produces action.⁷⁷ For the Platonists, on the contrary, it illustrates the inner battle between the rational and spirited part of the soul and the defeat of reason by *thumos*. It is therefore not a surprise that this same interpretation of Euripides' *Medea* also surfaces under Galen's pen with a view to responding to a Chrysippean exegesis. For Galen, Medea is the symbol of the barbarian and uneducated person, in whom *thumos*, like a disobedient horse, overcomes its charioteer, reason.⁷⁸

In another occasion, eighteen lines of *Odyssey* (20.5–22) picturing the hero straining not to succumb to his wrath generated by the misconduct of his maids with the suitors, are quoted by Galen as evidence that among Greeks and educated men, reason overpowers anger (*θυμός*). "If Homer," says Galen, "is not clearly describing in these verses a battle of anger against reason (*μάχην θυμοῦ πρὸς λογισμὸν*) in a wise man, the victory of reason and the obedience of anger to it, then there is nothing else that anyone would concede that I understand in the poet."⁷⁹ Later on, Galen recalls that in the fourth book of the *Republic*, Plato mentioned "in the most opportune way" (*εὐκαιρότατα*) several lines of that Homeric passage, while Chrysippus did so "in the most inappropriate manner" (*ἀκαιρότατα*).⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Eur. *Medea*, 1078–9.

⁷⁷ Epictetus, *Discourses* I 28.1–9. Chrysippus' interpretation of Medea is not preserved by Galen who only points out that his quotations were very inappropriate (*PHP* III 3.13) and, of course, testified against him (III 3.22 and IV 6.19). It has been tentatively reconstructed by Dillon 1997; Gill 1983; esp. 139–141 and Graver 2007: 70–71. They all insist on the monistic aspect of Chrysippus' interpretation. Dillon analyses it in terms of assent to representation while Gill in terms of deliberate rejection to reason. Graver reconstructs Chrysippus' reading thanks to his interpretation of Menelaus' kiss preserved by Galen (see *infra* n. 96) and believes that Medea illustrates in Chrysippus' eyes, instability and alternation of judgments as well as weakness of the reasoning mind.

⁷⁸ *PHP* III 3.13–22, 4.23–27, 7.14; IV 2.27, 6.19–22.

⁷⁹ *PHP* III 3.10; trans.: De Lacy, slightly modified.

⁸⁰ *PHP* III 3.2–13. Indeed, the verse "And striking his breast, he rebukes his heart with words" (*στῆθος δὲ πλῆξας κραδίην ἠνίπαπε μύθῳ* *Od.* 20.17) was used by Plato in *Republic* IV 441 b–c as a testimony (*τοῦ Ὁμήρου μαρτυρήσει*) to the tripartite soul. Cf. *Rep.* III 390 d4 and *Phaed.* 94 d; cf. *PHP* V 7.76. It should be understood that in Plato,

In the fifth book, Galen even regrets that Chrysippus has not learned from the same passage of Plato's *Republic* how to use Homer correctly. In fact, Galen's reading of this Homeric passage depicting Odysseus rebuking his heart with words also echoes a tradition of Platonic readings. Not only does Plato use it, as noted by Galen, as testimony to the tripartite soul in *Republic* IV, or in order to refute Simmias' concept of soul as harmony in the *Phaedo*,⁸¹ but for the author of the *Homeric Problems*, those very same lines (*Od.* 20.17–8) indicate that the spirited part of the soul dwells in the area of the heart.⁸² What is more, in Pseudo-Plutarch's *Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer*, in a paragraph which aims to show that Homer anticipated Plato's view of the plurality of the soul's parts and localisation, *Od.* 20.18 is cited as proof that the poet represents "reason exhorting *thumos* and commanding it as a ruler over a subordinate."⁸³

At the time he wrote these lines, Galen could not have known the *Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer*, for this work dates from the end of the second century or, at the latest, the beginning of the third.⁸⁴ From a chronological perspective, it is not impossible that he knew Heraclitus' *Homeric Problems*.⁸⁵ But we need not assume any interdependence between these interpretations. These parallels only show that Galen was familiar with certain traditions of the exegetic reading of Homer, known among philosophers and exegetes, which he is willing to exploit in his controversy with Chrysippus.

THE BIRTH OF ATHENA

Our last example also attests to Galen's involvement with traditions of the philosophical interpretation of myths. Galen quotes a long passage in which Chrysippus provides a philosophical reading of the birth of Athena. Chrysippus' exegesis appears as a reply to "some people"⁸⁶ who interpreted the myth of Athena's birth from Zeus' head as testimony to

the appeal to Homer follows a valid demonstration, which is not the case in Chrysippus. Tieleman 1996: 17 ff.

⁸¹ *Rep.* IV 441 b–c, cf. III 390 d4; *Phaed.* 92a–95a.

⁸² *Homeric Problems*, 18, 2–4.

⁸³ Pseudo-Plutarch, *Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer* 129. Cf. Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists* 687 F.

⁸⁴ See the introduction of Lamberton in Keaney and id. 1996: 7–9.

⁸⁵ The work is generally dated to the end of the first or to the beginning of the second century A.D. Russel and Konstan 2005: xi–xiii; Buffière 1962: ix–x.

⁸⁶ ἀκούω δέ τινας λέγειν.

the location of the hegemonic part of the soul in the head: "For, they say, the birth of Athena who is wisdom (μῆτις) and, as it were, prudence (φρόνησις), from the head of Zeus is the sign (σύμβολόν) that the governing part is there."⁸⁷

Chrysippus' alternative reading of the myth is based on extensive quotation from the *Theogony*, including verses which are absent from our standard edition of Hesiod.⁸⁸ According to Chrysippus, the swallowing of Metis, which precedes Athena's birth, shows that wisdom does not originate in the head, as claimed by the aforementioned exegetes, but from a lower region of the body. Indeed, Metis, who symbolises "a certain wisdom" (φρόνησις) as well as "the art concerning the things of life"⁸⁹ gives birth to a daughter similar to her, Athena. Athena is only the spoken expression of this "swallowed wisdom." For Chrysippus, Athena represents the wisdom uttered "through the mouth by way of the head."⁹⁰ This interpretation preserves his cardiocentric theory of the soul since, thanks to the stress put on Metis' ingestion, no wisdom originating in the head has to be postulated.⁹¹

According to J.-B. Gourinat this passage confirms that, contrary to A. A. Long's claim, allegorical readings of the myth existed in Stoicism already from Chrysippus' time.⁹² Actually, this kind of exegesis differs from the literal use of Homer that we have seen before. Here, it is the whole story in its succession of events which is invested with meaning, and not one or two sentences taken out of context.

⁸⁷ *PHP* III 8.3–4; trans.: De Lacy, modified.

⁸⁸ Hesiod, *Theogony* 886–890 and 900 (cf. *PHP* III 8.9) and fr. 343 (R. Merkelbach and M.L. West) (cf. *PHP* III 8. 11–14). Chrysippus states that his interpretation is based on a more detailed account of the myth (*PHP* III 8.4).

⁸⁹ περὶ τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον τέχνη *PHP* III 8.16. De Lacy translates: "art in practical matters."

⁹⁰ διὰ τοῦ στόματος κατὰ τὴν κεφαλὴν *PHP* III 8.18.

⁹¹ *PHP* III 8.1–19.

⁹² According to Long 1992: 58–59, Stoic interpretations of the myths were literal and articulated around etymologies. According to him, the birth of Athena's passage does not disclose any allegorical practices, since "Chrysippus does not take himself to be identifying a gap between surface meaning and hidden meaning. His interpretation demythologizes Hesiod but it does so in ways that retain the obvious link in the text between Metis as goddess and μῆτις as a word signifying intelligence." For Gourinat 2005, the allegorical character of Chrysippus' reading cannot be questioned: it resorts to personifications and symbols, and provides a coherent interpretation of a complex account, in which each element means something other than the literal meaning. See also Tieleman 1996: 221 and Goulet 2005: 115–116. There is abundant literature on allegory in Stoicism, see, for example: Ramelli 2004: esp. 79–146; Brisson 2004: 41–55 and Boys-Stones 2003: 189–216.

But what is Galen's view of such a reading of the myth? Ultimately he would qualify such an occupation as improper for philosophers. Chrysippus should have departed from myths (*ἀποκεχωρηκέναι τῶν μύθων*), and considered the explanation of their hidden meaning (*ἐξηγούμενον αὐτῶν τὰς ὑπονοίας*) a waste of time.⁹³

Nevertheless, before Galen condemns Chrysippus' concern with the interpretation of the myth, he spends several pages quoting, paraphrasing and explaining it. Chrysippus' assimilation of Zeus' "top of the head", from which Athena is said to have issued,⁹⁴ to Zeus' mouth fails to convince him. In Galen's eyes, the justification advanced by Chrysippus in reference to the frequency of such substitutions in allegory (*κατὰ σύμβολον*) is not persuasive and should have been discussed more thoroughly. Nevertheless—and such a positive attitude towards Chrysippus is exceptional enough to be mentioned—Galen finds Chrysippus' exegesis of the myth ingenious (*εὐμηχάνως*) and persuasive (*πιθανῶς*).⁹⁵ But Galen does not stop here. Since he cannot accept Chrysippus' cardiocentric interpretation of the myth, he deploys great creativity in order to provide an alternative allegorical reading, congruent this time with the concept of a tripartite soul. In his interpretation, based on "the observations according to dissection," or, in other words, on scientific premises, the origin of the arteries in the heart explains the fact that prudence (*φρόνησις*), i.e. psychic *pneuma*, is first conceived in the lower parts of the body. Eventually wisdom comes to completion in the head, more precisely in the top of the head, where the middle and principal ventricle of the head is located. If Chrysippus' exegesis "matches the myth to the Stoic dogma", Galen's own interpretation "fits the myth to the truth."⁹⁶

By producing an alternative interpretation of the myth, Galen positions himself, consciously or not, within a longstanding exegetical polemic concerning the birth of Athena. As we have seen, Chrysippus' exegesis was a response to certain exegetes who posited the hegemonic part of the soul in

⁹³ *PHP* III 8.34.

⁹⁴ Cf. Hesiod fr. dub. 343 (R. Merkelbach and M. L. West) and *PHP* III 8.13.

⁹⁵ *PHP* III 8.26–8.

⁹⁶ *PHP* III 8. 26 and III 8. 32. Trans.: De Lacy, modified. Note that on one occasion Galen accepts Chrysippus' reading of the myth. Chrysippus' interpretation of the episode of Menelaus kissing Helen instead of killing her, (Cf. Eur. *Andr.* 627 ff.) which was discussed in the fourth book of his *On the Affections* in terms of 'lack of psychic tension' (*ἀτονία*) and weakness of the soul (*ἀσθένεια*) is quoted, used and supplemented by Galen in order to show that Chrysippus acknowledges other powers in the soul than the rational and that he thus contradicts his own claims concerning passions as judgments (*PHP* IV 6.1–11).

the head. They were criticised by Chrysippus for distorting (διαστρέφοντες) and altering (παραλλάττοντες) the meaning of the text⁹⁷ which does not state that the birth of Athena occurred *in Zeus' head*, but—and the reader has to complete this part of the argument—*from it*.⁹⁸ These exegetes are not identified in our text, but thanks to Philodemus of Gadara's quote of the second century B.C. Stoic philosopher Diogenes of Babylon, it can be seen that they are Stoics themselves. Indeed, the fragment from Diogenes' book *On Athena* contrasts Chrysippus' interpretation of the birth of Athena with that of other Stoics, who locate the hegemonic part of the soul in the head.⁹⁹ Proof that these different Stoic interpretations of the myth of Athena's birth aroused interest outside the Stoic school is shown by the fact that this information is conveyed by an Epicurean philosopher.¹⁰⁰

CONCLUSION

Ultimately it appears that Galen's position is not as unequivocal as he wants his readers to believe. The opposition between the scientific discourse that he promotes and the exegetical one, which he criticises, is not as sharply delineated as he makes out. Indeed, although Galen mocks Chrysippus for having filled his writings with lines from the poets, he nevertheless discusses them at length. Galen attacks Chrysippus' monistic psychology by providing alternative exegeses of Homer and the poets in line with Plato's theory of the soul. Galen wants to show his readers that the Stoic philosopher misunderstood the true and obvious meaning of the verses he cited. Exegetical polemic therefore enables Galen to dismiss Chrysippus' arguments and doctrine.

What is more, we have observed that Galen's participation in exegetical polemic contradicts to some extent his contempt for arguments from the poets. His ambivalent attitude is accounted for not only by the polemical scope of his discourse, but also by his debt to and enrolment in the

⁹⁷ Although the subject of the participles is the indeterminate article "some" (τινες), Galen is obviously referring to the aforementioned allegorists who posit the hegemonic part of the soul in the head.

⁹⁸ *Theog.* 924 Cf. *PHP* III 8.10. and Hes. fr. dub. 343 cf. III 8.13.

⁹⁹ Philodemus, *On Piety*, P. Herc. 1428 cols. 9.10–10, 8. See Obbink 1996: 19–21. In his *Compendium of the Traditions of Greek Theology* (ed. Lang) 35, Cornutus attributes this opinion to "the ancients". Cf. Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* I, 41 and Heraclitus, *Homeric Problems* 19.9.

¹⁰⁰ Diogenes of Babylon's *On Athena* was a major source for Philodemus' *On Piety*. See Obbink 2001: 195.

tradition of philosophical exegeses of Homer and the poets. Interpretations of Homer and the poets circulated not only among professed supporters and exegetes of Homer, but also among philosophers. Different philosophical movements enlisted passages of their literary heritage, proposing a standard interpretation. When confronted with a different interpretation, supporting an opposing philosophical standpoint, they were ready to compete for the authoritative reading.¹⁰¹ Polemics through exegesis of Homer and the poets was therefore a fully-fledged genre of polemical discourse and the case of Galen proves it all the more, for even if he struggles to abandon such weak arguments in favour of a more scientific discourse, he cannot easily dismiss them.

It is important to remember that by Galen's time, exegetical polemics already played a fundamental role among another group of intellectuals in the Roman Empire, namely among Christian thinkers. In the first centuries C.E., the Christian appropriation of the Jewish Scriptures was effected by virtue of their claim that theirs was the only correct reading. Through exegetical polemics, the new religion progressively delineated the contours of its identity, defining dissidents or adepts, including or excluding others, and shaping the outlines of its orthodoxy. Less than a decade before Galen started writing his *PHP*, the Apologist Justin Martyr, also in Rome, already polemicalised on the correct understanding of Scriptures in his famous *Dialogue with Trypho*. In this apology for the new faith, Justin demonstrates that the Jews fail to understand their own Scriptures. Justin is one case among many Christian thinkers, such as Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus of Lyon or Tertullian who, in the second century, use exegetical polemic in order to crystallise their dogma. Homer and the poets certainly did not have the holy status that the Bible had for Jews and Christians. Nevertheless, the method of discussing the correct interpretation of a culturally shared text was a very effective device in the definition

¹⁰¹ Note that Galen is certainly not the first thinker, nor the last, to indulge in exegetical polemic. Obbink has already noted the similarity between the two final sections of Philodemus of Gadara's *On Piety*—which he describes as “a repertoire of authorities purportedly cited by Stoics in support of Stoic views, turned back by Philodemus against the Stoics in an attempt to make the Stoics look foolish and self-contradictory in their tenets”—and “Galen's casting of hundreds of quotations from the poets and philosophers back in the teeth of the Stoics in *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*” (Obbink 2002: 191 and n. 18). Likewise a very similar criticism to that of Galen, regarding Chrysippus' alleged misunderstanding of his Homeric quotations in his *On Fate*, was leveled at Chrysippus by the second century C.E. Diogenianus, as recalled by Eusebius, in his *Preparation for the Gospels* VI 8. (This reference is mentioned by D. Armstrong in the introduction of Lamberton 1992: xvii n. 34). See also Plutarch, *On Stoic Self Contradictions* 1043e, 1044b, 10489b–e, 1050b, 1056b.

and crystallisation of a philosophical standpoint vis-à-vis another and, willingly or not, Galen is also among its representatives.

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HOMER WITHIN THE BIBLE:
HOMERISMS IN THE *GRAECUS VENETUS*

Cyril Aslanov

The Greek version of the Bible preserved in MS. Marcianus gr. 7 (*Graecus Venetus*)¹ is a fourteenth-century humanistic translation of the Pentateuch and of six of the Hagiographs: Proverbs; Ruth; Song of Solomon; Ecclesiastes; Lamentations; Daniel, that is, four of the five scrolls, Proverbs and Daniel, a book held in high esteem for its eschatological content. Compared with the canonical version of the Septuagint, the *Graecus Venetus* has two particularities: first, its greater literalism. This aspect, which I dealt with in a previous article,² will not be a major focus in this present study. Second, it is written in an ultra-purist variety of Attic Greek with the exception of the Aramaic section of the Book of Daniel (2:5–7:28)³ that displays a curious mixture of various literary dialects—mostly, Doric with some ingredients taken from Ionic, Aeolic and Homeric Greek.⁴

The reason for this shift from an Attic blend of Greek to literary dialects may result from the endeavour to express the difference between Hebrew and Aramaic, erroneously perceived as two dialects of the same language. Now, in the classical corpora of Greek literature that has been preserved by Byzantine humanism, the most striking example of an inter-dialectal shift within the same text is provided by Greek tragedy where the transition from the dialogues to the choirs is emphasised by a code-switching from Attic to literary Doric. To be sure, the variety of Doric used in order to give an analogon of the use of Aramaic in Daniel is a little less conventional than the Doric exemplified by the tragic choirs or Pindar's epinicia and more consonant with authentic specimens of this dialect (as shown by the systematic use of the ending -μεξ instead of -μεν). However, it distinguishes itself from real Doric or Lesbian in that the *digamma* does not even appear in words that display Doric or Lesbian features. Obviously, the knowledge that the translator had of Doric and Lesbian derived

¹ Gebhardt 1875. On the history of this text, see Mercati 1916.

² Aslanov 1999a: 155–158.

³ If not specified otherwise, the biblical references are all of the Book of Daniel.

⁴ Aslanov 1999a: 169.

from a familiarity with Byzantine lexicographic treatises such as the monumental *Suda*, rather than to a direct reading of poetic texts, which were mostly lost in Byzantine times.

The issue of Doric is not, however, my concern in this paper. Instead I focus on Homerisms in an attempt to evaluate the strategic implications of the occasional use of Homer's *Kunstsprache* in this hotchpotch of dialects mainly dominated by the presence of a no less artificial blend of Doric.

1. CLASSIFICATION OF HOMERIC FEATURES

Before I deal with the stylistic and pragmatic intentions implied by the use of Homerisms in the translation of the Aramaic section of Daniel, it is useful to establish a list of the dialectal features that go back to the corpus of Greek epic:

Phonetism

The tendency to preserve the vowels in hiatus uncontracted may be considered a typically Homeric feature,⁵ although it is also shared with Herodotus's Ionian. This feature is well exemplified in nouns and verbs. In nouns, it affects especially the forms of the third declension: βασιλέες for *malkîn* "kings" (7:24); ὀράσεις for *hezwei* "visions" (7:15) and the neutral nouns of the third declension: e.g. ψεύδεις "of lie" for *kidbâh* "false" (2:9); ἔθνεα "nations" for *amamâyyâ* "peoples" (3:7; 7:14); εἶδος "of a kind" for *zanei* "kinds" (3:10; 15); ἄγγεα "recipients" for *mânei* (5:2); σκεύεα "vessels" for the same word *mânei* (5:3).⁶ There are also some occurrences of the typically Homeric uncontracted form of adjectives of matter that are contracted in classical Greek: χρύσεος "golden" for *dâh^abâ* "(of) gold" (5:2); ἀργύρεος "silvern" for *kaspâ* "(of) silver" (ibid.); σιδάρεοι for *di-farzel* "of iron" (7:19), which is a superficially Dorianised form of Homeric σιδήρεος;⁷ ἄλακτος for *di nâhâš* "of silver" (ibid.).

As far as verbs are concerned, there is frequent use of the uncontracted forms of the verbs in -άω and -έω: present participle ὀράων for *hazeh* "seeing" (7:2; 4; 6; 9; 13); present participle ὁμολογέων "praising" to translate

⁵ Chantraine 1958: I, 27–67.

⁶ Chantraine 1958: I, 208–209.

⁷ Chantraine 1958: I, 65.

mōde ‘giving thanks’ (6:11); ποιέων ‘doing’ (6:11) and ποιέει ‘he does’ (6:28) for ‘*ābed* ‘doing’; ζητέοντα ‘asking’ for *bāe* ‘betting’ (6:12), τελέειν ‘to exist’ for an unexpressed copula in 6:27; ἐκύρεον ‘I happened to be’ for *h^we* ‘I was’; ἐλάλεεν ‘he used to speak’ for *māmallelāh* ‘speaking’ (7:11); λαλέοντος ‘speaking’ for *māmallel* ‘speaking’ (7:20); contracted future ἐγερέεται ‘he will be awakened’ for *yāqūm* ‘he will stand up’ (7:24) and καθεδέεται ‘he will be seated’ (7:26) for *yitīb* ‘he will be seating’.

Sometimes, the non-contraction of the two vowels in contact also affects the non-morphological part of the word, as in δεεινός for *dāhīlāh* ‘awesome’ (7:7; 19).

Nouns

(i) Genitive masculine-singular ending -οιο/ -οίο of the second declension: e.g. χρυσοίο χρηστοίο for *di dāhab ṭāb* ‘of fine gold’; ἀργυροίο ‘of silver’ for *di kḥsaf*; χαλκοίο for *di nāhāš* ‘of bronze’ (2:32); ἀγροίο ‘wild’ for *bārā* ‘of the wilderness’ (2:38); ζώοιο for *ḥeywāh* ‘animal’ (4:13); ὀρνέοιο ‘bird’ for ‘*ōf* ‘fowl’ (7:6); σιδάροιο ‘of iron’ (with a Doric preservation of long *alpha*) for *di-farzel* ‘of iron’ (7:7) and even Δαριαυέσιοιο for *q^ādām Dāryāweš* ‘to Darius’ (6:2). This form is improperly used since the corresponding nominative in the text is Δαριαυέσας (6:1; 10; 26), that is, the Hebrew form *Dāryāweš* suffixed with the masculine ending of the first declension—ας instead of the classical form Δαρείος that is used in the Septuagint and in every mention of Darius in Greek literature in general. Now, according to the rules of Homeric dialect, the corresponding genitive form should have been *Δαριαυέσαιο or *Δαριαυέσεω.⁸ As shown in other places, the translator was well aware of the specificity of Homeric morphology. In 6:7, for instance, he correctly used the vocative in -α of the masculine paradigm of the first declension: Δαριαυέσα ‘O Darius’. Here, however, the use of the hybrid form Δαριαυέσιοιο may have been motivated by the mechanical equivalence between -ου and -οιο/ -οίο that are etymologically related since -ου results from the contraction of -οιο after the dropping of [j] <ι> in intervocalic position. The ending -οιο/-οίο also appears in the declension of the anaphoric αὐτός: αὐτοίο ‘his’ (7:26); ἐπ’αὐτοίο for ‘*lōhī* ‘upon him’ (5:9; 6:5).

This ending is an Aeolism (Thessalism) of Homeric Greek.⁹ However, since the translator of *Graecus Venetus* probably had no knowledge of

⁸ Chantraine 1958: I, 200–201.

⁹ Chantraine 1958: I, 193–194.

Thessalian, a dialect mostly attested in inscriptions,¹⁰ he used it merely as a Homeric feature.

ii) Occasional use of the ending -οισιν of the dative plural of the first and second declension:¹¹ e.g. *κασδαίοισιν* for *l̥-kaśdāei* “to the Chaldeans” (2:5); *ἐν πόλοισι* for *bi-šmāyyā* “in the heaven” (6:28). This ending may also be considered a mere Ionism or an Aeolism.

iii) Use of the forms *άνερες*, *άνερας* instead of *άνδρες*, *άνδρας* for *gubr̥n/ gubr̥āyyā* “men” 3:22–25.¹²

iv) Use of the forms *κέραος/ κέραϊ/ κέραα/ κεράων* of *κέρας* instead of classical *κέρατος/ κέρατι/ κέρατα/ κεράτων* for *qeren* “horn” or *qarn̥n/ qarn̥āyyā* “horns” in 7:7; 8; 20; 24.¹³

v) Use of the typically Homeric dative *κρατί* of *κάρα* for *rešā* “head” (7:20).¹⁴

vi) Use of the Aeolic ending -εσσι instead of -σιν in *πάντεσσι* “all” for *kol* (2:38) and *μεγιστάνεσσι* for *rabr̥ābn̥ōhī* “his lords” (5:1). In Homer, this form was used for metrical reasons in order to provide a dactyl.¹⁵ Here, however, this motivation is obviously absent.

As a matter of fact, the only clear Homerisms within the nominal system are iv), v) and i) if we take into account that the translator was not aware of the Aeolic (Thessalian) origin of this form. Feature vi) is an Aeolism, but it is quite possible that from the vantage point of the translator, it appeared as a mere Homerism. As for ii) and iii), they are general Ionisms, shared by both Homer’s dialect and Herodotus’ Ionic.

Numerals

Use of the form *πίσυρες/ πίσσυρα* for Homeric *πίσυρες/ πίσυρα* “four” in order to translate *’arbā ’āh* “four” (3:25; 7:2–3; 6; 17). This is an Aeolism of Homeric dialect. The undue reduplication of *sigma* in *πίσυρας* may be due to a cross-formation between *πίσυρας* and the Homeric form of Ionian origin *τέσσαρες* or between *πίσυρας* and *πέσσυρες* attested in Hesychius’ lexicon.¹⁶

¹⁰ Bechtel 1921: I, 133.

¹¹ Chantraine 1958: I, 194.

¹² Chantraine 1958: I, 214–215.

¹³ Chantraine 1958: I, 209.

¹⁴ Chantraine 1958: I, 230–231.

¹⁵ Chantraine 1958: I, 204–207.

¹⁶ Bechtel 1921: I, 72.

Pronouns

i) Use of the form ἐγών instead of ἐγώ for 'anāh "I" in 2:8 and *passim*. Again, this feature is an Aeolism of the Homeric dialect.¹⁷

ii) Occasional use of the form τύνη "thou" instead of σύ in 5:18. The use of this rare Aeolism of the Homeric dialect¹⁸ may reflect hesitation between the *ketib* form 'antāh and the *qeri* form 'ant "thou".

iii) Hesitation between Homeric Ionisms and Ionisms more typical of later Ionian literature (Herodotus and Hippocrates, especially) is felt as far as the pronouns are concerned. The form ὑμμέες for 'antūn "you" (2:8) is a strange hybridisation between the form ὕμμες, an Aeolism of the Homeric dialect,¹⁹ and ὑμέες (ὕμέες), an Ionism, characteristic of Herodotus' language.

iv) Other pronouns are directly taken from the Homeric dialect without hybridisation: accusative singular ἐ (7:13); genitive singular ἔο (2:7 and *passim*) or εὖ (7:9 and *passim*); dative 3rd person singular οἶ (2:24 and *passim*).²⁰ In other cases, the pronouns are directly taken from the Aeolic stock of Homeric pronouns: nominative 1st person plural ἄμμες (3:17); dative 2nd person plural ὕμμιν (2:9); accusative 3rd person plural σφέας (6:25); dative 3rd person plural σφίσιν (ibid. and 7:12) to translate 'innūn "they", bahōn "in them" or lahōn "to them". The last two forms are also shared by Herodotus' Ionic.

v) Use of the forms ὁ, ἡ, τό of the demonstrative (that is, of the article of classical Greek) as a relative pronoun (2:11 and *passim*). This feature is shared by other literary dialects, especially Ionian.²¹

Verbs

i) Use of ἔην,²² Homeric equivalent of ἦν, 3rd person singular of the imperfect of εἶναι in order to render h^awā' "he was" in 5:19; 6:3; 5; 11; 7:7; 19.

This form ἔην was extended to the rendering of the 1st person singular h^awe "I was" (4:7; 7:9; 13). The incorrect extension of ἔην to the 1st person singular is due to the isomorphism that unites the classical form ἦν in the 1st and 3rd person singular. Thus the form ἔην, which was perceived as a

¹⁷ Chantraine 1958: I, 264.

¹⁸ Chantraine 1958: I, 263–264.

¹⁹ Chantraine 1958: I, 268.

²⁰ Chantraine 1958: I, 263–264.

²¹ Chantraine 1958: I, 277–278; II, 168–169.

²² Chantraine 1958: I, 288–289.

Homeric variation of ἦν, has been erroneously thought to be also a form of 1st person singular.

ii) An example of polymorphy involving a typical Ionism of the Homeric dialect (shared with Herodotus' language) is provided by the use of the iterative imperfect ἔφασκον²³ "they were saying" (7:5). This form occurs as κᾶφασκον with a Lesbian crasis between καί and the augment ἐ- in 2:7; 10; 3:9. The plural ἔφασκον/ κᾶφασκον alternates with:

- ἔφη "he said" (as κῆφα, a form resulting from an Ionian crasis between καί and the augment ἐ in 2:12 and *passim*).
- the Doric form ἔφα and its plural κᾶφασσαν (3:16; 24).

The alternation between κᾶφασκον on the one hand and κῆφα/ ἔφα/ κᾶφασσαν on the other hand is meant to render the difference between the forms *wə-ʾamrīn* "and they were saying" and *wə-ʾamar* "he said" / *wə-ʾamrū* "they said", respectively. Whatever those dialectal differences might be, what is at stake here is the use of the Homeric iterative ἔφασκον in order to render the durative value of the participle *wə-ʾamrīn* "and they were saying".

iii) Use of the aorist without the augment ἐ-: πέμψε translating the perfect *šəlah* "he sent" (3:2); κτείνε (3:22) translating the active participle *qattīl* "killing"; πέσεε (4:28) translating the perfect *naʿal* "he fell". In 6:23, ἔπεμψε is used to translate the same *šəlah*.

Lexical Features

i) Use of the forms αἶα²⁴ (3:31; 4:19–20; 6:26) and γαῖα²⁵ (4:32; 7:4; 23) instead of γῆ "earth". This use could be a way to reproduce rhythmically the Aramaic original *ʾarʿā* "earth" or more precisely, the use of γαῖα instead of γῆ imitates the emphatic state of the plural -*ayyā* in Aramaic (although γαῖα is obviously not a plural). By contrast, in 4:8; 6:28, the same word *ʾarʿā* is translated by χθών, which is neither especially Homeric nor belonging to a special dialect.

ii) Use of μέροψ²⁶ and βροτός (3:10; 4:14; 29; 5:21; 7:8) to translate ^a*nāš*/^a*nāšā* "man" in 2:10; 4:13–14.

²³ Chantraine 1958: I, 316–25.

²⁴ Chantraine 1958: I, 112.

²⁵ Risch 1974: 136.

²⁶ On this term, see Leumann 1950: 214, n. 8.

iii) Use of the typically Homeric adjective ἀργαλέος “painful”²⁷ to translate *bəʿeš* “bad” (6:15).

Word Formation

In order to Homerise the style of his rendering of Daniel’s Aramaic, the translator replaces the common ethnonym Ἰουδαίος by Ἰουδαίης (3:8; 12) as a rendering of *yəhūdān̄ / yəhūdāyā* “Jews; Judeans”. This is a suffixation of the anthroponym Ἰουδα (eponym of the tribe of Judah) by means of the suffix -ίης, very well attested in epic anthroponymy.²⁸

Another ethnonymic suffix, which is actually akin to -ίης, is -ις/ -ιδος. It is used in the ethnonym μαδαίς (τῷ μαδαίϊδι in 5:28 and τοῦ μαδαίϊδος in 6:9; 13). This form, which appears instead of the classical form Μῆδος “Mede”, is derived from *Mādai*, the Hebrew and Aramaic term for “Media” (a metonymy for “Medes”) by the adjunction of the suffix -ις/ -ιδος to the derivational base *Mādai* with the first *iota* of -ις/ -ιδος merging with the last [-i] of *Mādai*. A few verses later (6:1), the classical Μῆδος is used to translate *Madāyā* (*qeri* form *Mādāʾā*) “the Mede”. It seems that the translator wanted to render not only the difference between Aramaic and Hebrew, but also the nuances within the Aramaic.

As for the symmetric term *Pārās* “Persia”, it is rendered by the neologism πάραξος (τῷ παράξῳ in 5:28 and τοῦ παραξέω in 6:9; 13; 16) with a Doric genitive in -ω and a special suffixation of πάραξος as παράξεος that tries to imitate the Aramaic/ Hebrew original. The use of <ξ> instead of <σ>—indeed, one would have expected here something like *πάρασος—may result from the fact that πάραξος seemed to *πάρασος what ξύν was to σύν. Since the translator systematically preferred ξύν (throughout the text and not only in order to adapt the Aramaic part of the book of Daniel), πάραξος was judged preferable to *πάρασος. The special value of *samek* as the affricate [ts] in some medieval traditions of Hebrew (in Spain, Provence and France for instance) may have functioned as an additional reason for the use of [ξ]. Since Ancient Greek does not possess any affricate, [ξ] was considered the closest approximation to this non-existent phoneme.

These examples of Homeric-like word formations reveal the intense creativity of the translator. Not content with his use of the already extant

²⁷ Risch 1974: 104.

²⁸ Risch 1974: 147–49.

forms, he created some new ones, using the attested Homeric words as a model of analogical formation.

2. WHY HOMERISMS?

If Doric functions as a default choice because it represents the antithesis of Attic (perhaps by dint of being reminiscent of the rivalry between Athens and Sparta in the fifth–fourth centuries B.C.), the use of Homeric dialect is more difficult to justify as far as the symbolic weight of the literary dialects is concerned. The most sensible way to apprehend Homerisms in *Graecus Venetus* would be to limit ourselves to the dimension of the signifier and to ask which features of the Homeric dialect could have been perceived as occasional equivalents of Aramaic. This paronomasiac approach to the interface between the source-language (biblical Aramaic) and the target-language (dialectal hotchpotch with many Homeric features) is meant to reproduce the sensorial effect that Aramaic has on a listener or a reader used to hearing or seeing Hebrew. Thus the typical Homeric ending—οιο/οῖο of the genitive singular of the thematic declension has a superficial likeness to the ending *-ayyâ*, emphatic state of the masculine plural in Aramaic. The analogy is not perfect, because, as far as one can reconstruct the tradition of Hebrew in a Byzantine Jewish context, *qâmaš* undoubtedly had the value of [a] and not [o] as in the Ashkenazi tradition.

Another problem is the formal parallelism between -οιο/οῖο and *-ayyâ* pertaining to the place of the stress. In the former, the stress (formerly a pitch reinterpreted as a stress due to the influence of Demotic phonetism on the reading of Ancient Greek) falls on the penultimate or the antepenultimate, depending of the accentual pattern of the noun or the adjective in the nominative singular. In the latter, however, it is the postponed article *-â* that always bears the stress. Had the Aramaic been pronounced according to the Ashkenazi pronunciation (probably still not totally crystallised by the end of the Middle Ages), *-ayyâ* [-áyo] would have been almost homophonous with -οῖο. However, independent of the place of the stress and the exact colouring of the vowel, the formal similitude is still perceptible between the Aramaic plural and the Homeric genitive, at least as far the syllabic structure is concerned. In both cases, we find a sequel vowel + glide [j] (reduplicated as [jj] in Aramaic) + homophonic vowel.

By and large, the presence of the postponed article *-â* in the emphatic state gives the impression that Aramaic is a language with paragogic endings, that is, a language in which the corresponding Hebrew nouns are

extended by the addition of an extra syllable. Since this syllable is an [ã], this vowel seems particularly well represented in Aramaic, which explains why Doric and Lesbian were chosen as convincing equivalents to Aramaic. These dialects preserved the original value of a long $\bar{\alpha}$ - instead of closing it to $-\eta$ -. Therefore, there are statistically more occurrences of [a] than in Attic. This makes Doric and Aeolian suitable candidates for representing analogically the effect produced by Aramaic on someone used to Hebrew.

The same paragogic principle seems to be at stake with the aforementioned nominal features: use of $-\omicron\sigma\tau\nu$ instead of $-\omicron\iota\varsigma$; use of the non-contracted form of the athematic neutral; use of the ending $-\epsilon\sigma\sigma\tau\nu$ instead of $-\sigma\tau\nu$ in the dative plural of the athematic neutrals.

However, sometimes the contrast between Aramaic and Hebrew reveals a reverse tendency inasmuch as the Aramaic form seems shorter than its Hebrew counterpart. This is the case with the 3rd person masculine singular perfect. Indeed, the forms *šalah* "sent" (3:2) and *nafal* "fell" (4:28) may be considered monosyllabic if we take into account that the reduced vowel [ə] has been dropped. The dropping of this vowel is well attested in the Ashkenazi pronunciation of Aramaic as well as in Syriac. It is not usual in the Sephardic pronunciation of Aramaic. However, here again, it is difficult to know in which way the late medieval Byzantine Jews used to perform the [ə]: in the Ashkenazi way (which happens to be similar to the Syriac) or in the Sephardic way? The way these forms have been translated into Greek reveals that the former pronunciation was likelier to have been shared by Byzantine Jews since the aforementioned verbs have been translated by $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\mu\psi\epsilon$ and $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\epsilon$ respectively. In other words the relation between the monosyllabic *šalah* (that is, [lah]) and *nafal* (that is, [nfal]) and their Hebrew equivalents *šalah* and *nafal* has been analogically reproduced as the relationship between the augmentless aorist forms $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\mu\psi\epsilon$ and $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\epsilon$ of Homeric Greek and the augmented forms $\xi\pi\epsilon\mu\psi\epsilon$ and $\xi\pi\epsilon\sigma\epsilon$. In both cases, Aramaic and Homeric Greek seem to have dropped a syllable in comparison with Hebrew and Attic.

Thus the gap between Homeric and classical Greek has been perceived as equivalent to the difference between Aramaic and Hebrew: sometimes the former displays the longer, paragogic form which is translated into Homeric Greek whenever this dialect displays a tendency to use endings longer than the Attic; at other times the Aramaic forms seem to be contracted and consequently have been rendered by unaugmented Homeric aorists that seemed to be the shortened forms of augmented forms of classical Greek (although, strictly speaking, the Homeric unaugmented form

just reflects a state of the language when the augment was facultative). This perception is somehow reminiscent of a development in Aristoteles' *Poetics* where the Stagirite mentions the lengthening or the curtailing that a prosaic word may undergo under the pen of the poets.²⁹ The Aristotelian concept of γλωσσα "rare word"³⁰ may help one understand the special effect produced by the presence of a Homerism and other dialectalisms in this learned translation of the Bible.

One of the illustrations that the *Graecus Venetus* provides of the differential effect produced by a "rare word" meant to translate Aramaic is found in the aforementioned place in Genesis 31:47, where the phrase "heap of stones" appears in Aramaic as *yagar śāh^adūtā* and in Hebrew as *gal'ed*. Now, the former is translated by the poetic expression λιθόσωρος μάρτυς "stone heap witness" where the compound λιθόσωρος "stone heap", though a mere neologism, is reminiscent of the solemn bahuvrīhi formations so frequently used in Greek epic and tragedy. By contrast, its Hebrew equivalent *gal'ed* is rendered by the λιθάς μάρτυς where the simple noun λιθάς, a feminine equivalent of λίθος "stone," found in the *Odyssee* (ξ 36; ψ 193), appears as a plain transposition of the Hebrew word. The rendering of the Aramaic phrase by a "rare word" inspired by the poetics of Greek epic and tragedy reveals *a contrario* that the plain style of Attic prose was perceived as the best equivalent of Hebrew biblical style. This example allows for a better understanding of what was at stake in the use of poetic dialects in order to translate the Aramaic places of Daniel.

This sophisticated system of equivalences that tries to reproduce the gap between two languages by means of the gap between Attic classical Greek and poetic dialects, reveals something interesting about the perception of Aramaic in the context of late medieval Byzantine Jewish scholarship. If Homeric Greek and other non-Attic dialects have been chosen to serve as an analog of Aramaic, it might mean that Aramaic was perceived as a dialect of Hebrew more or less in the same way that Homeric or other dialects are part of ancient Greek in spite of what differentiates them from Attic. This approach is typical of Jewish diglossia throughout the centuries since the notion of *lašon ha-qodeš* also takes in Aramaic, alongside Hebrew. The fact that the anonymous translator of the text seems to have shared this approach to the language may hint at his Jewish background

²⁹ Aristoteles, *Poetics*, 1458a.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1457b.

or at the Jewish background of the learned Jews who initiated him into the reading of the Hebrew/Aramaic Bible.

Another interesting point is that the translator probably perceived the essentially fake nature of biblical Aramaic. He tried to imitate this artifice by using a no less inauthentic hotchpotch of dialects, one of them—Homeric dialect—itself already a *Kunstsprache*. Perhaps the translator viewed Homeric dialect as a convincing precedent of the very principle of mingling several dialects. In the dialectal hotchpotch that was meant to reproduce the gap between Aramaic and Hebrew, the Homeric dialect functioned as a *mise en abyme* of the whole project of creating an artificial dialect.

Moreover, once the equivalence between biblical Hebrew and Attic was asserted, whatever was not biblical Hebrew appeared as non classical or as aberrant. Hence the use of dialects that correspond to other areas of the Hellenic world or to other epochs in the development of Greek. Indeed, the archaic factor may have played a crucial role in the perception of Homeric as a suitable equivalent to Aramaic. The translator was probably aware that the ancestor of the Israelites used to speak Aramaic, as suggested by Genesis 31:47 where Laban (coined ‘the Aramean’ in Rabbinical tradition) is said to have used an Aramaic word and by Deuteronomy 26:5: “A wandering Aramean was my father” (*‘aramī ‘obed ‘abī*).

Broadly speaking, the translation of the Aramaic chapters of Daniel constituted a remarkable opportunity to exhibit a virtuous command of non-Attic varieties of archaic and classical Greek, all of which have in common that they are literary dialects. Of course, Homeric could not be absent from this splendid display of dialectal forms.

The reinterpretation of the contrast of Hebrew and Aramaic in terms of Greek stylistics and poetics may cast a new light on the identification of the author of this erudite translation.

3. WHO COULD BE THAT MAN?

In a previous article on *Graecus Venetus*, I tried to reconcile Delitzsch’s assumption of the Jewish identity of the translator³¹ with Mercati’s identification of the same as the archbishop Simon Atumano when I suggested that the Atumano’s allegedly Turkish origin could in fact refer to

³¹ Franz Delitzsch in: Gebhardt 1875: x–xiii.

another background.³² Despite the problems involved in this hypothesis, this seemed to be the best way to solve the quandary that could be formulated as follows: which fourteenth-century Greek-speaking scholar would have been able to combine such a perfect knowledge of Ancient Greek literature with the ability to cope with the Hebrew/Aramaic original of the Bible? As suggested in the debate that followed my intervention, a Greek-speaking Jew at that time would usually have had little access to the Humanist legacy. Nor would a Byzantine humanist have had the ability to read and understand the Hebrew original of the Bible, let alone the Aramaic therein. With all the reservations pertaining to the issue of Atumano's Jewish origins, one thing remains beyond doubt: the translation was made on the basis of the Hebrew original of the Bible (Aramaic as far as Dn 2:4–7:28 is concerned). As far as our specific study on Homerisms in the Book of Daniel is concerned, this direct access to the original is confirmed by the aforementioned equivalence between Hebrew and Atticizing Greek on the one hand, and between Aramaic and a hotchpotch of non-Attic dialects on the other hand. Had the translator just rewritten the Septuagint in classical Greek, he would not have perceived the difference between the Hebrew and Aramaic parts of Daniel and would have integrated the apocryphal verses of this book (LXX Daniel 3:24–90).

Broadly speaking, the extreme, almost mechanical, literalism of the translation is also clear evidence that this version is not just a reworking of the Septuagint or any other Greek version of the Bible, but the product of a direct encounter between the letter of the Hebrew Bible and the pasticcio-like tradition of Atticist writing cultivated by Byzantine humanists. As a matter of fact, the translation is not just characterised by its literalism. It is a literalism that acknowledges the Rabbinic reading of the biblical letter, as already mentioned by Delitzsch in his introduction to Gebhardt's edition.

This interference of Jewish exegesis and Rabbinic Hebrew is perceptible in the way the Hebrew imperfective is rendered as an optative. In my previous article on *Graecus Venetus*, I interpreted this feature as a reminiscence of the Rabbinical understanding of *'az yašir* "then sang" in Exodus 15:1 as expressing an injunctive or a future value.³³ However, the more I reconsider the issue, the more I think that the equivalence between the imperfective in biblical Hebrew and the optative reflects the specific

³² Aslanov 1999a: 155–158.

³³ Aslanov 1999a: 170–171.

use of the oblique optative with a striking innovation which involves extending to main clauses a grammatical peculiarity normally restricted to subordinate clauses. What justified this step was that the oblique optative is a blatant example of a prospective verbal mood used to express the past (in reported speech). This paradoxical combination of past and future made this specific use of the optative a suitable equivalent of the Hebrew imperfective. Whatever the reason, it is obvious that the perception of the imperfective as a prospective verbal form is typical of a reading of the Bible from the vantage point of Mishnaic Hebrew where the opposition between past and future replaced the biblical opposition between perfective and imperfective.

Knowing that Atumano was interested in Hebrew (demonstrated in his project of producing a *Biblia triglotta* containing the Hebrew, the Greek and the Latin, as well as by his Hebrew translation of the New Testament), it is difficult not to admit that he was responsible for this subtle transposition of the letter of the biblical text into ultra-purist Humanist Greek. However, instead of assuming that he was of Jewish rather than Turkish origin, as in my previous article, it is perhaps preferable to consider that he translated the biblical text with the help of some Jewish scholars in a way reminiscent of Jerome's precedent. When Atumano stayed in Gerace, Calabria, from 1348 til 1366 and subsequently in Thebes from 1366 til 1380, he would have met with a Jewish presence in both places, more in the former than the latter.³⁴ Even though those Jewish centres were probably not outstanding foci of Rabbinical scholarship, there was no need for exceptional skill to impart sufficient Hebrew and Aramaic to a gifted Christian scholar to enable him to read and understand the Scripture in the original. Fourteenth-century Calabria was a place where an encounter between a Greek-speaking humanist and local Jews could easily have taken place. The Jewish presence there is revealed by several events that have to do with the interface between Jews and Christians and by the grey zone constituted by apostates and converts. Several decades before Atumano arrived in Gerace, the Jews of the Kingdom of Naples, to which Calabria belonged, had been persecuted on account of a blood libel fomented in 1288. As a result of this persecution, some of the Calabrian Jews had been compelled to embrace Christianity. Once converted, some of these Jews (known as *Neofiti* "Neophytes") kept practising a form of crypto-judaism.

³⁴ Dito 1916 (1989).

It is perhaps in this particular environment in mid-fourteenth century Calabria that Atumano got access to the biblical text in the original.

This Southern-Italian origin of Atumano's Hebrew and Aramaic scholarship could explain the aforementioned paronomasiac equivalence between the Aramaic plural ending *-ayyá* and the Thessalian genitive singular of the thematic declension *-oío*. Indeed, the Italo-Romance linguistic surroundings may have provoked a retrocession of the stress from [-ayyá] to [-áyya], which made it rhythmically equivalent to *-oío* (pronounced [-íyo] by that time).

Whoever the actual translator of the *Graecus Venetus* was, his skill obviously derives from an exceptional encounter between two intellectual traditions: Jewish biblical scholarship on the one hand and Byzantine humanism on the other. This reciprocal fecundation anticipated processes that took place in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries when the legacy of classical humanism focused on Latin and Greek was eventually enriched by an occasional knowledge of Hebrew.

Moreover, the possibility of bypassing the mediation of the Septuagint in order to strive for a more elegant and classical Greek is not typical of the Byzantine cultural horizon. The Septuagint was considered of paramount sanctity and authority in Greek-Orthodox contexts. On the Byzantine cultural horizon, Jews distinguished themselves from their Gentile surroundings by their reluctance to resort to the Alexandrine Bible. Whenever they needed Greek translations of the Bible, they would resort to alternative translations that were characterised by their affiliation to Demotic registers of Greek, as shown by the fragments encountered in the Cairo Genizah³⁵ or by the Judeo-Greek column of the Pentateuch printed in Constantinople in 1547.³⁶ However, Byzantine Greek-speaking Jews would hardly have resorted to an ultra-puristic archaising blend of Atticism in order to translate the sacred Scripture.

Catholics also were relying on an alternative translation that aimed to bypass the intermediary of Septuagint. Indeed, Jerome's endeavour to provide a new version of the Latin Bible is the first step in a process which culminated with the flourishing of Christian Hebraism in the early modern era. To be sure, the reluctant attitude of Western Christians toward the Septuagint is based on reasons that differ totally from the Jewish rejection. What makes the Catholic connection likelier than the Jewish is the

³⁵ De Lange 1996; Aslanov 1998.

³⁶ See Aslanov 1999b.

pretension of the *Graecus Venetus* to constitute an elegant and learned alternative to the Septuagint according to a move that is reminiscent of the replacement of the *Vetus Latina* by Jerome's translation or revision, which was both closer to the Hebrew letter of the Bible and more elegant than the first Latin translations of the sacred text. To be sure, the famous Tanna Raban Shimon ben Gamliel is reported to have allowed a translation into Greek of the biblical *sefarim* ("scrolls" rather than merely "books" according to the context of the Talmudic discussion). The implicit reason for this tolerance of Greek to the exclusion of any other foreign language was of a specifically aesthetic nature. Greek was considered of paramount beauty on the basis of an homiletic reading of Genesis 9:27: "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem".³⁷ Strikingly, the *Graecus Venetus* covers most of the "biblical scrolls" that Raban Shimon ben Gamliel mentioned when he used the term *sefarim*: not only the Pentateuch, but also four of the five *megillot* acknowledged as such by Rabbinical Judaism (excluding Esther). However, Raban Shimon ben Gamliel's opinion sounds like a mere working hypothesis, in the style of many other theoretical *a fortiori* arguments found in the Talmud. There is most probably no direct link between the assertion of the Tanna and the endeavour to translate the Pentateuch, four of the five *megillot*, the Proverbs and Daniel into classical Greek.

To sum up, if we identify the translator of this text with Atumano or with any other representative of the Roman Catholic Church on Greek soil, the search for an alternative to the primacy of the Septuagint would be perfectly understandable. Only from this non-Orthodox perspective could the centrality of the Septuagint undergo a process of relativisation. This could have led to the production of a classical version concurrent with the canonical translation by the Greek Church.

Furthermore, it is important to stress that this early encounter between the classical and the Hebraic legacy occurred precisely in a Western cultural context. Indeed, even if we assume that the knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic required to perform such a translation was acquired in Thebes rather than in Gerace, the polities founded in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade in Continental Greece were an outpost of the West in the Eastern Mediterranean.

However, beyond the issue of the canonicity of the Septuagint, something else is at stake here. The Hellenisation of the Hebrew letter of the

³⁷ TB *Megillah* 9b.

Bible according to the best standards of classical and archaic Greek is an endeavour that implicitly relies on the equivalence between the biblical corpus and the Greek classical legacy. The basic assumption that underlies this equation between Holy Writ and the unholy, though legitimised Hellenic παιδεία, is that the Bible can also be considered a paragon of Classicism. The equation between Hebrew and classical Greek on the one hand and Aramaic and Homeric Greek on the other hand implies bridging the gap between Holy Writ and pagan legacy. Although this step had been already partly undertaken by the Cappadocian fathers (Saint Basil's *Address to young men on the right use of Greek literature* was an illustrious precedent in the endeavour to recoup the classical legacy), there was a difference between the pedagogical use of Greek pagan literature and its pasticcio-like imitation in order to translate the Holy Writ in an Attic or archaic way that contrasts with the style of the Septuagint. Indeed, there is very much of parody in this paradoxical attempt at rewriting the Bible in Attic or in other dialects. One of the basic principles presupposed by the genre of the pasticcio is precisely the rhetoric question: "What would have this text look like had it been written in another time and in another context?" The *Graecus Venetus* is an almost fanciful translation that tries to answer the question what would have the Bible sound like had it be redacted by Thucydides or Demosthenes (as far as the Hebrew books are concerned) or by Homer and the Aeolian lyrics (as far as the Aramaic chapters of Daniel are concerned).

Whatever the pasticcio component in the whole endeavour to classicise the Bible might have been, there is no doubt that suggesting that the relationship between Hebrew and Aramaic is tantamount to the status of classical Greek toward Homeric and other non-Attic dialects may sound a little provocative from a Byzantine cultural perspective. It recalls the epigrams with Christian contents in the fashion of Greek anthologies cultivated from the fourth century A.D. and throughout early Byzantine times. However, there is a significant difference between late Antiquity and the late Middle Ages. By the fourteenth century, Byzantine humanism was more crystallised than Christian παιδεία ten centuries earlier. Thus there was less place for this kind of virtuous futility in a context marked by the gravity of Hesychasm than in remoter times when Christian literati tried to compete with their pagan homologues. However, after the use of icons was reinstated in 843, Byzantine humanism, inspired as it was by Saint Basil's teaching, was more open to non-Christian books than medieval Western scholarship was. Let us think of the extreme though

symptomatic case of Gemistus Pletho who was allowed to advocate a philosophical reinterpretation of paganism. To be sure, his *magnum opus*, the *Νόμων συγγραφή*, was burnt by the patriarch of Constantinople Gennadius in 1460. However, Pletho's notorious stand in favour of a philosophically inspired paganism did not prevent the Byzantine authorities from sending him to the Council of Florence in 1438–39 as a member of the Greek delegation. Whatever the toleration of Byzantine culture towards the pagan legacy might have been, the fact that Western medieval culture was unable to understand Greek gave Byzantine culture an advantage since Westernised Greeks (such as Atumano or other harbingers of the Renaissance) were able to embrace at one time both the Greek and Latin legacy (as well as Hebrew/Aramaic in the case of our translator).

Moreover, the Western cultural legacy, with its roots in late Antiquity, is far less open to the pagan legacy than the Greek-speaking Eastern legacy. Let us recall Jerome's famous diatribe in *Epistle 22, 29*. There, the patron of the translators establishes a clear-cut opposition between Horace and the Psalter, Virgil and the Gospel, Cicero and Paul. To be sure, Jerome's criticism pertains to Latin rather than to Greek literature. Nevertheless, the creative imitation of the best Greek authors in order to translate the Bible may be considered a means of expressing a stand against Jerome's condemnation of the most exquisite flowers of pagan literature on the Latin side of the classical legacy. Saint Basil's liberal stance towards Homer and the pagan legacy in general contrasted sharply with Jerome's radical rejection of pagan Latin literature. As for Augustine, he expressed a far more flexible stance than his contemporary Jerome.³⁸ Yet, in many places in the *City of God*, Augustine displays a blatant hostility towards pagan culture and literature.

Whatever the difference between West and East might have been as far as receptivity towards the pagan legacy is concerned, the pasticcio wherein the letter of the Hebrew Bible is classicised was more understandable in an environment of cultural overlap where the variety of linguistic horizon (Greek; Old French; Italo-Romance; Catalan, all languages spoken in continental Greece by the fourteenth century) could relativise the centrality of Hellenism in general and of the Septuagint in particular. In places of multicultural encounter such as Angevin-ruled Southern Italy, the principality of Achaia or the Duchy of Athens, cross-cultural dialogue

³⁸ As in the *City of God*, X, 27 where Augustine quotes Virgil's 4th eclogue.

led to a comparison which mooted that Hebrew was to Aramaic what classical Greek was to the language of Homer. The meeting-point between Byzantine Orthodoxy and Latin Catholicism was like a no-man's land from which vantage point equations between Hebrew/Aramaic and classical/archaic Greek were understandable. Only from this simultaneous Western and Eastern perspective does the endeavour to bring together the Hebrew letter of the Bible and the best of the classical legacy, including Homer, make sense. Anyone exclusively bound up with one of the two cultural legacies to the exclusion of the other would have been unable to think of comparing biblical Hebrew and classical Greek or the Aramaic chapters of Daniel and Greek literary dialects.

There is no doubt that the fact that the translator (Atumano or whoever else) belonged to both worlds—the relatively more tolerant Byzantine East and the more dogmatic West—helped him have a more positive attitude towards the idea of disguising the Bible in the rags of pagan literature. It is difficult to say what might have happened had Byzantine culture not come to an end in 1453. Could the path opened by the translator of *Graecus Venetus* have been continued? The fact that the early Renaissance drew upon Hellenic humanism might lead us to answer this theoretical question positively. The location of the manuscript at the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice speaks for the idea of continuity between the attempt at cultural pluralism involving Hebrew and Aramaic in late Byzantine civilisation and the evidence of a similar multiculturalism in Renaissance Italy. The combination of the cultivation of the Hebrew letter of the Bible and the learned pasticcio-like writing in classical and homeric Greek are testimony to attempts at cultural syncretism during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

CONCLUSION

The physical presence of Homerisms (some of them shared with Herodotus' Ionian or with Aeolian, some specific to the homeric *Kunstsprache*) in the translation of the Aramaic part of Daniel (2:5–7:28) does not reflect an attempt to project Christian categories onto the founding text of Greek civilisation. On the contrary, this paradoxical endeavour to homerise the Bible sounds like a way of paganising Holy Writ, perhaps in order to offer an ultra-archaising counterpart to the Septuagint. To make things even more complicated, this re-writing of the Bible according to the best

standards of classical Greek was made on the basis of the Hebrew/Aramaic original of the Bible. In this endeavour to cleave to the Semitic letter of the Bible, there is also an anti-Septuagint attitude, which may be ascribed either to a pro-Western Catholic stance or to Jewish-influenced antipathy to the authoritative Bible of Eastern Christianity. Actually, Western interest in the Hebrew truth of the Bible is a constant that started with Jerome and culminated in the Christian Hebraists of the Renaissance. The specificity of *Graecus Venetus* is that this typically Western attitude towards the letter of the Bible originated in a Greek-speaking milieu. It is as if the author of this purist and fundamentalist version had to redeem the Greek Bible from its long infeudation to the monolithic authority of the Septuagint.

It is highly significant that this curious product of the meeting between Hebrew/Aramaic on the one hand and Greek on the other hand took place in the late Middle Ages, in an epoch that could be considered the last echo of Byzantine humanism (facilitated by contact with the West) or as the dawn of the Renaissance. A man situated at the crossroads of the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, between the Latin West and the Byzantine East, between Christians and Jews (as shown by his contacts with Jewish scholars) succeeded in bridging the gap between the Bible and Homer. In his amazing translation, Homer is not just a synecdoche for the legacy of pagan Greek literature. It is also a concrete echo of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* represented in the form of "rare words" meant to reproduce the aura of archaism and otherness that accompanies the use of Aramaic in seven of the twelve chapters of the book of Daniel. However, it looks like a precious and almost decadent game at the level of the letter of the text rather than a seriously intended equation between the Bible and Homer.

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HEBRAIC OR ARAMAIC SPEAKING INTERPRETERS

THE TWENTY-FOUR BOOKS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE
AND ALEXANDRIAN SCRIBAL METHODS

Guy Darshan

Several scholars have already drawn attention to the parallel between the canonisation processes that produced the biblical corpus and the collection, sorting, and cataloguing projects undertaken by the Alexandrian librarians.¹ At the beginning of the third century B.C.E., Callimachus of Alexandria (ca. 310/305–240 B.C.E.) created a system for cataloguing Greek literature in his famous “tables” known as *πίνακες*.² According to this method, the entire Greek literary heritage was divided into classes according to genre or discipline—epic, tragic, comic poetry, etc.—and arranged in alphabetical order. Each author was introduced by means of a brief biographical note and a bibliography accompanied by the “incipit” and number of lines. This monumental work comprised 120 volumes. In the following generation, most probably in the days of Aristophanes of Byzantium (ca. 265/257–190/180 B.C.E.), selective (*ἐγκριθέντες*) lists of the greatest authors of the various genres of oratory, lyrical poetry etc. were also produced in Alexandria.³

The third century B.C.E., when Callimachus and Aristophanes of Byzantium were active in Alexandria, correlates with the period during which the literary sources of the biblical books that form the Ketubim (hagiographa)—which include secular and poetic creations, including hymns, wisdom literature, wedding songs—were being compiled. It is quite plausible, both historically and chronologically, that this literary activity in Alexandria wielded an impact that extended to Jerusalem, where it led to similar collection, conservation, and cataloging projects.⁴ This suggestion finds corroboration in the fact that, during the

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¹ See Sarna 1971: 818, 833; Sarna 2000: 64; Georgi 1993: 71–72; VanderKam 2000: 29–30; Lange 2004: 54; van Seters 2006: 356–357; McDonald 2007: 42–46.

² For the *pinakes*, see Regenbogen 1950: 1455–1462; Pfeiffer 1968: 126–134; Slater 1976: 234–241; Blum 1991: 124–181.

³ Pfeiffer 1968: 204–209.

⁴ McDonald 2007: 46. Cf. Lang 1998: 41–65.

third century B.C.E., the land of Israel was ruled by the Egyptian Ptolemies, a circumstance highly conducive to the transmission and dissemination of Hellenistic influence from Ptolemaic Alexandria.⁵

However, while evidence that the Jerusalem scribes were influenced to a certain extent by Hellenistic scribal methods does exist, the Alexandrian selective lists do not bear comparison with the biblical corpus.⁶ First, the two models are greatly divergent in nature and function. While the biblical corpus constitutes a set of books believed to represent the primary religious tenets adhered to by the entire Jewish nation and therefore intended for the general public, the Alexandrian selective lists were principally designed for scholars and scribes, thus more closely resembling the curriculum of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian scribal schools common in the ancient Near East long before the rise of Ptolemaic Alexandria.⁷ Second, the degree of selectivity in the biblical corpus was minimal; canonisation of Hebrew scripture was primarily a matter of the collection and preservation of extant ancient sources.⁸ In order to find support for the theory that the literary-cultural milieu of Alexandria influenced the formation of the biblical corpus, we turn to another aspect of Alexandrian scribal activity: the numerical division and textual standardisation of the Homeric corpus.

1. THE HOMERIC CORPUS AND THE HEBREW BIBLE

In similar fashion to the biblical literature, Homer's works stood at the basis of Greek culture and education.⁹ In the same way as Jewish children

⁵ The debate concerning the Hellenistic influence on Judaea and Judaism in the Second Temple period is extensive: see, for example, Tcherikover 1970; Hengel 1974; Bickerman 1988; Feldman 1993; Collins and Sterling 2001.

⁶ For a comparison between the Hebrew Scriptures and the scribal curriculum of the Hellenistic world, see Doran 2002: 116–132; Carr 2005: 141–156; but cf. van der Toorn 2007: 244–247. For the curriculum in Mesopotamia, see, for example, Vanstiphout 2003: 1–28. For the Egyptian curriculum and canon, see Shupak 2001: 535–547.

⁷ Designed for professional scribes within ancient Near East scribal schools, these curricular lists were virtually unknown by the general public. For the Egyptian education system during the Hellenistic period, see Marrou 1956: 164; Morgan 1998; Criboire 2001; Joyal, McDougall, and Yardley 2009: 123–124.

⁸ Haran 1996. see also volumes 2 (2003) and 3 (2008). For the canonical questions of the Bible see, for example, Collins 1997: 3–21; Schwartz 1997; Trebelle Barrera 1998: 167; Davies 1998; Davies 2002: 36–52; van der Kooij 1998: 17–40; van der Kooij 2003: 27–38; VanderKam 2000: 1–30; Ulrich 2000: 117–120; Ulrich 2002: 21–35; McDonald 2007; Charlesworth 2008. Cf. also, Leiman 1976; Beckwith 1985; Barr 1983; Barton 1986; Sanders 1987: 12–13.

⁹ Marrou 1956: 9–10. For later periods, see Criboire 2001: esp. 45–49, 140–142, 194–205.

learned to read from the Hebrew Bible, Greek children memorised verses from Homer's works, the two texts serving as "foundational literature" within their respective societies.¹⁰ The Sages of the Second Temple period appear to have recognised the analogy between the biblical and Homeric corpora within their respective Jewish and Greek milieus. Evidence exists that they regarded the Hebrew Bible and the writings of Homer as two competing pillars of equal stature, one representing the foundational literature of the Jewish people, the other that of the Hellenistic world. Some of the halakhic debates recorded in the Mishna thus set the two corpora opposite one another in status: "The Sadducees say: 'We protest against you, O Pharisees. For you say, "The Sacred Scriptures render the hands unclean, but the books of Homer do not render the hands unclean"' " (*m. Yad.* 4:6). Or as Jochanan ben Zakkai asserts: "Even so the Sacred Scriptures, in proportion to the love for them so is their uncleanness, [but] the books of Homer which are not beloved of us do not render the hands unclean'" (*ibid.*).¹¹

1.1. *The Number of Books within the Homeric Corpus*

According to Pseudo-Plutarch (second century C.E.), the Alexandrian scribes from the school of Aristarchus divided the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into twenty-four books according to the twenty-four letters of the Greek alphabet:

Εἰσὶ δὲ αὐτοῦ ποιήσεις δύο, Ἰλιάς καὶ Ὀδύσσεια, διηρημένη ἑκατέρα εἰς τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῶν στοιχείων, οὐχ ὑπὸ αὐτοῦ τοῦ ποιητοῦ ἀλλ' ὑπὸ τῶν γραμματικῶν τῶν περὶ Ἀρίσταρχον.

There are two poems [by Homer], the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, each divided into as many books as the letters in the alphabet, not by the poet himself but by the scholars of the school of Aristarchus.¹²

¹⁰ See, for example, Lamberton, 1997: 33–54, esp. 41–43; Finkelberg 2003: 75–96, esp. 91–96. See also Huebeck and West 1998: 3: "The two epics poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*... shaped and influenced the whole development of Greek cultural life in all its varied aspects to an extent almost impossible to grasp today. The Greeks themselves were aware of this, adopting and honouring Homer as their instructor in every conceivable sphere of life." For the ways in which the Hebrew Bible informed Jewish education, see Safrai 1974: 945–970; Doran 2002: 116–32. See also below.

¹¹ Cf. *y. Sanh.* 10:1, 28a; *b. Sanh.* 90a and see Kahane 2010: 75–115. For diverse approaches to the meaning of the concept of the "defilement of hands," see Friedman 1993: 117–132; Broyde 1995: 65–79; Haran 1996: 201–275; Regev 2005: 190–194 and the references there.

¹² *Vita Homeris* 2.4 (Keaney and Lamberton 1996: 68). Cf. *Eust.* 5.29. For Pseudo-Plutarch, see Keaney and Lamberton 1996: 1–29.

Although no assurance exists that Aristarchus (ca. 217–145 B.C.E.) created this division, almost all attribute its origin to the Hellenistic period, since in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. certain sections were referred to by title according to their literary content and not by book number: “the prowess of Diomedes” (Διομήδους ἀριστεία) (Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.116), “the delivery of the scepter” (σκήπτρου παράδοσις) (Thucydides, *Pelop. War* 1.9.4), etc.¹³ While some scholars suggest that the division was made a century earlier than Aristarchus, dating it to the days of Zenodotus (ca. 325–260 B.C.E.) or even earlier,¹⁴ it is generally agreed that the division into twenty-four books became widespread primarily through the acceptance of a standardised Homeric text in the middle of the second century B.C.E., after Aristarchus’ lifetime.¹⁵

The “alphabetic” division system is closely associated with the methods employed in cataloguing the archives held in Greek temples.¹⁶ Epigraphic findings from temples in Greece indicate that items from the same class were marked by means of alphabetical letters. This numerical cataloguing system—which Marcus Tod refers to as a system of “letter-labels”—enabled the temple officials to bestow a fixed order upon the objects held in the temple archives.¹⁷ Although this method is analogous to the

¹³ See Kirk 1962: 305–306; Taplin 1992: 285–293; Janko 1992: 31, n. 47; Richardson 1993: 20–21. Cf. more recently Nünlist 2006: 47–49. The attempts made to demonstrate that the division into twenty-four was made by the composer himself are unconvincing: see Goold 1960: 272–91; Jensen 1999: 5–35, 73–91. See also the criticism raised therein (*ibid.*, 35–73), as well as Berg and Haug 2000: 5–23; Rossi 2001: 103–112. Cf. also Janko 2000.

¹⁴ See Lachmann 1874: 93. Cf. also de Jong 1996: 20–35, who suggests that Zenodotus utilised the literary techniques of the original composer.

¹⁵ For the purposes of the present paper, it is noteworthy that, even amongst those who date the division early, some acknowledge that Aristarchus and his disciples were responsible for the designations of the books according to the Ionic alphabet: “He [Pseudo-Plutarch] may however be correct in ascribing the designation of the several books by the letters of the Ionic Alphabet to Aristarchus” (West 1967: 15); “This [Alexandrian] activity, which might have included numbering the ‘books’ with the letters of the Ionian alphabet, could have given rise to the misunderstanding that the school of Aristarchus had invented the ‘divisions’” (Heiden 1998: 81). Although Nagy (1996: 110, 181–183) suggests that the division was stabilised under Demetrius of Phalerum (317–307 B.C.E.) he also asserts that: “I propose instead that the school of Aristarchus *re-established* the divisions of the Homeric poems into twenty-four units . . . in the era of Aristarchus . . . the twenty-four units of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* could have become reconceptualized, shifting their identity from quasi *raphsōidai* . . . to veritable ‘books’ of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*” (pp. 182–183).

¹⁶ See Pfeiffer 1968: 116. Cf. Nagy 1996: 182–183. While the evidence of the Ptolemaic papyri does not conflict with an early date for the division, clear signs of a division into books by means of an empty space of two lines or by a paragraphus only exist in post-Aristarchean papyri: see West 1967: 18–25.

¹⁷ Tod 1954: 1–8; Smyth 1956: 104a [§ 384a].

“alphabetic numeral” system that became dominant in the Hellenistic period, it differs from the “letter-label” system in two significant respects. (1) While the “letter-label” method employs only the letters of the regular Ionic alphabet, the “alphabetic” numeral system adds three more letters: *digamma* (Ϝ)—later replaced by *stigma* (Ϛ)—for 6, *koppa* (Ϟ) for 90, and *sampi* (Ϡ) for 900.¹⁸ (2) In contrast to the “alphabetic numeral” method, which is a decimal system and therefore requires twenty-seven letters, the “letter-label” method is based upon a cycle of twenty-four letters, 25 thus being written as AA, 26 as BB, etc.

Readers of codices—the form of book with which we are familiar today, which originates not much earlier than the second century C.E.—may perhaps not readily understand the need for an alphabetic numbering method to mark the order of books.¹⁹ When a book or several books within the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were written on separate scrolls, the complete work amounting to all the scrolls placed on a shelf or in a special book chest (*capsa*),²⁰ librarians or readers needed a way of keeping the individual books in the correct order. The alphabetic numbers assigned to each scroll placed in the canister allowed librarians and readers to do just that.

This system is not only of practical significance, but has an ideological orientation. According to Aristotle (*Metaphysica* 14.6 [1093b1–5]), the spectrum between the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet represents perfection.²¹ Usage of all twenty-four letters in order to divide the Homeric corpus thus symbolised its completeness and universality. By partitioning the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* according to this number, the books were represented as perfect and containing everything, “from alpha to

¹⁸ Some examples exist in which the *digamma* is also used, but none with *koppa* and *sampi*: see Tod 1954: 1–8.

¹⁹ For codices, see, for example, Kenyon 1951: 87–120; Roberts 1954: 169–204; Roberts and Skeat 1983; Reynolds and Wilson 1991: 34–36.

²⁰ Cf. the well-known wall paintings from Pompeii, referred to by Turner 1987, pl. 9, or that in Clark 1902: 30, fig. 10. Note that each chest contains six rolls. For figures of shelves, see Clark 1902: 35, fig. 11, where the main shelf contains three rows of six rolls. For special book-chests and shelves for scrolls in the ancient classical world, see Kenyon 1951: 59–62. Special identification tags or labels (σύλλυβοι) bearing the title of the composition were normally attached to the rolls stored in the canister or on the shelves: see Turner 1987: 13, 34 and plates 6–8; Hall 1913: 14; Oliver 1951: 243.

²¹ ... καὶ ὅτι ἴσον τὸ διάστημα ἔν τε τοῖς γράμμασιν ἀπὸ τοῦ Α πρὸς τὸ Ω, καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ βόμβυκος ἐπὶ τὴν ὄξυτάτην [νεάτην] ἐν αὐλοῖς, ἧς ὁ ἀριθμὸς ἴσος τῇ οὐλομελείᾳ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (“... that the interval from A to Ω in the alphabet is equal to that from the lowest note of a flute to the highest, whose number is equal to that of the whole system of the universe.” [tr. Tredennick 1957: 301]). For the meaning of οὐρανοῦ here, see LSJ, s.v. οὐρανός I.4.

omega.”²² As noted above, the Greek world considered the Homeric texts to be total and inclusive, a corpus within which an answer could be found to any question in every aspect of life, the foundational educational work and the source of all wisdom and knowledge.²³

The presence of an ideological element in the division into twenty-four books is also evident from the fact that the division does not always correspond to the content or size of the books. This is particularly true with respect to the *Odyssey*, whose books are much briefer than those of the *Iliad*, the allocation of the material into twenty-four parts clearly being inappropriate to such a short work.²⁴

1.2. *The Number of Books within the Hebrew Bible*

With respect to the number of *biblical* books, early sources reflect two divergent traditions: twenty-four and twenty-two. The earliest reference to the first figure is in the apocryphal book of *4 Ezra* (12:44–46), dated, according to the majority of scholars, to the end of the first century C.E.²⁵ According to *4 Ezra* 12:45, Ezra heard a voice from a bush commanding him to write “many tablets,” and forty days later he was instructed to “Make public the twenty-four books that you wrote first”—an apparent allusion to the canonical books.²⁶ In contrast, he is to keep concealed the “seventy that were written last” (*4 Ezra* 12:46)—presumably the “apocryphal” books. The allusion to “twenty-two” books first appears in Josephus’ *Contra Apion* (1.38–42) and was followed by the early church fathers.²⁷

Both numbers are generally considered to refer to the same set of books, it commonly being assumed that Josephus and the patristic writers follow the Septuagint arrangement, counting Ruth and Judges as a single

²² Cf. Rev 1:8; 21:6; 22:13.

²³ See n. 10 above.

²⁴ West 1967: 19; Haslam 1997: 58. Cf. van Sickle 1980: 5–42.

²⁵ For the dating of *4 Ezra*, see Box 1913: 552–553; Oesterley 1933: xliv–xlv; Stone 1990: 9–10. For the frequent subsequent rabbinic references to number twenty-four books, see, for example, *b. Ta’anit* 8a; *Numbers Rabbah* 13:16; 14:4, 8; 18:21; *Canticles Rabbah* 4:11; *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 12:11–12.

²⁶ For the textual problems presented by this verse, see Oesterley 1933: 173; Stone 1990: 437.

²⁷ Charles proposes that the number twenty-two occurs in the original version of *Jubilees* 2:23–24; see Charles 1902: xxxix–xl, 11–12, 17–18. The fragment of *Jubilees* 2 found at Qumran (4QJub^a = 4Q216) leaves no room for such a reconstruction, however, suggesting that, if such a reference does appear in *Jubilees*, it does not derive from the earliest versions: see Beckwith 1985: 235–240; VanderKam 2000: 18–19.

book and combining Jeremiah and Lamentations into one book as well.²⁸ In fact, neither system—twenty-four or twenty-two—reflects the *precise* number of the biblical compositions (see also below). The two traditions rather represent alternative systems of recognised *exemplary* numbers, the books being arranged in a different order in order to reach the desired total (22 or 24) by combining several texts into a single scroll.

In light of the above, and in view of the fact that the Sages of the Second Temple period were familiar with the significance of the Homeric corpus within the Hellenistic world, it is plausible that the number twenty-four was established on the Homeric model (and according to the letters of the Greek alphabet) and that the number twenty-two represents an attempt to conform the Greek principle to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet.²⁹ If this assumption is correct, Josephus' reference to twenty-two books is not necessarily reliant upon the Greek translation of the Bible, but derives from an early Hebrew tradition which sought to replace the Greek method with a "pure" Hebrew system. The church fathers—who are clearly dependent upon a Hebrew tradition—explicitly indicate that the number twenty-two is linked to the letters of the alphabet. The church fathers' explanation coincides with Pseudo-Plutarch's description of the way in which the Homeric corpus was distributed, "each divided into as many books as the letters in the alphabet."³⁰

The fact that the conventional division of the Hebrew Bible into books reflects two numerical systems while the Homeric corpus is divided

²⁸ See, for example, Leiman 1989: 53–54; Mason 2002: 121–124. See also the surveys in Orlinsky 1974: 271, n. 7; Feldman 1984: 134–139.

²⁹ See Darshan 2007: 1–22, and the references there to the earlier literature (p. 17, n. 62). To this may now be added van Seters 2006: 354. Such a premise has customarily been dismissed by past scholars, as exemplified by Lieberman, who ignores the two systems of enumeration of the biblical books and the traditions behind them: Lieberman 1962: 27, n. 52. See also Beckwith 1985: 250–256. Beckwith likewise dismisses any link between the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible and the number of the letters in the Greek alphabet, alleging that such a system of numeration could only have originated amongst Alexandrian Jews in depreciation of the influence of Greek culture and scribal practices on Palestinian Judaism.

³⁰ See Athanasius, *Epistulae Festales* 39: "Ἔστι τοίνυν τῆς μὲν παλαιᾶς διαθήκης βιβλία τῷ ἀριθμῷ τὰ πάντα εἰκοσιδύο τοσαῦτα γάρ, ὡς ἤκουσα, καὶ τὰ στοιχεῖα τὰ παρ' Ἑβραίοις εἶναι παραδέδοται ("There are, then, of the Old Testament, twenty-two books in number; for, as I have heard, it is handed down that this is the number of the letters among the Hebrews"); and Jerome, *Prologus Galeatus*: "Quomodo igitur viginti duo elementa sunt, per quae scribimus Hebraice omne quod loquimur, et eorum initiis vox humana comprehenditur: ita viginti duo volumina supputantur" ("As, then, there are twenty-two letters by means of which we write in Hebrew all we say, and the human voice is comprehended within their limits, so we reckon twenty-two books").

according to one alone not only reveals that both biblical methods are essentially artificial in nature, but also suggests that both traditions are modeled on the Homeric pattern. Recognising the Homeric model as representing the optimal division based on a perfect number enables us to posit that the Jerusalem scribes made it their task to establish the Hebrew Bible as the Jewish counterpart to the most important composition in the Hellenistic world.³¹

However, unlike the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which are large compositions divided into twenty-four books or sections, the Hebrew Bible comprises a collection of compositions arranged in twenty-four volumes or scrolls. In following this scheme, the purpose of the Jerusalem scribes appears to have been to regulate the way in which the biblical books were copied on twenty-four scrolls.³² Whereas from Talmudic times onwards the customary practice was to use large scrolls that contained all the books of Pentateuch and all the Prophets, during the second and first centuries B.C.E.—as demonstrated by virtually all of the Qumran scrolls—the biblical books were written on individual scrolls.³³ Significantly, the twenty-four-book division does not always reflect or correspond to the length of the biblical texts. Thus, while the book of Psalms, like the Pentateuch, is composed of five “books,” for example, it is always copied as one scroll and counted as a single book—in contrast to the books of the Pentateuch, which are always counted as five separate scrolls. Smaller

³¹ One might ask whether the alphabetic method helped the Jerusalem scribes attach a fixed order to the biblical books, as in the Homeric corpus. A fixed and stabilised order is significant not only in lengthy compositions divided into several books, but also with respect to collections of books, as attested by extant ancient Near Eastern lists of works: see Sarna 1971: 827–828; Sarna 1971b: 410–411; Parpola 1983: 7; Pedersén 1998; Potts 2000: 28. The order of the biblical books, which preserves the chronological and literary precedence of the Pentateuch in relation to the Prophets, is even more crucial than in the case of the ancient Near Eastern lists.

³² Cf. *b. B. Bat.* 13:2: יהודה ר' מ' ר' יהודה ר' אומר: תורה בפני עצמה, נביאים בפני עצמן, וכתובים בפני עצמן; וחכמים אומרים: כל אחד ואחד בפני עצמו. ואמר רב יהודה: מעשה בביתוס בן זוגין, שהיו לו שמונה נביאים מדובקין כאחד. על פי ר' א' בן עזריה; וי"א: לא היו לו אלא אחד אחד בפני עצמו. ("Our Rabbis taught: It is permissible to fasten the Torah, the prophets, and the Ketubim together. This is the opinion of R. Meir. R. Judah, however, says that the Torah, the prophets, and the Ketubim should each be in a separate scroll; while the Sages say that each book should be separate. Rab Judah said: it is related that Boethus b. Zonin had the eight prophets fastened together at the suggestion of R. Eleazar b. Azariah. Others, however, say that he had them each one separate.")

³³ See Haran 1993: 61; Tov 2004: 74–79. The library at Qumran only contains a small number of Torah scrolls on which two consecutive books were written: cf. 4QGen-Exod^a (4Q1), 4QpaleoGen-Exod¹ (4Q11), 4QExod-Lev^f (4Q17), 4QLev-Num^a (4Q23), Muri, 4QRP^c (4Q365), and probably also 4QExod^b (4Q13): see Tov 2004: 75; Talshir 2009: 114–115.

works—such as Lamentations, Ruth, Esther, and Canticles—were likewise all regarded as individual books and copied as such on separate scrolls, despite being shorter than most of the twelve Minor Prophets, the latter being collected and viewed as one book already prior to 180 B.C.E.³⁴ Ezra and Nehemiah, on the other hand, while individually lengthier than most of the five megillot, were counted and copied as a single book—although Nehemiah's autonomous title alludes to an alternative organising principle.

The aim of organising the biblical books into a corpus consisting of a specific number—twenty-four—seems therefore to have been responsible for determining the standard method of copying some of the later books, such as the five megillot (in five separate scrolls) and Ezra-Nehemiah (in a single scroll). The alternative method, which adjusted the number of books to twenty-two by attaching two of the five small megillot to other books—Ruth to Judges and Lamentations to Jeremiah—while alluded to in the literary sources, finds no actual support in scribal practice, as no evidence exists to suggest that it was ever actually implemented at any time during the Second Temple period. As long as no scrolls containing both Ruth and Judges, or Lamentations and Jeremiah, are found, it is best to conclude that the division of the biblical corpus into twenty-two books existed as a theoretical system alone.³⁵

1.3. *Gematria, Inverted Nunin and Cancellation Dots*

The thesis that the numerical system of the Bible is modeled on the Homeric pattern may find support in the fact that the Jews also adopted the Greek system of alphabetical numbering—i.e., gematria.³⁶ According to R. Ishmael, “the Greek letters Alpha, Beta, Gamma” were written on the three baskets holding the coins in the Temple.³⁷ These marks were

³⁴ As evidenced by Ben Sira's reference to “twelve prophets” following Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel in his “Praise of the Ancestors” (Sir 49:10).

³⁵ With respect to 4QLam (4Q111), the first preserved column of this scroll commences with Lam 1:1b. While the preceding column may have contained Lam 1:1a, some blank lines, and probably the last verses of the book preceding Lamentations, it is virtually impossible to ascertain whether the latter was one of the megillot or Jeremiah, as Cross suggests: see Cross 2000: 229. Cf. Tov 2004: 75.

³⁶ While a parallel phenomenon exists in Mesopotamia, it is commonly accepted that the Jewish phenomenon of *gematria*, as known from rabbinic literature, did not develop until the encounter between Judaism and the Hellenistic world: see Tigay 1983: 169–189; Lieberman 1987: 167–176, 186–200.

³⁷ *m. Shekalim* 3:2. Cf. *m. Menaḥot* 8:1, 3, 6. Cf. also, for example, the date of one of the coins of Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 B.C.). While the obverse bears the text: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ

subsequently replaced by Hebrew letters, also carrying a numerical value. The prevalent use of Greek letters as a form of enumeration or cataloguing during the Second Temple period may have led the Jerusalem Temple scribes to apply the same principle with respect to the scope of the biblical corpus.³⁸

The number of books in the Homeric corpus, along with the Greek numerical system itself, formed part of a pool of common knowledge that was freely disseminated across cultures and was made widely accessible to the lay public. While such a transmission process may account for cross-cultural Greek influence, the Jerusalem scribes of the Second Temple period may have been particularly well acquainted with Alexandrian scribal practices. As Saul Lieberman and others have demonstrated, the unique scribal signs found in medieval biblical manuscripts and preserved in the printed editions of the Bible—the “inverted *nunin*” and *puncta extraordinaria* or “cancellation dots” above and below the letters—were adopted from Alexandrian practices.³⁹ The *puncta extraordinaria* occur in fifteen places in the Hebrew Bible, signifying a deletion, in similar fashion to the Greek papyri from Egypt.⁴⁰ The inverted *nunin*, which appear in several places in the manuscripts and printed editions of the Hebrew Bible—as, for example, in Numbers 10:35–36—serve to indicate parentheses, being identical in form to the *perigraphai* occurring in Greek papyri, which also signify a deletion,⁴¹ or to the *sigma* and *antisigma* used by the Alexandrian grammarians for various purposes. According to Aristophanes of Byzantium (ca. 257/265–180/190 B.C.E.), the *sigma* and *antisigma* denote unnecessary repetitions; under Aristarchus’ (ca. 217–145 B.C.E.) system, the *antisigma* probably indicate displaced verses.⁴² Such usage parallels that found in the manuscripts reflecting the MT of Numbers 10:35–36.

While Lieberman examined the midrashic explanations of the scribal signs provided by the Sages during the first centuries C.E., the discov-

ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ (“of the king Alexander”), and the letters KE denoting the year 25 of the king’s reign, the Aramaic text on the reverse is: *mlk’ lksndrws šnt kh* (“the king Alexandros, year 25”). See: Kindler 1968: 188–191; Millard 1995: 192.

³⁸ For the systems of writing numbers in the Second Temple Period, see Sarfatti 1968: 175–178; Millard 1995: 189–194.

³⁹ Lieberman 1962: 38–46; Tov 1992: 54–57.

⁴⁰ Butin 1969. For cancellation dots in Greek papyri, see Turner 1987: 16.

⁴¹ For the *perigraphai*, see Turner 1987: 16.

⁴² For Aristophanes’ system, see Sandys 1908: 126; Pfeiffer 1968: 178. For Aristarchus’ system, see Sandys 1908: 131; Pfeiffer 1968: 218; McNamee 1992: 15, nn. 31, 32.

eries from the Judean desert, dated from the end of the third century B.C.E. to the first half of the first century C.E., have revealed the living and ancient use of these signs.⁴³ The *puncta extraordinaria* are attested in many of the Qumran biblical and non-biblical scrolls, and the *perigraphai* also occur in one of the earliest manuscripts found at Qumran—4QJera (XII 11). Dated paleographically to the late third century (contemporary with Aristophanes of Byzantium), the “parentheses” marks in this scroll indicate erroneous repetition.⁴⁴ “Parentheses” marks are also found in the Paleo-Hebrew Leviticus Scroll from Cave 11 (11Q1PaleoLev), dated to the late second century B.C.E. (post-Aristarchus), where they appear to indicate displaced verses, similar to the medieval manuscripts of MT of Numbers 10:35–36.⁴⁵

While these scribal signs occur very commonly in papyri from the classical world, they are unattested in earlier papyri from the ancient Near East, such as the fifth-century B.C.E. Aramaic papyri from Elephantine. This circumstance suggests that they may have been borrowed from Hellenistic scribal practices dating from the end of the third and the second century B.C.E.⁴⁶ If the Jerusalem scribes of the Second Temple period were influenced by Alexandrian scribes, the scribal method of numerical ordering, according to which the Jewish literary heritage was organised, could well have been adopted from current Greek practice.

2. *The Significance and the Time Framework of These Processes*

Towards the end of the Persian period and at the beginning of the Hellenistic period, following the consolidation of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets, the biblical scribes collected other material attributed to this mythological biblical period and to biblical figures. The Pentateuch and the Former Prophets were thus the precedent for the creation of further collections of biblical material—the books comprising the Latter Prophets and the Ketubim.

The Latter Prophets and the Ketubim were produced by a process of collection, compilation, and preservation. The degree of selectivity in these processes was minimal. As demonstrated by Menahem Haran, the

⁴³ Lieberman 1962: 38–43; Tov 2004: 188–198.

⁴⁴ For this dating, see Tov 1997: 150.

⁴⁵ For this dating, see Hanson 1985: 2–23. In addition to the *perigraphai* and cancellation dots, the *ancora* may also occur in MasSir: see Tov 2004: 186.

⁴⁶ Tov 2004: 187–188. For a survey of ancient Near Eastern scribal practices, see Mabie 2004; Ashton 2008: 160–162.

four books of the Latter Prophets contain all of the prophetic texts known by their compilers to be extant during their lifetime. The scribes responsible for their composition sought to collect all of the prophetic material they could find, arrange it, and preserve it for subsequent generations. With respect to the Ketubim, the book of Psalms, for example, contains several collections of hymns comprising all the hymnic material known at the time of its composition. Psalms therefore constitutes a canonic work not because it was selected from or over other texts, but because it was specifically composed to constitute a canonical work. In similar fashion, Proverbs contains what were believed to be the remnants of all the wisdom and didactic material, Lamentations all the remnants of biblical threnody, and Canticles all the remnants of wedding songs, etc. Each of these comprised a definitive and delimited genre. When all the ancient sources were gathered together, the material was transformed into books; these were thus recognised as having been endowed with a unique status from the moment of their composition.⁴⁷

Since the principal component of these collecting efforts consisted of gathering of texts, this process must have occurred somewhere close to a scene of scribal activity, most likely a scribal school, where scribes received the necessary training and had access to ancient literary sources. The Temple precincts would have served as the pre-eminent location both for scribal activity and for the preservation of ancient documents. And therefore, following their completion, the books were probably also deposited in a special place in the Temple—an act which corresponds to the modern form of publication.⁴⁸

Throughout this period and subsequently, however, new compositions attributed to biblical figures and the biblical period continued to be penned. Had the canonisation process not yet been decisively terminated, the pupils of the earlier scribes could have recognised additional works as ancient texts belonging to the biblical period and could have included them in the biblical corpus. Since it is very difficult to imagine the process of collection of ancient materials ceasing of its own accord, spontaneously or accidentally, it is possible that the adoption of the numeric principle of organising the books into twenty-four scrolls is what brought it to a halt.

⁴⁷ Haran 1996: 30–31, 70–74.

⁴⁸ See Beckwith 1985: 80–86; Haran 1993: 58–59; van der Kooij 1998. For the argument that the act of depositing sacred books within a temple or public archives corresponds to the modern form of publication, see Lieberman 1962: 85–87; Kister 1982–1983: 134–135; Kister 1988–1989: 36–53; Friedman 1983–1984: 49–52; Tov 2008: 178.

Although the number twenty-four may be applied to various counting systems, and thus allows the admission of other books (for example, by combining the five books of the Pentateuch into one book—the Torah; or by combining the five small megillot into one book or attaching them to other books), it did not happen. It appears, therefore, that the standardisation of the method of copying the biblical books into a fixed number of scrolls, and the standardisation of their content, precluded the acceptance of additional books.

The third and second centuries B.C.E., which were a significant period for the formation of the books of Ketubim, were equally significant for the standardisation of the Homeric text.⁴⁹ As scholars have noted, of the relatively large number of Homeric papyri fragments from Egypt dating from the third century B.C.E. onwards that have survived, those dating earlier than the second century B.C.E. reflect a tradition different from that reflected in the later manuscripts or in the text with which we are familiar today. Most of the former, often designated “wild” or “eccentric” texts,⁵⁰ are longer in length and freer in content than the latter. During the second century B.C.E., the text of these manuscripts suddenly began to look more similar to that which subsequently became prevalent.⁵¹ While the “eccentric” papyri did not disappear overnight, the transition appears to have been sharp and clear. It is commonly assumed that the text that became common in the second century B.C.E. was influenced by the work of Aristarchus, one of the great Alexandrian librarians who flourished during the reign of Ptolemy VI Philometor (180–145 B.C.E.).⁵² This mid-second-century textual tradition displaced the “eccentric” texts in Egypt, beginning a process whereby the Homeric text was increasingly stabilised.

⁴⁹ West 1967: 11–25; Haslam 1997: 55–100, esp. 60–79.

⁵⁰ West 1967: 11–14; Haslam 1997: 64–65. Moshe Greenberg noticed the parallelism between the ‘wild’ Homeric papyri and the pre- or proto-Samaritan manuscripts from Qumran: see Greenberg 1956: 157–167, esp. 166. For the pre-Samaritan manuscripts from Qumran, see Tov 1992: 80–100.

⁵¹ West 1967: 15–16; Haslam 1997: 64.

⁵² While most scholars concur that Aristarchus was responsible in some form for the obsolescence of the “eccentric” texts, debate exists over whether his edition of the Homeric corpus constituted the archetype for the Vulgate (as per Davison and Boling) or whether it merely served to influence the determination of the *numerus versuum*—i.e., the number of verses constituting the Homeric poems, as per others. See Bolling 1914: 125–126, 128; Davison 1962: 215–233, esp. 223–224. See also the surveys by West 1967: 16–17; Apthorp 1980: 9–10; Janko 1992: 22; Haslam, 1997: 84–87; Finkelberg 2006: 233–235.

It is likely that when the Homeric numerical model of twenty-four books became well-known—probably in the wake of the spread of the mid-second century B.C.E. edition—its fame extended to Judea, and the Jerusalem scribes became acquainted with it. The “letter-label” numbers from alpha to omega was perceived as the perfect model for the organisation of the foundational books of Greek culture, a system ideally suited for application to the Hebrew national heritage as well.⁵³

During approximately the same period—the mid-second century B.C.E.—the latest biblical book, Daniel, was completed.⁵⁴ It would appear that the lengthy process of gathering and arranging the ancient and sacred sources begun during the Persian period was terminated at that point, since the biblical corpus contains no book composed subsequent to the mid-second century B.C.E. This date is thus also the *terminus post quem* for the adaptation of the numeric principle of organisation, since it could not have occurred prior to conclusion of the collection processes. The adoption of the numeric principle of organisation, which was implemented by means of regularly copying the biblical corpus on precisely twenty-four scrolls of standardised content, can therefore be appreciated as having closed the canonisation process, since it precluded the possibility of scribes in the first centuries C.E. continuing their predecessors’ project and admitting additional ancient writings into the now-sealed biblical collection.

While the idea of a pre-determined number initially constituted a library or scribal principle for copying and arranging books, and was therefore originally only shared by scribes and copyists, over the course of time the two numeric systems—twenty-four and twenty-two—became common knowledge through the literature of the late first century C.E. (Josephus, *4 Ezra*, etc.). It is thus plausible that the two models did not originate at the end of this century but predate the late first century C.E. This period is the *terminus ante quem* for the adaptation of the numeric principle of organisation.

⁵³ For additional examples of Greek or Hellenistic forms used for Jewish ideas, see, for example, Eddy 1961: 238–244; Goldstein 1981: 64–87; Cohen 1990: 220–221; Doran 1990: 106–108; Rajak 1990: 261–280; Carr 2005: 253–272.

⁵⁴ The latest stratum in the book of Chronicles also apparently belongs to the same time framework. I hope to devote a separate study to 1 Chr 23:3–27:34, a text whose principal theme is the twenty-four priestly courses in the Temple. For this section, see the surveys by Japhet 2004: 788–798; Knoppers 2004: 788–798. For the book of Chronicles as a literary “seal” intended *a priori* to conclude the third major division of the canon, see Steins 1995.

3. THE STANDARDISATION OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

It should come as no surprise that the standardisation of the number and length of the scrolls into which the biblical texts were copied accompanied the canonisation processes of the Hebrew Bible. When the process of canonisation is perceived as linked to the final redactions of the biblical books and their being deposited in the Temple, rather than as a series of disputes over various lists, as was the case in the Christian world,⁵⁵ the standardisation of the biblical text and the canonisation of the biblical books manifest themselves as two aspects of the same process.⁵⁶ The final redactions of the books, their arrangement in scrolls, and their placement in the Temple are the stages in the process by which the text of the Hebrew Bible was standardised. When a set of authoritative scrolls—a *de luxe* edition of sorts—was deposited in a designated location in the Temple, this became the model for all subsequent copies, which were then made in accordance with the authoritative texts.⁵⁷

Within a few generations after the stabilisation of the text of the Homeric corpus discussed above, the biblical text also appears to have undergone a process of textual standardisation. The evidence shows that in Judea the standardisation efforts commenced during the last century preceding the Christian era.⁵⁸ The biblical scrolls from Qumran, generally dated between the end of the third century B.C.E. and the beginning of

⁵⁵ From the end of the nineteenth century and through to the past three decades, the prevailing view within the study of the canonisation of the Hebrew Bible centred upon the so-called “Synod of Jabneh” hypothesis. According to this thesis, the biblical canon was determined by a “Council” at Jabneh (Jamnia). See, for example, Buhl 1892: 24; Ryle 1904: 182–183; Eissfeldt 1965: 568; Moore 1971: 86–87; Delcor 1989: 369. Over the past three decades, this theory has been jettisoned by most scholars. See, for example, Lewis 1964: 125–132; Stemberger 1977: 14–21; Blenkinsopp 1977: 3, 156; Aune 1991: 491–493; Lewis 2002: 146–162.

⁵⁶ Cf. Cross 1998: 223–225, who, while concurring with the view that the fixation of the biblical text and the stabilisation of the biblical canon constitute associated processes, dates both to the beginning of the first century C.E. In contrast to that, past scholarship has predominantly viewed the standardisation of the text on the one hand and the canonisation of the books on the other as two separate processes with divergent connotations. See, for example, van Seters 2006: 369; Nitzan 2009: 73.

⁵⁷ Cf. Tov 1996: 58; Tov 2008: 178–179. For the talmudic evidence regarding “correctors” or “revisers” (*megihim*) who emended books in the Temple court, see Talmon 1962: 14–27; Haran 1993: 58.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Greenberg 1956: 157–167; Barthélemy 1963; Barthélemy 1976: 878–884; Talmon 1982: 621–641, esp. 624–625; Tov 1992: 180–197; Tov 1996: 58–66; Tov 2008: 175–184; Young 2002: 364–390. See also Lange 2009: 79: “...in Judah efforts towards textual standardisations started some time in the second half of the first century B.C.E. This date is confirmed by the text-typological chronology of the biblical Dead Sea

the first century C.E., contain a wide variety of textual traditions, some reflecting a very free text that diverges widely from the MT subsequently recognised as authoritative in Judaism and represented in the printed editions of the Hebrew Bible. As Emanuel Tov has demonstrated, the largest group of Qumran biblical manuscripts—more than a third of those found at the site—belongs to the category designated “proto-Masoretic texts” due to its resemblance to the medieval manuscripts of the MT.⁵⁹ The text of the manuscripts from the first century C.E.—including those earlier than 73 C.E. found at Masada and those from Wadi Murabbaʿat and Nahal Hever, which appear to belong to the period of the Bar Kokhva revolt (135 C.E.)—is virtually identical to the consonantal *Vorlage* of the medieval manuscripts of the MT.⁶⁰

These findings are also corroborated by some of the ancient textual witnesses and early translations. While the textual tradition of the Septuagint and Samaritan Pentateuch attests to the relative fluidity of the biblical text during the third and second centuries B.C.E., the translations made in the first century C.E. and onwards, such as the Syriac version and the Greek revisions of the Septuagint, correspond very closely to the MT. The missing link between the first century C.E. versions and the earlier, more variable, textual tradition is found in the Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Nahal Hever (8HevXIgr), dated paleographically to the end of the first century B.C.E. This Greek version clearly indicates that during this period efforts were already being expended to bring the early Greek translations closer to a Hebrew text almost equivalent to the medieval MT.⁶¹

The expanding standardisation of the Hebrew Bible text that occurred during the first century B.C.E. appears to have been dependent on the canonisation processes that took place in the Temple precincts.⁶² The

Scrolls which indicates a first peak of proto-Masoretic manuscripts in the second half of the first century B.C.E.”

⁵⁹ Tov 1992: 115. See also Young 2002: 371–379.

⁶⁰ For a description of the Masada texts, see Talmon and Yadin 1999: 149; Tov 2008: 172–175. For the scrolls from the Bar Kokhva period, see Eshel 2000: 357–359; Eshel 2000b: 583–584. More recently two fragments from Leviticus have been discovered in Nahal Arugot which are also almost identical to the manuscripts of the Masoretic Text: see Eshel 2006: 55–60.

⁶¹ For this text, see Barthélemy 1963; Tov 1990. Lange 2009: 59–61 mentions also the papyrus Fouad Inv. 266b from Egypt dated to the middle of the first century B.C.E. This papyrus also attests to an early recension of Old Greek texts towards the text of the MT.

⁶² This was suggested as early as Segal 1953: 35–47; Greenberg 1956. See also Young 2002: 157–167. Cf. Tov 2008: 181, who also presumes that, while the MT texts originated in Temple circles, being adopted later by the Pharisees, “in our description of the temple practices, we do not know when copies were first deposited in the temple . . . One possibility would

Septuagint reflects the pre-stabilisation stage prior to the establishment of the authoritative text. 8HevXIIgr may reflect the intermediary phase, following the consolidation of authoritative texts in the Temple—as do the majority of Qumran scrolls belonging to the group close to the MT, despite the fact that the Qumran sect was not committed to Temple circles and did not insist upon a single text. The final stage occurred in the first century C.E., at which point the textual witnesses that differ widely from the MT virtually disappear.⁶³

This circumstance helps to explain why the textual tradition that became prevalent following the destruction of the Temple in Pharisean circles and ultimately developed into the MT retains traces of Alexandrian scribal signs—the *puncta extraordinaria* and *sigma* and *antisigma*. These marks were inserted into the scrolls at a time when the scribal worlds of Alexandria and Judaea were culturally linked. While the meaning of the signs became increasingly obscure, their inclusion within the biblical text accorded them the same status as the Hebrew wording and they were thus copied as an integral part of the sacred text. Together with the twenty-four-book division, they thus serve as evidence for, and as a reminder of, the period during which Greek and Jewish scribal worlds were so closely interrelated.

It should, however, be stressed that the above arguments do not allow us to claim that this acceptance of a corpus consisting of a fixed number of books eradicated other books or textual traditions from all use within Jewish society. Canonisation processes are not equivalent to censorship, despite the fact that these acts are frequently interdependent.⁶⁴ Books and textual traditions other than those sanctified by virtue of having been deposited in the Temple continued to circulate amongst the populace, assuredly within circles not associated with the dominant streams. The fixed set of books could not annul the importance of books written and read by the whole population. The disappearance of texts not admitted into the fixed set of sacred books cannot be directly attributed to the

be that as late as the early Hasmonean period a master copy was instituted in the temple court because of the extant textual plurality, but neither an early nor a late date can be supported convincingly.” See also Gordis (1971: xl), who proposes that the “archetypes” of the MT scrolls were deposited in the Temple “between the accession of Simon the Maccabean (142 B.C.E.) and the destruction of the Temple (70 C.E.)”; and van der Woude (1992: 151–169), who argues that a uniform textual tradition was consistently in use in Temple circles.

⁶³ For the origin of the MT, see, for example, Tov 1992: 27–29.

⁶⁴ Cf. Assmann and Assmann 1987: 7–27.

termination of the canonisation process, but was evidently linked to social and historical developments following the destruction of the Temple.

4. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have suggested that it is not coincidental that both the Homeric and biblical corpora are organised in twenty-four books, nor is it accidental that the two fixed sets of literary works were standardised within the same time period. The perfect number of twenty-four was adopted from the Alexandrian scribes responsible for transmitting the works of Homer in conjunction with other scribal and library practices. Alongside this method there arose an alternative, Hebrew-centred system, which promoted a division based on the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Being a secondary model from its inception, this principle of twenty-two gradually disappeared from use.

Acceptance of the twenty-four-book model was accompanied by two additional processes. The first of these was the standardisation of the method of copying the biblical books into twenty-four scrolls; the second, a direct result of the first, was the final closure of the biblical corpus. While the number twenty-four may be applied to various counting systems and thus allows the admission of other books, the standardisation of the method of copying the biblical books into twenty-four scrolls precluded the acceptance of additional books into the Hebrew Bible. The adoption of a fixed number forestalled any future alterations to the biblical corpus.

The arrangement of the biblical corpus into twenty-four books can thus be viewed as the primary means by which the Hebrew Bible came to be presented and perceived as a worthy Jewish rival to the Greek foundational literature of the Hellenistic world, a vestige of the days in which the Jerusalem scribes were influenced by Hellenistic scribal methods.

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NOBLEST OBELUS:
RABBINIC APPROPRIATIONS OF LATE ANCIENT LITERARY CRITICISM

Yonatan Moss

Our strength grows out of our weakness.
Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance*

INTRODUCTION: RABBINIC BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND ANCIENT
HOMERIC SCHOLARSHIP—DAUBE, LIEBERMAN, AND BEYOND

In 1949, unbeknownst to each other, two scholars of ancient law, one in England and the other in New York, wrote two very similar papers. In his “Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation and Hellenistic Rhetoric” David Daube, a rising lecturer of law at Cambridge, pointed to some close parallels in content and terminology between rabbinic modes of biblical interpretation and the exegetical methods of Hellenistic rhetoric and grammar that emanated from the scholarly circles of Alexandria.¹ At the same time, Saul Lieberman, a well-known professor of Talmud at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, was putting the final touches on what would go on to become perhaps his most influential book: *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*. Lieberman dedicates the first part of the book to an array of striking similarities between rabbinic approaches to the preservation and interpretation of the biblical text and the text-critical, exegetical and rhetorical practices of the Alexandrian grammarians, especially as they were applied to Homer.²

When it came, however, to interpreting their similar, often overlapping array of parallels, Daube and Lieberman reached different conclusions.

¹ Daube 1949. See further Daube 1953, for more focused attention to the parallels with Homeric scholarship.

² Lieberman 1950: 20–82. See Lieberman 1950: 54, n. 64, where Lieberman notes that Daube’s 1949 article did not reach him until this part of his own book was already ready for the press. But although Lieberman was aware of Daube’s work, Daube was oblivious to Lieberman’s. Lieberman 1950: nn. 64; 79; 99; 119; 153 already incorporate references to Daube 1949, but Daube 1953 makes no mention of Lieberman 1950. Daube 1953: 28–31 compares at length *Sif. Num.* 68 (Horovitz 1917: 63) to Athenaeus, *Deipnosoph.* 11.493–4, without referring to the full discussion of the same two sources in Lieberman 1950: 65–67; 79–80. See also Daube 1949: 261 and Lieberman 1962: 66, end of n. 153.

Daube asserted that the Rabbis directly borrowed their methods of interpretation from the Alexandrian scholars,³ while Lieberman preferred to limit the borrowing to terminology alone. According to Lieberman, the Rabbis developed their methods of biblical interpretation independently from the Hellenistic schools, and only at a later stage did they adopt variations of the Greek terms to label their own homegrown methods.⁴ However, despite these slightly divergent conclusions, both scholars shared an underlying methodological assumption, to which I will return shortly: that the proper historical explanation for the parallels they had found was to be conceived in terms of the influence that the Greek scholars had on the Rabbis. Daube and Lieberman took this paradigm seriously: they made a point of demonstrating the ways in which the Rabbis of Palestine in various periods could have access to developments in Ptolemaic Alexandria.⁵

In the sixty years that have passed since their publication, these pioneering twin studies have become classics in the field, repeatedly returned to in discussions about the place of Hellenism in ancient Jewish society.⁶ Nevertheless, in the past generation two significant scholarly developments have occurred that require a thorough re-evaluation of Daube and Lieberman's important contributions. The first development occurred in the study of ancient Homeric scholarship.⁷ Daube and Lieberman wrote two decades before Erbse published the first volume of his monumental critical edition of the ancient scholia on the *Iliad*.⁸ Working without a

³ Daube 1949: 240, and *passim*.

⁴ Lieberman 1962: 53; 62; 67–68.

⁵ Daube 1949: 240–241; Lieberman 1950: 26–27. It should, however, be noted that at times Daube and Lieberman also speak of the parallels in terms of a shared Hellenistic or Mediterranean culture, rather than in terms of direct influences: Daube 1949: 240; 257; Lieberman 1950: 67–68.

⁶ To cite just some examples, Levine 1998: 113–116; Visotzky 2006; Stemberger 2009: 132–138; 194–198. There were also dissenters, however, who wanted to minimise rabbinic reception of Hellenistic influences: See Feldman 2006: 22–24. See Stern 2008: 10–11 and Naeh 2011 for more literature.

⁷ See Matthaios 2011: 1–3 and Montanari 2011 for overviews of these developments in the context of the boom occurring since the second half of the twentieth century in the study of ancient scholarship more generally.

⁸ Erbse 1969, which includes the major text-critical and exegetical scholia, known by their manuscripts, A and bT. For fuller bibliographical information on the editions of the other Homeric scholia, see Dickey 2007: 18–23; Nünlist 2011. See Lundon 2011 for a survey of Homeric commentaries on papyrus. Although Erbse's edition of the *Iliad* scholia is by far the best, it is by no means the first. The scholia of Venice A and B have been publicly available since D'Ansse de Villoison's 1788 edition. Daube and Lieberman could have made use of this edition or that of Dindorf and Maas 1875–1888, but, for whatever reason, they

proper edition of the main text-critical and exegetical scholia, they mostly relied on rhetorical handbooks and on ancient and modern accounts of Hellenistic scholarship. They were comparing rabbinic exegesis, of which they had deep, broad and direct knowledge, to Homeric exegesis, to which their access was limited, sporadic and indirect.⁹

Today we have a very different picture of Homeric exegesis. It is not only that we have good editions and fine search aids for much of the relevant material. We also know much more about the inner historical development of Homeric scholarship, its diverse strands, and its impact on other areas of the intellectual life of the Graeco-Roman world. Thus, for example, Maren Niehoff has recently shown that much of the work of Philo and other Jewish Hellenistic writers should be read in dialogue with and in response to the Homeric scholarship practiced in Alexandria.¹⁰ Increased attention has been paid in the last generation to the varieties of Homeric scholarship both before and after its Alexandrian heyday and to the impact it had on other areas of scholarship and literary activity throughout the Roman Empire well into Late Antiquity.¹¹ Thus, the challenges that Daube and Lieberman faced in trying to explain how the Rabbis of Palestine might have had access to developments in Ptolemaic Alexandria clear up: Alexandrian Homeric scholarship was just one instance of a general, and multifaceted, culture of textual commentary that pervaded the Graeco-Roman world.¹²

In addition to helping to better define the historical contours of ancient Homeric scholarship, Erbse's publication has also spawned a crop of excellent studies of the scholia from the perspectives of exegetical method and literary criticism.¹³ These studies highlight the diversity and complexity of the hermeneutical methods employed by Homeric interpreters both

did not. Lieberman relied mostly on Lehrs 1882 (a study of Aristarchus), although he also once refers to Deecke 1912 (a selection of *Iliad* scholia).

⁹ A point made also by Niehoff 2011: 16.

¹⁰ Niehoff 2011.

¹¹ Much of the work on the literary history of the scholia has been done by Erbse 1960. For a digestible summary see Snipes 1988: 196–204. See, however, Nünlist, 2009: 17–19, for reservations about the source-critical study of the scholia. As for the varieties of Homeric scholarship and its impact on other realms of Graeco-Roman culture, see, e.g., Schlunk 1974; Lamberton and Keaney 1992; Rengakos 1993; Dickey 2011.

¹² Thus, for example, much of the exegetical material in the scholia, highly relevant to comparisons with rabbinic exegesis, is now thought to originate from third-fourth century Rome or Greece rather than from Hellenistic Alexandria. See Schmidt 2011.

¹³ Schmidt 1976; 2002; 2011; Richardson 1980; Nannini 1986; Meijering 1987; Snipes 1988; Nünlist 2009.

in Alexandria and beyond.¹⁴ The levels of nuance and comprehensiveness that these studies bring to the Homeric material must be incorporated into comparisons with rabbinic exegesis.

The past generation's significant accomplishments in the study of ancient Homeric scholarship are one development that requires a re-evaluation of Daube and Lieberman's pioneering forays into the relationship between Homeric scholarship and rabbinic interpretation. The other development occurred in rabbinic scholarship and is of a methodological nature. Over the past twenty years students of ancient Judaism, taking their cues from developments in general historiographical theory and methodology, have been challenging the theoretical frameworks that traditionally defined the field.¹⁵ The traditional paradigm conceived of the study of ancient Judaism in terms of binary encounters characterised by relations of either resistance or influence between abstract, reified entities like 'Palestinian Judaism', 'Hellenistic Judaism' and 'rabbinic culture', on the one hand, and their equally reified non-Jewish cultural environments, such as 'Hellenism,' 'Pagan culture' and 'Early Christianity,' on the other hand.¹⁶

The alternative approach, recently advocated eloquently by Michael Satlow, replaces this reifying paradigm with a view of the "Jews as subjective agents fully embedded within their cultural environments."¹⁷ Rather than assuming difference between Jews and their non-Jewish surroundings as a background against which to highlight certain parallels as instances of 'influences' and 'borrowing' between two essentially distinct communities, the new paradigm assumes sameness as its point of departure and seeks out differences as the very means by which Jews and others constructed their particular ideologies and communal identities.

Thus, when applied to our particular case, the traditional historiographical paradigm that frames Daube and Lieberman's approach assumes that 'Homeric scholarship' and 'rabbinic interpretation' were two separate, essentialised 'things.' Scholars operating within this paradigm try, as we saw, to explain apparent similarities between these two 'things' in terms

¹⁴ See Niehoff's contribution to this volume for a good example of the nuanced approach to ancient Homeric scholarship, demonstrating the diversity of approaches among Homeric interpreters in the Imperial age. It should be noted that Daube himself, at the end of his 1949 article (Daube 1949: 264), calls for further research along these lines.

¹⁵ See Schäfer 1998; Hezser 2000: 177–187; Satlow 2008; Stern 2008. See Rosman 2007 for a discussion of the ramifications of postmodernist theory on Jewish historiography more generally.

¹⁶ For two expressions of the traditional paradigm, see Levine 1998; Feldman 2006.

¹⁷ Satlow 2008: 40.

of the influences that one of them (Homeric scholarship) exercised on the other (rabbinic interpretation)—whether on the level of content (Daube) or on the level of terminology (Lieberman).

As an alternative to this approach, scholars are now proposing that rather than reading the parallels between ancient Homeric scholarship and rabbinic interpretation in terms of ‘influence’ we should read them “as testimony to broad cultural patterns in the ancient Mediterranean.”¹⁸ The many different rabbinic and Homeric exegetical projects (and, indeed, various Christian exegetical projects as well) were all reflexes of a shared scholastic, text-and-commentary centred culture. Assuming, therefore, ‘similarity’ as our point of departure, ‘difference’ becomes that which requires explanation. We must examine the ways in which individual interpreters exploited the resources available within this broader, shared culture in order to construct particular meanings for their community.¹⁹

Within this context there were of course contacts between the different groups, but rather than viewing them in passive terms, as influences that the groups perceived as more powerful, more original, or chronologically prior exercised on the other groups, we view them in terms of active negotiation and appropriation, in which individual agents from one of the groups chose to creatively transform elements from one of the other groups or from the shared cultural pool.²⁰

My essay is an initial attempt to apply the advances described above in the study of ancient Homeric scholarship and in the methodology of rabbinics to one specific test case. I will examine a short, difficult piece of rabbinic biblical interpretation dealing with the question of the textual

¹⁸ Alexander 2001: 127; Similarly, Satlow 2008: 46–47. It should be acknowledged that it is precisely thanks to the important works of Daube and Lieberman (and others) that we are in the position to make this claim. In other words, although scholars might now reject Daube and Lieberman’s explanatory model for the parallels they have adduced between rabbinic literature and Homeric scholarship, these scholars are still indebted to them for pointing out these parallels in the first place.

¹⁹ See the helpful analogy from football (soccer) provided by Alexander 2001: 123: “Although the game originated in England, it is meaningless at the end of the twentieth century to label the game itself English... The game has become an aspect of a global sporting culture, a universal code understood and played with enthusiasm and skill across Europe and the world. National distinctives operate not at the level of the system itself but within it, both formally (national anthems, team uniforms) and stylistically (in the idiolects that give variety and character to the playing style of different national teams). Similarly with the Jewish and Hellenistic schools: only when we move down to a more detailed level of comparison can we identify distinctive cultural flavors within the broader structure.”

²⁰ See Stern 2008: 14–15.

sequence of the Book of Daniel. The exegetical approaches of this text betray, as I hope to show, similarities to methods employed in Homeric and Christian exegetical texts. Rather than accounting for these similarities in terms of influences that the Rabbis passively received from their Homeric and Christian counterparts, I propose that the authors of this passage actively appropriated certain stances towards the problem of textual disorder that were available within the general exegetical culture, transforming them for their own polemical needs.

A CASE STUDY: *GENESIS RABBAH* ON NON-LINEAR NARRATION
IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

In the course of a discussion of cases where the Bible appears to narrate events in a non-linear fashion,²¹ *Genesis Rabbah*, the Palestinian midrashic compilation redacted in the fifth century, addresses the following problem in the Book of Daniel. Chapter 5 of Daniel concludes with the death of King Belshazzar and chapter 6 continues with the reign of his successor, Darius. Chapters 7 and 8, however, revert to the reign of Belshazzar. Why would the narration of Belshazzar's reign be interrupted to describe events that occurred after his death?

The midrash offers two answers to this question. The first answer is attributed to R. Huna and his teacher R. Aḥa, both active in the fourth century CE.²² The second answer is attributed to the collective, anonymous voice of the Sages.

R. Huna said in the name of R. Aḥa: [this is] so that it might not be said that it is the words of *piyutin*, so that all may know that he pronounced it through the Holy Spirit. The Sages said: in order to *lisrog* 'al the entire book that (or: because) he uttered it by the Holy Spirit.²³

²¹ This phenomenon goes by various names: 'non-linearity', 'chronological displacement', 'narrative disorder'. For treatments of this phenomenon in the Hebrew Bible and its reception in rabbinic literature, see Glatt 1993; Schlüter 2003; 2005; Gottlieb 2009; Moss forthcoming.

²² See Bacher 1896–1898: 3.107–8; 263; Albeck 1969: 316; 387.

²³ *Genesis Rabbah* 85 [Theodor and Albeck 1965: 1033] : ר' הונא בשם ר' אחא: כדי שלא יאמרו דברי פיוטין הוא, כדי שידעו הכל שאמרו ברוח קודש. רבנין אמרו: כדי ליסרוג על הספר כלו שאמרו ברוח קודש. Some manuscripts read *le'sareg* in the *pi'el* stem rather than *lisrog* in the *qal*. It is difficult to determine in this case whether the conjunction *she*, in *she'amaro* ('that/because he uttered it'), is introducing an object clause ('that') or a clausal cause ('because'). See Pérez Fernández 1997: 51–52.

In my English citation of this passage I have intentionally left the two words *piyutin* and *lisrog 'al* untranslated, for it is the interpretation of these difficult words that lies at the heart of this paper. R. Huna and the Sages appear to be making the same point, which is generally clear: the text's non-linearity testifies to its divine origin. But the precise meaning of their respective formulations, hinging on the words *piyutin* and *lisrog 'al*, is obscure.

R. Huna contrasts 'the words of *piyutin*' with compositions authored through the Holy Spirit. Linearity characterises the former but not the latter. 'The words of *piyutin*' seems, based on the Greek (and Latin) word for poets, to be referring to poetry.²⁴ The questions I wish to address are: what kind of poetry is R. Huna referring to? Why would he tout this kind of poetry as characteristic of orderly narration?

The Sages state that the book of Daniel was not arranged in chronological order so as to *lisrog* over it that it was divinely inspired. The verb *lisrog* normally means 'to strap' or 'to interlace.'²⁵ The question that needs to be asked here is: How are we to understand the Sages' usage of this word in the context of the literary arrangement of the Book of Daniel?

This is not the only passage in rabbinic literature that addresses questions about the chronological arrangement of the biblical text. Other approaches to the question appear elsewhere in rabbinic literature, and indeed in other late ancient biblical commentary traditions. Moreover, since the question of chronological displacement is at its core a literary question, it should come as no surprise that interest in it is not restricted to late ancient biblical exegetes. Contemporary interpreters of Homer and Virgil ask similar questions and offer a similar range of answers when interpreting the texts of these two authors, who were, respectively, known in Antiquity for 'putting first things last,'²⁶ and 'beginning in the middle.'²⁷

²⁴ Greek singular *poiētēs* (with metathesis of the *oi* diphthong) and the Hebrew *-in* plural suffix. On this plural suffix in Rabbinic Hebrew, see Pérez Fernández 1997: 63, and, in more detail, Epstein 1948, 1208; 1228.

²⁵ See Jastrow 1903: 1022. I discuss the meaning of this word at fuller length below.

²⁶ Cicero, *Ep. Att.*, 1.16.1; Quintilian 7.10.11; Pliny, *Ep.* 3.9.28. There was, however, also a dissenting view that Homer followed a more linear sequence. See Bassett 1920; Richardson 1980: 282. Some modern scholars understand the non-linearity of the Homeric epics in terms of 'ring composition' whereby "a number of elements within a narrative unit are handled individually in a certain sequence and then rehandled in reverse order." See Minchin 2011.

²⁷ Horace, *Ars poet.* 147–149.

Elsewhere I have provided a typology and analysis of three different approaches to the question in rabbinic literature and in the *Iliad* scholia.²⁸ In order to appreciate the background against which R. Huna and the Sages respond to the problem of textual disorder in the book of Daniel, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of these three approaches.

One common approach, attested especially in earlier rabbinic sources, holds that ‘there is no earlier or later in the Torah.’ In other words, the Torah is indeed arranged out of order, but rather than making a virtue of this (as the midrash does here), the interpreter’s role, according to this opinion, is to observe the cases where the text is out of order and to suggest how it might be rearranged—in theory, if not in practice.²⁹

The other common approach, attested in earlier and later sources alike, disputes the very notion that the Torah is arranged out of order. While the Torah might seem non-sequential, it was arranged the way it was so as to teach specific, local lessons. The interpreter’s role, according to this opinion, is to expound the lessons to be learned from the particular juxtapositions of apparently unrelated subject matters.³⁰

The third approach, far less common than the first two and attested only in later sources, is the one that our midrashic passage articulates. Like the second approach, this third approach views the Torah’s textual disorder as intentional. But rather than focusing on the local lessons that can be learned, it emphasises one overarching reason for the disorder. I call this the ‘meta-interpretive’ approach: it seeks self-referential reasons

²⁸ Moss forthcoming.

²⁹ See *Mekh. d’R. Ishmael, Shira*, 7 [Rabin and Horovitz 1931: 139–140]; *Sif. Num.* 64 [Horovitz 1917: 60–61] for the notion that ‘there is no earlier or later in the Torah.’ *Sif. Num.* 131 (Horovitz 1917: 169) contrasts this approach with the approach, to be discussed next, that attaches significance to the given order of the text, and derives special exegetical meaning from it. Compare this difference of opinion to the two views Origen, *Selecta in Ps. Praef.* (PG 12, 1073B–1076B) presents concerning the non-chronological arrangement of the Psalms. According to one view the Psalms were originally arranged in proper order but they fell into disarray. The order in which they now are found is due to Ezra’s limited success at reassembling them. According to the other view, which Origen appears to endorse, the given order of the Psalms intentionally follows a mystical pattern wherein the numbers of the Psalms have symbolic meanings. For a text-critical discussion of this Origen fragment, see Heine 1997: 132–133.

³⁰ See, e.g., *Sif. Num.* 117 (Horovitz, 135); *Sif. Zutta Num.* 15, 36 (Horovitz, 288); *Lev. Rab.* 25.8 (Margaliot, 583); *Cant. Rab.* 1.10 (3). See Gottlieb 2009: 37–73 for a survey of much of the evidence. Note that the position I represent here that views these two approaches as at odds with each other is not universally accepted. Some commentators treat these approaches as complementary rather than oppositional. See Moss forthcoming for my full argument.

for disorder. The text's disorder teaches a lesson about the nature of the text itself: that it is divinely inspired.

Interpreting the works of an author famous for putting 'first things last,' Homeric commentators also had to face the problem of textual disorder.³¹ Their responses, as recorded in the A and bT scholia on the *Iliad*, may be divided into three approaches—which bear striking resemblances to the three approaches identified in rabbinic literature. The first approach, characteristic of the earlier A scholia, takes note of breaches of textual order but offers no reason or explanation for them.³² The second approach, found, as far as I can tell, only in the bT scholia, points out cases of textual disorder, but offers explanations, mostly of a rhetorical nature for Homer's choice of arranging the text the way he did.³³ The third approach, equally rare and late like its rabbinic counterpart, may also be described as 'meta-interpretive.' It offers overall explanations for Homeric disorder as a general phenomenon rather than pointing out the particular rhetorical need served by each individual case of textual disorder.

Having briefly reviewed the three approaches to textual disorder documented in the rabbinic and Homeric commentary traditions, we are in a position to appreciate the import of R. Huna and the Sages' respective defences of the non-linear arrangement of the book of Daniel.

'UNLIKE POETS': THE FIRST DEFENCE OF NON-LINEAR NARRATION

R. Huna defends the non-linear arrangement of Daniel chapters 5–8 by relegating linear arrangement to 'the words of *piyutin*.' Divine texts as the Book of Daniel should not be expected to follow sequential, or linear, order. What does R. Huna mean by 'the words of *piyutin*?' Scholars have offered various interpretations that are mostly predicated on an understanding of R. Huna's statement as contrasting the Book of Daniel with

³¹ For previous discussions of the scholia's treatment of narrative order, see Richardson 1980: 266–269; Nünlist 2009: 87–93.

³² See, e.g.: Erbse 1969–88: 5.620 (A Scholium): τοὺς μὲν Ἀπόλλων πέφνευ: ὅτι πρὸς τὸ δεύτερον πρότερον ἀπήνηται. "Whom Apollo killed': He [scil. Homer] enters upon it last first."

³³ See, e.g., Erbse 1969–88: 5.620 (bT Scholium): τοὺς μὲν Ἀπόλλων πέφνευ: ῥητορικῶς ἀνέστρεψε τὴν διήγησιν· φάγε· καὶ γὰρ Νιόβη· τίς αὐτή; ἀπολέσσασα δώδεκα παῖδας, ὑπὸ τίνος; ὑπὸ Ἀπόλλωνος καὶ Ἀρτέμιδος. διὰ τί; δι' ὑπερηφανίαν. "Whom Apollo killed': In the manner of rhetoric he [scil. Homer] reverses (ἀνέστρεψε) the narrative. 'Eat'—for so did Niobe. Who was she? She lost her twelve children. By whom? By Apollo and Artemis. Why? Because of arrogance."

some form of historiography. Works in this genre were expected to follow chronological order, but the Book of Daniel was not 'mere' historiography; it was the product of the Holy Spirit.³⁴

The difficulty with these explanations is that they do not do justice to the word *piyutin* itself. *Piyutin*, as noted above, is a Hebraicised plural of the Greek loanword *poiētēs*, 'poet'. The Greek (and Latin) word was not normally used to refer to works of history or chronology. It referred to works of poetry, that is to say, works written in metre: epic and lyric poetry, drama and comedy. Homer and Virgil, the two poets *par excellence* of the Greek and Latin traditions, were known precisely for the *non-linear* arrangement of their epics.

How, then, could R. Huna set up a contrast between poetry and the work of the Holy Spirit, wherein poetry represented the side of linear narration? Was he completely unaware of epic poetry's reputation for non-linearity? If we are indeed to understand R. Huna's Greek loanword as referring to the same poetry which contemporary Greek and Latin speakers referred to with this word, whence could he have derived his image of it as the very paradigm of linearity?

When, however, we examine the question of linearity in the late ancient commentaries on Homer and Virgil, we discover traces of other views of Graeco-Roman poetry. These alternative views did not exalt Homer and Virgil for their non-linearity. Instead, like the alternative rabbinic view that I mentioned earlier, they pointed out how the text must be properly arranged, and, in the case of Homer, this approach was even linked to a specific type of poetry.

This alternative view of the epic poets is not the dominant one in the extant Homeric and Virgilian commentaries. The main surviving voices in these traditions go out of their way to cast epic poetry as a *non-linear* affair, but in the process they offer glimpses onto the alternative view.

³⁴ See the interpolated comment in the *editio princeps* of *Genesis Rabbah*: "For had it been written in order, it would be said that whoever wrote these things fabricated them from his own heart, like a man who tells of things that were in his own day..." The sixteenth century commentary *Yefe Einayim* interprets 'the words of *piyutin*' as 'legends and stories.' Bacher 1896–1898: 3:294, n. 2, interprets the claim here as a defense against the attack by the third century philosopher Porphyry on the historical trustworthiness of the book of Daniel. Jastrow 1903: 1160, derives *piyutin* from the Hebrew *patpet*, 'chatter' and translates it here as 'historical annals.' Finally, Yahalom 1999: 36–37, interprets 'the words of *piyutin*' as referring to a form of narrative liturgical poetry, but it is unclear whether this liturgical genre was already extant in the fifth century when *Genesis Rabbah* was redacted.

In the late ancient bT scholia on the *Iliad* we read the following remark on the catalogue of the ships in Book 2:³⁵

The poet is marvelous in that he follows nothing whatsoever in the [order of] storyline, but rather narrates all the elements in the reverse, each in its due time: the strife of the gods, the abduction of Helen, the death of Achilles. For narration that follows the order [of occurrence] is a more recent thing (νεωτερικόν) and typical of written compositions (συγγραφικόν) and it is far from poetic solemnity (τῆς ποιητικῆς ἄπο σεμνότητος).

The scholiast's tone, like R. Huna's, is polemical. Both exalt the non-linear nature of their revered texts by contrasting them with an alternative mode of narration. Just as R. Huna predicated the Book of Daniel's distinctive, divine nature on its non-linearity, the Homeric scholiast predicates the *Iliad*'s poetic solemnity, which he also associates with the poem's antiquity and orality, on its lack of adherence to chronological progression.³⁶ It is not stated what precisely this more recent, written poetry is. In all likelihood the scholiast refers here to the epic cycles,³⁷ which, when taken together, supplied a more comprehensive and orderly account of the Trojan War than Homer's version. It is now a matter of debate whether the epic cycles did indeed post-date and know the Homeric epics, but Hellenistic literary critics unanimously agreed that they did.³⁸ Thus, for these commentators there was indeed a distinct poetic genre characterised by its linear narration. We might be tempted to speculate that it was poetry of this type that R. Huna had mind when he contrasted the 'words of poets' with the Book of Daniel's non-linearity. But then the question presents itself: why would R. Huna have used the general term of poetry to refer to the epic cycles, which are such a specific, and relatively obscure, genre of poetry? Would he not have preferred to contrast the Bible with Homer and Virgil, the Greek and Roman poets *par excellence*?

³⁵ Erbse 1969–88: 1.288–289: θαυμάσιος ὁ ποιητής μὴ δ' ὀτιοῦν παραλιμπάνων τῆς ὑποθέσεως, πάντα δ' ἐξ ἀναστροφῆς κατὰ τὸν ἐπιβάλλοντα καιρὸν διηγούμενος, τὴν τῶν θεῶν ἔριν, τὴν τῆς Ἑλένης ἀρπαγὴν, τὸν Ἀχιλλέως θάνατον· ἢ γὰρ κατὰ τάξιν διήγησις νεωτερικὸν καὶ συγγραφικὸν καὶ τῆς ποιητικῆς ἄπο σεμνότητος. For a recent dating of much of the bT scholia's exegetical material to the third-fourth centuries, see Schmidt 2011: 158.

³⁶ For the notion of 'solemnity' in the Homeric scholia see Richardson 1980: 275–276. The connection between orality and non-linearity has been re-addressed in recent Homeric studies. For a summary of different views on this matter, see Rabel 1997: 55; Minchin 2011.

³⁷ Nünlist 2009: 89.

³⁸ See Burgess 2001: 9. For earlier, still essential, treatments of the critical Hellenistic view of the epic cycle, see Severyns 1928; Kullmann 1960.

Further examination of the Roman commentary tradition on Virgil roughly contemporaneous with R. Huna's purported dates, leads us to a more satisfying interpretation of R. Huna's statement. Servius and Donatus, the two major fourth-century Virgilian commentators, reveal traces of a position that sought to associate sequential order with Virgil himself. Servius, in the preface to his *Commentary on the Aeneid*, polemicalises against those who would rearrange the books of the *Aeneid* so as to have them follow the chronological sequence of the narrative.

Servius calls upon the precept of Horace, in his *Ars poetica*, and on the practice of Virgil in the *Aeneid*, to position non-linear narration at the very centre of the poetic art. He writes:³⁹

Also the order [of the books] is clear, although some unnecessarily say that the second book is first, the third is second and the first is third, since first Ilium fell, then Aeneas wandered, and after that he came to Dido's dominions. But they do not realize that such is the art of poetry. We begin in the middle, we return in the course of narration to the initial events, and we constantly foreshadow the future events. This is in fact what Horace teaches in his *Ars poetica*: 'He says now what ought to be said now and both postpones and omits a great deal for the present (ll. 43–44). It is well-known that Virgil skillfully accomplished this.

Servius, like the Homeric scholiast, defends non-linearity by elevating it to the distinctive mark of good poetry. But his comment reveals the traces of an alternative position that held that one needed to rearrange the books in their 'correct' sequence. According to this alternative position, non-linearity was not a mark of greatness, but an embarrassment that needed to be removed.

We also catch a glimpse of this latter, alternative approach in Donatus' *Life of Virgil*, where he discusses the order of the books of the *Eclogues*. Donatus starts off by presenting yet another approach to the question of non-linearity, according to which there is no meaning whatsoever to the arrangement of the books, whether sequential or not. But Donatus also

³⁹ Thilo 1878–84: 1.4–5: "Ordo quoque manifestus est, licet quidam superflue dicant secundum primum esse, tertium secundum, et primum tertium, ideo quia primo Ilium concidit, post erravit Aeneas, inde ad Didonis regna pervenit, nescientes hanc esse artem poeticam, ut a mediis incipientes per narrationem prima reddamus et non numquam futura praeoccupemus, ut per vaticinationem: quod etiam Horatius sic praecepit in arte poetica ut iam nunc dicat iam nunc debentia dici, pleraque differat et praesens in tempus omittat: unde constat perite fecisse Vergilium."

records another view, which, like the view Servius railed against, proposed an alternative sequence to the given order of the poem's books.⁴⁰

With regard to the order of the books, it is important to know that the poet only wished to maintain a sequence in the first eclogue and the last: just as in the one, he established the beginning (as he says in the *Georgics* [4.566], "I sang of you, O Tityrus, under the covert of a spreading beech"), so in the other he indicates the end, by saying, "Concede to me this final labor, Arethusa" [*Ecl.* 10.1]. For the remaining eclogues, however, it is quite certain that there is no natural, connected order. But there are those who would say that the beginning of this bucolic song is not "Tityrus" [*Ecl.* 1.1] but "She first deigned to play with the verse of Syracuse" [*Ecl.* 6.1].⁴¹

According to this latter view, Virgil is expected to follow a sequential order and when his text does not appear to do so, it is to be rearranged.

The Homeric scholiast, Servius, and Donatus demonstrate both in their own positions and in their records of the positions they oppose that the associations between linearity or non-linearity and poetry in Antiquity were as much a function of the text's interpreter as of the text itself. The scholiast and Servius attached importance to non-linearity as a defining characteristic of epic poetry. Donatus recognised non-linearity in Virgil's *Eclogues* but attached no importance to it. Certain interpreters cited by both Servius and Donatus demanded linear sequence from Virgil and rearranged the order of his texts accordingly.

Thus, turning back to R. Huna's 'words of *pyutin*,' I suggest that rather than pinpointing this to an actual type of poetry, we identify his reference to 'poetry' with a specific interpretative stance towards poetry, one that expected poetic narrative to follow a certain linear, sequential order.

⁴⁰ Brugnoli and Stok 1997: 52–53: "Quod in ordinem spectat, illud scire debemus, in prima tantum et in ultima ecloga poetam voluisse ordinem reservare, quando in altera principium constituerit, ut in *Georgicis* ait: 'Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi,' in altera ostenderit finem, quippe cum dicat: 'Extremum hunc, Arethusa, mihi concede laborem.' Verum inter ipsas eclogas naturalem consertumque ordinem nullum esse certissimum est. Sed sunt qui dicant, initium Bucolici carminis non 'Tityre' esse, sed: 'Prima Syracusio dignata est ludere versu.'" I cite from the translation of Wilson-Okamura 1996.

⁴¹ Compare this 'linearist' formulation to the articulation of the rabbinic position that 'there is no earlier or later in the Torah:' *Mekh. d'R. Ishmael, Shira*, 7 (Rabin-Horovitz, ed., 139–140): " 'In the year that King Uzziah died' (Isa 6:1). This was the beginning of the book, so why was it written here? Because there is no earlier or later in the Torah..." This is just one example among many that this midrash brings in which a verse in the middle of a book or a passage is believed to be that book or passage's true beginning. Both the second opinion in Donatus and this rabbinic midrash find the beginning somewhere in the middle.

In the dichotomy he sets up between linear and non-linear arrangement, R. Huna does not distinguish between Graeco-Roman poetry and the Bible. It would have been absurd to suggest that the former was any more linear than the latter. Rather, R. Huna strategically appropriates the one particular Graeco-Roman interpretive stance that demanded linear arrangement from its great poets, and he makes it stand for Graeco-Roman poetry in general. He rhetorically casts this image of Graeco-Roman poetry in contrast with the Bible, which, according to his own interpretive stance, is best viewed as a non-linear affair.

I qualify R. Huna's formulation as rhetorical because his association between interpretive stances and literary traditions could just as well have been the reverse. The stance which makes a virtue of non-linearity is, as we have seen, well documented for Graeco-Roman poetry, and the stance which seeks to impose linearity on otherwise non-linear texts can be found, as we have also seen, within rabbinic tradition with relation to the Bible. Thus, the distinction R. Huna sets up between the divinely inspired Book of Daniel and 'the words of poets' should be read not so much as a distinction between bodies of literature as a distinction between two interpretative stances, which were both equally available in the two interpretative traditions.

R. Huna in this case had more in common with the Homeric scholiast and with Servius than with certain strands within his own tradition. Perhaps R. Huna's rhetorical strategy here is to be read as an externalisation of an inner-rabbinic disagreement.⁴² By associating the Holy Spirit with his own, 'non-linearist' position and the poets with the 'linearist' one, he lines himself up on the side of the Holy Spirit, while relegating the dissenting rabbinic view to the side of 'the poets.' As we have seen, not only did R. Huna share his 'non-linearist' stance with the Homeric scholiast and Servius, but he also shared with them a very similar mode of rhetorical presentation. All three present their own interpretative stance by casting it in opposition to an inferiorly presented alternative. Textual disorder, which at first impression might seem to be an embarrassment, a weakness, is transformed at the hand of these interpreters into a strength.

⁴² For a similar interpretive strategy see Hayes 1998, and *ibid.* 274, n. 56, for further literature along the same lines. See also Moss forthcoming for a similar reading of another rabbinic text dealing with textual disorder.

NOBLEST OBELUS: THE SECOND DEFENCE OF NON-LINEAR NARRATION

Whereas R. Huna defended the non-linear narration in the Book of Daniel by contrasting it with the ‘poetic’ approach, the Sages make no mention of an alternative approach. Nevertheless, the general drift of their statement seems quite clear: Daniel’s non-linearity is not a fault—instead, it is what guarantees the book’s divine source. The Sages chose to talk about the present arrangement with the word: *lisrog*, ‘to strap or interlace,’ and the preposition ‘*al*, ‘over.’ What does it mean to strap or interlace *over* something? And how are we to understand this with reference to the arrangement of the Book of Daniel?

The attempts of earlier translations do not do justice to the particular semantics of this word. Their paraphrases merely demonstrate the difficulty at hand.⁴³ Elsewhere I attempted to draw on the related semantic field of ‘knitting’ that the fourth century bishop Gregory of Nyssa uses in his explanation of the non-chronological arrangement of the book of Psalms.⁴⁴

The imagery, however, makes more sense in Gregory’s context than here. Gregory uses the word to describe how the meaning (νοῦς) of the Psalms is implicated (συνήρηται) in the order of the Psalms. For Gregory this meaning is different from historical meaning that does not, in the case of the Psalms, follow the order of the text.⁴⁵

The knitting imagery cannot be said to apply to our midrash. It does not speak of two things being knit together, and it does not make sense to speak of knitting *over* or *on* ‘the entire book,’ as the midrash says.

I would like to propose a different understanding of the midrash’s use of the verb *lisrog*. Besides its more common meaning ‘to strap’ or ‘to

⁴³ Freedman 1983: 2.789, has: “In order to bring the whole of the Book of Daniel within the framework of an utterance inspired by the Holy Spirit.” Neusner 1985: 2.206, offers: “It was so that the whole of the Book of Daniel would be treated as stated by the Holy Spirit.”

⁴⁴ Moss forthcoming.

⁴⁵ Heine 1995: II.178. “Μετὰ τοῦτο δὲ κἄν ἡ ἱστορία ἐν ταῖς ἐπιγραφαῖς τὸ ἀνακόλουθον ἔχῃ, ἀλλ’ ὁ νοῦς πρὸς τὴν ἀκολουθίαν συνήρηται.” Heine’s translation here is somewhat misleading: “After this the historical order in the inscriptions does not follow, but the meaning has been consistently knit (συνήρηται) together.” However, it is not so much that meaning is ‘knit together’ as that meaning is knit to the order of the text. See also Origen, *Princ.* 4.2.9 (SC 268, 338) for a similar conceptualisation of Scripture as weaving unexpected passages into the expected historical sequence (συνύφηθεν ἢ γραφῆ τῆ ἱστορία τὸ μὴ γενόμενον).

interlace,' the verb can also carry another, transferred meaning, attested in some rabbinic sources. *Lisrog*, or its *pi'el*-stem equivalent *le'sareg* can denote the making on stone or wood of marks in interlaced, or crisscross, form.⁴⁶

In this *lisrog/le'sareg* follows a parallel semantic development to the Latin verb *cancellare*. In its general sense, *cancellare* referred to the making of lattices,⁴⁷ but it also took on the secondary meaning of making lattice marks in writing. *Cancellare* came to refer to the cross-shaped marks used to signal cancelation in legal texts, and then it took on the figurative meaning of bracketing a portion within a longer text.⁴⁸ In this last sense it is similar to the Greek obelus, which was used in Hellenistic textual scholarship to mark off lines of doubtful authenticity.⁴⁹

I know of no other rabbinic source that employs *lisrog/le'sareg* in this same text-critical sense that *cancellare* and *obelus* (together with its verbal derivative *obelizein*) came to have.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, given the similar semantic trajectory shared by these three words, I propose that we read *lisrog/le'sareg* in this instance as equivalent to *obelizein*. Just as the obelus was used to mark questionable verses of Homer, so the Sages here use *lisrog* to mark the non-chronological arrangement of the Book of Daniel.⁵¹

⁴⁶ See Jastrow 1903: 1022, s.v. סרג, final definition: 'to trace cross-lines on stone, to carve designs.' Jastrow cites a passage in *Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana*, 'Aniya 137 (=298) and its parallel in *Yalqut Shim'oni*, *Isaiah* 339 (=488) where the context indicates that the verb is used to denote cross-lines or designs made on stone. Another passage in *Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana*, not cited by Jastrow, uses the same verb with reference to wood. *Bahodesh*, 217: והיו מסרגין בכלי העץ.

⁴⁷ *Le'sareg* also has this meaning, e.g.: *Tosefta Menahot* 10.23. Compare also the *soreg*, the latticed railing in the Temple (*Mishnah Middot* 2.3), with the *chancel* in ecclesiastical architecture. For an interesting treatment of this architectural motif shared by churches and synagogues in Late Antiquity, see Branham 1992.

⁴⁸ See the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* database for this semantic trajectory, e.g. *Dig. Just.* 28.4.2 for the juristic sense: "cancellasset quis testamentum" and Marius Victorinus, *Commentary on Cicero's De Rhetorica*, 45 [Halm 1863: 253] for the more general sense of textual bracketing: "per conversionem sic reprehendemus, ut cancellato veluti respectu primam propositionem ad secundae propositionis dimittamus eventum."

⁴⁹ Some ambiguity surrounds both the physical form of the obelus and its precise function in Late Antiquity. The obelus used by the earlier Homeric scholars takes the form of a dash (—). The manuscripts of Origen's Hexapla transmit it in a variety of forms, some of which had more of a 'latticed' appearance (÷). See Schironi 2011; McNamee 1992: 12, n. 18; See also Schironi's contribution to this volume.

⁵⁰ However, Ben Yehudah 1960: 5.4203, s.v. *soreg*, gives this as a technical term used in Massoretic textual criticism, but the one source he quotes is late.

⁵¹ For another instance of rabbinic appeal to critical signs for the marking of textual disorder, see *b. Shab.* 115b–116a, where Num 10:35–36 is said to be "marked with signs" in order to indicate that it is "not in its place." See Lieberman 1962: 38–43.

But unlike the obelus of the Homeric commentators, the Rabbis' 'obelus,' on this reading, would play a positive role. It does not serve to mark out the spurious, corrupt, or suspicious parts of the book. Rather, it serves to mark the abnormal, surprising, unexpected part of the book: where it deviates from the expected chronological order. This mark of unexpectedness brands the whole book as the work of the Holy Spirit.

Origen of Alexandria provides a precedent for this approbatory application of the obelus. As Origen himself explains, he used the obelus in his *Hexapla* in order to mark out elements that were extant in the Septuagint but absent from the Hebrew.⁵²

When we examine Origen's exegetical treatments of these obelised passages, it becomes apparent that he held them in high regard. While admitting in some cases the possibility that the Septuagint variants arose as the result of scribal error,⁵³ Origen preferred to conceive of them as divinely inspired.⁵⁴ On some occasions he viewed the Septuagint variants as reflecting the original Hebrew, which had suffered corruption under the hand of the Jews.⁵⁵ On other occasions, he explains them as belated additions that had not been part of the original Hebrew text, but were included in the Greek translation by design of the divine economy.⁵⁶ In both cases, however, Origen applied to the Septuagintal additions the same techniques of allegorical interpretation that he used on other biblical texts.⁵⁷

⁵² *Comm. Matt.* 15.14 (GCS 40, 387–388); *Ep. to Africanus* 7 (4) (SC 302, 530–532). See the discussion in Neuschäfer 1987: 1.87–103, and esp. 89–92.

⁵³ See *Selecta in Ps.* on Ps. 2.12 (PG 12, 116C–117A), discussing the discrepancy between the Hebrew ךךך ('way') and the Septuagint ἐξ ὁδοῦ δικαίας ('from the right way'), Origen proposes that this may have arisen from 'the manuscripts having erred' (τὰ ἀντίγραφα ἡμάρτηται). See also *Hom. Jer.* 16.5 (GCS 6, 137) on the absence of the word 'first' in the Septuagint rendering of Jer. 16.18 ('And first I will doubly recompense their iniquity . . . —καὶ ἀνταποδώσω διπλάς τὰς ἀδικίας αὐτῶν.').

⁵⁴ Thus according to Hanson 1959: 163–165. Sgherri 1977: 1–28, disputes that Origen held that the Septuagint was divinely inspired. See also Braverman 1978: 15–19; Neuschäfer 1987: 1.111–113.

⁵⁵ See *Ep. to Africanus* 13 (9) (SC 302, 542–545).

⁵⁶ After raising the possibility of scribal error in both the Ps. 2.12 and Jer. 16.18 instances mentioned above, Origen proposes that the Seventy introduced these changes 'according to the economy' (κατ' οἰκονομίαν).

⁵⁷ For Ps. 2.12 (discussed in n. 53 above) Origen offers an ethical interpretation. For another example, see *Hom. Lev.* 12.5 (GCS 29, 464), on Lev. 21.14 (referring to the high priest): 'he shall take to wife a virgin of his people.' Origen says that the Jews denied having the words 'of his people,' which are extant in the Septuagint (he probably means Lev. 21.13 where there is indeed such a discrepancy; for 21.14 LXX and the Massoretic text actually provide the same reading, that includes 'of his people;' see Braverman 1978: 19). He explains that it was appropriate for the Jewish version not to have these words since the Jews are not the people of Christ. Christ, the high priest, shall take the virgin church as

Origen's attitude towards the Septuagint's additions is in line with his overall defense of the Septuagint in the face of competing textual witnesses. In the course of an allegorical exposition of the words of Song of Songs 1.2 "for your breasts are better than wine," Origen notes that there is a variant that reads "sayings" in the place of "breasts."⁵⁸ Although this variant would better fit his spiritual allegory of the passage, he adheres to the Septuagintal reading, arguing as follows:⁵⁹

But although it may seem that this gives a plainer meaning in regard to the things about which we have discoursed in the spiritual interpretation, we ourselves keep to what the Seventy interpreters wrote in every case. For we are certain that the Holy Spirit willed that the figures of the mysteries should be roofed over in the Divine Scriptures, and should not be displayed publicly and in the open air.

Although he expended great energy and resources on tracing the rich textual diversity of the Old Testament, at the end of the day Origen almost always defended the biblical version widely accepted in the churches. The obelus with which he marked the variants found only in this version functioned for him not as a signal for scribal corruption, as it did for the Homeric commentators, but as a signpost pointing towards the divine economy.

Origen employs the terminology and practices of Homeric literary-textual criticism, but in the process, he subverts them. I propose to read the Sages' defense of the Book of Daniel's chronological displacements in the same light. To rephrase the translation of the Sages' remark: the book was arranged in a disorderly manner in order to place obelus marks over the entire book, because Daniel had uttered it through the Holy Spirit. The non-linear arrangement obelises the entire book, and obelisation bespeaks, as it does for Origen, divine inspiration.

Scholars have long been interested in the many parallels between Origen's writings and rabbinic literature. Much has been written about the contacts that Origen often reports he had with Jewish exegetes.⁶⁰ As with

his bride since only the church is 'of his own people.' Origen takes the apparent inferiority of the LXX in comparison with the Hebrew and transforms it into a mark of Christian superiority to the Jews.

⁵⁸ The Massoretic text reads "love" rather than "breasts," although the rabbis were aware of the latter reading. See Braverman 1978: 18. I have not been able to find external evidence of the "sayings" variant that Origen mentions.

⁵⁹ *Comm. Cant.* 1.3; translation according to Lawson 1956: 74; Cited in Braverman 1978: 18.

⁶⁰ For a recent bibliography see Cohen 2010: 160, n. 2.

Daube and Lieberman's treatments of the parallels between Homeric and rabbinic materials, also Origen's relationship with the Rabbis has been conceptualised mostly in terms of influences and borrowing going across the two sides. The relationship is, for good reason, usually contextualised within a framework of polemical interaction between Origen and the Rabbis. As with my treatment of R. Huna and the Homeric and Virgilian commentators, in this short treatment of the parallel between Origen's usage of the obelus and my proposed interpretation of the rabbinic usage of it, I have tried to conceptualise the relationship between them in terms of appropriation rather than influence. The polemics in this case were not between Origen and the Rabbis, but between these two parties on the one side and the broader literary culture on the other side. Origen and the Sages did not passively assimilate the obelisation technique available within broader Graeco-Roman literary culture into their own exegesis. Rather, they actively appropriated it for their own uses, converting it from the sign that brands certain passages in a text as inauthentic into the vehicle bearing the message of the entire text's supreme authenticity as the work of the spirit.

CONCLUSION: STRENGTH OUT OF WEAKNESS

Narrative disorder jumped out at ancient readers. Interpreters of Homer, Virgil and the Bible noticed when their esteemed texts defied their expected chronological or linear orders, and they offered different solutions to the problem. Some viewed it as a nuisance to be dealt with; others pointed it out, but left it as it was; still others viewed it as a mark of the text's poetic artistry or its divine cachet. The focus of this essay was on one midrashic instance, in the form of two statements, of coping with the problem. Since narrative disorder was a concern shared by the different textual communities I proposed reading these two rabbinic statements in light of the work of their more or less contemporary Homeric and Virgilian interpreters.

In the first case, we saw that the dichotomy that R. Huna sets up between linear poetry and the non-linear Book of Daniel is mirrored by the dichotomy that the Homeric scholiast sets up between the linear poetry of the epic cycle and Homer's non-linear poetry. Comments by Servius and Donatus on the arrangement of Virgil's *Aeneid* and *Eclogues* revealed traces of another position: one that shunned non-linearity and sought to 'restore'—probably in theory rather than in practice—the Virgilian text to

its proper order. A position similar to this last one is documented also in rabbinic sources: 'there is no earlier or later in the Torah.'

I proposed that we read R. Huna's comment as a rhetorical categorisation of two distinct interpretive stances, which were in fact equally available both in the epic and in the rabbinic interpretive traditions. By rhetorically categorising the 'linearist' stance as belonging to non-biblical 'poetry' R. Huna was able to externalise the rabbinic version of the 'linearist' view, with which he disagreed, to outside of rabbinic culture.

In the second case, I addressed the Sages' strange usage of the verb *lisrog* in speaking of the jumbled arrangement of the Book of Daniel. On the basis of similarities between the semantic fields of *lisrog* and of the Latin verb *cancellare* I proposed that the Sages use *lisrog* here in a 'pseudo' text-critical sense. The Sages say that Daniel was arranged out of order so that one would come and place, as it were, text-critical marks around the whole text. Like Origen, whose obelisation of certain Septuagint variants did not prevent him from interpreting these same variants as part of the divine economy, so the Sages here found divine inspiration precisely in the text's disorderly arrangement.

The Homeric scholiast, Servius, R. Huna, the Sages and Origen all have in common a conservative approach to their revered texts. The text's disorderly appearance, which might have posed a grave problem to others, is to them not only a weakness to be disposed of, but the very mark of greatness.

I have tried to read the relationship between Origen and the Rabbis on the one hand and Graeco-Roman literary culture on the other hand less in terms of the influences that Graeco-Roman culture had on Origen and the Rabbis and more in terms of the ways Origen and the Rabbis actively appropriated and transformed for their own needs aspects of the literary culture equally available to all late ancient scholars. In doing so, I realise that I too may be said to be making a strength out of a weakness.

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RE-SCRIPTURIZING TRADITIONS: DESIGNATING DEPENDENCE IN RABBINIC HALAKHIC MIDRASHIM AND HOMERIC SCHOLARSHIP

Yakir Paz*

How then could we possibly not attribute every virtue to Homer, when those who have come after him have even found in his poetry all things he did not himself think to include? Some use his poetry for divination, just like the oracles of god, while others put forth entirely different subjects and ideas and fit the verses to them, transposing them and stringing them together in new ways. (Ps.-Plutarch, *Hom.* 218)¹

INTRODUCTION

The Rabbis most probably never directly read the Alexandrian commentaries on Homer. In fact they display very little knowledge even of the Homeric poems themselves.² However, since Homeric scholarship was an integral part of the Hellenistic culture and *paideia* which exerted great influence on the Rabbis, it is not surprising to find many hermeneutical and terminological similarities between the two exegetical communities par excellence of Late Antiquity.

And yet, despite the growing academic interest in the influence of the Hellenistic literature, rhetoric and *progymnasmata* on rabbinic midrash,³

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¹ Trans. Lamberton and Keaney 1996: 311. For short discussion of this paragraph in the context of the *topos* of the ignorant messenger in Graeco-Roman literature and rabbinic midrashim see Yair Furstenberg's contribution to this volume.

² This statement is obviously not valid for the Alexandrian Judaism. On the influence of Homeric scholarship on Jewish biblical scholars in Alexandria see Niehoff 2011. For an up-to-date survey of the Rabbis' acquaintance with the Homeric poems see Naeh 2011.

³ For the *status questionis* and bibliography see Visotzky 2006, who concludes: "The central map was drawn half a century ago and the thesis of Hellenistic influence is now well

there are relatively few studies which discuss Homeric scholarship in this context. The handful of studies conducted by Saul Lieberman, David Daube, E. E. Halevi, and Philip Alexander,⁴ have demonstrated similarities mainly of the elaborate hermeneutical terminologies and methods (such as the *middot*) and of the form of questions and answers,⁵ albeit citing very few examples from the Homeric commentaries.

These studies paid little attention to the fact that parallels are not only to be found in the exegetical methods, but also in the scholarly character of the commentaries. This could be seen in the way knowledge is formulated, organised and redacted, not only by the commentators themselves, but also in the later editorial phases of both the scholia and rabbinic literature.

Many scholarly practices and formulas—which hold together verses, various traditions and commentary—used in the rabbinic literature by both the Rabbis and the rabbinic editors seem so simple, that one is not inclined to look outside the rabbinic culture for their origin. However, similar formulas, and the scholarly practices that stand behind them, appear in the Homeric commentaries,⁶ whereas almost none of these are to be found in earlier Jewish literature. In fact, it is these formulas that give the rabbinic texts their peculiar scholarly texture, distinctly separating them from Second Temple literature composed in Palestine.⁷

established. What remains is to explore the still rich territory marked by the mapping.” See also and Furstenberg’s contribution to this volume.

⁴ Daube 1949 (who states: “[I]n its beginnings, the Rabbinic system of hermeneutics is a product of the Hellenistic civilisation dominating the entire Mediterranean world”); Daube 1953; Lieberman 1950: 47–82; Alexander 1990; Alexander 1998. For a comparison of narrative aggada to Graeco-Latin commentaries see also Kamesar 1994a; 1994b. For the impact of Graeco-Roman culture on the editing of tractate *Avot* see Tropper 2004: 117–207.

⁵ Lieberman 1950: 48 has already pointed out the similarity between the practice of *zetemata* and the questions and answers in rabbinic literature, especially *מה לפני מה* and *δὲ τί*. See also Borgen 1997: 81–101 who discusses the exegetical use of the form of question and answers in Philo within the wider Hellenistic context and cites a few examples from the rabbinic midrash. See also Niehoff 2008; 2011.

⁶ Some such formulas have been mentioned by scholars. E.g. Lieberman 1950: 49 no. 19 remarks that the very common rabbinic idiom *‘אלא...אין’* corresponds to the Greek: *οὐδὲν ἄλλο...ἤ*. Daube 1949:260 suggested that the familiar rabbinic term *שנאמר* might be a rendering of the Greek *ῥητόν*.

⁷ Fraade in many articles (e.g. 1991: 3–21; 1998: 2006b; and somewhat more subtly 2006a) has highlighted the differences between the Qumran literature and rabbinic midrashim stressing the importance of the formal aspects of the compositions. For opinions which stress the continuity between Qumran and the Rabbis see e.g. Kister 1998 and the works cited by Fraade 1998: 62 no. 7.

In this essay I focus on one such scholarly practice which I shall call *re-scripturizing* and which is shared by the Rabbis and Homeric scholars, based on the centrality of their respective foundational text, or Scripture,⁸ for their textual communities.

By the term *re-scripturizing* I refer to the concrete and transparent exegetical effort of a commentator or editor to show that a certain word, verse or passage in the Scripture is the source of a later self-standing tradition (whether oral or written). This could be seen as an attempt to 'return' the tradition to the Scripture in order to reaffirm its centrality and primacy. At times the tradition is directly linked to the verse, usually using an introductory formula, and at other times, the commentator or editor uses an *exegetical mediation*, a commentary or paraphrase of the verse, which facilitates the linking of tradition to the verse. The exegetical effort in *re-scripturizing* is transparent since the commentator does not actually merge tradition and Scripture, but rather marks the clear distinctions between Scripture, tradition and commentary. The commentator is not only exterior to the canonised text, but also to the received traditions.

The term *re-scripturizing* is particularly apt for the rabbinic literature as it stands in clear contrast to rewriting, common in Second Temple compositions, where the author fuses Scripture, traditions, additions and implicit exegesis. This constitutes the literary genre labeled "Rewritten Bible".⁹ *Re-scripturizing* also differs both from the various ways of presenting halakha in the Qumran literature and from the *pesharim* where we find citations of the Scripture followed by a commentary attributed to one authoritative voice.¹⁰ The appearance and centrality of *re-scripturizing* in rabbinic literature seems to reflect a major change in the way texts were perceived and marks a significant break from the earlier stages of Jewish writings.

⁸ I use this term, not without reservation, also for the Homeric poems. For the Homeric poems as foundational texts and canon see Finkelberg 2003 see also Alexander 1998 who compares the centrality of Homer and Moses in both communities.

⁹ The term was coined by Vermes 1973: 67–126. Further on rewriting in Second Temple literature see for example: Segal 2005; Alexander 1988.

¹⁰ For a survey of the various genres of presenting halakha in Qumran and the way they incorporate the biblical verses see Verman and Shemesh 2009. For a short comparison between the edited midrash and the *pesharim* see Fraade 1991: 1–17. Further on the terminology and biblical commentary in the *pesharim* see Bernstein 1994a; 1994b; Kister 1998; Nitzan 2009 and Berrin 2005 with a bibliographical survey.

In the following I focus on one innocent-looking introductory formula which is to be found in both the scholia and the halakhic midrashim—‘έντεῦθεν PN φησι/φασι’ and ‘מכאן היה ר' פלוני אומר’ or—‘מכאן אמרו’ and to demonstrate how the general concept of rescripturizing is put into practice. First I outline the different kind of comments for designating dependence in the Homeric scholia in order to show how, according to the ancient critics, the Homeric poems triggered later traditions in a wide range of authors. I then present the formulas in the halakhic midrashim which are used in a similar way as in the scholia, and which prove to be an important tool for rabbinic editors not only in designating the dependence of the sayings of various sages on the biblical verses, but also in linking to the Scripture the “oral” law as redacted in such texts as the Mishna. Based on the striking similarities between the examples from both corpora, I argue that the appearance of these notes in rabbinic literature should be viewed also in the context of Greek scholarship of the time.

Reading through the following examples in both corpora can teach us, aside from the issues which have immediate relevance to this essay, how the ancient critics and sages read Homer and the Bible, how they thought their predecessors read them, and what seemed to them to be sufficient similarity to assume dependence.

RE-SCRIPTURIZING IN HOMERIC SCHOLARSHIP

In Greek literature Homer is often seen as the source of all wisdom.¹¹ Xenophanes is already reported to have declared (though critically): “ἐξ ἀρχῆς καθ’ Ὀμηρον ἐπεὶ μεμαθήκασι πάντες”¹² (‘For from the beginning everyone has learnt according to Homer’) and many later authors expressed themselves in the same vein.

An extreme example of a systematic effort to put this general sentiment into practice can be found in *The Life and Poetry of Homer*, attributed to Plutarch, where the author launches a project to demonstrate that Homer was the source of all fields of human knowledge, ranging from rhetoric to philosophy.¹³ His claim is that diverse writers and thinkers such as Aristotle, Pythagoras, Thales, Epicurus and others were not simply preceded by

¹¹ For a full survey of the history of the concept of Homer as the source of all wisdom in Greek thought see Hillgruber 1994–9.1: 5–35.

¹² Diels and Kranz 1951: fr. 21.

¹³ Lamberton and Keaney 1996: 10.

Homer, but actually copied him.¹⁴ Interestingly enough, according to Ps.-Plutarch, Homer is the origin not only of one philosophical doctrine, but of many contradictory doctrines. Due to its anthological character, lack of sophistication and explicit pedagogical tone, *The Life and Poetry of Homer* seems to be not so much an original treatise, but rather a representative exemplar of concepts concerning Homer prevalent at the turn of the 3rd century CE, based on examples gleaned from the long tradition of both allegorical and non-allegorical Homeric scholarship.¹⁵

When turning to Homeric scholarship extant in the scholia¹⁶ we do not find such a concentrated effort as in Ps.-Plutarch. Nonetheless, there are many scattered examples where the ancient critics, starting with Aristarchus, point out the dependence of various traditions of later poets or authors on the Homeric verses.¹⁷

Notes designating dependence are quite often introduced by ἐντεῦθεν (from here, i.e. from this verse) or by using the formula ἐντεῦθεν PN¹⁸ φησι/φασί¹⁹ (from here a certain author (or authors) says), which are used quite consistently in the various scholiae on Homer as they appear in the medieval manuscripts and which could arguably be regarded as a technical formula for designating dependence.²⁰ This formula does not necessarily reflect the original wording of the early critics (although, as noted, the practice itself is used already by Aristarchus), and is likely to be a product of later editing.²¹ However, since the issue at hand is a comparison with

¹⁴ Ibid: 12. See for example *Hom.* 153: "a number of those who came after Homer paraphrased the many excellent maxims and admonitions he invented" (Lamberton and Keaney 1996: 245).

¹⁵ Ibid: 10–29; for the pedagogical context see also Criboire 2006: 206.

¹⁶ For introductions to the various scholiae see Van der Valk 1963–4; Schmidt 1976: 9–39; Reynolds and Wilson 1991: 9–14; Nagy 1997; Schmidt 2002; Dickey 2007: 18–28 who also cites extensive bibliography; Nünlist 2011. For a general overview of the historical background of Homeric scholarship in Alexandria see Pfeiffer 1962 and Fraser 1972. For the literary criticism in the scholia see now Nünlist 2009 and bibliography. On the manuscript transmission see Erbse 1960; the preface to Erbse 1969–1988.

¹⁷ For a collection of such comments of the scholia dealing with Homer as the source of many sciences see Schmid 1905; see also Sluiter 1997 who collects some of the notes dealing with Homer's didactic role.

¹⁸ As we shall see at times instead of a personal name there could appear 'law', 'proverb'.

¹⁹ At times ἐντεῦθεν appears with other verbs such as ἔλαβε, παραίνει etc.

²⁰ Over half of the occurrences of ἐντεῦθεν in the scholia to Homer indicate literary dependence. Seldom does this formula indicate dependence in the scholia to other authors. It *never* appears as such in Philo.

²¹ Severyns 1928: 92, who regards most of these notes as Aristarchean, concludes: "Il saute aux yeux, en effet, qu'Aristarque n'a pas pu donner à sa pensée la forme sèche et souvent inexacte où nous la trouvons aujourd'hui. Nous savons trop ce que sa pensée devient sous la plume des abrégiateurs, pour ne pas approuver Roemer qui se refuse à

rabbinic commentary, the later reworking and redactions (some of which took place contemporaneously with the compiling of the rabbinic literature) are as important for our discussion as the earlier material.

In the following I divide these comments into somewhat artificial categories of dependence, some of which clearly overlap, in order to highlight the variety of the re-scripturized sources.

Mythological Dependence

The first and most striking examples are the notes concerning dependence of later authors on mythological themes in the Homeric poems.²² This is typically an Aristarchean note where “he argues that a particular Homeric passage triggered another in post-Homeric poetry”,²³ especially the later post-Homeric poets who are called, at times disrespectfully, οἱ νεώτεροι. Aristarchus strove to differentiate Homer from the later poets instead of harmonising him with Cyclic literature.²⁴ This approach can clearly be demonstrated in the efforts to prove Hesiod’s dependence on Homer. In book 24 of the *Iliad* there appears the famous description of the two urns which are set on Zeus’ floor. This description is linked to the Hesiodic version in *Works and Days* of the one urn opened by Pandora:

δοιοὶ γὰρ τε πίθοι—*ἑάων*>: ὅτι ἐντεῦθεν Ἡσιόδῳ τὸ περὶ τοῦ πίθου μύθευμα.
(schol. A *Il.* 24.527–8a *Ariston.*)

“For two urns <are set on Zeus’ floor of gifts that he gives, the one of ills, the other of blessings>. [a dipole] because from here [came] to Hesiod the story of the urn.”²⁵

imputer, textuellement, à Aristarque le plus grand nombre de ces phrases avec ἐντεῦθεν. Il n’en reste pas moins vrai que le principe même vient d’Aristarque.” For Roemer’s effort to distance Aristarchus from these notes see Roemer 1924: 101–109 esp. 108.

²² For a full discussion of these notes and others concerning mythology see Nünlist 2009: 257–264 who cites further examples in no. 9, all of which are introduced by ἐντεῦθεν, except for schol. b *Il.* 5.880, where the dependence of Hesiod is introduced else wise (τοῦτο δέδωκεν ἀφορμὴν Ἡσιόδῳ εἰπεῖν). Quite a few of the Aristarchean notes on mythological issues were already discussed by Severyns 1928: 83–92; Roemer 1924: 87–170; Bachmann 1904: 29–33 and Lehrs 1882: 177–193.

²³ Nünlist 2009: 259. Bachmann 1904: 32 states: “Aristarch ist bemüht, Homer als das grosse Reservoir für die späteren Dichter nachzuweisen.”

²⁴ For an analysis of the οἱ νεώτεροι in the scholia see Roemer 1924: 109–122; Severyns 1928: 31–92. Severyns also argues that the Aristarchean notes of dependence were originally part of a systematic criticism of the νεώτεροι, and he collects many such examples under the heading “Les Néωτεροι: Imitateurs maladroits d’Homère.” (ibid.: 83–92)

²⁵ This example is also cited by Severyns 1928: 90. All translations of the scholia are mine. The quotations of the scholia on the *Iliad* follow Erbse’s edition (Erbse 1969–1988) and those of the scholia on Hesiod’s *Works and Days*—Pertusi’s edition (Pertusi 1955).

Aristarchus states that this Homeric story directly influenced Hesiod, based on the fact that they both use *πίθος*. We see here that a similar word is enough to assume dependence. A clearer explanation for the dependence of Hesiod's version on Homer's is to be found in the scholia on *Works and Days* commenting on the verse "But the woman took off the great lid of the urn (*πίθου*):"

< π ί θ ο υ : > ποίου πίθου; τί γάρ περὶ πίθου εἶπε; φαίνεται οὖν νεώτερος Ἡσίοδος Ὀμήρου· εἰπὼν γάρ τὸν πίθον ὡς ἐκείθεν ἡμῶν μαθόντων ὠμολογημένον ἔλαβε. δύο δὲ πίθους Ὀμηρος λέγει (*Il.* 24.527).

δοιοὶ γὰρ [τε] πίθοι κατακείαται ἐν Διὸς οὐδῆι. (schol. Hes. *Op.* 94a)

"Of the Urn": What sort of urn? For what does he [Hesiod] say concerning an urn? Hesiod indeed appears to be younger than Homer. For by saying [this] he [Hesiod] understood the urn as agreeing to what we may learn from there [i.e. from Homer]. Homer speaks of two urns: "For two urns are set on Zeus' floor".

In this cross-reference, which is common in the exegetical network created by the various scholiae,²⁶ the critic wonders what Hesiod means by *πίθος*, which is barely described in the poem. However, since, according to the critic, Hesiod lived later than Homer it is clear that he had the Homeric version in mind while composing this section and that he is referring the reader to Homer's detailed description of the urns. The fact that there are significant differences between the two versions— e.g. in Homer there are two urns whereas in Hesiod only one²⁷—does not seem important enough to the critic, and Hesiod's possible originality or his dependence on an alternative version are not considered. Although Aristarchus usually argues that the various versions of the myth be kept apart, in this case he clearly favours Homer.²⁸ Aristarchus and others assumed not only that Hesiod lived after Homer, but that he actually read (closely) the Homeric poems.²⁹ Hence, one can trace the exact Homeric verses which influenced Hesiod.

²⁶ Such a network of cross-references resembles the cross-references found in abundance in the rabbinic literature.

²⁷ See schol. Hes. *Op.* 90–94 which tries to settle the differences by claiming that according to Hesiod the urn contains also the good so as to be equivalent to the two urns in Homer.

²⁸ Nünlist 2009: 259.

²⁹ See schol. *A Il.* 12.22a and 17.719. See also Porter 1992: 83.

Another very interesting example is a comment on the epithet of Troilus in book 24. Despite Troilus' well-known *Nachleben* starting from the ancient vase painting and culminating in Chaucer and Shakespeare, he is mentioned only once in the Homeric poems and even that is *en passant*:

<Μήστορα τ' ἀντίθεον καὶ Τρωΐλον> ἵπποχάρμην: ἐντεῦθεν Σοφοκλῆς ἐν Τρωΐλῳ φησὶν αὐτὸν λοχηθῆναι ὑπὸ Ἀχιλλέως ἵππους γυμνάζοντα παρὰ τὸ Θυμβραῖον καὶ ἀποθανεῖν. (schol. T *Il.* 24.257a)

"<God-like Mestor and Troilus> the chariot-fighter": From here Sophocles in *Troilus* says that he [Troilus] was ambushed by Achilles while he was training horses by the Thymbraion and was slain.

According to this tradition, which was part of the Epic Cycle, Troilus was killed (most probably as a young boy)³⁰ by Achilles next to Apollo's temple Thymbraion.³¹

Sophocles, in his now lost play, must have recounted a much more detailed account of Troilus' life, which not even the scholia would claim to have stemmed from Homer. And yet the scholiast does claim some sort of influence. Why does he think that Sophocles derived his depiction of Troilus' death, happening while he was training horses, from this verse? The answer seems to hinge on the epithet ἵπποχάρμην. As Erbse notes *ad loc.* it appears that according to the scholiast, Sophocles interpreted this epithet not as a 'fighter from horses' but rather as the scholia D has it: ἵπποις χαίροντα—delighting in horses, implying a more playful attitude. From here it is but a short jump to read this not only as Troilus' epithet, but also his epitaph.

What we have here is an explanation as to how Sophocles built part of his narrative. The critic attributes to Sophocles a certain (scholarly) interpretive method. In a way, one can say anachronistically that the scholiast is tacitly attributing to Sophocles a midrashic effort—constructing a narrative from a word. Sophocles has rewritten the Homeric verse and

³⁰ According to Aristonicus, Aristarchus refuted the interpretation of the νεώτεροι that Troilus was a young boy, arguing that Homer gives an epithet only to full-grown men (schol. *A Il.* 24.257b *Ariston.*). For a detailed discussion of this scholia and an effort to reconstruct Aristarchus' original note see Severyns 1928: 71–73, who accepts the manuscript reading of ἄχευθῆναι (instead of λοχηθῆναι—a correction offered by Erbse based on Welcker 1839: 124 following Eustathius) and understands that according to Sophocles Achilles sexually attacked the poor young Troilus before killing him (this tradition is attested also in other sources—see Schein 2011). See also Bachmann 1904: 30–31.

³¹ For a full survey of the ancient accounts on Troilus and (including a detailed analysis of the fragment from Sophocles) see Lesky 1939. See also Welcker 1839: 124–129; Radt 1999: 453 and Schein 2011.

incorporated it into his tragedy—the scholiast identifies this rewritten version and links it back to the exact word that triggered it.

Mis-Dependence

Another form of dependence on Homer, which could be considered a sub-category of the previous one, is to be found in the cases where the commentator attributes to a later poet an unintentional misreading of Homer to account for an alternative version.³² The choice to attribute this divergence to a misreading rather than to an independent version or poetic invention (as done elsewhere in the scholia) reinforces the centrality of the Homeric text. For example, in *Il.* 4.59 Hera describes herself while arguing with Zeus as *πρεσβυτάτην*:

πρεσβυτάτην: τιμωτάτην νῦν. πλανηθεῖς δὲ ἐντεύθεν Ἡσίοδος νεώτερόν φησι τὸν Δία.(schol. A, bT *Il.* 4.59b *ex.*)

“The eldest”: In the present passage [this means]: ‘the most respected’. From here Hesiod, being misled, says that Zeus is younger.³³

The commentator explains that ‘*πρεσβυτάτην*’ in this passage does not mean seniority of age as is usual, but rather: ‘the most respected’.³⁴ Based on this interpretation it is clear to the critic that Hesiod, who in the *Theogony* depicts Hera as older than Zeus, derived his version from a misunderstanding of the adjective in this passage.³⁵ The expression used here to

³² Cf. Nünlist 2009: 259: “Another form of criticism has it that a later poet(s) did not understand the former version [...] or mixed up the chronology of events”. For a detailed discussion of such misunderstandings see Severyns 1928: 83–92; Schmidt 1976: 27; Bachmann 1904: 29–33.

³³ Cf. Hes. *Th.* 454–7.

³⁴ For a similar interpretation in rabbinic literature see *Sifra*, Qedoshim pereq 7, 12 (Weiss 91a) where it is stated ‘כַּחֲמֵי אֵלֵינוּ וְאֵלֵיךָ וְאֵלֵינוּ’ (an ‘elder’ is only a sage). For a discussion of the replacement of old-age with respectfulness see Sagiv 2009:192–201.

³⁵ For more examples see schol. AT *Il.* 15.119; T *Il.* 18.38 *ex.*; schol. *Od.* 8.362 *Cod. Vind.* 56 (cf. Schol. D *Il.* 5.422 and Nünlist 2009: 118) see also Nünlist 2009: 259 n. 9. For similar comments of Aristarchus on Antimachus’ misunderstandings of Homer see schol. A *Il.* 4.439–40 *Ariston.*; 14.500 *Ariston.* on which Schironi notes: ‘ancora una volta il ricorso ad espressioni come *πλανηθεῖς*, *πλάνη*, che indicano l’errare, il ‘prendere una cantonata’, e chi richiamano *ἐπλανήθη* in Sch. A ad *Ξ* 500, prova che Aristarco aveva ben presente quale fosse lo scopo di Antimaco: imitare Omero.’ (Schironi 1998: 198)

A similar case of attributing a misreading of Homer to ancient authors can be found in Ps.-Plutarch. In *de Homero* 150 he states: “others went astray over passages that Homer did not present with approval, but adapted to the conditions of his narrative”. Their main mistake, according to Ps. Plutarch, is regarding a character’s point of view as representing Homer’s own opinion, that is, they fail to notice Homer’s use of focalisation. For more on focalisation see Nünlist 2009: 116–134. So, for example, Epicurus was misled by Odysseus

describe this misunderstanding as *πλανηθείς*, which seems to imply more than just a simple mistake, but rather a scholarly misreading, since the exact expression is used elsewhere in the scholia to account for the errors committed by such scholars as Zenodotus and Crates.³⁶ When commenting on both the misled scholars and the misled poets, the critic points to their exegetical fallacies in order to prove their dependence (or rather *mis-dependence*) on a Homeric verse.

Literary Dependence

Besides notes on mythological dependence there are quite a few notes which demonstrate a literary dependence, without mythological themes, of later authors on Homer. In the following example the critic claims that Menander composed a line in his now lost comedy based on a verse from Achilles' response to Odysseus, where he claims he would rather return home and marry whomever his father chooses, than marry even Agamemnon's daughter:

Πηλεὺς θῆν μοι ἔπειτα γυναῖκα <γαμέσσεται αὐτός>: φιλοπάτωρ καὶ σώφρων κάκεινον κυρῶν γάμον, ὃν ὁ πατήρ ἔλοιτο. ἐντεῦθεν ἔλαβε Μένανδρος τὸ „ἐγάμησεν, ἣν ἐβουλόμην ἐγώ“ (fr. 781 Koe.=PCG VI.2 fr. 661). (schol. T *Il.* 9.394a1)

“Peleus indeed will then himself seek a wife for me”: he loves his father and is prudent in confirming also that marriage which his father would choose. From here Menander took the [verse] “he married her who I wanted”.

Since both Homer and Menander are dealing with a father choosing a bride for his son and the son accepting this choice (even though Achilles' statement is purely hypothetical and rhetorical), it is clear to the scholiast that Menander was directly influenced by the Homeric verse. It is important to notice that the commentator has to first paraphrase the Homeric verse in order to show more clearly the dependence of Menander. As we shall see this technique of *exegetical mediation* is quite common in rabbinic literature.

Another example can be found in a note on Achilles' refusal to Hector's plea:

praise of pleasure in *Od.* 9.5–11 and “got the idea that pleasure is the goal of the fortunate life” (*Hom.* 150; Lamberton and Keaney 1996: 241; cf. Hillgruber 1994–7.2: 335–6).

³⁶ For Zenodotus see schol. A *Il.* 9.131 *Ariston.*; 14.442 *Ariston.*; 16.161a *Ariston.*; for Crates see schol. A *Il.* 14.32a *Hrd.* cf. schol. AT *Il.* 15.119.

ὡς οὐκ ἔστι λέουσι <καὶ ἀνδράσιν ὄρκια πιστά>: ἐντεῦθεν τὸν περὶ λεόντων καὶ ἀνθρώπων μῦθον Αἴσωπος ἀνέπλασεν. (schol. T *Il.* 22.262)

“As between lions and men there are no oaths of faith”: from here Aesop modeled his fable about lions and men.

The scholiast claims that Aesop’s much longer fable, or myth, was directly influenced by this particular verse.³⁷ Aesop’s tale is seen as a narrative expansion (or rewriting) of what already existed in Homer.³⁸

Philosophical Dependence

Particular Homeric verses are also seen as the origin of various philosophical ideas. So, for example, Antisthenes is said to have been influenced by the description of the appearance of the spirit of Patroclus before the eyes of grief-stricken Achilles:

<πάντ’ αὐτῷ μέγεθος τε> καὶ ὄμματα κάλ’ εἰκῦα: ἐντεῦθεν Ἀντισθένης ὁμοσχήμονας φησι τὰς ψυχὰς τοῖς περιέχουσι σώμασι. (schol. AbT *Il.* 23.66)

“[then there came to him the spirit of unhappy Patroclus], in all things like his very self, in stature and fair eyes”: from here Antisthenes says that the spirits have the same shape of the encompassing bodies.

Homer’s emphasis on the similarity between the corporal and spiritual manifestations of Patroclus supposedly inspired Antisthenes’ philosophical approach.

³⁷ As Erbse *ad loc.* notes it is not quite clear to which fable this, refers. Possibly Aesop. fab. 149H, or 264 H.

³⁸ It is worth noticing that these last few examples could be used to reflect on some of the biblical narrative aggada in the midrashim. Previous research dealing with Hellenistic impact on the aggada focused mainly on comparisons of the narrative aggada—perceived mainly as a rabbinic creative elaboration of the Scripture—with various Graeco-Roman *literary* models (See Kamesar 1994b for an apt analysis of such attempts). However, many aggadot are part of an oral law handed down to the Rabbis, some of which are known to have existed hundreds of years earlier. Hence, in some cases the Rabbi who cites the narrative aggada is not in fact its author but rather its re-scripturizer. He connects an already known narrative to the verse using evermore sophisticated and innovative exegetical methods. There are interesting parallels to the more rudimentary efforts of the Homeric critics to show that a later narrative tradition is in fact a narrative elaboration triggered by a specific verse. Further comparison could prove fruitful. For an interesting example of re-scripturizing of a narrative tradition using an extremely elaborate hermeneutical method see Milikowsky 2005: 15.

A similar example may be seen in the following scholia where Epicurus' concept of the gods is linked directly to a Homeric verse:³⁹

<αὐτοὶ δέ τ' > ἀκηδέες <εἰσί>: [...] καὶ Ἐπίκουρος ἐντεῦθεν φησὶν ὅτι „τὸ ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀφθαρτον οὔτ' αὐτὸ πράγμ' ἔχει οὔτ' ἄλλοις παρέχει· διὸ οὔτε ὀργαίς οὔτε λύπαις συνέχεται“ (Rat. Sent. 1 = Gnom. Vat. 1) (schol. T II. 24.526)

“<and they themselves are> without care”: [...] And Epicurus says from here that: “the immortal and incorruptible [nature] has no trouble itself nor causes trouble to any others, therefore it is never constrained neither by anger nor by pains”

In both these examples the critics pinpoint the exact verse which inspired an entire philosophical doctrine.⁴⁰

Source of Proverb

There are a few examples which offer interesting comparisons to rabbinic literature, where a Homeric verse is seen as the source, according to the scholiast, of a known proverb or epigram. Achilles' harsh response to Hector's plea that the winner of their duel shall not desecrate the loser's body (which, as we saw above, was regarded by some critics as the origin of Aesop's fable) was also considered a source of a proverb:

ἄλλως· οὐδὲ λύκοι τε καὶ ἄρνες <— ἔχουσιν >: ἐντεῦθεν ἡ παροιμία· „ἄρνα φιλοῦσι λύκοι, νέον ὡς φιλέουσιν ἔραστα“ (schol. bT II. 22.263b)

In another way: “Nor do wolves and lambs have hearts of concord”: from here the proverb: “wolves love a lamb, as lovers love a youth”

Achilles uses a simile (and maybe an already known proverb) from nature and equates himself with a wolf and Hector with a lamb. There is to be no mercy. The scholiast sees this as a source of another proverb. Yet, the quoted proverb, which appears in a slightly different form in the *Phaedrus* (241d1), seems to be commenting not so much on the relation between wolves and lambs, but rather on the aggressive bestial-like lust of the

³⁹ Interestingly Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. gramm.* 273) blames Epicurus of plagiarism: “Epicurus has been detected as guilty of having filched the best of his dogmas from the poets” (trans. R. G. Bury, *Sextus Empiricus, vol. IV: Against the Professors*, London 1949, p. 155). Sextus brings a few examples, most of which demonstrate Epicurus' borrowings from Homer.

⁴⁰ Cf. schol. II A 678a ex; schol. II AbT 10a ex; schol. II b 276–7a1 ex. For Homer's usefulness for philosophy in the writings of Plutarch and Philo see Niehoff's contribution to this volume.

lovers, as Socrates says to Phaedrus: “the fondness of the lover is not a matter of goodwill, but of appetite which he wishes to satisfy”⁴¹ (241c4). However, what is important for our discussion is that the sheer fact that lambs and wolves are mentioned in both is enough for the scholiast to regard this specific Homeric verse as the origin of this proverb.⁴² It further highlights the motivation of the scholiast.

Dependence of Ethical Maxims

Occasionally Homer is seen as the source of an ethical teaching.⁴³ For example, when Thetis comes to persuade Achilles, her son, to return Hector’s body she opens her speech thus “My son, how long will you keep on thus grieving and groaning? You are eating your own heart”. The last words lead to the following note:

<σ ἦ ν> ἔδεαι καρδίην: [...] ἐντεῦθεν⁴⁴ καὶ Πυθαγόρας παραινεῖ μὴ ἐσθίειν ζώου καρδίαν· ὁ γὰρ ἐκείνην ἐσθίων καὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐσθίει, τουτέστιν οὐδέποτε ἀτάραχον καὶ ἄλυπον ἑαυτὸν τηρεῖ. (schol. b *Il.* 24.129a²)

“Eating your own heart”: From here Pythagoras too advises not to eat the heart of a living creature. Since he who eats the heart of another also eats his own, hence he will never preserve himself undisturbed and free of pain.

Pythagoras’ concrete ethical-dietary maxim not to eat the heart of a living creature,⁴⁵ which was part of his professed vegetarianism, was inspired,

⁴¹ Trans. H. N. Fowler, *Plato: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, (Cambridge Mass./London 1914), p. 457.

⁴² Further examples: schol. bT *Il.* 24.262; T 542a T; b 542b. cf. Hermes’ rebuke of Priam for going out alone in his old age to confront Achilles: ἄνδρ’ ἐπαμύνασθαι, ὅτε τις πρότερος χάλειπῆναι: παροιμιακὸς γέγονεν ὁ στίχος. (schol T *Il.* 24.369 ex.). (“to stand up against a man, when he attacks first”: The verse has become proverbial.). See also Schmid 1905:8–9. It is important to notice that not all proverbs quoted by the scholia are seen as originating from Homer, some are brought as illustration as we find in the rabbinic commentaries. This kind of dependence is found also in scholia to other writers. For examples of proverbs which are used for illustration see note 66.

⁴³ See also the many maxims collected by Ps.-Plutarch *Hom.* 152–160.

⁴⁴ It is important to note that in the almost exact parallel note in 129a¹ (A and T) the word ‘ἐντεῦθεν’ does not appear. However it seems highly likely that there too the note is meant to indicate Pythagoras’ dependence on this verse.

⁴⁵ Diels and Kranz 1951:466 this maxim is cited alongside such maxims as ‘do not eat the brain’; ‘do not eat beans’. For a similar interpretation see Porphyry *Vit. Pyth.* 42. Ps. Plutarch (*Hom.* 154) also notes that these Homeric verses were copied by Pythagoras in his maxim ‘Spare your life, do not eat out your heart [fr. 16, Nauck]’ (Lamberton and Keaney 1996: 245–7; Cf. Hillgruber 1994–9.2: 342–3). See also Iamblichus’ description of this maxim as part of Pythagoras’ dietary rules: ‘Other students, whose life was not entirely pure and holy and philosophic, were allowed to eat some animal food, though even they

according to the critic, by Thetis' statement that Achilles had been eating his heart due to his overwhelming grief. This seems to be based on the understanding that the heart is the dwelling of thought and life. In order to prove this dependence the critic, based on a long tradition of interpreting Pythagoras' maxims symbolically,⁴⁶ attributes to Pythagoras quite an elaborate exegetical procedure (or midrash): Eating a (physiognomic) heart of a living creature is equivalent to eating one's (metaphorical) heart. Hence Pythagoras' ruling is actually meant to prevent pain and disturbance, such as those which afflicted Achilles. Once again we see the need for exegetical mediation in order to prove dependence.

Legal Dependence

Finally, there are other examples where a law is claimed to have originated from an Homeric precedent. So, for example, Agamemnon promises Teucer that, on account of his martial excellence, he shall choose from the booty directly after Agamemnon if Troy is captured. This is seen as the basis for a general law:

πρώτῳ τοι μετ' ἐμέ: [...] ἐντεῦθεν νόμος τοὺς ἀριστεῖς γέρας δέχεσθαι.
(schol. T *Il.* 8.289 *ex.*)

"To you first after me" [...] From here the law that the best men receive the gift of honour.

Similarly Hector's threat to kill and not allow burial to those who will not go forward to the ships, inspired the law-givers:⁴⁷

οὐδέ νυ τόν γε / γνῶτοί τε — ἐρύουσι: ἐντεῦθεν νόμος τὸν προδότην
μὴ θάπτεσθαι (bT) παρὰ τῶν νομοθετούντων ἐκινήθη. (schol. T *Il.* 15.349–51 *ex.*)

"His kinsmen and kinswomen shall not give him his dues of fire, but dogs shall tear him in pieces": From here the law not to bury the traitor was stirred by the law-givers.

As we shall see, these last few examples have much in common with rabbinic efforts to re-scripturize various legal traditions.

had fixed periods of abstinence. He also forbade them to eat the heart or the brain, and told all Pythagoreans to abstain from these, for these are the governing organs and, as it were, the seats and abodes of thought and life: their nature is that of the divine reason and he declared them sacred (*Vit. Pyth.* 109, trans G. Clark (ed.) *Iamblichus: On the Pythagorean Life*, Liverpool 1989, 48).

⁴⁶ Richardson 1975: 75.

⁴⁷ See also schol. bT *Il.* 10.419–20c *ex.*

Reading through these notes the Homeric text emerges as the origin of many ideas, myths and sayings. One might argue that many of the comments cited could be seen as general notes of literary dependence, which could be found in any commentary of an ancient author, where the critics “either argue that the passage depends on another text or *vice versa*” and are engaged in a form of *Quellenkritik* dealing mainly with questions of chronology.⁴⁸ But as we have seen, the wide range of re-scripturized traditions in the Homeric commentaries, and the fact that many of these traditions seem to be quite independent of Homer, clearly suggests an underlying motivation or ideology on the part of Homeric scholars to reaffirm the primacy of their central text. The accumulation of these examples points to a general (and not surprising) assumption held by the ancient critics that later poets, philosophers, law-givers and many others were directly influenced by a close reading of Homer and that their ideas can be traced to a single verse. This denotes concrete influence, not merely vague inspiration. By re-scripturizing these traditions Homeric scholars portray the later authors as close readers of Homeric text, very much in the image of the scholars themselves.

RE-SCRIPTURIZING IN THE HALAKHIC MIDRASHIM

We may turn now to the halakhic midrashim, compiled around the first half of the 3rd century C.E., which are edited as a running commentary on the Scripture. These are highly stylised midrashim, where the impact of the editor or editors is all-pervasive. The Rabbinic editor, unlike his Second Temple predecessor, is, in Fraade’s words, ‘a collector and subtle shaper of received *traditions* who creates a commentary out of such traditions by configuring them not only in relation to the atomised texts [...] but also in relation to one another’.⁴⁹ One such configuration is designating dependence using, among others, formulas containing *מכאן*;⁵⁰ especially *מכאן אמר רבי פלוני*;⁵¹ *מכאן*,⁵² ‘from here a certain Rabbi would say’,

⁴⁸ Nünlist 2009: 158. The *Quellenkritik* is more common in the Aristarchean comments of dependence. But see also idem: 14 and 16 where he refers to the ancient critics’ “conviction that poets—Homer in particular—are the source of wisdom in every conceivable form.”

⁴⁹ Fraade 1991: 17.

⁵⁰ I cannot discuss here other similar (yet not identical) introductory formulas such as *מכאן*; *מכאן אתה אומר*; *מכאן אתה למד*; *אמר*.

⁵¹ In the Babylonian Talmud this formula always appears as *פלוני ר' אמר*.

⁵² *מכאן* itself refers hundreds of times in the halakhic midrashim to the verse under discussion. See Elias 2007: 90 and Bacher 1899: 76–77. This could be compared to the similar use of *ῥῶν* in the scholia.

which appears dozens of times, and the much more common **מכאן אמרו** ⁵³ ‘from here they [i.e. the sages] said’, which occurs hundreds of times in the halakhic midrashim of both the schools of R. Akiva and R. Yishmael.⁵⁴ These are clearly *editorial* formulas representing *editorial* practices.⁵⁵ The re-scripturized traditions may be linked directly to a verse, or the editor may first supply a short exegetical midrash or paraphrase which highlights the particular understanding of the verse that triggered the tradition. In the latter case the term **מכאן** would mean “from this verse, as understood in this particular way”.⁵⁶

Due to the clear differences between Greek and rabbinic literature we do not find any direct parallels in the halakhic midrashim to such notes as those pointing out philosophical, mythological or literary dependence, which abound in the scholia. Nonetheless, as in scholia, these formulas are used to ‘return’ to a verse various sayings of the sages containing ethical maxims, proverbs and, since the halakhic midrashim deal mainly with halakha, legal issues.⁵⁷ As we shall see, both formulas, and especially **מכאן אמרו**, often connect the fixed laws of the Mishna or, less often, other edited texts (such as Braitot and Tosefta) with their scriptural sources. These instances represent a more systematic and ideological effort to re-scripturize than is to be found in the scholia.

⁵³ For the variations **מיכן-מכאן** see Epstein 2000.2: 1236–7; Kutcher 1976: 455; for a few instances where the Geniza fragments of the *Mekh. d. R. Yishmael* have **אמרו** and **פלוני** **אומר** whereas the other mss. have **מכאן אמרו** and **פלוני אומר** see Elias 1997: 75–76.

⁵⁴ 351 times according to Elias 2007: 108 who also supplies a breakdown according to the different midrashim. Beside the halakhic midrashim, this term appears a handful of times in the *Mishna* and the *Tosefta*, there it usually introduces a proverb or a known halakha (Elias 2007: 108 no. 344). Unlike the relative fluidity of the formula in scholia, in rabbinic literature these formulas are fixed and clearly function as technical terms.

⁵⁵ For a rare case where **מכאן אמרו** is used by a named sage (and not the editor) see *Mekh. d. R. Yishmael*, Bahodesh, 3 (Horovitz-Rabin 213).

⁵⁶ Cf. Bacher 1899: 76: “Ueberaus häufig ist die Formel **מכאן אמרו**—“von hier”—d. h. auf Grund dieser Bibelstelle und ihrer Auslegung—“haben sie—nämlich die Weisen, die Gesetzeslehrer—gesagt”. In some cases where a long midrash is cited it is quite possible that **מכאן** refers only to the midrash and not to the verse. That is, the midrash itself is seen as the source of the tradition or halakha.

⁵⁷ As Fraade 1991: 15 remarks in a similar context: “a parable, story, saying, or rule may be adduced in relation to the interpretation of a verse of Scripture without it being clear how what has been added fits or contributes to the exegetical context”.

Dependence of Ethical Maxims

Quite often ethical teachings of a sage or sages are linked to a certain biblical verse. So, for example, we find the following maxim in the *Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael*:

"וגר לא תונה ולא תלחצנו כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים" (שמ' כב 20) [...]
מכאן היה רבי נתן אומר: מום שבך אל תאמר לחבירך.

"You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Ex. 22, 20) [...] from here R. Nathan would say: Do not label your fellow with you own fault. (*Mekh. d. R. Yishmael*, Neziqim 18 [Horowitz-Rabin 311])

The editor of the midrash links a general ethical teaching by R. Nathan to a verse from Exodus. R. Nathan's saying seems to be self-standing and was not necessarily derived from this verse. However, the fact that both the verse and the saying deal with similar ethical issues is enough for the editor to note the dependence.

Another example of a re-scripturizing of an ethical maxim, this time using *מכאן אמרו*, can be found in the *Sifra* commenting on Lev. 25:37–38 ("You shall not give him [i.e. your brother] your silver at interest, nor give your food for gain. I am the Lord your God"):

"ובמרבית לא תתן אכלך אני ה'", מכאן אמרו: כל המקבל עליו עול ריבית
מקבל עול שמים, וכל הפורק ממנו עול ריבית פורק ממנו עול שמים.

"... nor give your food for gain. I am the Lord": from here they said: Whoever accepts upon himself the yoke of not taking interest accepts upon himself the yoke of Heaven. And whoever removes from himself the yoke of not taking interest removes from himself the yoke of Heaven.⁵⁸ (*Sifra b'Har*, parasha 5:5 [Weiss 109c])

According to the *Sifra*, reading the beginning of verse 38 ("I am the Lord your God") as a direct continuation of verse 37 triggered the ethical maxim that equates avoiding loaning with interest to receiving the yoke of Heaven.

A large number of ethical maxims introduced by *מכאן* are to be found in the aggadic material of both the Mekhiltot. This has led Menachem Kahana to suggest that the editors of the aggadic material had used a compilation of ethical sayings (a kind of *Derekh Eretz* tractate) and occasionally integrated some of these sayings according to the order of

⁵⁸ Trans. Neusner 1988.3: 330.

the verses.⁵⁹ One such example can be found in the following midrash, which appears in the *Mekhiltot* of both schools, where the verse describing the meeting of Moses and his father-in-law Jethro is seen as the source of an ethical ruling:

"ווישתחו וישק לו וישאלו איש לרעהו לשלום", אין אנו יודעין מי נשתחוה למי ומי נישק למי, מי שמענו שקרוי 'איש'? לא משה? כענין שנ' "והאיש משה עניו מאד" (במ' יב 3) הא לא נשתחוה ולא נישק אלא משה ליתרו. מיכאן אמרו⁶⁰: לעולם יהא אדם נוהג כבוד בחמיו.

"He bowed low and kissed him. Each man asked after the other's welfare". We do not know who bowed down to whom and who kissed whom. Who have we heard to have been called "man"? [is it] not Moses (following Ex. 18:7)? As it is said, "And the man Moses was very humble" (Num. 12:3). Thus it was none other than Moses who bowed and kissed Jethro. From here they said: "One should always behave honorably toward his father-in-law"⁶¹ (*Mekh. d. R. Shimon bar Yohai* 18:6 [Epstein-Melamed 130])

The ethical maxim that one should always behave respectfully to his father-in-law is derived, according to the editor, from the verse based on the understanding that it is Moses (referred to as "man") who bowed and kissed Jethro. However, in this case the maxim seems quite independent of the verse and hence the exegetical effort is quite elaborate.

Dependence of a Proverb

In some cases a proverb cited by a certain sage is linked to a verse. The proverbs may be seen either as derived from this verse or as an exegetical comment on the verse. An interesting example is an Aramaic proverb

⁵⁹ Kahana 1999: 298–299 esp. no. 46 where other examples from the *Mekhiltot* are cited. For further examples from the halakhic midrashim see e.g.: *Mekh. d.R. Yishmael*, Va-Yehi, Ptichta, (Rabin-Horovitz 76, and parallels); Ba-Hodesh, 11 (244 and parallels); *Sifre Num.* 59 (Horovitz, 57); *Sifre Zuta Num.* 11,12 (Horovitz, 277); *Sifre Deut.* 29 (Finkelstein, 47); 33 (Finkelstein, 59); *Sifre Deut.* 96 (Finkelstein 157, cf. t.Baba Kama 9:30, where R. Gamliel himself cites the verse. However, as Finkelstein *ad loc.* remarks, this maxim is already attested in the *Testament of Zevulun* 8:3 and hence was probably a known proverb and not directly dependent on the cited verse).

⁶⁰ In the *Mekh. d. R. Yishmael*, Amalek, 3 (Horovitz 193) the Oxford and Munich mss. have *מיכין למדנו* (from here we have learnt)—another introductory formula for designating dependence. It is important to notice that this section in the *Mekh. d. R. Shimon bar Yohai* is only preserved in the *Midrash ha-Gadol*, and hence the terminology might not be exact. Nonetheless, it seems clear that some kind of formula containing *מיכין* was used.

⁶¹ Trans. W. D. Nelson, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai*, Philadelphia 2006, p. 200 [with minor changes].

cited by R. Yoshaya which is linked to the Biblical verse describing the people of Israel complaining to Moses:

"להמית אתי ואת בני ואת מקני" מיכאן היה ר' יאשיה אומ': נפל ביתא חבל לכותא.

"[Why did you bring us out of Egypt,] to kill us and our sons and our livestock [with thirst?]" (Ex. 17, 3)—From here R. Yoshaya would say: The house fell, woe for the windows! (*Mekh. d. R. Shimon bar Yohai*, 17:3 [ed. Epstein-Melamed 117])⁶²

According to the editor R. Yoshaya's cited proverb illuminates a certain understanding of this verse: The multiple complaints of the people of Israel resemble those of a person who laments the loss of the windows when the entire house has collapsed, since what use is their livestock to them if they themselves die of thirst? It is possible that the editor claims that this proverb (which was probably a known folk proverb) is derived from this verse. However, it seems more likely that R. Yoshaya's citation of the proverb is to be understood, according to the editor, as an exegetical comment hinging on this verse.

Similarly, a proverb cited by R. Yishmael is seen as an exegetical comment on Deut. 3:26 where God refuses Moses' entreaty to be allowed to enter the land of Israel:

ויאמר ה' רב לך" א' לו: משה, בדבר הזה רב לך, שאין מניחין את הצדיק לבוא לידי עבירה חמורה. מיכן היה ר' ישמעאל <אומר: משל הדיוט>⁶³ לפום גמלא שיחנא.

"And the Lord said to me: Enough for you!" (Deut. 3, 26)—He said to him: Moses, concerning this thing it is enough for you. Since one does not let the righteous come to a grave transgression. From here R. Yishmael would say: A folk proverb says: 'According to the camel—the load.' (*Sifre Num.* 135 [ed. Horovitz 181])

The editor first supplies an elaboration of God's reply to Moses, which facilitates the link to R. Yishmael's proverb. According to this midrash, R. Yishmael suggested that just as the weight to be loaded onto a camel should be determined for each camel individually, so God, restrains Moses, knowing his limits, so that he might no further transgress. It is possible that R. Yishmael quoted this proverb in a different context,⁶⁴ since the

⁶² Cf. *Mekh. d. R. Yishmael*, Vayisa 7 (Horovitz 174).

⁶³ These words do not appear in ms. Vatican 32.

⁶⁴ For further examples of exegetical comments see, e.g.: *Mekh. d. R. Yishmael, Va-Yisa*, 3 (Rabin-Horovitz, 167–8, but in *Mekh. d. R. Shim'on bar Yochai* on Ex 16:15 [Epstein-Melamed,

very same proverb, at times with its attribution to R. Yishmael, is cited elsewhere in rabbinic literature with not connection to this verse.⁶⁵ By linking an independent tradition to the verse the editor creates the exegetical moment.⁶⁶

If in the last two examples the editorial claim is not so much that the Rabbis coined these proverbs, but rather used them as exegetical illuminations of a certain verse, then it seems likely that the term 'מכאן' went through a process of grammaticalisation where the original strong meaning of 'from here' is bleached into the weaker meaning 'in this context', while preserving the general concept of dependence.⁶⁷

Legal Dependence

As one would expect, in most of their occurrences in the halakhic midrashim the formulas link the halakhic sayings of various sages to a verse. So, for example, on Leviticus 19:24 ("But in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, a praise to the Lord"), the *Sifra* comments:

"הילולים" מלמד שהוא טעון ברכה לפניו ולאחריו, מיכן היה רבי עקיבא אומר: לא יטעום אדם כלום קודם שיברך.

"A praise", this teaches that it [i.e. the fruit of the fourth year] requires the recitation of the blessing both before and after being consumed, from here

[11] the same teaching appears without (מכאן); *Va-Yisa*, 6 (Rabin-Horovitz, 175); *Sifre Zuta Num.* 6,26 (Horovitz, 248); 159 (215); 116 (133);

⁶⁵ In BR 19:1 (Theodor-Albeck 170) this proverb, also attributed to R. Yishmael, is cited in a different context. In b. Sota 13:2 it is used in a similar context and introduced by תנא דבי ר' ישמעאל (cf. *Kalla Rabbati* 2:13). In b. Ktubot 67:1 it appears as a folk proverb (דאמרין אינשי) and probably also in *ibid.* 104:1.

⁶⁶ In most cases the folk proverb (משל הדיוט) is introduced without an introductory formula and it is used in order to illuminate a verse without necessarily claiming dependence see: *Sifre Num.* 119 (Horovitz 143); *Sifre Deut.* 6 (Finkelstein, 15. However, in *Gen. Rab.* 16 [Theodor-Albeck 145] the proverb is introduced with (מיכן משל הדיוט); *Sifre Deut.* 24 (34). In the later rabbinic literature there are many examples where an exegetical effort is made in order to prove that many wide-spread folk proverbs are actually based on Scripture. For a collection of such attempts see e.g. b. Baba Kama 92a–b (מנא הא מילתא) דאמרין אינשי

In the Homeric scholiae there is a very similar use of proverbs (παροιμία) which are also connected to a verse without introductory formulas. See e.g. schol. A *Il.* 1.499b ex.: "ἄπο πολλῶν ὄρεων Ὀλύμπου: > παροιμία, „τρίς δὲ τριηκόσια κορυφαὶ νιφόντος Ὀλύμπου.“ ("Of many-ridged Olympus": Proverb: 'thrice three hundred peaks of snow-clad Olympus'). In this case the note seems to indicate that the proverb is both dependent on the verse and also illustrates it. For further examples: Schol. bT *Il.* 1.349b; T *Il.* 4.405a1; bT *Il.* 8.39a; T *Il.* 14.229a; T *Il.* 17.755b1; T *Il.* 24.192a; Schol. BEQ *Od.* 9.80; Q 14.214.

⁶⁷ I owe this insight to my colleague Sinai Rusinek. This could fit well with other exegetical comments introduced by מכאן.

R. Akiva would say: A person should taste nothing prior to reciting a blessing. (*Sifra* Kedoshim, parasha 3:5 [90b])⁶⁸

From the word הלולים, understood as derived from הלל, praise, the editor notes that one should say a blessing before and after eating a fruit of the fourth year. According to the editor, based on this specific case study, R. Akiva derived his more general teaching that one should always say a blessing before eating *anything*. This connection is quite tenuous and highlights the effort of the editor.

Similarly in Ex. 12:3 God orders Moses and Aaron to “Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household”. On this verse the *Mekhilta* comments:

“ויקחו להם”. וכי כלן היו לוקחין? אלא לעשות שלוחו של אדם כמותו. מכאן אמרו: שלוחו של אדם כמותו.

“They shall take to themselves”: Did all of them actually take? Rather [this verse’s meaning is] to make an agent of a man as the man himself. From here they said: A man’s agent is like the man himself.⁶⁹ (*Mekh. d. R. Yishmael*, Pisha 3 [Horovitz-Rabin 11])

The editor locates the origin of this general legal maxim in this verse using midrashic mediation. Since it is not possible that the Scripture means that everyone should take a lamb, it is clear that the agent of a person is like the person himself. E. Z. Melamed had argued that מכאן אמרו refers here to a direct citation of the *Mishna Berakhot* 5:5:⁷⁰

המתפלל וטעה סימן רע לו ואם שליח צבור הוא סימן רע לשולחיו מפני ששלוחו של אדם כמותו.

He who prays and errs—it is a bad omen for him, and if he is an agent of the congregation [i.e. the precentor] it is a bad omen to those who appointed him because a man’s agent is like the man himself.

Nonetheless, it seems clear that the *Mishna* itself is quoting a well-known maxim which existed independently,⁷¹ and which many sages tried to re-scripturize in various ways.⁷²

⁶⁸ Trans. Neusner 1988.3: 120.

⁶⁹ Trans. Lauterbach 1933–5.1: 25.

⁷⁰ Melamed 1967: 106

⁷¹ See Ginzburg 1960: 70; Yadin 2006: 39 and no. 15 for further examples.

⁷² Cf. *Mekh. d. R. Yishmael*, Pisha, 5 (Horovitz-Rabin 17); *Sifre Num.* 152 (Horovitz 203); 154 (205–6); *Sifre Zuta Num.* 14 (Horovitz 279) and parallels.

Dependence of the Mishna and Other Edited Texts

As noted above, most occurrences of **מכאן אמרו**, and less often **מכאן** **היה ר' אומר**, function as a more specific technical term for designating the dependence on Scripture of an edited text, most often the Mishna.⁷³ There is an important distinction between the school of R. Akiva and the Yishmaelian collections, as Menachem Kahana concludes: ‘The Akivan works make frequent use of the extant Mishna, often seek to link it with the verses and their interpretation, and generally cite it verbatim’.⁷⁴ In the Yishmaelian school, on the other hand, the term **מכאן אמרו** is not as common, at times it cites other edited texts (the ‘Mishna of R. Yishmael’?), and when the Mishna is quoted it is usually done by way of paraphrase or abbreviation.⁷⁵ It has been suggested that some of the **מכאן אמרו** passages, especially in the halakhic midrashim of the Yishmaelian School, are later interpolations.⁷⁶ This specific use of **מכאן אמרו**, as a citation of a particular text, has no direct parallel in Homeric scholia.⁷⁷

⁷³ Already Bacher 1899: 76 has remarked: “Mit dieser Formel werden normirte Halachasätze, die zum grossen Theile in der Mischna oder in den Baraithen ihre Stelle gefunden haben, auf ihre biblische und exegetische Grundlage zurückgeführt.” For a full list of all the occurrences of **מכאן אמרו** and **מכאן היה ר' אומר** as quotations of the *Mishna* and *Tosefta* (although at times farfetched) see Melamed 1967. See also Epstein 2000: 2.728–748; Halivni 1986: 61 and nos. 48–50; Kahana 2006: 55–57; Elias 2007: 108.

⁷⁴ Kahana 2006: 58.

⁷⁵ See Yadin 2006: 39 who argues for the priority of the Midrash over the Halakha in the Yishmaelian school and in such instances when a mishna is quoted, “*mikan 'amru* affirms the priority of midrash not of *halakha*: an interpretive argument has been made and from this—from *this midrashic argument*—they say what they say in the Mishnah.” This may be true in some instances, yet this statement is too overreaching. It seems clear that in many instances (barring late interpolations) the midrash is phrased in such a manner as to facilitate the link between tradition and verse.

⁷⁶ See Epstein 2000: 747–748. Kahana 1987: 72–73. According to Halivni, who argues that the school of R. Yishmael did not accept the *Mishna*, the **מכאן אמרו** passages found in the *Midrashei Halakha* of R. Yishmael are not an integral part and were most probably added later by circles close to R. Yehuda the Patriarch. See Halivni 1986: 61 and no. 48. See also Yadin 2006: 39.

⁷⁷ Another important difference from the scholia is that at times in the halakhic midrashim the cited *mishna* includes a direct quotation of the verse in question, thus making the re-scripturizing self-evident. This could be understood on the backdrop of the way the editors are re-arranging various traditions as a running commentary to the Scripture and also as part of the general rhetorical and ideological aspect of these notes, which will be discussed below. However, in the editors' eyes, there is no difference between the few cases when the verse is explicitly cited by the sages and the majority of occurrences where it is not—both are equally derived from scripture. There is no ‘weak’ dependence when using this formula.

Let us examine a couple of selected examples from the Akivan School. On Deut. 26:4 where it is stated that one should give the tithes to the stranger, orphan and widow, the *Sifre Deut.* comments:

"ואכלו ושבעו"—תן להם כדי שבעם. מיכן אמרו: אין פוחתים לעני בגורן מחצי קב חטים או קב שעורים דברי ר' יהודה. רבי אומר חצי קב.

"And they [i.e. the stranger, orphan and widow] shall eat and be satisfied": Give them enough to satisfy them. From here they said: One may not give the poor less than half a kab of wheat or one kab of barley from the threshing floor. (*Sifre Deut.* 303 [Finkelstein 321]⁷⁸)

The editor opens with a short exegetical note that the Scripture's statement that the stranger, orphan and widow "may eat and be satisfied" is to be read as a commandment concerning necessary quantity—one *must* supply them enough for them to be satisfied. Based on such an understanding a direct quotation of a passage in m.Pe'a 8:5 (cf. *Tosefta* Pe'a 4:2) is adduced to the verse.

In contrast to the previous example, where only a short extract from the Mishna is quoted, the following example is representative of the rather crude re-scripturizing common in the *Sifra*, where a large portion of the Mishna is claimed to be dependent on two words from Lev. 19:9 ("Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest"):

"ולקט קצירך"—אין לקט אלא מחמת הקציר. מיכן אמרו: היה קוצר קצר מלוא ידו תלש מלוא קומצו הכהו קוץ עקצתו עקרב ניבעת ונפל מידו על הארץ הרי שלבעל הבית. תוך היד תוך המגל לעניים אחר אחר המגל לבעל הבית. ראש היד ראש המגל, רבי ישמעאל אומר: לעניים. רבי עקיבה או': לבעל הבית.

"The gleaning of your harvest", 'Gleaning' refers only to that which falls due to the process of harvesting. From here they said: if [the householder] was harvesting, and he harvested an armful or plucked a handful, and a thorn pricked him or a scorpion stung him or he was startled [and what he held] fell from his hand to the ground, this belongs to the householder. [What falls from] within the hand or within the sickle belongs to the poor. [what falls from] the back of the hand or the sickle belongs to the householder. [what falls from] the top of the hand or the sickle, R. Yishmael says: it belongs to

⁷⁸ Trans. R. Hammer, *Sifre: A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy*, New Haven/London 1986, pp. 157–158. Cf. *Sifre* Deut. 110 (Finkelstein 171).

the poor. R. Akiva says: to the householder (*Sifra* Qedoshim, pereq 2 [Weiss 87d; based on ms. Vatican 66])

From the juxtaposition of gleaning and harvest in the verse the midrash learns that gleaning refers only to what falls due to the harvest. Based on this understanding, the *Sifra* quotes almost the whole of Mishna Pe'a 4:10 (with minor differences). The Mishna itself opens with short statement (not cited by the *Sifra*): "What counts as 'Gleanings'? Whatsoever drops down during the harvest." The *Sifra* seems to have paraphrased this opening statement and turned it into an exegetical comment which helps to link the verse to the rest of the Mishna.

These examples of *אמרו מכתאן* represent a different level of re-scripturizing. Shlomo Naeh has very aptly labeled this an *ideological bibliographical note*.⁷⁹ This is because the editors' main goal is not only to prove the dependence of a particular saying of a sage, but rather to supply a constant reminder to the reader of the scriptural dependence of the entire Mishna (or other edited texts), exactly as redacted by R. Yehuda the Patriarch and others.⁸⁰ This type of re-scripturizing subordinates the "oral" law to the written one, and by doing so confers authority on the rabbinic traditions.

The editorial re-scripturizing which we analysed in this section constitutes a final stage in the general motivation of the halakhic midrashim which are, as Kahana puts it, "primarily concerned with demonstrating the close connection between the tannaic halakha and the Bible".⁸¹ That is, re-scripturizing the oral or written traditions and halakhot handed down to the Rabbis, or formulated by them. To be sure, some of these traditions did indeed originate in the Scripture, but they were not necessarily handed down with the exact reference. Moreover, there are probably many extra-biblical halakhot, which did not stem directly from the Scripture, and which demand a much more innovative exegetical effort. Thus many of the midrashim try to reconstruct an exegetical procedure using various hermeneutical methods, some of which were only introduced many years

⁷⁹ Private correspondence.

⁸⁰ Cf. Fraade's (2006b: 45) insightful comment: "Traditions are never communicated or engaged by their tradents apart from ideologically freighted and socially formative rhetorical embodiments. The medium may not alone be the message, but it certainly contributes mightily to it".

⁸¹ Kahana 2006: 55. For a discussion on the uniting of the oral and written law in the *Sifra* see Neusner 1990.

after these traditions were first formulated.⁸² Nonetheless, from the point of view of the Rabbis and the rabbinic editors, they are merely re-scripturizing: returning these traditions to their presumed original source.

On the backdrop of such a general effort to re-scripturize, the editorial bibliographical formulas of *מכאן אמרו* and *מכאן היה ר' פלוני אומר* emerge as a more forceful technique for directly and explicitly designating the scriptural dependence of the rabbinic traditions.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, both Homeric scholars and editors of the midrashim were engaged in re-scripturizing using a very similar formula⁸³ to link various traditions or direct quotations of later authors to a specific verse in their central Scripture. At times in order to demonstrate this dependence, the rabbinic editor and the Homeric critic attribute explicitly or implicitly to the later authors a certain reading of the verse, whether by paraphrasing it or by adding an exegetical comment.

The fact that many of the traditions re-scripturized by the critics and rabbis seem to be independent of the central Scripture indicates that these notes are not 'neutral,' but rather a product of the commentators' motivation and perhaps even ideology in their efforts to return the traditions to their source. It seems that the definition *ideological bibliographical note* may indeed suit not only the rabbinic commentaries, but also some Homeric ones too.

One should bear in mind that re-scripturizing plays a relatively minor role in the scholia and it could at times, especially in the Aristarchean notes, be seen as part of a larger project of *Quellenkritik*. In the rabbinic

⁸² For the approach that favours the priority of halakha over midrash see Epstein 1957: 511. Halivini 1986, on the other hand, views the midrash as the earlier mode of authority. But even Halivni concedes that "Rarely do we know the full circumstances prevailing at the time when a reason became attached to a fixed law. However, when the Tannaim disagree as to the reason for an early law, we assume that the law reached them without a reason" (ibid.: 57). For a short survey on the relation between halakha and midrash cf. Kahana 2006: 7–8 and nos. 19–20; see also Yadin 2004: 167–8 and 2006 who distinguishes between the school of R. Yishmael, which accords absolute priority to the Scripture and marginalise the role of extra-scriptural tradition, and the Akivan school, which strives to link existing halakhot with biblical verses (cf. Urbach 1958).

⁸³ Strictly speaking the formula in the scholia is not a technical term, contrary to the rabbinic halakhic midrashim, which are extremely fond of technical terms. As I hope to show elsewhere quite a few rather loose formulas in the Homeric commentaries are crystallised and turned into technical terms in the rabbinic literature.

midrashim, on the other hand, re-scripturizing is more dominant and the editorial efforts are clearly more technical, consistent and ideological. Moreover, the effort to re-scripturize the various halakhot, especially in the case of *מכאן אמרו*, is meant not only to highlight the centrality of the Scripture, but also to confer authority on the rabbinic traditions themselves, whereas in the Homeric commentaries re-scripturizing is used at times as a way of undermining and criticising the later authors.

It also should be noted that while the ancient critics re-scripturize diverse traditions from various genres spanning the entire Greek literature, the rabbinic editors re-scripturize only their own rabbinic predecessors, themselves biblical scholars, as part of a larger project of consolidating the rabbinic interpretive community.⁸⁴

With these important reservations in mind, the similarities do seem to indicate that the appearance in rabbinic literature of both the formula and the editorial interest in dependence should be seen not only as an inner development in post-destruction rabbinic circles⁸⁵ but also on the backdrop of the intellectual context of their time. The Rabbis did not have to ‘embark for Alexandria’⁸⁶ in order to get acquainted with such contemporary scholarly practices and formulas, which they incorporated while simultaneously molding, reshaping and adapting them to their own particular goals and interests. In other words, the practice of re-scripturizing may have been part of a broader scholarly context, but the way in which it was developed and employed is clearly innate to rabbinic culture. Some of these developments are distinctly rabbinic and have no parallel in the Homeric commentaries.

⁸⁴ As Fraade 1998: 75 notes “Cultural history requires us to take seriously the forms by which a culture transmits its knowledge, and thereby shapes its members’ competencies and self-conceptions”. See also Fraade 1991: 18–20.

⁸⁵ See Fraade 2006b: 63–64 who argues against the approach that the differences between Qumran and rabbinic literature are only a product of time and that the Rabbis ‘represent an evolutionary progression from their Qumran antecedents’ (cf. Kister 1998). For a short survey of some of the factors that induced the formation of the tannaic midrashim see Kahana 2006:11.

⁸⁶ To quote Lieberman’s famous statement: “The early Jewish interpreters did not have to embark for Alexandria in order to learn there the rudimentary methods of linguistic research” (Lieberman 1950: 53). Lieberman was notoriously cautious and although he pointed to the direct influence of Greek rhetors on the rabbinic terminology, he argued that the methods themselves were the creation of the Rabbis. For further discussion of Lieberman’s approach see Visotzky 2006: 122–126 and Yair Furstenberg’s contribution to this volume.

Once again it is important to emphasise that the appearance of such scholarly notes and features in the rabbinic literature mark a drastic change from compositional practices of the Second Temple writers. One may say, in a somewhat simplified manner, that in order to incorporate various traditions, both of the Oral Lore and Law, the rabbinic editors of the halakhic midrashim did not wish to compose a *re-written Bible* but rather to compile *re-scripturized traditions*. The comparison to the Greek scholarship of the time may help us to further understand this scholarly turn of rabbinic literature.

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THE AGON WITH MOSES AND HOMER:
RABBINIC MIDRASH AND THE SECOND SOPHISTIC

Yair Furstenberg

RHETORICAL EDUCATION AND EARLY MIDRASH

Was rabbinic midrash, which originated in Palestine during the period of the Roman Empire, related in any way to Graeco-Roman scholarship? Can this intellectual context illuminate the peculiarities of rabbinic exegetical activity, or should it be understood only on its own terms? For half a century now, the most prominent of all scholarly discussions regarding these questions has been Saul Lieberman's influential essay, "Rabbinic Interpretation of Scripture".¹ Scholars have repeatedly referred to similarities Lieberman mentions between midrash and Hellenistic modes of interpretation, which seem to prove the Hellenistic background of midrash,² but in fact little has been constructed on this foundation. A direct borrowing of specific hermeneutical methods from the Graeco-Roman context is still questionable and the distinct features of early rabbinic midrash have not been elucidated by such comparison. Whereas narrative *aggadah* has been persuasively associated with contemporary genres,³ tannaitic midrash still seems on the whole *sui generis*. Indeed, this early midrash, known also as

¹ Lieberman 1950: 47–67. It was reprinted in: *Essays in Graeco-Roman and Related Talmudic Literature*, with a prolegomenon by Henry Fischel (Fischel 1977: 289–310).

² E.g., *inter alia*, Alexander 1990: 101–124; Levine 1998: 113–116. Visotzky 2006: 111–131. Towner 1982: 107–109 sees the existence of explicit interpretive methods in the Greek-speaking world as contributing to the appearance of rabbinic hermeneutics. Others minimise the influence of Hellenism in Palestine, in general, and on rabbinic circles in particular. See Feldman 1986: 107.

³ The comparison of *aggadah* to contemporary genres is instructive on all levels. Very much to the point are Fischel's essays on the *chreia*, and especially his work on the Hillel stories in light of the "cynicising *chreia*" (Fischel 1969). Stern and Levinson demonstrate the influence of the Greek Novel on *aggadah* (Levinson 1996; Stern 1998). The importance of the Graeco-Roman context for understanding the compilation of a complete midrash, such as *Va'yikra Rabba*, is discussed by Visotzky 2003. Scholars have also noted the affinity between Homeric scholarship and criticism and the innovative nature of *aggadah* (Kamesar 1994: 55–61; Kim 2008: 620). Finally, Kovelman claims that the rise of aggadic literature followed the Hellenistic move from the epic through Alexandrian exegesis to the serio-comic. 'In shattering the naiveté of the epic, Alexandrians paved the way for irony and laughter' (Kovelman 2004: 135).

'halakhic (legal) midrash' (second-third centuries C.E.), which characteristically manipulates and misinterprets Scripture⁴ does not seem to fit the commonalities of Graeco-Roman literary activity. In this essay I revisit the possibilities presented by Lieberman's argument and suggest a possible understanding of the midrashic project in light of some familiar intellectual trends of the Roman East.

In the first part of his essay, Lieberman discusses the similar traits of ancient Jewish midrash and the literary activity of the Alexandrian grammarians. He mentions *zetemata*, which include inquiries such as 'why' questions (*dia ti*, מַדּוּנֵי מַה), and *hermeneia*, translation and interpretation. However, as Lieberman himself admits, "The early Jewish interpreters of Scripture did not have to embark for Alexandria in order to learn there the rudimentary methods of linguistic research".⁵ Thus, in the following section he discusses the kind of problem for which the Rabbis most probably sought a solution in foreign sources. As legal authorities they were mainly concerned to develop tools for extrapolating new legal issues from the biblical text. Consequently, they turned away from the pure role of the grammarians and assumed the role of advocates and rhetors.⁶ It is not surprising, therefore, that Lieberman finds the most striking parallel to the rabbinic norms of interpretation (*middot*), attributed to Hillel the Elder and to R. Ishmael, not in the grammatical literature, but in the rhetorical handbooks and exercises, known as *progymnasmata*.⁷

⁴ Daube 1961 introduces the term misinterpretation to describe both Roman jurisprudence and rabbinic exegesis, following Hillel the elder. Thus he writes, "It will not surprise that a very great deal of rabbinic exegesis under this regime was of the type exemplified at Rome by emancipation, the twisting of a penal provision of the XII Tables into an authorization of a new institution. That is to say, it was neither literal nor liberal interpretation of the texts, but misinterpretation".

⁵ Lieberman 1950: 53. In the last part of the essay (pp. 64–68) Lieberman returns to the Alexandrian *zetemata*, and to similar solutions found also in midrash, such as inversion (סרס). This tool was discussed also by Daube 1953, who claimed to find in this case a terminological borrowing from Alexandria.

⁶ This claim is greatly developed in two of Daube's articles on this topic (Daube 1949; Daube 1961). In the first article Daube focuses on Hillel's revolutionary theory regarding the relation between statute law, tradition and interpretation. In contrast to both Pharisaic and Sadducean views, Hillel claimed that Scripture itself included the tradition of the fathers. By applying a series of rational norms of exegesis, which Daube compares to Hellenistic rhetoric, traditional views were vindicated (p. 245). Following the accepted rhetorical theory, Hillel claimed that any gaps in scriptural law might be filled in with the help of certain modes of reasoning. In his second essay, Daube introduces the more extreme concept of 'misinterpretation', mentioned above (n. 4).

⁷ For a helpful collection and translation of several of these *progymnasmata* see Kennedy 2003.

According to Lieberman, the widespread rabbinic exegetical rule of *gzera shawa*, analogy, is a literal translation of the Greek term *sunkrisis pros ison*, a comparison with the equal. This term served to infer from legal precedence to specific court cases. The *sunkrisis* was the most popular tool in the rhetorical handbooks, and it developed the advocate's ability to utilise precedents in each concrete case. Lieberman is careful not to claim that the method itself was borrowed from the Greeks. However, as the Rabbis organised their hermeneutical rules into a structured system, they borrowed the Greek rhetorical term at hand.⁸ Thus, it is claimed that Hellenistic rhetorical literature gave rise to the terminological crystallisation of rabbinic hermeneutics. Both systems were concerned with generating new cases and legal questions from relatively limited sources, as Lieberman concludes:

The Rabbis were often confronted with the same problems as the Greek rhetors. The former sought to derive new laws from the Torah or to find support for old ones which were rooted in oral tradition. They were aware that in certain cases their interpretation is not borne out by the actual meaning of Scripture. In their schools the Greek rhetors taught the art of twisting the law according to the required aim and purpose . . . They (=the Jews) would certainly not hesitate to borrow from them (=the Greeks) methods and systems which they could convert into a mechanism for the clarification and definition of their own teachings.⁹

Forensic rhetoric supplied the terminological tools for rabbinic interpreters who were busy twisting the original meaning of Scripture. However, such a description of the relationship between Hellenistic rhetoric and rabbinic interpretation is unsatisfactory.¹⁰ After all, if the exegetical tools were genuinely rabbinic and only the terminology was borrowed, no essential correspondence between the rabbinic hermeneutical system and Greek rhetoric can be claimed. The two systems only share a most general interest, common to all jurists, to manipulate the words of the law, and which grows out of the intrinsic needs of each of the legal systems.

⁸ Lieberman suggests that the creation of an organised system of hermeneutical rules, unknown from earlier Jewish sources, is in itself of Greek origins: 'But it was the Greeks who systematized, defined and gave definite form to the shapeless mass of interpretation' (p. 62)

⁹ Lieberman 1950: 62–63.

¹⁰ For example, although Philip Alexander compares Homeric interpretation and rabbinic exegesis systematically, he specifically rejects Lieberman's line of argument, claiming there is little linguistic overlap between the technical terms used by the Greek scholars and those used by the Rabbis (Alexander 1998: 138).

In addition, as Burton Visotzky has claimed, “There is a distinct difference between arguing in court to persuade a judge or audience, on the one hand, and interpreting Scripture for the derivation of rabbinic law, on the other hand”.¹¹ It is not surprising, therefore, that Lieberman’s limited analogy was not further developed by other scholars, since it could not draw rabbinic hermeneutics and Greek rhetoric together to the same field.

However, once scholarship has established a terminological affinity of rabbinical hermeneutics and rhetorical practice, we are in a better position to assess the analogous nature of the textual engagement in both scholastic cultures. I claim that a closer look into Graeco-Roman rhetorical education is indispensable to evaluating rabbinic exegetical activity which developed during the first two centuries C.E. Only within this environment can we explain the rise of a new textual approach which was previously unattainable to interpreters of Scripture and which cannot be ascribed to inner-developments within Jewish culture.

Undeniably, the *progymnasmata*, exercises in rhetoric, not only made it easier to twist the meaning of the law through force of persuasion, but paved the way to a distinct stance in relation to canonical literature.¹² We can best recognise this stance as it was acquired during the course of an individual’s textual education. In her comprehensive portrayal of the educational system in Egypt under the Empire, Raffaella Criore describes the move from the study of grammar to that of rhetoric: “The literary texts of the past were appropriated ever more intensively, but they were also transcended and seen in new perspectives, as students sought to force their way in with their exercises and vie with the originals”.¹³ In preparation for the fully-fledged declamation, in which the speaker was expected to advise or to accuse an historical figure as though he were standing trial, the students of rhetoric developed the skill of modifying

¹¹ Visotzky 2003: 122.

¹² For the present, the adjective ‘canonical’ denotes *formative* texts, which provide society with a shared vocabulary and a literary frame of reference. This kind of formative canon stands in contrast, according to Halbertal, to both normative canons, that are obeyed and followed, and exemplary canons, which are models for imitation (Halbertal 1997: 3). Notably, in the Hellenistic and Roman world standard and basically stable reading lists were fixed for rhetoric education, and they served as models for imitation. For discussion of these lists, such as mentioned by Quintilian in book 10 of his *Institutio Oratoria*, see Vardi 2003.

¹³ Criore 2001: 225. Similarly, in reference to the stages of rhetorical education, Teresa Morgan has insightfully commented that: “this tells us something about the way the literary texts were viewed. They oscillated between two statuses: that of a particular version and that of a tool which could be used and altered” (Morgan 1998: 224).

basic literary units. They first learned the art of simple paraphrasing, later they exercised various methods of textual elaboration, and finally they took pride in refuting its content.¹⁴ Thus, through a series of exercises the orators-to-be were granted the ability to put forward an alternative story, and a more suggestive one than that which had traditionally been handed down.¹⁵

As the orator appropriated a large body of classical texts, to be exploited in his future declamations, he developed an agonistic disposition; he strove to surpass the original. This theme is common in rhetorical treatises, in which the recommendation of mimesis of previous authors is regularly supplemented by a note of rivalry. Thus Quintilian “I would not have our paraphrase to be a mere interpretation, but an effort to vie with and rival our original in the expression of the same thoughts.”¹⁶ Another expression of this textual mind-set is found in “Longinus”, *On the Sublime*, as he guides the young orator towards a loftier style.

This writer (Plato) shows us that another way (beyond anything we have mentioned) leads to the sublime. And what, and what manner of way, that may be? It is the imitation and emulation of previous great poets and writers. And let this, my dear friend, be an aim to which we steadfastly apply ourselves. . . . And it seems to me that there would not have been so fine a bloom of perfection on Plato’s philosophical doctrines unless he had with all his heart and mind struggled with Homer for the primacy, entering the lists like a young champion matched against the man whom all admire, and showing perhaps too much love of contention and breaking a lance with him, as it were, but deriving some profit contest nonetheless. For, as Hesiod says, ‘this strife is good for mortals’.¹⁷

In light of these rhetorical textual habits, I propose to approach rabbinic midrash from the perspective of the rhetorical *agon*, in which the speaker competes with the original canonical text. The literary *agon*, which was deeply rooted in rhetorical education and found various expressions

¹⁴ Rhetorical refutation of mythological narrative (*anaskeua*) is discussed in great detail in Theon’s treatise 93–96 (Kennedy 2003: 40–42). A complete example of a refutation declamation can be found in Libanius’s *progymnasmata* (Libanius 2008: 108–113). At the same time, the most popular rhetorical exercises found in papyri were those of impersonation and praise, whereas *anaskeuai* have not been preserved (Cribiore 2001: 228).

¹⁵ The role of this rhetorical education and environment in the development of the aggadic midrash is discussed by Levinson 2005: 19–27.

¹⁶ Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 10.5.4. For additional sources on the rivalry of rhetors with poetry see North 1952: 13.

¹⁷ “Longinus”, *On the Sublime* 13. The *agon* in “Longinus’ theory of the sublime is discussed lengthily by Too 1998: 214–216.

No other Talmudic source presents with such clarity the tension between Moses, the receiver of the Torah, and the Rabbis. Moses completely fails to understand the discussion taking place in the classroom. He is seated in the last row, greatly distressed. He is only comforted when he finds out that the law is still attributed to him. This rich scene is only one part of a more complex narrative leading to the martyrdom of Akiba, the hero of the Talmudic culture, and as such it has received much attention and several analyses. On the whole, it was understood to represent the inherent tension between divine revelation, embodied in the figure of Moses, and human interpretation, brought to new heights by Akiba.²⁰ As has been pointed out, much of the narrative is dedicated, explicitly and implicitly, to the glorification of Akiba, who shares with God authority over Torah, and he is comparable to the Son of God, whose death appeases God.²¹ At the same time, I would argue that the figure of Moses in this story is representative of a more general attitude in rabbinic literature. Although this story, as it stands in the Talmud, is a Babylonian creation, the depiction of Moses follows earlier traditions and is strongly rooted in earlier tannaitic sources. It may even underlie the very character of tannaitic midrash. There too Moses is depicted as an ignorant text receiver who is disqualified from participating in any interpretive activity.

According to Leviticus 10:10–11, the priests are required to: ‘distinguish between the sacred and the profane and between the unclean and the clean. And you must teach the Israelites all the laws which the Lord has imparted to them through Moses’. In these verses it is assumed that the priests teach the same laws transmitted by Moses. Surprisingly, the tannaitic midrash on Leviticus, the *Sifra*, attributes to Moses only a very specific portion of the laws:

“You are to distinguish between the sacred and the profane”: this refers to vows of valuation. “And between the unclean and the clean”: this refers to matters of uncleanness and cleanness. “And you must teach the Israelites”:

²⁰ A helpful account of traditional, modern and post-modern readings of this story relating to the question of authority and interpretation can be found in Edwards 2000. After stating that ‘If this passage can be read as an argument for continuity in the tradition, it also serves simultaneously as a radical statement of rupture’ (419), Edwards characterises the story as an expression of rabbinic anxiety over the decline of Palestinian community and the competing truth claims from other sects (428).

²¹ In her close reading of the narrative Lipton 2008 weaves in an extremely rich array of literary allusions. Not only does the narrative end with R. Akiba’s martyrdom scene, but it is adjacent to a story anticipating the death of God (or his firstborn) through misreading of the word *וַיְהִי־ג* (Exodus 13:15; Lipton 2008: 303–305).

this refers to matters of instruction (הוריות); “all the laws”: this refers to exegeses (מדרשות); “Which the Lord has imparted to them”: this refers to decrees (הלכות); “through Moses”: this refers to Scripture. Might one suppose that included also study (תלמוד), it therefore says “and to teach”. R. Yose b. Yehudah says: where do we learn of translation (תרגום), Scripture says “and to teach”.²²

This is not the only rabbinic source which lays out the different limbs of rabbinic curriculum, including Scripture, decrees and exegeses.²³ However, it is of particular interest, since it specifically ties Moses to Scripture—“through Moses”: this refers to Scripture—supposedly excluding him from other parts of the rabbinic tradition, including exegesis.²⁴ Apparently, Moses is only the source of Scripture, and is not involved in the rabbinic activity of interpretation and expounding.²⁵ The fact that Moses is responsible only for transmitting the word of Scripture, but not for methods of generating laws, can explain the curious fact that whereas various biblical figures are depicted as engaging in rabbinic-like exegetical or legal innovation, nothing of the sort is attributed to Moses himself.

²² Sifra Shemini, parash 1:9 (46d): “ובין” אלו הערכים “ובין” אלו הטהרות, “ולהרות את בני ישראל” אלו ההוריות, “את כל החקים” אלו המדרשות, “אשר דבר ה’ אליהם” אלו ההלכות, “ביד משה” זה המקרא. יכול אף התלמוד? תלמוד לומר “ולהרות”, ר’ יוסה ביר’ יהודה אומר מניין זה המקרא. “אף התרגום? תלמוד לומר “ולהרות”. This is the version of some of the best *sifra* MSS including Vatican 66. Other versions, which attribute to Moses the teaching of Talmud, seem to be influenced by the later Babylonian version (b. *Keritot* 13b). For a survey and analysis of this complex textual history see Fraade 1998.

²³ Compare Tosefta *Hagiga* 1:9: “Civil law, sacrificial cult, matters of cleanness and uncleanness etc. for them there is abundant Scripture (מקרא), exegesis (מדרש), and rulings (הלכות). They have much on which to depend”. See also, *Sifre* on Deuteronomy 317: “And he did eat of the fruitage of the field”: this refers to Scripture (מקרא), “and he made him to suck honey out of the crag”, this refers to the Mishna (משנה), “and oil out of his flinty rock”, this refers to the Talmud (תלמוד), “Curd of oxen and milk of sheep with fat of lambs”, these refers to arguments, analogies, logically proposed interpretations and refutations (קלים וחמורים וגזירות שוות ודינים ותשובות).”

²⁴ Alternatively, the difference between Moses and the Rabbis is not in the type of knowledge or the level of understanding, but in the different bodies of knowledge, which was revealed to each. Thus we read in the *Pesikta de Rav Kahana*: ‘R. Aha said, Things that were not revealed to Moses on Sinai, were revealed to R. Akiba and his friends’ (PDR”K, Para 7, Mandelbaum ed. p. 72).

²⁵ The question whether Moses taught the skill of exegesis may have been a matter of dispute: “And you shall teach them the statutes (חוקים) that is the interpretations (מדרשות); “and the laws (והתורות)”: that is the decisions (הוריות). These are the words of R. Yehoshua. R. Eleazar of Modi’im says: “statutes” means the laws against incestuous practices . . . and “the laws” means decisions (*Mekhilta de .R. Ishmael*, Amalek 4, ed. Leuterbach p. 182). Interestingly, the version in the parallel *Mekhilta de Rashbi* omits ‘interpretations’ from both views.

We find Aaron, for example, deducing a previously unknown legal instruction as a result of Miriam's leprosy, when he was expected—according to rabbinic assumptions—to examine her. “[And Aaron said to Moses:] Let her (=Miriam) not be as one dead” (Nu. 12.12)—Aaron said, I will cause loss to my sister, since I cannot shut her up, and not declare her unclean, and not declare her clean. We thus learn that Aaron decreed (דורש): a person may not examine the leprosy signs of his own relatives”.²⁶ Aaron is aware that his personal feelings preclude him from leading Miriam through the process of purification, consequently creating a new rabbinic-like ruling (*M. Negaim* 2:5). Furthermore, according to the *Sifre*, even the daughters of Zelophehad, while demanding their rights from Moses, prove their ability to expound: “Why should the name of our father be taken away from his family, because he had no son” (Nu. 27:4): why is this repeated, after it has just been mentioned “and he had no sons” (Nu. 27.3)? This teaches us that they (the daughters of Zelophehad) were wise and they expounded (דורשות) in the following manner: This means that even if he had a daughter of a son we would not demand”.²⁷ The repetition of their statement “our father had no son” is interpreted in the midrash as their own development of the basic law: if there is a son, even a descendant of the son, the daughters are not entitled to inherit.²⁸

Against this backdrop it is quite surprising that Moses, in contrast to other figures, never pursues any such activity. He might be present when others develop the laws, but he himself does not actually participate, and never is the verb דרש, expound, associated with him.²⁹ According to the *Sifre* on Deuteronomy, Moses only repeats the commandments. In reference to the verse at the head of Deuteronomy, according to which Moses started to ‘explain/clarify’ (באר, διασαφέω in the LXX) the Torah (Dt. 1:5), the midrash describes an ongoing effort of memorisation: “He (Moses) told them: My death is near. Whoever heard one verse and forgot it should come and rehearse it; one paragraph and forgot it should come and

²⁶ *Sifre* on Numbers, piska 105 (ed. Horowitz p. 103): אמר אהרן נמציתי מפסיד לאחותי: לפי דרכנו למדנו שהיה אהרן דורש: שאיני יכול לא לסוגרה ולא לטמאה ולא לטהרה. אין אדם רואה בנגעי קרוביו.

²⁷ *Sifre* on Numbers, piska 133, (ed. Horowitz p. 177): "כי אין לו בן" למה נאמר והלא "מה תלמוד לומר "כי אין לו בן"? מגיד שהיו חכמות ודורשות, הא אם היה לו בן בת לא היינו דורשות.

²⁸ Further examples: David (Sifra, B'Har, parasha 5:4 [109c]); King Menashe (*Sifre* on Numbers piska 112, ed. Horowitz p. 120).

²⁹ Moses' tent is indeed referred to as a Bet Midrash, for example, *Sifre* on Numbers piska 103 (ed. Horowitz p. 123). However, we never hear of Moses' own legal innovations.

rehearse it etc.³⁰ The midrash shifts the verse to the opposite pole, turning explanation into memorisation. This disability of Moses is most evident when confronted with a new problem, and he turns to God for help.³¹ In such cases, according to the *Sifre*, Moses is paralysed and defeated by his interlocutors who prove their ability to expound, and are praised as good *darshanim*. The above-mentioned demand of the daughters of Zelophehad is such an example. The midrashic representation of the impure people who asked Moses to participate in the Passover sacrifice is a similar case. According to the *Sifre* on Numbers, Moses and Aaron were sitting in the bet midrash when some impure people entered. The verse only spells out their basic request “Why should we be excluded from presenting the Lord’s offering (of the Passover sacrifice)” (Nu. 9:7), to which Moses immediately replies “Wait, that I may hear what the Lord will command”. In the midrash the discussion is transformed into a rabbinic-like dialogue:

He said to them: **Sacrifices are not offered in a state of impurity.**

They replied: So at least the blood should be sprinkled in behalf of the impure, and let the flesh be eaten only by those who are pure. And indeed this can be deduced logically: If the sin-offering, which is classified as holy of holies, produces blood that is sprinkled in behalf of the impure persons, while its flesh is eaten only by the pure persons, the Passover, which is on a lower degree of holiness, surely should be subject to the rule that the blood may be sprinkled in behalf of the impure, and the flesh is to be eaten by the pure.

He said to them: **Sacrifices are not offered in a state of impurity.**

They replied: If sacrifices (such as sin-offering) that are subject to replacement by the owner (in case they have been lost, for example) are to be offered (even if the owners are impure), sacrifices that are not subject to replacement by the owner (such as Passover) are not to be offered?

He said to them: I did not hear.³²

³⁰ *Sifre* on Deuteronomy, piska 4 (ed. Finkelstein, p. 13): "באר את התורה הזאת" לאמר" אמר להם כבר אני סמוך למיתה. מי ששמע פסוק אחד ושכחו יבוא וישננו, פרשה אחת ושכחה יבוא וישננה, פרק אחד ושכחו יבוא וישננו, הלכה אחת ושכחה יבוא וישננה. לכך נאמר "באר את התורה הזאת לאמר".

³¹ The three instances when Moses turns to God in preference of direct revelation, obviously pose a problem for rabbinic ideology. This is best represented in the sayings of Shimon Ha'Shikmoni, who claims that there was actually no substantial lack of knowledge and all these laws could have in truth been said by Moses. However, Moses stepped back so to teach that "one gives the benefit to one who deserves it and the obligation to one who is obligated". (*Sifre* on Numbers, piska 68, p. 63; piska 114, p. 123; piska 133, p. 177).

³² *Sifre* on Numbers, piska 68 (ed. Horowitz, p. 63): אמר להם: אין קדשים קרבים: אם לאו יזרק הדם על הטמאים והבשר יאכל לטהורים, והדין נותן בטומאה. אמרו לו: אם לאו יזרק הדם על הטמאים והבשר יאכל לטהורים הפסח ומה חטאת שהיא קדשי קדשים דמה נזרק על הטמאים ובשרה נאכל לטהורים הפסח

Strikingly, Moses is unable to handle the logical argument; he just reiterates the exact same words: 'Sacrifices are not offered in a state of impurity'. When the impure continue to a third round and establish their argument even further, Moses gives up and turns to God for a solution. Compared to parallel rabbinic dialogues, this dispute clearly proves that the impure requesters were familiar with rabbinic argumentation, and developed their claim in similar manner, whereas Moses, as he is not able to participate, is inevitably defeated.³³ All these sources share the view that Moses, as the transmitter of the text, is prevented from any further expounding of it. Therefore, alongside the tendency in rabbinic literature to attribute all the oral Torah to the Sinai event, thus awarding Moses knowledge of, or at least access to, all future innovations, we also find a clear limitation to this approach, as evident in the following source:

"These are the statutes, the ordinances and Torahs": "The statutes": these are the exegeses (מדרשות), "the ordinances": these are the laws (דינים), "and the Torahs" This teaches that two Torahs were given to Israel, one written and one oral. Said R. Akiba, "Now did Israel have only two Torahs? And did they not have many Torahs given to them? "This is the Torah of the burnt offering" (Lev. 6:2), "This is the Torah of the meal-offering" (Lev. 6:27) etc."³⁴

The sages are debating the meaning of the plural 'Torahs'. The comparatively early midrash, prior to R. Akiba, offers a solution on the basis of the doctrine of Two Torahs, which is echoed already in Second Temple literature. R. Akiba rejects this solution and points to the many torahs mentioned in Scripture. As scholars have noted, R. Akiba seems to reject the very notion that Moses received anything at Sinai beyond Scripture itself.³⁵ Since no additional Torah was given at Sinai, all other branches

שהוא קדשים קלים דין הוא שיזרק הדם על הטמאים והבשר יאכל לטהורים. אמר להם: אין קדשים קרבים בטומאה. אמרו לו: אם קדשים שיש להם אחריות יהו קרבים קדשים שאין להם אחריות לא יהו קרבים? אמר להם: לא שמעתי.

³³ Tannaitic sources include similar dialogues, in which one rabbi (e.g. Akiba or Hillel) manages to defeat his interlocutor in three rounds, exhibiting his supremacy in argumentation; for example, Tosefta *Pesahim* 4:11 (Hillel vs. Bnei Btera); *Sifre* on Numbers, piska 75 and *Sifra*, Nedava, parasha 4:4–5 (R. Akiba vs. R. Tarphon). Hence, since R. Akiba is always on the winning side, and Moses is here defeated, they can be brought into direct opposition by the Talmudic narrator.

³⁴ *Sifra*, Behuqotai pereq 8:12: "אלה החקים והמשפטים והתורות" החוקים אלו המד- רשות, והמשפטים אלו הדינים, והתורות מלמד ששתי תורות ניתנו להם לישראל, אחד בכתב ואחד בעל פה. אמר ר' עקיבא, וכי שתי תורות היו להם לישראל והלא תורות הרבה ניתנו להם לישראל: זאת תורת העולה, זאת תורת המנחה, זאת תורת האשם וכו'.

³⁵ For a survey of sources representing R. Akiba's view and a comparison to alternative rabbinic traditions (those of R. Ishmael) and Qumran claims to authority see Werman 2006.

of the law inevitably depend on an exegetical process of which he, R. Akiba, is a master. In light of this statement we can indeed assume that in R. Akiba's opinion, Moses would not have understood his own class. Such a combination of elements—that the canonical text is the sole source for all knowledge, but it is nonetheless beyond the reach of its transmitter—breaks away from Second Temple attitudes towards Moses, and is in line with approaches to Homer expressed in contemporary literature.

As in many other major issues, here too rabbinic literature stands in stark contrast to Second Temple literature.³⁶ Moses is far from being elevated to the same status as in some Jewish Hellenistic sources.³⁷ In the *Letter of Aristaeus* (139), for example, Moses the lawgiver is described as the author of the law, who was a wise man and specially endowed by God to understand all things (ἐπίγνωσιν τῶν ἀπάντων). Subsequently, the authority of the law derives directly from the superiority of Moses himself, who comprehended each particular detail. Josephus too testifies to the nearly divine status of Moses in Essene circles.³⁸ Furthermore, I would claim that despite some superficial similarities, rabbinic literature does not quite fit into the traditional and highly developed Mosaic discourse, to use the term coined by Hindy Najman.³⁹ Within this discourse, the way to claim authority was to speak in the voice of the greatest prophet and founding figure, Moses himself, as in Deuteronomy, Jubilees and Temple Scroll.⁴⁰

³⁶ The question whether rabbinic literature is a faithful representative of Second Temple traditions transmitted within Pharisaic and rabbinic circles, or is it a creation of the third century and on is much debated. Most instructing is the scholarly dispute regarding the rabbinic traditions of *creatio ex nihilo*, and their roots in Second Temple literature (Niehoff 2005; Kister 2007). It seems to me that although at times we may discern Second Temple layers within rabbinic literature, scholars are now more prepared to acknowledge the rupture between much of rabbinic activity and earlier sources. I deal with this issue extensively in my dissertation regarding purity in early rabbinic literature (Furstenberg 2011). Others have done much to reveal this same phenomenon in other fields. See for example, Ishay Rosen-Zvi's work on the suspected woman, where he shows that rabbinic depiction of the Temple ceremony actually represents second century innovations (*The Rite that Was Not: Temple, Midrash and Gender in Tractate Sotah* [JSJ Suppl.; Leiden: Brill, forthcoming]), and his recent work on the evil inclination in rabbinic literature in contrast to Second Temple concepts (Rosen-Zvi 2011).

³⁷ Hafemann 1990 surveys these sources and compares the different corpora.

³⁸ Josephus, *War of The Jews* 2.145. Compare m. *Yadayim* 4.8.

³⁹ Najman 2003.

⁴⁰ Najman attempts to read Philo also as part of this group of texts (Najman 2003: 70–107). However, Niehoff in her extensive discussion of Jewish scholarship in Alexandria has revealed the extent of Philo's participation in Hellenistic modes of interpretations and his contribution to them (Niehoff 2011: 133–151). Philo, she shows, stresses the intention of Moses as the author of the Torah, deriving the allegorical interpretation from this original

Najman discusses the possible continuity between Second Temple literature and rabbinic tradition; do the Rabbis claim authority for specific traditions or interpretations in the same manner?⁴¹ Prima facie, the efforts to anchor non-Mosaic laws in Scripture by way of midrash, the reference to some laws as “handed to Moses at Sinai”, and the notion of Two Torahs given at Sinai, all seem to reflect the presence of the Mosaic discourse in rabbinic literature. However, rabbinic texts such as mentioned above point to a fundamental difference between the two corpora. Only in rabbinic literature do we find a celebrated rupture between the Torah and its interpreters.

As the rabbinic activity claims supremacy, Moses is transformed (at least in some sources) into a symbol of the imperfection of the crude biblical text. In other words, it is one thing to acknowledge the authority of traditions or exegeses, which are subsequently attributed to Moses, as we find in various Second Temple writings, but entirely different to venture the possibility of competing with and superseding Moses. Remarkably, it is this very element which is characteristic of certain literary activity in the Greek East, which developed the notion of the “ignorant messenger”.⁴²

There has been a longstanding tendency in Greek literature to attribute to the Homeric text ideas which appear only later on, since Homer is the source of all wisdom.⁴³ A most familiar expression of this approach, apparent also in the scholia,⁴⁴ is Ps. Plutarch’s *Essay on the Life and Poetry*

authorial intention. She further claims that Philo is the first to anchor allegory in serious literary scholarship, rooted in the Aristotelian notion of authorial intention.

⁴¹ Najman 2003: 108–137.

⁴² As we trace the change of attitude towards Moses from Second Temple to Rabbinic literature, it is interesting to note a parallel change in pagan literature, in relation to Moses’ deficiency as a lawgiver (Gager 1972: 80–112). According to earlier writers Moses instituted foul, perverse and misanthropic laws. Since the quality of the laws reflects the virtue of the lawgiver, in these writings Moses is blamed for his wickedness. With Galen, during the second century C.E., a new phase in the pagan attitude towards Moses begins. Galen compares those who practice medicine without scientific knowledge to Moses, who neglects to offer proofs, saying: “god commanded, god spoke.” Similarly to the rabbinic representation of Moses in the dialogue with the impure people, Moses is criticised for not understanding the law and uncritically repeating it, in the name of God.

⁴³ Niceratus who supposedly knew the whole *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by heart states that: “Doubtless you know that Homer, the wisest of men, has dealt with practically all human affairs in his poetry. So let anyone cultivate me, who wishes to become an expert in domestic economy, public speaking or strategy, or to be like Achilles, Ajax, Nestor or Odysseus; for I understand all these things” (Xenophon, *Symposium* 4.6). Plato’s *Ion* is dedicated to refuting such claims.

⁴⁴ More on this in Yakir Paz’s contribution to this volume.

of Homer. The essay, of about 200 C.E.,⁴⁵ celebrates Homer by proving that he was the source of all philosophy, of all human skills and fields of knowledge.⁴⁶ To this author's mind, the plethora of views, even diverse ones, all linked somehow to the text, enhance the prestige of the Homeric encyclopedia. This approach is brought to its fullest manifestation in this treatise, but the writer is well aware of its critical consequences. He therefore adds that this source of wisdom can be put to use even beyond the intentions of Homer himself. In his conclusion, the author declares: "How then can we not possibly attribute every virtue to Homer, when those who have come after him have even found in his poetry things he did not himself think to include? Some use his poetry for divination, just like the oracles of God, while others put entirely different subjects and ideas and fit the verses to them, transposing them and stringing them together in new ways".⁴⁷ According to Ps. Plutarch, Homer's narrow understanding of his own poetry does not in any way prevent future readers from finding in it new subjects and ideas, even if it requires creative, even midrashic, readings of the texts. Interestingly, this same idea can be found in the Talmudic corpus too. We only need to substitute the name Homer with Moses to arrive at the third century Talmudic teaching that suggests that all was already said to Moses at Sinai, even that which an experienced student was to say before his master.⁴⁸

Significantly, such a depiction of Homer as an ignorant messenger who bears knowledge he is not aware of, is not characteristic of classical

⁴⁵ Keaney and Lamberton 1996: 29. This work represents a stage of Homeric interpretation intermediate between the allegories of Heraclitus and the Platonising interpretation of Porphyry.

⁴⁶ The writer, who may have been a *grammaticus*, does not seem to belong to a specific philosophical school. Thus, although he saw Homer as a sage of limitless wisdom, the author was very far from mystical allegorical interpretation, such as offered by the roughly contemporary Pythagorean Numinus (Keaney and Lamberton 1996: 8–9).

⁴⁷ [Plutarch], *Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer*, 218 [Keaney and Lamberton 1996: 310–311: πῶς δὲ οὐκ ἂν πᾶσαν ἀρετὴν ἀναβείημεν Ὀμήρω, ὅπου καὶ ὅσα αὐτὸς μὴ ἐπετίθεισε, τὰτα οἱ ἐπιγενόμενοι ἐν τοῖς ποιήμασιν αὐτοῦ κατενόησαν; καὶ χρώνται μὲν τινες πρὸς μαντείαν τοῖς ἔπεσιν αὐτοῦ, καθάπερ τοῖς χρησμοῖς τοῦ θεοῦ, ἄλλοι δὲ ἐτέρας ὑποθέσεις προθέμενοι ἀρμόζουσιν ἐπ' αὐτὰς τὰ ἔπη μετατιθέντες καὶ συνείροντες.

⁴⁸ "Said R. Joshua b. Levi: [It is written,] 'on them—and on them', 'words—the words', 'all—with all' (all these appear in the Deut. 9:10 "And the Lord gave me the two tables of stone written in the finger of God; and on them were all the words which the Lord had spoken with you on the mountain"): [This refers to] Scripture, Mishna, Talmud and Aggadah, and even what an experienced disciple is destined to teach in the future before his master, already has been stated to Moses at Sinai. That is what is written "Is there a thing of which it is said, See, this is new" and his fellow replies to him "It has been there already for ages before us". (*Yerushalmi*, Megilla 4:1 [74d]; *Leviticus Rabba* 22:1).

Homeric criticism; rather, it seems to surface at a later stage in Homeric scholarship, and was especially crucial for the development of Stoic exegesis. According to Boys-Stones, starting from the early Stoa and up to the first century, writers such as Cornutus believed there to be no authorial intention behind the allegorical material they recovered from the ancient poets, who were bearers of ancient wisdom. These interpreters denied the poets' wisdom yet believed that for all their absurdity, the poets were nevertheless worth interpreting.⁴⁹

In a similar vein, a somewhat less venerating presentation of the "ignorant author" notion is characteristic of Lucian's unrelenting scorn for contemporary scholarship. In his *True History* Homer informs Lucian that all the so-called spurious lines noted by Zenodotus and Aristarchus, were actually genuine, and he attacks the scholarly tendency to divest the poet of his work with the most silly argumentation (πολλὴν ψυχρολογία).⁵⁰ According to Lucian here, the direct, although imaginary meeting with the poet is much preferred to scholars' disgraceful pedantry. However, a more balanced presentation of this poet-scholar conflict is offered in another of his writings. In the short dialogue *A Conversation with Hesiod* Lucian confronts Hesiod with one of his readers, Lycinus, a pseudonym for Lucian himself. This contemporary critic scorns Hesiod's failing to prophesy the future, as he declared; or was he lying, when he said that he received such a gift from the Muses? Against this charge Hesiod replies that nothing he composed actually belongs to him, but to the Muses, therefore he is not responsible for what has been left out. Furthermore, Hesiod rejects such questioning from his literary critics, saying:

It is not proper to examine poetry in minute detail, or to demand complete perfection down to every syllable of what is said, or again to criticize bitterly any unconscious oversight in the flow of the composition.

But you are robbing us of our greatest possession—I mean freedom and poetic license. You are blind to the other beauties of poetry, and pick out a few splinters and thorns (σκινδαλάμους καὶ ἀκάνθας) and seek out handles (λαβὰς) for captious criticism. You (Lykinus) are not alone in this, nor am I (Hesiod) the only victim. Many others pick the poetry of my fellow craftsman Homer utterly to pieces, pointing out similar niggling details, the merest trifles.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Boys-Stone 2001: 29–43; idem 2003.

⁵⁰ Lucian, *True History*, 2.20 (LCL, vol. 1, p. 322).

⁵¹ Lucian, *A Conversation with Hesiod* 5 (LCL, vol. 6; p. 232): οὐ γάρ, οἶμαι, χρὴ παρὰ τῶν ποιητῶν ἐς τὸ λεπτότατον ἀκριβολογούμενους ἀπαιτεῖν κατὰ συλλαβὴν ἐκάστην ἐντελῆ πάντως τὰ εἰρημένα, κἂν εἴ τι ἐν τῷ τῆς ποιήσεως δρόμῳ παραρρῦεν λάθῃ, πικρῶς τοῦτο ἐξετάζειν . . . σὺ

After concluding his apology and regaining his self confidence, Hesiod adds that his statement of being a prophet is in truth defensible. After all, in his *Works and Days* he does predict the outcome of right and timely action and the penalties of neglect. This last claim is immediately spurned by Lykinus, who concludes that Hesiod knows absolutely nothing of the future. At the same time, if the poem is a result of a divine inspiration, it is not very reliable nor does it elevate the poet in any way. Of course, the notion that the poet speaks only through inspiration and not by means of skill or expertise is as old as Plato, as is the criticism of the poet's lack of knowledge.⁵² However, in the current context, this idea serves not as a rejection of poetry, but to justify its excessive literary criticism, or over-reading. In truth, Lykinus does not answer Hesiod's charge against those who indulge in criticism and rob the poet of his freedom and poetic license. However, once he deprives Hesiod of any understanding of his own poetry, he enables the critics to over-read or misread this inspired poetry. In consideration of the poet's deficiencies, the critics surely would comprehend the text better than its initial messenger.

Homer's and Hesiod's ignorance sets the ground, then, for new readings and for the incorporation of new issues into the text, as is characteristic of some Homeric scholarship which diverges from the Aristotelian demand for authorial intention.⁵³ Henceforth, we return to Moses' experience in R. Akiba's classroom. In his latest discussion of this scene, Daniel Boyarin suggests reading this story as part of the genre of Mennipean satire. Torah study is caricatured as expounding the jots and tittles fixed above the letters of Scripture (no such practice is ever documented), and as being foreign even to Moses, its source. In this way, Boyarin claims, the rabbinic

δὲ τὸ μέγιστον ὧν ἔχομεν ἀγαθῶν ἀφαιρῆ ἡμᾶς—λέγω δὲ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν καὶ τὴν ἐν τῷ ποιεῖν ἔξουσίαν, καὶ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα οὐχ ὄρας ὅσα τῆς ποιήσεως καλὰ, σκινδαλάμους δὲ καὶ ἀκάνθας τινὰς ἐκλέγεις καὶ λαβὰς τῆ συκοφαντίᾳ ζητεῖς. ἀλλ' οὐ μόνος ταῦτα σὺ οὐδὲ κατ' ἐμοῦ μόνου, ἀλλὰ πολλοὶ καὶ ἄλλοι τὰ τοῦ ὁμοτέχνου τοῦ ἐμοῦ Ὀμήρου κατακνίζουσι λεπτὰ οὕτω κομιδῇ καὶ μάλιστα μικρὰ ἅττα διεξιόντες.

⁵² In a harsh attack on Homer, Socrates not only demands banishing poetry in order to prevent moral corruption, but he emphasises the complete ignorance of Homer about all matters, human and divine. "And is it conceivable that the contemporaries of Homer, or again of Hesiod, would have allowed either of them to go about as rhapsodists, if they had really been able to make mankind virtuous? [...] Then must we not infer that all these poetical individuals, beginning with Homer, are only imitators; they copy images of virtue and the like, but the truth they never reach? [...] Thus far then we are pretty well agreed that the imitator has no knowledge worth mentioning of what he imitates" (Plato, *Republic* 10, 600d–602b).

⁵³ Niehoff 2011: 58–74 discusses this specific Aristotelian influence on Jewish biblical interpreters intermediated by Alexandrian scholarship.

narrator comments satirically on his own practices of Torah study, as he reflects critically on it and points to its limitations. Boyarin also compares Moses' meeting with Akiba to Hesiod's meeting with Lucian in the same vein. "In both, an implicit or explicit accusation of the later hermeneuts for over-punctiliousness in their interpretive practice is bruited. In both there is an implicit (satirical) imputation that the original author, especially as he divinely inspired, doesn't understand and cannot defend his own text".⁵⁴

Indeed, we can hear in the words of Hesiod the voice of Moses sitting in the last row of the classroom, frustrated with his lack of understanding. Interestingly enough, both Hesiod and Moses fail to appreciate the manner in which later readers tear their text apart and focus on thorny details: Moses sees R. Akiba expounding every 'thorn and thorn' (קוץ וקוץ), and Hesiod's readers pick out splinters and thorns (σκιινδαλάμους και άκάνθας).⁵⁵ In both stories the splinters express the punctilious nature of the hermeneutical project, foreign to the original messenger.⁵⁶ However, contra Boyarin, in the Talmudic narrative the point is not so much to caricature Torah study; R. Akiba is hardly defamed but Moses, in his ignorance is painted in a bad light. He is compelled to admit later on in the story that R. Akiba is more worthy to be the bearer of the Torah than he is. This is true also of the Hesiod/Lucian dialogue. Although Hesiod slanders

⁵⁴ Boyarin 2009: 238.

⁵⁵ The standard meaning of קוץ in rabbinic literature is 'splinter', and therefore all interpreters, early and modern, understood that R. Akiba generated from each 'splinter' many laws. Since this is stated as an explanation for God's effort in adding coronets to the letters, these 'splinters' were regularly identified with the jots and tittles on the letters. Recently, Shlomo Naeh called into question this standard interpretation (Naeh 2010). Naeh claims that this statement should be interpreted in light of a parallel source, wherein many (תילי תלים) laws are generated from each קוצה. The קוצה is not a splinter but a textual unit, a paragraph. Therefore R. Akiba produced many laws from each pericope in the Torah. Although compelling, it would be hard to completely detach the reference to קוצים from the coronets tied by God to the letters, and Naeh himself admits that God's effort to decorate the letters represents the punctiliousness of the exegetical project. At any rate, read against the Greek usage of 'thorn' in reference to pedantic over-reading, its appearance in the Hebrew parallel may not be coincidental. Compare Leviticus Rabba 19:2 (ed. Margulies, p. 419) in reference to the phrase קווצתיו תלתלים 'R. Zeira said: Even things that you see them as thorns in the Torah, are actually curls; they can destroy the world and make it into a barrow תל'. In other words, even things that seem unnecessary or even dangerous like thorns can be beautiful or crucial like curls.

⁵⁶ Visotzky compares Origen's exegetical method, according to which 'not a single tittle of the sacred Scripture is without something of the wisdom of God', to R. Akiba's approach to midrash as presented in this story. However, as he himself mentions (Visotzky 1988: 285) each of the traditions derives from a different source. Origen's starting point is Jesus statement 'One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law' (Matt. 5:18).

his literary critics, in truth it is he who comes out pretty badly, no better than a simple-minded peasant. Within the full context of the conversation, Hesiod's claims against his sophisticated readers mainly serve to point out the tremendous gap between his pretensions as a prophet and his narrow understanding and inabilities. Both the Talmud and Lucian play with the idea of the 'ignorant messenger', who is unaware of the text he has handed down through inspiration. Consequently, both create the option for later exegetes to excessively examine minute details.

MOSAIC REVISIONISM

In the previous section I set forth the claim that some Talmudic sources comprehended their exegetical activity in similar terms to contemporary intellectual discourse. Such a discourse furnished the Rabbis with the most suitable tools for reflecting upon the widening breach between the Mosaic text and their own critical activity. Common to all these sources is the expressed superiority of the later critics over the initial ignorant messenger, be it Moses, Homer or Hesiod. Whereas in the Greek world the roots of this attitude to the poets can be traced to classical times, in the Jewish tradition of biblical interpretation it represents a new phase.⁵⁷ However, this feature does not exhaust the full scope of the *agon* with Moses, as we take into account an additional element characteristically found in the writings of imperial authors—what Glen Bowersock termed 'Homeric revisionism'.⁵⁸ Even closer in nature to the literary concerns of the Rabbis

⁵⁷ Seemingly, a parallel concept of the 'ignorant messenger' finds expression in Second Temple apocalyptic literature. Thus, in the Qumran *Peshar Habakkuk* 7:3–5 we read "And when it is said 'so he can run who reads it', its interpretation concerns the Righteous Teacher, to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of his servants the prophets". The writer claims that the prophet Habakkuk uttered words, which their meaning was to be revealed only later to the Righteous Teacher. However, this notion is very far from the rabbinic appropriation of this idea. Besides the fact that in *Peshar Habakkuk* such ignorance is attributed to a minor prophet and not to Moses, such ignorance is inherent to the nature of apocalyptic revelation. The mystery of the final period can unfold only to those who approach it, while it is too remote to the earlier prophets. This idea is most explicit in 4Ezra 12:10–12, "This is the interpretation of the vision. The eagle whom you saw come up from the sea, is the kingdom which was seen in the vision of your brother Daniel. But it was not expounded unto him, therefore now I declare it unto you".

⁵⁸ According to Bowersock, "Serious Homeric revisionism spans most of the period of the Roman Empire" (Bowersock 1993: 11), and it is a major component of the explosion of fictional production of the Roman Empire, since the reign of Nero (21–23). For a recent account of this literary phenomena see Kim 2010. More generally, Zeitlin 2001 surveys the variety of Homeric representations during the Roman Empire.

is Silvio Bär's recent characterisation: "A striking feature of various Second Sophistic prose texts which deal with Homeric matters is their tendency to question, sometimes even to annihilate and thus to revise, rephrase, and 'correct' Homer and his tales in a playful, innovative, and often ironic way."⁵⁹ Indeed, Homeric revisionism expresses itself in various ways and in various genres in the literature of the period and I propose employing this heuristic category to better understand the development of rabbinic midrash.

Two familiar examples of this Second Sophistic attitude to Homer are Dio's *Trojan Oration* and Philostratus' *Heroicus*, and some elements of these works will serve as a backdrop to the peculiarities of rabbinic midrash. Dio's *Trojan Oration* has long been identified as an unusually lengthy example of the rhetorical refutation (*anaskeue*),⁶⁰ in which mythical and other stories were proven to be falsehoods, in this case the complete Homeric account of the sack of Troy. The oration employs traditional methods of Homeric critical scholarship which serve as a springboard for the comprehensive refutation of the narrative.⁶¹ For our current discussion it is of interest to note Dio's overt effort to transform his Trojan audience's perception of its own past. Dio acknowledges the fact that his listeners would prefer to hold onto the Homeric account, however disgraceful it is to them and their city. Nonetheless, he offers them a more positive portrayal of their past: "You should be grateful and hear me gladly, for I have been zealous in defense of your ancestors".⁶² Furthermore, Dio contrasts the Homeric tradition to contemporary civic conditions and ideologies under Roman rule. Whereas in the past Greeks were emboldened by Homer's falsifications, contemporary listeners are ready, due to Roman rule, to accept the truth: "Well, the situation has changed and there is no longer any fear of an Asiatic people ever marching against Greece. For Greece is subject to others and so is Asia".⁶³ Consequently, we find ourselves in a completely new setting, which allows the Trojans access to their true past.⁶⁴ Much of Philostratus' *Heroicus* is also dedicated to the modification

⁵⁹ Bär 2009: 289. Anderson 1993: 174–176 emphasises the playfulness and deliberate absurdity of Homeric revisionism, which was encouraged in sympotic contexts.

⁶⁰ Hunter 2009: 54.

⁶¹ Saïd 2000: 177–180 contrasts various readings of the oration, which highlight different elements in Dio's activity: as a speaker, a sophist, a politician, a scholar, a philosopher.

⁶² Dio, *Or.* 11.5–6.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 147–150.

⁶⁴ According to Kim (in a discussion of the refutation of another of Dio's orations, *Chryseis*): "Whereas the scholars aim to solve problems, to hammer out the bumps and fill in

of Homer, through the retelling of the Trojan War by Protesilaus. In this case, a key element in this counter narrative relevant to our discussion is the propagation of a new type of hero, who is recast in the image of early empire *pepaideumenos*.⁶⁵ Whereas Odysseus comes out pretty badly in the *Heroicus*, the anonymous Palamedes becomes the greatest hero as he is transformed into a sophistic-like figure.⁶⁶

Like the Sophists of the second and third centuries the Rabbis too, we are reminded by Joseph Geiger, lived in a literary world of a privileged past onto which they projected themselves as *pepaideumeno*.⁶⁷ Like these Sophists, the Rabbis were concerned to consciously revise the Torah and offer access to the underlying truth by formulating an alternative content. Obviously, in contrast to Greek literature, finding traces of such an approach in rabbinic writings is a tricky task since this literature avoids rejecting Scripture head on, and no overt statement parallel to the accusation of Homer can be found there. However, the Rabbis quite possibly shared a similar rhetorical standpoint, according to which offering an alternative to the canonical text was the most appropriate form of mediation. Much is to be gained from reading the rabbinic midrashic sources as participating in this conscious revision of the ancient tradition. By standing in opposition to it, and not merely transmitting or interpreting it, the Rabbis adapted Scripture to contemporary conditions and ideology.

As a preliminary reading attempt of this kind, I wish to look into some examples from *Sifre* on Deuteronomy. This third century compilation of tannaitic legal and exegetical sources is generally viewed as a running commentary on most of Deuteronomy, in particular of its legal portion.⁶⁸ Thus, according to Fraade, the *Sifre* identifies between the rabbinic teaching and the “Words of Torah”. However, this specific midrash halakha has some unique elements, one of them being its overt affinity to Hellenism, to judge from the amount of Greek loan words and allusions to

the holes in the narrative, Dio has a completely different project: for him the problems spur an inquiry that allows access into the underlying truth; in their ambiguities, they allow him sufficient room to maneuver and extrapolate a supplementary narrative” (Kim 2008: 617).

⁶⁵ Anderson 1985: 249–251; Mestre 2004: 133–135.

⁶⁶ A parallel reworking of Homer is to found in Quintus of Smyrna's *Posthomerica*, as Odysseus is transformed to a trickster, betraying the dangers of eloquence (Bär 2009).

⁶⁷ Geiger 2007.

⁶⁸ As spelled out in the title of his book, defining the *Sifre* as commentary is crucial to Fraade's thesis. In his introduction he describes the evolution of this new form of exegesis, contrary to Second Temple forms (Fraade: 1991, 1–23).

Graeco-Roman institutions.⁶⁹ In what follows I wish to argue that the *Sifre* on Deuteronomy is not only a running commentary on most of the book; rather, it revises Moses' last speeches on two levels: firstly, at times it presents its legal rulings expressly as alternatives to Scripture. Secondly, it revises the general plan of the speech as a whole.

As stated, the midrashic habit of misinterpreting Scripture in order to arrive at new rulings motivated Lieberman and Daube to compare it to forensic rhetoric. However, such a classification does not assist us in understanding the instances in which the midrash not only alters the biblical law, but presents it as diametrically opposed to Scripture. At times, the rabbinic alternative is not disguised as Scripture; rather, it formulates the legal issue at hand in a contrasting manner. Let us look closely at one innocent-looking example. Deuteronomy 22 lays out the instructions in the case of a straying animal: "You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray and ignore them. You shall take them back to your brother. If your brother does not live near you or if you do not know who he is, take it home with you and keep it until your brother inquires for it. Then give it back to him" (Deut. 22.1–2). According to this biblical scenario, the finder is obliged to take in the lost animal, and to wait passively until the owner comes searching for it. It is assumed that whoever will be searching for the animal is the real owner.

Against the biblical demand to wait until the owner inquires after his animal, the midrash comments: "Would you possibly think you are to surrender it to him without describing its distinguishing marks!? Why then is it said "until your brother inquires for it"? **Until you first inquire your brother** as to whether or not he is deceiving you."⁷⁰ The words of the verse pose a problem, and they are presented as completely improbable: How can you return it to the owner just because he asks for it!? The midrash therefore comes to the conclusion that you must first examine the reliability of the brother. As a legal precept in and of itself this is of course a very reasonable conclusion, but we should pay attention to the rhetoric of the midrash, positing its ruling against the meaning of the verse and

⁶⁹ To the best of my knowledge, no systematic survey has been done to assess the extent of 'hellenisation' of each of the rabbinic writings. It is, however, noticeable in general that later works include more Greek loan words. The *Sifre* is of the mid-third century.

⁷⁰ *Sifre* on Deuteronomy, ch. 223 (ed. Finkelstein, p. 256): "והיה עמך עד דרוש אחיך: אותו: וכי עלת על דעתך שאתה נותן לו עד שלא יתן סימנים אם כן למה נאמר עד דרוש אחיך אותו עד שתדרוש את אחיך אם רמיי הוא אם אינו רמאי". Compare the more moderate wording of the Mishna Baba Metzia 2:7, which lacks the explicit confrontation with the verse.

not alongside it. Instead of a simple solution, such as complementing the verse with an additional practical measure ensuring the reliability of the owner, the midrash chooses to flip the verse on its head. From now on, the owner does not inquire after his animal; rather, he is to be inquired. In the rhetoric of the midrash, the verse is overturned and a new idea is introduced, which in no way matches Scripture.⁷¹

In truth, behind such a strong reaction to this specific problem of reliability lays a complete shift in the legal paradigm, wherein Scripture and the Rabbis stand in opposition to each other. Whereas in Deuteronomy, the finder is required to maintain the animal until the owner comes for it, according to the Mishna, the finder must actively announce his find for a limited time until he is granted ownership of the property. From the rabbinic point of view the biblical requirement to 'keep it until your brother inquires for it', although clearly comprehended, is meaningless. The alternative is offered in the *Sifre*, and its rhetoric does not enhance the authority of Scripture, as we would initially expect it to do, rather it stands in opposition to it.

A close reading of other midrashim from various sources yields similar results.⁷² At the same time, the *Sifre* as a composition presents us with an additional, larger scale revision of Scripture. This midrash revises Moses' speeches in Deuteronomy in two interrelated aspects. Firstly, it explicitly offers alternative rhetorical paradigms to the text. Secondly, as a consequence the intention of the text as a whole is inverted. A brief examination of some paragraphs from the beginning and end of the *Sifre* may demonstrate this claim.

Moses' last speech, in Deuteronomy 33, is designated as a blessing prophesying the future: 'This is the blessing with which Moses, the man of God, bade the Israelites farewell before he died' (33:1). In the *Sifre* the blessing is reframed, explicitly alluding to contemporary rhetorical practice:

He [Moses] Said: The Lord came from Sinai; He shone from Se'ir. Scripture tells that Moses began not with the needs of Israel but with the praise of God.

⁷¹ The commentators' effort to justify the rabbinic reading only highlights the problem. For example, Albeck suggests that the rabbis rearranged the words in the verse, from 'דרש אחיך אותו' (your brother inquires for it) to 'דרש אותו אחיך' (inquire him, your brother).

⁷² For another illuminating example in the *Sifre*, regarding the case of the captive woman, see Stern 1998: 100–105.

A parable, to what may this be compared? To a *rhetor* (advocate) standing on the podium, hired by someone to plead his case. He does not begin with the needs of his client but with the praise of the king, “Happy is the world of which he is king; Happy is the world of which he is judge. Upon us shines the sun! Upon us shines the moon!”, and others would then join him with praise. Only afterwards does he turn to the needs of that man [=his client], and concludes by again praising the king.

Similarly, our teacher Moses did not begin with the needs of Israel, but with the praise of God, as it is said “As he said: The Lord came from Sinai” and only afterwards did he begin with the needs of Israel: ‘May there be a king in Jeshurun’ (33:5). He concludes by returning to the praise of God ‘O Jeshurun, there is none like God’ (33:26).⁷³

Moses does indeed open his last speech by praising the Lord; however, one looks in vain for any real structural similarities between these verses and the rhetorical model. As Fraade has already noted,⁷⁴ the *Sifre* completely transformed the setting from the scriptural blessing of Moses, as God’s agent, to an advocate of Israel.⁷⁵ The prophetic stance is abandoned in favour of the talented speaker who is able through his words and performance to stimulate others, and to entice the judge through public praise. Specifically, the function of this rhetorical model seems to be most evident in the last example (not cited here) of this rhetorical model. The leader of the daily prayer concludes his praise by calling the angels and all cosmic forces to join in during the *Qedusha*, and only then does he begin with the needs of Israel. As we learn from the *Sifre*, this rabbinic practice can be linked to Moses only through the revolutionary model of the rhetor.

From a wider perspective, the transformation of Moses from prophet to orator entails a major revision—so I would argue—of the composition of Deuteronomy as a whole. The *Sifre*, like other midrashic compilations, is in no way a coherent text, and there is no clear overarching

⁷³ *Sifre* on Deuteronomy, piska 343 (ed. Finkelstein, p. 394): ויאמר ה' מסיני בא זרחה ומשעיר, מגיד הכתוב שכשפתח משה לא פתח בצרכם של ישראל תחילה עד שפתח בשבחו של מקום משל ללוטייר שהיה עומד על הבמה ונשכר לאחד לדבר על ידי ולא פתח בצרכי אותו האיש תחילה עד שפתח בשבחו של מלך אשרי עולם ממלכו אשרי עולם מדיינו עלינו זרחה חמה עלינו זרחה לבנה והיו אחרים מקלסים עמו ואחר כן פתח בצרכו של אותו האיש וחזר וחתם בשבחו של מלך אף משה רבינו לא פתח בצרכי ישראל עד שפתח בשבחו של מקום שנאמר ויאמר ה' מסיני בא ואחר כך פתח בצרכם של ישראל ויהי בישורון מלך חזר וחתם בשבחו של מקום אין כאל ישורון,

⁷⁴ Fraade 1991: 29–30.

⁷⁵ Consequently, some verses change their meaning too. For example, the indicative statement in verse 5: “Then he became King in Jeshurun” is converted in the midrash to the optative: ‘May there be a king in Jeshurun’.

structure or tight argument. However, through specific compositional choices, the midrash does at times disclose something of its general outlook and relation to Scripture. I believe that this is the case here. A continuous exegesis is offered in the *Sifre* only for chapters 11–26 of Deuteronomy, which include the main body of laws.⁷⁶ Of the first chapters of the book only three select passages are discussed.⁷⁷ One of these units, on the *Shema Israel* (Deut. 6:4–9), hardly requires justification, but what can we say of the first two units, one expounding most of chapter 1 (piskas 1–25), and the second expounding the end of chapter 3 (piskas 26–30)? Arguably, the *Sifre*'s decision to bring together these two sections and alter Moses' prologue reflects a revised understanding of the book as a whole; by re-assembling these building blocks the midrash revises Mosaic Deuteronomy.

The first speech in Deuteronomy is a prologue which spans the first four chapters and is composed mainly of an historical overview of Israel's travels, preparing the way for their final journey into the Land, this time without Moses (1:6–3:29). These historical events are divided into two. At first Moses demonstrates how mistrust and disobedience lead to disaster; bringing upon Israel defeat and death in the wilderness. In contrast, the next generation's trust in God leads to victories over powerful kings.⁷⁸ Subsequently, Moses exhorts Israel to obey God's laws, as a precondition to inheriting the Promised Land. In contrast, by focusing on two selected elements of this prologue, the *Sifre* applies an alternative rhetorical scheme and adopts a different attitude towards the body of the law. The first unit is a rebuke of Israel; the second focuses on Moses' plea to be let into the Land.

The *Sifre* makes it clear that all details in the first chapter of Deuteronomy must, in some way, reflect Moses' rebuke of Israel, on account of their wrongdoings in the desert:

“These are the words which Moses spoke” (1:1): Did Moses not prophesy anything but these words? Did he not write the entire Torah, as it is said “And Moses wrote this Torah” (31:9)? Why does the verse state, “these are the

⁷⁶ Interestingly, there is no reference to the Ten Commandments (Deut 5).

⁷⁷ Scholars have sought to attribute these unique units (compared to other parts of the *Sifre*) to one of the two midrashic academies, of R. Akiba and of R. Ishmael. Epstein 1957: 627 has pointed out that each of the two first units, which will be discussed below, belongs to a different source. It is therefore plausible to assume that specific sources have been compiled by the editor in order to create the desired effect.

⁷⁸ Tigay 1996: 6.

words which Moses spoke"? Hence we learn that they were words of rebuke, as it is said "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked" (32.15).

"Unto all Israel" Had he rebuked only some of them, those who were in the market place might have said: You heard this from the son of Amram and you did not answer back? By God, had we been there, we would have had four or five retorts to him for every one of his words". Another interpretation: "Unto all Israel" We learn that Moses gathered them all together, from the oldest to the youngest, and said to them "I am about to rebuke you. If anyone has anything to say in rebuttal, let him come forth and speak". Another interpretation "Unto all Israel": Hence we learn that all of them were people of rebuke and able to stand up under rebuke.⁷⁹

Therefore, in its first unit the *Sifre* lays out this detailed rebuke at each station in the wilderness. At times it even reinterprets some of the more positive of Moses' statements to fit its gist.⁸⁰ However, as we turn to the second unit (piskas 26–30), which refers to Deuteronomy 3:23–29, the reproach of Israel is left behind and we hear of Moses' elaborate plea to be let into the Land. The elaboration on Moses' prayer leads to this final statement, which expresses the contrast between the two opening units:

[So we stayed in the valley near Beth Pe'or (3:29)]: He [Moses] said to them: See what difference there is between you and me. For all of my prayers, requests and pleas, it has been decreed that I am not to enter the land. Whereas you, you have been angering Him for forty years in the wilderness, as it is said "For forty years was I wearied with that generation (Ps. 95:100), and not only that, but even the greatest of you worshipped Pe'or, and yet his right hand is stretched out to receive the penitent. As it is written "Now, O Israel, listen to the laws!" (Quoting the next verse, 4:1) Now you are newly created and what happened in the past has already been forgiven.⁸¹

⁷⁹ *Sifre* to Deuteronomy, Piska 1: "ואלה הדברים אשר דבר משה", וכי לא נתנבא משה, "אלא אלו בלבד? והלא הוא כתב כל התורה כולה, שנאמר 'ויכתב משה את התורה הזאת'. מה תלמוד לומר 'אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה'?" מלמד שהיו דברי תוכחות. "אל כל ישראל" אילו הוכיח מקצתם היו אלו שבשוק אומרים: כך הייתם שומעים מן עמרם ולא הייתם משיבים לו דבר כך מכך? אלו היינו שם היינו משיבים לו ארבע וחמש פעמים על כל דבר ודבר. דבר אחר "אל כל ישראל" מלמד שכנסם משה מגדולם ועד קטנם ואמר להם הריני מוכיחכם, כל מי שיש לו תשובה יבוא ויאמר. דבר אחר "אל כל ישראל" מלמד שהיו כולם בעלי תוכחה.

⁸⁰ For example, Piska 21 (ed. Finkelstein, p. 32): "And the Thing pleased me well (1:23) If it pleased him, why did he record it together with the words of rebuke?"

⁸¹ *Sifre* on Deuteronomy, piska 30 (ed. Finkelstein, p. 49): "ונשב בגיא מול בית פעור": "אמר להם ראו כמה ביניכם לביני שכמה תפילות וכמה בקשות וכמה תחנונים עשיתי ונגזרה עלי גזרה שלא אכנס לארץ. אבל אתם הכעסתם לפניו ארבעים שנה במדבר שנאמר 'ארבעים שנה אקוט בדור' ולא עוד אלא שגדולים שבכם משתחוים לפעור וימינו פשוטה לקבל שבים שנאמר 'ועתה ישראל שמע אל החוקים' הרי אתם חדשים כבר מחול לשעבר."

I would venture to say that no statement stands in starker contrast to the overall plan and purpose of the book of Deuteronomy than the statement "Now you are newly created". The Moses of Scripture repeatedly predicts the future sins of Israel after they enter the Land, and it seems to be their unavoidable fate, deeply rooted in past experience. However, the *Sifre* systematically omits any reference to these predictions, and ignores all chapters in Deuteronomy dealing with such anxieties, offering a surprisingly optimistic standpoint.⁸² But there seems to be more to it. Throughout the first two units of the *Sifre* the first speech of Moses, very much like his last, is revised in structure and purpose. In contrast to Deuteronomy, which employs the wilderness experience to warn of the forlorn future in the Land, the *Sifre* employs an opposite rhetorical scheme.

In the style of *synkrisis*, comparison, the fate of Israel is compared with Moses' personal fate. Israel's many sins are contrasted with Moses' one unforgiven one, and the many sins of the past intensify the contrast with a positively bright future. This rhetorical scheme is indeed familiar, and expressly announced in the tannaitic literature. Most famously, in the Passover Haggadah the Rabbis employed the rhetorical principle of מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח, "Beginning with rebuke and concluding with praise". One is required to employ this tool as he retells the story of the Exodus and the history of the Jewish People. According to this principle, known also from rhetorical *progymnasmata* in exercise of praise:⁸³ "If we wish to express doubtful matters in the eulogy as definitively honorable, we mention by way of contrast to matters which seem worthy of detraction, and thus convert them into an encomium, so that our speech becomes entirely one of praise".⁸⁴ Here too, as the midrash is revising Moses' speeches to suit his role as advocate, it uses this theory in order to offer a more persuasive speech. Armed with the tools of rhetorical convention, assuming the role of defending the Jewish people, the Rabbis reject the Mosaic narrative, omit what is needed, and offer their audience a positive prospect. In fact, the significance of such Mosaic revisionism

⁸² The same approach is found elsewhere in the *Sifre*. Immediately in the following unit, which discusses the *Shema*, Jacob is brought as a model for the change of heart following rebuke (Piska 31, ed. Finkelstein. p. 53). And again towards the end of the book (piska 342, ed. Finkelstein pp. 391–392): "Since Moses has spoken harsh words to Israel previously he now spoke words of comfort to them . . . This indicates that once they (the prophets) have spoken words of comfort to them, they will not speak words of rebuke to them".

⁸³ For example, Theon's exercise of praise (*encomion*), 111 (Kennedy 2003: 52).

⁸⁴ This quote of Sopartos and a further sample of such rhetorical instructions parallel to the rabbinic principle are supplied by Stein 1957: 37.

under Roman rule is analogous to Dio's anti-Homeric claim that Troy was never sacked.

CONCLUSION

The thesis laid out in this paper differs from earlier treatments of rabbinic midrash and its relation to parallel Graeco-Roman activity in two major respects. Previously, scholars such as Lieberman and Daube tended to turn to Graeco-Roman sources for the most part to clarify specific, somewhat strange characteristics and particularities of the rabbinic hermeneutical system. As a consequence, parallels were judged by the level of linguistic or conceptual affinities they demonstrated between the two systems. My turn to Graeco-Roman cultural institutions, in contrast, is motivated to a large degree by a view of rabbinic midrash as a multifaceted cultural project. Undoubtedly, the Rabbis were deeply rooted in the Second Temple tradition of biblical exegesis and within this tradition they struggled to gain authority over and against other readers of the bible. As a result, we scholars assume their exegetical activity is to be read within a declared traditional approach, according to which their own teachings must represent the most authentic and original meaning of the Mosaic revelation. Such notions indeed can be found in rabbinic traditions. However, this was not necessarily the most available textual stance during this period in the Roman East when scholars were appreciated for their ability to challenge the foundational text. Isn't it plausible that we find traces of such an approach ingrained in contemporaneous scholarly culture also within rabbinic literature? It seems to me that even if we cannot pretend to offer a decisive answer, the question is well worth asking.

By adopting such a perspective we may have gained a more subtle understanding of some rabbinic midrashic sources, which surprisingly seem to posit the Rabbis against Moses and his Torah. Here we come to the second point of difference. Whereas Lieberman and Daube assumed that the Hellenistic rhetorical methods functioned to disguise the gaps between Scripture and rabbinic ruling, the sources discussed here reveal the ways in which the Rabbis, like the Sophists, celebrated the acknowledged rupture between the text and themselves. From the wide range of possible expressions of the rhetorical *agon* towards ancient writers I have singled out two different phenomena which are clearly recognisable in both midrashic and contemporary Graeco-Roman sources. The first is the direct refutation of the author, whose authority as the most wise or

knowledgeable is undermined and who instead becomes the 'ignorant messenger' of the truth. Current interpreters, in contrast, are presented as possessing direct access to this knowledge through their over-sophisticated exegetical methods. Secondly, the contemporary speaker claims to offer an alternative, more appealing account. This is a clear trait of prevailing Homeric revisionism, and surprisingly seems to have infiltrated rabbinic midrash, which at times presents itself in opposition to Scripture. These two elements are not necessarily interdependent; however, they join together to create an innovative exegetical stand, characteristic of the contemporary Graeco-Roman intellectual environment.

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MIDRASH AND HERMENEUTIC REFLECTIVITY:
KISHMU'O AS A TEST CASE

Ishay Rosen-Zvi¹

The hermeneutics of Philo and the Rabbis differ on various fundamental issues, most notably Philo's dualistic assumptions about the hidden, spiritual meaning of the biblical text, which are not shared by the Rabbis. However, there are also significant similarities. These are not limited to shared themes and legal traditions, but encompass interpretive methods and tools, such as the citation of multiple interpretations² and lumping together disconnected verses to reach the desired exegesis;³ as well as several specific techniques, etymologies, analogies and syllogisms.⁴

Above all, Philo and the Rabbis seemed to have a very similar notion of the religious meaning of interpreting divine scripture. "It does not simply explain individual passages, but reconstructs the entire picture of God's word. This is why, on the one hand there is breaking into pieces, and many are the 'digressions', the explanations, the references to other passages; on the other, there is a broadened reconstruction of the word that 'manifests' itself in the Bible, but which also has to be reconstructed in its hidden meanings, in its apparent repetitions and contradictions, via the many interpretative systems which are all valid in that they are all partial".⁵ This recent scholarly description of Philo's theory of interpretation could have been taken almost verbatim from an introduction to rabbinic midrash.

Assessments of interpretive techniques in any two corpora tend to embellish trivial similarities that are easily seen; the more important task is to search for fundamental hermeneutic assumptions. For example: both

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² Fraade 2001: 13.

³ Hamerton-Kelly 1976: 45–56.

⁴ For specific comparisons see the studies of Lieberman, Daube and Belkin. For a full bibliography see Hilbert 1984: 65–67 ("Rabbinic and Later Jewish Literature"). See also Visotzky 2006: 117–131.

⁵ Cabali 1998: 102.

Philo and the Rabbis have an interest in explaining scriptural repetitions and redundancies. In her study of biblical exegesis in Alexandria, Maren Niehoff states that: “Philo, like Aristarchus and other Biblical scholars, was sensitive to stylistic redundancies. While Aristarchus had noted especially redundant lines, unaware that they reflect the oral origin of the epic, Philo discusses mostly redundant words, which reflect—unknown to him—the underlying Hebrew”.⁶ As an example Niehoff cites Philo’s usage of the biblical idiom: *mot yumat* (Ex 21:21; translated literally in the LXX—*thanato thanatousto*—which does not make much sense in Greek) to demonstrate that there are two kinds of death: “some are dead while living, while some are alive while dead” (*Fuga* 54).⁷ Interestingly, Rabbi Akiva has a very similar homily regarding a parallel biblical redundancy: “That person shall utterly be cut off (*hikaret tikaret*, Num 15:31): *hikaret*—in this world; *tikaret*—in the world to come, so R. Akiva. R. Ishmael said to him: Because it also says: “That person shall be cut off” (*venichreta*; *ibid.*, 15:30): am I to understand that there are three cuttings off in three worlds!? [Rather] what does scripture teach by *hikaret tikaret*? That Torah spoke in human language” (*Sifre Numbers* 112, 121).⁸

Philo is interested in redundancies as an opportunity to demonstrate the necessity of allegory.⁹ As Niehoff convincingly shows, Philo took advantage of the textual sensitivities developed by Alexandrian homeric scholarship “to anchor allegory in the literal sense, thus hoping to convince his literalist readers of its plausibility”. In contrast, the tannaitic debate is about the problem of redundancy itself, regardless of its local, thematic implications. R. Ishmael certainly does not dispute the idea of “the world to come”, celebrated by R. Akiva, but only the ability to deduce it from the (alleged) repetition; according to him “Torah spoke in human language”. Biblical redundancies are a major issue in midrash, even in places where no ideological or thematic problems are apparent.¹⁰ In their independent

⁶ Niehoff 2011: 138.

⁷ Cf. Y. Ber. 2:2 (4:4); b. Ber. 18a; Ecc Rab. 9:5: “*For the living know that they would die* (Ecc 9:5)—these are the righteous that even when they are dead are called living; *and the dead know nothing* (*ibid.*)—these are the wicked that even when alive are called dead”.

⁸ On this dispute see Yadin 2004: 18–19; Kahana 2006: 20.

⁹ Cf. Philo’s assertion, cited by Niehoff, that Moses deliberately employed excessive verbosity to “urge [you] to depart from the literal sense” (*Det.* 15). Philo differs profoundly from the medieval Jewish-Arabic commentators, who turned to allegory (*ta’wil*; *majaz*) only when the literal understanding contradicts other verses, reason or tradition. See Saadya’s introduction to his *Tafsir* (Zucker 1984: 17 ff.) and Zucker 1959: 229–236; Ben-Shammai 2003.

¹⁰ See Kugel 1981: 96–134; Rosen-Zvi 2000.

interest in the text and its integrity, the Rabbis are closer to the Alexandrian academics, Hellenes and Jews¹¹ than to Philo's functional, utilitarian exploitation of textual problems to promote his exegetical agenda. Thus specific similarities, both thematic and methodological, should be always examined in light of the larger textual and hermeneutic assumptions behind them.

But such an examination encounters an obstacle that eludes any attempt at broad hermeneutic comparison: the lack of rabbinic reflection on their hermeneutic techniques. While Philo's writings are rich in explicit accounts of his method, the Rabbis are not so forthcoming. An example of Philo's reflective generosity: in the midst of his narration of the therapeutae's feast, Philo pauses to explain their (and ultimately also his)¹² way of explicating the bible:

The exposition of the sacred scriptures treats the inner meaning conveyed in allegory. For to these people the whole law book seems to resemble a living creature with the literal ordinances for its body and for its soul the invisible mind laid up in its wording. It is in this mind especially that the rational soul begins to contemplate the things akin to itself and looking through the words as through a mirror beholds the marvelous beauties of the concepts, unfolds and removed the symbolic coverings and brings forth the thoughts and sets them bare to the light of day for those who need but a little reminding to enable them to discern the inward and hidden through the outward and visible (*Cont.* 78; *LCL*, 161).

This passage is one of the most detailed accounts of allegory in Philo's compositions, but it is by no means exceptional. Similar accounts are to be found in many of Philo's works,¹³ and the same holds true for his successors in allegorical exegesis, the Alexandrian Church Fathers who were contemporaneous with the Rabbis.¹⁴ In contrast, one searches in vain for similar reflections in rabbinic literature. While one may find sporadic statements regarding midrash, no systematic or coherent account of midrash is suggested by the Rabbis.¹⁵ The anonymous, collective nature of

¹¹ On Jewish literalists in Alexandria see Shroyer 1936.

¹² As Yehoyada Amir sharply remarks: "The very objections against the reliability of his description [of the therapeutae] reinforce the value of Philo's explanations as evidence of his own attitude" (Amir 1988: 448, n. 168).

¹³ I.e. *Abr.* 88; 99; *Leg. All.* II 19; *Opif.* 69; 157; *Deus.* 61; *Agr.* 131; 157; *Fug.* 106; *Plant.* 113; *Somn.* I 39–40; 235; *Migr.* 89–94; *Decal.* 154; *Spec. Leg.* I 8; 20; *Mos.* I 4; 68; II 38–40.

¹⁴ See Visotzky 1995: 28–40.

¹⁵ For this reason the very definition of midrash is debated by scholars. For an attempt to define midrash as a hermeneutic method see Teugels 2004: 151–169; Bakhos 2006.

rabbinic literature rules out any Philo-like systematic account; but even local reflections are frustratingly rare. How, then, shall we conduct a comparison on the basic hermeneutic level, as suggested above? How can we compare an interpretive culture which reflects on its own assumptions and methods with one which does not espouse such reflective practices?

My claim in this essay is that we do indeed find reflectivity in rabbinic midrash, albeit different to that found in Philo and his companions. Instead of collecting sporadic explicit statements, as scholars tend to do when asked to explicate the meaning of midrash (a somewhat Sisyphean task), I suggest looking at the reflectivity embedded in the midrashic praxis itself. As an example of self-reflectivity, I shall examine one midrashic term, *kishmu'o*, which I claim is self-reflective by nature.

The degree of reflectivity in homiletic activity is one of the most troubling questions in the study of midrash. Are the homilists aware of their departure from simple meanings of scripture? How self-conscious are the motivations for such departures? The assumption of early scholars was that the Rabbis lacked significant reflectivity, and that this absence of self-awareness is a distinguishing feature of midrash, which is nourished and even made possible by this innocence. Isaac Heinemann went so far as to posit that homilists have “organic minds” which cannot distinguish between the biblical text and the midrashic exegete.¹⁶

In recent years scholars have attempted to redeem homilists from this naïve, non-reflective world. Moshe Halbertal claims that not only do homilists choose between different interpretations—often deliberately preferring the less convincing argument—but the midrashic structure itself, in its juxtaposition of different interpretations, is a “consciousness-creating structure”.¹⁷ Azzan Yadin attributes even greater self-awareness to the midrashic school of Rabbi Ishmael. According to him this School regards scripture not just as the text to be interpreted, but as a teacher, guiding its readers as to the manner in which it is to be interpreted, and to clues which should be sought in the text.¹⁸

¹⁶ Heinemann 1970; On his thesis see Boyarin 1990: 1–11. I think it no coincidence that Heinemann's romantic reconstruction of the Rabbis began after his total abandonment of Philo's scholarship upon arrival in Jerusalem, concentrating from then on solely on Hebrew writing on rabbinic midrash. See Niehoff 1999: n. 72.

¹⁷ Halbertal 1999: 117. Halbertal distinguishes between “first-order consciousness”, that is the very comprehension of exegesis as a choice between different interpretive options, and “second-order consciousness”, which is the theoretisation and justification of such exegetical choice. He attributes only the former to the rabbinic exegetes.

¹⁸ Yadin 2004.

In order to better understand this scholarly shift, some preliminary observations on the scholarship of midrashic hermeneutics are warranted. The interpretive character of midrash has confounded the scholarly study of Judaism from its very inception. Why does midrash depart so vigorously from simple readings of the text? Are over-reaching homilies an innovative attempt at exegesis, or are they simply not exegetical in nature? What conceptualisation of the biblical text allows for such drastic manipulation? Abraham Geiger was the first to complain of the “turbid” (“getrübt”) exegetical sense of the Rabbis,¹⁹ and ever since students of midrash have worked hard to explain the essence of midrashic hermeneutics and to reconcile it with our perceptions of the nature of acceptable exegesis. Different explanations were offered: the secret of midrash, known to the ancients, is a mystery to us;²⁰ midrash itself was given at Sinai;²¹ it reveals the “depth of the plain meaning”;²² to the various approaches which see the homily as an afterthought to ideas and narratives which preceded it and which were created outside of it.²³

A significant development in the discussion was heralded by Heinemann’s *Darkhe Haagada*, which attempted to present midrash as ‘real’ exegesis, operating under a set of rules and presumptions that are different from those of the modern exegete. Heinemann’s mapping of the various modes of midrash and pointing out their systematic nature was a boon to scholarship. However, it came at the price of portraying midrash romantically, as noted above, as a mode of primitive, “organic” thought.

In the last few decades various scholars have claimed that in order to read midrash as exegesis, the very concept of “exegesis” should be expanded. Our assumptions regarding “simple meaning” must be the first to go for although the term “*pehuto shel mikra*” (or its Aramaic parallel:

¹⁹ Geiger 1844. See also Heinemann 1970: 198 n. 26; Harris 1995: 162. Harris’s study reveals the complex and conflictual relationship of the *Wissenschaft* School and midrashic phenomenon at large.

²⁰ Frankel 1923: 17.

²¹ I. H. Weiss, in the introduction to his edition of the Sifra, Vienna 1862.

²² This was the position of various orthodox bible exegetes in the nineteenth century, most notably R. Meir Leibush Weiser (*Malbim*), who wrote on the title page of his commentary on Leviticus and the Sifra, Weiser 1860: “I have shown and proven with clear proofs that the midrash is the most simple meaning, which must be and which is founded in the depth of language”. See also Halivni 1991: 31–33.

²³ This position is held, in different versions, by Yosef Heinemann, Ephraim E. Urbach, and Jonah Frankel. The former two stress the historical contexts, while the latter stresses the literary one. See Levinson 2005: 30–35. On a parallel claim in the halakhic context see Epstein 1959: 511 and Urbach 1987: 50–66.

“*peshateh de-kerā*”) appears in rabbinic literature, it does *not* refer to an exegetical method, as it does later in the writings of the “*peshat*” medieval commentators.²⁴

Daniel Boyarin’s *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* was another watershed in this current. For the rabbinic homilist, he maintains, the Torah is not just a text, a singular anthology of images and tales (“*parole*”), but a collection of citations which the homilist can use to build new stories almost endlessly (“*langue*”). Thus, the midrashic exegesis is not inherent in the verse alone, nor is it invented by the homilist out of thin air and then attached to proof-texts technically either. Rather it is exegesis by the “co-citation” of various verses. The process of co-citation removes the verses from their original contexts and creates a new one which is key to the new midrashic understanding. Unlike the approaches which see midrash as an atomistic, non-contextual reading,²⁵ Boyarin celebrates midrash as an act of re-contextualisation, a departure from the local context, driven by the concept that the entire Bible is the immediate context of each and every verse within it.²⁶

But Boyarin’s account, like that of most of his predecessors, confines itself to the realm of aggada—whether the Amoraic aggadic collections or the aggadic sections of the tannaitic midrashim.²⁷ The study of the *halakhic* sections of the tannaitic midrashim focuses mainly on preparatory subjects: the identification of lost midrashim, mapping and characterisation of the different schools of tannaitic midrash, as well as explicating specific halakhic discussions. While these studies advanced scholarship greatly, placing them at the centre of scholarship, they sidelined attempts to understand the hermeneutic context of the halakhic midrashim.²⁸

²⁴ See Loewe 1964, Halivni 1991: 53–79, Kamin 1986: 53–79, Haran 1986, Arend 1994, Henshke 1996.

²⁵ This is the definition of midrash offered by Sara Kamin and adopted broadly by scholars. See Cohen 2011: 7–8. For critic of the assumption that midrash is context-blind see Boyarin 1986; Raviv 2000: 22–29; Hayes 1998.

²⁶ The co-citation and re-contextualisation are not, according to Boyarin, made up of a whole cloth in the homilist’s imagination, but are subject to a number of hermeneutic principles. The most basic principle is that the prophets and hagiographa are perceived as a commentary on the historical events only laconically narrated in the Torah. The other 19 books of the bible are an extension of the sacred history, from the Fathers to the death of Moses, and so can be used to explain and expand the Torah.

²⁷ An exception to this generalisation is Yadin’s study of the Hermeneutic of R. Ishmael’s legal midrash (Yadin 2004). On this study see Rosen-Zvi 2005.

²⁸ Scholars tend to explain (away) the roundabout and scholastic nature of midrash by the fact that it only supports existing laws and does not create them. See e.g. Goldberg 1981 and Rosen-Zvi 2006, and the literature cited there, p. 125 n. 47.

One way of bridging this gap is to tackle the very question of midrashic hermeneutic from a textual, philological perspective by examining midrashic terminology.²⁹ Though homilies may seem long-winded and arbitrary, there are in fact a limited number of variants. The building blocks of homilies, the terms and the structures in which they are situated, repeat themselves in various ways. A mapping of these building blocks reveals a picture which is different to the one apparent from a cursory inspection of occasional examples or from gathering sporadic rabbinic statements about midrash. Just as micro-history in many cases reveals a picture different to that which is seen by examining the wider views of political or social history,³⁰ so a detailed inspection of the midrashic mechanism and its various parts reveals a different facet of midrashic hermeneutics, easy to miss in an overview. I would like to use one midrashic term—*kishmu'o*—as a test case through which the old question of midrashic reflectivity can be examined from a fresh perspective.

The term appears more than sixty times in tannaitic literature, almost all in works from the School of R. Ishmael.³¹ Let us examine three classic occurrences in the Mekhilta of R. Ishmael on the book of Exodus.

- a. *Between your eyes* (Ex 13:9). On the high part of the head. You say on the high part of the head, or between your eyes *kishmu'o*. Scripture says, *you are children of the Lord your God, you shall not scratch yourselves <<nor make a baldness between your eyes>>* (Deut 13:1). Just as *eyes* there means on the high part of the head, so *eyes* here means on the high part of the head. (Mek. RI, *Pisha* 17, ed. Horovitz, 67).

In this homily, *kishmu'o* represents a reading which must be dismissed. The rejected reading is that *between your eyes* means just that: on the bridge of the nose, between the two eyes. Since the rabbis read Exodus 13:9 as referring to the commandment of tefillin, such a reading would imply that the head phylactery should be placed between the eyes. This is of course against the accepted *halakha* and thus cannot be maintained. However, this is not the formal reason given here for dismissing the *kishmu'o* option.

²⁹ This track, abandoned by later scholars, was taken already by Bacher 1899. Analysis of midrashic terminology, albeit mainly for the purpose of differentiating the tannaitic schools, was conducted by Menahem Kahana (1999; 2003) and his late student, Liora Elias Bar-Levav (Elias 2007).

³⁰ See Ginzburg 1993.

³¹ In the Mishna and Tosefta the term has a somewhat different function, which I shall not discuss here.

Rather, a second verse is introduced to explain the 'right' reading of the first one.³²

- b. *Her "she'er", those are her victuals, as it says which the she'er of my people ate (Micha 3:3), and it says and he rained on them she'er like dirt (Ps 78:27). Her clothing—kemashma'o. Her "onah"—that is the way of the world (=intercourse) as it says and he lay with her vaye'aneha (read as: and caused her onah; Gen 34:2). (Mek. RI, Nezikin 3, ed. Horovitz, 258).*

This homily discusses the obligations of a master to a maidservant he has bought, read by the Rabbis as the source for obligations of husbands to their wives. The word *kesut* in the verse which is marked "*kishmu'o*"³³ is situated within a sequence of words which are expounded on by comparison to other verses. Why is *kesut* being read *kishmu'o*, while *she'er* and *onah* are not? The answer is rather simple. *Kesut* is a word which still functions in rabbinic Hebrew, and thus its meaning is clear to the Rabbis and their audience. The latter two are biblical words which require explanation. That they have no *kishmu'o* definition is clear from the fact that in the following homilies other definitions of these words are offered. A similar phenomenon occurs in the following homily (Sifre Deut 44, ed. Finkelstein, 91): "*your grain—kemashma'o. Your tirosh—that is the wine, as it says [...], your yizhar—that is the oil, as it says [...]*". The word for grain, *dagan*, is common to both biblical and rabbinic Hebrew, unlike *tirosh* or *yizhar*, and is thus read *kishmu'o*. It is also the only word in the verse for which a proof-text is not offered.

The term *kishmu'o* occurs only where the biblical word is considered sufficiently self-explanatory. For example, in a discussion regarding the time of the Paschal sacrifice in Mekhilta *Pisha* 5 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 17), the homilist expounds the words *at night* in Deuteronomy 16:5 beginning with a question: "could I be hearing (*shomea ani*) the words *kishmu'o*?" In contrast the parallel words *bein haarbaim* in Exodus 12:6 are expounded beginning with the question: "could I be hearing 'at twilight'?" The latter phrase is not considered self-explanatory, and so no *kishmu'o* reading is offered.

³² In other words, tradition is not a legitimate consideration when rejecting the literal meaning and the homilist is thus compelled to present an exegetical reasoning for his rejection.

³³ *Kemashma'o* and *kishmu'o* are interchangeable. I have found no regularity in the use of the one or the other, and it seems to be a result of a personal choice of scribes and copyists.

However, while self explanatory meaning is a necessary condition for designating a word *kishmu'o*, it is in no way a sufficient condition. In some cases the homilist marks only one term in a biblical verse *kishmu'o*, while expounding all other, equally simple, terms. In such cases the homily—or lack thereof—is not a consequence of the words in question, but of a homiletic *decision*. For example, The Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael on Exodus 17:14 (*Amalek* 2, ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 185): *I shall obliterate*—in this world; *surely obliterate*—in the next world. *Any remnant*—that is Haman. *Of Amalek*—*kishmu'o*. “Amalek” is not simpler than any other phrase in the verse, but is kept as it is by the homilist without any further specification. Needless to say, had the homilist wished to substitute “Amalek” for a specific entity in his time (Rome, heretics or gentiles in general) he could have done so easily; but he does not, and thus biblical *Amalek* remains just biblical *Amalek*.

- c. *And they walked in the desert for three days <<and found no water>>* (Ex 15:22). R. Joshua says: *kishmu'o*. R. Eliezer says: but the water was under the feet of Israel, and the land does not float but on water, as it says *to he who hammers land on water* (Ps 136:6). So why does scripture say *and [they] found no water*? To tire them. Others say: the water that Israel took from the shreds [of the sea] was exacted from them at that time. So why does scripture say *and [they] found no [water]*, as it says *and their great ones sent their young ones to water* (Jer 14:3). The expounders of sealed things said: *and they found no water*—words of Torah which are compared in parables to water. (Mek. RI *Vayyasa* 1, ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 154).

The homilists are discussing the verse which begins the story of Israel's wanderings in the desert. The verse tells that Israel walked in the desert, found no water, and began complaining to Moses. R. Joshua's marking *kishmu'o* does not add any new information to the verse, and thus can only be understood as a polemic against the homilies which follow. Each of the other sages expounds *and they found no water* differently: R. Eliezer seeks the moral of the verse and finds it in the claim that God hid the water on purpose, although it was there (i.e. there was water, but they did not *find* it), to tire them. “Others” read Jeremiah 14:3 (the only other verse where the phrase *and found no water* is found) inter-textually as an expansion of the laconic description in Exodus, and “the expounders of sealed things” read the verse allegorically, as they are wont to. All three share the assumption that the verse must be expounded, that it is not what it seems to be, and that its actual meaning can be revealed only by using midrashic techniques. R. Joshua opposes this assumption: sometimes water is just water.

And so *kishmu'o* marks, in the above examples, three distinct possibilities: a reading which is to be disregarded, a word in a sequence of expounded terms which is marked as requiring no explanation, or an opposition to other homilies. All the occurrences of the term fit into one of these possibilities. More than half of the occurrences are of the first kind: possibilities raised only to be disregarded. The remainder is divided between the other two kinds.³⁴

This mapping, however, should not distract us from what these contexts have in common. In all the cases presented above, the term marks the literal meaning of a lexical unit. In all of them this marking is deemed sufficient to explain the unit; no further explanation is appended to it.³⁵ What is the purpose of this marking, then? As the examples above show, it is always oppositional and reactionary—either against other parts of the verse or against other ways of reading the unit. In both cases, the term marks the intentional avoidance of homily, leaving the word “as-is”.

Such literal reading is *not* to be confused with the “simple meaning”, *Peshat*, argued for by medieval commentators.³⁶ Although the two correlate sometimes, in many cases *kishmu'o* marks a lexical or hyper-literal meaning of the verse—in contrast to the meaning which should be deduced from context or the accepted use of metaphor or idiom. Thus, for example, the Mekhilta (Mek. RI, *Kaspa* 1, ed. Horovitz-Rabin, 319) justly rejects the interpretation *Under his mother* (Lev 22:27)—*kishmu'o*: the Torah surely does not mean that the newborn calf or kid be placed under its mother, between her belly and the ground, for seven days, but that it should be *with* its mother for that time, before it can be taken for sacrifice.

In fact, the departure from the “simple meaning” is much deeper. Medieval *peshat* is an exegetical strategy, whereas *kishmu'o* is *not* a method of exegesis; indeed it is not exegesis at all, but merely marks the *absence* of exegesis.³⁷ The term thus never appears with another homily, prefaced

³⁴ The second kind—words in a sequence—is especially common in the Mishna and Tosefta.

³⁵ Except for two extraordinary cases in Mishna Sotah (8:5; 9:5).

³⁶ Pace Loewe 1964: 169–170, who reads *kishmu'o* as a manifestation of “a semi articulated feeling” toward *peshat*.

³⁷ This can be demonstrated by comparison to Saadia Gaon’s similar term “*masmu'*”. As was suggested by Ben-Shammai 2003: n. 33, this term is probably based on the rabbinic “*Kishmu'o*”. However, Saadia’s term already marks a specific type of interpretation—a literal one—and thus is always accompanied by a short exegesis or translation. *Kishmu'o*, in contrast, is never followed in tannaitic midrashim by an exegesis. Cf. Ben-Shammai’s claim that “*masmu'*” (“heard”) parallels “*zahir*” (“apparent”, “something attained through the

by the ubiquitous *davar acher*—"another interpretation"—but only in a dialectic (as a rejected opinion or in a sequence of words) or polemic context. This term does not allow for its juxtaposition along other modes of exegesis, as Philo is wont to do with allegory, since it is not a mode of exegesis at all, but marks the choice not to expound a verse or a part thereof. It is not a homily, but a sign of the absence of one. This may explain the small number of occurrences of this term, around sixty, since it does not designate all the places where a word should be read in a literal manner, but only places where the literal option must be marked out—against its detractors.

Redactional activity added another layer to the term, labeling not only the literal option, but its insufficiency. This is achieved by the specific location of *kishmu'o* in the homily. When *kishmu'o* appears in a polemic setting, it is usually set *before* the homily it opposes.³⁸ Such a rhetorical arrangement clearly decides in favour of the homily, presenting the *kishmu'o* option as insufficient. Such structures highlight midrash as a conscious activity, which acknowledges that words have literal definitions while at the same time recognising that midrash was made precisely as a departure from those definitions. Indeed, the literal meaning of the term *kishmu'o*—"as it is heard"—itself points to the fact that homilists are aware of the primacy of the literal exegesis but are not content with it.

The literal meaning of the Torah is insufficient for the homilist not only because the content of the Torah is difficult and requires the mediation of a homilist, as pointed out by scholars,³⁹ but first and foremost because it cannot give scripture the full range of meaning it is capable of. It leaves numerous redundancies, duplications and (allegedly) unnecessary verses

sense of sight"), both marking the meaning according to the common use of language. He further differentiates between this early meaning and the more developed concept of "Peshat" as used by later, medieval commentators. Cf. Ben Shammai 1991: 382–383. On the gradual development of the concept of "*Peshuto shel Mikra*" into a hermeneutic principle in medieval Jewish exegesis see Cohen 2011.

³⁸ The only exceptions are two homilies attributed to R. Eliezer: Mekhilta Deuteronomy 23:9 (*Midrash Tannaim*, 57; Kahana 2005: 344) and Sifre Deut 213, ed. Finkelstein p. 246 (which, according to Finkelstein, is taken from the Mekhilta). Compare also the term *devarim kichtavan*, appearing twice in Akivan homilies in Sifre Deuteronomy, both in a polemical context and both *after* the homily they contradict: Sifre Deuteronomy 104 (p. 163), in the name of R. Joshua, and 237, (p. 269) in the name of R. Eliezer. On this rare term see Zussman 1990: 57–58, n. 185.

³⁹ See Halbertal 1999, and compare Henshke 1994. For a critique of this approach see Rosen-Zvi 2000.

and phrases, which can only be accounted for through midrashic tools.⁴⁰ As seen above, redundancies create a real problem for the homilist as they question the basic concept of scripture as omniscient.⁴¹ This is nowhere better summarised than in a homily which reads: *For it is not empty from you* (Deut 32:47) as if it were saying “if it is empty, it is from (meaning: because of) you, for you cannot expound properly”.⁴²

This also finds expression in the rabbinic attitude toward redundancies and duplications. These are not merely considered an opportunity to anchor ideas or traditions in the text, but rather a scandalous phenomenon to interpret away. This is proven by the fact that redundancies are solved in many different ways in tannaitic midrash,⁴³ sharing only the basic understanding that the alleged redundant word or phrase is not superfluous at all.

And so, this term exposes the consciousness of the homilist that midrash is a kind of manipulation, created by the juxtaposition of various verses. Raising the option of literal reading, *kishmu'o*—“as it is heard” without any interpretive intervention, proves that the homilists realise that the literal meaning has a precedent—logically at least—but that in most cases it cannot be sustained; the rabbinic expectation of scripture cannot be satisfied by the literal meaning.

It is therefore clearly a reflexive term, presenting the ‘correct’ meaning as a product of the application of complex midrashic tools, mostly inter-textual,⁴⁴ to nullify the first lexical interpretation. We may state

⁴⁰ Thus the most basic midrashic question is not *ma neemar* (“what does scripture say”) as a modern exegete would have it, but *lama neemar* (“why is this [i.e. word, phrase, passage] said [by scripture]”).

⁴¹ The term was coined in this context by James Kugel (Kugel 1998: 17). For a critic see Elman 2005.

⁴² This version appears in Genesis Rabba (1:14, ed. Theodor-Albeck, 12) and parallels. Cf. the Yerushalmi’s version “if it is empty, it is from you. Why? For you do not toil for it (*yegeim bo*)”.

⁴³ In some cases the midrash adds no homily at all but rather offers a stylistic explanation to the redundancy. See e.g. the two very different explanations—the first legal and the second rhetorical—offered to the alleged redundant formulation “both they and you” (Numbers 18:3) in Sifre Numbers 116 (ed. Horovitz p. 132): “Whence do I learn that [priest are warned not to switch] one service for another? For scripture says *and you* [...] What do: *both they and you* (Num. 18:3) teach us? Since Korach protested against Aharon, scripture related all the warnings to him”.

⁴⁴ For this reason several of the *kishmu'o* homilies open with the question “why was this said” (*lama neemar*), for by rejecting the *kishmu'o* option they point out the fact that in order to reach the right result one must combine multiple verses, thus establishing their necessity.

this even more strongly: since the term does not offer any explanation other than the marking of the literal option, and thus of the homily as its opposite, it is nothing but a reflection: a pure form of consciousness and consciousness-building terminology. Exegetical manipulation is a choice, not a default: not only is midrash a reflective and conscious act, but it is able to denote this component of its own nature with a special term.

It is not surprising therefore that the term is almost always implemented by the School of Rabbi Ishmael, which systematically espouses greater consciousness of the various levels of interpretation it employs. Indeed, the parallels with the School of R. Akiva present in many cases a similar exegesis but without any special term. Instead they cite synonyms⁴⁵ or just repeat the biblical term.⁴⁶ In several cases the parallel homilies from R. Akiva's School simply ignore the words marked by the School of R. Ishmael as *kishmu'o*.⁴⁷ This means that the term is present in the School of R. Ishmael not because the latter tended to read verses more literally, but because this School is more cognisant of the various levels of interpretation it employs, more careful to mark them, and has a larger vocabulary of terms with which to do so.⁴⁸

The analysis of one midrashic term yielded instances of rabbinic reflectivity not acknowledged by scholars. It also revealed some assumptions behind the rabbinic aversion to redundancies, which are markedly different from the role superfluous words play in Philo's commentaries, despite

⁴⁵ See e.g. Mek RI, *Pisha* 17, ed. Horovitz-Rabin pp. 66–67: “or on your hand *kishmu'o*”, “or between your eyes *kishmu'o*”. In the parallel in Mek RS, however: “perhaps he should put them on his hand”, “perhaps he should put them on his sleeve”, “perhaps he should put them on his forehead”.

⁴⁶ See e.g. Mek RI *Nezikin* 5, ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 253: “her clothes—*kemashma'o*”, while in the parallel homily in Mek RS we read: “her clothes—those are clothing”. See also Sifre Num 57, ed. Horovitz, 71: “and on your new months—*kemashma'o*”, and in Sifre Zutta ad. Loc., “those are the new months”.

⁴⁷ See e.g. Mekhilta Deuteronomy (Kahana 2005: 350): “and your vows and contributions—*kishmu'o*”. This is the only phrase in the verse which is not expounded in Sifre Deut 63, ed. Finkelstein, p. 130. Compare also Sifre Num 103, ed. Horovitz, p. 101: “Man—*kishmu'o*, and live—those are the ministering angels”, and in Sifra Nedava 2:2, ed. Weiss, p. 4a: “For man cannot see me and live—even the lofty animals cannot see the divine glory”, while the word “man” is not expounded at all.

⁴⁸ This can be shown from analysing the parallel Akivan term: *vadai*. Unlike *kishmu'o*, *vadai* does not appear only as an alternative to the exegetical activity, but also as part of the exegetical process itself, its first stage. See e.g. Mek RS 21:28, ed. Epstein-Melammed, 179: <the ox will surely be stoned> and his flesh not eaten—*Vadai*. [But] when he says “his flesh”, this [includes also] what we said: “to make the sinew, bones, horns and claws like the meat”.

superficial similarities in interpretive techniques. This example thus illustrates the two methodological claims presented at the outset of the article: that broad hermeneutic assumptions, not only local themes and specific techniques, should be taken into account when comparing different interpretive discourses like that of Philo and the Rabbis. And that in doing so, midrashic terminology should play a greater role since it enables the “lost” reflectivity of the Rabbis to be—at least partially—recovered.

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FROM NARRATIVE PRACTICE TO CULTURAL POETICS:
LITERARY ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE RABBINIC SENSE OF SELF

Joshua Levinson

For can you find me a single man who cares how he does what he does, and is interested, not in what he can get, but in the manner of his own action. Who when he is deliberating, is interested in the deliberation itself?

LITERARY ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE SUBJECT

The conjunction of Homer and the Bible cannot but bring to mind the opening chapter of Auerbach's *Mimesis*, "Odysseus' Scar."² I return later to Auerbach's understanding of biblical characters, but for now I mention his magisterial investigation of how different techniques of representation capture a particular culture's fundamental forms for organising experience, because I too will address here certain issues of representation. However, instead of asking about the reflection of the world in the text, I focus on the work of the text in the world.³ Under the rubric of what I call the literary anthropology of the Rabbis,⁴ I discuss their "sense of self"; how both legal and literary texts construct certain types of subjectivity. Just as the anthropologist can study a culture as text because "the real is as imagined as the imaginary,"⁵ so too the literary scholar can investigate the presence of the text in the world because the imagined is as real as reality.

One of the bridges that joins anthropology and literature is the category of the subject, the specific form or position that the self can take in a given culture. As the literary text fashions characters, so the ideological

¹ Epictetus, *Discourses* II, 16, 15.

² Auerbach 1953: 3–23.

³ For an important re-evaluation of Auerbach as a form of cultural criticism see Holquist 1993.

⁴ This term has been defined differently in both anthropology and literary theory. My own use relates to the manner in which a culture tells certain stories and not others about a subject's relationship to itself and to the world around it; how it conceptualises a person's ability to formulate plans and act in the world, to create an interpretive network of goals, plans, and psychological motivations that create coherence and intelligibility. See also Poyatos 1988 and Iser 1989.

⁵ Geertz 1980: 136.

apparatus of a society fashion subjects. Moreover, both the subject and the character receive their identity through narrative as the individual becomes a subject only once he has accepted upon him or herself a narrative function.⁶ I would like to begin to sketch the contours of the rabbinic subject and sense of self that is shared by both the legal and literary discourses of the rabbinic corpus.⁷ My working assumption is that a legal discourse constructs a specific type of subject which is interpellated not only as subject-to-the-law, but is also called upon to assume a certain subject identity through-the-law, a subject of the law. In the first part of this article I will discuss some of the contours of this legal subject, and then move on to investigate the representation of the subject as character in rabbinic literary discourses.

Homeric scholarship has long and richly debated the nature of Homeric man's inner self, the measure of his autonomy and psychological integrity. While these discussions have moved away from the radical claims of Bruno Snell and others that "Homer does not know genuine personal decisions," or, "Homeric man has not yet awakened to the fact that he possesses in his own soul the sources of his powers,"⁸ there is still considerable controversy over questions of continuity or development and issues related to the nature of the self and subjectivity.⁹ In spite of the scholarly consensus that Snell had at best overstated his case (and at worst misrepresented the evidence vis à vis Homer), this debate has spilled over into later periods instigating a growing scholarly consensus of "a new or modified notion of self [that] emerges in the Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman periods that is closer to the subjective-individualist conceptions than are the ideas embodied in preceding Greek culture."¹⁰ Richard Sorabji has

⁶ Frith 1996: 122; Eagleton 1991: 145.

⁷ Even though most of my examples here are drawn from Palestinian rabbinic literature, for the purposes of this article I have not sufficiently distinguished between the various strata of the rabbinic corpus which remains very much a scholarly desideratum; for now see Goldenberg 1975. On some of the problems and issues in defining the rabbinic subject see Schofer 2003, 2005 who was one of the first scholars to substantially engage with these issues.

⁸ Snell 1953: 20–21.

⁹ The literature on these controversies is extensive. See, for example, M. Finkelberg's essay in this volume; Sharples 1983; Gaskin 1990; Halliwell 1990; Gill 1996.

¹⁰ Gill 2006: 343. As Bartsch points out, Gil also warns us that "not only is *self* a modern English term with no equivalent in Greek [nor in Hebrew], but as we tend to use it, it reflects a particularly modern tendency to privilege such components as a unitary consciousness, personal individuality, self-discovery, and the uniqueness and worth of each individual self, a tendency that inevitably distorts our understanding of ancient notions of ethical selfhood" (Bartsch 2006: 233; Gil 1996: 2).

written on “the explosion of new ideas about the Self” in Late Antiquity that “established the basis of freedom and morality in the consciousness of the individual.”¹¹ Gill has noted that Hellenistic-Roman thought is marked by a heightened focus on self-consciousness, and Foucault has argued that a special feature of this period was “an intensification of the relation to oneself by which one constituted oneself as a subject of one’s acts . . . that is, of the forms in which one is called upon to take oneself as an object of knowledge and a field of action.”¹² This intellectual and religious ferment could be said to reach a certain maturity in the writings of Augustine, who gave unprecedented prominence to the place of will (*voluntas*) in moral and religious life, declaring that “in the inward man dwells truth.”¹³ Moving to the Christian subculture of the Empire, Guy Stroumsa, among others, has emphasised the crucial importance of the emergence of a “newly reflexive self” in early Christianity “a subject turned back upon itself in ways unknown before,” and by tracing its Judaic and Hellenic roots he has shown how this new anthropology crystallised in the period from the 2nd to the 4th centuries of the Common Era.¹⁴

I would like to follow up on these insights and begin to fill in two lacunae. Firstly, this period coincides with the formation of classical rabbinic literature, and therefore begs the question not of Judaic influences, but rather of Jewish expressions of this new anthropology. Secondly, when scholars discuss these issues they usually limit themselves to a certain type of discourse.¹⁵ Rabbinic literature, with its unique medley of imaginative and legal discourses, provides us with an opportunity to follow this question across various generic registers. Undoubtedly, this project has as many pitfalls as it has ramifications. It has direct bearing on complex philosophical, theological and moral questions, on the history of emotions, and questions of representation in law and literature. Given this broad scope and my own limitations, this article is very much a modest proposal, but I believe that it can provide a fruitful meeting-ground

¹¹ Sorabji 2006: 43; Dihle 1982: 41.

¹² Foucault 1988: 42. Alongside agreement with Foucault’s general observation there is much cogent criticism of his (overly modern) conception of the self and subjectivity, his methodology and historical conclusions, see: Hadot 1996: 206–213; Gill 2006: 330–334; Bartsch 2006: 251–255.

¹³ Augustine, *De vera religione* XXXIX.72 (*in interiore homine habitat veritas*); Sorabji 2006: 50; Taylor 1989: 129; Dihle 1982: 129; Gill 2006: 328; Cary 2000.

¹⁴ Stroumsa 1990: 35; Idem 1999.

¹⁵ A rich exception to this tendency is the erudite work of Gill (1996, 2006) who masterfully uses the Greek literary and philosophical traditions to illuminate each other.

for literary and religious concerns in the cultural imagination of Late Antiquity.

THE SUBJECT IN LEGAL DISCOURSE

At the risk of over-generalising, the subject in biblical law, with very few exceptions, is defined and evaluated mostly by what he does, and these actions determine if the agent is guilty or innocent, pure or impure. Suddenly, in rabbinic literature, we begin to hear echoes of a different type of legal subject. This is seen most clearly in certain legal terms and categories that emerge here for the first time, like; “commandments must be performed with intention,” or, unintentional work on the Sabbath. Without, at present, going into the history of these concepts, they are all rabbinic innovations that grant a new legal status to the internal world of the legal subject.

It is important to clarify at this stage that I am not positing a strict dichotomy between biblical law that only rarely takes account of the legal ramifications of interiority or *mens rea*, and between rabbinic literature that does. Both ancient near-eastern and Greek legal systems promulgated diminished punishment for unintentional acts, as, in certain cases, did the Bible and the Qumran community.¹⁶ However, even if biblical law recognises a few cases of diminished punishment for unintentional acts, I will suggest that rabbinic literature reflects a fundamental shift in its understanding of the reflexive self that expresses itself both in its conceptualisation of the subject and in its legal ramifications.

This shift can be most clearly seen precisely in those few cases where biblical law seems to favour intention over action; for example; the case of unintentional murder (Ex 21:13, Deut 19).¹⁷ While it may seem that the intention of the legal subject is the decisive factor for exoneration, it is more precise to say that recognition of intention, or lack thereof, causes only diminished punishment (exile, not death). The act of murder itself remains the motivating factor, and therefore it can only be expiated by the

¹⁶ Plato already stated that “in all states and by all legislators whatsoever, two kinds of actions have been distinguished—the one, voluntary, the other, involuntary; and they have legislated about them accordingly” (Laws 9). See also Daube 1981; Jackson 1971; Parush 2000: 50; Qimron 1990; Anderson 1995; Shemesh 2003.

¹⁷ For an important discussion of another example see Edrei 2007.

death of the High Priest (Nu 35:25). There is no option here of a mistaken intention that annuls the forbidden act, or makes it non-adjudicable.

In spite of the express distinction here between homicide and involuntary manslaughter, there is still a world of difference between the biblical text and the stratification of consciousness that the Rabbis introduced.¹⁸ The Bible recognises only the two legal categories of premeditated and inadvertent murder, and respectively two verdicts; capital punishment or exile. The conceptual system of the rabbis demands a full correspondence not only between the intended act and its consequences, but also both acts must be of the same type, entail the same physical results and legal consequences.¹⁹ Therefore, in addition to the biblical category of unintentional homicide that entails exile, categories such as willful carelessness and accidental negligence now exist which do not entail any punishment whatsoever. For example, the Mishna states that “even if he intended killing one but killed another, he is not liable” (mSan 9, 2). Likewise, while the situation of “a man threw a stone into the public domain and after the stone had left his hand another person put out his head and was killed by it” would seem to exemplify the biblical description of accidental homicide that “if he did not do it by design, but it came about by an act of God, I will assign you a place to which he can flee” (Ex 21:13)—rabbinic law exempts the agent from any punishment, including exile.²⁰ Thus even if we acknowledge the limited sphere of subjectivity in these biblical laws, there is still a wide gap between them and the conceptual possibility of human intention that influences reality itself.²¹ This different conception of the legal subject will be discussed in the first half of this essay and the representation of this subject in imaginative literature in the second half.

THE LEGAL SUBJECT IN PURITY LAWS

Biblical scholars have pointed out that the priestly categories of pure and impure are intimately connected to the creation story, and conceived as related to immutable physical properties; fins and scales, life and death, etc.²² According to chapter 11 of Leviticus, corpses can transfer their

¹⁸ On possible developments within the biblical legal corpus see Bartor 2010: 134, 160.

¹⁹ Eilberg-Schwartz 1986: 32.

²⁰ Midrash Tannaim 19:5 (Hoffman, p. 113).

²¹ Noam 2009: 183.

²² Milgrom 1991: 689; Eilberg-Schwartz 1990: 219–220.

impurity only to food “that may be eaten” and vessels “that can be used.” Only that which is defined as such can become impure if it comes into contact with a source of contagion. In the rabbinic understanding, “impurity pertains to artifacts insofar as they are part of the human sphere—since artifacts are invested, in a way, with the subjectivity of their makers and owners. The objects that have agency in the impurity system have it because they are seen as extensions of human beings.”²³ Against this biblical background, I want to take a short look at some rabbinic texts.

A general rule has been stated concerning pure food: whatever is designated as food for human consumption is susceptible to impurity, unless it is rendered unfit for a dog. And whatever is not designated as food for humans is pure, until it is designated for human consumption. For instance, if a young pigeon fell into a wine-press [and died] and one intended to pick it out for an idolater [to sell for food], it is impure; [but if he intended to give it to a] dog, it is pure [. . .] If a deaf mute, an imbecile or a minor intended it as food, it remains pure.²⁴

Food that is fit for human consumption is automatically susceptible to impurity. This Mishna talks about how a given object that is **not** fit for Jewish consumption—a bird that fell and died in a wine press—can be pure or impure according to the intentions of the user. If he thought to sell it as food to a gentile, then it is automatically rendered susceptible to impurity. If, however, he thought to give it to a dog—thereby revealing that it is not intended for human consumption—this same bird is pure. In other words, the mere intention of the subject has the capacity to influence the nature of the object. Therefore, as the text continues, if someone who is considered to be mentally incapacitated thought to use the bird as food, this intention is unable to effect a category change.

We find the same relation to intentionality in relation to objects, that only an entity which is considered to be an expression of subjective agency can contract impurity:

A table one of whose legs was broken is pure. If a second leg was lost it is still pure, but if a third was lost it becomes impure if the owner has the intention of using it.²⁵

A three-legged table is a useful object and can, therefore, contract impurity. Therefore, if it lost one or two of its legs it ceases to become an expression

²³ Balberg 2011: 28.

²⁴ mToharoth 8, 6. All quotes from the Mishna are according to ms. Kaufman A50.

²⁵ mKelim 22, 2.

of agency and is pure. If, however, it lost all of its legs, then it is transformed from a broken table into a potential tray, and if the owner entertained the thought to use it in this manner then mere thought changes the status of the object to one which can contract impurity.

We seem to be a far cry from the biblical texts where impurity is inherent in an object, and therefore contagious by mere physical contact. In rabbinic law, the nature of the object is at least partly determined by the intention of its user. We can witness here the emergence of a new type of legal subject whose intentions influence the nature of the object. It should be stressed, however, that this new legal subject is not marked by a personal individuality, autonomy, or unitary consciousness in the Cartesian sense, but rather is much closer to what Gill has called an 'objective-participant' model of collective subjectivity that stresses the relation of the self to a consensual community of values (what is considered edible and what is considered useful) and not the link of selfhood to individuality.²⁶

PIGUL

My next example is especially striking. The Torah (Lev 7:18) prohibits eating sacrifices out of their proscribed times and places; these are called *pigul* and punished by extirpation (*karet*). It seems fairly clear from the verses that if one eats his sacrifice on the third day he is culpable. This is an objective category solely dependent upon the time and place of the offence, Jubilees (21:10) follows this understanding, and likewise Philo states that "there are two days only during which God permits the nation to make use of the sacrifice . . . He has, with all possible strictness, forbidden the use of those meats being reserved to the third day . . . and He declares that the man who has merely tasted of it is blamable" (On Special Laws, 1.220).

The rabbinic position is radically different. These verses now relate not to one who ate his sacrifice on the third day, but rather to one who merely thought to do so at the time of the sacrifice on the first day, as we see in the following text:

IT SHALL NOT COUNT FOR HIM WHO OFFERED IT (Lev 7:18)—R. Eliezer said:
Incline your ear to hear: Scripture speaks of one who thinks [on the first

²⁶ Gill 1996: 11–16.

day] of eating of his sacrifice on the third day . . . Others say, it becomes unfit through thought [on the first day] and not on the third day.²⁷

Even though the sacrifice in all of its particulars was performed properly on the first day, the mere thought about a possible future infringement is sufficient to transform the sacrifice into *pigul*; which is now a sin of thought and not of deed.

SEEDS

My last example from rabbinic law is concerned with the impurity of produce. Types of produce can become contaminated only when moist since water acts as a conductor of impurity, as it says in Leviticus 11:38: BUT IF WATER IS PUT ON THE SEED, AND ANY PART OF A CARCASS FALLS UPON IT, IT SHALL BE UNCLEAN FOR YOU. We have for this law, a parallel text from Qumran 4Q274 which seems to follow the biblical conception:

Any herb [which has no] dew may be eaten. For if one [were to put it on] the ground and [water] wetted it [when] the rain [falls] upon it, if an [unclean person] touches it, let him by no means [eat it].

Here, as Baumgarten has remarked, the laws of pure and impure—like in the Bible—are based upon objective circumstances, giving no place to will or intention.²⁸ Once again, the rabbis take a different approach, and so we read in the Mishna:

If one carried wheat to be milled and rain came down upon it and he was glad of it, it comes under the law of IF WATER IS PUT.²⁹

The Rabbis severely limited the ability of water to transfer impurity to the situation where the produce became wet with the express approval of the owner. Therefore, the mere presence of moisture—which is sufficient in the Bible and Qumran—is here only a necessary but not a sufficient condition to transfer impurity; what is missing is intention.

What is the upshot of these few examples? In all of these cases the Rabbis have introduced a new dimension into the biblical law, whereby a subject's thoughts and intentions play a significant role in establishing the nature of an object or the value of a deed. **Self and interiority have come**

²⁷ Sifra Tzav 8 (ms Vatican 66); see also bZev 28b.

²⁸ Baumgarten 1994: 98–99; Idem 1999: 90; Ottenheijm 2000: 134.

²⁹ mMachshirim 3, 6.

together in a new perception of agency. Moreover, in those cases where we have parallels from Second Temple legal texts, they almost always seem to follow the biblical realist conception of action.³⁰ Not only are these legal innovations based upon a new inward turn, but they also see in the agent of that experience an object for investigation and training; the self has become a subject-of-the-law. This development exemplifies Foucault's observation quoted above that in this period we see the emergence of new technologies of the self that express themselves in "the forms in which one is called upon to take oneself as an object of knowledge and a field of action, so as to transform, correct, and purify oneself." I suggest that if we seek the ideological framework that enables the emergence of this new legal sense of self, then it is at least partially to be found in a new type of subject. Without a concept of self that assumes that "in the inward man dwells truth," as Augustine said, these laws could not have come into existence.

This transformation concurs with what Gil and others have suggested concerning a heightened focus on self-consciousness and a new concept of self that emerges in Stoic thought of the period, especially in that of Epictetus (55–135 C.E.). These discussions focus on his use of the term *prohairesis*, usually translated as volition or rational agency. This term marks "the basis for everything that is 'us', our character, judgments, and motivations . . . It is what makes us agents or beings capable of formulating objectives . . . The essence of the self is our decision making . . . and *prohairesis* is what persons can be held fully responsible for and what is up to them."³¹ A. A. Long has argued that Epictetus' use of this term reflects a shift in the

³⁰ Although outside the purview of this article, it must be said that we begin to find within Second-Temple literature an emerging voice of interiorisation. Qimron and Anderson have shown that the Qumran sect applied the biblical model of unintentional sin to the special laws of the sect. Likewise, Rosen-Zvi (2008: 522) and Kister (2010) have convincingly shown how the evil inclination as an external demonic entity is gradually transformed into an independent yet internalised force, such that "the dangers lurking for man are within him, and not outside." For example, we find in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs that Joseph declares that "not even in thought did I yield to her" (TJ 9:2), and "the disposition of his soul did not admit an evil desire" (TR 4:9). The scene of seduction has moved from the bedroom of Potiphar's wife to Joseph's soul, and as Rosen-Zvi remarked in a different context "inner thoughts and internal conflicts, rather than external deeds, stand at the center of the narrative" (Rosen-Zvi 2006: 74). In relation to the materials mentioned above, these examples raise the interesting possibility that legal discourses may change and evolve at a more conservative pace than their literary equivalents.

³¹ Long 2002: 214, 218, 220; Dobbin 1991: 111–135.

nature of the representation of the self and “is best interpreted as a new focus on consciousness, on the individuality of the perceiving subject.”³²

The Stoic philosopher achieves this state through what Pierre Hadot has called “spiritual exercises” (Foucault’s ‘technologies of the self’) that focus on *prosechô* or attention:

Attention (*prosoché*) is the fundamental Stoic spiritual attitude. It is a continuous vigilance and presence of mind, self-consciousness which never sleeps, a constant tension of the spirit. Thanks to this attitude, the philosopher is fully aware of what he does at each instant, and he *wills* his actions fully.³³

Ciarán McMahon has shown that this attention or *prosechô* (as an exercise and the goal of the exercise) characterises the relationship between human subjectivity and the wider environment.³⁴ Like the words of Epicurus quoted at the beginning of this essay, the philosopher must concentrate upon “how he does what he does.”³⁵ Interestingly enough, this term already began to be “judaised” in the first century B.C. Wisdom of Solomon, which declares that “love of Wisdom is the keeping of her laws, and attention (*prosoché*) to her laws is assurance of immortality” (6:18).

This inward turn as self-examination is similar to Harry Frankfurt’s famous theory of personhood that was utilised by Gill and Bartsch to examine the new reflexivity that emerged in the Stoic sense of self. As is well-known, Frankfurt proposed that the mark of a ‘person’ is having ‘second-order’ desires, or desires *about* which ‘first-order’ desires to have. It is this second-order reflexive ‘I’ that is called upon to evaluate and make judgments about the self’s wishes, as freedom of will can now be defined as the freedom to want what one wants to want.³⁶

The rabbinic legal subject with its attendant emphasis on thought and intention seems to me to be remarkably similar to these exercises. I suggest that by legislating a new ‘second-order’ obligation that makes proper legal practice contingent upon a certain type of ‘attention’ to how

³² Long 1996: 266.

³³ Hadot 1995: 84; see also Davidson 1990; Sorabji 2000: 228–252; Schofer 2005: 163.

³⁴ McMahon (2007: 36). He also remarks that etymologically, *prosechô* is used ‘in the sense of “to hold to”, and “to turn to or towards”, often in the context of a ship heading to port. In this case it is also used in the sense of “to turn one’s mind to”, “to be intent on”, and “to devote oneself to the service of.” Interestingly enough, the equivalent rabbinic word for intention (*kavannah*) also means ‘to turn towards’ and it too was originally used in a spatial context.

³⁵ Epictetus, *Discourses* II, 16, 15.

³⁶ Frankfurt 1971: 15; Gill 1996: 413; 2006: 353; Bartsch: 236–239.

one does what one does, rabbinic legal discourse actually creates a new legal subject—a reflexive second-order self or what Bartsch called a **dialogic self**—that promotes “a continuous vigilance and presence of mind.” Thus, perhaps the most important innovation here is that biblical law has become in the hands of the Rabbis a technology of self-fashioning, transforming the subject into an object for himself “in which one is called upon to take oneself as an object of knowledge and a field of action.” Since appropriate legal action can only be the result of self-scrutiny, as to know oneself is to watch oneself, the law has been transformed from something that an agent does *in* the world—into something that must reflect the agent’s *internal* world, as the law itself becomes a means for constructing a reflexive self.³⁷

INTENTION AND SUBJECTIVITY IN MIDRASH AGGADAH

I now turn to some midrashic texts and begin to build a bridge that would enable us to see both types of discourse as expressions of a common anthropology. When we move from legal to imaginative discourse (a bad name for sure, as if the legal is any less imagined)—then we are moving from subjects to characters. While a subject is not a character, nor is a character exactly a subject; for our purposes here we can say that a character enacts a certain type of subjectivity.³⁸

First of all, there are any number of general statements that express these sentiments, like: “thoughts of sin are more injurious than sin itself,” or, “even if one [merely] thinks of performing a precept, but is accidentally prevented from doing so, Scripture ascribes it to him as though he had performed it.”³⁹ Here we can clearly see the importance of intention in relation to deeds, such that mere thought can sometimes even replace action. While these types of midrashic texts are usually interpreted as pietistic hyperbole, it seems to me that in light of the legal texts we saw, we are better served if we see them as expressions of the same rabbinic sense of self.

³⁷ As I hinted above, this development is also related to a gradual emergence of more nominalist views of law that occur in the rabbinic period. See Schwartz 1992; Rubenstein 1999.

³⁸ See Gill 1983; 1986.

³⁹ bYoma 29a; bKid 40a.

The opposite scenario—if one only thought of sinning but did not actually do so—is a little more complex. The Talmudic discussion in bKid-dushin 40a says that mere thought does not count as sin. However, later on in this tractate (81b) there appears the wonderful story of R. Hiyya bar Ashi. This overly pious rabbi tried to conquer his sexual lust by withdrawing from his wife. Then, as an act of protest, she dressed up as a prostitute and seduced him. Upon returning home he attempts to kill himself in remorse. When his wife reveals to him that she was the woman he slept with, he rejects her entreaties by saying; “I, however, intended to sin.” R. Hiyya sees himself as guilty of sleeping with another woman—in spite of the fact that this other woman was his wife.⁴⁰

From the moment that thought is separated from deed then the distinction between them becomes blurred. We now must ask; what if thought opposes deed, or, what is the sin that condemns a person or the commandment that credits him? The Babylonian Talmud (bNazir 23a) contains a sustained discussion on these issues, and I want to look at some of its elements. The discussion begins in the legal sphere:

I. Our Rabbis taught: BUT IF HER HUSBAND ANNULS [HIS WIFE'S VOWS] ON THE DAY HE HEARS THEM, THEN NOTHING THAT HAS CROSSED HER LIPS SHALL STAND, WHETHER VOWS OR SELF-IMPOSED OBLIGATIONS. HER HUSBAND HAS ANNULLED THEM AND GOD WILL FORGIVE HER (Nu 30:13). Scripture is speaking of a woman who made a Nazirite oath and her husband annulled it without her knowledge. [She then drinks wine and becomes impure (by contact) with a corpse.] When R. Akiba reached this verse he would weep, declaring; ‘If concerning one who intended to eat swine’s flesh and by chance eats lamb the Torah says he needs atonement and forgiveness, then how much more so does one who intended to take swine’s flesh and actually took it, stand in need of atonement’.⁴¹

The biblical verse seems to contradict itself in saying that the wife’s vow is annulled by her husband, and yet she is still in need of atonement. The Talmud, therefore, creates a scenario where the wife is unaware of the fact that her husband has annulled her vow. When she now “sins” by acting contrary to her vows (the Nazirite is prohibited to drink wine or incur corpse defilement; Nu 6), she still needs forgiveness in spite of the fact that the vow itself and its attendant prohibitions have been annulled.

⁴⁰ We can perhaps hear in his sense of self an echo of Jesus’ words in Matthew: “But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mat 5:27–28).

⁴¹ The bracketed text is taken from the parallel version that appears in bKiddushin 81b that I include here for reasons of clarity.

Thus, her intention to sin is sufficient to condemn her. From the moment that we separate thought from deed, the internal from the external, then we create the possibility of opposing them

II. . . . FOR THE WAYS OF THE LORD ARE RIGHT; THE RIGHTEOUS CAN WALK IN THEM, WHILE SINNERS STUMBLE IN THEM (Hos 14:10)—[How could one path have contrary results? This verse speaks of] Lot and his daughters. Their intention was for the sake of a commandment, and therefore it is written 'THE RIGHTEOUS CAN WALK IN THEM'; whereas Lot intended to sin, and therefore 'THE SINNERS STUMBLE IN THEM'.

This is a stunning reversal of the biblical narrative where the daughters initiate the seduction of their drunken and unconscious father. Here, it is Lot who is guilty of incest because he slept with his daughters with intent to sin, yet his daughters themselves are righteous because they slept with their father in order to re-populate the planet. The same act can be categorised in opposing manners according to the intention of the character. I see this text as the midrashic equivalent to the case of the bird which fell into a wine-vat discussed above; the intention of the agent determines the religious significance and value of the action. This notion reaches its logical and perhaps radical conclusion in the continuation of the Talmudic discussion (23b):

III. Ulla said: Both Tamar and Zimri were promiscuous; Tamar fornicated and gave birth to kings and prophets, Zimri fornicated and on his account tens of thousands of Israel perished?! R. Nahman bar Isaac said: A transgression performed with good intention, is better than a precept performed without [proper] intent; as it is written, BLESSED ABOVE WOMEN SHALL JAEL BE, THE WIFE OF HEBER THE KENITE. MORE BLESSED IS SHE THAN THE WOMEN IN THE TENT (Ju 5:24), and who are THE WOMEN IN THE TENT?—Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.

The identical actions of Tamar and Zimri brought about contrasting results, because a sin performed with intention towards a culturally sanctioned goal is considered superior to a commandment performed for the wrong reasons. Here, the preference of intention over action comes very close to the anti-nomian, as Tamar's seduction of her father-in-law—a blatant biblical prohibition—places her even above the Matriarchs.

BIBLICAL CHARACTERS IN THE MIDRASH

The rabbinic expansions of the biblical narrative are a particularly fruitful genre for investigating this new inward turn. Here, we can readily see how the Rabbis revise the biblical narrative to align it with their own

concerns. As I briefly mentioned, more than sixty years ago Auerbach had already characterised biblical narration as “fraught with background,” where “thoughts and feelings are only suggested by the silence and the fragmentary speeches.”⁴² Leaving aside his characterisation of Homer which has been criticised on various fronts,⁴³ it must also be said that he has simplified the narrative complexity and ideological pay-off of the biblical reticence. Be that as it may, many scholars have pointed out the opposite tendency in midrashic expansions of the biblical text. Here we see that the Rabbis constantly strive to reveal the inner world of the characters, so absent or muted in biblical poetics.

Usually, this is understood as a type of gap-filling; as an attempt on the part of the midrash to enliven the characters by adding a certain roundness and depth. I think this view is both right and wrong. While it is true that the midrash is closing gaps in the biblical narrative, we have to remember that gaps themselves are contingent, and depend upon the conventions of a given reading formation.⁴⁴ We perceive an element as lacking because we approach the text with certain presuppositions and expectations about what should be there. **Here poetics joins history; what is new in rabbinic poetics is precisely this expectation of an interiority that defines the nature of the character and the value of his actions.** Therefore, what was unproblematic for the biblical narrator—and did not need mentioning—becomes a gap in the rabbinic reading formation. We saw indications of this in the text on Lot and his motives, or Tamar and hers; so also in the following text from Genesis Rabbah (65:15):

AND HE WENT, AND TOOK, AND BROUGHT THEM TO HIS MOTHER (Gen 27:14)—
under duress, forced, and weeping.

This vignette touches upon the question of Jacob’s relation to his mother’s plan to deceive his infirm father in order to steal the blessings. Do the three concurrent verbs—went, took, and brought—convey commitment

⁴² Auerbach 1953: 9.

⁴³ Sternberg 1985: 232; Bakker 1999.

⁴⁴ “By reading formation I mean a set of discursive and inter-textual determinations which organize and animate the practice of reading, connecting texts and readers in specific relations to one another in constituting readers as reading subjects of particular types and texts as objects-to-be-read in particular ways... Texts exist only as always-already organized or activated to be read in certain ways just as readers exist as always-already activated to read in certain ways: neither can be granted a virtual identity that is separable from the determinate ways in which they are gridded onto one another with different reading formations... Different reading formations produce their own texts, their own readers and their own contexts” (Bennett 1987: 70).

or coercion? The midrash solves this problem by linking these three verbs of action to three descriptions of Jacob's internal state. Thus, while the biblical narrative describes only what Jacob does and leaves us to speculate about his motives, the midrash works to justify Jacob's actions by exposing the internal conflict of the son caught between his two opposing parents. This text adopts the same rhetorical tactic as the previous ones. While the biblical narrative describes only actions, the midrash evaluates these actions by transforming them into expressions of the character's internal world. Thus, like the daughters of Lot, Jacob is exonerated for deceiving his father in spite of his actions because of his thoughts.

I am suggesting that we can see a cultural homology between legal and imaginative discourses, both in the Bible and in the rabbinic sources in the manner they construct their subjects. Just as the legal subject in biblical law is constituted and evaluated mostly by his actions; and these determine if he is innocent or guilty, pure or impure—so too the biblical narrator does not usually penetrate into the subjective world of his characters, and only rarely does he let that world speak for itself. In contrast to this biblical poetics, I suggest that just as the Rabbis demand a certain interiority for legal acts to be valid—and thereby transform legal discourse into a means of self-fashioning that trains the subject to constantly observe his “manner of action and deliberation” as Epictetus said—so too when they re-write the biblical narrative they constantly expose and interrogate the interior world of its characters. In both the legal and the imaginative discourses of the Rabbis, we see again and again that a person's thoughts and emotions determine the religious significance of his actions.

Again, I must stress that I am not claiming that the biblical texts are unaware of or indifferent towards interiority and further work needs to be done by genre and period before it would be possible to fully describe a ‘biblical’ or ‘rabbinic’ subject. However, I do think that we can see a significant shift in an emerging dominance of interiority and a newly-reflexive self in rabbinic texts, which expresses itself in a new legal theory and a new poetics. I suggest that this change in both types of discourse is based upon a new anthropology; the cultural need of the rabbinic authors to evaluate the actions of the biblical characters as a consequence of their internal world—just as the legal act must be a result of a proper intention.

CONTOURS OF INTERIORITY

I want now to take a very brief look at some familiar texts about Abraham's journey to Canaan in order to begin to delineate in a more detailed

manner the comparative contours of this internal landscape. In Genesis 12, Abraham receives the command to leave his family and country for an unknown destination and immediately sets out. There are various problems and issues in these verses, but what interests me is precisely what is not problematic for the biblical narrator: what was Abraham's reaction to this commandment? According to what I have been saying till now, it is clear that this question is not a question at all for the biblical narrator, who wishes to present Abraham as a paradigm of obedience according to his actions.

One of the most fascinating aspects of text reception is its interpretive 'after-life', how textual 'blanks' are transformed into narrative gaps as the text moves into a new reading formation. A gap derives from lack of information concerning the represented world, whether with regard to its events or characters, or the causality of the plot itself. Their purpose is to activate the reader to create a coherent imagined world by filling them in. The blank, likewise, is a result of omission and lack of representation within the text, however it has no artistic motivation. It is very difficult to separate these two concepts because there is no formal distinction between them. Only after the reader posits a certain artistic intentionality or motivation can he attempt to distinguish between a gap and a blank; between that which is missing in order to arouse interest and that which is missing due to lack of interest. In other words, the very choice between gap and blank depends upon the reading formation in which the text is interpreted.⁴⁵

At a fairly early stage in the reception of this tale of Abraham's odyssey, a new question began to trouble ancient readers transforming a biblical blank into a gap. If we calculate the biblical chronology, then it becomes apparent that Abraham abandoned his aging father in order to fulfill the divine command. "Could it be," as Kister has remarked, "that the first commandment of God to Abraham was to violate the sacred duty to honor his father, to stay with him until his death and to bury him?"⁴⁶ Ancient interpreters solved this problem in a variety of ways: the Samaritan translation, Philo, and Acts all change the biblical chronology by stressing that Abraham left only after his father died, while Ephrem says that his "parents did not wish to join him," and the author of Jubilees has Abraham

⁴⁵ On the function of gaps in the rabbinic reading formation see Levinson 2005: 45–59.

⁴⁶ Kister 2001: 44.

departing with his father's blessing, with the express intention of returning to take him.⁴⁷

Now let us see how the midrash deals with this problem:

NOW THE LORD SAID UNTO ABRAM: GO FORTH (*LECH LECHA*) [...] But Abraham was anxious, saying, "If I leave then I will cause a desecration of the Divine Name, as people will say, 'He abandoned his father in his old age and departed?' " Therefore the Holy One said to him: "You (*lecha*) I exempt from the duty of honoring your parents, but I exempt no one else from this obligation".⁴⁸

This text also addresses the chronological problem of Abraham's hasty departure. However, in spite of the functional identity to earlier traditions, there is a critical difference between them; the biblical and post-biblical Abraham neither hesitates nor deliberates. The midrash is different; here the exegetical problem becomes an opportunity to display the character's inner reflections and turmoil. This architecture of the self is very similar to what we saw in the Jacob text; there also the midrashic character is defined in conflict; conflict that is not so much between right and wrong—as between two contradictory sources of authority; a typically rabbinic concern. They thus resemble the internal dialogues that Epictetus promotes as a means of self-examination and "exhibiting the self to itself."⁴⁹

Moreover, one could also say that this text fashions two subjects. Not only has the hero pattern become internalised as Abraham is transformed from an obedient servant into one whose character is evaluated through his internal deliberations, but also the reader who struggles with the morality of Abraham's actions finds his twin in the character himself. The exegetical problem that the reader confronts in the biblical narrative has become dramatised as part of the represented world of the midrash in the form of an internal conflict of the character. Thus, just as there is religious value to the legal act only when it is accompanied by proper intention—so too we can say that there is value to Abraham's obedience, because it is accompanied by proper deliberation. I would even say that according to the Rabbis if he had not so deliberated, then he would not have been worthy of being chosen.

⁴⁷ Jubilees 12:28–31; Philo, *On the Migration of Abraham*, 177; Acts 7, 4; Ephrem 1994: 149. See also Bernstein 1994: 12–13; Augustine, *City of God*, XVI.15.

⁴⁸ Genesis Rabbah 39:1 (ms. Vatican 30).

⁴⁹ Long 2002: 139; Gill 2006: 389. J. Schofer (2003: 215) has pointed out that these internal deliberations are another expression of the rabbinic/stoic spiritual exercises.

In relation to the legal texts previously examined I mentioned the Stoic perception of the second-order or dialogical self. In his discussion of Homer's deliberative monologues, Gill has noted that whether they transpire between men, or men and the gods, or between a man and himself, they exemplify "an exceptional internalization of interpersonal discourse wherein the formation of judgments, or decisions, is the outcome of an internal dialogue involving affirmation and assent."⁵⁰ He employs Frankfurt's distinction between first and second order volition, discussed above, to propose the model of the divided self of what he calls the "problematic hero", who enacts a **self in dialogue**, much like Bartsch described Seneca where "second-order deliberation on first-order desires is consistently couched in terms of a dialogue the self holds with the self."⁵¹ This reflexive self deliberates between conflicting courses of action:

Between the kind of response that seems 'reasonable' by normal ethical standards and one that the problematic hero sees as justified by her reflective reasoning on the basic principles of co-operative conduct. The intensity of these conflicts derives from the fact that the hero sees the force of the reasons, and the validity of the correlated emotional responses, on either side.⁵²

I suggest that in this midrash Abraham displays a similar dialogic self in conflict between two sets of desires, each with its own ethical validity. This is in sharp distinction to the biblical character of Abraham who has no second-order self. When he imagines that obeying the Divine command and abandoning his aging father will result in a desecration of the Divine name he is making a second-order argument, as he deliberates between what seems 'reasonable' by normal ethical standards (caring for his father) and the religious obligation to abandon him. The critical difference from the Stoic approach is that while Abraham's reflexivity consists in second-order deliberation about his own first-order volition and goals—he himself is unable to resolve the conflict on the basis of reason alone.⁵³

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I mentioned previously that different reading formations will perceive and close textual gaps according to their own cultural assumptions. Even

⁵⁰ Gill 1996: 47, 59.

⁵¹ Bartsch 2006: 239.

⁵² Gill 1996: 204.

⁵³ For a discussion of this type of anti-hero in rabbinic literature, see Levinson 2005.

if, as I have indicated, the emergence of this newly-reflexive self was shared by various Mediterranean cultures in Late Antiquity, this does not mean that they would necessarily close shared textual gaps in the same manner. I would like now to take a brief look at the reading strategy of a contemporary of the Rabbis, the church father Chrysostom (347–407 C.E.), as he grapples with these very same verses:

It was in fact, no slight thing that he was ordered to do—to leave his country where he had lived for so long, all his kindred and the whole of his father’s household, and go to a place he didn’t know and didn’t understand . . . Whom, in fact, would these words not have disturbed? . . . You see, if anyone else had so bidden anyone of a hundred, he would have said: All right, you bid me leave the country I’m now living in, my kindred, my ancestral home. Why don’t you make clear to me the country you order me to travel to . . . ? The just man, on the contrary, neither said any of those things nor contemplated them . . . If, of course, he had not been schooled in every way to obey God, he would have found no little further obstacle in the fact of his father’s death . . . reasoning this way: My father left his home for love of me . . . For my sake he finished his days in exile, so shouldn’t I, in turn, be anxious to pay him the same compliment after his death, instead of leaving my father’s tomb with his kindred and going off?⁵⁴

Using masterfully the rhetorical device of *prosopopoeia*, where the speaker places himself in the position of a character in a time of crisis,⁵⁵ Chrysostom presents a long narrated monologue concerning what Abraham could have thought. He could have objected about the vagueness of the command, his old age, about abandoning his ancestral graves, etc. He then continues:

This just man, on the contrary, far from entertaining any of these thoughts, hastened to obey the command . . . He obeyed it without any meddlesome curiosity and was in fact perfectly assured that God’s promises were unailing.

Let me just briefly mention some of the points of convergence and divergence here. Firstly, I find it significant that both Chrysostom and the Rabbis feel the cultural need to give expression to Abraham’s inner deliberations. His actions can be properly evaluated only according to the measure of their interiority. Seemingly they would both agree with Augustine that “reflexivity is central to moral understanding”; as he said, “the human mind cannot attain self-knowledge except through some kind of self-interrogation.”⁵⁶ For both Chrysostom and the Rabbis the trial has

⁵⁴ Chrysostom 1990: 243.

⁵⁵ Quintilian, *Rhetoric*, III.8.49; See also Bonner 1977: 267; Kennedy 2003.

⁵⁶ Taylor 1989: 139; Augustine, *City of God*, XVI.32.

become internalised, as the value of the deed lies in the self-interrogation of the protagonist.

However, the differences are no less significant. For the Church Father from Antioch, Abraham is the chosen one because he could have, but did not deliberate. Precisely for this reason he resorts to psycho-narration where the narrator presents in his words the thoughts of the character, and not to the quoted monologue of the midrash. In taking narrative control of the character's internal world he has created a breach between the biblical character and the preacher's audience. Abraham passes the test and proves his righteousness precisely because he did not think certain thoughts that we might have entertained.

The Rabbis go in a different direction. What Abraham could have thought in Chrysostom is precisely what he did think in the midrash, and by using direct discourse we hear Abraham's actual deliberations and hesitations. If the doubting Christian reader is radically different to Abraham—the doubting reader of the rabbinic text is just like him. For the Rabbis, it is precisely the character's moral dilemma—that “meddlesome curiosity” of Chrysostom—that makes him worthy. So while both reading formations are extremely interested in interiority, the contours of this internal world can be very different.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I have tried to show that we can witness in rabbinic literature of Late Antiquity the emergence of a new sense of self. Both legal and narrative texts evaluate actions and agents based upon internal deliberations. As legal texts become an exercise in self-fashioning, so the midrashic texts display an almost obsessive interest in a character's thoughts and motives. I also indicated briefly that this emerging dominance of an inward turn—while shared by certain Christian and Roman discourses of the period—was structured and employed in different fashions.

For sure, I have presented an over-simplified picture; from both a synchronic and a diachronic perspective. Undoubtedly, there is much more work to be done in investigating the differences both within biblical and rabbinic literature, by genre and by period, and between the Rabbis and their neighbours. Likewise, I have not had time to discuss how this anthropology evolves within the Second-Temple period—where I believe it originates—or how it continues to develop and change within rabbinic literature itself. Nevertheless, I believe that this outline of a new

anthropology provides us with an important avenue for thinking not only about the poetics of rabbinic literature, but also about how this poetics was transformed into a cultural practice.

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