

EXPLAINING THE POETS:
GREEK LITERARY EXEGESIS
FROM THE SIXTH TO THE FOURTH CENTURIES BCE

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EXPLAINING THE POETS:
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My dissertation, *Explaining The Poets: Greek Literary Exegesis from The Sixth to the Fourth Centuries BCE*, studies how the Classical audience interpreted Archaic poetry.

Scholars usually regard literary criticism as a Hellenistic or Aristotelian product. Earlier exegesis, as a result, has received little and often misguided attention. By contrast, my project demonstrates that poetry was not merely utilized as a repository of moral and stylistic norms; rather, it emerged as an autonomous object of study.

Explaining The Poets is organized around two broad and historically productive modes of approaching literary texts: problems-and-solutions inquiries, ζητήματα, (chapters 1–3) and the practice of interpreting texts allegorically, “allegoresis” (chapters 4–6).

Zetematic texts first appear in the fourth century BCE, yet the origins of this mode of inquiry are much older. Literary challenges framed as problems and solutions were widespread, particularly in the archaic symposium, and their productive influences can be detected in such diverse works as the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* (chapter 2) and *Against Homer’s Poetry* by Zoilus of Amphipolis (chapter 3).

The practice of interpreting texts allegorically is as old as the sixth century BCE. After a methodological introduction (chapter 4), in chapter 5 I focus on two forerunners of allegoresis: Theagenes of Rhegium and Pherekydes of Syrus. Finally, the bulk of chapter 6 deals with the oldest allegorical treatise preserved to a significant extent: the Derveni papyrus. In contrast to previous scholarship, I claim that there is strong continuity between the exegetical attempts of literalist and allegorist readers. Ancient allegorists, in fact, viewed their efforts as readings from within the text and employed the same exegetical techniques that will later be sanctioned by literalist critics such as Aristotle.

Overall, my work provides new insights on well-studied texts (the *Contest* and the Derveni Papyrus) and brings attention to neglected but influential grammarians such as Theagenes and Zoilus. By shifting the focus from the Hellenistic and later periods to the Classical Period, my dissertation re-imagines the “invention” of criticism in Greece and contributes to the recent scholarly interest in hermeneutics and exegetical texts.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Matthieu Real joined the Cornell Classics Department in 2016 after receiving his BA (2014) and MA (2016) from Padua University and the Scuola Galileiana di Studi Superiori (Italy).

His research interests include Greek and Latin epic poetry, ancient literary criticism, ancient biographies, and the developments of paratextual genres. He has published on Andronicus of Rhodes, the Derveni Papyrus, and Zoilus of Amphipolis.

At Cornell, he has taught an extensive range of classes including Greek and Latin at different levels, as well as general introductions to Greek Myth, Roman History, and Ancient Mediterranean Culture. Currently, he is teaching a college-level class on world literature to incarcerated students at the Cayuga Correctional Facility. In the 2021–2022 academic year, he was one of the five recipients of the campus-wide Deanne Gebell Gitner '66 and Family Annual Prize for Teaching Assistants.

To Aline, Laurette, Massimo, and Alice
For their love and support
And to dad, who is always close

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I have composed and recomposed these acknowledgments in my head too many times. The grandest version consisted of detailed paragraphs narrating at length how my dog's shenanigans or my grandmother's Sunday calls kept me sane during the final rush to complete the dissertation. There was also a version full of what, at the time, seemed like irresistible witticisms (for instance, the mention of the P&C cashier who had the audacity to card me all while asking me if the 25 hot-pink birthday candles I was purchasing were for my daughter). Alas, *tempus fugit* and now that I am a few days away from submitting my dissertation it has become clear that my acknowledgments will be neither long nor witty. So, if you expected to be mentioned and you are not, forgive me: the reason was not lack of love, but lack of time.

This dissertation would not exist if it weren't for the care and support of my committee: Jeff, Hayden, Charles, and Fred. Each of them has been extremely generous with their time and has shown an authentic interest in my work. Jeff and Charles have been advising me since day one. A little later Fred conquered me with his stories and love for literature and Hayden with a course on the *Iliad* that was easily one of the best classes I have ever taken. During these years, I especially benefitted from the long Zoom calls that Jeff, Hayden, Charles, and I would have at the beginning of the pandemic, Hayden's detailed emails on challenging passages in Homer or Plutarch, and the many conversations with Fred in the lounge. I could not have asked for a better committee: it is partly their fault if I am still committed to a life devoted to teaching and research.

This dissertation also benefitted from feedback from other graduate students in the program, in particular Peter, Kathleen, and Jonathan, who read portions of Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. Mary was there when this project was still in its infancy and provided much help and encouragement along the way.

The Classics Department has been a second home for me. I would like to thank in particular our fabulous admins, both old and new: Linda, Jessica, Keeley, Ryan, and Tracey. I have abused their help on too many occasions. I learned immensely from every faculty member here and I am grateful for all their support. I would like to thank in particular Verity and Eric who, in their capacity as Chair and DGS, have been looking out for me, especially in these past few years.

Throughout my time in Ithaca, I have had the chance of meeting many extraordinary people. Some became close friends, others have left an enduring impression in my memory. I will not list them all. I must, however, mention at least Colin, with whom I have been inseparable since that day during prospectives weekend in which he approached me to bum a cigarette. While we have both quit smoking at last, we have not ceased enjoying each other's company and have hardly ever passed up a good opportunity to party. Colin is the kind of friend that you want by your side when you need cheering up, you are trying to build a TV stand, or need to turn a convoluted sentence of 10-plus subordinates into an intellegible one.

Again, I will refrain from listing names, but I want to acknowledge also the work and passion of my students, both at Cornell and at the Cayuga Correctional Facility: they are the ultimate reason why all of this makes sense.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, to whom this dissertation is dedicated. While I am not sure I am deserving of their unconditional love, I would not want to live without it. Dad left us too soon and yet it is clear that he keeps on living through his loved ones. Mom has always enabled me to follow my dreams, even when they brought me far away from her. She taught me the virtue of perseverance, a quality that has served me especially well during my time here. She and Massimo make every trip home sweet. My sister is an enormous source of inspiration to me, both professionally and personally. Having her close again is one of the greatest perks of living in Upstate New York. Alice has turned what could have been one of the most difficult years of my life into one of the most exciting—I cannot wait to see what the future has in store for us.

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Introduction

According to the majority of contemporary scholars, philology, by which I mean here, very broadly, a form of secondary discourse concerning literature, has a precise place and time of birth: Athens, late fourth century BCE. Scholars, in fact, credit Aristotle with the “invention” of philology. More precisely, they regard chapter 25 of his *Poetics*, a text to which I will come back many times throughout this dissertation, as the first explicit moment when philology emancipates itself from other “arts.” To paraphrase Aristotle, artistic success does not rest upon a scientifically accurate representation of objects, but on whether the representation successfully meets artistic criteria. What these criteria are is the object of a new science: poetics.

Aristotle’s *Poetics*, chapter 25 in particular, is indubitably the oldest surviving theoretical discussion of the goals and scope of philology. Yet we should not assume, as scholars do, that the lack of explicit philological reflection necessarily entails the absence of a philological practice. My dissertation, in fact, shows that the principles championed by Aristotle were implicitly held by many previous readers. Still, my main goal is not merely to provide a better answer to the question of when and where philology was invented. Despite the natural human inclination to establish the beginning of things, this question is misconstrued: philology certainly was not born from the mind of one single individual, but rather developed over a long period of time. My aim is to cast a new light upon a period of roughly 200 years, from the

middle of the sixth century to the middle of the fourth century, of ancient engagement with literature in Greece.

Because of the widespread narrative according to which philology is a Peripatetic-Hellenistic construct, the study of pre-Hellenistic literary criticism has suffered from a general lack of interest and many biases. I will start by addressing some of the biases. Since scholars have long believed that aesthetical analysis for its own sake is a Peripatetic product, they regard older evidence as either naive or externally motivated, for instance by moral and ethical considerations. The critiques that Zoilus of Amphipolis leveled against Homer, which I study in Chapter Three, are a case in point. Scholars downplay them either as pedantic or as motivated by moral concerns. As I will show, they are wrong on both accounts. Similar misconceptions drive scholarly analysis of ancient allegoresis, the practice of interpreting literature allegorically. While it is true that allegoresis was used to justify ostensibly problematic narratives, throughout Part Two of this dissertation I show that the practice was also instrumental in developing techniques of literary analysis as well as the ability to grasp the complexities of figurative language.

An in-depth scholarly study of pre-Hellenistic exegetical practices is still a desideratum. G. Lanata, *Poetica pre-platonica* (1963, reprinted 2021), a collection and commentary of sources that deal with ancient ideas of poetics, is an excellent place to start any deeper investigation. The most thorough study of this topic remains part one of Pfeiffer's unsurpassed *History of Classical Scholarship* (1968). This is something of a paradox given that it is Pfeiffer's work that consolidated the narrative according

to which philology is a later (Hellenistic) “invention.”¹ After Pfeiffer, only a handful of works have focused on the Archaic and Classical exegesis. Still extremely valuable is Richardson’s article “Homeric professors in the age of the Sophists” (1975). Finally, Novokhatko’s long article “Homeric Hermeneutics on the way from Athens to Alexandria” (2020) is a recent and comprehensive survey of pre-Hellenistic literary exegesis.² In addition, two other works deserved to be mentioned: Ford’s *The Origins of Criticism* (2002) and Halliwell’s *Between Ecstasy and Truth* (2011). Both of these monographs deal with the Greek history of poetics (Halliwell) and criticism (Ford). They differ, however, from the other works I mentioned and my own insofar as they focus mostly on primary texts (Homer, Xenophanes, Gorgias, Plato, etc.), and extrapolate from them a theory of “literature” (or lack of a theory).

My work shares with Pfeiffer’s, Richardson’s, and Novokhatko’s a focus on secondary texts, texts whose aim is to elucidate or comment upon another text.³ This is because what interests me primarily are the concrete exegetical practices of ancient critics and what they can tell us about ancient engagement with literature. Explicit theories of literature, such as the ones that we find in Plato and Aristotle, receive secondary attention. Differently from Pfeiffer and Novokhatko, however, my work has no ambition at being comprehensive. I prioritize depth over breath, deciding to select only a few significant texts — the *Certamen of Homer and Hesiod*, Zoilus’ *Against*

¹ Pfeiffer saw the roots of classical scholarship in the work of the poet-critics such as Callimachus (PFEIFFER 1968). Later scholars deemed the work of the Peripatetics philosophers to be a more accurate beginning (See especially BOUCHARD 2016).

² Much of the same material can be read also in NOVOKHATKO 2015.

³ While the *Certamen*, discussed in chapter 2, is not exactly a secondary text, it must be understood in relationship with secondary texts.

Homer, and the Derveni papyrus — and to limit my investigation to two exegetical modalities: *zetemata* and allegoresis.

These two modalities form the structure of my dissertation: Part One focuses on *zetemata* and Part Two on allegoresis. Each part consists of three chapters, one that serves as an introduction and two that deal with specific texts and sets of fragments. In Chapter One, I provide an introduction to *zetemata*. *Zetemata* are secondary texts framed as a series of questions and answers: an interlocutor identifies a problematic aspect of a text (πρόβλημα) and one or more other interlocutors try to justify it (λύσις). I reconstruct the origins of these texts and I show that this mode of exegesis owes much to the context of the symposium. Moreover, against the scholarly consensus, I conceive of this modality as a constructive and collaborative one. While *zetemata* are often described as a contest between accusers and defenders of poetry, I show that both sides have a common goal in mind: the correct interpretation of texts.

The *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*, a parallel biography of Homer and Hesiod whose original nucleus dates to the sixth to fourth century BCE, is the topic of Chapter Two. A study of the *Certamen* in the context of an investigation of zetematic literature will come as a surprise to many, as the *Certamen* is often regarded as a rhapsodic product. I show instead that it is best understood in relationship to the literary games that were played during the symposium (Chapter 2.2). I argue that one of the games featured in this text, that of the “ambiguous propositions,” is especially akin to the zetematic modality (Chapter 2.3). This chapter strengthens the relationship between *zetemata* and symposium established in Chapter One, emphasizes the collaborative

nature of zetematic endeavors, and provide a discussion of an as-yet unappreciated example of ancient textual exegesis.

Chapter Three deals with Zoilus' *Against Homer's Poetry*, a text that only survives in fragments. Against previous scholars, I show that Zoilus' treatise was not an attack on Homer. Rather, it is a zetematic treatise whose goal was to spark thorough discussion of the Homeric poems (3.1). I further show that Zoilus' comments are far from pedantic: they anticipate later trends in scholarship (3.2) and are fully motivated by aesthetical concerns (3.3).

Chapter Four discusses allegoresis, the practice of reading literature allegorically. Ancient allegoresis, I show, constantly negotiates between the need to be faithful to the poetics of a text and the desire to use the text as a basis for philosophical investigations. Chapter Five explores these two conceptions of allegoresis — as philology and as philosophy — through the work of Theagenes and Pherekydes respectively. Theagenes' discussion of the *Theomachy* is best understood as an investigation of Homer's use of figurative language and divine representation. Pherekydes' treatise, by contrast, is the first literary work that uses explicit allegory as a way of conveying philosophical truths.

Chapter Six, a discussion of Metrodorus and the Derveni author's allegoresis, concludes my dissertation. Both of these authors combine their philosophical interpretations of the text with a minute investigation of its literal meaning. After a general overview of Metrodorus (6.1), the core of this chapter investigates the Derveni author's exegesis of an otherwise unknown Orphic poem. In Chapter 6.2 I make the case that the Derveni papyrus is not a treatise but rather a precursor to later

commentaries. In Chapter 6.3 I focus on the exegetical techniques exploited by the commentator and I show that he already used the same strategies recommended by Aristotle in chapter 25 of his *Poetics* — at least 50 years before.

Now that I have briefly summarized the content of my project, I will devote a few words to what readers might expect to find in my dissertation but will not. As I already mentioned, I do not deal with theories of literature. So, for instance, I do not discuss Plato's conception of poetry as it transpires from the *Ion*, or the *Republic*, nor do I focus on Aristotle's *Poetics* apart from chapter 25. As for instances of actual exegesis, my work is selective. Of the many pre-Aristotelian grammarians that I could have discussed, only Theagenes of Rhegium and Zoilus of Amphipolis are granted an in-depth study.

Another notable absence is that of the sophists, Protagoras in particular. Protagoras' discussion of Simonides' *Ode to Scopas* in Plato's *Protagoras* is rightly celebrated as one of the most complex and interesting instances of ancient exegetical endeavor. Still, a number of very good studies on Protagoras' engagement with language and literature already exist and only a separate study would have done justice to this topic.⁴

That being said, Protagoras is far from absent from this dissertation. I mention him often in relationship to his contribution to the study of language and grammar,⁵ an area that closely relates to exegesis and philology. Moreover, it was a paper on Protagoras, Brittain's "Deinos (Wicked Good) at Interpretation: Protagoras 334–48,"

⁴ Among many others, see especially CORRADI 2012 and PELLICCIA forthcoming.

⁵ On which see now HUITINK-WILLI 2021.

(2017) that provided one of the main sources of inspiration for my project. In this article, Brittain demonstrates that the analysis of Simonides' *Ode to Scopas* in Plato's *Protagoras* already featured some of the exegetical techniques recommended by Aristotle in chapter 25 of his *Poetics*. In the same vein, I show that the Derveni author, roughly a contemporary of Plato, also utilized the techniques discussed by Aristotle (Chapter 6.3). I further demonstrate how the types of poetical criticism that Aristotle catalogues in that same chapter find a practical instantiation in *Against Homer* by Zoilus (Chapter 3.2–3).

Another significant omission is Aristophanes' *Frogs*, a text that, while studied in depth, would benefit from a side-by-side investigation with the *Certamen*. Much like in the *Certamen*, in fact, it is not so much the figure of the poet who is put on stage by Aristophanes but rather that of the literary critic.

Despite the recent attention toward criticism and the tools of criticism in virtually every field of the humanities, scholars of Greek Literature have hardly ever taken into account the profound effects that exegesis had in shaping literary production and consumption in the Classical Period. By shifting the focus from the Hellenistic and later periods to the Classical Period, my dissertation re-imagines the “invention” of criticism in Greece and remedies a serious bias of the scholarly tradition.

Part One: *Zetemata*

Chapter One

Exegesis and Party Games: The *Zetemata*

1.1 Literary *Zetemata*: an Overview

With the term zetematic literature (< ζήτημα, inquiry, investigation, question), scholars designate a mode of investigation framed in the form of a series of questions and answers:⁶ an interlocutor identifies a problematic aspect of a text (προβλήμα) and one or more other interlocutors try to justify it (λύσις). Literary *zetemata* (often also referred as *aporemata*, *aporiai*, or *problemata*) are a type of this broader “genre.”⁷

In a methodological section⁸ of his “*Homeric questions*”, a collection of *zetemata*, Porphyry gives us a brief overview of the genre (*QHI*, K 252):

ἡ συναγωγή τῶν ζητουμένων γέγονε μὲν ἤδη καὶ παρ’ ἄλλοις· ἡμεῖς δὲ τὰ προβλήματα λαμβάνοντες παρὰ τῶν ἐζητηκῶτων τὰς λύσεις ἐπικρίνομεν ἅς ἐκεῖνοι ὑπέταξαν τοῖς προβλήμασι, καὶ τινὰς μὲν τούτων ἐγκρίνομεν, τινὰς δὲ παραιτούμεθα, τὰς δ’ αὐτοὶ ἐξευρίσκομεν, τὰς δὲ πειρώμεθα διορθοῦν καὶ ἐξεργάζεσθαι, ὥσπερ τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσιν ἔσται δῆλον.

The collection of questions is already in the work of others also. But we, taking the problems from those who have made inquiries, evaluate the solutions they proposed for the problems. Some of them we approve, some we reject, others we ourselves find out, and others we attempt to correct and perfect, as will be clear to the reader.⁹

⁶ This kind of literature is often referred to with the term *erotapokriseis* (<ἐρωταποκρίσεις, questions and answers). See DÖRRIE-DOERRIES 1964. On ancient *zetemata* see esp. GUDEMAN 1927: 1511-29; JACOB 2004; TAUB 2015: 413-436; VERHASSELT 2020. On Homeric *zetemata*, specifically, see also HEATH 2009: 251-55.

⁷ The genre as a whole is often referred as *erotapokriseis*, i.e. Question-and-answer literature, of which the Homeric questions are a type (see below). On the problems inherent in the use of the word “genre” to define zetematic literature see e.g. NERI 2004: 72-3.

⁸ According to VAN DER VALK 1963: 104 n. 75 this was originally the beginning of Porphyry’s work. Cf. also PONTANI 2019: 48 n. 3. “On a l’impression d’avoir ici l’ouverture d’un livre [...] ou de l’oeuvre entière.”

⁹ Unless specified otherwise, all translations are my own.

When Porphyry wrote his *Homeric Questions* (2nd half of the 3rd century) he was well aware that the genre already had a long history (on Porphyry's *Homeric Questions* see 5.1). The “collection of questions is already in the work of others also,” says Porphyry, who then describes the genre. The critics that partake in the zetematic inquiry are called *ezetekotes*, (sometimes they are referred as *lytikoi*), that is, the ones that made inquiries, *zetemata*. As we would expect, their inquiries consist of two parts. First comes the *problema*, when the critic detects, often in the form of a question, a difficulty with Homeric poetry, second comes the *lysis*, that is the resolution of/ answer to the problem. By the time of Porphyry a great number of *lyseis* to Homeric *problemata* had already been proposed. It is, therefore, the critic's job to assemble them (τὰ προβλήματα λαμβάνοντες), to assess them (τὰς λύσεις ἐπικρίνομεν), accepting some (καί τινας μὲν τούτων ἐγκρίνομεν), rejecting other (τινὰς δὲ παραιτούμεθα), and possibly, when necessary, to create better ones (τὰς δ' αὐτοὶ ἐξευρίσκομεν) or improve those already existing (τὰς δὲ πειρώμεθα διορθοῦν καὶ ἐξεργάζεσθαι).

It is worth briefly noting that these and other passages focus on the *λύσεις* side of the practice over the *προβλήματα*. It is as if, at this point in time, all that mattered was the correct answer to already established problems, the defense of the poet against his critics. This is understandable given that *zetemata* are an exegetical tool, and the goal of exegesis is, mostly, to solve interpretative issues rather than creating ones. Yet, bringing to the surface interpretative issues and eventually solving them is a necessary part of an honest (and rigorous) hermeneutical analysis. Moreover, finding solutions to a problem implies that, at least for a moment, the critic engages seriously with it.

Sometimes, it is only by reframing the problem or by further specifying it that the critic can solve it. It should not surprise us, then, that Aristotle and Heraclides of Pontus, often considered to be λυτικοί, i.e., defenders of Homer, also came up with critiques of the poet (see below). In short, especially during the early day of the practice, the role of the attacker and defender of poetry overlapped more than scholars are willing to grant. This more holistic way of consider the zetematic practice, in which question and answer are seen as the two stages of a single procedure, has significant consequences and I will refer to it in more details when I consider the cases of the *Certamen* and of Zoilus of Amphipolis in the next two chapters.

Thanks to the passage that immediately follows the one quoted above, we gain a rough chronological idea about the beginning of this tradition.

αὐτίκα τῶν παλαιῶν ζητημάτων ὁμολόγηται εἶναι τὸ τοιοῦτο, ἐν οἷς φησιν
 “ἄστρα δὲ δὴ προβέβηκε, παρώχηκε δὲ πλέω νύξ/ τῶν δύο μοιράων, τριτάτη δ’
 ἔτι μοῖρα λέλειπται.” (*Il.* 10.252-53) πῶς γὰρ, εἰ αἱ δύο μοῖραι ἐξήκουσιν αὐταί
 τε καὶ ἔτι τούτων πλέον, ἢ τριτάτη μοῖρα λέλειπται, ἀλλ’ οὐχὶ τῆς τρίτης
 μόριον; [...] Μητρόδωρος μὲν οὖν τὸ πλεῖον δύο σημαίνειν φησὶ παρ’ Ὀμήρω·

For example it is agreed that this is the same as those old *zetemata*, in which he [*sc.* the poet] says:

“the stars have proceeded, and more night has gone by
 Than two parts, and a third part still remains” (*Il.* 10. 252-53)
 For how if these two parts have passed and even more than this, does the third part remain, but not a portion of the third? [...] Metrodorus [61.5 DK] says that “more” means two things in Homer.¹⁰

Porphry is here dealing with a problema that is considered as “old.” By old he means at least as old as Metrodorus of Lampsacus,¹¹ the pupil of Anaxagoras

¹⁰ On this much-debated zetema see now VERHASSELT/MAYHEW 2021.

¹¹ The identification of this Metrodorus with Metrodorus of Lampsacus, already proposed by SCHRADER 1880: 384, is the most logical option (see *contra* Jacoby, *FGH*, 1. 522 who attributes the fragment to Metrodorus of Chios). On the question see RICHARDSON 1975: 68 n. 3, MACPHAIL 2011:171 n. 109, and VERHASSELT/MAYHEW 2021: 479 n. 64. On Metrodorus see chapter 6 below.

mentioned as an Homerist in Plato's *Ion*,¹² who in the fifth century devised a lysis for it. Around the time of Metrodorus, Stesimbrotus of Thasos, likewise mentioned as well as an Homerist in the *Ion*, also devised solutions to three famously problematic passages in the *Iliad*.¹³ One of these was the problem concerning Nestor's cup in book eleven of the *Iliad* (how could the old Nestor be the only one to be able to lift it?)¹⁴ to which two other fifth-fourth century critics, Glaucon,¹⁵ another character featured in the *Ion*, and Antisthenes,¹⁶ the pupil of Gorgias and Socrates, provided a solution. Moreover, Aristotle mentions an otherwise unknown critic, Hippias of Thasos, (fifth century BCE?) who solved two Homeric problems by mean of prosodic interventions.¹⁷ Following this tradition, we could go as far back as Theagenes of Regium in the sixth century who is said to have applied a λύσις πρὸς τὴν λέξιν to make sense of the Homeric theomachy (on Theagenes see chapter 5.1).

According to our evidence, full zetematic treatises, that is, collections of different *zetemata*, were produced as early as the fourth century. Apart from the case of Zoilus which I will assess in ch. 3 below, Heraclides Ponticus, a pupil of the Academy, wrote a treatise in two books titled Λύσεις Ὀμηρικαί.¹⁸ Six long fragments of this work survive and show Heraclides both critiquing the poet (174 Wehrli=102 Schütrumpf), and answering difficulties detected by himself or previous critics (171 W= 99 S; 172 W = 100 S; 173 W = 101 S; 103 S; 175 W = 104 S).¹⁹ In the latter half

¹² Pl. *Ion*, 530c-d.

¹³ See RICHARDSON 1975: 72-74.

¹⁴ Porph. *QHI* 11. 637.

¹⁵ See RICHARDSON 1975: 77.

¹⁶ RICHARDSON 1975: 77-81.

¹⁷ Arist. *Poet.* 1461a21-23. On Hippias of Thasos see ERCOLES 2019.

¹⁸ D. L. 5.88.

¹⁹ On Heraclides' *Homeric solutions* see esp. HEATH 2009: 251-272.

of the fourth century,²⁰ Megaclides wrote a treatise in at least two books, the *περὶ Ὀμήρου* in which he engaged with difficulties in the Homeric text. As we will see below, one of his extant solutions was intended as an answer to a difficulty raised by Zoilus.

From this brief survey, we can conclude that by the time Aristotle analyzed the zetematic genre in chapter 25 of his *Poetics* (*περὶ δὲ προβλημάτων καὶ λύσεων, ἐκ πόσων τε καὶ ποίων εἰδῶν ἐστίν, ὧδ' ἂν θεωροῦσιν γένοιτ' ἂν φανερόν. Ar. Poet. 1460b6-7*)²¹ and by the time he wrote his own zetematic treatise, *Homeric problems*,²² the practice of criticizing and defending poetry was already well underway. After Aristotle, we find much other evidence of such treatises²³ together with many references to the cultural milieu of the Museum in Alexandria. It is said, for instance, that the Alexandrian critics were accustomed to pose questions and providing answers concerning Homer²⁴ and that even the emperor Hadrian, when he visited Alexandria, successfully engaged in the practice.²⁵ Whatever we might think about the validity of these and similar anecdotes, the zetematic practice had a huge influence on Homeric exegesis. To mention but one example, Aristarchus, the great second-century BCE grammarian, in his hypomnemata (commentaries) constantly tackled old *zetemata*

²⁰ Megacleides is called a Peripatetic by Tatian (*Or. Ad. Grae.* 31.120 = F 2 Janko) an epithet that would make him a successor of Aristotle. Nevertheless, it is often argued (GUDEMAN 1934: 410; DREYER 1969: 1138–1139; RICHARDSON 1993: 129) that he preceded him since Aristotle seems to reference a point made by Megaclides (F 6 JANKO) at *Ar. Poet.* 21.1460a14-17.

²¹ On chapter 25 of Aristotle's *Poetics* see esp. chapter 6.

²² The work, which survives in fragment, is variously cited as *Ἀπορήματα Ὀμηρικά*, *Ὀμήρου ἀπορήματα*, *Προβλήματα Ὀμηρικά* or *Ὀμηρικὰ ζητήματα*. The extant fragments can be read in HEITZ 1869, ROSE³: 1886 (F 142-179), and GIGON 1987 (366-404); BREITENBERGER 2006 provides a German translation and a commentary. MAYHEW 2019 is the most recent monograph devoted to Aristotle's *Homeric Problems*. See also HINTENLANG 1961; BOUCHARD 2010; VERHASSELT 2020.

²³ See GUDEMAN 1927: 2513.

²⁴ Porph. *QHI* 9. 682.

²⁵ *Hist. Aug.*, XX.22.

which he marked in the margins of the Homeric text alongside the passages where the difficulties lay through the critical sign of the diplē, a sort of “nota bene” sign.²⁶ Aristarchus’ pupil, Apollodorus of Athens also is ascribed a zetematic work, the *Ζητήματα γραμματικὰ εἰς τὴν Ἐτῆς Ἰλιάδος*.²⁷ In the third century CE, when Porphyry undertook the writing of his own zetematic treatise, many of the problems he discussed were, indeed, very “old.”

1.2 *Zetemata* as Party Games

Through the work of Aristotle and his Alexandrian successors especially, the genre of the *zetemata* became inextricably linked with research on old poetry and influenced the production of hypomnemata and syngrammata, which collected the prime fruit of ancient erudition and knowledge about poets and poetry. There is, however, another, at times more “frivolous,” side to the practice. Homeric *zetemata* are, in effect, discursive practices that, through their form of questions and answers, betray an oral and performative character. In this sense, they belong to the more general scheme of the erotapotakriseis literature, that is, inquiries that are conducted through a series of questions and answers and that were, of course, not exclusively directed to poetical texts, but informed, already since the fifth century, philosophical as well as scientific inquiries.²⁸

²⁶ See *An. Rom.* 54.11-15 with SCHIRONI 2018: 51 and 536 n. 154. On diplē and *zetemata* in Aristarchus see also GUDEMAN 1927: 2514-5 with SLATER 1982: 337-38 n. 8. In light of this evidence, PFEIFFER 1968: 263 can be seen to have gone too far in stating that Aristarchus had no interest in zetematic inquiries.

²⁷ Perplexity about this title, transmitted by a Milan papyrus (*PRIMI I* [1937] n. 19 ed. Vogliano), is voiced in PFEIFFER 1968: 263.

²⁸ On questions-and-answers in medicine see now MEEUSEN 2020. On philosophical *zetemata* see esp. JACOB 2004: 40-48 and TAUB 2015: 413-436.

Though sophists and philosophers might have had a prominent role in the development of the genre, it has often been suggested that the major setting for zetematic inquiries was the symposium.²⁹ A link between the symposium and the zetematic practice is attested in many later sources. Plutarch,³⁰ for instance, says that it was customary, during symposia to hand out lots and that those who received them were tasked with proposing philological *zetemata*. Elsewhere, (*The Banquet of the Seven Sages*) Plutarch has the seven sages congregating at a banquet and discussing a medley of difficult topics. The conversation is set off by a *problema* contained in a letter that King Amasis addressed to Bias. During the table conversation, Periander (*Sept.* 10) argues that the custom of challenging each other with difficulties, what the seven sages are in effect doing in this dialogue, was an old practice among the Greeks, as the competition between Homer and Hesiod supposedly testifies (on the relationship between this passage and the *Certamen Hesiodi et Homeri* see next chapter). By the time of Plutarch, the link between zetematic practices and the institution of the symposium is well-established. Not only were actual banquets the setting of actual zetematic games but they also became a favorite literary setting for some authors to frame their miscellaneous and erudite treatises.³¹ In works such as Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*, Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists* down to Macrobius' *Saturnalia* erudite information is, in fact, not simply handed down through the impersonal voice

²⁹ See especially GUEDEMAN 1927: 2516-29, SLATER 1982 and BETA 2012. Against Slater's reconstruction see BLANK-DYCK 1984 who, however, are too quick in dismissing the value of ancient sources attesting a link between symposia and "serious" scholarship.

³⁰ Plut. *Quest. Conv.* IX, 2.

³¹ Note, for instance, that the transmitted title of Plutarch's treatise often translated in English as *Table talks* is Συμποσιακῶν προβλημάτων βιβλία ἐννέα, that is, literally, *Nine books of Symptotic Questions*. On Plutarch's *Table talks* and Homeric problems see SLUITER 2005: 379-396.

of the author but is presented as the result of semi-fictional dinner-conversations between learned participants, often in the form of questions and answers.

It is possible that the Hellenistic grammarians and critics who wrote on poetry and poets came up with the “serious” *zetemata* that constituted the object of their treatises and lectures in the seclusion of their libraries, away from lively parties, yet the two sides of the zetematic practice, both a witty game with which to pass an evening in company, and a serious method of literary investigation, are less distinct than one might like.

A scholium by Aristonicus is good evidence in this respect (*Sch. A Il. 20. 269-72a*):

ἀθετοῦνται στίχοι τέσσαρες, ὅτι διεσκευασμένοι εἰσὶν ὑπὸ τινος τῶν βουλομένων πρόβλημα ποιεῖν. [...].

They athetize four lines because they have been introduced by one of the people who wanted to create a puzzle.

The scholium refers to a notorious ancient zetema which was already recorded by Aristotle (*Poet.* 1461a31-35): according to the transmitted text (*Il. 20. 267-72*), Aeneas’s spear was not able to completely pierce Achilles’ shield and only passed through two layers of it. The poet explains that Hephaestus had constructed the shield with five layers, the outer two made of bronze, two others of tin and an innermost one made out of gold. There are two main problems with this description of the shield: first, it does not make sense to have the golden, the most precious of the layers, hidden underneath the other four. Secondly, the description contradicts other lines of the poem, such as line 20.266, in which the arms of Hephaestus are said to be impenetrable (this, according to the rest of the scholium, is the main issue that

Aristarchus points out). To solve the contradiction, says Aristonicus, ancient critics decided to athetize (eliminate from the text) the lines. As is mostly the case with Aristonicus, the ancient(s) critic in question is Aristarchus.³² He justified his choice by claiming that the disputed lines were added by people who wished to create a difficulty, a problema.³³ Aristarchus' justification is striking. Usually interpolators add or change lines because they do not understand the text as it is, and the interpolation has an exegetical aim.³⁴ It is not the case of the alleged interpolators of this passage who, according to Aristarchus, knowingly made up their own Homer. We might ask what were the motivations of these "puzzle-makers." Schironi reasons that the interpolation was made by a commentator that wanted to create an exegetical puzzle for other scholars.³⁵ Did this hypothetical "puzzle-maker" relish the thought that someone, perhaps quite some time later, would notice the contradiction in the text and, believing the text authentic, would have wasted his time trying to solve it? This option cannot be ruled out but it does sound quite perverse, even for an Alexandrian critic. There is a better context in which the interpolators would have immediately enjoyed the fruit of their fraud: the symposium. This kind of interpolation in fact does not appear to belong to "serious" zetematic literature where the goal is the investigation of the literary text; it does, however, make sense in a context where to find/create problems for the collective amusement is part of the rules of the game. Although in

³² On Aristonicus as a source of Aristarchus see especially VAN DER VALK 1963: 553-592 and SCHIRONI 2018: 14-25.

³³ The same justification is given in another Aristonicean scholium to *Il.* 10. 372a.

³⁴ On the reasons why interpolators modified the text according to Aristarchus see SCHIRONI 2018: 485-86.

³⁵ SCHIRONI 2018: 486.

“serious” zetematic inquiries what is most important is the solution to a puzzle, to find enough new problems to keep the conversation going must have been the real challenge for some symposiasts. To add new puzzles to the text of Homer by altering his lines was an easy way out.

If I am right about this Aristarchean passage, we can conclude the following. On the one hand, Gudeman does seem correct in pointing out that Aristarchus frowned upon the zetematic practice, at least the most frivolous side of it.³⁶ At the same time, it follows that Aristarchus thought it perfectly plausible that what was happening in discussion environments like the symposium, where Homer’s text served as a sort of conversation starter—as a vehicle for puzzle-posing and battles of wits— had major and pernicious consequences: he believed, according to Aristonicus’ report, that he could detect its effects in the written copies of Homer he had at his disposal. Zetematic discussions, in other words, were influential enough to intrude into the vulgate text.³⁷ From Aristarchus’ comment, hence, it appears that the practice of spending time in challenging one another with witty *zetemata* was not the imperial-age degeneration of a once-upon-a-time serious scholastic endeavor, nor a mere literary frame for miscellaneous treatises crafted by authors such as Plutarch. Instead, at least since before Aristarchus’ times, it was a known approach for investigating poetry in which, to a more “serious” exegetical side (the one that derived from works such as

³⁶ GUDEMAN 1927: 2514. See, however, on this question SLATER 1982: 12 n. 8.

³⁷ According to the Sch. II. 20.269-72b (οὗτοι καὶ προηθεοῦντο παρ’ ἐνίοις τῶν σοφιστῶν, ἐν ἐνίοις δὲ οὐδὲ ἐφέροντο) which, if the tentative attribution to Didymus holds, would go back to Aristarchus, the expunction of these lines had already been proposed by other unnamed critics and the lines were not present in some copies. (See SCHIRONI 2018: 293 n. 122). Aristarchus might have, therefore, athetized them also on the ground that not every copy reported them. Yet, their absence in a part of the tradition tells very little about the “original” Homeric text. Ultimately, their absence in some copies of the text by Aristarchus’ time is likely the result rather than the cause of their athetesis by pre-Aristarchean critics.

Aristotle’s *Homeric Problems* and other Hellenistic zetematic collections which heavily featured in the syngrammata and hypomnematata of the period) corresponded a more “frivolous,” entertaining one, which was at home in the context of the symposium.

I argue that the same was true for the Classical period. The symposium, in fact, seems to have been the natural setting for zetematic games much before the Hellenistic times. We know that in the symposia of the Classical period poetry was performed, erudite conversations took place, and participants spend their time playing games, some of which involved physical dexterity (think of the kottabos) others involved readiness of mind, like the practice of the *eikasmos*.³⁸ A passage from Aristophanes’ *Wasps*, among others, corroborates the idea of a direct relationship between the institution of the symposium and literary-driven games in the classical period.³⁹ The comedy opens with an exchange between two servants, Xanthias and Sosias, who recount and interpret each other’s dreams (Aristoph. *Vesp.* 13-24).⁴⁰

Ξανθίας: [...] καὶ δῆτ’ ὄναρ θαυμαστὸν εἶδον ἀρτίως.
Σωσίας: κᾶγωγ’ ἀληθῶς οἶον οὐδεπόποτε.
ἀτὰρ σὺ λέξον πρότερος.
Ξανθίας: ἐδόκουν αἰετὸν
καταπτόμενον ἐς τὴν ἀγορὰν μέγαν πάνυ
ἀναρπάσαντα τοῖς ὄνυξιν ἀσπίδα

³⁸ On which see PELLICCIA 2002.

³⁹ See also Poll. 107-108 who attests that both riddles’ competitions (*griphoi*) as well as *zetemata* were customary in the symposium. In this passage, the *zetemata* are called *kulikeia* that is, literally, “cup-discussions,” discussions over wine. We also learn from the passage that Theodectes the Sophist (fourth-century rhetorician and tragedian) was particularly skilled in solving *zetemata* because of its mnemonic ability and that he called the *zetemata*, *mnemonia*. The precise relationship between *zetemata* and memory escapes us, as it is also unclear how much the *zetemata* mentioned here (*kulikeia* and *mnemonia*) were similar in form and content with the *zetemata* attested in the literary exegetical tradition. On Theodectes’ aptitude for riddles see also Ath. X, 451e-f. On *griphoi* (and symposia) see Ath. X, 448f-459b. On *ainigma* and *griphos* in antiquity see MONDA: 2012.

⁴⁰ On this passage see MACDOWELL 1973: 130; BETA 2012: 73; MONDA 2012: 106-107 and MONDA 2019: 396-397.

φέρειν ἐπίχαλκον ἀνεκὰς ἐς τὸν οὐρανόν,
κάπειτα ταύτην ἀποβαλεῖν Κλεώνυμον.
Σωσίας: οὐδὲν ἄρα γρίφου διαφέρει Κλεώνυμος.
Ξανθίας: πῶς δὴ;
Σωσίας: προσερεῖ τις τοῖσι συμπόταις, λέγων
‘τί ταῦτόν ἐν γῆ τ’ ἀπέβαλεν κἄν οὐρανῶ
κἄν τῇ θαλάττῃ θηρίον τὴν ἀσπίδα;’

Xanthias:

Funny dream I had just now.

Sosias:

I have been dreaming too, like anything. But tell me about yours first.

Xanthias:

I dreamt that I saw an enormous eagle swoop down into the Market place, and it snatched up a coppery sort of snake and flew away with it, right up into the sky. And then I saw it was Cleonymus throwing it away.

Sosias:

This Cleonymus would make a good riddle.

Xanthias:

How so?

Sosias:

It is just the thing for a drinking party. “What creature is it that sheds its *shield*, on land, at sea, and in the sky? (Barrett modified)

Xanthias’ dream is a play on the omen scene recounted by Homer at *Il.* 12. 200⁴¹

where an eagle lets a snake fall in the middle of the Trojans’ lines. In Aristophanes’

rendition the snake will turn out to be a shield, for in Greek, ἀσπίς, can mean both

snake and shield, and the eagle will manifest itself as Cleonymus, an Athenian general

whose cowardice in battle was the butt of many Aristophanic jokes.⁴² To Xanthias’

vision, Sosias replies that Cleonymus is a riddle (i.e. the solution to a riddle) of the

kind that people propose in symposia. This passage provides the first attestation of the

word riddle, *griphos*, in Greek literature, as well as the first attestation of such a

⁴¹ Aristophanes parodies the same omen at *Knights* 196-201.

⁴² The dream is to an extent self-explanatory. Note the transformation of the eagle into Cleonymus, an exegetical moment embedded within the vision, that reminds of Penelope’s dream at the end of *Od.* 19, where the eagle identifies itself as Odysseus (19.546–50). On Cleonymus see MACDOWELL 1971 *ad loc.*

practice in the symposium. The original form of this riddle is preserved in Athenaeus 10, 453b = *Carmina popularia*, F 10 Diehl. “What is found in the sky, on land, and in the sea?” The answer was bear, *arktos*, snake, *ophis*, eagle, *aietos* and dog, *kuon*, for all these nouns are names of constellations, as well as names of different species of marine and land animals. Aristophanes, reworking the riddle, jokes that Cleonymus, because of its extreme cowardice, is the one that can abandon his shield everywhere, in the sky, on the land, and in the sea.

What does this Aristophanic reference to *griphoi* tell us about a potential link between zetemata and symposia? For one thing, we should notice that Cleonymus’ riddle does not arise in a void. It is instead an interpretation of a dream that, in effect, parodies a Homeric omen. In Aristophanes, the enactors of the omen become the vehicles for the riddle. The literary reference works in a similar way as the passage about the layers of Achilles’ shield analyzed above, in which the allegedly interpolated Homeric lines were construed as a pretext for a zetema. Moreover, riddles are based upon the same kind of apparent logical inconsistencies that critics à la Zoilus accused the poets of. In this case, the problem consists of attributing three seemingly contradictory statements to the same subject. To one X correspond three predicates (it exists on land, it exists in the sea, it exists in the air) that are hard to imagine as ontologically true for the same X.⁴³ The solution, in turn, consists in moving the interpretation from ontology to semiology and finding words with the requisite triple ontological references (*arktos*, *ophis*, etc.). This is the same kind of solution for

⁴³ We find the same kind of structure in the famous enigma of the sphynx which despite its variation amounts to “What is the thing (X) that has (a) two feet, (b) three feet, (c) four feet?”

literary inconsistencies that Aristotle advocates in chapter 25 of his *Poetics*.⁴⁴ Finally, we should note that ancient sources do not precisely differentiate between *ainigma*, *griphos*, or *zetema*. Clearchus of Soli's definition of riddle, which comes from his lost treatise *On Riddles*, is a case in point.

Ath. 10.448c = F 86 Wehrli= 89 Dorandi ὁ μὲν Σολεὺς Κλέαρχος οὕτως ὀρίζεται: γρίφος πρόβλημά ἐστι ἐπιπαιστικόν, προστακτικὸν τοῦ διὰ ζητήσεως εὐρεῖν τῇ διανοίᾳ τὸ προβληθὲν τιμῆς ἢ ἐπιζημίου χάριν εἰρημένον.

Clearchus of Soli gives this definition: A riddle is a problem posed in jest, requiring to figure out the thing referred to by intellectual inquiry, proposed for the sake of reward or punishment.

The riddle is here defined in terms that betray both the sympotic context (the riddle is facetious and posed with an eye to reward or punishment⁴⁵) as well as the zetematic terminology and procedure (the riddle is a “question”, *problema*, which need to be solved, εὐρίσκω, (in zetematic contexts we find more often λύω, but note that the verb was used by Porphyry in connection to λύσεις [see above]) by way of an intellectual inquiry, *zetesis*.

In light of this evidence, both Classical and post-Classical, a broad picture appears. In general terms, there were two sides to the zetematic practice. One aimed primarily at solving a poetic, philosophical, or scientific problem. When related to poetry, this kind of zetematic inquiry was carried out by critics such as Heraclides Ponticus and Aristotle, as well as many Alexandrian critics after them, who produced their own collection of *zetemata*, or answered old problems in their commentaries. The

⁴⁴ Ar. *Poet.* 1461a 31. The only difference being that in literary analysis, as Aristotle observes, the pool of different meanings is limited by context.

⁴⁵ As we learn from Ath. 10, 457c and 10, 458 ff. the punishment for failing to answer the riddle was to chug a bowl of wine mixed with salted water.

second side to this practice was arguably more frivolous and was undertaken for the sake of entertainment, as a pastime in the symposium. Literary texts were not discussed with the goal of understanding poetry, but they were used as the basis for intellectual games. The ancients themselves recognized the existence of these two sides of the practice and often frowned upon the more frivolous one (we have seen above Aristarchus' attitude toward the makers of *zetemata*, but see also Plat. *Resp.* 179c in which the traditional riddle of the eunuch and the bat is dubbed as "childish"). Yet, the distinction between them is a tenuous one.⁴⁶ The literary games that were practiced in the symposia had clearly different aims than the more serious zetematic investigation of philosophers and literary critics, nevertheless both forms of these sympotic investigations, framed as problematic questions that necessitate solutions, as well as the kind of reasonings and solutions that they required are very similar.

Symposia were a significant part of the life of every learned Greek man, and it is only natural that they influenced the ways in which Greek critics investigated literature and philosophy. I find it telling that the first thorough investigations of Homer's poetry we know of should be phrased as a series of difficulties and solutions, that they should take, in other words, an agonistic form in which the critic battles with the poet, or, more often, takes his side and battles with other critics that allegedly misread him. When Aristotle, for instance, wrote his *Homeric Questions* he hardly composed this work to amuse the participants at a symposium, yet, whether

⁴⁶ See Clearchus F 63 Wehrli = Ath. 10, 457c who claims that the examination of riddles is not foreign to philosophy with BETA 2012: 69-80 who rightly emphasizes the continuity between posing and solving riddles at symposia and their use in philosophical contexts.

consciously or unconsciously, he adopted a form that mimicked the kind of learned game that was at home in ancient symposia.

In the next two chapters, I will focus on two fifth to fourth century texts whose connection with literary *zetemata* has hardly been ever emphasized: the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi* (chapter 2) and Zoilus' *Against Homer's Poetry* (chapter 3). The games featured in the *Certamen* are ostensibly sympotic in nature, and yet, they gesture at serious philological inquiries. For Zoilus the opposite is, perhaps, true. While his attacks of Homer are the jumping off point for serious exegetical inquiries, their tone and nature imply a playful exegetical relationship with the text of Homer, one that is often at odds with the more austere comments of later exegetes. Both these texts will, I hope, provide a broader overview into the zetematic genre, as well as into pre-Hellenistic exegetical practices.

Chapter Two

The Contest of Homer and Hesiod

2.1 The Certamen: Date and Composition

At ll. 650-9 of his *Works and Days*, Hesiod tells the audience of his poem about that time in which he took part in the funeral games of the heroes Amphidamas in Chalcis and reported the victory with a song (*hymnos*).⁴⁷ This episode would serve as the basis for the later creation of the *Certamen* of Homer and Hesiod.⁴⁸ *On Homer and Hesiod, their Life, and their Contest*,⁴⁹ better known by its abridged Latin title, *Certamen*, is a treatise that relates, in parallel, Homer and Hesiod's lives as well as the competition that took place between the two. More precisely, the *Certamen* starts with the birth-place, parentage, and relative chronology of the two poets (1-53) and

⁴⁷ οὐ γάρ πώ ποτε νηί γ' ἐπέπλων εὐρέα πόντον./εἰ μὴ ἐς Εὐβοίαν ἐξ Αὐλίδος, ἧ ποτ' Ἀχαιοὶ/μείναντες χειμῶνα πολὺν σὺν λαὸν ἄγειραν/Ελλάδος ἐξ ἱερῆς Τροίην ἐς καλλιγύναικα./ἔνθα δ' ἐγὼν ἐπ' ἄεθλα δαΐφρονος Ἀμφιδάμαντος/ (655) Χαλκίδα τ' εἰς ἐπέρῃσα: τὰ δὲ προπεφραδμένα πολλὰ/ἄεθλ' ἔθεσαν παῖδες μεγαλήτορος: ἔνθα μέ φημι/ ὕμνω νικήσαντα φέρειν τρίποδ' ὠτώεντα./ τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ Μούσης Ἑλικωνιάδεσσ' ἀνέθηκα./ ἔνθα με τὸ πρῶτον λιγυρῆς ἐπέβησαν ἀοιδῆς. "For never yet did I sail the broad sea in a boat, except to Euboea from Aulis, where once the Achaeans, wiating through the winter, gathered together a great host to sail from holy Greece to Troy with its beautiful women. There I myself crossed over into Calchis for the games of valorous Amphidamas—that great-hearted man's sons had announced and established many prizes—and there, I declare, I gained victory with a hymn, and carried off a tripod with handles. This I dedicated to the Heliconian Muses, where they first set me upon the path of clear-sounding song." (West). For ὕμνος = "hymn" (l. 657) as a non-specialized term for song, see WEST 1978: 321.

⁴⁸ Plutarch, possibly relying on a Hellenistic source, likely believed the opposite to be true. As Proclus informs us (see *Sch. vet. in op. et dies* 650-62), he regarded the Hesiodic passage as an interpolation. He must have thought that the Hesiodic lines were inspired by the later story concerning Hesiod's poetic contest. On this matter, see esp. WEST 1978: 319 and BASSINO 2019: 11-13. Although Plutarch cannot be proven wrong, it is more economical to accept that the lines in the poem inspired the *Certamen* rather than vice versa. To derive biographical claims from poetry is, in fact, a well-documented practice. See esp. FAIRWEATHER 1974, LEFKOWITZ 1981 and 2012² and GRAZIOSI 2002. GALLAVOTTI 1929: 41 also points out that if the line in Hesiod were an interpolation from the story of the contest, the interpolator would not have left out the name of Homer. On Hesiod's passage and its relationship with the *Certamen* see BASSINO 2019: 5-7 with bibliography.

⁴⁹ This is the title given by the only manuscript that transmits the text in its entirety, the Florence, Bibl. Laur. Plut. 56.1. The manuscript contains various, mostly rhetorical, works and was written by different hands dated to the XII to XIV centuries. On the manuscript see BASSINO 2019: 48-52.

recounts the oracle concerning Homer's fatherland and death (54-62). Then, the central episode of the treatise is narrated: the contest between Hesiod and Homer (63-214). Next are the events that chronologically followed the contest, that is the oracular response given to Hesiod about his death (215-223), Hesiod's actual death (224-253), and the rest of Homer's life and his demise (254-338).

In its present form, the *Certamen* dates to the Antonine period,⁵⁰ but, as already argued by Nietzsche,⁵¹ the treatise (or parts of it) goes back to Alcidamas, the fourth century BCE sophist and student of Gorgias. As we will see, it is possible that many elements of the *Certamen* are even earlier and predated Alcidamas. Of the vast scholarly literature existing on the work,⁵² the bulk deals with the complex genesis of the text, its authorship, and tradition. In what follows, I focus instead on the kinds of games that feature in the section of the contest proper (ll. 63-214), with a view to what such games can tell us about the avenues and the modes of literary interpretation of the Classical Period.⁵³ My intervention is two-folded. First, I argue that the majority (4 out

⁵⁰ *Cert.* 32-34 ὄπερ δὲ ἀκηκόαμεν ἐπὶ τοῦ θειοτάτου αὐτοκράτορος Ἀδριανοῦ εἰρημένον ὑπὸ τῆς Πυθίας περὶ Ὀμήρου, ἐκθησόμεθα. “We shall now reveal what we have heard about Homer from the Pythia in the time of the most divine emperor Hadrian.” (Bassino) As West says: “the expression [...] implies that Hadrian is dead, but of fresh memory.” (WEST 1967: 433 n. 2). Certainly, the *terminus post quem* for the last redaction of the text is the reign of Hadrian. On the compilation and its possible links with the imperial context see UDEN 2010, KIMMEL-CLAUZET 2015 and HELDMANN 1982.

⁵¹ NIETZSCHE 1870.

⁵² The text of the *Certamen* has been critically edited, translated in English, and commented upon most recently by Paola Bassino (BASSINO 2019). I follow her text unless noted otherwise. Previous influential editions include ALLEN 1912; WILAMOWITZ 1916a; AVEZZÙ 1982. For a list of other editions of the *Certamen* see BASSINO 2019: 83-4. Studies of the *Certamen* comprise: NIETZSCHE 1870; NIETZSCHE 1873; ROHDE 1881: 556-557; MEYER 1892: 377-80; BUSSE 1909; WILAMOWITZ 1916b: 393-413; GALLAVOTTI 1929; ABRAMOWICZ 1938; KIRK 1950; VOGT 1959; HESS 1960; WEST: 1967; DI BENEDETTO: 1969; WEILER 1974: 118-20; RICHARDSON 1981; HELDMANN 1982; O’SULLIVAN 1992: 63-105; KIVILLO 2000; GRAZIOSI 2001; GRAZIOSI 2002: 168-80; COLLINS 2004: esp. 185-191; NAGY 2009: esp. 297-304; KONING 2010: 239-268; UDEN 2010; DEBIASI 2012; KIMMEL-CLAUZET 2015; BASSINO 2017; LUCARINI 2018; OSORIO 2018; PORTER 2021.

⁵³ Two modern works focus upon these aspects especially: GRAZIOSI 2001 and COLLINS 2004: esp. 185-191. On ancient Greek contests more generally, with insightful references to the *Certamen*, see also GRIFFITH 1990.

of 5) of the games that appear in the *Certamen* are taken from a sympotic context and are in no way indicative of what actual rhapsodic contests would have looked like (2.2). Second, I show that the author of the *Certamen* projects onto the characters of Homer and Hesiod concerns proper to a fifth to fourth century literary critic (2.3). The poets, in fact, are only partly assessed on the merits of their compositions. The main ability that is put to test is their talent to propose and solve poetic games and riddles. Though described as poets and rhapsodes, Homer and Hesiod act as literary critics whose imagined concerns and exegetical solutions offer a privileged window into the hermeneutical practices of the fifth to fourth centuries BCE. Before making my case, it is, however, necessary to start with some preliminary issues concerning the genesis of the *Certamen*, which will constitute the bulk of chapter 1.

The story that led to the now widely accepted attribution to Alcidas of the *Certamen* is an exciting one—to the degree, of course, to which philological debates and discoveries can be exciting. In 1492 Lorenzo De' Medici acquired the manuscript bearing the text of the *Certamen* for the Medicean Library in Florence. Soon humanists such as Poliziano and Pico de la Mirandola were able to read the story of the contest between Homer and Hesiod. In 1573 the famous printer Henri Estienne (Stephanus) published material from the manuscript, including the *Certamen*. After that, the text circulated through Stephanus' and subsequent editions,⁵⁴ but knowledge of the manuscript was mostly forgotten until Valentin Rose (the editor of Aristotle's fragments) rediscovered it in 1863.⁵⁵ It is likely the rediscovery of the manuscript that

⁵⁴ See the list in BASSINO 2019: 83.

⁵⁵ Rose 1864: 1-26.

inspired new studies of the text and especially Nietzsche's seminal works.⁵⁶ A little later, in 1869, Nietzsche got Rohde to collate the manuscript for him and finally edited the text in 1871.⁵⁷ In 1870, however, Nietzsche had already published the first of his two-part study of the *Certamen*⁵⁸ which inaugurated the modern era of scholarship on the text.

In his 1870 article for the *Rheinische Museum für Philologie*,⁵⁹ Nietzsche argues against scholars such as Bernhardt⁶⁰ that the *Certamen*, despite mentioning the Roman emperor Hadrian, consisted mostly of material from a much earlier date. It was part of the *Museum*, a work composed by the fourth century BCE sophist Alcidamas. For Nietzsche, in fact, the author of our version of the text was a mere "Referent," (a later excerptor/interpolator)⁶¹ who mostly reproduced and abbreviated one older single source. Only in the beginning, where the "Referent" tells the birth, parentage, fatherland, and chronology of the poets, and later, telling the death of Hesiod, does he use multiple sources. According to Nietzsche, the name of this single source is revealed at *Cert.* 239-40, where we read ὡς φησιν Ἀλκιδάμας ἐν Μουσειῶι. Alcidamas is here evoked as the source for the first of the two accounts of Hesiod's death that we find in the *Certamen* (*Cert.* 224-240). The second account of his death is attributed instead to Eratosthenes (see *Cert.* 240-249). Assuming, as Nietzsche does, that the "Referent" mostly follows one source throughout, of the two sources

⁵⁶ In 1867, Nietzsche gave a paper entitled "Der Sängerkrieg auf Euboea" at the Leipzig "Philologischer Verein." See LATA CZ 2014: 12-15. Later publications on the *Certamen* are NIETZSCHE 1870, NIETZSCHE 1871, and NIETZSCHE 1873.

⁵⁷ NIETZSCHE 1871. For the events that I just recounted see BASSINO 2019: 48-9.

⁵⁸ NIETZSCHE 1870-1873. On Nietzsche and the *Certamen* see LATA CZ 2014: 12-19.

⁵⁹ NIETZSCHE 1870: 536-540.

⁶⁰ Bernhardt considered it a product of the second sophistic. BERNHARDY 1845: 256.

⁶¹ NIETZSCHE 1870: 537.

mentioned for the death of Hesiod one or the other must be the main one. This can be no other than Alcidamas whose name is revealed in order to differentiate him from the second source, Eratosthenes.⁶² Nietzsche, then, backs up his argument by showing that Stobaeus (IV. 52.22) attributes the lines quoted at *Cert.* 78-79 to Alcidamas' *Museum*. He then concludes that it would be perfectly plausible for Alcidamas to have written the *Certamen*. In fact, in his treatise *On Sophists*, Alcidamas praises improvisation, precisely the ability upon which Homer and Hesiod are evaluated in the *Certamen*.

Although it managed to convince some (for instance, Mahaffy and Adolf Busse),⁶³ Nietzsche's *Quellenforschung* did not impress Wilamowitz. In his 1916 study of the *Certamen*, Wilamowitz concludes that the attribution of the text to Alcidamas is a fantasy ("Hirngespinst") not worth spending any time upon.⁶⁴ For him, the mention of Alcidamas in the text of the *Certamen* only proves that the sophist related the death of Hesiod somewhere in his *Museum*. As for the lines which Stobaeus attributes to Alcidamas, those Alcidamas must have quoted from an older "poem about the contest." It is worth pointing out that when Wilamowitz says that no one anymore regards the *Certamen* as an imperial product, this was true only thanks to the unnamed Nietzsche's seminal studies. Nietzsche's good friend Rohde had

⁶² Technically, at this point in the argument, Eratosthenes could have been the primary source and Alcidamas the secondary one. Nietzsche does not specify why he preferred one over the other. The fact that Alcidamas is mentioned first and Eratosthenes second in the *Certamen* could be a reason but it is hardly a cogent one. It is only thanks to his other pieces of evidence that Nietzsche was able to choose Alcidamas over Eratosthenes.

⁶³ MAHAFFY 1891: 377-80; BUSSE 1909: 108.

⁶⁴ WILAMOWITZ 1916b: 401. Although Nietzsche's name is not mentioned in this context, Wilamowitz was obviously thinking about him. Latacz is too indulgent, when he claims that "basically only one philologist of rank expressed himself unfavorably concerning Nietzsche's work on the *Certamen*: Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff" (LATA CZ 2014: 19). In fact, e.g. BERG 1883: 63-66 and MEYER 1892: 378 n.1. were much of the same opinion as Wilamowitz. A more nuanced view is expressed by Allen who thinks that Alcidamas wrote a version of the *Certamen* expanding it from older materials (ALLEN 1924²: 24 and 27).

already shown in 1881 that many elements of the *Certamen* were older than Alcidamas.⁶⁵ Meyer, for his part, had already pointed out in 1892 that lines 107-8 of the *Certamen* were known to Aristophanes who employed them in the *Peace* in 421 BCE.⁶⁶ But definitive proof of the antiquity of the text came from a papyrus, the *P. Petr.* I 25, published for the first time by Mahaffy in 1891.⁶⁷ The papyrus, which dates to the second half of the III century BCE, preserves a text that is very similar to *Cert.* 69-102, thus proving that a version of the *Certamen* was already circulating by the 3rd century BCE. What scholars such as Wilamowitz rejected about Nietzsche's reconstruction was, therefore, not the relative antiquity of the *Certamen* but Alcidamas' authorship.

Nietzsche's hypothesis concerning the authorship of the papyrus was destined to remain a mere fantasy had not another papyrus been found. This is P. Mich. inv. 2754, a 2nd to third century papyrus published in 1925 by Winter with the help of Hunt.⁶⁸ The first part of the papyrus (ll. 1-14), transmits the death of Homer in a version that is very similar to the end of the text of the *Certamen* (ll. 327-38). Lines 15-23 of the papyrus contain a section (not found in the *Certamen*) in which the author praises Homer and makes some concluding remarks about his own work. There follows a *subscriptio* that reads [...]άμαντος Περί Ὁμήρου. The obvious supplement

⁶⁵ ROHDE 1881: 566-67. He draws attention, in particular, to the existence of an archaic wisdom contest, Hesiod's *Melampodia*, (on which I will say more below) and to the fact that Heraclitus already knew the riddle of the lice mentioned at *Cert.* 323-338.

⁶⁶ MEYER 1892: 377-380.

⁶⁷ MAHAFFY 1891. For a description, edition, translation, and commentary of the papyrus see now BASSINO 2019: 60-67.

⁶⁸ WINTER 1925. Winter also provides a good summary of the early scholarship on the papyrus. On this papyrus see BASSINO 2019: 67-75 and PORTER 2021. The latter is the most recent edition, translation, and discussion of the text of the papyrus.

for the lacuna is Ἀλκιδάμαντος Περὶ Ὁμήρου, *On Homer* by Alcidamas. The (apparent) appearance of the name Alcidamas appended to a portion of a text reporting the end of the *Certamen* suddenly brought a powerful proof in favor of Nietzsche's argument, or so it seemed at first.

Skepticism about the Alcidamas' hypothesis resurfaces with Kirk in 1950.⁶⁹ He argues that the first part of P. Mich. Inv. 2754 (ll. 1-14), i.e., the narrative of Homer's death also appearing at the end of the *Certamen*, is interpolated from Alcidamas' *On Homer* into the (non-Alcidamantan) *Certamen*. In short, only ll. 15-23, which do not occur in the *Certamen*, stem from Alcidamas. Kirk's reasons for separating ll. 1-14 from 15-23 are the lack of connection between the two sections, as well as some stylistic and lexical difficulties in attributing the first portion of the papyrus to the pre-Hellenistic era. Building on Kirk's work, Dodds argues as well that ll. 1-14 are not by Alcidamas and claims that the papyrus is a compilation of different excerpts concerning Homer.⁷⁰ Both these hypotheses have been, in my view conclusively, proven wrong by West in 1967.⁷¹ He answers point by point Kirk's criticisms, and shows that the Kirk-Dodds' hypothesis would lead to some unreasonable consequences: to hold that Alcidamas had no part in the redaction of the *Certamen* would entail accepting the following: i) Alcidamas in the *Museum* narrated the same version of Hesiod's death as we have it in the *Certamen* and quoted two lines that in the *Certamen* are put in Homer's mouth, but the *Museum* was not (neither did it contain) the *Certamen* (these are the elements already pointed out by Nietzsche); ii)

⁶⁹ KIRK 1950.

⁷⁰ DODDS 1952.

⁷¹ WEST 1967.

The compiler knew Alcidamas' work, made use of a narrative already attested in the Hellenistic era but which was not Alcidamas' (Nietzsche + P. Petrie); iii) a portion of the *Certamen* and a portion securely attributed to Alcidamas appear in the same papyrus one after the other without any editorial sign of separation but the two portions do not belong to the same work (P. Mich.). These can hardly be all mere coincidences, and nowadays scholars generally agree that Alcidamas had a primary role in the genesis of our *Certamen*.⁷²

Where West went astray, according to the majority of the interpreters,⁷³ is in his claim that Alcidamas invented the story of the contest between Homer and Hesiod.⁷⁴ West's conclusion is indeed unlikely. Competitions in σοφία are an archaic motif that we find already attested in the story of the contest between Mopsus and Calchas (Hes. Fr. 278 M. W.), as well as in the stories about the Seven Sages,⁷⁵ and about Oedipus and the sphinx.⁷⁶ *Works and Days* ll. 650-9, moreover, confirms that Hesiod did actually take part to a poetic competition. For an ancient reader to conjecture that none other than Homer was Hesiod's opponent was easy and may have occurred right after the "publication" of Hesiod's poem.⁷⁷

⁷² KONIARIS 1971 and HELDMANN 1982: 9-14 still maintain that Alcidamas was not the author.

⁷³ See esp. RICHARDSON 1981.

⁷⁴ WEST 1967: 438-441.

⁷⁵ The dating of stories of the Seven Sages is difficult to secure. The first explicit mention of them is in Pl. *Prot.* 342e-343b.

⁷⁶ RICHARDSON 1981: 2.

⁷⁷ Philochorus (*FGrHist* 328 F 212) in the III century quotes a passage from Hesiod in which the poet claims that he *first* (πρῶτον) competed with Homer in Delos. West notes that the "πρῶτον" implies that the fragment references a second contest, likely the one we hear about in the *Certamen*, which took place in Calchis (WEST 1967: 440). This need not be the case as πρῶτον in the context of the fragment could also mean that this was Hesiod's first contest, not necessarily the first of his contests with Homer (i.e., "first competed, with Homer" rather than "first competed with Homer"). The fragment is, however, likely a forgery and it is difficult to say how far back in time it goes. For a discussion of this text, see BASSINO: 8-10 with bibliography, as well as my analysis below. An alternative line of Hes. *Work and Days*, 657 (see *sch. in Hes. Op. et dies*, 657) as well mentions Homer as the opponent of

Concerning the “invention” of the story of the context, a further element, that is, the presence of lines 107-108 of the *Certamen* in Aristophanes’ *Peace* (ll. 1282-3), deserves to be discussed at some length. At lines 1265, Trygaeus, the protagonist of the play, asks a boy, referred to as Lamachus’ son, to give him a preview of the song he is about to sing at a wedding festivity. When the boy starts singing the first line from the *Epigonoι*, a poem the ancient attributed to Homer,⁷⁸ Trygaeus interrupts him and asks for another song more apt for peaceful times. The boy ignores the advice and keeps on singing about war. Again, Trygaeus interrupts him and scolds him. This basic scheme is repeated four times, with some variations, until Trygaeus loses his patience and sends the boy inside (ll. 1291-1297). Among the hexameters sung by the boy are ll. 1282-3:

ὥς οἱ μὲν δαίνυντο βοῶν κρέα, καὶ χένας ἵππων
ἔκλυον ἰδρώοντα, ἐπεὶ πολέμου ἐκόρεσθεν.

Thus they dined on beef, and the necks of horses
That were sweaty they unyoked, since they were sated of war.

The same lines occur with small variations at *Certamen* ll. 107-108. There, they are split between Hesiod, who sings the first line, and Homer, who sings the second. The exchange is part of the game of the “ambiguous propositions” (ἀμφίβολοι γινῶμαι. See *Cert.* 102-3) in which Hesiod challenges Homer to solve the problematic meaning of his lines by capping it with new ones. Taken in isolation, in fact, the first line of the quoted passage would signify that some people are eating the necks of their horses, a

Hesiod. This time, however, the competition is set in Calchis like in the *Certamen*. How and when this alternative line emerged it is difficult to say but it likely postdates the *Certamen*. On it see BASSINO 2019: 6-7 with bibliography.

⁷⁸ Hdt. IV, 32.; *Cert.* 258-60. See also OLSON 1998: 307.

disturbing practice, at least for a Greek audience (see on 2.3). Through Homer's addition, however, the meaning of the lines changes as the necks of the horses becomes the object of the verb "to unyoke." Nobody is eating horses, rather warriors sated with battle are unyoking their horses' necks before eating beef.

Since the *Peace* was produced in 421 BCE, Aristophanes could not have taken these lines from Alcidamas, who wrote later. It follows that lines 107-108 of the *Certamen* preceded Alcidamas. Also, Aristophanes did not create them *ex nihilo*: all the other lines he puts in the mouth of the boy are quotations of, or are directly inspired from, Homeric poetry, and the scene itself presupposes that the boy is singing traditional poetry.⁷⁹ These lines must therefore antedate 421 BCE. There are, then, three possibilities for the origin of these lines: 1) they were traditional epic lines not necessarily connected with poetic contests; 2) they featured in a game similar to that of the "ambiguous propositions" but were not part of a version of the *Certamen* that preceded Alcidamas; 3) they belonged to a version of the *Certamen* that preceded Alcidamas. Options 1 and 2 would both be compatible with West's view that Alcidamas invented the contest between Homer and Hesiod. Option 3, obviously, would not. We can immediately exclude option number 1. As rightly noted already by Meyer,⁸⁰ in fact, these lines can only have been conceived as part of the kinds of games we witness in the *Certamen*.⁸¹ Not only is the *hysteron proteron* (first they

⁷⁹ See DI BENEDETTO 1969. OLSON 1998: 307-9.

⁸⁰ MEYER 1892: 378-9.

⁸¹ Meyer is not open to the possibility that these lines could stem from a work other than the *Certamen*, in which such a game might have featured. He immediately jumps to the conclusion that Aristophanes must have taken these lines from a version of the *Certamen* that preceded Alcidamas'.

dine, then they take care of the horses) difficult to explain otherwise, but so is the “harsh” enjambment between the two lines.⁸²

The setup of the exchange between Trygaeus and the boy also points towards options 2 and 3: not only does Trygaeus interrupt the boy and ask for different songs but, at least once,⁸³ he completes and changes the meaning of the boy’s line through a strategy that is reminiscent of the game of the “ambiguous propositions.” This is the case of ll. 1286-7:

Παῖς Λαμάχου

θωρήσονται ἄρ’ ἔπειτα πεπαυμένοι—

Τρυγαῖος

ἄσμενοι, οἶμαι.

Son of Lamachus

“The meal over, they girded themselves—”

Trygaeus

With good wine, no doubt? (Hall-Geldart)

As clearly explained by Olson,⁸⁴ here the boy starts a hexameter whose immediate meaning is “having ceased (from some more pacific activities), they put on their

⁸² Collins states that “as those who have studied enjambement have well recognized, the runover position is one of the most characteristic feature of Homeric style.” COLLINS 2004: 189. Runover positions are indeed a “characteristic” Homeric feature. Still, as rightly noted by Bassino, not only do Homeric and Hesiodic hexameters usually “stand on their own grammatically, and express a self-contained thought” but, and on this point the authorities Collins mentions on Homeric enjambment agree, enjambment “rarely causes a substantial change in the syntax of the previous line.” BASSINO 2017: 197. Compare with e.g. EDWARDS 1966: 135-7. In other words, it is true that enjambments are common in Homer, though far from the norm, but, *pace* Collins, the kind of enjambments (i.e. enjambments that cause a substantial change of the previous line syntax) we find in these two lines quoted by Aristophanes as well as in the section of the “ambiguous propositions” of the *Certamen* are completely alien to the Homeric (and epic) style.

⁸³ Twice, if we follow Bassino in counting lines 1270-72 as a case in which “Trygaeus completes it [the hexameter of the boy] and adds a new one, which reverses the word of the previous speaker” BASSINO 2019: 149. Nevertheless, this passage is much different from the game of the ambiguous propositions (and from ll. 1286-7 discussed below) as Trygaeus is not reinterpreting the line of the boy. He is simply interrupting him and asking him to sing something else.

⁸⁴ OLSON 1998: 309.

breast-plates.” The hexameter is completed by Trygaeus’ appreciative comment “gladly, I think” which suggests that he takes the line in the opposite sense. Trusting in the ambiguity of the word θωρήσσομαι,⁸⁵ he interprets the line as “having stopped (fighting), they fortified themselves (with wine)—hence they must be glad.” Insofar as one interlocutor continues/comments upon the line of the previous participant and changes its meaning, the exchange is reminiscent of the game of the “ambiguous propositions” featured in the *Certamen*.⁸⁶

The quotation of ll. 1282-85, the ones that also feature in the *Certamen*, is used to similar effect:

Παῖς Λαμάχου

ὥς οἱ μὲν δαίνυντο βοῶν κρέα, καὶ χένας ἵππων
ἔκλυον ἰδρώοντας, ἐπεὶ πολέμου ἐκόρεσθεν.

Τρυγαῖος

εἶεν; ἐκόρεσθεν τοῦ πολέμου κᾶτ’ ἦσθιον.
ταῦτ’ ἄδε, ταῦθ’, ὡς ἦσθιον κεκορημένοι.

Son of Lamachus

“Tis thus they feasted on the flesh of oxen and, tired of warfare, unharnessed their foaming steeds.”

Trygaeus

That's splendid; tired of warfare, they seat themselves at table; [1285] sing sing to us how they still go on eating after they are satiated. (Hall-Geldart)

As I said above, here Aristophanes quotes the two lines that also appear in the *Certamen*, and put them in the mouth of one character, as if he did not pick up the fact that line 1282 was meant to set up a problem and that line 1283 was supposed to be its solution. I suspect, however, that Aristophanes was very much aware of the ludic

⁸⁵ θωρήσσομαι in the sense of fortifying with drink is attested already in Pindar (F. 72). See LSJ II and OLSON 1998: 309.

⁸⁶ In the *Certamen*, however, the two opponents exchange complete lines of hexameter and every capping line is always a completion and not a comment on the previous line.

nature of these hexameters and of how they worked in their original context but wanted to put his original spin on them. He does so by showing that capping the problematic line 1282 with l. 1283 only seemingly brings the game to a conclusion. Indeed, a new problem arises: the warriors are sated (of war) and yet they have dinner!⁸⁷ Again, Trygaeus, in typical comedic fashion, turns the heroic and military concerns of the boy's song into mundane and bodily ones (put on armor > drink; be tired of war > be filled with food). Again, through Trygaeus' intervention the meaning of the boy's lines is turned onto its head. This time, moreover, Trygaeus' comment (ll. 1284-5) turns into an explicit challenge for the boy who is tasked with singing a paradox ("sing to us how they still go on eating after they are satiated"), a paradox that is reminiscent of the insoluble challenge by which Hesiod tests Homer in *Cert.* ll. 97-98.⁸⁸ Far from neglecting the point of these lines, Aristophanes perfectly captures the spirit of the game and provides us with a new version of it: he turns the line that was originally meant to be the solution to a problem, into another problem (l. 1283), a new puzzle for the boy to solve.⁸⁹

These two instances (*Peace* ll. 1286-7 and ll. 1282-85) strongly suggest that in this passage Aristophanes was engaging with the kinds of literary games that are attested in the *Certamen*. It remains to see whether he engaged with a version of the *Certamen* that preceded Alcidamas or whether he found inspiration in another similar

⁸⁷ The problem, of course, arises only if we accept the perspective of Trygaeus, who, indisposed as he is to consider any military theme, blatantly ignore the word πολέμου which makes the verb κορέννυμι unambiguous.

⁸⁸ There, Hesiod asks Homer not to sing about the things that are, shall be, and were, to which Homer brilliantly replied by singing about the funeral games of Zeus, an immortal god.

⁸⁹ As we will see in 2.3, in the original configuration of the game the line used to cap was often meant to create a new problem.

source (perhaps a “gaming” manual for the symposium; on this hypothesis see 2.2 below) upon which Alcidamas as well was dependent. Unfortunately, there is no definitive proof one way or the other. Still, the former option is more likely. As noted by Di Benedetto,⁹⁰ all of the other lines sung by the boy in this section of Aristophanes’ *Peace* (ll. 1265-1297) are quotations/elaboration of Homeric or pseudo-Homeric lines. If we assume that ll. 1282-3 also came from an older version of the *Certamen* that would strengthen the Homeric connection. Moreover, the quotation of the beginning of the *Epigonoï* by which Aristophanes opens the exchange between the boy and Trigaëus is also quoted at the end of the *Cert.* 259.

To sum up, it is clear that Ar. *Peace* 1282-3 (= *Cert.* 107-8) existed before Aristophanes and Alcidamas and that they were meant as part of a literary game (options 2 and 3). Furthermore, nothing rules out that such a game featured in an old story of the contest between Homer and Hesiod (option 3). If that were true it would follow that, *pace* West, Alcidamas was not the inventor of the story of the *Certamen*. Still, even if he did not invent it, Alcidamas may nonetheless have been the one responsible for most of the version of the *Certamen* we read today.

The theory of an Ur-*Certamen* that preceded Alcidamas’ intervention has found many supporters since Rohde’s time and it remains a plausible hypothesis to this day.⁹¹ It should be noted in this respect that biographical texts such as the *Certamen* typically do not arise from the mind of one individual; they are best

⁹⁰ DI BENEDETTO 1969.

⁹¹ Among the recent scholars who explicitly believe that the story of the contest between Homer and Hesiod preceded Alcidamas are RICHARDSON 1981; NAGY 2009; DEBIASI 2012; LUCARINI 2018. Others simply note that much of the material we found in the *Certamen* preceded Alcidamas (see e.g. GRAZIOSI 2001: 59-60 and BASSINO 2019: 115).

considered as part of the traditional lore of stories concerning ancient poets.⁹² Different individuals must have participated in its construction and, although Alcidas' work, as it seems, became at some point the main version against which to think about the story, it is unlikely that one original and canonical version of Homer and Hesiod's contest ever existed. Many elements point in this direction. First, there survive different versions of the contest. Plutarch, for instance, narrates (see *Conv. sept. sap.* 153f-154a) that i) it was Hesiod, and not Homer, who was tasked with solving the riddles and that ii) the recitation of passages of poetry preceded rather than followed the riddle's contexts. Additionally, iii) according to some editors, Plutarch had the poet Lesches participate in the contest instead of (or together with) Homer.⁹³

Even the text of the papyri that preserve portions of the *Certamen* are often different from the text of the Laurentian manuscript and such differences can hardly be explained as the mere result of the copying process. They should instead be viewed as part of the process of selection and simplification of later compiler(s).⁹⁴ But later readers did not simply abridge an older text. As we have seen above, one imperial compiler (Nietzsche's "Referent") contributed to the narrative at least by adding the story concerning Hadrian's oracle. The *Certamen*, in short, never seems to have been regarded as a fixed canonical text. It was rather a malleable text, by which I mean, a kind of text more open than others to transformations resulting from the interventions of different readers.

⁹² Already Wilamowitz defined the *Certamen* as a "Volksbuch."

⁹³ On the Plutarch's passage, see BASSINO 2019: 13-20 with bibliography.

⁹⁴ On the differences between *P. Petr.* I 25 and the Laurentian manuscript see BASSINO 2019: 64-66. On the differences between *P. Mich. Inv.* 2754 see BASSINO 2019: 70-1.

Its central portion, the contest proper, is especially likely to have reached its present form through progressive accumulation of different material. It now consists of two main portions: the impromptu riddles games (74-175) and the recitation of poetic passages (176-204). The first section is further divided into 5 different games, each of which, in turn, consists of different rounds (game number 2 only consists of one round; see 2.2 for more details). Each game is connected to the other by prose sections (see *Cert.* 94-6; 102-104; 138-9; 148-150) which, despite showing some degree of variation, have all the same basic meaning, *i.e.* “since Homer responded well to this challenge, Hesiod turned to this other one.” Theoretically speaking, a reader can increase the number of games and of rounds endlessly without altering the basic structure of the text. It suffices to add a prose section like the one above to introduce an entirely new game. Adding new rounds is even simpler, given that those can be inserted without the need to modify the context. Some of these games and rounds, as I have mentioned above and will more amply discuss below, existed before Alcidamas, but who it was who decided, and when, to attach them to the story of the contest between Homer and Hesiod is difficult to say. Likely, the first version of the *Certamen* did not consist of all of the five surviving games (and all of the rounds that make up each game). Instead, the process that led to the present configuration continued over a long stretch of time, between the sixth and fourth centuries BCE.

A similar development can be seen *in nuce* in the story of the contest between Calchas and Mopsus which scholars have often offered as a parallel to the *Certamen*'s

story.⁹⁵ According to the myth, Calchas was given an oracle foretelling that he would die if he met a better diviner than himself.⁹⁶ This indeed happened when Mopsus challenged and beat Calchas in a contest in the art of divination. The story is certainly old. Indeed, a fragment from Hesiod *Melampodia* (F. 278 M.-W.) already alludes to the contest between the seers, and Sophocles also recounted the myth in his lost tragedy *Helen claimed* (see F 180 RADT = Str. 14.1.27). What is interesting for our purposes, are the different variants of the story.⁹⁷ In Hesiod's version, as Strabo (Str. 14.1.27) informs us, Calchas asks Mopsus how many figs there are on a tree. Mopsus guesses both the number and their weight. Calchas is defeated and dies. Sometime later, Pherekydes (*FGrHist* 3 F 142= Str. 14.1.27) says that the question Calchas asked Mopsus was how many piglets were in a pregnant sow. Others (see Str. 14.1.27), combining the two pieces of information, said that the question about the figs was proposed by Calchas whereas the one about the sow by Mopsus. This is the version that we find also in Apollodorus (6.2-4). A further version is transmitted by Photios (Bibl. cod. 186, 132a). In this case, the divinatory games are not enough to establish a winner, so the king of the Lycians, Amphimachos, resolves the context by having the two seers predict the outcome of his next war.⁹⁸ Judging from these three variants, the context between Calchas and Mopsus originally consisted of only one round (the riddle of the fig). At some point, however, a second round (the riddle of the sow) was

⁹⁵ For a good summary of the story of the myth of Calchas and Mopsus with relevant sources and discussion see YU 2017: 921-25.

⁹⁶ See Apoll. 6.2-4.

⁹⁷ WEILER 1974: 114-116 and GANTZ 1993: 702-3 collect the variants.

⁹⁸ It is impossible to say how this variant arose, but the parallelism between the role of Panoides in the *Certamen* and that of Amphimachos in settling the context seems to suggest that one story influenced the other at some point.

added. Finally, a new ending of the contest was provided: King Antimachos sets the test which resolves the entirety of the contest. The original nucleus of the story is always the same (Calchas and Mopsus compete, Mopsus wins, Calchas dies) but readers expanded upon it by the addition of new trials. I take it that something similar, but on a much larger scale, happened with the *Certamen*. Readers did not resist, as it were, the temptation to participate in the contest themselves and, much like Hesiod, came up with new riddles or imported them from elsewhere. Without altering the original nucleus of the story (Homer and Hesiod compete, Hesiod wins) they progressively added different kinds of games and rounds until the *Certamen*, probably already by the time of Alcidamas, acquired a form similar to the one we witness in the Laurentian manuscript.

It is now time to summarize the results of this initial investigation into the *Certamen* by providing a succinct sketch of the history of its origins and genesis. Sometime after Hesiod produced his *Works and Days*, readers inspired by ll. 650-9 found in Homer the perfect adversary for Hesiod to have met in the contest mentioned there, and the story of a contest between the two was based thereon. Although it cannot be established for sure, I take it that the first version of the contest consisted only of the recitation of poems. This is, in fact, what Hesiod himself implies, *e silentio*, at ll. 656-7 when he claims that he defeated his opponent with a song (ἐνθα μέ φημι/ ὕμνω νικήσαντα). Moreover, what we would expect from a poetic competition is precisely a song contest, not a series of games of wit. The presence of games of wit as part of the poetical contest must have struck Plutarch as odd as well, since he provides an explanation for it: the contestants moved on to the contest of riddles only because a

winner could not be determined from the recitation of poetry . In Plutarch's version of the story, the poetic battle comes first, and the games of wit subsequently (Plut. *Conv. sept. sap.*, 153f-154a).⁹⁹ It should be noted, moreover, that when Dio Chrysostom (Dio. Chr. *On Kingship* 2.7-12) and Philostratus (Philostr. *Her.* 43.7-10) mention the story of the *Certamen*, they merely refer to the recitation of Homer and Hesiod own poetry and not to any games of wits.

Around the time in which the story of the contest arose, other elements of the biographies of the two poets recounted in the *Certamen* started emerging as well. Most famously the riddle of the lice, which ends the *Certamen* and was already known to Heraclitus (F 56D) in the sixth century BCE.

At some point between the sixth and the fourth centuries, a series of games of wit were added to the contest story. This is fully compatible with the archaic conception of the poet as a *sophos* (cf., e.g. the riddle of the lice), as well as with the interest in riddles and games of wit attested both in popular culture (cf. Oedipus and the sphinx) and in actual sympotic practices (on this see below). The section on riddles may have been modest in origin but ultimately became the main focus of the contest.

By the time Alcidamas compiled the *Certamen* for his *Museon*, the story of the contest between Homer and Hesiod already existed, and already consisted of two parts: the riddles' portion and the recitation of the poems. Given his interest in rhetoric and improvisation, Alcidamas probably expanded the riddles' section, pulling from sympotic material, and, perhaps, inventing some games and rounds himself.

⁹⁹ Whether the inversion of the order was Plutarch's doing or whether Plutarch was following a version of the story unknown to us, it is impossible to say.

Alcidamas was also responsible for the fashioning of a parallel biography of Hesiod and Homer and for the insertion of the contest as the central event of such a biography.¹⁰⁰ Contest and biography, in fact, were certainly not conceived as parts of a whole, for there is one major contradiction between the two sections. In the contest, in fact, Homer recites passages from the *Odyssey* (*Cert.* 84-9) and the *Iliad* (*Cert.* 191-204). Yet, according to the *Certamen*, at the time of the contest Homer had only composed the *Margites* (see *Cert.* 55). The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* would be composed only later (see *Cert.* 275-6). In combining the two sections, Alcidamas produced a work that is both a historical investigation of the lives and works of Homer and Hesiod (biography) and a *divertissement* for learned readers (contest). These two aspects, history (ἱστορία) and pastime (παιδιά), are precisely the ones that Alcidamas’ emphasizes at the end of his work according to the Michigan papyrus, which, in Porter’s recent translation, reads: “And so now, in return for this amusement [which Homer gave us, viz., that of the contest] (παιδιάς χάριν), I give him thanks, by publicly transmitting [the details of] his birth and his poetry as well to anyone among the Greeks who wants to study the facts (φι λ [ἱστορ]εῖν¹⁰¹) with [any] accuracy of memory.”¹⁰²

After Alcidamas, who crystallized the text in a form similar to what we have today, only minor changes occurred.¹⁰³ That being said, however, the text was

¹⁰⁰ See PORTER 2021: 20-22.

¹⁰¹ On the reasons for this supplement and the role of *historia* in Alcidamas see PORTER 2021: 16-18.

¹⁰² PORTER 2021: 9-10.

¹⁰³ Pelliccia notes *per litteram* that Alcidamas’s role “would seem to have parallels in the 4th-3rd c. movements to turn “folk” material into “higher” literary genres.” He provides as examples inscribed epitaphs that become literary epigrams, begging songs that become a mini-genre (Phoenix of Colophon), as well as creation of the Lives of Aesop.

certainly simplified and abridged over time, while new pieces of information coming from different sources were added (see e.g. the alternative story of Hesiod's death quoted from Eratosthenes; *Cert.* 240-7). Moreover, during the 2nd century CE a compiler added at least one detail, the story of Hadrian's oracle (*Cert.* 32-43).

Given the nature of the evidence, many details of the overview I just sketched are destined to remain speculative. For the sake of my argument, however, it suffices to have proven that the material found in the *Certamen* (and in the contest's section especially) was as old as Alcidas, and, most likely, preceded him. Ultimately, the *Certamen* is a product of the Classical Period.¹⁰⁴ In what follows, I analyze in detail the games depicted in the contest section. I argue that they come from a sympotic context (ch. 2) and they reflect the concerns of a literary minded audience (ch. 3).

2.2 The *Certamen*: a Sympotic "Handbook"

Nobody doubts that the contest narrated in the *Certamen* is fictional. That is to say, nobody believes that it is the representation of an actual poetical competition that happened between Homer and Hesiod. In what follows, I argue that the *Certamen* is fictional in a much stronger sense: although it is represented as a competition between two poets/rhapsodes (Homer is identified as a rhapsode at *Cert.* 56 and 286),¹⁰⁵ it hardly is an illustration of an actual archaic/classical rhapsodic competition or even a

¹⁰⁴ This is generally the scholarly consensus. See GRAZIOSI 2002: 168, n. 11.

¹⁰⁵ *Cert.* 56 Ὅμηρον περιέρχασθαι κατὰ πόλιν ῥαψωδοῦντα [...], [some say that] Homer wandered from city to city reciting poems. *Cert.* 286 ἐκεῖθεν δὲ παραγενόμενος εἰς Κόρινθον ἔρραψόδει τὰ ποιήματα, from there when he came to Corinth, he performed his poems.

manipulation of a rhapsodic framework.¹⁰⁶ This point is controversial and I will, therefore, treat it in some detail.

The idea that the *Certamen* owes a great deal to rhapsodic competitions is old and well-rooted in the scholarly tradition. Already Meyer in 1892 believed that the verses of the *agon* belonged to the rhapsodic repertoire.¹⁰⁷ More recent scholars have taken the rhapsodic theory even further. Ritook claims that the best basis to assess the nature of actual rhapsodic competitions is the *Certamen*.¹⁰⁸ Collins adopts a similar approach both in his article on improvisation in rhapsodic performances¹⁰⁹ and in his monograph on “capping” and competitive poetic performances.¹¹⁰ Nagy, summarizing Collins, goes as far as to claim that “the formal characteristics of Hesiod’s quoted poetic challenges and Homer’s quoted poetic responses are in fact typical of what we find in ancient reportage concerning rhapsodic competitions that actually took place in the historical period extending from the sixth into the fourth century BCE.”¹¹¹ The implicit strategy adopted by the scholars I just quoted is 1) to assume that the *Certamen* is evidence of actual historical rhapsodic competitions on the ground that it features games based on poetic creativity, collaboration, and improvisation, and 2) to utilize the *Certamen* as further basis to argue that ambiguous and much-discussed ancient sources concerning rhapsodic activity actually support the notion of rhapsodic creativity, collaboration, and improvisation. As far as I can see, the obvious circularity

¹⁰⁶ I am paraphrasing COLLINS 2004: 189.

¹⁰⁷ MEYER 1892: 379.

¹⁰⁸ RITOOK 1962: 228.

¹⁰⁹ COLLINS 2001.

¹¹⁰ COLLINS 2004: 185-191.

¹¹¹ NAGY 2009: 298.

of this reasoning has never been explicitly called into question. In what follows, I will briefly point out that I can see no reason why we should take the *Certamen* as evidence of actual rhapsodic practices. Subsequently, I will discuss the main sources concerning rhapsodic performances, pointing out that their use as evidence for rhapsodic creativity, collaboration, and improvisation rests, at best, on speculative interpretation. In so doing, I will mostly engage with Collins' work, which makes the strongest case in favor of reading the *Certamen* as part of a rhapsodic framework.

The main goal of this section is to prepare the terrain for my two subsequent arguments: 1) the techniques featured in the *Certamen* originated in the sympotic context; 2) Homer and Hesiod act not so much as poets competing against each other but rather as literary critics assessing the limits of their own compositions (I make this point in 2.3). My argument, however, has also wider implications as it engages in the controversial question of the role of improvisation, creativity, and collaboration in rhapsodic performances.¹¹²

The use of the *Certamen* as a quasi-historical document to reconstruct formal features of rhapsodic competitions is highly problematic. What is worse, scholars who treat it as such do not provide any explicit argument to support the legitimacy of their operation. Aside from the similarities that they believe exist between the techniques featured in the *Certamen* and actual rhapsodic practices, I can think of three possible arguments that might have persuaded scholars to use the *Certamen* as evidence for

¹¹² A useful summary of the wide array of scholarly positions on the question can be found in PELLICCIA 2003: 97-98. A thorough, recent, and often ingenious (but quite one-sided) account of the rhapsodic craft is GONZÁLEZ 2013 which is based on Nagy's evolutionary model for the gradual fixation of the Homeric text (first proposed in NAGY 1981. See also NAGY 1995 and NAGY 1996: 26-63). I found the succinct account of GRAZIOSI 2002: 21-40 to be a much more reliable reconstruction.

actual rhapsodic performances: 1) much like historical rhapsodes, Homer and Hesiod are said in the *Certamen* to engage in a poetical competition; 2) Homer is compared to a rhapsode twice in the *Certamen*; 3) Homer and Hesiod recited epic lines, and epic was a rhapsodic prerogative.

All of these points are far from conclusive. 1) Homer and Hesiod are certainly represented as engaging in a poetical competition in the *Certamen* but, with the exception of the recitation of their own poetry (see *Cert.* 176-210), the other kinds of games they play are never explicitly associated with rhapsodic competitions in our ancient sources (see below). 2) It is true that Homer is defined as a rhapsode twice in the *Certamen* (*Cert.* 56 and 286). Still, as already shown by Graziosi, in these instances the verb ῥαψοδέω “is used in connection with travelling and indicates recitation, not composition.”¹¹³ The verb, thus, exclusively refers to those moments in Homer’s life in which the poet recites the poems which he previously composed and is never used to characterize the poetical games played by Homer and Hesiod, which involve improvisation and creativity and not mere recitation. This use of the verb ῥαψοδέω, as we will see below, is consistent with Alcidamas’ conception of rhapsodic activity as presented in *Alcid. Soph.* 14. 3. Although rhapsodes are often associated with epic poetry,¹¹⁴ epic performances were clearly not an exclusive prerogative of

¹¹³ GRAZIOSI 2002: 35.

¹¹⁴ It should be noticed that Plato in the *Ion* has Socrates ask Ion, a rhapsode, whether he was an expert in poets other than the epic ones. Specifically, he mentions Archilochus (a lyric poet) at 531a2 and 532a6. It is difficult, however, to say whether by mentioning Archilochus, Plato was entertaining the possibility that an actual rhapsode could be an expert in poets other than the epic ones, or whether this is a typical case of Socratic irony: Socrates is playing dumb in order to ridicule the limitations of rhapsodic expertise. I found the former to be more likely as Homer and Archilochus are also associated in a fragment of Heraclitus (f. 42 DK) which likely contains a pun on the word ῥαψοδός. On Heraclitus’ passage see GRAZIOSI 2002: 29-30 and 31 n. 60. Another example of non-epic rhapsody is Plat. *Tim.* 21B on which see FORD 1988: 302. That the term ῥαψοδία is not limited to epic but can be

rhapsodes. To mention only one example out of many, consider the passage from Aristophanes' *Peace* discussed above. There (Ar. *Pax* 1265-1304), two boys rehearse the songs they are about to sing at a wedding. As we have seen, the repertoire of boy 1 is entirely taken from epic poetry. This is a particularly fitting case as two of the lines recited by the boy (ll. 1282-3) also occur in the *Certamen* (ll. 107-108). Although these very lines may have been originally part of the rhapsodic repertoire, Aristophanes' passage is proof of a quite obvious fact: epic lines were commonly recited also by people other than professional rhapsodes, e.g. random boys, in contexts other than rhapsodic competitions, like wedding celebrations.¹¹⁵ To this, we shall add the fact that participants in the symposia were expected to play games involving the recitation of hexameters, and presupposing knowledge of heroic themes as, for instance, a passage from Clearchus of Soli which I shall discuss below testifies (see Ath. X 457e2-458a1).¹¹⁶

Aside from these specific points, two general considerations should be added. First, as I have argued in section one, our version of the *Certamen* developed over a long period of time, and many agents, at different moments contributed to it. Even if the story of a contest between Homer and Hesiod was originally created in a rhapsodic context (which seems quite likely), the kind of games performed by the two poets, which, as I have argued, are plausibly a later contribution to the story of the contest,

defined as the performance of poetry without a μέλος as been argued by FORD 1988, see *contra* GONZÁLEZ 2013: 343-356.

¹¹⁵ Another example connected with the *Certamen* are the elegiac couplets of Theognis 425-427 which, with the exception of the pentameter at 426, are quoted by Homer at (*Cert.* 78-9). Theognis may have quoted the hexametric lines from an earlier source (see CAMPBELL 1983: 233) and turned them into elegiac couplets by adding the two pentameters ll. 426 and 428. On these lines see also below.

¹¹⁶ Cf. COLLINS 2004: 129: "The improvisation or recitation of hexameter verses seems to have long been a mainstay at symposia."

need not be in any way representative of actual rhapsodic contests. In fact, as I will argue later, the techniques showcased in the *Certamen* are at home in a different context, that of the symposium. Moreover, Homer and Hesiod as depicted in the *Certamen* should in no way be assimilated to rhapsodes. As a matter of fact, they cannot even be associated with poets *tout-court*. Despite the creative nature of their performances they are not singing/composing any songs, they are rather challenging each other in puzzles and other games of wits. Connected to this, is also the obvious observation with which I began this section: the *Certamen* is a work of fiction. Much as the idylls of Theocritus can hardly cast any significant light on the actual habits of ancient Greek shepherds, so the *Certamen* is not a faithful representation of any actual poetical competition. Such an aprioristic use of the *Certamen* as evidence for reconstructing the techniques of ancient rhapsodes is, therefore, flawed.

Now that I have established that the *Certamen* cannot be utilized *a priori* as evidence for the reconstruction of ancient rhapsodic craft, I will assess whether other sources attribute to rhapsodes similar kinds of techniques and expertise as those attributed to Homer and Hesiod in the *Certamen*. Collins has made the case that they do; I intend to show the opposite. To do so, I will rebut the main points of Collins' argument, step by step, in the order in which they are presented in his 2001 article "Improvisation in Rhapsodic Performance."¹¹⁷

Collins' ambitious goal is to show against previous scholarship that ancient rhapsodes were not mere reduplicative reciters of epic but created and improvised

¹¹⁷ Collins makes the same case in two venues, see COLLINS 2001 and its revision in COLLINS 2004: 179-191. The two works are almost identical. I engage primarily with COLLINS 2001 because it is slightly more detailed but I will also occasionally refer to COLLINS 2004: 185-191.

poetry as well, often in collaborative settings—a now quite fashionable theory. To achieve his goal, he starts by dismissing the accounts of Plato’s *Ion* (and Xenophon’s references to rhapsodes as “the stupidest of men” [see *Symp.* 3.6; *Mem.* 4.2.10]) as prejudicial. Obviously, Collins needs to push Plato’s testimony to the side, as there is little doubt that according to Plato’s dialogue, the rhapsode Ion memorized and recited the fixed text of Homer.¹¹⁸ Yet, refusing to engage with arguably the most comprehensive ancient source concerning rhapsodic activity in order to focus on later and ambiguous scraps of evidence is quite a suspicious move.¹¹⁹

Next, Collins moves to the ancient sources that discuss the etymological meaning of the term ῥαψωδός. Although this is not the only, nor the most common etymology offered by ancient sources,¹²⁰ the word rhapsode was connected with the idea of “stitching/sewing” from the time of Pindar.

ὄθεν περ καὶ Ὀμηρίδαι
 ῥαπτῶν ἐπέων τὰ πόλλ’ ἀοιδοὶ
 ἄρχονται, Διὸς ἐκ προοιμίου· καὶ ὄδ’ ἀνήρ
 καταβολὰν ἱερῶν ἀγώνων νικαφορίας δέδεκται πρῶτον Νεμεαίου
 ἐν πολυμνήτῳ Διὸς ἄλσει. (Pind. *Nem.* 2.1-6)

Just as the Homeridae, the singers of woven verses, most often begin with Zeus as their prelude, so this man has received a first down-payment of victory in the sacred games by winning in the grove of Nemean Zeus, which is celebrated in many hymns. (Svarlien)

¹¹⁸ There is no internal reason why one should understand the verb κοσμέω in Plato’s *Ion* 530d6 as a reference to “any number of different activities, including the addition of verses” (COLLINS 2001). Given that Ion has just said that no one, not even “commentators” of Homer such as Metrodorus of Lampsachus, Stesimbrotos of Thasus, or Glaucón (on which see chapter 1), has offered so many and *beautiful* (καλά) comments about Homer as he has, the kosmesis of Homer mentioned at 530d6 is very likely a reference to the exegesis of Homer that must have been part of Ion’s performance. A similar conclusion is found in RIJKSBARON 2007: 131-2.

¹¹⁹ Along similar lines see PELLICIA 2003: 113. The evolutionary theory of Nagy and González (with time rhapsodes become more and more bound to a *script*) is a more sensitive approach to explain the presence of sources like the *Ion* that emphasize rhapsodic recitation. See above for references to Nagy and González’ model. Skepticism concerning the evolutionary model is voiced by READY 2017: esp. 500-2.

¹²⁰ The derivation from ῥάβδος, staff, was more popular. See on this GRAZIOSI 2002: 23.

There are many difficulties surrounding the interpretation of this passage. For instance, it is not clear whether the Homeridai, a clan of professional rhapsodes of the island of Chios claiming descentance from Homer, stitched together individual verses or bigger thematic nuclei.¹²¹ Nor is it clear what the metaphor of the stitching precisely entails.¹²² Another point is in my view equally unclear. Although scholars take these lines to mean that the Homeridai stitched individual verses/scenes together into their song, a different reading is also possible. Pindar, in fact, does not specify that the ones doing the stitching are the Homeridai. The qualification ῥαπτῶν ἐπέων ἀοιδοὶ, singers of stitched songs, can in fact also mean that the Homeridai recited songs made up of different thematic units and previously stitched together, we might say composed, by another poet. In the endless discussion about the meaning of the “stitching” metaphor, this significant distinction has, to my knowledge, never been brought up. Yet, if we accept that Pindar’s passage is also ambiguous as to whom is responsible for the stitching, its use as evidence for the creative nature of rhapsodic performances becomes even more difficult to establish.

Although Collins does briefly discuss the metaphor of the stitching and the question of what were the rhapsodes stitching in relationship with this Pindaric passage, his main contribution to the question of the etymology of the term “rhapsodos” rests on his analysis of two sections of a scholion to the text of Pindar: *schol. ad Pind. Nem. 2, 1c4-d10* DRACHMANN and *schol. ad Pind. Nem. 2, 1d, 16-22*

¹²¹ Since PATZER 1952, much ink has been spilled over the question of whether rhapsodes stitch together large segments of narrative or smaller (individual lines) poetic items.

¹²² A short summary of the different interpretative possibilities can be found in FORD 1988: 300-2.

DRACHMANN. I follow Collins' order and I start with *schol. ad Pind. Nem. 2, 1d, 16-*

22 DRACHMANN:

Φιλόχορος (*FGrHist* I 417) δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ συντιθέναι καὶ ράπτειν τὴν ᾠδὴν οὕτω φησὶν αὐτοὺς προσκεκλησθαι. δηλοῖ δὲ ὁ Ἡσίοδος λέγων (fr. 357 MW):
ἐν Δήλῳ τότε πρῶτον ἐγὼ καὶ Ὅμηρος ἀοιδοὶ μέλομεν,
ἐν νεαροῖς ὕμνοις ράψαντες ἀοιδὴν,
Φοῖβον Απόλλωνα χρυσάορον, ὃν τέκε Λητώ.

Philochorus says that they (*sc.* the rhapsodes) were called thus from the putting together and stitching of the song. Hesiod shows this by saying:
At that time in Delos for the first time Homer and I, the poets, sang,
Stitching a song in new hymns,
Phoibos Apollo with a golden sword, whom Leto bore¹²³

Collins makes three points about this passage: i) Hesiod and Homer “work together to sing *one* song about Apollo” (emphasis in the original); ii) “they appeared to do so by means of new verses or segments;” iii) the expression “stitching a song in new hymns” could mean improvisation (COLLINS 2001).

A better sense of the meaning of this text can be gained if we accept with Else¹²⁴ and Martin¹²⁵ that Hesiod F 357 MW is a reference to the Homeric hymn to Apollo. This hymn is often considered to be made out of two discrete sections: the so-called Delian section (ll. 1-178) and the Pythian one (179-546). Separatist scholars, with whom I tend to agree on this issue, consider the two sections to be two originally autonomous poems combined at a later time.¹²⁶ They especially point to lines 165-176

¹²³ There are many difficulties concerning the translation of this fragment, e.g. the function of the participial aorist *ράψαντες* and whether to punctuate after *μέλομεν* or after *ὕμνοις*. A detailed analysis of the different possibilities is found in GONZÁLEZ 2013: 420-426. My translation follows the general consensus (e.g. GRAZIOSI 2002: 33; COLLINS 2001; MOST: 2007: 355; GONZÁLEZ 2013: 420-426).

¹²⁴ ELSE 1957: 30-31.

¹²⁵ MARTIN 2004: 411-15

¹²⁶ The separatist argument was first formulated by Ruhnken in the second edition of his letter to Valckenaer. See RUHNKEN 1782². A summary of the scholarly debate over the question of the composition and unity up to 1975 can be found in FÖRSTEL 1979: 20-59. A more recent survey of the

which have a decisively concluding flavor. Unitarians, relying especially on common themes and similarities between the two sections, believe that the poem is one single coherent composition by one author.¹²⁷ Whether the poem was originally made up of two different poems or not, the separation between the two portions is striking and, I assume, must have perplexed not only modern readers but also ancient ones. F 357 MW can thus be seen as a convenient, albeit fictional, explanation by an ancient reader¹²⁸ to account for the status of the hymn.¹²⁹ Two different authors, Homer and Hesiod, composed a hymn to Apollo on the same occasion, a performance in Delos, that is why we have one poem made out of two clearly discrete sections. In my reading, the ἀοιδὴν of the fragment is the complete hymn to Apollo, ἐν νεαροῖς ὕμνοις, are the two sections sung by Homer and Hesiod, respectively, i.e. ll. 1-178 and ll. 179-546,¹³⁰ the verb ῥάπτω refers to the combination of the two sections of the hymn.¹³¹

Although Collins has no problems accepting the scenario I just described,¹³² he fails to draw the proper conclusions from it. If F 357 MW indeed refers to the

bibliography can be found in CHAPPELL 2011. Among the more recent work see esp. BURKERT 1979; JANKO 1982: 99-132; CLAY 1989: esp. 18-19 and CLAY 1994; RICHARDSON 2010: 9-15; PETROVIC 2013.

¹²⁷ For the unitarian view see, among others, MILLER 1986, CLAY 1989: 18-19 and CLAY 1994; RICHARDSON 2010: 9-15.

¹²⁸ In my view, F 357 is not by Hesiod, but is rather a later, perhaps, rhapsodic composition. Hypotheses on the origins of this fragment can be found in WEST 1967: 440.

¹²⁹ I argue elsewhere that fictional accounts of the poet's lives were often created for the sake of solving the interpretative problems raised by their poems. For instance, I believe that the story Stesichorus' blindness and subsequent recovery should be explained on similar grounds. The story is obviously fictional (the main question is whether it was alluded to by Stesichorus himself in his poem or not. I believe it was not), which helps justify the bipartite structure of Stesichorus' *Palinode* (1 accusation of Helen; 2 retraction).

¹³⁰ A possibility entertained as well by GONZÁLEZ 2013: 426.

¹³¹ Similarly ELSE 1957: 30-31.

¹³² In a footnote of his 2001 piece he says that "As Ruth Scodel suggests to me viva voce, if Hesiod F357 MW can be taken to refer to the Homeric Hymn to Apollo, perhaps we can account for the Delian and Pythian division of that poem as the competitive contributions performed by Homer and Hesiod,

bipartition of the *hymn to Apollo*, then to say that Homer and Hesiod i) are “working together” it is too strong a statement. There is, in fact, little to no collaboration involved: Homer is responsible for one discrete portion of the poem, the first, Hesiod for the second. While it is technically true that two poets collaborated insofar as they came together in one place and both contributed to the finished product, ultimately the result of their so-called collaboration is two discrete entities camouflaged as a whole. This hardly suggests any form of real interaction between the poets during the compositional process. Homer and Hesiod quite literally stitched two different songs together. ii) That the new song arises through the stitching of new verses or segments, a meaning that Collins infers from the expression ἐν νεαροῖς ὕμνοις ῥάψαντες ἀοιδῆν, is, as well, unlikely to be an accurate representation of the evidence. The new hymns that Homer and Hesiod stitch together are the two large (178 lines the first, 368 lines the second) sections of the poem. These can hardly be characterized as “verses or segments”, terms which suggest much smaller units. Finally, the expression ἐν νεαροῖς ὕμνοις ῥάψαντες ἀοιδῆν certainly means that the two sections are original compositions of Homer and Hesiod¹³³ and iii) *could* imply that they had been improvised by the two poets during their performance. At the same time, there is no

respectively.” (COLLINS 2001: n. 16). In his monograph, he repeats the gist of this note and adds that line 241 of the Homeric Hymn to Apollo is almost identical to Hesiod, *Catalogue* fr. 70.18 MW.

¹³³ GRAZIOSI 2002: 33 points out that the emphasis on the novelty of the composition “may have been a necessary qualification: Homer and Hesiod did not perform in the manner of original rhapsodes, their songs were new.” I agree with the gist of her argument but see *contra* GONZÁLEZ (2013: 339 n. 33). I should add that the emphasis on “new hymns” might reflect the *priamel* like (see RICHARDSON 2010: 86) beginning of the two sections of the hymn of Apollo. Both in the first section (see ll. 19-24) and in the second section (ll. 208-213) the poet wonders how he might sing about Apollo given the abundance of material existing on the topic. Once the poet moves to the actual subjects of his hymn (at l. 25 in the first section and at l. 214 in the second), the material he sings is, therefore, implicitly set up as his original innovation on the preceding tradition. It is possible that the composer of Hesiod F 357 MW picked up on this claim for originality and specified that the two portions sung by Homer and Hesiod were “new hymns” because they innovated upon the preceding hymnic tradition.

reason why it *should* imply it. Precisely because, as we have seen, there is little to no interaction between Homer and Hesiod’s performances, it would be perfectly logical for them to recite, one after the other, a memorized piece previously composed independently from one another.

I now move on to the second section of Pindar’s scholion: *schol. ad Pind.*

Nem. 2, 1c4-d10 DRACHMANN

ἐπιφανεῖς δὲ ἐγένοντο οἱ περὶ Κύναιθον, οὓς φασὶ πολλὰ τῶν ἐπῶν ποιήσαντας ἐμβαλεῖν εἰς τὴν Ὀμήρου ποίησιν. ἦν δὲ ὁ Κύναιθος τὸ γένος Χίος, ὃς καὶ τῶν ἐπιγραφομένων Ὀμήρου ποιημάτων τὸν εἰς Ἀπόλλωνα γεγραφὼς ὕμνον ἀνατέθεικεν αὐτῷ. οὗτος οὖν ὁ Κύναιθος πρῶτος ἐν Συρακούσαις ἐραψώδησε τὰ Ὀμήρου ἔπη κατὰ τὴν ξθ’ Ὀλυμπιάδα, ὡς Ἰππόστρατός φησιν (FHG IV 433)

Cynaethus¹³⁴ became famous, who, they say, having composed many verses, inserted them into Homer’s poetry. Cynaethus was Chian by descent and of the poems attributed to Homer he composed the *Hymn to Apollo* and credited it to him (sc. Homer). This Cynaethus was the first to perform Homer’s epics in Syracuse during the sixty-ninth Olympiad (504-501), as Hippostratus says.

Collins believes that this text, especially the section going from ἦν δὲ to ὕμνον ἀνατέθεικεν αὐτῷ is evidence of the fact that Cynaethus produced utterances (πολλὰ τῶν ἐπῶν), i.e. *individual* verses, and inserted them into the poetry of Homer. He then specifies: “we cannot and should not conclude from this, however, that these utterances themselves constituted a narrative, for Kynaiethos could have been

¹³⁴ οἱ περὶ + τινα (acc. *nominis propriae*) can indicate the person together with his associates or can be simply a periphrasis for Cynaethus. Analysis of this expression need to be made case by case, author by author. In this instance, it is difficult to be conclusive on the matter as, even if the passage were to stem from Hippostratus, it is unlikely to be a verbatim quotation. I follow COLLINS 2001 in preferring the periphrastic meaning (1. the fragment seems to be concerned with Cynaethus and not with the activity of an otherwise unknown rhapsodic circle of Cynaethus; 2. in scholiastic texts the periphrastic meaning is often to be preferred). GRAZIOSI 2002: 213 translates, instead, “those around Cynaethus.” On οἱ περὶ + τινα (acc. *nominis propriae*) see DUBUISSON 1982; SALANITRO 1987; GORMAN 2003; BIANCHI 2016: 40-41 with reference to previous bibliography and, more recently, SAVIO 2019.

embellishing or adding lines here and there for emphasis, color, even humor.” I believe that everything about the scholion at hand authorizes us to conclude precisely the opposite: Kynaethus inserted into the ποίησιν of Homer, that is into his *corpus*, πολλὰ τῶν ἐπῶν, that is, an entire narrative/autonomous poem. ἔπος is a notoriously ambiguous word. It can mean “word,” “individual verses,” the meaning adopted by Collins, but also more generally “epic poetry” (see *LSJ IV*). This last meaning is also attested at the end of this very text, where Cynaethus is said to perform τὰ Ὀμήρου ἔπη an expression that clearly means the epic works of Homer. The same meaning occurs in Pl. *Hipp.* 228b-c (discussed below). There, Collins is perfectly happy to understand the expression τὰ Ὀμήρου ἔπη as the Homeric poems in a written form.¹³⁵ The term ποίησις is translated by Collins, rightly, as poetry. Yet, Collin’s interpretation demands that ποίησις signify one single poem into which Cynaethus interpolated new lines. Ποίησις, however, often indicates something more general than a single poem. Had our source meant to speak of individual poems it would probably have used the term ποίημα, as it does right after the sentence I am analyzing (see τῶν ἐπιγραφομένων Ὀμήρου ποιημάτων). Here ποίησις seems to have a meaning more akin to Homer’s *corpus*, i.e. the totality of his poems. To these linguistic elements, I shall add the fact that my interpretation makes better sense of the rest of the fragment. In the following section of the quoted scholion, we learn, in fact, that Cynaethus composed the *Hymn to Apollo*—an entire poem¹³⁶ and not some individual lines—and

¹³⁵ COLLINS 2001.

¹³⁶ Taken at its letter, the scholion refers to the entirety of the Homeric hymn. WEST 1975: 165 agrees but also suggests that “If there is anything in what the scholiast says, it must refer to D” (D being the Delian section of the *hymn to Apollo*). West does not elaborate further but I take it that what he means is that the original source from which the scholion ultimately depends stated that Cynaethus composed

attributed it to Homer. Our source, I take it, specifies with a concrete example what precedes, i.e. that Cynaethus inserted into the Homeric *corpus* a new poem. This is the most natural reading of the fragment. If we follow Collins' interpretation, we end up, instead, having, by Collins' own admission, two competing interpretations of Cynaethus' activity: "Kynaiythos composed lines, which he then inserted into Homer" (first part of the passage), "or composed poems such as a Hymn to Apollo, which he attributed to Homer" (second part of the passage).¹³⁷ My reading is preferable as it harmonizes the two alternatives.

After a brief section in which Collins discusses examples from living poetic traditions, Collins moves to the *Certamen*. I have already explained above why its use as evidence of rhapsodic performances is problematic. I should only add here that Collins seems especially impressed by the fact that the game of the "ambiguous propositions" featured in the *Certamen* (see below) rests on the use of enjambments, a feature that he sees as typical of the epic style. As I have argued above, the type of enjambments featured in the *Certamen* are far from typical of the epic diction: Collins' claimed analogy does not hold up.

only the first section of the hymn. Later on, however, readers, being unable to recognize the distinction between the two sections of the poem, mistakenly referred to the whole hymn the story concerning Cynaethus' composition. West's hypothesis is tantalizing. If we accept it, in fact, we would recover another story, alternative to that of the competition of Hesiod and Homer, that serves as a justification for the two-part structure of the *hymn to Apollo*: Cynaethus composed the first section and attributed it to Homer; as a result, the section entered the Homeric corpus and was stitched to a pre-existing Homeric hymn to Apollo (the second section of our poem). It does not matter whether this story is a sensible representation of the actual process by which our Homeric *hymn to Apollo* emerged (it is likely not), what is interesting is what the story about Cynaethus achieves: it provides an explanation for an interpretative difficulty. (on this topic see above).

¹³⁷ COLLINS 2001. The presence of two different accounts of Cynaethus' activity must have ended up bothering Collins. In COLLINS 2004: 184, which, overall, reproduces almost *verbatim* Collins 2001, in fact, the reference to the second account (the one according to which Cynaethus composed an entire poem, the *Hymn to Apollo*) is completely omitted.

As a last piece of evidence, Collins analyses two sources concerning the so-called Panathenaic Rule.¹³⁸ The story is well-known:¹³⁹ Hipparchus, the son of Peisistratus, (Solon or Pericles according to other sources) instituted rhapsodic contests for the Panathenaea and set the rules for it. The following are the two main sources for the story.

Pl. *Hipp.* 228b-c Ἰππάρχῳ, ὃς τῶν Πεισιστράτου παίδων ἦν πρεσβύτατος καὶ σοφώτατος, ὃς ἄλλα τε πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ ἔργα σοφίας ἀπεδείξατο, καὶ τὰ Ὅμηρου ἔπη πρῶτος ἐκόμισεν εἰς τὴν γῆν ταυτηνί, καὶ ἠνάγκασε τοὺς ῥαψωδοὺς Παναθηναίοις ἐξ ὑπολήψεως ἐφεξῆς αὐτὰ διέναι, ὥσπερ νῦν ἔτι οἶδε ποιοῦσιν.

Hipparchus, who was the eldest and wisest of Peisistratus' sons and who displayed many other beautiful deeds of wisdom, was also the first to bring to this land here (sc. Athens) the poems of Homer and compelled the rhapsodes at the Panathenaea to go through them in sequence, by relay, as they still do nowadays.

Diog. Laert. 1.57 = *FGrHist* 458 F 6:

τά τε Ὅμηρου ἐξ ὑποβολῆς γέγραφε (*scil.* Σόλων) ῥαψωιδεῖσθαι, οἷον ὅπου ὁ πρῶτος ἔληξεν, ἐκεῖθεν ἄρχεσθαι τὸν ἐχόμενον.

Solon wrote down a law that the poems of Homer be recited on cue, that is, where the first person left off, there the next one would begin.

The meaning of each of the words of these texts has been carefully scrutinized and many interpretative difficulties remain. Still, the general picture portrayed by the sources is clear: rhapsodes had to perform the poems of Homer in relays, starting from where the previous performer left off. These texts are generally taken as evidence that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, or one of the two poems, were recited from the beginning

¹³⁸ The expression was coined by DAVISON 1955.

¹³⁹ On the sources concerning this story see DAVISON 1955. SHAPIRO 1993 provides a cautious but reliable reconstruction of the meaning of the historical context of this rule and of its consequences for rhapsodic performances. More closely aligned to COLLINS 2001 are NAGY 2002: 9-36 and GONZÁLEZ 2013: 382-392.

till the end in their entirety at the Panathenaea.¹⁴⁰ With reference to the first source, however, Collins claims that “The Panathenaea may have allowed for the display of various improvisational techniques, such as embellishing and the sequencing of scenes in expansion, as well as a clever pick-up through enjambment by one rhapsode from the previous rhapsode. All of these possibilities are conceivable within Hipparkhos' rules for performance.”¹⁴¹ This is pure speculation: nothing in the text suggests it. Moreover, the expression ἀντὰ διέναι seems to entail precisely what Collins wants to reject, i.e. that rhapsodes “were going through” the τὰ Ὀμήρου ἔπη, i.e., by Collins own admission, the Homeric poems in written form. Moreover, the freedom that Collins is willing to grant to rhapsodes on the basis of this text does not seem to square well with the idea that rhapsodes were forced (ἠνάγκασε) into doing something. The term implies that Hipparchus implemented stricter rules for rhapsodic competitions. As Sealey once suggested,¹⁴² the rule may have prevented rhapsodes from reciting only the highlights from Homer's poems and may have guaranteed that over the course of three days participants would hear the entirety of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in the proper order. Be the question as it may, it is difficult not to agree with Shapiro that “Hipparchos' Panathenaic rule thus meant both a narrowing of the repertoire of the rhapsode and more emphasis on rote memorization, with no freedom, say, to “stitch together” episodes in different ways.”¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ See the bibliography collected at COLLINS 2004: 193 n.6.

¹⁴¹ COLLINS 2001.

¹⁴² SEALEY 1957.

¹⁴³ SHAPIRO 1993: 104.

Even more speculative is Collins' analysis of Diog. Laert. 1.57. He claims that "what *ex hypoboles* ("by cue") means exactly is not as clear as scholars have suggested. It could mean, as Shapiro argues, that after a coherent scene one rhapsode stops and another one begins. It could also mean, however, that two rhapsodes were both engaged in singing by turns the same "scene"—just as Homer and Hesiod were engaged on Delos to sing one hymn to Apollo—and they alternated with one another in producing it." Collins is right that the precise meaning of *ex hypoboles* is unclear.¹⁴⁴ However, Diogenes' gloss for it, introduced by the term οἷον, meaning, "that is," makes it quite clear that a performer would start where, i.e. at the point within the text (assuming as Collin does that the Homeric poems were written down) or simply at the point in the narrative, in which the previous perform left off. If we follow Collins' interpretation, the gloss would mean that the second performer starts *when* the first is done. Even granting that this meaning is possible in light of the Greek οἷον ὅπου ὁ πρῶτος ἔληξεν, ἐκεῖθεν ἄρχεσθαι τὸν ἐχόμενον, to say that the second rhapsode must start when the first one is done would be quite useless a rule, as surely rhapsodes were never performing their pieces at the same time.

All things considered, Collin's theory of the collaborative and creative nature of rhapsodic activity does not hold up to scrutiny. In particular, nothing suggests that they engaged in the kind of impromptu and capping games that feature in the *Certamen*.¹⁴⁵ In light of the evidence I have discussed, rhapsodes can, at best, be held

¹⁴⁴ Some of the many proposals advanced by scholars are collected in GONZÁLEZ 2013: 384-392; esp. 384 n. 185.

¹⁴⁵ Similarly BURGESS 2006 in reviewing COLLINS 2004 writes: "The characters Homer and Hesiod compete with epic lines in the *Certamen*, which Collins repeatedly discusses to good effect, but this gaming type of competition does not constitute the normal practice of rhapsodes."

responsible for the composition of larger and discrete unity of poetry, like the two sections of the *hymn to Apollo*.

I conclude this section by bringing attention to a passage that is not very often utilized in the debate over the nature of the rhapsodic activity and whose connection with the *Certamen* has never been emphasized.¹⁴⁶ It provides, in my view, positive evidence of the fact that the kind of games featured in the *Certamen* were not conceived as rhapsodic performances by fourth-century readers. I am referring to chapter 14 of Alcidamas' work *On the Sophists*:

Alcid. *Soph.* 14 ἀνάγκη δ' ἐστίν, ὅταν τις τὰ μὲν αὐτοσχεδιάζη, τὰ δὲ τυποῖ, τὸν λόγον ἀνόμοιον ὄντα ψόγον τῷ λέγοντι παρασκευάζειν, καὶ τὰ μὲν ὑποκρίσει καὶ ῥαψωδία παραπλήσια δοκεῖν εἶναι, τὰ δὲ ταπεινὰ καὶ φαῦλα φαίνεσθαι παρὰ τὴν ἐκείνων ἀκρίβειαν.

Necessarily, whenever someone improvises some parts and conforms others to models, the speech would attract criticism for the speaker because of its heterogeneity: some parts would seem to be similar to a stage performance and a rhapsodic performance, others would appear to be common and cheap when compared to the precision of the former parts.

In this passage, Alcidamas notes that orators who do not speak off the cuff but, rather, base their performances upon previously written models are like actors reciting a drama and rhapsodes reciting a poem. This passage confirms what we knew already from Plato's *Ion*, i.e. that by the fourth-century rhapsodes, much like actors,¹⁴⁷ were reciting fixed texts from memory. What is more, it portrays rhapsodic performance as

¹⁴⁶ Collins knows this text, COLLINS 2004:192 n.2, and COLLINS 2001 but he does not seem to be aware of its implications for his interpretation of the *Certamen*.

¹⁴⁷ Unless one reads ὑποκρίσει καὶ ῥαψωδία as an hendiadys meaning “dramatic rhapsody,” “rhapsodic interpretation,” “rhapsodic performance,” *vel similia*. This interpretation is defended by GONZÁLEZ 2013: 316.

the epitome of slavish replication of a model: rhapsodic activity is presented by Alcidamas as the exact opposite of improvisation.¹⁴⁸

Alcidamas' view of rhapsodic activity is particularly relevant because, as we have seen, he played a significant role in the composition of the *Certamen*. Since Nietzsche, there have been many attempts to connect the topics discussed in Alcidamas' *On Sophists* to the *Certamen*.¹⁴⁹ Scholars, for instance, insist upon the fact that it is not by chance that Alcidamas praises and discusses at length the virtues of improvisation in the *On Sophists*, and in the *Certamen* Homer and Hesiod are represented as participating in games of improvisation.¹⁵⁰ Still, to claim with Collins "that Alcidamas is clearly interested in the extemporaneous choices that a rhapsode must make in performance"¹⁵¹ is obviously problematic. Alcidamas cannot be interested in the "extemporaneous choices" of a rhapsode, given that he explicitly negates that rhapsodic activity involved any "extemporaneous choices" at all.¹⁵² If, as we should, we grant to Alcidamas a part in the composition of our text of the *Certamen*, we

¹⁴⁸ This is not to say, of course, that historically they were not cases in which a rhapsode could have gone off-script or modified such a script. In the case of actors, we know indeed that this happened. Evidence for actors' "interpolations" is collected and discussed by HAMILTON 1974. The public expectation, however, at least on the basis of Alcidamas' testimony, is *verbatim* adherence to a model. On *verbatim* memorization and reproduction in the classical period see PELLICCIA 2003.

¹⁴⁹ NIETZSCHE 539-540. Among the more recent scholars the most thorough discussion between the two works has been undertaken by O'SULLIVAN 1992.

¹⁵⁰ Improvisation provides a strong link between the *Certamen* and the *On Sophists*. Still, the relationship between these two works should not be overstated. The kind of improvisational games featured in the *Certamen*, which consist of short and witty hexametric back and forth between two participants are very different, and require different sets of skills, from the production of long prose speeches of the type Alcidamas is discussing in the *On Sophists*.

¹⁵¹ COLLINS 2004: 188.

¹⁵² Consistent with that is the fact that the verb *ραψοδέω* in the *Certamen* implies the recitation of a previously composed model. See above.

cannot argue that he was “manipulating a rhapsodic framework”¹⁵³ or had rhapsodes in mind when writing the improvisational games featured in the *Certamen*.¹⁵⁴

So far, I have argued that the contest narrated in the *Certamen* should not be understood in light of rhapsodic competitions. I will now show, that both the types of games featured in the *Certamen* as well as the skills, such as improvisation and capping, that such games presuppose are at home in the context of the symposium. A closer look at the contest section in the *Certamen* (62-214) will help make my case.

After an introduction to the contest (*Cert.* 62-74) follow five main sections (1. *Cert.* 74-94; 2. *Cert.* 94-101; 3. *Cert.* 102-137; 4. 138-148; 5. 148-175.) each one representing a different kind of challenge Hesiod submits Homer to. These sections I will refer to as “games.” Each game, as we will see, can be further divided into “rounds.” The section (*Cert.* 176-204) in which Panoides tasks each poet to recite the finest passages from their compositions ends the contest section. Although the audience preferred Homer, Panoides declares Hesiod the winner. The latter, then, dedicates to the Muses the bronze tripod he received as a prize (*Cert.* 205-214). As I have already argued above, the final section of the contest is the only one that can be directly related to an actual rhapsodic competitions. This section was probably the

¹⁵³ COLLINS 2004: 189.

¹⁵⁴ An argument could be made that the games featured in the *Certamen* were i) older than Alcidas and ii) that they reflected a different and older phase in the rhapsodic practice characterized by creativity, collaboration, and improvisation. ii) That rhapsodic practice should be studied diachronically has been emphasized by GONZÁLEZ 2013. Although I agree that many rhapsodes must have also composed, and not simply recited, poetry, especially in the archaic period, I can find no evidence for rhapsodic activity of any time that matches the types of games featured in the *Certamen*. i) As I have argued above, although some of the improvisational games featured in the *Certamen* likely preceded Alcidas, this section of the work is one of the more “recent” nuclei of the work and, I suspect, Alcidas expanded upon it significantly.

original nucleus of the story which was progressively expanded by the addition of the other five challenges.

The five main sections are structured as follow. Game 1, dubbed “the riddle of the superlative” by Bassino,¹⁵⁵ is made up of 2 rounds. First, Hesiod asks Homer what is the best thing (φέρτατον) among mortals, then, slightly varying his question, he asks what is the finest thing (κάλλιστον) among mortals.¹⁵⁶ To the first question Homer replies with a version of the Greek adage according to which it is best not to be born, and, once born, to die as soon as possible.¹⁵⁷ To the second, he replies by quoting one passage from his poem: *Od.* 9.6-11, the description of the banquet in honor of Odysseus prepared by the Phaeakians.¹⁵⁸ Game 2, “the insoluble challenge” (l. 95) is constituted of only one round. Hesiod tasks Homer *not* to sing of “the things that are,

¹⁵⁵ BASSINO 2020: 141.

¹⁵⁶ I can see no obvious difference in meaning between the first and the second question, which use two different superlatives (φέρτατον and κάλλιστον) of the same adjective ἀγαθός, “good” (at l. 82 the manuscript reads, ἄριστον, which the editor corrected to, κάλλιστον, according to *P. Petr.* I, 25, (1), l. 18). Note that to the first question Homer replies by describing what is ἄριστον and not what is φέρτατον, which was metrically available and was the term used by Hesiod in his question. Note also the use of yet another term related to the idea of “goodness” i.e. the comparative ἀμείνων in the fourth game (*Cert.* 164). Given that the two questions posed by Hesiod are basically identical, it is possible that one of the two was added at a later time by a reader who was not satisfied with Homer’s answer and wanted to give him an opportunity to redeem, as it were, himself. The two answers given by Homer are indeed opposed to one another and provide two contrasting images of the poet. The first entails a rather pessimistic view of human life and, as noted by BASSINO 2020: 14, “is not Homeric in form or sentiment.” The second entails a more positive outlook on life and celebrates the pleasure of collectively partaking in music, food, and wine. On the process of cumulative addition of rounds and games over time, of which, I believe, we can see here a concrete example, see above.

¹⁵⁷ ἀρχὴν μὲν μὴ φῦναι ἐπιχθονίοισιν ἄριστον,/ φόντα δ’ ὅμως ὄκιστα Πύλας Αἴδαο περῆσαι. “Not to be born at all is the best thing for people on earth, and once born, to pass through the doors of Hades as soon as possible” (Bassino). These lines are first attested in Theognis 425-8 (with the addition of the pentameter at 427) and are commonly attested in Greek literature (see WEST 1971: 194 for a list of the occurrences). They express a traditional motif. See, e.g., Soph. *OT* 1225-7 or Bacchyl. 5.160-2, or compare the story of Kleobis and Biton (attested e.g. in Hdt. 1.31). As I have said above, Stobaeus (4.52.22) quotes these lines as coming “from Alcidas’ *Museum*,” one of the elements that led Nietzsche to conclude that Alcidas was the author of the *Certamen*.

¹⁵⁸ Note that according to the *Certamen*’s timeline Homer had yet to compose the *Odyssey* at this point. This incongruence might suggest that the contest section and the biographical one were originally autonomous (see above).

will be and were” to which Homer replies by singing of something that would never happen, i.e., the funerary games in honor of the immortal Zeus. Game 3, defined as ἀμφιβόλους γνῶμας, literally “ambiguous propositions,” (ll. 102-3), is the one upon which scholars have mostly focused. I will discuss it in detail in 2.3. For the moment, suffice it to say that it consists of 14 rounds (if one follows Bassino in interpreting the double lines ll. 121-2, 124-5, 135-6 as one single riddle by Hesiod and not two different ones¹⁵⁹), each of which is made up of a nonsensical line pronounced by Hesiod which Homer is tasked to restore via capping. I already discussed above the case of the Greeks eating their horse-necks (ll. 108-9 = round 1). Another example is round 4, in which Hesiod sings the following line (l. 113): “this man is the son of a good man and a coward.” (Bassino) Taken in isolation this line is problematic, for how can the same man be both good and coward? Homer caps it with (l. 114) “mother, since war is hard for all women” thus making the adjective coward (ἀνάλκιδος), which earlier could only agree with the man’s father (ἀνδρός), agree now with the man’s mother (μητρός).¹⁶⁰ The man thus becomes the son of a good man and a coward mother, which is entirely possible.¹⁶¹ Game 4 is made up of one round as well and consists of a numerical riddle: how many Achaeans went to Troy? To it Homer replies with a complex calculation which leads to an absurd result. Finally, game 5 consists of 8 rounds in each of which Hesiod asks Homer different “philosophical” questions. The first three questions resemble the riddles of the superlative in game 1, the other four

¹⁵⁹ On this question see below.

¹⁶⁰ *Cert.* 113-114, Hes. οὗτος ἀνὴρ ἀνδρός τ’ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ ἀνάλκιδος ἐστί/ Hom. μητρός, ἐπεὶ πόλεμος χαλεπὸς πάσῃσι γυναιξίν.

¹⁶¹ On these two lines see GRAZIOSI 2001 :67 and below.

are phrased differently and are mostly concerned with issues of morality such as human wisdom and happiness.

Although the majority of scholars connect the *Certamen* to rhapsodic performances, the sympotic connection has already been proposed. As far as I can see, it was first advanced by Adolf Busse, in an oft-forgotten article,¹⁶² and does sometimes resurface in more recent scholarship,¹⁶³ most notably in Konrad Hess' work.¹⁶⁴ Building on Busse and Hess' work, I intend to provide further evidence of the connection between the games featured in the *Certamen* and the sympotic context. I shall start with some general observations.

As pointed out by Busse¹⁶⁵ and Hess,¹⁶⁶ literary riddles and games of wits of the kind featured in the *Certamen* are also found in sympotic settings. They adduce two main texts from Athenaeus in support of this claim: Ath. X 457c2-458a1 = fr. 63 Wehrli and X 448 c-e = fr. 86 Wehrli. In the first, Athenaeus quotes Clearchus of Soli (4th-3rd century BCE) who describes the kinds of games that ancient participants (οἱ παλαιοί) to the symposium (παρὰ τοὺς πότους) used to play.¹⁶⁷ One game consisted of capping each other epic or iambic line with the one coming next in the poem. Another consisted of reciting, in turn, versions of the same theme by different authors. Other

¹⁶² BUSSE 1909: 116-118.

¹⁶³ See e.g. WEST 1967: 440 "this (*sc.* the ambiguous propositions) seems to have been recognized as a type of party game" and KONING 2010: 49: "Moreover, the riddles and poetry-games that make up the greatest part of the contest in the *Certamen* in all likelihood find their origin in drinking parties."

¹⁶⁴ HESS 1960: esp.10-12.

¹⁶⁵ BUSSE 1909: 116-177.

¹⁶⁶ HESS 1960: 10-11.

¹⁶⁷ Given that Clearchus lived at the beginning of the Hellenistic era we can safely assume that when he refers to the games played by "the ancients" he had in mind, at the very least, a late Classical sympotic setting. Of course Clearchus' reconstruction of old symposia was largely idealized (see COLLINS 2004: 131-2) but there is no reason to doubt that the games that he mentions were not actually played in such contexts from an early time.

games included the recitation of lines that meet certain requirements, such as a particular number of syllables. Others were more like trivia questions, in which participants had to name a specific Achaean or a Trojan commander. In the second passage, we hear, again from Clearchus, about other types of riddles that were used to entertain the participants in a symposium. These passages not only prove that literary riddles and trivia-like questions featured in the symposium of the Classical time,¹⁶⁸ but also that improvisation, creativity, and the ability to cap each other lines, in short, the abilities that Homer and Hesiod exhibit in the *Certamen*, were precisely what was expected of the banqueters.

I shall now analyze each of the five games mentioned above in order to see if further connections with symposia can be established. Of these five challenges, I argue that 1 to 4 fit well the context of the symposium, whereas 5 has a more ambiguous status. The superlative questions, in Konstantakos' words "questions which ask what thing or what person possesses a quality to the highest degree"¹⁶⁹ featured in game 1 are commonly found in sympotic settings. Busse¹⁷⁰ points out that Plutarch in the *Dinner of the Seven Sages* (152E-153D) has the banqueters discuss precisely this type of questions. Of course it is possible that it is not only the sympotic context that motivates the presence of this type of questions in Plutarch's work but also the type of characters, the Seven Sages, to which similar modes of discussions are traditionally attributed.¹⁷¹ Still, overall, superlative questions of the τί τὸ κάλλιστον (or φέρτατον

¹⁶⁸ I discuss earlier evidence of graphic literature performed in the symposium in chapter 1. For the connection between riddles and symposia see also Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* V 673 A.

¹⁶⁹ KONSTANTAKOS 2005: 20. See also VISCHER 1965: 40-2.

¹⁷⁰ BUSSE 1909: 117 referring both to the questions in game 1 and game 5.

¹⁷¹ On this see KONSTANTAKOS 2005: 14-24.

vel similia) kind were especially popular sympotic conversation starters.¹⁷² One of the most famous examples is Sappho fr. 16 Voigt in which the priamel-like structure allows us to hear different answers to τί τὸ κάλλιστον question (“Some say thronging cavalry, some say foot soldiers,/ others call a fleet the most beautiful of/ sights the dark earth offers”) until we hear Sappho’s own answer, in Pelliccia’s words an “exhilaratingly scandalous assertion of a totally subjective relativism”¹⁷³ (but I say it's what-/ever you love best).¹⁷⁴ Finally, the sympotic character of game 1 can be inferred as well from the content of Homer’s reply. As we have seen above, at ll. 75-76 Homer replies to Hesiod’s first question by quoting lines attested as well in the convivial poetry of Theognis. Lines 84-89, Homer’s reply to Hesiod’s second question, moreover, describes a sympotic situation, the banquet prepared by the Phaeakeans in honor of Odysseus. These lines, which were dubbed “golden line,” traditionally preceded banquet and libations, as the text of the *Certamen* (ll. 90-94) informs us. Both from a formal point of view (the τί τὸ κάλλιστον sympotic motif) and a thematical one (the reference to sympotic topics: human condition, music, food, and wine) game 1 gestures toward a sympotic setting.

¹⁷² On this see PELLICCIA 2002: 210-211 with bibliography. See also FORD 1997: 92-93.

¹⁷³ PELLICCIA 2002: 210.

¹⁷⁴ Translations of Sappho 16 are from Jim Powell. The τί τὸ κάλλιστον sympotic motif has a productive afterlife and appears in some of the least expected places. In the 1982 movie, *Conan the Barbarian*, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger in the lead role, a general asks his warlords—over wine, of course— “what is best in life.” “The open steppe, fleet horse, falcons at your wrist, and the wind in your hair” suggests someone. Much like in Sappho, the initial answer is, however, rejected in favor of Conan’s over-the-top alternative: what is best in life is “to crush your enemies, to see them driven before you, and to hear the lamentations of their women.” Pelliccia has pointed out to me *per litteram* that Conan’s reply is likely based upon a quote attributed to Genghis Khan: “The greatest joy for a man is to defeat his enemies, to drive them before him, to take from them all they possess, to see those they love in tears, to ride their horses, and to hold their wives and daughters in his arms.” See GIBSON 1973: 3.

Game 2 consists of an aporetic question: not to sing the present, the future or the past. To it, Homer replies by singing of an impossible event, something that never happens nor will ever happen: the death of Zeus. Such impossible challenges are typical of Greek wisdom contests. Bassino mentions two examples:¹⁷⁵ the impossible challenge posed to king Amasis (to drink the sea up to the last drop), which is discussed and solved over dinner by the seven wise men of Plutarch's dialogue (*Plut. Dinner Seven Sage*, 150F3-151E7); the questions asked by Alexander to the gymnosophists according to Plutarch's *Life of Alexander* 64. Although it is not explicitly labelled as an ἀπορία, one of the oldest and most famous riddles of antiquity, the riddle of the sphinx can be seen as well an insoluble challenge: tell me what is it that, having one voice, has, at the same time, two, three, and four limbs. Formally the sphinx's request is presented as a riddle (what is it that matches certain types of conditions) rather than an impossible task but, like the case of Hesiod's challenge (less so the Amasis and Alexander's questions), it is based on a radical paradox.¹⁷⁶ How can one be, at the same time, two, three, and four-footed? In other words, however one decides to conceptualize it, the insoluble challenge of game 2 can be effectively seen as a type of riddle. As such it is especially at home in the sympotic context. Moreover, it should be noted that Hesiod's request constitutes a playful take on a traditional epic formula τὰ τ' ἐόντα τὰ τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα, attested with variations at *Il.* 1.70, *Hes. Th.* 38 and 32.¹⁷⁷ And so is Homer's imaginative take on a classical epic theme: the funerary games for a dead hero. As noted by many

¹⁷⁵ BASSINO 2020: 146.

¹⁷⁶ On the riddle of the sphinx see also BETA 2013: 200.

¹⁷⁷ See BAIER 2013: with bibliography.

scholars,¹⁷⁸ the playful and parodic repurposing of epic material was a constant of the symposium. The sympotic games described by Clearchus fr. 63 Wehrli (the fragment mentioned above), especially those that consist of reciting hexametric lines starting with a specific letter or having a specific number of syllables, are a case in point. Interesting is also the mention in the *Suda* of a certain Pigres (2nd-1st century BCE?)¹⁷⁹ who is credited with inserting elegiac lines between the hexameters of the *Iliad*.¹⁸⁰ The reference to an elegiac *Iliad* opens the tantalizing possibility embraced, I believe rightly, by Collins that “Pigres’ example offers a perfect poetry game for the symposium.”¹⁸¹ In sum, the certainly playful and perhaps slightly irreverent—note that although Homer negates the possibility that Zeus can die, his lines compel us to visualize the tomb of a dead god!—deployment of epic formulas and themes by Homer and Hesiod leads us again toward the symposium.

Game 3, which consists of problematic/nonsensical lines that a participant is tasked to solve via capping, has no precise parallel. Yet, I argue, there are many points of contact with the sympotic game known as σκολίον.¹⁸² The term σκόλιον, sympotic song, can refer to a wide range of poetic compositions and practices. Collins,¹⁸³ expanding especially on the work of Vetta,¹⁸⁴ identifies as many as 4 types of *skolia*, which I briefly summarize. 1) lyric compositions, not better defined, by known

¹⁷⁸ See esp. COLLINS 2004: 135-146.

¹⁷⁹ On Pigres see AHLY (RE) and BLIQUEZ 1977: esp. 13-16.

¹⁸⁰ *Suda*, s.v. Πίγρης (1551) ὅς τῃ Ἰλιάδι παρενέβαλε κατὰ στίχον ἐλεγείων, οὕτω γράψας·
μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος,
μοῦσα, σὺ γὰρ πάσης πείρατ’ ἔχεις σοφίης.

¹⁸¹ COLLINS 2004: 136.

¹⁸² On σκόλια see REITZENSTEIN 1893: 3-44, an influential work. More recently see BOWRA 1961: 373-403; VAN DER VALK 1974; WEST 1974: 16-18; VETTA 1983: 119-30; COLLINS 2004: 84-98.

¹⁸³ COLLINS 2004: 91-92.

¹⁸⁴ VETTA 1893: 119-120.

authors; 2) brief compositions in aeolic meters, such as the 25 short songs found in Athenaeus 694c-695f; 3) lyric compositions known by subject (like the song of Harmodius in Aristophanes, *Wasps* 1225 on which see below) or excerpts from major lyric poets performed with or without the lyre; 4) “impromptu, off-the-cuff or adapted, poetry recited to cap a previous verse(s).” The fourth type is the one that most interests us here, as it bears significant connections with game 3 in the *Certamen*. It can be best exemplified by a passage of Aristophanes: *Wasp* 1219-1250. There, Bdelycleon provides his father, Philocleon, with a practical tutorial on the skolion game (see ll. 1219-1222),¹⁸⁵ so to prevent him from making a fool of himself at the dinner-party they are about to attend.¹⁸⁶ Although, as we have seen, skolia can be short individual songs sung by one single person, in Aristophanes a different procedure is referenced. One participant starts the song and a second one finishes it.¹⁸⁷ One participant starts the song and a second one finishes it.¹⁸⁸ The passage unfolds as follows. First, Bdelycleon, pretending to be Cleon, the Athenian demagogue often attacked by Aristophanes,¹⁸⁹ recites the first line of the song of Harmodius and asks Philocleon to cap it.

Βδελυκλέων

ἐγὼ εἶσομαι· καὶ δὴ γάρ εἰμ' ἐγὼ Κλέων,
ἄδω δὲ πρῶτος Ἀρμοδίου· δέξαι δὲ σύ.

¹⁸⁵ οἱ δὲ συμπόται/εἰσὶν Θεώρος Αἰσχίνης Φᾶνος Κλέων,/ ξένος τις ἕτερος πρὸς κεφαλῆς Ἀκέστορος./ τούτοις ξυνὼν τὰ σκόλι' ὅπως δέξει καλῶς. The guests are Theorus, Aeschines, Phanus, Cleon, Acestor; and beside this last, I don't know who else. You are with them and will show how to take up the songs that are started (O' Neill).

¹⁸⁶ The representation of the *skolion* game in this passage has been the object of many scholarly analyses. See esp. REITZENSTEIN 1893: 24-29; VETTA 1983: 119-131; COLLINS 2004: 99-110. Among the more recent commentaries on Aristophanes' *Wasp* (MACDOWELL 1971; SOMMERSTEIN 1893; LENZ 2014; BILES-OLSON 2015) BILES-OLSON is especially good in their treatment of these lines.

¹⁸⁷ See the use of the verb δέχομαι at ll. 1222 (with BILES-OLSON 2015 ad loc.); 1223; 1225.

¹⁸⁸ See the use of the verb δέχομαι at ll. 1222 (with BILES-OLSON 2015 ad loc.); 1223; 1225.

¹⁸⁹ On Cleon and Aristophanes see MACDOWELL 1971: 1-4.

‘οὐδεις πάποτ’ ἀνήρ ἔγεντ’ Ἀθήναις’—
Φιλοκλέων
οὐχ οὕτω γε πανοῦργος οὐδέ¹⁹⁰ κλέπτῃς.

Bdelycleon

That we shall see. Suppose me to be Cleon. [1225] I am the first to begin the song of Harmodius, and you take it up: "There never yet was seen in Athens ...

Philocleon

... such a rogue or such a thief." (O'Neill)

Skolia that celebrated the deeds of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, who assassinated the tyrant Hipparchus in 514, were popular and four examples survive (*PMG* 893-6), none of which, however, corresponds to the line quoted by Bdelycleon. As pointed out by Biles and Olson,¹⁹¹ the first line looks to a continuation such as “ὡςπερ Ἀρμόδιος καὶ Ἀριστογείτων.” Philocleon, instead, assuming that Cleon was promoting himself through the story of the tyrannicides, subverts the meaning of the song, and turns praise into a direct abuse of Cleon: he is a rogue and a thief. When Bdelycleon comments that attacking such a powerful politician as Cleon might get him killed, Philocleon does not change his hostile attitude toward the demagogue and replies by quoting an adaptation of Alc. Fr. 141-3, most likely an attack on Alcaeus’ enemy, the tyrant Pittacus (ll. 1219-1235). Next, Bdelycleon pretends to be another participant at the symposium, Theoros, an associate of Cleon. He recites the first line of a well-known skolion, attributed to the poetess Praxilla¹⁹²: “Knowing the tale of Admetus, my dear, love those who are good (l. 1239).”¹⁹³ The use of this line implies that Theoros is presenting his friendship with Cleon as a union between good people.

¹⁹⁰ οὐδέ is an addition of all the major editors. COLLINS 2004: 101-2 defends the reading of the manuscripts.

¹⁹¹ BILES-OLSON 2015: 441.

¹⁹² On this skolion see BILES-OLSON 2015: 443.

¹⁹³ Ἀδμήτου λόγον ὧσταίρε μαθὼν τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς φίλει.

Again, Philocleon subverts the meaning of the line thus: “I know not how to play the fox, nor call myself the friend of both parties” (ll. 1241-2). These two otherwise unknown lines (improvised on the spot by Philocleon?¹⁹⁴) turn Theoros in a duplicitous character who associates himself not only with good people but with whoever can give him something in return. Finally, Bdelycleon pretends to be Aeschynes, a character depicted as a boaster in the play. He recites another well-known song which praised the comfort of two characters: the speaker and Cleitagora (the poetess?) (ll. 1245-8).¹⁹⁵ To that Philocleon replies: “The two of us have boasted a great deal.”¹⁹⁶ (l. 1248) In so doing, he accuses Aeschynes of lying about his actual resources. After these mock skoliastic performances, Bdelycleon is satisfied with the ability exhibited by his father and the two are off to the real symposium (ll. 1249-50).¹⁹⁷

Before emphasizing the strong connections between the game of the skolion, as it is typified by this passage of Aristophanes, and game 3 in the *Certamen*, it should be pointed out that the two are not exactly the same game. There are two main differences. i) In Aristophanes the lines to cap are not, in and on themselves,

¹⁹⁴ For this hypothesis see Collins 2004: 106.

¹⁹⁵ BILES-OLSON 2015: 444.

¹⁹⁶ πολλά δὲ διεκόμπασας σὺ κἀγώ. Διεκόμπασας is Tyrwhitt’s correction for the manuscript reading διεκόμισας.

¹⁹⁷ MACDOWELL 1971: 293 is puzzled by the fact that Bdelycleon praises his father’s performance, τοῦτ’ ἐπιεικῶς σὺ γ’ ἐξέπιστασαι (in this you did reasonably well), while after his first capping (l. 1228) he seemed dissatisfied with his performance. BILES-OLSON 2015: 445 suggest taking the praise at the end of the performance as a reference only to the last capping and not to the whole performance. This seems far-fetched. In the beginning Bdelycleon does not take issue with his father’s mastery of the game. He simply suggests that his approach might be dangerous. By pointing that out, Aristophanes is able to bring yet another accusation against Cleon: he is a resentful and vengeful person. At the end of the scene, it has become clear that Philocleon abusive approach is no fluke, but part of a precise strategy. Bdelycleon can thus conclude that his father knows what he is doing and seems to have mastered the game’s technique.

problematic/nonsensical. They are perfectly fine bits of poetry that can, however, be taken in different directions. Connected to this is ii) the fact that in Aristophanes the capped line never entails a strong syntactical rearrangement of the previous one. As a result, in Aristophanes the new meaning emerges from the simple juxtaposition of the two lines, whereas in game 3 a strong enjambment between the two lines is necessary to obtain the desired result. These considerations aside, however, the two games are formally very similar and require similar kinds of abilities on the part of the participants. From the formal point of view, in both cases, the game involves quick exchanges of smaller units of text (1 to 3 lines) whose meaning is meant to be subverted by the addition of another segment. Homer, much like Philocleon, brings the meaning of the line he is offered into new and unexpected directions. In both cases, participants in the game showcase an ability to quickly think on their feet and improvise or recollect the perfect line for each situation. In light of the similarities I just outlined, the fact that game 3 was one of the many games played by participants in actual symposia is a tantalizing possibility. Certainly, at the very least, we can conclude that such a game emerged out of a sympotic gaming tradition, a tradition at which Aristophanes' text allows us to get a glance.

In Game 4, Hesiod asks Homer how many Achaeans participated in the Trojan expedition.¹⁹⁸ This line of inquiry is reminiscent of Clearchus' trivia-like questions mentioned above (e.g. to give the name of each Achaean or Trojan commander).¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Compare with Thucydides 1.10.3-5.

¹⁹⁹ Commentators (see e.g. BASSINO 2020: 157) also point out the parallel with Calchas and Mopsus' competition which is, however, less relevant. No arithmetical riddle is featured in it and the guessing of the answer does not entail any logical reasoning.

Still, in the case of game 4 simple recollection of the poems does not lead the respondent very far. Homer, in fact, has not specified anywhere the exact number of the Achaeans who took part in the Trojan expedition. To answer this question, therefore, inferences from different elements of the text need to be drawn. This is what Homer does in the *Certamen*, when he deduces the number of Achaeans present on the basis of the number of fire-hearths, spits, and pieces of meat allegedly mentioned in the text:²⁰⁰ “fifty were the fire-hearths, and in each one fifty spits, around each of which were fifty pieces of meat; and three times three hundred Achaeans were around one piece of meat.” (Bassino)²⁰¹ Homer does not provide a straightforward answer, rather he cloaks it into an arithmetical problem ($50 \times 50 \times 50 \times (3 + 300)$)²⁰² as the text of the *Certamen* makes it clear: (l. 142) “and he [*sc.* Homer] answered *with a numerical problem* (διὰ λογιστικοῦ προβλήματος).” Hesiod and Homer’s exchange in the *Certamen* thus emerges as a particular kind of riddle of which numerous examples²⁰³ are collected, next to other types of riddles and oracles, in book 14 of the *Greek Anthology*.²⁰⁴ The *Anthology* (see n. 146) even includes Homer’s riddle in a slightly modified version (7 fire-earths, instead of fifty).²⁰⁵ Given that as we have seen, our sources unequivocally connect riddles with the symposium, it is natural to associate

²⁰⁰ The number of fire-hearths, spits, pieces of meat, and men collected around each of them mentioned here do not correspond with any known passage of Homer.

²⁰¹ πεντήκοντ’ ἦσαν πυρὸς ἐσχάραι, ἐν δὲ ἐκάστη/ πεντήκοντ’ ὀβελοί, περὶ δὲ κρέα πεντήκοντα·/ τρις δὲ τριηκόσιοι περὶ ἓν κρέας ἦσαν Ἀχαιοί (ll. 143-5).

²⁰² Alternatively the problem can be formalized as $(50 \times 50 \times (3 + 300))$ see below.

²⁰³ See esp. n. 1; 2; 4; 6; 116; 117; 129; 134; 140 where a general question is answered by an arithmetical problem.

²⁰⁴ On book 14 of the *Greek Anthology* see FOSTER 1945. On the formal similarities between oracles and riddles see BETA 2013.

²⁰⁵ This seems to have escaped BASSINO 2020’s notice. She does not mention this parallel in the pre-apparatus nor in the commentary.

with it also this particular kind of riddle. Other contexts of fruition can be envisioned as well (e.g. school exercises), but the symposium appears to be the perfect venue in which literary puzzles and basic arithmetical games encountered themselves.

Finally, game 5 consists of 8 “philosophical questions” on different topics: ethics and morals (#1. what is the best and worst thing for mortals; #6. what is the mark of wisdom for human beings; #7. in which matters can humans be trusted; #8. what is happiness for humans), politics (#2. how to best govern cities; #5. what can justice and courage achieve), religion (#3. what is the best thing to pray for to the gods), and others (#4. what is the best thing contained in the smallest space). As this survey shows, half of these questions are formally related to the sympotic τί τὸ κάλλιστον module discussed above. In particular, the first part of question 1 is almost identical to the two questions posed in game 1. Questions 2 to 4 play upon this module as well. Formally different are questions 5-8. Scholars have often noted that this section of the *Certamen* “reek[s] of the late fifth and early fourth century” as West puts it.²⁰⁶ In terms of language the epic vocabulary is less frequent and the topic discussed “widely informed fifth- and fourth-century philosophical and political discourse, and sophistic influences are identifiable throughout the section.”²⁰⁷ This section has therefore a more ambiguous origin than the others and might have been inspired by the teaching and public performances of the sophists. That being said, the nuggets of wisdom that characterize Homer’s answers (think, for instance, about the *carpe diem* motif featured at l. 171) could be also at home in the symposium;

²⁰⁶ WEST 1967: 442.

²⁰⁷ BASSINO 2020: 159. On Protagorean influences (in particular the notion of *homo mensura*) in the *Certamen* see OSORIO 2018.

ultimately it is very difficult to neatly separate the philosophical questions tackled by the sophists in their teaching and the ones that were discussed in the symposia, as the two must have often coincided.

All things considered, the 5 games featured in the *Certamen* emphasize Homer (and Hesiod)'s wit and their ability to come up *extempore* with satisfactory answers to riddles and puzzles. At the same time, especially game 1 and 5 presents the two poets as *sophoi*, the holder of that practical wisdom that later on sophists will vindicate for themselves.²⁰⁸ As I have noted above the contest's section of the *Certamen* was likely created by the progressive aggregation of games and rounds. It is, therefore, not surprising, that some portions of it stem almost directly from sympotic practices while others (game 5) might have different origins.

The symposium is also present in terms of the themes mentioned in the verses that Hesiod and Homer exchange. I have already commented upon the fact that Homer's answer in game 1 round 2 is the description of a symposium. More generally, food and drink, are heavily referenced in this section (see ll. 107; 119; 121; 131; 135; 143-5). Perhaps even Panoides' decision to grant victory to Hesiod, the poet of peace, instead of Homer, the poet of war, was informed by the sympotic background. In fact, the idea that strife should be left out of the doors and harmony between the participants must prevail is a sympotic *topos*.²⁰⁹ Ultimately, however, it is better to suspend our judgment about the ideological reasons of Hesiod's victory as the theme

²⁰⁸ On the sophists as heirs of the poets' wisdom see esp. Plat. *Prot.* 316d and ff.

²⁰⁹ See e.g. Theognis 493-96, and Xenophanes B I DK (*apud* Athen. 462c) esp. ll. 13-24; I read the reference to the battles of Centaurs, Giants, and Titans in the latter, so not so much as a rejection of the epic repertoire but rather as a rejection of tales of strife and violence.

of peace vs war transcend the symposium and, furthermore, the judgment of Panoides may have been conceived autonomously from the 5 previous games.

Now that the connection with the symposium has been established, I will briefly address the question of the aim of the contest portrayed in the *Certamen*. As we have seen above, in the conclusion of his work (see *P. Mich inv.* 2754, l. 19-23) Alcidas gives thanks to Homer for the entertainment (παιδιά) he has provided. The reference is likely to the contest section specifically, which, as I have shown, was created independently from the life. Although Alcidas refers to it as a work of entertainment, which, in part, it certainly was, the material included in the contest section of the *Certamen*, if not the contest section itself, was likely created and utilized to fulfill more practical aims. Meyer,²¹⁰ whose hypothesis is defended by Wilamowitz,²¹¹ argued that this section originated as part of a rhapsodic performance and was then memorized by young Athenians in school during the fifth century. I have already shown that the rhapsodic contribution to this section, if there even was one, is minor for they can only be held responsible for the “invention” and setting of the story, not its details and games. I found also unconvincing the idea that the work survived as a school book. What were students supposed to learn from it? How to enjamb badly formed hexameters? How to answer riddles? Likely none of these skills were taught in school. Much more attractive is the hypothesis, almost never mentioned in recent scholarship, briefly advanced by Busse. While assessing the question of the origins of the lines mentioned both by Aristophanes’ *Peace* and the *Certamen* (on

²¹⁰ MEYER 1892: 379.

²¹¹ WILAMOWITZ 1916b: 400 n.1.

which see above), Busse is led to positing the existence of a collection of answers and questions that, he speculates, was used by those who may have lacked the ability to improvise verse of their own in the symposium.²¹² Busse's suggestion, which is obviously difficult to fully prove, is nevertheless based on good grounds. As we have seen, lines such as the one found in game 3 preceded our version of the *Certamen* and could only have been created as part of a capping game. As I have demonstrated, a version of this capping game was played in the symposium. It is, therefore, plausible that there existed collections of verses such as the one found in game 3 and that those functioned as a handbook of sort to impress fellow diners at the symposium.²¹³ Although the contest section as we read it today need not be directly identified as one of these sympotic handbooks, much of the material it contains (especially the material featured in game 2, 3, and, perhaps 4) likely stemmed from such sources.

In conclusion, as I hope to have demonstrated, the main productive force behind this section of the *Certamen* is the sympotic institution with its games and practices, not the rhapsodic *milieu* as often posited by scholars. Although Homer and Hesiod do come up with their own lines, they are never represented in their capacity as poets or rhapsodes (except perhaps when they recite portions from their own poems at the end of the contest). Instead, they act as a learned consumer of literature of the Classical era would, i.e. they play recognizable literary games to pass their time, show off their knowledge and skills, and triumph over their opponents.

²¹² BUSSE 1909: 118.

²¹³ That one could (and perhaps should) prep for the symposium is demonstrated by the passage of Aristophanes' *Wasps* commented above. On handbooks for the symposium see also chapter 3 below.

2.3 The Certamen: Poets as Literary Critics

In his “rather idealized”²¹⁴ representation of Classical symposia, Clearchus states (fr. 63 Wehrli) that the games played by the symposiasts (παιδιά) gave an indication of their familiarity with culture (μηνύματα γίνεσθαι τῆς ἐκάστου πρὸς παιδείαν οικειότητος). In this section, I make a similar claim. Although the literary games featured in the *Certamen* were mainly sympotic pastimes, they nonetheless give us an indication of the audience’s familiarity with literature and exegesis. They show us what kind of questions readers asked of their texts and what kind of linguistic, literary, and philosophical expertise these questions presuppose. More precisely, I argue that the nonsensical lines of game 3 gesture at a typical modality of literary inquiry which scholars call zetematic.

As we have seen, literary *zetemata* are a mode of inquiry in two phases: 1) formulation of a critique/problem; 2) solution(s). The critique usually rests on a unilateral reading of the text, whereas in phase 2 the interlocutor shows that a new reading(s) is possible. By endorsing the new reading the second interlocutor neutralizes the critique. The main premise of the entire process is that language, especially poetical language, is by its nature ambiguous and can be interpreted in different way. Take the following example from Aristotle’s chapter 25 (461b10) of the *Poetics* (on this example see further discussion in the next chapter). A straightforward reading of the beginning of the *Iliad* implies that Apollo, whose goal was to punish the Greek soldiers, starts by killing the mules first (*Il.* I 50). This bizarre decision was criticized by ancient readers such as Zoilus. Aristotle, in response to such criticism,

²¹⁴ COLLINS 2004: 131.

tries to explain the logic of the passage by reading *Il.* 50 in a different ways: the word οὐρηῆας does not mean mules but is rather a rare word for “watchmen.”

A similar procedure is at the core of the nonsensical lines game in the *Certamen*: Hesiod comes up with a problematic line and Homer is tasked with solving the problem. For instance at l. 107 Hesiod utters the line I discussed the previous section: δεῖπνον ἔπειθ' εἴλοντο βοῶν κρέα, καὐχένας ἵππων. “Then they dined on beef and necks of horses.” (Bassino) The thought of eating horses is obviously repugnant for a Greek and Homer needs to fix the line. He does so by completing it with the following hexameter: ἔκλυον ἰδρώοντας, ἐπεὶ πολέμοιο ἐκόρεσθεν. The couplet thus comes to mean: “Sated with war, they dine on beef and cleansed the sweaty necks of their horses.” Scholars have emphasized²¹⁵ that Homer’s solution rest on “capping” the first line with a new one through enjambment. This is, however, only a partial interpretation of what is at stake in this game. The crucial element of Homer’s strategy is the syntactical rearrangement of the words of the sentence. When Hesiod’s line is uttered in isolation καὐχένας ἵππων goes together with βοῶν κρέα and defines δεῖπνον. Once Homer’s line is composed a new configuration of the element of the sentence is necessary. καὐχένας ἵππων must be separated from βοῶν κρέα and must be taken as the object of ἔκλυον.

This procedure, the syntactical re-arrangement of elements of the sentence, is discussed by Aristotle both in its *Poetics* (1461a24-26) and in the *Sophistici elenchi* (chs. 4; 19-21) under the name of “separation” διαίρεσις and “union” σύνθεσις of the words of the sentence (on which see below 6.3). Take one of the many Aristotelian

²¹⁵ See esp. COLLINS 2004: 185-191.

examples: εἴη δ' ἄν τις ἀγαθὸς ὦν σκυτεὺς μοχθηρός; (*Soph. El.* 177b12). This sentence has two possible meanings: i) can someone good be a bad cobbler? Or ii) can a good cobbler be bad? In i) ὦν connects τις and ἀγαθός, i.e. it is “separated” from σκυτεὺς μοχθηρός; in ii) ὦν connects ἀγαθός and σκυτεὺς, i.e. it is “united” with σκυτεὺς. In the *Poetics*, διαίρεσις is explicitly discussed as a solution the critic can resort to if he encounters a poetical problem. If the poetic line you are reading creates interpretative issues consider a different re-arrangement of the word order, suggests Aristotle. Aside from the *Certamen* and Aristotle, there are at least two pre-Hellenistic instances in which an ancient interpreter employed diaresis to interpret a difficult passage of poetry. These are Pl. *Pr.* 340-1 and Derv. Pap. col. VIII, 4-12 KPT. In the first case, Socrates is trying to make sense of the first line of Simonides’ *Ode to Scopas* and states that it is silly to take the adverb ἀλάθεως with the second word of the sentence, i.e. ἀγαθόν. Instead, the adverb is in hyperbaton and should be “united” with χαλεπόν, word 6 in the sentence.²¹⁶ In a similar fashion, the Derveni commentator notes a hyperbaton in the poem he is commenting upon and moves the elements of the sentence around in order to prevent the poet from saying that “Zeus took power against the prophecies,” παρὰ θέσφατα (I discuss this exegetical solution in full below, see 6.3). These examples suggest that diaresis was part of the toolkit of the Pre-Hellenistic critic.

Game 3 of the *Certamen* is much more than a standard capping game (think, e.g., of the rather predictable ληκύθιον ἀπόλεσεν of Aristophanes’ *Frogs*). It is a veritable *tour the force* for its participants – and also for the audience – who must first

²¹⁶ On this solution, see BRITAIN 2017: 40.

identify the problems involved in the first line and then quickly rearrange its meaning once the second line is uttered.²¹⁷ While this game, as the majority of scholars claim, may well gesture at the improvisational ability of poets/rhapsodes, it is most of all a reference to a type of exegetical procedure employed to solve literary difficulties. While, in fact, there is no other example of actual poetry that makes use of such convoluted use of enjambments, such daring syntactical rearrangements of the word order, as we have seen, are a staple of pre-Hellenistic exegesis. Game 3 of the *Certamen* is much more of a re-enactment (perhaps even a parody) of literary exegesis than it is of any poetical compositional process.

So far, I have focused on the second phase of the game, Homer's solutions to Hesiod's difficulties. Still the most interesting phase, for my purpose, is the first, the one in which Hesiod comes up with the nonsensical lines. In what follows, I will shortly explain why. As we have seen, both ancient literature and modern scholarship on *zetemata* tend to focus on the second phase, the *lyseis*. This is perfectly understandable, given that the ultimate outcome of a *zetemata* is to solve a problem, i.e. to achieve a "correct" interpretation of a passage. Thus, in his treatment of *zetemata* in the *Poetics* Aristotle, despite mentioning that he will treat both "problems" and "solutions," ends up devoting much more time explaining the type of solutions than it does discussing the type of criticisms. When he recapitulates his discussion at *Poet.* 1461b22 he states:

²¹⁷ As GALLAVOTTI 1929 rightly notices that the complexity of the lines uttered by Hesiod and Homer in game 3 can be better explained if we assume that they were produced in writing. The game as it is preserved in the *Certamen* is, therefore, somewhat artificial and only closely approximates a real game.

Ar., *Poet.* 1461b23 τὰ μὲν οὖν ἐπιτιμήματα ἐκ πέντε εἰδῶν φέρουσιν: ἢ γὰρ ὡς ἀδύνατα ἢ ὡς ἄλογα ἢ ὡς βλαβερὰ ἢ ὡς ὑπεναντία ἢ ὡς παρὰ τὴν ὀρθότητα τὴν κατὰ τέχνην.

The criticisms they [*sc.* the zetematic critics]²¹⁸ formulate are of five kinds: that things are either impossible, or illogical, or harmful, or contradictory, or contrary to artistic correctness.

Of these five kinds, only ἀδύνατα and ὑπεναντία have been previously discussed. We are, therefore, left to wonder what the others are.²¹⁹ This emphasis on the latter phase of the process, the *lyseis*, is what led scholars (as well as the ancient tradition) to focus mostly on the outcome of the exegetical process and to reduce the critics as evil “detractors” of poetry.²²⁰ As I have argued in the introduction to part 1, “defenders” and “detractors” of poetry are fluid roles which are ultimately both essential to the exegetical process. While the ability to critique a literary work (or the scholarly opinion on a literary work) is nowadays a praised skill, the significance of the first stage can be appreciated even more when we think of *zetemata* in terms of sympotic games. In a game setting the “correct” understanding of a passage is hardly the ultimate goal and coming up with a difficult riddle or seemingly insoluble problems is arguably at least as valuable a skill as that of solving a puzzle.

As we have seen above (ch. 1), coming up with good problems must not have been an easy task. Whatever the context, we should not forget that much like a good

²¹⁸ The subject of the verb φέρουσιν is left implicit. Given that this section (1461b23-26) summarizes the main topics discussed throughout the chapter, the reference is to the same unnamed critics who posed the difficulties (περὶ δὲ προβλημάτων) which are referenced as the object of the inquiry at the beginning of the chapter (1460b6).

²¹⁹ I believe that in chapter 25 Aristotle conflates ἀδύνατα and ἄλογα into one category that he refers to as ἀδύνατα. Perhaps a reference to βλαβερὰ can be seen at 1461a5-9 but on this term see BOUCHARD 2010. No mention is made of critiques παρὰ τὴν ὀρθότητα τὴν κατὰ τέχνην.

²²⁰ The case of Zoilus, which I treat in the next chapter is emblematic in this respect.

punchline requires a good setup, so does a worthwhile literary game or exegetical inquiry.

A proper appreciation for phase 1 of the game has important consequences for the evaluation of the *Certamen*. Scholars often lament the fact that while Homer is the star of the game, Panoides, in a way not dissimilar from Dionysus in the *Frogs*,²²¹ gives the prize to the less expected candidate.²²² While it is true that the author of the *Certamen* has a soft spot for Homer, the text does not only celebrate Homer's ability to solve riddles, to answer philosophical questions, and to cap nonsensical lines but also, indirectly, Hesiod's aptitude in setting up all of these games. As perceptively noted by Graziosi,²²³ the games in the *Certamen* are not zero-sum games. At the end of each round, both poets have gained more glory and the success of the entire endeavor requires mutual collaboration. The collaborative element is particularly evident in the cases of the double riddles (ll. 121-3; 124-6; 133-7). Consider *Cert.* ll.

121-123:

δειπνον δειπήσαντες ἐνὶ σποδῶ ἀιθαλοέσση
σύλλεγον ὅστέα λευκὰ Διὸς κατατεθνηῶτος
παιδὸς ὑπερθύμου Σαρπηδόνοσ ἀντιθέοιο.

Having dined among the smoky ashes
They gathered up the white bones of the deceased, Zeus'
Son, the proud and godly Sarpedon. (Bassino)

The first line is problematic insofar as it suggests that somebody (likely the heroes) was eating among ashes. The next line solves the problem: it connects ἐνὶ σποδῶ

²²¹ See ROSEN 2004.

²²² It is important to remember that the outcome of the game is rigged from the beginning. The inspiration for the *Certamen* is *Works and Days*, 650-9, in which Hesiod recounts his victory in a poetic contest.

²²³ GRAZIOSI 2001: 57-8; 69.

αἰθαλοέσση with σύλλεγον ὅστέα λευκὰ Διὸς κατατεθνηῶτος. The new meaning thus becomes: after they dined, they gathered up the white bones among the smoky ashes of the deceased Zeus. At this point, however, a new problem arises. How can the immortal Zeus be deceased?²²⁴ The next line, clarifies that the deceased is not Zeus, but rather his mortal son Sarpedon. The second line (122) both answers a problem and sets up a new one. In the context of the *Certamen* we are compelled to attribute both lines 120 and 121 to Hesiod since nowhere it is suggested that Homer poses riddles to Hesiod. However, it is clear that the original context of production of these three lines demanded a different setup. Either the respondent was allowed/must have answered with a new problem or there were multiple participants in the game, each of which would have uttered one line.²²⁵ This goes to show that in these kinds of games i) posing and solving problems are not necessarily two conflicting efforts and ii) the success of one of the participants does not necessarily implies the defeat of another. As I have demonstrated in the introduction to part 1, the same is true for literary *zetemata* where attacking and defending the poet are parts of a collaborative exegetical endeavor.

There is another more practical reason why phase one of the game is more relevant for my study than phase two. While the solutions put forward by Homer can all be described under the umbrella term of *diarexis*, the types of problems that Hesiod tasks Homer to confront are much more varied. Hesiod's lines thus provide a generous sample of the potential types of criticism that readers subjected their literary texts to.

²²⁴ The implausibility of Zeus' death was also already exploited by Homer at *Cert.* 100-101.

²²⁵ See BASSINO 2020: 153.

In what follows, I will discuss each line of Hesiod's game 3 according to the types of problem it showcases. The classification I propose does not intend to have any normative value. For one, it is not based on ancient categorization. The only attempt at mapping the types of literary criticisms is in fact Aristotle's discussion in chapter 25 of the *Poetics*. However, his framework, while it works rather well to account for Zoilus' criticism (see chapter 3), only poorly maps onto the *Certamen*. Moreover, as we have seen, Aristotle himself does not discuss criticisms in any great detail. Secondly, many cases could belong to different categories. For instance, l. 117, which suggests that Artemis was married is, both a contradiction of the mythical story and also a blasphemous image. While a certain amount of fluidity must be granted when thinking in terms of categories of critiques, I nonetheless hope to show that the problems upon which Hesiod's lines rest capture relevant trends in ancient exegesis, specifically pre-Hellenistic exegesis.

One type of criticism exemplified by Hesiod's lines is inappropriate behavior. Two cases belong to this category: ll. 106-107; ll. 133-137. We already mentioned ll. 106-107 in which Hesiod suggests eating horses. The practice is repugnant for a Greek and was most readily associated with barbarians. Thus, e.g., Herodotus reports that the Scythians commonly used horses as sacrificial victims (Her. 4.6.2). Discussion of such cultural taboos is not uncommon in zetematic literature. In the *Republic* (391 b), for instance, Plato condemns the story of Achilles' dragging of Hector around the tomb of Patroclus (Il. 24.14-18). Herodotus again (9.79) alerts us to the fact that mistreating the dead is an action more suitable to barbarians than Greek. Ancient critics proposed different solutions against this criticism of Achilles' behavior. Aristotle in his *Homeric*

Problems (fr. 166 Rose = 389 Gigon), e.g., excuses Homer through historical relativism: Homer was referring to an old practice, one that was still attested around Aristotle's time in Thessaly.²²⁶

ll. 133-137 offers another case of improper behavior, this time on the part of a single character, Agamemnon.

τοῖσιν δ' Ἀτρεΐδης μεγάλ' εὐχέτο πᾶσιν ὀλέσθαι
μηδέ ποτ' ἐν πόντῳ, καὶ φωνήσας ἔπος ἠΰδα·
ἔσθιέτ' ὦ ξεῖνοι, καὶ πίνετε· μηδέ τις ὑμῶν (135)
οἴκαδε νοστήσειε φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν
πημανθείς, ἀλλ' αὐτίς ἀπήμονες οἴκαδ' ἴκοισθε.

Hes.: For them all the son of Atreus prayed very much, that they might perish

Hom.: Never in the sea, and he uttered this verse:

Hes.: Eat, o foreigners, and drink; may none of you

Hes.: Return home to your dear fatherland

Hom.: harmed, but may you reach home unharmed (Bassino)

The problem with lines 133 and 135-6 is that Agamemnon is wishing destruction for his guests (ξεῖνοι), an obviously reprehensible sentiment. Aristotle refers to these kinds of problems in *Poetics* 1461a4-9: “When the question is whether or not someone has spoken or acted well [...]” As a solution, he suggests paying close attention to the context and to examining the character's situation, and motives. “One should examine not only whether the actual deed or utterance is good or bad, but also the identity of the agent or speaker, to whom he acted or spoke, when, with what means, and for what end—namely, whether to occasion greater good, or avert greater evil.” (Halliwell). Critiques of characters' behavior are ubiquitous in ancient exegesis²²⁷ and also inform a number of remarks by Zoilus (on these critiques see the

²²⁶ On body mutilation in Homer see KUCEWICZ 2016.

²²⁷ See, e.g., Aristotle F 168 ROSE.

next chapter). Here I will briefly mention one. Commenting on *Il.* 18.22-35, Zoilus found faults with Achilles' over-the-top reaction to the death of Patroclus (see F 11 FOGAGNOLO with my discussion below). Interestingly, Zoilus seems to be aware of Aristotle's previously mentioned caveat, i.e. that when assessing characters' actions or speeches context is essential. He in fact starts his critique by saying that ἄτοπον νῦν εἰδέναι Ἀχιλλέα, "Achilles behavior *in these circumstances* (νῦν) is problematic."

Another kind of criticism featured in game 3 of the *Certamen* is contradictions of the audience's beliefs. For instance, consider l. 109: καὶ Φρύγες, οἱ πάντων ἀνδρῶν ἐπὶ νηυσὶν ἄριστοι. "And the Phrygians, who of all men on ships are the best." The absurdity of such a line consists of associating the Phrygians, who lived in inland Anatolia, with naval prowess.²²⁸ In short, Hesiod's line contradicts a commonly held geographical belief. These types of contradictions as well were discussed by pre-Hellenistic critics. Consider, e.g., Aristotle F 167 Rose,²²⁹ a critique of Homer's depiction of Hector's body, which, despite Achilles' mutilation, looks miraculously unscathed when returned to Priam. Ll. 117 and 129 of the *Certamen* similarly defy the audience's mythological beliefs. The former, in fact, suggests that the virgin Artemis

²²⁸ BASSINO 2020: 150 states that in *Il.* 2.862-3 the Phrygians "were not a maritime force." While it is true that Homer does not present them as a maritime force, his characterization does not exclude this possibility either. In line 109, the nature of the problem is, therefore, not a contradiction between the line uttered by Hesiod and Homeric text, but rather a contradiction with commonly held beliefs. On the Phrygians see the bibliography in BASSINO 2020:150.

²²⁹ Ar. F 167 Rose³ = Sch. T *Il.* 24.420 ἀδύνατον νεκρῶν τραύματα μύειν, ὡς φησιν Ἀριστοτέλης εἰρηκέναι Ὅμηρον "μῦσεν δὲ περιβροτόεσσα ὠτειλή". τοῦτο δὲ τὸ ἡμιστίχιον οὐδὲ φέρεται. "It is impossible that the wounds of dead bodies close, as Aristotle says that Homer said: "the bloody wound closed up". This hemistich, however, is not attested."

was married,²³⁰ the second that the Argonauts took with them both Medea and her father Aietes.²³¹

Two lines showcase linguistic critiques: ll. 111 and 124. At *Cert.* 111 Hesiod says:

χερσὶ βαλὼν ἰοῖσιν ὄλων κατὰ φῦλα γιγάντων

Shooting arrows at the tribe of all the Giants with his hands (Bassino)

The line as it stands is un-grammatical.²³² Βάλλω can only take one dative, either a dative *instrumenti*, i.e. to shoot “with hands” (See *LSJ* I) or a dative of the weapon, i.e. to shoot “arrows (see *LSJ* II). Part of the ridicule of this line is that the reader might construe its meaning as “throwing hands at the tribe of all the Giants.” It is only when Homer adds the next line Ἡρακλῆς ἀπέλυσεν ἀπ’ ὤμων καμπύλα τόξα that the couplet makes sense grammatically. χερσὶ goes with ἀπέλυσεν ἀπ’ ὤμων καμπύλα τόξα and the meaning becomes “Herakles loosed a bent bow from his shoulder with his hands.”

The other example is l. 124:

ἡμεῖς δ’ ἄμ πεδίον Σιμοέντιον ἤμενοι αὐτως

Sitting thus over the plain of the Simois (Bassino)

As noted by Bassino,²³³ ἄμ is usually accompanied by a verb of motion whereas here it is coupled with a verb implying stasis: ἤμενοι.

²³⁰ αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δμῆθη γάμῳ Ἄρτεμις ἰοχέαιρα. As she had yielded to marriage, Artemis shooter of arrows (Bassino).

²³¹ Κολχίδ’ ἔπειθ’ ἵκοντο καὶ Αἰήτην βασιλιῆα. Then they took away the Colchian girl and king Aietes.

²³² That is probably why many editors (Wilamowitz, Rzach, Evelyn-White, Avezzu and Nietzsche in apparatus) suggest emending ἰοῖσιν in ἰούς. Yet, if we do so, there is no problem for the line to showcase.

²³³ BASSINO 2020: 153-4.

Attention to the rules of language is, obviously, a central feature of poetical exegesis. Criticism of poetical use of language goes back at least to Protagoras, who found two grammatical faults in the first line of the *Iliad*: (1) the poet used the wrong mood, imperative instead of optative, to pray to a goddess (cf. Arist., *Poet.* 1456b 15-18) and (2) should not have taken μῆνις to be a feminine word (Arist., *Soph. El.* 173 b 17-22).²³⁴ Another earlier example of linguistical criticism is Zoilus' F 5 FOGAGNOLO. In this passage, Zoilus and Chrysippus state that Homer committed a mistake (σολοικίζειν) when he said (*Il.* 1.129) δῶσι πόλιν Τροίην. δῶσι, they claim, is plural but the subject of the verb, Zeus, is singular. Since δῶσι is a perfectly fine 3rd person singular of the aorist subjunctive of δίδωμι, it is very likely that Zoilus and Chrysippus were not reading δῶσι in *Il.* 1.129 but rather δῶσι.²³⁵ As shown by Cobet,²³⁶ in fact, the ancient copies of the *Iliad* often omitted the *iota mutum*.

l. 127 has an ambiguous status:

δὴ τότε ἄριστῆες κοῦροι χεῖρεςσι θαλάσσης

Then the best young men with the hands of the sea

The line seems to suggest that the sea has hands. In principle, there is nothing out of the ordinary about such a line, especially if we accept that natural entities such as rivers were personified in Greek thought and literature. As noted by Bassino, the example of the river Scamander is relevant here. In book 21 of the *Iliad* Achilles engages in a fight against Scamander. The river talks to the hero and chases him. At l. 21.213 the river is even said to take on the appearance of a man. The anthropomorphic

²³⁴ On these passages there is copious bibliography. See now HUITINK-WILLI 2021.

²³⁵ For this issue see FOGAGNOLO 2022: 95-97.

²³⁶ COBET 1876: 259-263; 339-342.

representation of bodies of waters seems, therefore, to be perfectly at home in Homer. Still, the situation is not as straightforward. We know, e.g., that line 21.213 was missing from some older copies of the text. Two hypotheses can be advanced to explain its absence: either the line was omitted because the anthropomorphism of a river was regarded as suspect or the line was introduced in some texts to explain how the river was able to talk to Achilles.²³⁷ Whatever the answer may be, in general, the representation of divinities in Homer raises a number of problems. While gods are most often anthropomorphic there are many instances in which it seems that the poet is treating them as metonymical stand-ins for physical or moral concepts. Consider, e.g., *Il.* 15.410-413 in which the battle between Achaeans and Trojans is compared to a carpenter's line; not any carpenter but one that is skilled in all the types of craft because of the bits of advice he received from Athena (ῥά τε πάσης/ εὔ εἰδῆ σοφίης ὑποθημοσύνησιν Ἀθήνης). Here it would be ridiculous to imagine that the carpenter was actually schooled by Athena herself. Simply, the expression "bits of advice of Athena" is figurative and Athena stands in for the tricks of the art. This and other examples (some of which I treat in chapter 5), show that divinities in Homer exist on a "metonymical spectrum:" they can be actual anthropomorphic characters that much like humans have body parts, speak, get angry etc., or they can be stand-ins for physical or moral entities, much like Athena is synonymous for craft in *Il.* 15.412.

While this aspect of Homeric divine representation usually does not raise too many issues at a narratorial level, it often does when the audience is asked to visualize the divinity, especially when it interacts with humans. Consider, e.g., Athena's

²³⁷ For this last hypothesis see RICHARDSON 1993: 71.

apparition to prevent Achilles from killing Agamemnon in book 1 of the *Iliad*. While it is explained that the Greeks cannot see Athena, how come they did not notice that Achilles was hindered by a seemingly invisible force with whom he engaged in conversation?²³⁸ It seems that, as Aristotle points out (*Ar. Poet.* 1460a13-16), there are scenes that when visualized (for instance on stage) appear to be ridiculous but do not appear so when narrated.

I take it that something similar is at play in l. 127 of the *Certamen*. While the idea of a personified river is not problematic *per se*, to concretely visualize the sea as having body parts is too on the nose for the audience. In conclusion, while the exact significance of Hesiod's problem in line 127 escapes us, discussions of the anthropomorphic status of the Homeric divinities are both ancient and well-attested. As we will see in chapter 5, the earliest recorded Greek literary criticism revolved around the status of divinities in Homer.

The four other lines uttered by Hesiod in this section of the *Certamen* do not present any recognizable literary criticism but, rather, showcase a variety of logical fallacies and impossibilities. For instance, line 113 implies that a good man can be a coward whereas at l. 119 it is said that some people feasted "while having nothing." Similarly, at l. 122 the image of a deceased Zeus is evoked while at line 131 the addressees are invited to drink the whole sea. These kinds of logical impossibilities do not gesture directly to an exegetical milieu. Instead, they are much more reminiscent of the sophists and of their passion for formal fallacies such as the ones explored in

²³⁸ I owe Pelliccia for much discussion of these and similar scenes. For this and similar scenes see PELLICCIA 2021: 78-100.

works like Plato's *Euthydemus* and Aristotle's *Sophistici Elenchi*. Still, one of these cases, it has been argued, might point toward linguistic concerns. This is *Cert.* 113-114:

οὗτος ἀνὴρ ἀνδρός τ' ἀγαθοῦ καὶ ἀνάλκιδός ἐστι
μητρός, ἐπεὶ πόλεμος χαλεπὸς πάσησι γυναιξίν.

This man is the son of a good man and a coward
Mother, since war is hard for all women. (Bassino)

In l. 113 we find the following contradiction: how can someone be the son of a good and cowardly man? A man cannot be both good and coward. Homer solves the contradiction by connecting ἀνάλκιδος with μητρός. When taken together with the next line l. 113 reads that “someone is the son of a good father and a coward mother,” a perfectly plausible scenario. Graziosi claims that “there may be a suggestion here that the adjective ἀνάλκις should be feminine.”²³⁹ She then points out that Protagoras, as we have seen above, “complained that the noun μῆνις is feminine in Homer, although it should be masculine in view of its meaning.” What strengthens the connection with Protagoras is the fact that ἀνάλκις is a one-termination adjective, so, hypothetically, a question about the gender of such an adjective can be raised in a way that it could not for three-termination adjectives. That this passage of the *Certamen* evoked fifth-century linguistic concerns about gender is, therefore, definitively a possibility. As Aristophanes' parody suggests (see Aristoph. *Clouds*, 847-853) such discussions were, in fact, far from esoteric. Still, it must also be pointed out that Homer's solution need not rely on any theoretical understanding of language and

²³⁹ GRAZIOSI 2001: 67. On this question see also BASSINO 2020: 150-151.

gender. The mere ability to speak Greek is a sufficient condition to compose this couplet.

Yet, these two lines are interesting also for another reason. They provide vivid confirmation of what I discussed above, i.e. the importance of the setup (Hesiod's line) in this kind of game. The solution concocted by Homer rests in fact entirely on Hesiod's choice not to end l. 113 in a three-termination adjective. In other words, Hesiod's setup strongly invites Homer's solution and if indeed these lines suggest familiarity with fifth-century linguistical theories, that familiarity must have been fully shared by both participants in the game.

In short, the analysis of nonsensical lines shows that the vast majority of the issues raised by Hesiod's lines mapped well onto the exegetical concerns of the time.

To sum up, in analyzing game 3 of the *Certamen* scholars have mostly focused on the style of the hexameters as well as its content and have mostly appreciated it as a document of ancient poetics and/or rhapsodic performances. My analysis, instead, encourages us to read this game in a completely different fashion, that is, as a document of ancient literary exegesis. The setup of the game in two phases, one in which the interlocutor raises a problem, the other in which the problem is solved, strongly gestures at the zetematic mode of discussions. Moreover, both the Homeric solutions, based on διαίρεσις, and Hesiod's nonsensical lines illustrate actual pre-Hellenistic hermeneutical techniques and literary concerns. In short, the peculiarity of

the *Certamen*, one that has gone mostly unnoticed, consists of having Greece's two oldest poets anachronistically posing as fifth-century literary critics.²⁴⁰

²⁴⁰ There is another obvious example from the Classical period of poets posing as critics: Aristophanes' *Frogs*. While parallels between these two works have sometime been suggested, (see, e.g., ROSEN 2004), the role of the poets as critics in the *Frogs* deserves further study.

Chapter Three

Zoilus' Against Homer's Poetry

3.1 Zoilus' Against Homer's Poetry: a zetematic collection²⁴¹

Of the few traces of the pre-Hellenistic engagement with Homer's poetry, many lead to the activity of Zoilus of Amphipolis. Known as the Homeromastix, “the Scourge of Homer,”²⁴² Zoilus was a rhetorician, historian, and literary critic. A slightly older contemporary of Aristotle, he was active in Athens in the middle of the fourth century (410/400-330/320 B.C.E. ca.). He wrote epideictic speeches (e.g. the *Encomium of Polyphemus*), possibly also a *Techne Rhetorike*, a historical treatise, an essay on his hometown (*On Amphipolis*), as well as works against Plato and Isocrates.²⁴³ As his nickname indicates, however, he was most closely identified with his work on Homer's poetry. Entitled *Against Homer's Poetry*, (Κατὰ τῆς Ὀμήρου ποιήσεως),²⁴⁴ this work in 9 books collected mistakes committed by the poet of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Of it, 16 indirect fragments survive, mostly from ancient scholia to Homer's text.²⁴⁵ Zoilus, for instance, reproached Homer for having Apollo shoot arrows at the dogs and mules first (*Il.* 1.50), in order to send the plague among the

²⁴¹ A much curtailed version of this section is in RÉAL forthcoming (a).

²⁴² On the epithet see now FOGAGNOLO 2021.

²⁴³ On Zoilus' life and works see now FOGAGNOLO 2022: 1-11. Other recent overviews are GOULET-CAZÉ 2018: 421-436, WILLIAMS 2016, and REGALI 2015. GÄRTNER 1978 provides a thorough and methodical investigation. The fragments of Zoilus were first collected and critically edited by FRIEDLAENDER 1895. The most recent complete collection is that of Williams for the *Brill's New Jacoby*. See also *FGrHist*, 71, A, 109-112 and RADERMACHER 1951: 198-200. FOGAGNOLO 2022 collects all the testimony and fragments pertaining to Zoilus' exegetical and grammatical activity.

²⁴⁴ *Suda* ζ 130, s.v. Ζωΐλος = T 1a FOGAGNOLO. Ancient sources often quote the work in a shortened version, *Against Homer*. See T 9; T 3; F 9a.

²⁴⁵ Fr. 4-19 FOGAGNOLO. F 20 FOGAGNOLO might stem as well from this work, but it is sometimes considered as part of a distinct work, the Ψόγος Ὀμήρου, mentioned by the *Suda* (See LEHR 1888³: 202). On the question of the existence of a work, distinct from the *Against Homer's Poetry*, called Ψόγος Ὀμήρου see GOULET-CAZÉ 2018: 427 and FOGAGNOLO 2022: 26.

Greeks (F 4 FOGAGNOLO). Similarly, he found it ludicrous to have the Trojan hero Idaeos abandoning his chariot in the midst of the battle and deciding to flee from the enemy on foot (*Il.* 5.20: F 7 FOGAGNOLO).

Ancient sources were not kind to Zoilus: his “attacks” against Homer provoked many disdainful reactions. Overall, the tradition offers an extremely negative judgment of his work and character, a judgment which is echoed in the different anecdotes concerning the violent circumstances of his death. Some ancient biographers, as Vitruvius informs us, for instance, fantasized that he was crucified, stoned to death, or thrown alive upon a funeral pyre for his literary crimes.²⁴⁶ It is worth, however, emphasizing that the sources that record Zoilus’ bad fame date at the earliest to the end of the first century BCE, and that by that time ancients had hardly any firm grasp of Zoilus’ context of production and motives.²⁴⁷ Despite this evident bias of the tradition, many modern scholars have accepted the ancient portrayal of Zoilus and speculated, in turn, that the author of the *Against Homer’s poetry* must have been an “annoying misanthrope [...] without genius nor taste.”²⁴⁸ Yet, as Lehms already noted,²⁴⁹ Zoilus’ criticisms of Homer are clearly best explained as part of a specific cultural context and genre rather than as evidence of a sick soul.

²⁴⁶ On the ancient sources’ judgment about Zoilus see FRIEDLAENDER 1895: 42-45. On the stories concerning his death see Vitr. VII *Praefatio*, 8-9 = T3 BNJ = F 1 Friedlaender with FRASER 1970.

²⁴⁷ Doubts about the validity of the ancient tradition concerning Zoilus were already expressed by WULFERT: 1882. see also CESAREO 1903 and, more recently, NOVOKHATKO 2020:113. On the ancient reception of Zoilus see esp. GÄRTNER 1978: 1551-4. On the ancient and modern reception of Zoilus see FOGAGNOLO 2022: 16-19.

²⁴⁸ This is the judgement of This is the judgement of HARDION 1773: 185. Similarly harsh judgments on the personality of Zoilus can be found, among others, in Boileau and Wolf (see FRIEDLAENDER 1895: 43) up until the end of the nineteenth century (SPINDLER 1888).

²⁴⁹ LEHRS 1882³: 204-5, whose opinion is followed in many respects by Friedlaender (FRIEDLAENDER 1895: 42-46).

Attacking Homer's poetry is a practice we can trace from as early as the sixth century BCE, when Greek intellectuals such as Xenophanes, Heraclitus, and Pythagoras (see 4.2) criticized Homer, mainly over his treatment of the Gods and his unsound representation of moral issues. Plato famously showed a similar discontent especially in his *Republic*. The sophists too, often critiqued the traditional poets. Critics of Homer, however, were not all created equal. Plato, for instance, viewed Homer's poems as responsible for corrupting the youth; his main complaint against it was, therefore, its dangerous pedagogical effects. The sophists had arguably other preoccupations. As succinctly noted already by Lehrs,²⁵⁰ their critiques were not aimed at the content or at ethical values conveyed by the poems but rather at the ways these poems were crafted. Protagoras, as noted earlier, attacked Homer twice on the proem of the *Iliad*.²⁵¹ In both cases the issue was Homer's diction (the improper use of the imperative mood and erroneous agreement between noun and adjective) and not whether Homer was dangerous to listen to because of his views on religion, moral or science. For the sophists, then, the critique of poetry was more a matter of rhetoric than morality. Through the critique of Homer's grammar, for instance, they sought to publicize their own innovative theories about language.²⁵² It is not by accident that Protagoras, in faulting Homer's use of verbal moods and gender, was also the first to come out with a classification of moods and genders in Greek. In other words, for the sophists the Homeric material, because of its authority and widespread circulation,

²⁵⁰ Hi enim non impie eum [sc. Homerum] cecinisse iactabant sed inepte: versum versui repugnare, sententiam sententiae, non distingui vocabula similiter significantia, horrere striblignine. LEHRS 1882³: 199.

²⁵¹ On Protagoras engagement with Homer see esp. CORRADI 2012; PELLICCIA forthcoming.

²⁵² On which see now HUITINK-WILLI 2021.

was the perfect playground in which to test their own theories, and the perfect medium through which to communicate them.

Recent scholars have proposed three possible motives for Zoilus' activity.

1) Zoilus' attack on Homer should be viewed as a "parody" of contemporary Homeric exegesis, a thesis first championed by Lehrs,²⁵³ and for the support of which the entertaining and satirical character of some of Zoilus' critiques can be adduced (see, in particular, F 15 FOGAGNOLO). Still, as shown by Friedlaender,²⁵⁴ it is problematic for this hypothesis that Zoilus' criticisms served as the basis for the work of the same kind of critic as Zoilus was supposedly making fun of (e.g., Aristotle and Megaclides). While the satirical character of Zoilus' criticisms is undeniable, I think that it is best explained as a feature of the zetematic mode of discourse, which, as we have seen in chapter 1, owes much to the symposium.

2) Scholars such as Felix Buffière²⁵⁵ understand his work as part of a rhetorical exercise conducted in proper sophistic fashion.²⁵⁶ Yet Zoilus' work, a 9-book long endeavor offering countless minute exegetical critiques of the Homeric texts, was hardly a rhetorical stunt or a polemical pamphlet. Genuine interest in exegesis—not mere rhetorical display—lies at its core.

3) Finally, scholars like Caroline Bishop²⁵⁷ argue that Zoilus' work aimed at freeing the readers from Homer's harmful ethical influence. The problem with this

²⁵³ LEHRS 1882³: 204-205, n. 126.

²⁵⁴ FRIEDLAENDER 1895: 44.

²⁵⁵ BUFFIÈRE 1956: 24.

²⁵⁶ The idea that Zoilus' treatise was a rhetorical exercise goes back to Porphyry (see F 9a FOGAGNOLO). On Zoilus' work as a "*declamatio oratoria ante litteram*" see SODANO 1964: 6.

²⁵⁷ BISHOP 2015: 392.

interpretation is that, as I will show in section 3, none of of Zoilus’ surviving fragments actually deal with ethical questions. While Bishop realizes the profound influence that Zoilus’ work had on the subsequent exegetical tradition, equating his criticisms with Plato in many cases leads to profound misunderstandings. Verhasselt,²⁵⁸ for instance, notes how in chapter 25 of his *Poetics* Aristotle suggests that we should judge poetry “first of all by poetic standards.” He then continues by saying: “This is perhaps Aristotle’s strongest argument against most of the objections made by Plato and Zoilus.” Verhasselt represents the *communis opinio* when it comes to the history of ancient literary criticism: before Aristotle critics did not considered poetry to be an autonomous object of study and approached poetry through the lenses of other τέχναι, ethics, biology, and religion. As I will demonstrate in section 2 and 3 of this chapter the seeds of Aristotle’s game-changing exegetical presuppositions were already planted at least by Zoilus who approached poetry from an eminently aesthetical point of view. In the remainder of this section, I will argue that when Zoilus framed his attacks of Homer he had a zetematic agenda in mind: as counterintuitive as this may seem, Zoilus’ goal was not to discredit Homer but rather to create the conditions for a deeper investigation of his text—a radical departure from the biased image of the spiteful critic that much ancient tradition promoted.

Before I present my argument, a couple of specifications are in order. Scholars have often argued that Zoilus’ work should be understood in light of zetematic literature.²⁵⁹ Yet none has ever specified what exactly they mean by it. By and large,

²⁵⁸ VERHASSELT 2020: 224.

²⁵⁹ See, e.g., GÄRTNER 1978: 1454, PONTANI 2005 : 35, FOGAGNOLO 2022: 10; 18-19.

they limit themselves to note that Zoilus' attacks provided the material against which later zetematic critics framed their solutions. This position is taken to be self-evident and not in need of further discussion. The point I am making is different and has broader consequences. I argue that Zoilus himself framed his attacks of Homer so as to solicit a response from contemporary and future critics.²⁶⁰ His interest was not in taking down Homer but in challenging readers to come up with solutions to his criticism. Obviously, discussing the intentions of an author that never speaks about himself in his work is problematic. I do not think that the evidence that we possess will ever allow us to say the final word about the motives behind Zoilus' work, but the question is worth entertaining, especially since none of the solutions proposed so far by scholars is completely satisfactory.

Readers of my dissertation are by now familiar with *zetemata* (see chapter 1 and chapter 2 *passim*). Here I will recall and expand upon two points: i) the way in which the first part of *zetemata*, the *προβλήμα*, is phrased; ii) the fact that even, so called defenders, *λυτικοί*, of Homer mounted attacks against him. First, in the fragments that survives from the Homeric zetematic treatises, the exegetical inquiry is usually framed as a competition between two interlocutors, who play, as it were, the

²⁶⁰ Fogagnolo comes closer to this position when she states (FOGAGNOLO 2022: 19) “[...] la sua critica di marca iperrazionalistica appare ispirata da intenti seri e pienamente inserita nel panorama pre-aristotelico dell’esegesi antica strutturata per *zetemata* e *lyseis*.” “The hyper-rational criticisms [of Zoilus] seemed to be inspired by serious intents and to be fully at home into the pre-Aristotelian exegesis structured by way of *zetemata* and *lyseis*.” Yet, she clearly nearly confronts the incoherence of her own position when on p. 10 she suggests that the *Against Homer’s Poetry* belongs to both the zetematic genre and the *kata/pros* literature, i.e., *ad hominem* polemical treatises. The two options are incompatible as they lead to two opposite views concerning the nature of Zoilus’ work. If the *Against Homer’s Poetry* were to belong to the *kata* literature, then his author meant it as a genuine critique of Homer and, only later, ancient scholars would have used it as a starting point for their zetematic investigation. If instead, as I argue, Zoilus conceived of his work in a zetematic fashion, then the critiques he raised were not meant as final, rather they served to jump-start a hermeneutical discussion.

roles of the prosecution and the defense. On the stand is Homer—his poems, that is. The goal of the prosecution is to mount the best possible case against the poet, while the goal of the defense is to invalidate the attacks of the prosecution. The voice of the interlocutor A, the prosecution, as it were, is sometimes presented in a neutral form with expressions such as, ζητεί, he inquires, but often such a voice is introduced in terms of an actual accusation or critique against the poet (see expressions such as, αἰτιάομαι, a term that has clear judiciary undertones and means, to censure, to accuse; ἄτοπον, it is awkward; οὐ πρέπον, it is not proper that, etc.). These and similar expressions of blame are found all over the scholia, as well as in the fragments that stem from our first zetematic treatises, such as those of Aristotle and Heraclides. The voice of the interlocutor(s) B, on the other hand, is often introduced either with a negation of the premises of the “prosecution” (οὐκ ἄτοπον, it is not illogical that, etc.), or with expressions such as “λύω”, i.e. to solve a difficulty, an expression that emphasizes that the hermeneutical game has come to a conclusion; the correct interpretation of the passage has been achieved and the poet can go free of blame. This is no small point as it shows that within the zetematic context the attacks raise against the poet are constructive and serve as starting point for a thorough exegetical examination.

Secondly, even if Aristotle and Heraclides are often considered to be lytikoi, that is, “defenders” of Homer,²⁶¹ they did not refrain from “attacking” Homer, often

²⁶¹ The apologetic character of Heraclides of Pontus’ collection must have been already emphasized in antiquity, given its transmitted title: *Homeric Solutions*. Modern scholars too, often, consider Aristotle and Heraclides of Pontus’ treatises to be apologetic works. See e.g. PFEIFFER 1968: 70. On the alleged apologetic aim of Aristotle’s treatise see, e.g., BREITENBERGER 2006: 371.

lending their voices to the “prosecution” as well. Not only do they collect and answer the attacks of previous, generally unnamed critics, but they also formulate criticisms of their own. In two of the six surviving fragments of his zetematic treatise (F 99-104 SCHÜTRUMPF), Heraclides entertains critiques of Homer (F 100 and F 102 SCHÜTRUMPF), seemingly without providing solutions to them. In Aristotle’s case, of the 39 fragments (F 366- 404 GIGON) that stem from his Homeric Questions, five fragments attribute to him a critique of Homer. At least three of these report both his critiques and ensuing solutions (F 384; 394; 395 GIGON), whereas two of them (F 390-391 GIGON) report Aristotle’s own critique alone.²⁶² The end goal of Heraclides’ and Aristotle’s works was, ultimately, to solve as many interpretative difficulties as they could; solutions, consequently, had a prominent role in their work. Still, they considered providing exegetical solutions to be only one step of the whole exegetical process.²⁶³ By lending their voice to the prosecution, they show that proper zetematic investigation should start with a critical diagnosis of poetry, that is, with hunting for potential problems in it. The solution, in turn, is the natural continuation of the exegetical difficulty; it is informed by it and makes sense only in light of the ways in which the critique is framed. To speak of “defenders” versus “detractors” of poetry, as if these were two different kinds of critics who had consistently different exegetical

²⁶² The presence of a number of critiques seemingly left unanswered in works such as those of Heraclides and Aristotle raises the question whether the zetematic critics intended to leave some exegetical problems unsolved, or whether the lack of solutions is to be explained as the mere result of the complex textual transmission of such works. On this point see HEATH 2009: 259-61.

²⁶³ The importance of identifying difficulties as a means for proper philosophical inquiry is explicitly stressed by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics*. See Ar. Met. B.1.995a27–36 with TAUB 2015: 418.

aims, is, therefore, often arbitrary. As a matter of fact, Aristotle and Heraclides are perfectly happy alternating roles within the same work.

In light of this evidence, I argue that when it comes to zetematic literature, to “accuse” and to “defend” the poet should be considered two aspects of the same hermeneutical procedure. Both sides, defense and prosecution, as it were, ultimately seek the same result: a better understanding of the poem investigated. The agonistic setting is ultimately a fiction, one that probably originated as part of the sympotic context and that was preserved even in the “more serious” collections of *zetemata*. The detractors and the defenders of poetry are merely playing a part which is dictated by the nature of the genre. In what follows, I make the case that Zoilus’ attacks are best understood as in keeping with this zetematic fiction. With his criticisms of poetry, Zoilus did not intend to pass judgment on Homer’s poetry or his worldview, instead, he prompted exegetical discussions and deeper investigations of his poetry. Of course, not every ancient critique regarding the poet can be explained in light of a zetematic agenda. The famous attacks of a Xenophanes or a Plato against Homer must certainly be handled in quite a different way, but consistent features of Zoilus’ critiques militate in favor of understanding them as part of a zetematic project.

For one thing, consider the sheer length of Zoilus’ work. According to the Suda, the *Against Homer’s Poetry* consisted of as many as 9 books.²⁶⁴ A project of such an extent suggests that Zoilus went through the text of Homer methodically, scene by scene, line by line, and likely covered with his critiques a considerable portion, if not the entirety, of the text of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Had Zoilus aimed

²⁶⁴ See above.

at ridiculing Homer or at alerting readers to his harmful influence, a few well-chosen remarks, carefully arranged, would have sufficed, and made more sense rhetorically. For such a lengthy and labor-intensive work, I can conceive only of two avenues that are not necessarily mutually exclusive. i) Zoilus' collection of critiques of Homer was intended as a "conversation starter" in a sympotic context, a repertoire of puzzles to entertain and challenge the fellow-diners.²⁶⁵ This seems to be how Plutarch used Zoilus in *Table's talks* 4.5.1-2, which I analyze in full below. There, Plutarch selects a problem that actually stemmed from Zoilus' treatise (F 8 FOGAGNOLO) and puts it in the mouth of some of the diners featured in his work. The problem provides an occasion for the diners to solve the issue and entertain each other while showing off their knowledge. ii) Zoilus' treatise was intended as an exegetical guide for learned readers of Homeric poetry and aimed at promoting a critical discussion of the text. Both these possibilities, ultimately, suggest that Zoilus' work ought to be considered in close relationship with other zetematic treatises of the time.

A second point of convergence between Zoilus' work and zetematic treatises is the way in which later sources framed Zoilus' criticisms. Exactly like in any other zetematic exchanges, Zoilus' critiques are either introduced in a neutral form, with expressions such as, ζητεῖ πῶς, "he inquires how", (see F 14 FOGAGNOLO) or in agonistic terms with expressions such as, for instance, γελοίως πεποίηκεν ὁ ποιητῆς, [the poet] composed it ludicrously (see F7; cf. also F 6a, F 15, and F 18 FOGAGNOLO), αἰτιάομαι, to accuse, (F 12 FOGAGNOLO) or ἄτοπον, it is awkward (F 11; F 18; F19a

²⁶⁵ Similarly, Zoilus' treatise could also be understood as a prep-book for the symposium. On written anthologies intended for a sympotic consumption, see PELLICCIA 2002: 224 and chapter 2 above.

FOGAGNOLO).²⁶⁶ These similarities suggest that the majority of the tradition which engaged with Zoilus' work regarded his attacks as part of a zetematic mode of discourse. The roots of such a tradition go as far back as the time of Zoilus' activity, given that already Aristotle and Megaclides, who are almost contemporary with Zoilus, incorporated his critiques within their own zetematic works.

Lastly, the faults that Zoilus imputed to Homer, I argue, correspond with the types of criticisms that Aristotle, in the already mentioned chapter 25 of his *Poetics*, considers as typical of zetematic inquiries. I will expand on this point below in 3.2

Ar., *Poet.* 1461b23 τὰ μὲν οὖν ἐπιτιμήματα ἐκ πέντε εἰδῶν φέρουσιν· ἢ γὰρ ὡς δύνата ἢ ὡς ἄλογα ἢ ὡς βλαβερὰ ἢ ὡς ὑπεναντία ἢ ὡς παρὰ τὴν ὀρθότητα τὴν κατὰ τέχνην.

The criticisms they [sc. the zetematic critics]²⁶⁷ formulate are of five kinds: that things are either impossible, or illogical, or harmful, or contradictory, or contrary to artistic correctness.

The five criticisms that Aristotle listed here have been the object of much scholarly debate and my interpretation relies especially on the insightful analysis of Elsa Bouchard.²⁶⁸ The term δύνата, impossibilities, especially refers to scenes that give a fantastic impression. This is the case in Zoilus' criticism (F 6a-b FOGAGNOLO) of Homer's description of Diomedes, in which the hero is said to have a fire literally burning on his head and shoulders (*Il.* 5.7). Ἄλογα, irrationalities, refers to scenes in

²⁶⁶ It is always risky to make inference about a fragmentary author's style especially when his thought is embedded in scholia, i.e. texts that were reworked on multiple occasions over time. Still, as noted by Fogagnolo, despite the many manipulations of the original material, the sources seem to reproduce pretty faithfully Zoilus' critical terminology. See FOGAGNOLO 2022: 14.

²⁶⁷ The subject of the verb φέρουσιν is left implicit. Given that this section (1461b23-26) summarizes the main topics discussed throughout the chapter, the reference is to the same unnamed critics who posed the difficulties (περὶ δὲ προβλημάτων) which are referenced as the object of the inquiry at the beginning of the chapter (1460b6).

²⁶⁸ BOUCHARD 2010.

which the natural expectations of the reader are deceived. One such case is Zoilus' point (F 19a-b FOGAGNOLO) about *Odyssey* 9.60, in which the poet says that exactly six of Odysseus' companions perished from each ship—a symmetry that is rather suspect. Βλαβερὰ refers to actions which a character in the poem performs against his own interest or without a clear motivation.²⁶⁹ An example from Zoilus (F 8 FOGAGNOLO) is the already mentioned critique of Idaios' decision to abandon his horses and to flee from Diomedes (*Il.* 5.20). No surviving fragments by Zoilus belong to the ὑπεναντία, a category which includes factual contradiction internal to the poem(s). An example of ὑπεναντία is the contradiction concerning the number of cities in Crete. In the *Iliad* (*Il.* 2.649) it is said that they were 100, while in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 19.172-4) we learn, instead, that Crete had 90 cities.²⁷⁰ The last category, παρὰ τὴν ὀρθότητα τὴν κατὰ τέχνην, deals with all the other poetic mistakes, and includes formal and stylistic failures.²⁷¹ Two fragments of Zoilus (F 9a and F 16 FOGAGNOLO), which I will analyze below, belong to this category.

I end this section by considering a potential objection to conceiving *Against Homer's Poetry* in close relationship with other contemporaries' zetematic treatises. As we have seen, the zetematic works of Aristotle and Heraclides feature both problems and solutions concerning Homer's poetry. It seems that Zoilus, on the contrary, did not answer any of the difficulties that he raised concerning Homer's work. We should, however, be cautious in drawing such general conclusions on the

²⁶⁹ This interpretation has especially been argued for by BOUCHARD 2010 against the traditional view, according to which βλαβερὰ refers to morally harmful elements.

²⁷⁰ This was a much-discussed zetema in antiquity, for which both Heraclides (F 99 SCHÜTRUMPF) and Aristotle (F 370 GIGON) devised solutions.

²⁷¹ On this last criticism see BOUCHARD 2010: 310 and BISHOP 2015: 386.

basis of the few surviving fragments of Zoilus' lengthy treatise. For all we know, Zoilus could have very well provided exegetical solutions along with the problems he raised. There is, in fact, a least one fragment of Zoilus' treatise, hardly ever emphasized by scholars, that works better as a defense, rather than an attack, of Homer. I am referring to F 13 FOGAGNOLO, a note to *Il.* 21.447. The line Zoilus is commenting upon comes from Poseidon's speech to Apollo, where the former is trying to convince the latter to enter battle. Poseidon reminds Apollo of their service to the former king of Troy, Laomedon, and mentions his own deed, the building of a "wide and very beautiful wall" (l. 447). Zoilus proposes to read, instead, "wide and very high wall (μακρόν)."²⁷² We are told nothing of the motivation(s) behind Zoilus' emendation, but there is no discernable polemical intent here. Possibly, as already alluded to by Friedlaender,²⁷³ Zoilus, or other critics, took issue with the rhetoric of Poseidon's speech, who is depicted as bragging about the construction of the wall ("I made a very beautiful wall").²⁷⁴ By reading μακρόν instead of καλόν, Zoilus comes to Homer's rescue, and proposes a solution against a potential criticism of the passage.²⁷⁵ In light of this passage we should be open to the possibility that Zoilus' work, much

²⁷² *Schol. Il.* 21.447 (Ge) Ζωΐλος γράφει "εὐρύ τε καὶ μάλα μακρόν." Note that the presence of the verb γράφει does not imply that Zoilus edited Homer's text. On this see FOGAGNOLO 2022: 160-161. Instead, the "emendation" was part of his zetematic work. Aristotle as well proposes an emendation of the Homeric text in F 394 GIGON as part of a λύσις to a πρόβλημα.

²⁷³ FRIEDLAENDER 1895: 22.

²⁷⁴ Alternatively, Zoilus might have found the presence of the adjective καλόν inconsistent with what comes next in the line, ἴν' ἄρρηκτος πόλις εἴη. How does a beautiful wall contribute to making the city impregnable?

²⁷⁵ The solution I am arguing for is the one preferred by Fogagnolo. See FOGAGNOLO 2022: 159-161. An anonymous reader of an unpublished paper of mine appears to be troubled by the fact that, according to my reading, Zoilus might have defended Homer. He suggests, therefore, to read the scholion as an abridged account of a criticism by Zoilus. The text we read in the scholion must have originally meant, says the anonymous reader, something like "the poet should have said 'wide and very high wall.'" While this cannot be excluded, I prefer to make inferences based on what the sources actually say rather than what we would like them to say.

like Aristotle and Heraclides' treatises, featured both criticisms and solutions.

Ultimately, we are left to wonder whether the fact that the majority of the fragments of Zoilus' work that are preserved to us feature a criticism of Homer is an accident of the tradition or a faithful representation of the content of his work.

Whatever we might think about the presence of λύσεις within the *Against Homer's Poetry*,²⁷⁶ the evidence I discussed invites us to understand Zoilus' criticisms as a hermeneutical posture. Far from being a categorical attack against Homer, Zoilus' criticisms were meant to promote a more searching understanding of his poetical text. His treatise compelled readers to engage with the minute details of Homer's epics, and prompted them to address the difficulties he identified with their own solutions. In conclusion, with his treatise, Zoilus entered the zetematic arena and, much like a symposiast who poses puzzles for his fellow-diners, he challenged his readers to engage with the issues raised by the Homeric poems. Very soon after the publication of his treatise, critics, including Megaclides and Aristotle, rose to the challenge, and did come up with solutions against the critiques devised by the famous

Homeromastix.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ Note that such a title is unlikely to go back to Zoilus, and is rather the result of the later reception of his work. As such, it gives us little information about the actual content of the work. As we have seen above, Heraclides Ponticus' work is transmitted as *Homeric Solutions*, and yet his work definitively featured attacks on the poet, some of which he may have even left unanswered.

²⁷⁷ After my presentation of some of this material at a conference in January 2022, Matteo Milesi drew my attention to an interesting parallel to Zoilus' work: Tatian's προβλημάτων βιβλίον. We know very little about this work, but, based on what Eusebius says in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.13.8, it seems that it collected a series of difficulties concerning the scriptures. To this work, Rhodion, a pupil of Tatian, responded with a work containing ἐπιλύσεις to the προβλήματα raised by his teacher. Clearly, Tatian, a Christian, did not mean to find faults with the text of the scriptures. Rather he must have wanted to draw attention to some difficult passages so as to spark an exegetical debate. As far as I can tell, however, it is difficult to say whether Tatian only collected difficulties or answered some of them. The first hypothesis, entertained by CRAWFORD 2016: 543, seems to me more plausible.

3.2 Zoilus: Interpreting Omens and “Criticizing Homer from Homer”

Zoilus’ critiques of Homer belonged to a wide-spread and traditional mode of literary inquiry, but constitute, nonetheless, a highly original and often unappreciated moment in the development of Greek sensibility toward *poetics*. Traditionally, what Greeks imputed to Homer was a morally reprehensible portrayal of gods and heroes, together with a general ignorance of many of the topics featured in the poems (military techniques, biology, geography, history, etc.). The *Poetics* of Aristotle constitutes in this respect an epoch-making change in perspective. A poet should be judged in terms of standards of poetic correctness and not upon external criteria (cf. chapter 25 of the *Poetics* especially). Before Aristotle, however, already the sophists, Protagoras *in primis*, started analyzing poetry not in terms of what the poets said or which views they held, but rather on how what was said corresponded to criteria of “good” poetry. Similarly, Zoilus’ fragments testify an interest in Homer’s poetical failures and show an early appreciation for notions, such as use of symbolic devices, internal consistency and, to an extent, characters’ development, that will later become staples of the literary discourse. In what follows, I will provide a brief overview of the types of attacks that Zoilus mounted against Homer, focusing on fragments 9a, 16, 12, and 14 FOGAGNOLO. In the final section (3.3), I will deal with those fragments that scholars have wrongly interpreted as dealing with moral issues, and I will show how Zoilus’ seemingly moral comments were actually aesthetically driven.

Scholars have divided the 16 fragments (F 4- 19 FOGAGNOLO) likely belonging to the *Against Homer’s poetry* into different categories according to the kind of

criticism featured in them.²⁷⁸ Although there is little agreement among them, three main categories of criticism are typically postulated. The first is the less problematic one and includes linguistic flaws. To this category belongs F 5 FOGAGNOLO, where Zoilus reproaches Homer for making a singular subject (Zeus) agree with a plural verb (δῶσι). Note that since δῶσι is actually the regular Homer third person singular of the aorist subjunctive, not plural, of the verb δίδωμι, either we claim that Zoilus made an elementary mistake, or, as pointed out by many scholars (and above), we must infer that he had a copy of the text where the *iota mutum* was not marked (δῶσι is indeed a plural).²⁷⁹ Although it does not immediately read as a critique of Homer’s language, F 10 FOGAGNOLO also deals with questions pertaining to words’ usage and meaning.²⁸⁰ To a second and wider category belong the majority of Zoilus’ fragments (F5; F6; F7; F9; F12; F13; F14; F15; F16; F17; F19 FOGAGNOLO). These, broadly speaking, deal with different kinds of artistic implausibility. Scholars also unanimously argue for a third category that includes those fragments (F8; F4; F11; F18 FOGAGNOLO) that they regard as touching upon moral issues but which, as I will argue at the end of this chapter, are better understood as artistic failures and, therefore, fall into the second category.

Borrowing from the list of poetic flaws provided by Aristotle in *Poetics* chapter 25, 1461b22-24, I provide a further distinction among the fragments of the

²⁷⁸ See LEHRS 1882³: 203; SPINDLER 1888: 12; APFEL 1938: 250-252; WILLIAMS 2016 who all postulate a “moral” category. GÄRTNER 1978: 1545-6 divides Zoilus’ interventions into three categories: 1) failure to represent what is *πρέπον*, that is fitting, especially for a character to do, and 2) contradictions of human experience, natural laws, common sense and 3) linguistic and textual matters.

²⁷⁹ See Fogagnolo 2022: 95

²⁸⁰ On this enigmatic fragment see now FOGAGNOLO 2022: *ad loc.*

second category. In this chapter of the *Poetics*, Aristotle looks back at the tradition of zetematic literature and examines different kinds of poetic problems and their solutions. At the end of this chapter, he provides the following list of types of literary problems, which I mentioned already above (ἐπιτιμήματα): ἀδύνατα, ἄλογα, βλαβερά, ὑπεναντία, and παρὰ τὴν ὀρθότητα τὴν κατὰ τέχνην.²⁸¹ Although arguably Aristotle did not come up with such a list to specifically classify the kinds of attacks Zoilus mounted against Homer, and although these labels were not used, as far as we can tell, by Zoilus himself, the zetematic context in which the list is found allows us to conclude that Aristotle devised it having in mind contemporary zetematic works such as Zoilus'. The five categories mentioned by Aristotle provide, therefore, a useful hermeneutical tool, to be taken flexibly, for better framing Zoilus' poetical critiques.

Ἀδύνατα, impossibilities, and ἄλογα, irrationalities, are two categories that overlap in many respects. Nevertheless, I follow Bouchard in referring ἀδύνατα to “scenes in a poem that give a somewhat fantastic impression” and ἄλογα to scenes where the reader's natural expectations are deceived.²⁸² To the ἀδύνατα belong such fragments of Zoilus as F 6 FOGAGNOLO, where the critic takes issue with the depiction of Diomedes, who is said (*Il.* 5.7) to have fire burning from his head and shoulders.²⁸³ To the same category, belongs F 15 FOGAGNOLO, where Zoilus ridicules the scene (*Il.* 22.209-13) in which Zeus weighs the “fates” of Achilles and Hector on a scale. An example of ἄλογα is F 19 FOGAGNOLO. There Zoilus takes issues with a scene of the

²⁸¹ As it will become clear throughout, my understanding of this Aristotelian list is particularly indebted to BOUCHARD 2010.

²⁸² BOUCHARD 2010: 329-30.

²⁸³ This Homeric passage is explicitly labelled as a ἀδύνατον in Porphyry (*QHI E 7 MACPHAIL*).

Odyssey (*Od.* 9.60) where it is said that six companions perished from each ship.

Zoilus found implausible that the same number of men, six, not one more not one less, perished from each ship. F 17 and F 18 FOGAGNOLO, allegedly moralistic fragments that will be discussed below, also belong among the ἄλογα.

The category of βλαβερά, and its debated meaning within Aristotle, will be treated below in relationship with Zoilus' allegedly moralistic fragments. No surviving fragments by Zoilus belong to the ὑπεναντία, a category that includes factual contradiction internal to the poem.²⁸⁴ The meaning of the last category, παρὰ τὴν ὀρθότητα τὴν κατὰ τέχνην, has been much debated by scholars.²⁸⁵ One could take it as meaning flaws against some “art” (such as medicine, biology, politics), as when an artist, to follow Aristotle's example (*Poetics* 1460b17-21), represents a horse running with both his right legs thrust forward at the same time. In this case, the artist is acting against standards of biological correctness, that is, against the standards of an art that is not mimetic. However, it is also possible to take the expression to mean flaws against standards of poetic correctness. According to this second interpretation, “likely candidates for this group are elements that betray some sort of poetic inconsistency but cannot be qualified as downright factual “contradictions” (ὑπεναντία).”²⁸⁶ There are no unambiguous surviving examples of flaws against some other “art” that stem from

²⁸⁴ An example of ὑπεναντία is the contradiction concerning the number of cities in Crete mentioned above. In the catalogue of the ships (*Il.* 2.649) it is said that they were 100 while in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 19.172-4) we learn, instead, that Crete had 90 cities. This was a much-discussed πρόβλημα in antiquity for which both Heraclides (F 99 SCHÜTRUMPF) and Aristotle (F 370 GIGON) devised solutions.

²⁸⁵ See BOUCHARD 2010: 310-311 for discussion and bibliography.

²⁸⁶ BOUCHARD 2010: 332.

Zoilus' treatise *Against Homer*.²⁸⁷ In what follows, it is to this second meaning that I will refer when I use the expression *παρὰ τὴν ὀρθότητα τὴν κατὰ τέχνην*.

A particular kind of mistake *παρὰ τὴν ὀρθότητα τὴν κατὰ τέχνην* is represented by F 9, F 12, F 14, and F 16 FOGAGNOLO which deserve a separate and thorough investigation. I have already dealt at length with F 9 and F 16 elsewhere.²⁸⁸ Here I will, therefore limit myself to provide a summary of my discussion of these two fragments.

In book 10 of the *Iliad*, the poet narrates how Odysseus and Diomedes, under cover of night, cross the battlefield, killing Dolon, a Trojan scout, along the way, and sneak into the enemies' camp, killing 13 Thracians, including their king, Rhesus.

When Odysseus and Diomedes are starting out, Athena sends a heron on their right:

τὸ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν ὄπλοισιν ἔνι δεινοῖσιν ἐδύτην,
βάν ῥ' ἰέναι, λιπέτην δὲ κατ' αὐτόθι πάντας ἀρίστους.
τοῖσι δὲ δεξιὸν ἦκεν ἐρωδιὸν ἐγγυὸς ὁδοῖο
Παλλὰς Ἀθηναίη· τοὶ δ' οὐκ ἴδον ὀφθαλμοῖσι
νύκτα δι' ὀρφναίην, ἀλλὰ κλάγξαντος ἄκουσαν.
χαῖρε δὲ τῷ ὄρνιθ' Ὀδυσσεύς, ἠρᾶτο δ' Ἀθήνη (Hom. *Il.* 10.272-77)

When these two had armed themselves in their weapons of terror
they went on their way, and left behind there all the princes,
and on the right near the way they were taking Pallas Athene
sent down a heron to them; indeed, their eyes could not see it
through the darkness of night, but they could hear it crying.
And Odysseus was glad at the bird-sign, and prayed to Athene (Lattimore)

²⁸⁷ The only case that qualifies is F 1 FOGAGNOLO, a fragment that does not belong to the *Against Homer's Poetry* but to Zoilus' epideictic speech "*On the people of Tenedos*", (See *contra* LEHRS 18823: 202). In it Homer is accused of a geographical mistake.

²⁸⁸ RÉAL forthcoming(a)

Porphry, the Neoplatonic philosopher who wrote a zetematic treatise on Homer, analyzes these few lines at great length (2 full pages in Macphail’s edition). Near the beginning of his account he states:

οὔτος [sc. Ζωῖλος ὁ κληθεὶς Ὀμηρομάστιξ] ἄλλα τε πολλὰ Ὀμήρου κατηγορεῖ καὶ τὰ περὶ τοῦ ἐρωδιοῦ, ὄν ἐν τῇ νυκτεγερσία ἔπεμψε τοῖς περὶ τὸν Ὀδυσσεῶ ἢ Ἀθηνᾶ, ὄν, φησὶν, οὐκ εἶδον ὀφθαλμοῖσιν, ἀλλὰ κλάξαντος ἄκουσαν. πῶς γὰρ, φησὶ, χαῖρε δὲ τῷ ὄρνιθι Ὀδυσσεύς; εἰκὸς γὰρ ἦν ὑπολαβεῖν περιβοήτους ἔσεσθαι· φωνὴ γὰρ σημεῖόν ἐστι τοῖς λανθάνειν προαιρουμένοις ὑπεναντίον. (Porph., *QHI ad K 276*, 1-4 MACPHAIL = F9a FOGAGNOLO)

Zoilus, known as the scourge of Homer, condemned Homer for many things, including the passage about the heron, which Athena sent to Odysseus and Diomedes²⁸⁹ in the *Walking by Night* and which [the poet] says, “they did not see [...] but heard it scream” (*Il.10. 275-6*). How come, says [Zoilus], Odysseus “rejoiced in the omen” (*Il.10.277*)? For it would have been likely to assume that they [Odysseus and Diomedes] would be the center of an outcry, for sound is a sign that is contrary to those that prefer to go unnoticed.

Scholars have only cursorily hinted at the reasons why Zoilus was condemning Homer for “the passage about the heron,” as Porphyry puts it. But they generally assume that Zoilus was criticizing Homer on account of Odysseus’ unrealistic reaction to a noisy bird.²⁹⁰ Since Odysseus and Diomedes are on a secret mission, silence is of paramount importance. Yet, a loud bird starts screaming. Odysseus should not have rejoiced, as Homer says; rather, he should have been annoyed at the bird’s appearance because its screeches would have awakened the enemies. A closer investigation of Porphyry’s passage shows that this interpretation is unsupported.

²⁸⁹ For οἱ περὶ + *acc. nominis* see MACPHAIL 2011: 179 n. 14.

²⁹⁰ See WULFERT 1882: 7; APFEL 1938: 250; BUFFIÈRE 1956: 23; SODANO 1964: 5-10; GÄRTNER 1978: 1546; BOUCHARD 2016: 56; FOGAGNOLO 2022: 133-35. LEHRS 1882³: 204 appears to be the only scholar who saw that Zoilus’ point of contention is not so much the noise of the bird, but rather its symbolic meaning. “[...] *Latere volentibus alitis clangorem sinistrum omen esse.*” NOVOKHATKO 2020a: 114 emphasizes, instead, Zoilus’ interest in the affects of Homer’s characters.

Porphry claims, instead, that Zoilus took issues with Odysseus' poor interpretation of an omen (χαῖρε δὲ τῷ ὄρνιθι Ὀδυσσεύς, "Odysseus rejoiced at the bird omen" l. 277). Note, in fact, the passage "it would have been likely to assume (εἰκὸς γὰρ ἦν ὑπολαβεῖν περιβοήτους ἔσεσθαι) that they [Odysseus and Diomedes] would be the center of an outcry." The verb ὑπολαμβάνω which means, among other things, "to understand," "to interpret" or "to assume," and which I translate here with the less-committal of the three, i.e. "to assume," suggests that Zoilus took issues with Odysseus' decoding of the meaning of the omen, rather than with his instinctual reaction to a loud bird.²⁹¹ Nobody would "assume" much about a bird flying by, unless he had reason to think it had a symbolic value, unless he took the bird presence to be an omen. Zoilus' quotation of ll. 275-6, where it is said that the heron is not seen but heard, further supports the point. There is no reason why Zoilus should have stressed the opposition between sight and hearing mentioned in these lines if his target was Odysseus' unexpected reaction to a noisy bird. Yet, contrary to previous scholarship, if we take Zoilus' criticism to be Odysseus' incorrect interpretation of the omen, the presence of such lines makes perfect sense. A modern reader would easily interpret ll. 275-6 as a mere narratorial intervention. Homer wants the heroes (and the readers) to realize that Athena supports the expedition. He, therefore, has the goddess send a propitious sign, a bird, flying on their right. Still, the poet also feels compelled to explain how Odysseus and Diomedes could take notice of the flight of a bird in pitch dark night. Ll. 275-6 address the difficulty: the heroes did not see the heron, but

²⁹¹ The same expression is used in the context of the interpretation of an omen in Aristotle F 369 GIGON. See below.

recognized it through its sound. For Zoilus, however, this poetical intervention comes at a high cost. In his view, in fact, it completely shifts the meaning of the omen. Glossing over the fact that the bird flies from the right, a fact that unequivocally suggests to us that the bird was a good omen,²⁹² he assumes that ll. 275-6 must be part of the semantics of the omen. For Zoilus, the relevant message to be interpreted is not, as we would expect, *there is a bird flying on the right*. It is, rather, *there is a bird that cannot be seen, but can be heard because of its sound*. From this, it follows that the logical inference for Odysseus would have been to realize that he was bound to be discovered by the enemies. For it would be fair for Odysseus to presume that a bird which is not seen signifies, by analogy, that they as well will not be seen. Yet, since the bird can be recognized by its sounds, Odysseus should have realized that they too would be perceived (“they will be the center of an outcry”), not because of the loud noise the bird makes, as previous scholars believe, but because of what the bird noise portends, i. e., the enemy-awakening noise the two Greeks will make on their mission. Sound (φωνή), concludes Zoilus, is a contrary sign (σημείον) for people that are scouting. Under these assumptions, it is clear that Odysseus should not have rejoiced. The omen, in fact, signifies that Diomedes and he, despite operating under the cover of the night, would be heard, and, therefore caught.

In short, Zoilus assesses the unsupplied analogy between the literal meaning of the omen, the *interpretandum*, (i.e. the bird is not seen but heard) and its symbolic interpretation, the *interpretamentum*, (i.e. Odysseus’ deduction that he and Diomedes

²⁹² In Homer, as well as in later ornithomancy, a bird appearing on the right side of the observer anticipates a favorable event (cf. *Il.* 13.821-3; *Il.* 24.319-20). Conversely, a bird flying on the left is an unfavorable sign. On the right and left opposition in bird omens see e.g. COLLINS 2002: 27-29.

will be successful).²⁹³ He critiques Homer because of the inherent contradiction between the “letter” of the omen and its symbolic meaning.

Zoilus’ critique is answered by Megaclides,²⁹⁴ whose interpretation of the heron passage is quite clearly construed as a response to Zoilus’ criticism.²⁹⁵ The fragment runs as follows:

Porph., *QHI ad K 276, 5-7* MACPHAIL = F 11 JANKO Μεγακλείδης, ὅτι μαντικῶς ταῦτα ἐποίησε· δηλοῖ γὰρ ὅτι φωνὴν ἤκουσαν μόνον. οὐκοῦν οὕτως ἀπέβη τὸ μέλλον· αὐτοὶ μὲν γὰρ ὑπὸ τῶν πολεμίων οὐκ ᾤφθησαν, ἤκουσαν δὲ τὰ βουλευματα καὶ τὰς τάξεις, Δόλωνος ἐξαγγελίαντος. πῶς ἂν οὖν οἰωνὸς σαφέστερος φανείη;

Megaclides [says] that [the poet] composed these lines [*sc.* ll. 275-6] in an oracular manner; for [the poet] makes it clear that they heard the voice only [i.e. they did not see the bird]. Certainly, what follows plays out like this. On the one hand, they *were not seen* by the enemies but, on the other, they *heard* their plans and layout thanks to Dolon’s betrayal. How could then an omen appear more clearly?

In formulating his interpretation of the passage, Megaclides strictly follows Zoilus’ interpretative framework: i) he does not comment upon the fact that the bird appeared on the right and ii) he takes ll. 275-6 to be part of the semantics of the omen and not, as we would expect, a narratorial intervention. Though certainty in these matters cannot be attained, the similarity in the approach suggests that Megaclides’ reading was prompted by Zoilus’ interpretation of the passage and was meant as a solution to his criticism. Where Megaclides differs from Zoilus is in his analogical

²⁹³ I use the terms *interpretandum* and *interpretamentum* in their literal meaning. By *interpretandum* I mean the sign that needs to be interpreted, by *interpretamentum* any interpretation of said sign.

²⁹⁴ Megaclides wrote a treatise in at least two books, the *Περὶ Ὀμήρου*, in which he addressed anomalies in the Homeric text. He is called peripatetic by Tatian (Or. Ad. Grae. 31.120 = F 2 JANKO), an epithet that would make him a successor of Aristotle. Nevertheless, it is often argued (GUDEMAN 1934: 410; RICHARDSON 1993: 129) that his work preceded him, since Aristotle seems to reference a point made by Megaclides (F 6 JANKO) at Ar. Poet. 21.1460a14-17. On Megaclides see JANKO 2000: 138-143 and BOUCHARD 2016: 59-60; 284-9; 299-300.

²⁹⁵ Thus already ERBSE 1960: 45. On the question see now FOGAGNOLO 2022: 135.

interpretation of the *interpretandum*. He maintains with Zoilus that the first part of the omen is an indication that the heroes would not be seen. However, he interprets the fact that the bird is heard in light of a subsequent episode, i.e. the one in which Diomedes and Odysseus capture Dolon, and extort information from him about the “plans and the layout” of the enemies (see ll. 382-445). Hearing the sound of the bird is, for Megaclides, an analogical reference to the fact that Odysseus and Diomedes would hear the voice of Dolon, the enemy.

While Megaclides’ solution is not without problems,²⁹⁶ his perspective is strikingly innovative. Similarly to how some scholars today look at omens, that is, as pieces of a narratological design (see especially De Jong’s analysis of omens in Homer),²⁹⁷ Megaclides analyzes the scene from a structural perspective. What comes first is designed to make sense in light of what comes next, and the poet is in perfect control of how different scenes are organized. Like a prophet that can foretell what comes next, Homer uses omens to give his audience a preview of what is about to narrate next. For Megaclides ll. 275-6, are not merely a description of the scene but rather an instance of what we would call prolepsis. I take it that this is the meaning of the ambiguous expression, “Megaclides says that the poet composed these lines (275-6) in an oracular manner” (Μεγακλείδης, ὅτι μαντικῶς ταῦτα ἐποίησε). Like a diviner who discloses to his audience what will happen in the future in an enigmatic way, thus the poet, in composing lines 275-6, hid clues for the audience about what will come next into the text. In Megaclides’ view, Homer is no improviser, rather he is a poet in

²⁹⁶ I discuss them at length in RÉAL forthcoming (a)

²⁹⁷ DE JONG 2001: 51-53.

full control of the structure of his poem, of the implications that each scene has on the next.²⁹⁸

Going back to Zoilus now, it is worth notice that, while Zoilus frames his critique as a critique of Odysseus' behavior, nothing in this fragment suggests that he critiqued Odysseus qua character in the poem (we will analyze a critique of character's representation below).²⁹⁹ Odysseus does not act inconsistently or consistently with his own dramatic persona, indeed it does not even matter that it is Odysseus who rejoices, for had any other characters acted like Odysseus it would have been exactly the same issue. Odysseus' reaction has nothing to do with who Odysseus is or its psychology; it is instead the quality of the reasoning per se that is Zoilus' concern (εἰκὸς γὰρ ἦν ὑπολαβεῖν περιβοήτους ἔσεσθαι). The critique is aimed more at Homer, for foisting an illogical decision on a character—any character—to suit his poetical design. Zoilus zeroes in on not the depiction of character but on the inconsistency between the message of the omen and the way it gets interpreted; he saw the “question of the heron” as a flaw in Homer's deployment of symbolic devices. According to Zoilus, the actual significance of the omen is, in fact, inconsistent with the poet's intended effects. Megaclides, in turn, accepting Zoilus' presuppositions and responding to them, shows,

²⁹⁸ Megaclides' eye for poetical design can be best appreciated from F 5 JANKO. Commenting upon the fact that Patroclus in book 16.140-145 takes all of Achilles' gear but not his spear, Megaclides contends that the poet adds the detail of the spear in view of the episode of Hephaestus' fabrication of Achilles' armor in book 18. Megaclides' reasoning can be reconstructed as follows: the armor that Achilles lends to Patroclus will eventually be taken by Hektor. Achilles will therefore be in need of a new one which Hephaestus will fabricate. Hephaestus, reasons Megaclides, works only with celestial material, such as gold and silver, and could therefore not have produced a wooden spear for Achilles. The poet must therefore prevent Patroclus from taking Achilles' spear into battle. Ll. 141-145, in which the poet specifies that only Achilles can lift his spear are not a random narrative detail that the poet inserted without reasons but rather a calculated addition that looks forward to a scene that will happen two books later. For a fuller discussion of the fragment see BOUCHARD 2016: 190-196.

²⁹⁹ This is one of the reason why I prefer to regard this fragment as a case of critique *παρὰ τὴν ὀρθότητα τὴν κατὰ τέχνην* and not as a case of *βλαβερόν*.

through a different configuration of the relationship between *interpretandum* and *interpretamentum*, that the omen can be understood in a manner consistent with the poet's intentions for it.

As Rebecca Bushnell and others have shown, insofar as the interpretation of omens relies on “drawing analogies between the configuration of the sign—the bird action and appearance— and the configurations of its context— the human affairs to which the sign is related,” omens can be compared to simile.³⁰⁰ A simile is based on a similar analogy between “tenor” and “vehicle,”³⁰¹ and its quality is often assessed as such in antiquity. This is true also for Zoilus, who approaches similes in Homer in the same way he approaches omens. For example, in F 16 FOGAGNOLO, on the simile in *Il.* 23.100 in which Patroclus' spirit is said to disappear under the earth like smoke, Zoilus protests that smoke moves upward and not downward:

ψυχή δὲ κατὰ χθονὸς ἤυτε καπνός] ... Ζοῖλος δὲ φησιν ὅτι «ἀλλ' ὁ καπνὸς ἄνω φέρεται».

“The spirit went underground like smoke” (*Il.* 23.100) [...] Zoilus says: “but smoke goes upward.” (*Sch. T Il.* 23.100 = F 16 FOGAGNOLO)

Zoilus must have been aware that in this simile the tenor matches the vehicle in as much as spirits and smoke are both intangible,³⁰² what he notes, however, is that the relationship is not a perfect one, since smoke, the vehicle, tends to go upward, whereas Patroclus' spirit, the tenor, goes down. As in the case of the heron omen, where only

³⁰⁰ BUSHNELL 1982: 3.

³⁰¹ Modern critics often use the terms “tenor” and “vehicle” to discuss the components of metaphors and similes. The “tenor” is what is being described, the “vehicle” is the image used to describe it.

³⁰² Thin (λεπτόν) and breathlike (πνευματώδεις) according to the bT scholion to this passage.

a part of the *interpretandum* matches the *interpretamentum*, here too the vehicle is not fully consistent with the tenor.

This kind of criticism may appear captious to us, but it conforms to the interpretative practices observed in the interpretation of similes throughout antiquity. Ancient (and, to an extent, modern) critics' analysis of Homeric similes is, in fact, often synonymous with an explanation of the relationship between the "vehicle" and the "tenor."³⁰³ As Nünlist points out, the identification of the *Vergleichspunkt(e)*, point of comparison(s), between "vehicle" and "tenor" is the type of comment which is most often found in the scholia.³⁰⁴ When Zoilus protests that smoke goes upward and spirits downward he is looking at a Homeric simile in the same way as most later ancient critics will. He is thinking in terms of *Vergleichspunkt(e)*, or, rather, lack of *Vergleichspunkt(e)*, and challenges the notion that smoke is an adequate image for the spirit of Patroclus reaching the underworld.

In conclusion, the cases of the heron omen allows us to better appreciate how fourth century critics (Zoilus and Megaclides) studied Homeric divination.³⁰⁵ Their approach was eminently poetical. They did not use the Homeric text as a pretext to investigate the *realia* of mantic practice, nor did they concern themselves with the zoological questions that interested other later critics, like the ones mentioned by Porphyry in relationship to the heron passage.³⁰⁶ Instead, they approached the omens

³⁰³ On the interpretation of similes in the Homeric scholia, see especially RICHARDSON 1980: 279-80 and NÜNLIST 2009: 282-298. On Aristarchus and similes see SCHIRONI 2018: 133-38.

³⁰⁴ NÜNLIST 2009: 294.

³⁰⁵ Note this is true also of Aristotle (F369 GIGON). As I argue in RÉAL forthcoming (a), Aristotle's may tacitly respond to a criticism of Zoilus'.

³⁰⁶ See Porph. *QHI ad K 276*, 8-34 MACPHAIL. Readers took issue with the fact that Athena sent a heron instead of an owl, her animal *par excellence*. An analysis of the habits and habitat of the bird is used to make sense of the choice. Porphyry's note, then, connects the significance of the omen with a

as σήματα, symbolic devices, and focused on the details concerning the analogical relationship between *interpretandum* and the *interpretamentum*, which the poet often left unexplained.

F 9 has given me the occasion to touch upon the question of design. As we have seen, the solution that Megaclides provides to Zoilus' critique, is innovative insofar as it attempts to solve the problem by looking past the immediate textual context in which the contradiction is found. Even more striking is his analysis of the problem posed by Achilles' spear in book 16. To solve it, he, in fact, looks two books ahead and finds in book 18 clues to explain what does not seem to make sense in book 16.³⁰⁷ This tendency to move beyond localized spots in the text has wider implications for the question of Homer's reception that I shall discuss below. I will first demonstrate that such a critical attitude preceded Megaclides and is already at work in Zoilus' F 12, and 14 FOGAGNOLO as well as F 11, which I will, however, discuss at further length in 3.3.

In F 12 we read as the following:

Schol. Il. 21.256 (Ge) φεῦγ' (sc. Achilles) , ὁ δ' ὀπισθε ρέων <ἔπετο>· Ζοῖλος αἰτιᾶται, ὅτι ἀθανάτους ἵππους ἔχων ἐν τῷ ἀντικειμένῳ καιρῷ οὐ χράται.

Zoilus attacks this line because although Achilles has immortal horses, he does not use them at the present moment

Zoilus' comment is preserved as a note to book 21.156 where Achilles is said to flee the river Scamander that is overtaking him. Zoilus' criticism, however, must be read

traditional story about the heron, i.e. that it "weeps blood for the sake of love." A poetic quotation about the heron from Hermo of Delo follows, as well as an attempt at emending the *Iliadic* passage on the basis of the existence of a type of heron called "dusky" (πέλλον). The note ends with a "zoological" distinction of three types (γένη) of herons.

³⁰⁷ F 5 JANKO see n. 58 above.

especially in light of lines 263-4 (ὡς αἰεὶ Ἀχιλῆα κινήσατο κῦμα ῥόοιο/ καὶ λαιψηρὸν ἔόντα· θεοὶ δὲ τε φέρτεροι ἀνδρῶν). There, in fact, the poet makes it clear that Achilles is counting upon his own swiftness, but, more importantly, he makes it explicit that a mortal cannot outrun an immortal. Zoilus found this passage problematic in light of the fact that Achilles could have easily counted upon the immortal help of his horses, Xanthus and Balios, and, therefore, could have escaped Scamander without turning to Zeus's help. This criticism qualifies as an example of the βλαβερὰ, insofar as Achilles is acting against his self-interest. What it is, however, interesting to note here is that Zoilus' remark implies the knowledge of an episode that happened two books prior, at *Il.* 19.404-417. The horses of Achilles are first introduced at *Il.* 16.148-154.³⁰⁸ In this passage, they are provided a genealogy, and their swiftness is emphasized, as well as their immortality. Their immortality is again mentioned at 17.443-44. Given that Zoilus' criticism touches upon the immortality of the horses, knowledge of these two passages is implied. Nevertheless, the passage that Zoilus is more directly recalling is found at the end of book 19 (*Il.* 19.392-423) where we witness Achilles leaving the encampment driven by his horses. On the basis of this passage, it is unequivocal that Achilles enters the battle that will lead him to the fight with Scamander accompanied by Xanthus and Balios. Strikingly, however, the immortal horses do not play any role whatsoever in the ensuing fight. We see Achilles' horses again only at the end of book 22 (l. 400)³⁰⁹ when his chariot

³⁰⁸ τῷ δὲ καὶ Αὐτομέδων ὕπαγε ζυγὸν ὠκέας ἵππους/ Ξάνθον καὶ Βαλίον, τὸ ἅμα πνοιῆσι πετέσθην,/ τοὺς ἔτεκε Ζεφύρω ἀνέμῳ Ἄρπυια Ποδάργη/ βοσκομένη λειμῶνι παρὰ ῥόον Ὠκεανοῖο./ ἐν δὲ παρηορήσιν ἀμύμονα Πήδασον ἴει,/ τὸν ῥά ποτ' Ἡετίωνος ἐλὼν πόλιν ἤγαγ' Ἀχιλλεύς,/ ὃς καὶ θνητὸς ἐὼν ἔπεθ' ἵπποις ἀθανάτοισι.

³⁰⁹ μᾶστιξέν ῥ' ἐλάαν, τὸ δ' οὐκ ἀέκοντε πετέσθην.

conveniently reappears so that Achilles can carry the body of the dead Hector around the wall of Troy. In light of this, Zoilus found it contradictory that Achilles does not make use of Xanthus and Balios when he would have most needed them. Against Zoilus' criticism, one could protest that horses in the *Iliad* play only a minor role in battle and they are mostly employed to bring the warriors in and out the front-line. Achilles is not necessarily expected to use them. Or, as the ancient critic Ammonius claims (see P.Oxy. 2.221 with FOGAGNOLO 2022: 157-8), Achilles chose not to use them as they would have been an impediment in those circumstances. That being said, what is worth emphasizing here is that Zoilus took notice of a contradiction in Homer's design, drawing the reader's attention to what we might call a 'plot-hole.' He thus shows not to be only concerned with textually localized problems but rather with the incongruity between two *loci* in the text that belong to two different scenes and that could be as far apart as two books. From this fragment, we can conclude that Zoilus' critical eye was perfectly capable of embracing the totality of the poem.

A similar conclusion is warranted by F 14 Fogagnolo.³¹⁰ In *Il.* 21.435-460, Poseidon tries to convince Apollo to change sides and reminds him of the abuse they suffered when they were working for the Trojan king Laomedon. Laomedon, in fact, refused to pay them and even threatened to put them into chains and sell them as slaves on far-away islands (*Il.* 21.441-455). A scholion to the *Iliad* reports Zoilus' comment about Laomedon's threat to sell the gods into slavery:

Schol. Il. 21.454 (Ge) Ζωΐλος ζητεῖ πῶς ὁ Ποσειδῶν τὸν Αἰνεΐαν μεταθεῖς ἐξ ὄλου τοῦ στρατεύματος αὐτὸς κινδυνεύει πραθῆναι.

³¹⁰ I discuss this passage also in RÉAL forthcoming (a).

Recent scholars such as Williams,³¹¹ followed by Novokhatko,³¹² miss the point of Zoilus' intervention when they translate: "Zoilos wonders why Poseidon, after he removed Aeneas from the entire army (Iliad 20.325-9), risked destroying *him* [my emphasis]." Nowhere in the *Iliad*, and certainly not at 21.454, does Poseidon "risked destroying" Aeneas. Here αὐτὸς refers to Poseidon and works as the subject of κινδυνεύει. Πραθῆναι, moreover, the same verb that we find in *Il.* 21.454 (περάαν), does not mean "to destroy" in this context but "to be exported to foreign parts for sale as a slave" (see *LSJ sub voc. πέρνῃμι* I.A).³¹³ The fragment should, therefore, be translated as: "Zoilus inquires how Poseidon himself [αὐτὸς] is in danger of being sold as a slave given that he transposed Aeneas out of the whole battle."

In general terms, Zoilus is taking issue with the fact that Poseidon (and Apollo), although gods, endured Laomedon's harsh treatment. More specifically, he does not understand how the threat of being enslaved and sent off to "far-away islands" could have endangered Poseidon. His criticism is fair, and similar concerns were expressed by other ancient readers as well. Aristarchus, for instance, notes that Homer does not give any clue to the audience as to why Poseidon and Apollo had to serve a mortal (see Sch. A *Il.* 21.444b1 [Ariston.]); others speculated that either Poseidon and Apollo were testing Laomedon (a solution offered by the fifth century Hellanicus of Lesbos, see *FGrHist* 4 F 26a), or they were being punished for attempting to revolt against Zeus, a revolt referenced in *Il.* 1.399-400 (see Sch. D *Il.* 21.444d).

³¹¹ WILLIAMS 2016: on BNJ 71 F 14.

³¹² NOVOKHATKO 2020a: 118.

³¹³ Similarly also FOGAGNOLO 2022: 165 n. 253.

The way in which Zoilus frames his criticism is particularly interesting. Zoilus could have easily claimed that it was theologically untenable for a god to be at the mercy of a human, or at the very least, that gods in myth are represented as too powerful to be victims of human abuse. In other words, he could have assessed the text in light of external references. Instead, he chose to point out a contradiction which is internal to Homer alone, a contradiction internal to the poem. Poseidon could not have been seriously worried about being enslaved and sent off to a far-away island when he was working for Laomedon (book 21), given that Homer shows (in book 20), that that same Poseidon (only older) can now transport himself and others from one place to another in a matter of seconds. The reference is to the episode in which Poseidon saves Aeneas from Achilles by literally catapulting him out of the battlefield (*Il.* 20.319-329). There, Poseidon approaches Aeneas, clouds Achilles' vision with a mist, raises the Trojan in the air, and hurls him to the outer limits of the battlefield where he joins him soon after. In an instant, the two characters are far away from the battle.³¹⁴ On the basis of this passage, Zoilus must have concluded that it was internally inconsistent for Poseidon to be threatened by Laomedon, given that Homer shows that Poseidon would have been perfectly capable of escaping his punishment. Again, the internal investigation of the text of the kind shown in F 14, presupposes Zoilus' intimate knowledge of the whole poem. It also presupposes a propensity for interpreting lines and scenes in the poem beyond their immediate context, and for drawing analogies between different parts of the same work.

³¹⁴ On this and other similar rescue scenes see PELLICCIA 2021.

Another fragment, which I will discuss at more length below, as it belongs to the allegedly moral ones, illustrates Zoilus' concern for internal consistency: F 11 FOGAGNOLO.³¹⁵ There Zoilus' critique of Achilles' reaction to the death of Patroclus rests upon a comparison with another passage of the poem. On receiving the news of Patroclus' death, Achilles is inconsolable (*Il.* 18.22-35). He covers himself in dirt, lays himself on the ground, and tears his hair out. He is in such a desperate state that his friend Antilochus fears he might commit suicide. According to Zoilus, there is an internal reason, among others, why Achilles' display of grief is inappropriate: such behavior is not exhibited by other heroic characters represented by Homer. To make his point, Zoilus compares Achilles' behavior here with that of Hecuba at *Il.* 22.405-7. Though not just hearing about, but witnessing Achilles defiling the body of her dead son, Hector, the queen reacts, according to Zoilus, in a more dignified manner than Achilles does in 18.22-35.

In conclusion, these three fragments show that Zoilus did not content himself with analyzing problematic lines of Homer in isolation but assessed them in light of other relevant passages within the same poem. In short, he *criticized Homer from Homer*. This disposition to browse the text, as it were, in search of similarities and differences between passages of the same work, will later reach the status of the fundamental "rule" of proper philological investigation. Almost two centuries after

³¹⁵ Porph. *QHI ad Il.* Σ 22, 2-4 ΜΑΡΦΑΙΛ = F 11 FOGAGNOLO Ζωίλος δέ φησιν ἄτοπον νῦν εἰδέναι τὸν Ἀχιλλέα· [...] καὶ τοὶ Ἑκάβης ἐπὶ τῷ συρμῶϊ Ἴκτορος οὐδὲν τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν. Zoilus says that it is absurd that Achilles only realizes now; [...] and Hecuba at the dragging of Hector is not at all like this.

Zoilus' work, Aristarchus, the "best of grammarians,"³¹⁶ made it a point to combine careful attention to a single textual *locus* and its context, with a knowledge of the full scope of the poem and its linguistic and poetical peculiarities.³¹⁷ In this sense, his work best illuminates the meaning of the ancient hermeneutical maxim to *elucidate Homer from Homer*.³¹⁸ The development of a consistent method of reading the poem from an internal perspective, a game-changer in the history of philology, attained full maturity in the Hellenistic period, thanks to philologists such as Aristarchus, who followed especially in the footsteps of Aristotle.³¹⁹ The roots of such a hermeneutical practice, however, extend further back than Aristotle, and can be appreciated already in Zoilus' work.

Another implication of Zoilus' concern with internal consistency is worth pointing out:³²⁰ he regarded the Homeric text as fixed and he assumed it was the product of a single poetic mind. This fact may seem unsurprising in light of modern hermeneutical assumptions but when it comes to the Classical period it does suggest a broader change in the conditions of poetry's composition. As it is well known, poetry was handed down orally for a long time. This, especially for Homer, meant that an audience might have rarely had the chance to hear a poem of the length of the *Iliad* performed on one occasion from the beginning to the end. To apprehend a poem the

³¹⁶ As per the formulation of Sch. AT *Il.* 2.316b, which inspired the title of the recent SCHIRONI 2018 on Aristarchus.

³¹⁷ On Aristarchus' methodology see now SCHIRONI 2018: esp. 738-741.

³¹⁸ This maxim is found in Porphyry (Porph. *QHI*, 56.3-6 SODANO). For an overview of the scholarship on the origin and meaning of this formula see SCHIRONI 2018: 75 n. 47. See also NÜNLIST 2015 and MONTANA 2020.

³¹⁹ On the relationship between Aristotle's work and later Hellenistic exegesis see esp. BOUCHARD 2016. On Aristotle and Aristarchus see SCHIRONI 2009.

³²⁰ It is especially worth pointing out in light of some of the absurd conclusions to which the oralist dogma has led to.

length of the *Iliad* in its totality down to the details of its every scene in such a scenario must have been, at the very least, a challenging task. Furthermore, oral performance necessarily implies a higher degree of variability within the text. A fundamental credo of scholars that emphasize these factors is, therefore, that to every performance of Homer corresponded a new Homer. On such a scenario it would make no sense at all to claim that what happens at one point A in the poem is inconsistent with what happens at a point B in the same poem, since A and B could have been produced independently from each other, or belong to a different “new Homer”. Strictly speaking, under these conditions, there is no such thing as one poem by Homer. To expect internal consistency from a literary work makes, therefore, only sense in a very different hermeneutical situation, one in which the Homeric text, through the help of the written medium, has reached a greater form of stability and can be enjoyed in all its parts from the beginning till the end. It is a matter of great debate when this new mode of enjoying poetry took over, but it was obviously already a reality by the time Zoilus produced his treatise *Against Homer’s Poetry*.

3.3 Zoilus: a Literary Approach to Poetry

I now turn to the four fragments (F4; F8; F11; F18 FOGAGNOLO) which scholars believe are evidence for Zoilus’ moral readings of Homer, but rather, I argue, touch upon questions of poetics and thus belong together with the previously analyzed fragments. To distinguish clearly between ethical and poetical judgments within Zoilus’ fragments is not a question of mere labels; what is at stake is the very purpose of the *Against Homer’s poetry*. To say that Zoilus found the moral representation of

the gods and heroes faulty, goes, in fact, hand in hand with claiming that Zoilus took issue with Homer's worldviews. His critique would then not aim at poetical failures but at the didactic and ethical role that Homeric poems played in their society. His work, much like Plato's, should thus be seen as having a pedagogical and moral intent. I have already shown that Zoilus' critiques of Homer do not necessarily imply a rebuttal of his moral and pedagogical authority but should rather be taken as a scholarly practice informed by lighthearted sympotic games. I have furthermore shown that the majority of Zoilus' fragments are concerned with Homer's poetics rather than Homer's *mores*. It remains to make the case that even the fragments of the *Against Homer's poetry* that seemingly have a moral focus hide poetical questions of the kind discussed above.³²¹

In one of this group of fragments, F4 FOGAGNOLO, Zoilus takes issue with the fact that Apollo, at the beginning of the *Iliad*, killed the dogs and the mules first (*Il.* 1.50), in order to send the plague among the Greeks.

F4 FOGAGNOLO Heracl. (14.1-3) οὐρήας μὲν πρῶτον ἐπώιχετο καὶ κύνας ἀργούς». οὐ γὰρ οὕτως ἄκριτον ἦν παρανάλωμα τῆς Ἀπόλλωνος ὀργῆς τὰ ἄλογα τῶν ζώων οὐδ' ἂν ὁ θυμὸς ἀφρόνως ἐνήκμαζεν ἡμιόνοις τε καὶ κυσίν, ὡς τὸ Θραικικὸν ἀνδράποδον Ὀμήρου κατεξανίσταται, λέγω δὲ τὸν Ἀμφιπολίτην Ζώϊλον, ἄνω καὶ κάτω τοιούτους τινὰς λήρους φληναφοῦντα.

The irrational animals were not such an indiscriminate waste of Apollo's anger nor would his temper have foolishly raged against mules and dogs, as the

³²¹ FOGAGNOLO 2022: 12-13 correctly separates Zoilus' critiques of Homer from that of Plato and Xenophanes but she is unwilling to go as far as to say that Zoilus was judging poetry from a poetic perspective. According to Fogagnolo, some fragments (FF 6a-b, 17, 19) were meant to highlight the poet's failure to abide by the law of physics and nature, others (FF 7, 9a-b) his failure to abide by the practices and costumes of the time. In other words, Homer's failure in these cases was not an artistic one. I have already shown that this is not the case for FF 7, and 19, which I have re-categorized as a case of βλαβερόν and ἄλογα, respectively, and I have discussed at length the case of F 9 as a type of παρὰ τὴν ὀρθότητα τὴν κατὰ τέχνην criticism. A full rebuke of her argument, however, will be undertaken elsewhere.

Thracian slave, Zoilus of Amphipolis, contends against Homer, constantly uttering such nonsense.

Although they hardly make their line of reasoning explicit, scholars³²² have often seemed to take Zoilus' comment primarily as a critique of Apollo's impious conduct, killing innocent beasts.³²³ Very little in this passage, however, suggests such a reading. The pericope τὰ ἄλογα τῶν ζώων does certainly introduce a distinction between human beings and animals on the basis of their intellectual capacities, thus suggesting that animals have no part to play in god's punishment: they are, we might say, innocent. Yet, the way innocent animals are treated is not the point of the fragment; Zoilus' does not contend that Apollo was morally contemptible for killing innocent beings, but rather that to start by killing animals in order to kill men is narratively gratuitous. Apollo's anger is literally a waste, παρανάλωμα, because it does not go straight to its target, and it is indiscriminate, ἄκριτον,³²⁴ because it strikes both its target and non-targets. The remainder of the passage points in the same direction: Apollo acts foolishly, ἀφρόνως,³²⁵ that is, there is no clear rationality behind his actions. Nothing in this passage suggests a moral interest, as if Zoilus reproached Homer for depicting a flaw in the divine system of retributive justice. Zoilus' point is a literary one, inherent in the portrait of a character: Apollo's actions are incongruous with his intended goal. This kind of criticism thus belongs to a specific type which, in

³²² LEHR 1882³: 203; SPINDLER 1888: 12; APFEL 1938: 250. More nuanced is Buffière's analysis which mentions Apollo's inconsistency (BUFFIÈRE 1956: 23). Novokhatko takes the fragment as an indication of Zoilus' interests in Homer's affects (NOVOKHATKO 2020: 114-115). FOGAGNOLO 2022: 81-82, correctly notes the non-moral nature of the critique.

³²³ See especially BUFFIÈRE 1956: 23.

³²⁴ On which see FOGAGNOLO 2022: 82.

³²⁵ On which see, again, FOGAGNOLO 2022: 82.

keeping with the Aristotelian kinds of ἐπιτίμημα studied above, can be labeled as βλαβερά.

Scholars dealing with the meaning of βλαβερά in Aristotle's *Poetics* (Ar. *Poet.* 1461b22-24) have long contended that Aristotle by this word means “morally harmful (for the public) representations.” Instead, Bouchard argues, in my view compellingly, that no ethical value is involved in Aristotle's use of βλαβερόν and that this kind of critique is best understood as a ““character-focalized”” judgment made by a reader, whose expectations about the aims pursued by a character are at odds with a narrated action (or speech), which is, consequently, criticized as ““harmful.””³²⁶ She then points out that no fewer than 10 out of the 39 fragments listed by Gigon as stemming from the Aristotelian treatise *Ἀπορήματα Ὀμηρικά* belong to this category.³²⁷ Indeed these fragments point out “the apparently harmful—or at the very least useless [my emphasis]—nature of a character's specific action with regard to his own interest or that of his near and dear”.³²⁸ Aside from the meaning of βλαβερόν in the context of Aristotle's *Poetics*, this notion of “counterproductiveness,” of “inexpediency,” is particularly well illuminates some of Zoilus' criticisms among which the fragment just mentioned is an example. In terms of its intended goal (killing the Greeks), Apollo's action of killing mules and dogs first is useless. As mentioned above, F 12 FOGAGNOLO, in which Zoilus contends that Achilles does not make good use of his immortal horses, is another case in point. The same could be true also of F 14 FOGAGNOLO (discussed above), where part of the problem is why Poseidon, an all-

³²⁶ BOUCHARD 2010: 312. On βλαβερά see also BOUCHARD 2016: 296-301.

³²⁷ BOUCHARD 2010: 319-20.

³²⁸ BOUCHARD 2010: 321.

powerful god, endures the treatment of Laomedon, a mortal. Certainly belonging to the βλαβερά is F 7 FOGAGNOLO, where Zoilus takes issue with the fact that the Trojan Idaios leaves his chariot behind in order to flee from Diomedes (*Il* 5. 20).

F 8 FOGAGNOLO raises issues similar to F 4. It reads:

Quest. Conv. 677c-f ΠΡΟΒΛΗΜΑ Δ. Περὶ τοῦ “ζωρότερον δὲ κέραιε.” Γελοῖος ἐδόκει τισὶ τῶν συνδειπνούντων ὁ Ἀχιλλεὺς ἀκρατότερον ἐγγεῖν τὸν Πάτροκλον κελεύων, εἴτ’ αἰτίαν τοιαύτην ἐπιλέγων· (*Il.* 9.204) “οἱ γὰρ φίλτατοι ἄνδρες ἐμῶ ὑπέασι μελάθρω.” Νικήρατος μὲν οὖν [...] ἀλλὰ μειρακιώδη τὴν φιλοτιμίαν αὐτῶν ἀπέφαινον, δεδιότων ὁμολογεῖν ἀκρατότερον εἰρησθαι τὸ ζωρότερον, ὡς ἐν ἀτόπῳ τινὶ τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως ἐσομένου καθάπερ ὁ Ἀμφιπολίτης Ζοῖλος ὑπελάμβανεν, ἀγνοῶν ὅτι πρῶτον μὲν ὁ Ἀχιλλεὺς τὸν Φοῖνικα καὶ τὸν Ὀδυσσεῖα πρεσβυτέρους ὄντας εἰδῶς οὐχ ὑδαρεῖ χαίροντες, ἀλλ’ ἀκρατοτέρῳ, καθάπερ οἱ ἄλλοι γέρονες, ἐπιτεῖναι κελεύει τὴν κρᾶσιν [...]

Fourth Question. About the expression to “mix [the wine] stronger.” It seemed ridiculous to some of the banqueters that Achilles orders Patroclus to pour stronger wine and then adds this as a reason: “for my dearest friends are under my roof.” [...]. But I indicated that they [i.e. the other guests] demonstrated a schoolboyish rivalry, since they feared to admit that ζωρότερον was said in the sense of “more pure,” as if Achilles would then be in a paradoxical situation, as Zoilus of Amphipolis believed, ignoring first that Achilles orders [Patroclus] to intensify the mixture, knowing that Phoenix and Odysseus being older, enjoyed it not watered down but purer, like the old men generally.

The fragment stems from Plutarch’s *Table’s talks* and is part of a discussion of the Iliadic line 9.204 where Achilles bids Patroclus to “mix the wine stronger” ζωρότερον δὲ κέραιε for his guests, Odysseus, Phoenix, and Ajax.

Scholars have paid little attention to it but when they did, they ranked it, as well, among the moralistic fragments of Zoilus.³²⁹ Their line of thought, which

³²⁹ LEHR 1882³: 203; SPINDLER 1888: 12. Novokhatko discusses it among the linguistic fragments (NOVOKHATKO 2020: 115-16). Surely enough the fragment is about the word ζωρότερον, but this is beyond the point. Zoilus is not analyzing the meaning of ζωρότερον. Instead, he assumes that it means “stronger” and then he focuses on the inconsistency arising from the use of such a meaning. Much different is the case of F 6 which, as we have seen above, actually deals with a linguistic problem.

Spindler makes explicit, is that Achilles surrender to drunkenness.³³⁰ I argue that nothing of the sort can be derived from Plutarch's text.

First, we should look at the way Plutarch begins his discussion, a section of text that, with the exception of Fogagnolo, is usually not included by the editors of Zoilus' fragment. There, Plutarch mentions that "some of the diners" find the Homeric line in question problematic on the basis of what comes next in the text, that is, l. 9.205 where Achilles gives the reasons why Patroclus should make the wine stronger, i.e. Achilles is hosting some of his dearest friends. The mention of line 205 is an important point in order to understand Zoilus' criticism, as we will see below. To the problem thus posed follows in Plutarch a lengthy philological discussion (not included here) about the meaning of the word ζωρόν, in which different λύσεις (solutions) to the problematic lines feature. To avoid the problem, the characters of Plutarch's work claim that ζωρόν does not necessarily means "strong."

The narrator, however, is not convinced by this line of inquiry, which, to use Aristotle's words, consists of a series of πρὸς τὴν λέξιν solutions (see chapter 2.3 above).³³¹ He proposes instead i) to accept the meaning of ζωρόν as "strong" and ii) he refutes Zoilus' idea that such a meaning constitutes a problem. Three possible solutions against Zoilus' criticism follow (see below).

It is clear from the fragment that Zoilus took ζωρόν as meaning "strong" and that he found such a meaning to be problematic. What Plutarch, however, does not

³³⁰ Eundem (sc. Achillem), cum Patroclum minore aqua vinum diluere iubebat, vinolentiae deditum inducit. SPINDLER 1888: 12.

³³¹ Note that Aristotle (*Ar. Poet.* 1461a14-16) tried to solve the same problem by claiming that the meaning of ζωρότερον is "quicker" and not "stronger", a solution actually mentioned by Plutarch and attributed to some unnamed critic.

make immediately clear is why Zoilus found it problematic. I see, however, no good reason to assume, with previous scholars, that Zoilus was worried about the moral effects of such a scene. Nowhere in Plutarch's discussion, in fact, is Achilles' behavior deemed problematic as condoning excessive drinking. I can think, instead, of four poetical reasons why Zoilus might have thought Achilles' order to Patroclus awkward. The first is that to drink excessively strong wine does not square well with what Zoilus might have assumed to be the warriors' customary behavior. The problem would therefore be one of these cases in which the poetic representation does not match what was the case at the time in which Homer composed the scene or what was the case at the time in which the critic wrote.³³² A second objection would be that Homer represents an action that goes against the assumed social status of the character. Heroes do not drink excessively. Although this objection might seem to be a moral one, it is rather internal to the poem, insofar as it assumes a concern for poetical representation, rather than a critique of the pedagogical role of the poem.³³³ In light of our previous discussion we could, therefore, rank this critique among the *παρὰ τὴν ὀρθότητα τὴν κατὰ τέχνην*. Thirdly, Zoilus might have found it problematic that Achilles served stronger wine than usual to his guest, given that they are not really there on a friendly visit, but rather to discuss very important business.³³⁴ If that were the case we should rank this critique as a case of *βλαβερά*.

³³² For this kind of criticism compare *Ar. Poet.* 1460b7-10.

³³³ On this subtle yet essential distinction see BOUCHARD 2010: 332-332.

³³⁴ Achilles does not know yet what the order of business is but he must have guessed it. At any rate, it is hard to believe that he could have assumed that the group was there to leisurely spend the evening drinking wine.

There is, however, a final and more plausible way of reading Zoilus' critique which would count as well among the βλαβερά. As I mentioned above, Plutarch engages in the discussion of the meaning of ζωρόν by stating that it is "ridiculous" to have Achilles ordering Patroclus to mix the wine stronger (*Il* 9.204) and then offering as a reason for it Achilles' desire to entertain the dearest among his friends (*Il*. 9.205). Clearly, for Plutarch's narrator, the contradiction is between Achilles' action (to serve a stronger drink) and his goal (to entertain his dearest friends). Such a contradiction presupposes, in turn, that one wants what is best for his friends and that excessive drink is harmful. Achilles' order to Patroclus is, therefore, absurd since it would show Achilles trying to harm his friends. Plutarch's solution is conceived as an answer to this very contradiction. Achilles does not want to harm his friends, but he knows that his wine is exceptionally watered down and that his (older) friends prefer wine that is stronger.

I suspect that this way of setting up the contradiction that Plutarch attributes to some of the diners actually stemmed from Zoilus. As we have seen above, the presence of the word γελοῖος was a favorite of Zoilus' and could indicate that Plutarch was pulling this problem as well as the way it is set up from Zoilus' treatise (whether directly or, more likely, through an intermediate source). Moreover, this set-up is consistent with what comes later, when Zoilus is mentioned by name. Plutarch's narrator argues that Zoilus was wrong in claiming that the meaning "stronger" puts Achilles in a "paradoxical position" (ἐν ἀτόπῳ τινί):³³⁵ first, Zoilus did not realize that

³³⁵ The word ἄτοπος/ -ως in the context of literary discussions indicates different kinds of anomalies both at the stylistic and compositional level; it is usually glossed with the English "absurd" (See e.g.

old men such as Phoenix and Odysseus liked strong wine. Second, Zoilus did not understand that Achilles knew that weak wine is good for people who are not fighting, like himself at that moment in the story, but that, instead, is not suitable for people that have spent the day fighting, as his guests have.³³⁶ Third, Achilles, compared to other warriors, was an especially light drinker, and what is stronger for him is not necessarily so for others.³³⁷ Plutarch narrator's rebuke of Zoilus consists of pointing out that Achilles' action is consistent with his aim, that is, to make his dear friends feel welcomed. There is nothing wrong with giving them stronger wine because some of them are old, they have fought a lot, and Achilles' mix is already weaker than the norm. If Zoilus' point in critiquing Achilles' behavior were one of the first three mentioned above (1. improper representation of actual social norms, 2. improper characterization of the heroes' social status, 3. counterproductive action, given the situation), then Plutarch's arguments would not aim at the core of Zoilus' critique but would simply provide mitigating circumstances. Instead, if we take Zoilus' criticism to be that Achilles is harming his friends, that is, a contradiction between Achilles' action

NÜNLIST 2009: 371). It can, in some rare cases, indicate morally compromising situations (see e.g. *Sch. in. Od.* ad 8.267).

³³⁶ Plut. *Quest. Conv.* 677f-678a ἔπειτα Χείρωνος ὄν μαθητῆς καὶ τῆς περὶ τὸ σῶμα διαίτης οὐκ ἄπειρος ἐλογίζετο δῆπουθεν, ὅτι τοῖς ἀργοῦσι καὶ σχολάζουσι παρὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς σώμασιν ἀνεμένη καὶ μαλακωτέρα κρᾶσις ἀρμόζει. καὶ γὰρ τοῖς ἵπποις ἐμβάλλει μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων χορτασμάτων τὸ σέλινον οὐκ ἀλόγως, ἀλλ' ὅτι βλάπτονται μὲν οἱ σχολάζοντες ἀσυνήθως; ἵπποι τοὺς πόδας: ἔστι δὲ τούτου μάλιστ' ἴαμα τὸ σέλινον. ἄλλοις γοῦν οὐκ ἂν εὖροις παραβαλλόμενον ἵπποις ἐν Ἰλιάδι σέλινον ἢ τινα τοιοῦτον χιλόν. ἀλλ' ἰατρὸς ὄν ὁ Ἀχιλλεὺς τῶν θ' ἵππων πρὸς τὸν καιρὸν οἰκείως ἐπεμέλετο καὶ τῷ σώματι τὴν ἐλαφροτάτην δίαιταν, ὡς ὑγιεινοτάτην ἐν τῷ σχολάζειν, παρεσκεύαζεν: ἄνδρας δ' ἐν μάχῃ καὶ ἀγῶνι δι' ἡμέρας γεγενημένους οὐχ ὁμοίως ἀξιῶν διαιτῶν τοῖς ἀργοῦσιν ἐπιτεῖναι τὴν κρᾶσιν ἐκέλευσε.

³³⁷ Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 678b καὶ μὴν οὐδὲ φύσει φαίνεται φίλοινοσ ἀλλ' ἀπηνῆσ ὁ Ἀχιλλεὺσ
Il. 20.467 οὐ γάρ τι γλυκύθυμοσ ἀνήρ ἦν οὐδ' ἀγανόφρων,
ἀλλὰ μάλ' ἐμμεμαῶσ:

καὶ που παρρησιαζόμενοσ ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ 'πολλάσ' φησὶν 'ἀύπνοσ νύκτασ ἰαῦσαι:' βραχὺσ δ' ὕπνοσ οὐκ ἔξαρκεὶ τοῖσ χρωμένοισ ἀκράτῳ. λοιδοροῦμένοσ δὲ τῷ Ἀγαμέμνονι πρῶτον αὐτόν 'οἶνοβαρῆ' προσεῖρηκεν, ὡσ μάλιστα τῶν νοσημάτων τὴν οἶνοφλυγίαν προβαλλόμενοσ.

(l. 204) and intended goal (l. 205), Plutarch's argument would be extremely effective in showing Zoilus' contradiction void: Achilles' mixture is perfectly consistent with the intent of honoring his guests.

Of course, given the state of the evidence, it remains very difficult to prove what the substance of Zoilus' critique actually was and the real motives behind Zoilus' intervention will remain a matter of conjecture. It must, however, be emphasized that against the moralist reading of this fragment at least four alternative readings, all pertaining to issues of poetics, and all making good sense in light of Zoilus' surviving production, can be defended.

The next allegedly moral fragment is F 11 FOGAGNOLO, which deals with Achilles' reaction to the news of Patroclus' death (*Il.* 18. 22-35).

Porph. *QHI ad Σ*, 22-35, 1-4 MACPHAIL ὧς φάτο, τὸν δ' ἄχεος νεφέλη <ἐκάλυψε --ᾤμωξεν > Πλάτων ἐν τρίτῳ Πολιτείας κατηγορεῖ τῶν ὀδυρομένων, λέγων ὑπὲρ τῶν τεθνεώτων μὴ δεῖν τοῦτο ποιεῖν ὡς δεινόν τι πεπονθότων. Ζοῖλος δέ φησιν ἄτοπον νῦν εἰδέναι τὸν Ἀχιλλεῖα· προειδέναι τε γὰρ ἐχρῆν ὅτι κοινοὶ οἱ πολεμικοὶ κίνδυνοι τὸν τε θάνατον οὐκ ἐχρῆν δεινὸν ὑπολαμβάνειν τό τε οὕτως ὑπερπενθεῖν γυναικῶδες. οὕτως οὐτ' ἂν βάρβαρος τι<τ>θὴ ἐποίησεν· καὶ τοὶ Ἐκάβης ἐπὶ τῷ συρμῶι Ἴκτορος οὐδὲν τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν.

ὧς φάτο, τὸν δ' ἄχεος νεφέλη <ἐκάλυψε --ᾤμωξεν > Plato in the third book of the *Republic* (338 b1) criticizes those that wail, stating that one should not do that about the dead as if they were suffering something terrible. Zoilus says that it is awkward that Achilles gains knowledge now. For he was supposed to know already that the risks of war befall to everybody and that he was not supposed to deem death extraordinary, and to over grieve like that is womanly. Not even a barbarian nurse would have acted like that. And there is no such behavior by Hecuba when Hector is dragged.

As the scholion says, already Plato took issue with Achilles' behavior in this passage of the *Iliad*. There, we witness Achilles in such a desperate state (he covers himself in dirt, lays into the ground, and tears his hair) that his friend Antilochus fears he might

actually kill himself. Plato's criticism of this scene is part of a larger discussion in which the pedagogical role of poetry is at stake. The portrayal of a character such as Achilles that excessively mourns over the loss of his friend is dangerous for the guardians of Plato's ideal city (see Plat. *Rep.* 388a-b). Plato's focus is exquisitely moral: Achilles' bad behavior sets a bad example for the youth. The same should not be necessarily postulated for Zoilus, despite many scholars ranking this fragment among Zoilus' moral interventions.³³⁸

Zoilus presents us with two main reasons why this scene is problematic. First, Achilles, given his wide experience of military life, should have known better. He should not have regarded death as such a terrible evil and he should not have acted in such a womanly manner. Secondly, Achilles' behavior is exceptional even when compared to that of a barbarian nurse and of Hecuba, who on the occasion of the death and mutilation of the body of his son, Hector, acts in a more dignified manner (see *Il.* 22.405-7).

I start with the second point. Admitting that this portion of the scholion actually stems from Zoilus and is not the thought of a later compiler who was expanding upon the word γυναικῶδες in the previous sentence, Zoilus compares Achilles' behavior to that of an unspecified non-Greek nurse, and to Hecuba, likewise a barbarian, which, however, has a real presence in the poem. Both these non-Greek characters, argues Zoilus, even when faced with a similar situation, would have/did behaved better than Achilles. Achilles' behavior is therefore exceptional because it

³³⁸ SPINDLER 1888: 12; APFEL 1938: 250; BISHOP 2015: 391-2; MAYHEW 2019: 78. Again, FOGAGNOLO 2022: 149-151 is the only one that underscores the literary character of this critique.

does not suit what the audience expects for such a character. To be a hero in an epic poem, especially if a man and a Greek, comes with certain behavioral responsibilities. Zoilus is working here from the presupposition, widely shared by his time, that moral is contingent upon gender, social status, and race.³³⁹ Homer's mistake thus consists of disregarding the moral assumptions of the audience which expects a certain conduct from a hero like Achilles. When seen in this way, Zoilus' criticism is similar to Plato's: a person supposed to be good is represented as behaving badly. Nevertheless, Zoilus is looking at the problem from a literary perspective (i.e. from the point of view of the contradiction between the readerly assumptions about a character and his actions)³⁴⁰ whereas Plato is worried about the moral effects of such a representation upon the audience. This literary concern is evident in Zoilus' comparison between Achilles and Hecuba. Achilles' behavior, in fact, does not only offend fourth-century standards of moral conduct but is also inconsistent with the poet's usual representation of characters' behavior. By mentioning the conduct of Hecuba, who, although she is confronting the death and the mutilation of her son, acts in a more dignified manner than Achilles, Zoilus is pointing toward an extreme case. Both the situation (death of a son) and the character (a non-Greek women) would have excuse violent manifestations of mourning. And yet, even when compared with Hecuba, Achilles' response to Patroclus' death remains exceptional. Through this comparison between two characters of the same poem, Zoilus shows that Achilles' conduct is not inappropriate *tout-court* but that it is especially so insofar as it consists of a deviation

³³⁹ A thought shared for instance also by Aristotle, see *Ar. Poet.* 1454a17-23.

³⁴⁰ I already mention this kind of contradiction in my discussion of F 8 above.

from the typical mode of representing characters' behavior within the poem. Again, Zoilus approaches a Homeric problem with an eye to the whole and “*criticizes* Homer with Homer.” On this see 3.2.

The second reason why Zoilus criticized Achilles' behavior is also eminently poetical. Zoilus claims that it is awkward to have Achilles behaving in such a way *now*, that is, at this point in the story. Given his previous military experience, Achilles should have already been accustomed to losing a friend in the war. Zoilus, so it seems, would have had little problems if Achilles' extreme manifestation of distress would have occurred, say, at the beginning of the Greek expedition, or when the character was younger. Instead, what makes the passage troubling is the timing of Achilles' reaction which is not consistent with the story-line. The condemnation of Achilles' behavior is, therefore, not without appeal but conditional on artistic circumstances. Zoilus is pointing toward what we might call a flaw in the “development of the character.” In order for artistic representation to be believable, a character is supposed to learn from previous experiences and act accordingly.

Zoilus' perspective, in this respect, is strikingly innovative. Before Aristotle,³⁴¹ in fact, the tendency was to consider epic characters as the monolithic instantiation of virtues or vices. Thus for Hippias, according to the representation that Plato gives of him in the homonymous dialogue, Achilles is “the best”, Nestor “the wisest” and Odysseus “the most double” (πολυτροπώτατον).³⁴² Zoilus' comment suggests instead

³⁴¹ See especially chapter 15 of Aristotle's *Poetics* that deals with proper characters' representation in poetry (Ar. *Poet.* 1454a16-1454b17).

³⁴² Pl., *Hipp. min* 363b-365b. See also BOUCHARD 2016: 139-147 for a discussion of this and similar sources.

a more complex attitude toward ethos' representation, one that aims towards a higher degree of naturalism. Characters in poems should not only be consistent with what is expected of them based on their mythical role, their status, gender, and race but, just like humans in real life, they should evolve and change based on what they experience in the stories told about them.

To summarize, although Zoilus' critique of Achilles' behavior moves from very precise standards of moral conduct, his focus is upon the way in which such behavior is inconsistent with standards of artistic correctness. Zoilus' critique is not a moral one but instead belongs among the *παρὰ τὴν ὀρθότητα τὴν κατὰ τέχνην*.

F 18 FOGAGNOLO, the last of the allegedly moral fragments, tackles a scene, *Od.* 8.266-370, that was often the source of moral concerns in antiquity.³⁴³ The scene in question is the story of Ares and Aphrodite's adulterous love sung by Demodocus in the presence of the Phaeaceans. Zoilus' comment reads as follows:

ἐπιτιμᾶι δὲ αὐτοῖς ὁ Ζοῖλος, ἄτοπον εἶναι λέγων γελᾶν μὲν ἀκολάστως τοὺς θεοὺς ἐπὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις, τὸν δ' Ἑρμῆν εὐχεσθαι ἐναντίον τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τῶν ἄλλων θεῶν ὀρώντων δεδέσθαι σὺν τῇ Ἀφροδίτῃ.

Zoilus objects to these lines saying that is awkward that the gods laugh without restraint in these circumstances and that Hermes wishes to be bound with Aphrodite in the presence of his father and the other gods watching.

The criticism of gods' laugh had already been censured by Plato (*Pl. Res.* 388-e89a) in reference to another Homeric passage (*Il.* 1.599-60).³⁴⁴ According to Plato, gods cannot be overpowered by laughter, and Homer, by depicting them thus overpowered, is spreading falsehood. According to Heraclitus, who summarizes a long tradition of

³⁴³ Heracl. 69, 1-6; *Sch. vet. in Od.*, 8. 267.

³⁴⁴ See also Xenophanes (21 B 11 DK).

moral anxiety regarding the love of Ares and Aphrodite, readers thought that such a story was impious. In fact, Homer allows for licentiousness (ἀκολασία) to abide among the gods and attributes to them a terrible act, adultery, which among men is punished with death.³⁴⁵ Did Zoilus share similar views? This is probably what the author (or its source) of the scholion preserving Zoilus' criticism believed, given that right after mentioning Zoilus he says: οὐκ εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ ποιητικοὶ θεοὶ φιλόσοφοι, ἀλλὰ παίζονται (“Nevertheless, the gods in poetry are no philosophers, but they joke”).³⁴⁶ With this sentence he defends Homer against moralizing views, pointing out that poetry and philosophy handle gods differently.³⁴⁷ There are, however, reasons to believe that the scholiast, and modern scholars after him,³⁴⁸ were too quick to attribute these moral concerns to Zoilus.

Zoilus does take notice, like Plato, of the god's laughing, modified with ἀκολάστως, a cognate of the word ἀκολασία, found in Heraclitus, but he does not take issue with the main reason why this scene was considered licentious, that is, that he shows the gods in the act of committing adultery. Instead, Zoilus' attention is captured by the scene depicted at Il. 333-342 where Apollo jokingly asks Hermes if he would enjoy being bound on a bed with the beautiful Aphrodite, to which Hermes replies: Il. 339-342 “Lord who strikes from afar, Apollo, I wish it could only/ be, and there could

³⁴⁵ Heracl. 69.2-3 Ἄνω γὰρ οὖν καὶ κάτω τραγωδοῦσι τὰ περὶ Ἄρεος καὶ Ἀφροδίτης ἀσεβῶς διαπεπλάσθαι λέγοντες· (3) ἀκολασίαν γὰρ ἐμπεπολίτευκεν οὐρανῶ καὶ τὸ παρ' ἀνθρώποις, ὅταν γένηται, θανάτου τιμωρούμενον οὐκ ἐδυσωπήθη παρὰ θεοῖς ἱστορήσαι, λέγω δὲ μοιχείαν.

³⁴⁶ Pace APFEL 1938: 250, this sentence is unlikely to be a continuation of Zoilus' argument.

³⁴⁷ On this sentence, which references two poles (*docere* and *delectare*) of the debate concerning the aim of poetry, see BOUCHARD 2016: 108-9.

³⁴⁸ See especially SPINDLER 1888: 12; APFEL 1938: 250; BUFFIÈRE 1956: 28. GÄRTNER: 1978: 1545-6 and NOVOKHATKO 2020: 119 speaks instead of “inappropriateness.” FOGAGNOLO 2022: 193-4 is the only scholar that emphasizes the aesthetic character of Zoilus' critique.

be thrice this number of endless fastenings,/ and all you gods could be looking on and all the goddess,/ and still I would sleep by the side of Aphrodite the golden”

(Lattimore). If Zoilus was simply criticizing Homer for his immoral depiction of the gods why did he focused on the details of this wish in particular? A scholion to line 333-342 suggests that Zoilus was not the only one that had trouble with the scene:

Schol. in Od. 8.333-342 (H) ἐν ἐνίοις ἀντιγράφοις οἱ δέκα στίχοι οὐ φέρονται διὰ τὸ ἀπρέπειαν ἐμφαίνειν. νεωτερικὸν γὰρ τὸ φρόνημα.

In some copies these 10 lines are omitted because they represent something inappropriate. The spirit of the remark is “neoteric.”

From the scholion, which stems from Didymus, we can reconstruct that an unnamed critic, possibly Aristarchus,³⁴⁹ athetized these lines because he believed that a more modern author, a neoterus, added the scenes concerning Apollo and Hermes. The critic found proof of his reasoning in the manuscript tradition where allegedly the lines were, sometimes, missing. It is unlikely that such a critic would have athetized the lines on moral grounds, for if morality was his concern this athetesis alone would not have removed the moral problems raised by Demodocus’ song.³⁵⁰ Instead, as explicitly said, the reason for the athetesis here is ἀπρέπεια, inappropriateness.

The word πρέπον in ancient literary criticism indicates primarily consistency with the character or the situation and does not necessarily suggest a moral judgment. Insofar as it means what is appropriate for a character to say or to do in a certain

³⁴⁹ LUDWICH 1884: 571.

³⁵⁰ SCHIRONI 2018: 687, moreover, argues that Aristarchus, when it comes to the gods, was not interested in moral and ethical concerns.

situation it can have moral implications.³⁵¹ The scholiast does not elaborate on the reasons why the scene from the *Odyssey* is inappropriate.

It could be that he did not think a sexual joke to be fitting for a god; but, following Zoilus, we might suggest at least two better reasons. Zoilus's passage, in fact, admits at least two interpretations: 1) Zoilus is taking issue with the fact that the sexual joke is uttered in the presence of his father³⁵² and the other gods watching Ares and Aphrodite, i.e. the problem is with the context in which ll. 339-342 are uttered ; 2) Zoilus is taking issue with Hermes' desire to be watched by Zeus and the other gods while he mingles in love with Aphrodite, i.e. the problem is with the content of ll. 339-342.³⁵³ I will analyze the implications of both readings in turn.

If interpretation number 1 is the case, Zoilus specifies that the problem is not the mere content of the joke but rather that such a joke does not fit the company.³⁵⁴ Zoilus, so it seems, would have had no problems with this scene, if it were a quiet joke between two young pals. Instead, to have Hermes and Apollo make an overt sexual joke in the presence of their own father and all the other gods must have struck him as something of an implausibility. Aristarchus reasoned along similar lines when he athetized the passage from the *Iliad* (Il. 24.130-2) in which Thetis invites Achilles to have sex with a woman. He argues that it is inappropriate (*ἀπρεπέες*) for a mother to

³⁵¹ See POHLENZ 1933 and BOUCHARD 2010: 322-33. On the notion of *πρέπον* and its use in Aristarchus see esp. SCHELENKEVELD 1970: 167-9 and SCHIRONI 2018: 429-30 esp. 429 n. 49. On the multiples meaning of *πρέπον* see also HUNTER 2018: 157-158.

³⁵² As Pelliccia rightly notes *per litteram*, the presence of Zeus in this scene cannot be taken for granted.

³⁵³ Thus GÄRTNER 1978: 1545.

³⁵⁴ Compare Aristotle's point (Ar. *Poet.* 1461a4-9) according to which good and bad behavior in poetry should be judged also according to the identity of the agent or speaker and to whom he acted or spoke.

urge his son to have sex.³⁵⁵ As Schironi rightly says, “these words are inappropriate in terms of the situation and the character who utters them (a mother to her own son!) more than of “morality” per se.”³⁵⁶ Although the word ἀπρεπές does not feature in Zoilus’ fragment, the main issue is the inappropriateness of the joke based on the relationship between speaker and internal audience. This inappropriateness makes the scene implausible. The presupposition behind Zoilus’ criticism is not necessarily what one ought to do in such and such a situation but what it is logical to expect that one does. Zoilus’ focus is on the actions of the characters within the context of the scene. Thus interpreted, his critique reads as a case of ἄλογα, that is, a scene or an action deemed implausible for it contradicts the logical expectations of the reader (given the internal audience, no one would expect such a joke), and not as a case of moral indecency.

In light of Hermes’ reply to Apollo (Il. 339-342), however, the second interpretation of the fragment can be defended as well: Zoilus took issue with the content of Hermes’ desire, that is, the wish of being watched by all the gods and goddess. Yet, even thus formulated, the point of Zoilus’ critique does not necessarily express the prudery of a critic uncomfortable with voyeurism. By pointing out the filial relationship, Zoilus, stresses the paradoxical implication of Hermes’ wish: given that Hermes wishes to be seen by all the gods, strictly speaking, Hermes does not mind being seen even by his own father, Zeus, in the act of having sex. The content of Hermes’ wish is not simply indecent, it is, instead, utterly absurd. No one, seems to

³⁵⁵ *Sch. in Il.* 24. 130-2a ἀθετοῦνται στίχοι τρεῖς, ὅτι ἀπρεπές μητέρα υἱῶ λέγειν ‘ἀγαθόν ἐστι γυναικὶ μίσγεσθαι’.

³⁵⁶ SCHIRONI 2018: 488 n. 191. Against this reading, see SCHENKEVELD 1970: 169-70.

contend Zoilus, could have plausibly wished to be seen in such a situation by his father. What is inappropriate about Hermes' wish is not that it suggests a licentious and immoral behavior but rather that it indicates a sudden obliviousness for what the actual relationship among the characters in the poems are.³⁵⁷ Given the filial relationship between Hermes and Zeus, it is inappropriate for Hermes to say that he does not mind being seen by "all the gods." As was the case with the first reading, Zoilus is pointing out how implausible it is for Hermes, insofar as he is a specific character in the poem, with a specific relationship with the other gods, to wish for what he does. Again the critique is a case of ἄλογα, because the wish is utterly illogical.

According to both these readings, the central issue that Zoilus' emphasized with his critique is characters' appropriateness, particularly the specifics of their relationship with other characters in the poem. Following this line of reasoning, it is possible that the reason why Zoilus found the laugh of the gods problematic was that he thought it inappropriate for the situation and the characters involved in it. For how could a father, Zeus, laugh at his own daughter, Aphrodite? This would be consistent with the second part of the critique where the point is the implausibility of a situation in which a son involves his own father in his sexual fantasy. Alternatively, as Fogagnolo as recently pointed out,³⁵⁸ the critique could be that the gods, generally,³⁵⁹

³⁵⁷ This remains a rather curious remark by Zoilus, given that there is generally very little concern in Greek myth to maintain a distinction between familial links and love when it comes to the Olympians. It does, however, work well in light of Aristotle's principle mentioned above (*Ar. Poet.* 1461a4-9) according to which good and bad behavior in poetry should be judged also according to the identity of the agent or speaker.

³⁵⁸ FOGAGNOLO 2022: 193-4.

³⁵⁹ Fogagnolo is silent about other cases of unquenchable laugh arising among the gods in the poems. See *Il.* 1.580 ff.

do not abandoned themselves to laugh in the poem. We will see below that Zoilus was perfectly capable of noticing cases of contradiction in the representation of characters within the poem. Of course, an interpretation of the fragment in terms of moral preoccupations could not be altogether dismissed, but my reading has the advantage of providing a better explanation of the reason why Zoilus chose to focus specifically on Hermes' wish, out of the entirety of Demodocus' story, as well as the reason why he pointed out what in Hermes' wish was left implicit, that is, Hermes filial relationship with Zeus. If my reading holds, we can stress, again, that in reading Homer Zoilus was moved by artistic preoccupations and we can add that by focusing on character's appropriateness, he tackled Homeric problems in a way that is reminiscent of the procedures of some of his later colleagues, such as Aristarchus.

In general, my analysis of F4; F8; F11; F18 FOGAGNOLO, proves that Zoilus did not approach Homer with a moral mindset. Instead, he was very much capable of making insightful literary comments, along the same lines that Aristotle recommends in his *Poetics* and that many Hellenistic critics after him will follow.

Part 2: Allegoresis

Chapter Four

Allegoresis and Allegory: The Origins of Textual Criticism and Philosophy

4.1. Allegoresis: an Elusive Concept

Allegoresis is notoriously complex concept, and many scholars have examined these topics in depth.³⁶⁰ In this introductory section (4.1) I will start with some remarks about modern day usage of the term and I will then turn to the ancient sources. The word “allegoresis” itself is a modern coinage³⁶¹ which defines the interpretation of any artistic productions,³⁶² though primarily poetical texts, beyond their mere literal and immediate meaning. The term was introduced into scholarship for the sake of avoiding the confusion with the polysemic word “allegory.” On a general level, “allegory” can, in fact, indicate a) the rhetorical trope akin to metaphor,

³⁶⁰ General monographs and collections of studies concerning ancient allegorical interpretation and its historical development are WEHRLI 1927; BUFFIÈRE 1956; PÉPIN 1976; LAMBERTON 1986; WHITMAN 1987; BLÖNNIGEN 1992; DAWSON 1992; BRISSON 1996; CUCCHIARELLI 1997; BOYS-STONES 2003; STRUCK 2004; RAMELLI 2004; ed. DAHAN-GOULET 2005; ed. COPELAND-STRUCK 2010. Recent remarks concerning ancient allegory and allegorical interpretations can be found also in FORD 2002: 67-89; LAMBERTON 2002: 185-205; PONTANI 2005b: 26-32; PRIMAVESI: 2005; NADDAF 2009: 99-131; BOUCHARD 2016: 29-83; DOMARADZKI 2011; DOMARADZKI 2015; DOMARADZKI 2017; HERREN 2017: 73-82; 109-164; SAVIO 2018: 9-71; NOVOKHATKO 2018: 39:30; KOTWICK 2020; BERGAMO 2022. For a brief overview of the concept and its ancient development see PONTANI 2013.

³⁶¹ The coinage is based upon the compound Greek root *allēg-* at the basis of words such as *allēgoria*, meaning “allegory”, “veiled language” (*LSJ*) and *allēgoreō* “interpret allegorically” or “speak figuratively” (*LSJ*).

³⁶² The vast majority of our sources concerning allegoresis deals with texts, mostly poetical. Nevertheless, the practice of interpreting allegorically is not exclusively textual and extends to any vehicle of narrative, be it textual or visual. For instance, in the context of allegorical interpretations of the mythical theomachies, Celsus (Orig. *Contra Celsum* VI, 42) mentions the embroidered robe of Athena depicting the goddess’s fight against the giants carried in procession at the Panathenaea as an example of allegorical narrative. On the robe of Athena see also Porph. *HQ* Y 67-75,8. Similarly, a notorious allegorical reading by Chrysippus (SVF, B 1071-74) does not concern a text, but rather a wall painting representing Hera fellating Zeus in the temple of the goddess at Samos (see STRUCK 2004: 279-282). Mysteries, dreams, and oracles can also be the object of allegoresis. On mysteries and allegoresis see Or. *Contr. Cel.*, VI, 42; Porph. *HQ* Y 67-75, 8; On dreams and allegoresis see esp. Artem. 1.2 with STRUCK 2004: 183-4. Kotwick recently argued that the interpretation of Penelopes’ dream in *Od.* XIX is a case of allegoresis (KOTWICK 2020). On the interpretations of oracles see esp. Plut. *De Pyth.* 407a-b with STRUCK 2004: 180-82.

b) the compositional practice that aims at hiding a message under a covert expression, and c) the exegetical practice that aims at decoding such an expression to retrieve a hidden message.³⁶³ These three meanings are clearly distinct yet they refer to similar practices. When someone composes allegorically they employ a specific trope, that is, allegory. Likewise, when someone interprets a text allegorically, they try to explain a trope. When allegory is considered as a trope, the focus is on the means by which the allegorical practice is carried out. When, however, we focus on the agent of the practice, the distinction between composition and interpretation, that is to say, between compositional allegory and allegoresis, emerges. Compositional allegory refers to the author's intent, whereas allegoresis has to do with the reception of the work. Of course, these two poles of the practice – intention and reception—are strictly interdependent. A reader that interprets a text allegorically presumes, for the most part, that the writer composed his narrative using enigmatic language in order to hide further meaning below the letter of a text. On the other hand, when a writer uses enigmatic language, he expects that at least some of his readers will be able to decode his riddles.³⁶⁴

³⁶³ For the use of the term allegoresis in modern scholarship see DOMARADZKI 2015: 247; ID. 2017: 300-303.

³⁶⁴ On “compositional allegory” and “interpretative allegory” see especially WHITMAN 1987: 3-13. Further discussion also in DOMARADZKI 2017: 300-303 and HERREN 2017: 73-74. For ancient authors that composed works explicitly intended to be read allegorically see, for instance, Theognis, who regards his verses as riddles that the reader should decode (Theog. 679-682): φορτηγοὶ δ' ἄρχουσι, κακοὶ δ' ἀγαθῶν καθύπερθεν./δειμαίνω, μή πως ναῦν κατὰ κῦμα πῆρι./ ταῦτά μοι ἠνίχθω κεκρυμμένα τοῖσ' ἀγαθοῖσιν./γινώσκοι δ' ἄν τις καὶ κακός, ἂν σοφὸς ᾖ. “The cargo-carriers are in charge, and the base are above the good; I am afraid that a wave will swallow up the ship. Let these be my veiled riddles for the good; even a base man, if he is wise, would know the meaning” (Hunter). Much in the same vein, see also Pind. *Ol.* 2, 82-89. On both of these passages, see HUNTER 2009; ID. 2014. As I will show below, Pherekydes of Syros too composed a work that requires to be interpreted allegorically. Although related, these old instances of compositional allegory should not be equated with what scholars of later allegoresis such as Lamberton call, “deliberately allegorical literature”, that is, works

In a commendable effort to attain clarity, scholars have often posited strict boundaries between these three meanings of allegory. In so doing, however, they have often lost track of their close similarities. Particularly notable is the scholarly stress laid upon the differences between the rhetorical analysis of allegory and allegoresis, which are regarded as almost two completely different endeavors. As I will show throughout my examination of early allegorical tradition, there are especially good reasons to regard rhetorical analysis and allegoresis as two facets of the same exegetical practice.

The usage of the term in antiquity does not allow us to see a precise pattern of distinction between the three meanings; context is usually the only guide to more precise semantic distinctions. The compound root ἀλληγορ - (from ἄλλος “other” and ἀγορεύω “to say”, that is, “to say something other than what one means”³⁶⁵) from which the word allegory derives, is not attested in our ancient sources before the first century BCE.³⁶⁶ The term first appears in the context of classifications of rhetorical tropes and usually defines “a metaphor sustained for the length of a whole sentence (and beyond)”.³⁶⁷ An example of allegory is, thus, the famous poetical image of the ship of the state in Horace’s *Ode* 1.14, in which the ship described in the poem refers to the Roman state, the waves and tempests stand for the civil wars, and the harbor for

that are *consistently* structured to be read on one or more levels beyond the superficial. (LAMBERTON 1986: 145).

³⁶⁵ This etymological explanation was already suggested in antiquity. See Heraclit., *Quaestiones Homericae*, 5.2 with PONTANI 2005b: 184, n.11.

³⁶⁶ Among the first occurrences of the term are *Philodemus Rhet.* 4.3; *Cic. Orat.* 94; *Demetr. eloc.* 99-102.

³⁶⁷ LAUSBERG 1998 [1st ed. 1960]: 399. On allegory in the ancient rhetorical tradition see HAHN 1967 and INNES 2003. Note that extended metaphors, which the ancients defined as allegories, are usually not categorized as such by moderns critics. See LAMBERTON 1986: 145 n. 3.

peace and harmony (see Quint. *Hist. Orat.* 8.6.44).³⁶⁸ Although the precise definition of allegory as a rhetorical trope varies according to authors and contexts, and although the term may be also used to indicate enigmas, gnomic sayings, riddles etc.,³⁶⁹ on a general level, ancient readers viewed allegory as a form of deliberate obscurity on the part of the writer or speaker who uses figurative language to hide his message.³⁷⁰

By extension, when someone employs the trope of allegory, they can be said to “speak/compose allegorically”, i.e. to use *compositional allegory*, whereas when someone decodes an allegory, they can be said to “interpret/read allegorically”, i.e. to practice *allegoresis*. Ancient Greek, like modern languages, did not necessarily distinguish between allegory *qua* mode of composition and allegory *qua* mode of interpretation, but indicates both operations by the term *ἀλληγορία* or its cognates, such as *ἀλληγορέω*, “to say/to interpret allegorically”. The use of the word *ἀλληγορία* to indicate *allegoresis* is clearly manifest in the following passage of Plutarch’s essay *On How to Listen to Poets* 19e-f:

Plut. *De audiendis poetis* 19e-f παρά δ’ Ὀμήρῳ σιωπώμενόν ἐστι τὸ τοιοῦτο γένος τῆς διδασκαλίας, ἔχον δ’ ἀναθεώρησιν ὠφέλιμον ἐπὶ τῶν διαβεβλημένων μάλιστα μύθων, οὓς ταῖς πάλαι μὲν ὑπονοίαις ἀλληγορίαις δὲ νῦν λεγομέναις παραβιαζόμενοι καὶ διαστρέφοντες ἔνιοι μοιχευομένην φασὶν Ἀφροδίτην ὑπ’ Ἄρεος μηνύειν Ἥλιον, ὅτι τῷ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἀστέρι συνελθὼν ὁ τοῦ Ἄρεος μοιχικὰς ἀποτελεῖ γενέσεις, Ἥλιου δ’ ἐπαναφερομένου καὶ καταλαμβάνοντος οὐ λανθάνουσιν.

In Homer this form of instruction is given silently, but it leaves room for a reconsideration, which is helpful in the case of those stories which have been most discredited. By forcibly distorting these stories through what used to be

³⁶⁸ Alcaeus Z2 lobel-Page, Horace’s source for the ode, is quoted as an example of allegory by Heraclit. *Quaestiones Homericae*, 5.6. and by the rhetorician Cocondrius, *On tropes*, 9. On the image and its interpretations see PONTANI 2005b: 185.

³⁶⁹ See LAUSBERG: 398-401; INNES 2003: 19-20.

³⁷⁰ Using an image that will become commonplace in modern discussions, Demetrius defines allegory as a *συγκάλυμμα*, a “veil”. See Demetr. *eloc.* 99-102.

termed ‘deeper meanings,’ but are nowadays called ‘allegorical interpretations,’ [ταῖς πάλαι μὲν ὑπονοίαις ἀλληγορίαις δὲ νῦν λεγομέναις] some persons say that the Sun is represented as giving information about Aphrodite in the arms of Ares, because the conjunction of the planet Mars with Venus portends births conceived in adultery, and when the sun returns in his course and discovers these, they cannot be kept secret. (Goodwin)

According to Plutarch’s report, to interpret the love scene between Aphrodite and Ares narrated in book eight of the *Odyssey* as a tale hinting at astral phenomena is a case of ἀλληγορία, that is, allegoresis.³⁷¹ Around the same time as Plutarch,³⁷² the author of the so-called *Homeric Problems*, Heraclitus, makes a very significant move. He directly connects the rhetorical meaning of the term ἀλληγορία with allegoresis. He reasons (see *HQ*, 5-6) that given that all ancient poets, including Homer, have used the trope of allegory, it is a legitimate endeavor to interpret inconvenient passages allegorically, to practice allegoresis (I discuss this passage also in 6.2 below).³⁷³

Although the word ἀλληγορία does not appear before the first century CE,³⁷⁴ the idea that artistic production can convey hidden truths is much older.³⁷⁵ Our earlier sources refer to the phenomenon through different terms. As noted by Plutarch in the passage from the *On how to Listen to Poets* quoted above, ἀλληγορία is a more recent synonym of the older term ὑπόνοια, literally, “under-meaning”.³⁷⁶ The term is famously used by Socrates in a passage of Xenophon’s *Symposium* where rhapsodes

³⁷¹ See also Plutarch *De Isid.* 363d where the verb ἀλληγορέω is used to indicate the interpretation of the mythical gods as cosmological concepts. [...] ὡς περ Ἕλληνες Κρόνον ἀλληγοροῦσι τὸν χρόνον, Ἴηραν δὲ τὸν ἄερα, γένεσιν δὲ Ἥφαιστου τὴν εἰς πῦρ ἀέρος μεταβολήν.

³⁷² Heraclitus’ date is impossible to ascertain with any confidence. Scholars generally oscillate between a dating around the first century CE (RUSSELL-KONSTAN 2005: XI-XII) and the beginning of the second century CE (PONTANI 2005b: 9-17). For a brief summary of the question see now SAVIO 2019.

³⁷³ Heracl., *Quaest. Homer.* 6.

³⁷⁴ See, however CUCCHIARELLI 1997: 224 and SCHIRONI 2018: 139 for the possibility that Aristarchus used the term ἀλληγορία.

³⁷⁵ Ancient authors themselves, and not only interpreters, were aware of it. See n. 5 above.

³⁷⁶ On ὑπόνοια see esp. PÉPIN 1976: 85-7.

are ridiculed for not knowing the hidden meanings [ὑπόνοιαι] of Homer's texts.³⁷⁷

Plato too uses it to refer to allegoresis in his discussion about the educational value of the traditional stories concerning the gods in book two of the *Republic*.

Pl. *Res.*, 378d2-378e1 Ἦρας δὲ δεσμούςς ὑπὸ ὑέος καὶ Ἥφαιστου ρίψεις ὑπὸ πατρός, μέλλοντος τῆ μητρὶ τυπτομένη ἀμυνεῖν, καὶ θεομαχίας ὅσας Ὅμηρος πεποίηκεν οὐ παραδεκτέον εἰς τὴν πόλιν, οὐτ' ἐν ὑπονοίαις πεποιημένας οὔτε ἄνευ ὑπονοιῶν. ὁ γὰρ νέος οὐχ οἷός τε κρίνειν ὅτι τε ὑπόνοια καὶ ὁ μή, ἀλλ' ἂ ἂν τηλικούτος ὢν λάβῃ ἐν ταῖς δόξαις δυσέκνιπτά τε καὶ ἀμετάστατα φιλεῖ γίγνεσθαι.

We won't admit stories into our city—whether allegorical [ἐν ὑπονοίαις πεποιημένας] or not—about Hera being chained by her son, nor about Hephaestus being hurled from heaven by his father when he tried to help his mother, who was being beaten, nor about the battle of the gods in Homer. The young can't distinguish what is allegorical from what isn't [ὅτι τε ὑπόνοια καὶ ὁ μή], and the opinions they absorb at that age are hard to erase and apt to become unalterable. (Grube-Reeve)³⁷⁸

Nevertheless, as Peter Struck has shown in depth, the “real conceptual engines of allegorism” are the word αἴνιγμα, riddle, and its cognates such as αἰνίσσομαι, “to speak in riddles, to hint at”.³⁷⁹ The term αἴνιγμα is used, for instance, by the anonymous author of the Derveni Papyrus (fifth to fourth centuries BCE), the first allegorist whose work we possess to a significant extent (see chapter 6 below). According to the Derveni papyrus (col. VII, 6-7), Orpheus said, “great things in

³⁷⁷ Xen. *Symp.* 3.6 ἐκεῖνο δ', ἔφη ὁ Ἀντισθένης, λέληθέ σε, ὅτι καὶ οἱ ῥαψῳδοὶ πάντες ἐπίστανται ταῦτα τὰ ἔπη; καὶ πῶς ἄν, ἔφη, λελήθοι ἀκροώμενόν γε αὐτῶν ὀλίγου ἂν ἐκάστην ἡμέραν; οἷσθ' ἂν οὖν ἔθνος, ἔφη, ἠλιθιώτερον ῥαψῳδῶν; οὐ μὰ τὸν Δί', ἔφη ὁ Νικήρατος, οὐκ οὐκ ἐμοίγε δοκῶ. δηλον γάρ, ἔφη ὁ Σωκράτης, ὅτι τὰς ὑπονοίας οὐκ ἐπίστανται. σὺ δὲ Στησιμβρότῳ τε καὶ Ἀναξιμάνδρῳ καὶ ἄλλοις πολλοῖς πολὺ δέδωκας ἀργύριον, ὥστε οὐδέν σε τῶν πολλοῦ ἀξίων λέληθε. On this passage, and on hyponoia and allegoresis in general, see especially Richardson's valuable study (RICHARDSON 1975). On hyponoia see also CALIFF 2003: 26.

³⁷⁸ Pl. *Res.*, 378d2-378e1 Ἦρας δὲ δεσμούςς ὑπὸ ὑέος καὶ Ἥφαιστου ρίψεις ὑπὸ πατρός, μέλλοντος τῆ μητρὶ τυπτομένη ἀμυνεῖν, καὶ θεομαχίας ὅσας Ὅμηρος πεποίηκεν οὐ παραδεκτέον εἰς τὴν πόλιν, οὐτ' ἐν ὑπονοίαις πεποιημένας οὔτε ἄνευ ὑπονοιῶν. ὁ γὰρ νέος οὐχ οἷός τε κρίνειν ὅτι τε ὑπόνοια καὶ ὁ μή, ἀλλ' ἂ ἂν τηλικούτος ὢν λάβῃ ἐν ταῖς δόξαις δυσέκνιπτά τε καὶ ἀμετάστατα φιλεῖ γίγνεσθαι.

³⁷⁹ STRUCK 2004: 39. On αἴνιγμα see esp. STRUCK 2004: 39-51; 170-179.

riddles” (ἐν αἰνίγμασιν δὲ μεγάλα), a consideration that legitimizes the anonymous interpreter in reading Orpheus’ poem allegorically. Oftentimes the word αἰνίγμα and its cognates are used in prophetic contexts—an element, among others, that suggests a close relationship between allegoresis and divinatory practices.³⁸⁰ Finally, another word that may indicate allegorism is σύμβολον, “symbol”, which, however, is almost never used in a literary sense until Chrysippus’ time (mid-third century BCE).³⁸¹

To recapitulate, from a lexical point of view, Greek has a variety of terms, often used interchangeably, with which to engage the concept of obscurity and allegorism. As in modern languages, in all of these terms the two sides of the allegorical process, the compositional and the interpretative one, coexist. Even when the emphasis is on the interpretative part of the process, the compositional aspect remains present. This is particularly clear with the term αἰνίσσομαι, which means “to speak in riddles/hinting at”, but not “to interpret allegorically.” In these cases, to express that X should be interpreted allegorically as Y, Ancient Greek says that the poet composes X in order to hint at Y. From a lexical point of view, to interpret allegorically is to assume that the poet composed allegorically.³⁸² At a later period in

³⁸⁰ FORD 2002: 80-85; STRUCK 2004: 162-203; KOTWICK 2020: 4.

³⁸¹ See STRUCK 2004: 111-141. Note. Moreover, that Heraclitus the allegorist also uses *hyposēmainō* as a synonym for *allēgoreō*. See STRUCK 2004: 152.

³⁸² Conceptually, the question is much more complex. The fact that a reader interpreted a text allegorically is not necessarily a guarantee that he regarded the author of the text in question as the designer of a deliberate allegory. In an influential paper on the Stoics and allegoresis that addresses this question, Long proposes to distinguish between allegory in a “weak” and “strong” sense. When an interpreter reads a text as a case of strong allegory, he takes the allegorical interpretation to be what the writer intended to signify. Nevertheless, when an interpreter reads a text as a case of weak allegory, he does so regardless of the intention of the author. According to Long (LONG 1992: 41-66; esp. 41-43), Stoics read Homer and traditional poets in a weak allegorical sense. While Stoics might be said to have interpreted the poems allegorically, they did not necessarily believe that the poets deliberately hid philosophical truths under the cover of poetry. Rather, they looked at poetry because of the mythological stories contained within it. Myth, which transcends poetic design, is what the Stoics were interested in interpreting and understanding. For a more nuanced picture of the Stoics’ interpretation of

time, looking at the phenomenon from the point of view of the composition, rhetoricians and textual critics dealt with the precise classification of the means by which a poet or a speaker could accomplish obscurity. They came up with the term ἀλληγορία to indicate a specific type of figure. Quite naturally, this meaning was then expanded to cover both the processes of allegorical composition and allegoresis.

4.2. Allegoresis: The Beginnings of the Practice

With a succinct overview of the terminology in mind, we can now turn to our main question, the origins of allegoresis. When dealing with the beginnings of allegoresis, scholars have often argued that allegory originated as a “defensive” practice.³⁸³ According to such a picture, allegoresis emerged in the sixth century BCE as a way of defending the poetic text against the attacks of intellectuals such as Xenophanes (c. 570- c. 478), Pythagoras (c. 570- c. 490), and Heraclitus (*fl.* 500). Each of these three authors, in fact, has given scholars reasons to believe that they were somewhat critical of Homer and Hesiod’s poetry, particularly their way of depicting the gods.³⁸⁴ Xenophanes, for instance, says in one of his poems (Fr. B 11 DK):

poetry see BOYS-STONES 2003: 189-216 and GOURINAT 2005: 9-34. Other attempts have been made at analyzing allegoresis on the basis of poetical intentionality. See e.g. Tate’s division in historic, intrinsic, and artificial allegoresis (TATE 1934: 109-12).

³⁸³ The common claim that allegoresis originated as a response to early critiques of poetry is found already in SENGEBUSCH 1855: 133. “Ea quae Pythagoras, Xenophanes, Heraclitus in Homero vituperaverunt, alii philosophi poëtae admiratores allegorice explicando et physice maxime excusare studuerunt”. A more recent version of this claim can be found, among others, in MOST 1999: 336-342.

³⁸⁴ Paraphrasing an expression of Plato (*Rep.* 607b), scholars often analyzed these critiques in the context of an “ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy”. Yet, the evidence for the actual existence of such a quarrel is rather scanty. See esp. MOST 2011. On Xenophanes and his critique of Homer see esp. FORD 2002: 46-66. The question of Pythagoras and Pythagoreans’ approach to poetry and, more precisely, of whether there existed an early Pythagorean exegetical tradition of reading Homer and Hesiod’s texts has been discussed many times and has led to contradictory results. The

πάντα θεοῖσ' ἀνέθηκαν Ὅμηρός θ' Ἡσίοδος τε,
ὅσσα παρ' ἀνθρώποισιν ὀνειδέα καὶ ψόγος ἐστίν,
κλέπτειν μοιχεύειν τε καὶ ἀλλήλους ἀπατεύειν.

Everything Homer and Hesiod attributed to the gods,
Everything is a matter of disgrace and reproach:
Stealing, cheating, and deceiving.

In a similar vein, Heraclitus (see 22 B 42 DK = F 30 Marcovich) used to say that Homer “deserved to be thrown out of the contests and thrashed”, whereas according to a story preserved in Diogenes Laertius (see Diog. Laert. 8.21), when Pythagoras descended into the underworld, he saw Hesiod and Homer suffering great punishments for what they said about the gods.³⁸⁵

Given that Porphyry (Porph. *QHI ad Il.* 20. 67-75) mentions Theagenes of Rhegium, a rough contemporary of Xenophanes and Pythagoras,³⁸⁶ as the first to have defended Homer through allegoresis, it seemed economical to many scholars to relate the emergence of allegoresis with the earlier attacks against the traditional poets. Seen in this light, allegoresis is an exegetical technique that originated around the sixth century BCE and was meant to exculpate the poets from the charge of narrating

evidence was first collected by DELATTE 1915: esp. 109-136 and subsequently reconsidered by DETIENNE 1962: esp. 61-81. About the existence of such an early tradition Buffière is mostly skeptical (BUFFIÈRE 1962: XXIX). Reservations also in BURKERT 1972: 291 n. 67. For a nuanced overview and bibliography see esp. LAMBERTON 1986: 31-46. Further bibliography also in FORD 2002: 70 n. 11. Concerning Heraclitus it should be emphasized that he did not only critique traditional poets, or poetry itself, but also other thinkers such as Pythagoras, Xenophanes, and Hekataieos (see DK 22B40). Especially since Havelock's seminal studies (HAVELOCK 1982; Id. 1983), Heraclitus' attitude towards poetry has been analyzed often as a critique of the limits of traditional language. See, for instance, MORGAN 2000: 53-59 and POSTER 2006.

³⁸⁵ Diog. Laert. 8.21 “Hieronymus, however, says that, when he had descended into Hades, he saw the soul of Hesiod bound fast to a brazen pillar and gibbering, and the soul of Homer hung on a tree with serpents writhing about it, this being their punishment for what they had said about the gods” (Hicks).

³⁸⁶ Theagenes was active around 529-522. See Tatian 31, p. 56 Whittaker = DK 8A1 = T1 BIONDI with BIONDI 2015: 31-32.

morally questionable stories. From the point of view of the allegorists, in fact, poets used such stories as a mere veil to hide greater philosophical truths.

Jonathan Tate's seminal intervention of 1927, which he subsequently expanded upon with a series of articles in 1929-1930 and 1934,³⁸⁷ influentially complicated the question of the origins of allegoresis. In Tate's view, allegory was not a defensive, but rather a "positive" practice, that is, a way of appropriating traditional and authoritative poetry for the needs of one's own worldviews. Indeed, from the sixth through the fifth centuries BCE, Presocratic thinkers such as Pherekydes of Syros, Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Empedokles repurposed mythology and its traditional language in their own works for the sake of communicating their philosophical doctrines. This new approach that transforms myth from a simple tale to a philosophical vehicle is what, for Tate, abides at the root of allegoresis. It was only after this new conception of the function of myth had been established that readers could investigate Homer and Hesiod in search of hidden philosophical meanings. Thus, from Tate's point of view, allegoresis in its origins was "positive," and not "defensive," for it aimed at integrating older poetry and its language with new ways of thinking. Such practice is largely indebted to Presocratic philosophers such as Pherekydes of Syros, who lived in the sixth century, a generation earlier than Theagenes of Regium (see ch. 5).

Today, the mere question of whether allegoresis started as a form of defense or appropriation of poetry has somewhat fallen out of fashion.³⁸⁸ Struck and others have

³⁸⁷ TATE 1927: 214-15; TATE 1929: 142-154; TATE 1930: 1-10; TATE 1934: 105-14.

³⁸⁸ This is not to say, however, that the question is not worth considering or that scholars have ceased to take sides in the old debate. See, for instance, Herren for which it is likely that "allegorical interpretation arose out of the need to defend the ancient poets." HERREN 2017: 79.

rightly shown that “defensive” versus “positive” are not mutually exclusive concepts.³⁸⁹ Furthermore, Struck argues, given that under these two models external motivation (be it the defense of poetry or its reformulation according to one’s needs) becomes the central aspect of allegorical practices, one fails to appreciate that ancient readers might have also read poetry allegorically for the mere fact that such poetry demanded to be read allegorically.³⁹⁰ Yet, although the discussion about the meaning of the terms “positive” and “defensive” allegoresis is rather futile, more is at stake in this debate, for two competing conceptions of allegoresis are often hidden under these two labels and are worth discussing further.

When Tate first argued that allegoresis is not defensive, but positive, he completely redefined the issues at stake. In his view, the defining feature of allegoresis is the appropriation of myths by early thinkers, i.e., their efforts to rationalize and recover meaning from old tales. Allegoresis thus emerges as the product of the

³⁸⁹ STRUCK 2004: 13-16; NADDAF 2009: 114; DOMARADZKI 2017: 307-8.

³⁹⁰ The definition of allegory as an externally, that is, extra-textually, motivated practice is commonplace in scholarship, but is a deceptive category. To say that an allegorist was externally motivated in his reading of a text often means very little, for, a priori, every reading is necessarily externally motivated. In the famous words of Northrop Frye “all commentary is allegorical interpretation, an attaching of ideas to the structure of poetic imagery” (FRYE 1957: 89). Thus Struck is right in pointing out that allegorists might have interpreted the text allegorically simply because they believed that the text required an allegorical interpretation. Nevertheless, he is a little too charitable when he says that “no reader (ancient or modern) understands himself or herself as foisting ideas onto a text that do not belong there” (STRUCK 2004: 16). Many modern and ancient examples come to mind that contradict Struck’s statement. Leaving aside the more parodic cases, such as the many passages in Plato where Socrates deliberately misinterprets sayings and poetic texts in order to foster his own views (see e.g. *Pl. Alc.* 2, 147b-d and Socrates’ analysis of Simonides’ poem in the *Protagoras*, *Pl. Prot.* 342a-347a), it is hardly the case that allegorists always interpreted a text allegorically solely in order to understand it, or because they believed that the text was allegorically composed. They certainly also manipulated the authority of traditional texts as a better way of conveying their own ideas, for they lived in a society in which familiarity with traditional poets formed the basis of any intellectual endeavor. Such an appropriation of the traditional text does not necessarily rest upon any sincere beliefs about what a text is meant to mean.

complex and well-studied dialectic between *logos* and *mythos*.³⁹¹ Under these assumptions, the interpretation of poetry inevitably becomes a subordinate task: what constitutes allegoresis is primarily the engagement with the myth preserved in the poetic texts rather than the engagement with the *poetics* of such mythological texts. In keeping with his definition, Tate showed that allegoresis was practiced by philosophically inclined authors such as Pherekydes of Syros and other Pre-Socratics rather than grammarians *à la* Theagenes.

Tate's influence, whether explicitly acknowledged or not, thus went far beyond the mere debate over "positive" and "defensive" allegoresis. Both Felix Buffière and Jean Pépin, who produced among the two most influential and comprehensive treatments of ancient allegoresis in the last century, made myth and religion, rather than poetry, the central core of their investigation.³⁹² More recently, George Boys-Stones begins his edited volume about metaphor and allegory in the classical tradition by stating that, "if theoretical reflection on allegory began with the philosophers, it always remained, not exclusively, but characteristically a philosopher's tool."³⁹³ This focus on philosophers as the main exponents of the practice owes much to Tate's conception. On the other hand, a year after Boys-Stones, Struck published his already

³⁹¹ The relationship between *mythos* and *logos* has for a long time been characterized in terms of the historical shift from mythical and irrational forms of thought to more scientific and rational approaches, an alleged revolution that Greek civilization underwent between the sixth and fourth centuries. Since Nestle's book *Von Mythos zum Logos* (NESTLE: 1940) the expression *from mythos to logos* has dominated the ways scholars have understood the interaction between these two modes of approaching the world. More recently, many attempts have been made to circumvent the positivistic view inherent in the expression *from mythos to logos*, and to move past the polarization of these two concepts. An overview of the scholarship on *mythos* and *logos* can be found in BUXTON 1999: 1-13. Recent remarks also in WIANS 2009: 1-6 and ID. 2019: 1-15.

³⁹² BUFFIÈRE 1956. PÉPIN 1958. This tendency is particularly evident in Pépin, who, in the foreword of his monograph, describes his work as "non pas comme une étude littéraire, mais comme une contribution à l'histoire de la philosophie religieuse" (PÉPIN 1958: 6).

³⁹³ BOYS-STONES 20003: 3.

mentioned influential monograph, *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of their Texts*. Taking cues especially from Lambertson³⁹⁴ and Coulter,³⁹⁵ and responding to the aforementioned scholarly tendency to view allegoresis primarily as the philosophical appropriation of mythological discourse, he instead placed allegorists within “a rather broad context of ancient literary criticism.”³⁹⁶

In light of these diverse scholarly approaches, the task of defining ancient allegoresis is often a controversial one. In the remainder of this section, I will work toward a definition of allegoresis that tries to capture the hybrid nature of the technique, including both its philosophical and literary elements.

4.3 Allegoresis: Beyond Literalism and Allegorism

Many scholarly attempts have been made to describe ancient allegoresis. Focusing especially on the hermeneutical techniques employed by ancient allegorists, Mirjam Kotwick’s recent study provides one of the most comprehensive analyses.³⁹⁷ In starting from her work, I seek to demonstrate that the exegetical practices that are usually associated with allegorists were also deployed by “literalist” interpreters. In my view, allegorists contributed much more than previously admitted to the development of textual criticism and ancient grammar.

³⁹⁴ LAMBERTON 1986.

³⁹⁵ COULTER 1976.

³⁹⁶ STRUCK: 2004: 8.

³⁹⁷ KOTWICK 2020.

Paying special attention to the techniques that were employed by old allegorists and especially the author of the Derveni papyrus, Kotwick provides a list of four conditions that are equally met in ancient allegoresis:³⁹⁸

1. Allegoresis operates on two levels: the literal meaning of words and narratives (which I call here the *interpretandum*, i.e. what ought to be interpreted), and the level of the allegorical meaning of words and narratives (which I call here the *interpretamentum*, i.e. the interpretative solution).
2. Allegoresis operates on a narrative. The *interpretandum* is not a single element, but rather includes a series of events and characters; likewise, the *interpretamentum*;³⁹⁹
3. Words and phrases of the *interpretandum* are interpreted out of their original narrative context;
4. The relationship between the elements of the *interpretandum* and those of the *interpretamentum* is of similarity and/or analogy. Such similarity can be both linguistic or functional/qualitative.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁸ KOTWICK 2020: 12.

³⁹⁹ On this point see esp. DAWSON 1992: 3-6. In my understanding, narrative function coincides with the notion of allegory as an extended metaphor (see above). When a metaphor extends and includes multiple single metaphors, personifications, and other tropes it generally tells a story. When the goddess Athena is interpreted as wisdom this is a simple case of personification. But once Athena (wisdom) fight Ares (folly), as in *Il.* 21, the scene develops over time and acquires a narrative character.

⁴⁰⁰ In other words, allegoresis is “substitutive” because allegorists substitute an element of the *interpretandum*, A, with a new element, B, on the basis of a series of etymological, metaphoric, and/or analogical relationship between A and B. In Homer, the goddess Athena (A) can be interpreted as wisdom (B) because the goddess is often represented as giving good advice to her favorite heroes. Hera (A) can be interpreted as air on the basis of the pseudo-etymological link between her name, Ἥρα, and its anagram, ἀήρ (air). The term “substitutive” was first introduced by Wolfgang Bernard in order to capture the difference between old “substitutive” allegoresis and neo-platonic “dieretic” allegoresis (BERNARD 1990: 11-94). Virtually every case of old allegoresis that we know of is in its essence substitutive. On substitutive allegoresis see also RUSSELL-KONSTAN 2005: xxiii-xxiv; PONTANI 2005b: 31 n. 77; SAVIO 2018: 18-20.

Let us briefly line Kotwick's list up against a standard example of allegoresis, the interpretation of the theomachy of books 20 and 21 of the *Iliad*. In book 20, lines 67-75, the poet gives his audience a preview of the battles among the gods:

Il. 20, 67-75 ἦτοι μὲν γὰρ ἔναντα Ποσειδάωνος ἄνακτος
ἴστατ' Ἀπόλλων Φοῖβος ἔχων ἰὰ πτερόεντα,
ἄντα δ' Ἐνυαλίῳ θεᾷ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη:
Ἥρη δ' ἀντέστη χρυσηλάκατος κελαδεινῇ
Ἄρτεμις ἰοχέαιρα κασιγνήτη ἐκάτοιο:
Λητοῖ δ' ἀντέστη σῶκος ἐριούνιος Ἑρμῆς,
ἄντα δ' ἄρ' Ἥφαιστοιο μέγας ποταμὸς βαθυδίνης,
ὄν Ξάνθον καλέουσι θεοί, ἄνδρες δὲ Σκάμανδρο

For now over against the lord Poseidon
Phoibos Apollo took his stand with his feathered arrows,
and against Enyalios the goddess gray-eyed Athene.
Against Hera stood the lady of clamor, of the golden distaff,
of the showering arrows, Artemis, sister of the far striker.
Opposite Leto stood the strong one, generous Hermes,
and against Hephaistos stood the great deep-eddying river
who is called Xanthos by the gods, but by mortals Skamandros. (Lattimore)⁴⁰¹

Later on in book 21, the poet will describe in details five individual duels (i) between the river Scamander, on the one hand, and Hephaestus and Hera on the other, (ii) between Athena and Ares, (iii) between Athena and Aphrodite, (iv) between Hera and Artemis, as well as the verbal confrontation (v) between Poseidon and Apollo that ends in a truce. Commenting on the theomachy, Porphyry (*QHI ad Il.* 19.67-75) provides us with an example of a standard allegorical interpretation. The battle among the gods signifies the cosmic opposition between elements, and each god is a stand-in for a physical element: Scamander stands for wetness/water, Hephaestus stands for

⁴⁰¹ *Il.* 20, 67-75 ἦτοι μὲν γὰρ ἔναντα Ποσειδάωνος ἄνακτος/ ἴστατ' Ἀπόλλων Φοῖβος ἔχων ἰὰ πτερόεντα,/ ἄντα δ' Ἐνυαλίῳ θεᾷ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη:/ Ἥρη δ' ἀντέστη χρυσηλάκατος κελαδεινῇ/ Ἄρτεμις ἰοχέαιρα κασιγνήτη ἐκάτοιο:/ Λητοῖ δ' ἀντέστη σῶκος ἐριούνιος Ἑρμῆς,/ ἄντα δ' ἄρ' Ἥφαιστοιο μέγας ποταμὸς βαθυδίνης,/ ὄν Ξάνθον καλέουσι θεοί, ἄνδρες δὲ Σκάμανδρον.

heat/fire, Apollo for the sun, Poseidon for the water, Hera for the air, and so on. Such an allegorical interpretation meets all the conditions set out by Kotwick. There is a literal level, i.e. the actual battle among the gods, and an allegorical one, i.e., the cosmic opposition between elements. The theomachy is a narrative and its elements are interpreted out of the narrative context.⁴⁰² Finally, there is an evident relationship between the literal meaning of the single elements and their allegorical meaning. This relationship is linguistical (like in the case of Hera, Ἥρα, whose name is the anagram of ἀήρ, air), functional (the gods oppose each other like opposite elements of the *kosmos*), and qualitative (Poseidon stands for water because he traditionally maintains sovereignty over the sea).

Overall, Kotwick's list seems to provide a good representation of the significant features of ancient allegoresis. At the same time, we should note that her four points could also be applied to other exegetical readings, not necessarily allegorical in their intentions, that treat a poetically ambivalent narrative. We can see this by evaluating her list against another passage from Homer, whose ancient and modern interpretations can hardly be defined as a standard case of allegoresis. In *Iliad* 19.215-237, Odysseus tries to convince Achilles that it is best to wait before returning to battle. The Greek army needs to eat and drink, and to pay tribute to its dead. To make his point, near the beginning of his speech, Odysseus says the following (*Il.* 19. 221-224):

αἰψά τε φυλόπιδος πέλεται κόρος ἀνθρώποισιν,
ἦς τε πλείστην μὲν καλάμην χθονὶ χαλκὸς ἔχευεν,

⁴⁰² This is generally true, although, as I will show below, there are also contextual reasons that explain why Scamander is interpreted as water and Hephaestus as fire.

ἄμητος δ' ὀλίγιστος, ἐπὴν κλίνησι τάλαντα
Ζεὺς, ὅς τ' ἀνθρώπων ταμῆς πολέμοιο τέτυκται

When there is battle men have suddenly their fill of it
when the bronze scatters on the ground the straw in most numbers
and the harvest is most thin, when Zeus has poised his balance,
Zeus, who is administrator to men in their fighting. (Lattimore)

The precise meaning of the extended metaphor⁴⁰³ has puzzled many ancient⁴⁰⁴ and modern readers.⁴⁰⁵ The passage is, indeed, in Edward's words,⁴⁰⁶ "imaginative and highly allusive, with several examples of words used with more than one concurrent significance." Overall, Odysseus is comparing a battle scene to an agricultural scene, but the precise details of the description require some analysis. Since a full examination of the poetics of this metaphor exceeds the scope of my argument, I will limit myself to a concise analysis of its main elements.

The words χαλκός is straightforward enough. Its literal meaning, "bronze", both applies, by metonymy, to the sickle and to weapons. More problematic is the term ἄμητος, which Homer uses only here. Literally, the word could mean the process of harvesting, the time of the harvest, and the harvested crop. Following the majority of commentators, I believe that "harvested crop" gives us a good literal meaning in

⁴⁰³ In modern terminology, this is an instance of metaphor. Yet, it is a complex one that is extended for four lines. As we saw above, Quintilian and other rhetoricians would certainly consider it a case of allegory. Porphyry indeed first says that Odysseus speaks in riddles (τὰ ἔπη ταῦτα ἠνιγμένα ὑπὸ τοῦ Ὀδυσσεύως *HQ*, T 221-224, 1) and then says that the poet made an allegory (πεποιήται δὲ τὴν ἀλληγορίαν ὁ ποιητῆς *HQ*, T 221-224, 14). The image is defined as an allegory both in the scholia (*Sch. vet.*, *ad loc.*) and in Eustathius (Eust. 4, 318, 10).

⁴⁰⁴ See Porphyry (*HQ* T 221-224 Macphail), Eustathius (*ad Hom. il.*, 4, 318-320), and the *scholia vetera*.

⁴⁰⁵ MOULTON 1979; COMBELLACK 1984; EDWARDS 1991; GRETHLEIN 2005; CORAY 2016.

⁴⁰⁶ EDWARDS 1991: 260.

context.⁴⁰⁷ As for its allusive meaning, the question is rather complex.⁴⁰⁸ The term must represent some sort of gain for the soldiers and is sometimes interpreted as booty. Following Combellack’s analysis, the temporal clause in ll.223-4 alludes to Zeus’ decision to change the course of the war. More precisely, I argue, given that Achilles has now decided to come back to war and has already, by his sole appearance in front of the tents, terrified the Trojans, the scale’s image suggests that the Greeks will now overcome their enemies. It remains to note that, although with the temporal clause the imagery of the battle is reintroduced over that of the harvesting,⁴⁰⁹ the poet brilliantly keeps his metaphor alive. This can be seen especially in the use of the word ταμίης, “steward”, which, as suggested by Edwards,⁴¹⁰ recalls the stewards of l.44 who dispense food to the army. It should be noticed also, that ταμίης is the word by which Eurikleia (see *Od.* 2.337-347) is introduced to her audience in her capacity as keeper of Odysseus’ storeroom. Thus Zeus’ epithet aptly retains the agricultural connection by reinforcing the imagery of food consumption and adding that of the storage of

⁴⁰⁷ Nevertheless, some convincing arguments in favor of “the time of the harvest” have been put forward by Combellack (COMBELLACK 1984: 247-50).

⁴⁰⁸ See CORAY 2016: 103-104 for an overview of the possibilities. Moulton argues that *amētos* refers to the surviving heroes, an interpretation favored by Eustathius, but that is inconsistent with the overall image (MOULTON 1979: 286). Combellack provides convincing arguments for interpreting it as booty (COMBELLACK 1984: 247-50). I believe it is also possible to take *amētos* as the retrieval and burial of the dead bodies. This seems to make good sense in context given what Odysseus says at ll.228-229: “No but we must harden our hearts and bury the man who/ dies, when we have wept over him on the day” (Lattimore). If that were to be the meaning, the harvested crop, that is, the farmer’s gain for his labor, would be analogical to the proper celebration of the heroes’ *kleos*. It would follow that what makes the soldiers sated of war is the realization that, in case they die, they would not be properly honored for their sacrifices. That being said, we should not completely dismiss Edward’s point that crop also suggests the meal after the battle which is referenced too by Odysseus in ll. 231.

⁴⁰⁹ The scholiast (see *sch. vet.* ad 221-4a1) comments that if the poet wanted to keep the image alive he should have called Zeus, “administrator of the harvest of men”, instead of “administrator of the war of men”. For this reason he calls the overall image a mixed allegory instead of a complete one. αἰψά τε φυλόπιδος<—τέτυκται>: ὁ τρώ-πος μικτή ἀλληγορία· εἰ γὰρ εἶπε ‘ταμίης καρποῖο τέτυκται’ (cf.224), τελεία ἦν ἀλληγορία.

⁴¹⁰ EDWARDS 1991: 261-62.

harvested goods. The metaphor of the scale operates in the same way. In context, it clearly refers to Zeus' decision to change the course of the war; however, the scale, as the object upon which one weighs produce for selling, reinforces the idea of the economical profit that follows the harvest. This is particularly evident in light of the following simile, in which battle and agricultural imagery are again married through the image of the scale:

*Il.12.432-43 ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὧς ἐδύναντο φόβον ποιῆσαι Ἀχαιῶν,
ἀλλ' ἔχον ὧς τε τάλαντα γυνὴ χερνῆτις ἀληθῆς,
ἣ τε σταθμὸν ἔχουσα καὶ εἴριον ἀμφὶς ἀνέλκει
ἰσάζουσ', ἵνα παισὶν ἀεικέα μισθὸν ἄρηται:
ὧς μὲν τῶν ἐπὶ ἴσα μάχῃ τέτατο πτόλεμός τε,
πρὶν γ' ὅτε δὴ Ζεὺς κῦδος ὑπέρτερον Ἴκτορι δῶκε
Πριαμίδῃ, ὃς πρῶτος ἐσήλατο τεῖχος Ἀχαιῶν.*

But even so they could not drive panic among the Achaians,
but held evenly as the scales which a careful widow
holds, taking it by the balance beam, and weighs her wool evenly
at their end, working to win pitiful wage for her children:
so the battles fought by both sides were pulled fast and even
until that time when Zeus gave the greater glory to Hektor,
Priam's son, who was first to break into the wall of the Achaians. (Lattimore)

From a cursory examination of Odysseus' speech, it is clear that Homer has constructed a metaphorically rich image that he intends for his audience to decode. Although there is probably not one univocal interpretation of Odysseus' metaphor that does not lose some of its density of allusions, based on the above interpretation, the overall meaning goes like this: When, (or maybe, "even when") Zeus, who is in control of the war of men, decides to favor one party over the other, the soldiers immediately lose their appetite for war, seeing that, although they will kill many men (or, alternatively, "seeing that many will die"), they will not get their due recompense, (i.e. booty, following Combellack's hypothesis, or, proper mourning, following my

proposal in n. 49). The condition of such warriors is analogous to that of farmers who, despite their hard work in the fields, end up with very little crop.

Having provided a general reading of the passage, let us analyze the hermeneutical process against Kotwick's features of allegoresis. Certainly, the most common interpretations of Odysseus' image meet condition number one. There is a first level of meaning, the agricultural scene, and a second one, the military imagery. Condition number two and three are also met. Although the passage does not present a very extended narrative, it depicts a scene that involves different temporal stages. First, there is the moment of the reaping (l. 216), next comes the moment of the gathering of the crop (ἄμητος δ' ὀλίγιστος l.223); finally, the use of the words τάλαντον, "scale" (l. 223) and ταμίης, "steward" (l. 224) suggest the moment of the storage, consumption, and selling of the product. The use of the temporal adverb αἶψα, "right away" (l. 215) and the temporal clause in ll.217-218 point in the same direction. The decontextualization of the elements of the narrative (condition number 3) is clear from all attempts at interpreting the passage. A couple of examples will suffice. The term χαλκὸς at line 216 means "sickle", but, out of its immediate context, it can designate a weapon. The word ἄμητος is equally decontextualized. Because the literal meaning of the word is not self-evident, both ancient and modern readers first discuss the range of its possible literal meanings and then interpret it outside the agricultural imagery. Finally, condition number four is equally met. Every element of the *interpretandum* is analogical to that of the *interpretamentum*. Sickle and weapons are qualitatively analogical, for they are both made of bronze. The stalk is analogical to the dead warrior because of its falling on earth. Harvested crop and booty, (or burial,

or food, according to the different interpretations) are related because they all represent the gain that follows hard work.

Despite that, it would be certainly odd to define Combellack, Edwards, and the other modern and ancient scholars that have interpreted this passage as allegorists. Although these interpreters used the same kind of techniques as allegorists, to our modern sensitivity there is an apparent difference between the interpretation of the theomachy and the interpretation of Odysseus' speech. But what are, *au juste*, these differences? From our modern perspective, one key difference is that, in the theomachy, the poet does not use an identifiable *tropos*, whereas Odysseus in his speech does. The theomachy, therefore, should be taken literally, whereas Odysseus' speech should not. Seeing it from this lens, allegoresis would be a form of over-interpretation of the text. The allegorist interprets the text on the basis of premises that are extraneous to the text. There is no doubt that many of our ancient examples of allegoresis are evident overinterpretations of texts, yet the line that separates interpretation from overinterpretation, figurative from literal meaning, is a fine and often arbitrary one. This is especially the case when it comes to status of the gods in epic. Sometimes, in fact, they are treated strictly as characters that partake into the dramatic action. They are subjected to the laws of time and space, and act and think like human beings. In this respect, there is no difference between Achilles and Zeus. In other instances, however, they are clear personifications of natural elements, like in the passage of the *Iliad* (2.426) where the Greeks are said to cook their meat on Hephaestus, the god of fire. To suppose that Homer composed his theomachy as an enigma, using the trope of personification, to hide natural phenomena below the name

of the gods, can be regarded, hence, as a legitimate exegetical inclination, one that is granted by the treatment of the gods in other passages of the poem.

Strictly connected to the first, the second macroscopic difference between the two interpretations consists of the philosophical reach of the *interpretamentum*. The interpretation of the theomachy as a system of opposition between physical elements has a philosophical, whether Ionian or Stoic, background.⁴¹¹ It is thus legitimate to assume that these kinds of interpretations were means for interpreters to appropriate traditional poetry, and to reveal its alleged philosophical content to readers. Nothing of the sort can be said of the interpretations of Odysseus' speech. Nevertheless, again, it would be arbitrary to characterize allegoresis as always externally motivated and appropriative. Although the majority of our examples fit this characterization, there are clear ancient cases, albeit late, in which allegoresis is regarded as a literary, internally-motivated technique, that is motivated within the text.

As an example of these cases, consider the following interpretation of a passage from Euripides' *Hippolytus* 73-87, recently studied by Richard Hunter.⁴¹²

σοὶ τόνδε πλεκτὸν στέφανον ἐξ ἀκηράτου
λειμῶνος, ὃ δέσποινα, κοσμήσας φέρω,
ἔνθ' οὔτε ποιμὴν ἀξιοῖ φέρβειν βοτὰ
οὔτ' ἤλθέ πω σίδηρος, ἀλλ' ἀκήρατον
μέλισσα λειμῶν' ἠρινὴ διέρχεται,
αἰδῶς δὲ ποταμίαισι κηπεύει δρόσοις,
ὅσοις διδακτὸν μηδὲν ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ φύσει
τὸ σωφρονεῖν εἴληχεν ἐς τὰ πάντ' ἀεί,
τούτοις δρέπεσθαι, τοῖς κακοῖσι δ' οὐ θέμις.
ἀλλ', ὃ φίλη δέσποινα, χρυσέας κόμης
ἀνάδημα δέξαι χειρὸς εὐσεβοῦς ἄπο.
μόνοι γάρ ἐστι τοῦτ' ἐμοὶ γέρας βροτῶν·

⁴¹¹ On the philosophical elements of ancient allegorical interpretations of the theomachy see especially BUFFIÈRE 1956: 101-105; SVENBRO 1984: 115-119; DOMARADZKI 2011: 212-219; BIONDI 2015: 61-63.

⁴¹² HUNTER 2009; ID 2014.

σοὶ καὶ ζύνειμι καὶ λόγοις ἀμείβομαι,
κλύων μὲν αὐδῆς, ὄμμα δ' οὐχ ὄρων τὸ σόν.
τέλος δὲ κάμψαιμ' ὥσπερ ἠρξάμην βίου.

Mistress, I bring you this woven garland which I have fashioned from an unravaged meadow, where no herdsman chooses to graze his animals nor has iron ever passed there, but in the springtime the bee traverses the unravaged meadow and *Aidōs* [shame] nurtures it with river waters; those who have no share in the taught, but in whose natures *sōphrosynē* [self-control] has its place in all things for all time—these may pluck [from the meadow], but for the wicked it is not permitted. Mistress of mine, receive from a pious hand a wreath to bind your golden hair. Alone of men do I enjoy this privilege, for I keep company with you and converse with you, hearing your voice, though I do not see your face. May I end my life as I have begun it.⁴¹³ (Hunter)

The question of whether such a passage should be read allegorically or literally features prominently in ancient commentaries of the play found in the scholia.

Consider, for instance, the scholion at l.78:

This cannot be understood if one wants to understand it literally [κυρίως] as being about gardens. Therefore there is an allegory here. Poets reasonably liken their own natures to bees and rivers and meadows, and poetry itself to garlands; the flowers indicate the variety and beauty of poetry, the rivers its mass and the impetus to creation, the bees the labor [τὸ ἐπιμελές] and concentrated effort involved, as well as the sweetness of the poems, and the garlands indicate that those who are praised win glory through them. Euripides has combined all of these things and thus made more brilliant the allegory through which he wished to describe his hymn to Artemis; other poets use these devices [τρόπο] in a scattered fashion. Plucking from unravaged meadows indicates that a poetic soul must be pure and unravaged, and unstained by any evil. Those who are going to practice *poiētikē* must most of all partake of *aidōs*. For this reason some call the Muses too virgins.”⁴¹⁴ (Hunter)

⁴¹³Eur. *Hipp.* 73-87 σοὶ τόνδε πλεκτὸν στέφανον ἐξ ἀκηράτου/ λειμῶνος, ὃ δέσποινα, κοσμήσας φέρω,/ ἔνθ' οὔτε ποιμῆν ἀξιοῖ φέρβειν βοτὰ/ οὔτ' ἠλθέ πω σίδηρος, ἀλλ' ἀκήρατον/ μέλισσα λειμῶν' ἠρινὴ διέρχεται, / αἰδῶς δὲ ποταμίαισι κηπεύει δρόσοις,/ ὅσοις διδακτὸν μηδὲν ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ φύσει/ τὸ σωφρονεῖν εἴληγεν ἐς τὰ πάντ' αἰεί,/ τούτοις δρέπεσθαι, τοῖς κακοῖσι δ' οὐ θέμις./ ἀλλ', ὃ φίλη δέσποινα, χρυσέας κόμησ' ἀνάδημα δέξαι χειρὸς εὐσεβοῦς ἄπο./ μόνωι γὰρ ἐστὶ τοῦτ' ἐμοὶ γέρας βροτῶν./ σοὶ καὶ ζύνειμι καὶ λόγοις ἀμείβομαι,/ κλύων μὲν αὐδῆς, ὄμμα δ' οὐχ ὄρων τὸ σόν./ τέλος δὲ κάμψαιμ' ὥσπερ ἠρξάμην βίου

⁴¹⁴ ἄλλως: ταῦτα οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπινοῆσαι, εἰ κυρίως τις βούλεται ἐπὶ τῶν κηπευμάτων ἐκδέχεσθαι τὸν λόγον. ἀλληγορεῖται οὖν τὰ προκείμενα. οἱ γὰρ ποιηταὶ ἐπεικῶς τὰς ἰδίας φύσεις μελίσσαις καὶ ποταμοῖς καὶ λειμῶσι προσομοιοῦσιν, αὐτὴν δὲ τὴν ποιήσιν στεφάνοις, διὰ μὲν τῶν ἀνθέων τὸ ποικίλον καὶ τὸ κάλλος αὐτῆς παριστάντες, διὰ δὲ τῶν ποταμῶν τὸ πλῆθος καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ τὸ ποιεῖν ὀρμὴν, διὰ δὲ

Reasons why a commentator should not take Euripides' description of the garden literally are given at the scholion to line 73, which says: "it would be remarkably strange to imagine that there was a flowery meadow where flowers were picked and it was of such a kind that those who entered were examined as to whether their *sōphrosunē* [self-control] was taught or naturally acquired and the meadow was irrigated by *aidōs* [shame]"⁴¹⁵ (Hunter). Although crudely put, the scholion rightly notes that Euripides' "unravaged meadow" cannot be a mere garden, but is rather an image of "transparent symbolism."⁴¹⁶ Euripides, we might say, is allegorizing, i.e. composing allegorically.

The necessity to read beyond the letter, here, as in the case of the interpretation of Odysseus' speech, emerges from the text itself, from its internal poetics. Surely enough, this internally motivated kind of allegoresis⁴¹⁷ can easily turn into philosophical appropriation of the text when one tries to show, as another interpreter mentioned by the scholiast does,⁴¹⁸ that in Euripides' passage the meadow is pure

τῶν μελισσῶν τὸ ἐπιμελὲς καὶ τὸ συντεταγμένον, ἅμα καὶ τὸ τῶν ποιημάτων μελιχρὸν, τοὺς στεφάνους ἔνεκα τοῦ λαμπρύνεσθαι δι' αὐτῶν τοὺς ἐπαινουμένους. ταῦτα δὲ πάντα συλλαβῶν ὁ Εὐριπίδης ἐφαιδρυνε τὴν ἀλληγορίαν, δι' ἧς τὸν εἰς τὴν Ἄρτεμιν ὕμνον ἠβουλήθη παραστήσει, τῶν ἄλλων ποιητῶν σποράδην τοῖς τρόποις χρησαμένων. τὸ δὲ ἐξ ἀκηράτων λειμώνων δρέπεσθαι διὰ τὸ δεῖν τὴν ποιητικὴν ψυχὴν καθαρὰν τε καὶ ἀκήρατον εἶναι καὶ παντὸς κακοῦ ἄχραντον. δεῖ γὰρ τοῖς ποιητικῆν μετιοῦσιν αἰδοῦς μεμοιρᾶσθαι πάντως· διὸ καὶ τὰς Μοῦσας παρθένους εἶπον ἔνιοι.

⁴¹⁵ καὶ γὰρ δὴ παράλογον εἶναι καὶ πολλὴν ἀτοπίαν ἔχον τὸ δοκεῖν ἄνθινον λειμῶνα εἶναι, ὅθεν ἐδρέφθη τὰ ἄνθη, καὶ τοιοῦτον, εἰς ὃν οἱ εἰσιόντες ἐξετάζονται πότερον διδακτὴν ἔχουσι τὴν σωφροσύνην ἢ ἐκ φύσεως, καὶ <ὕπὸ τῆς αἰδοῦς> κατάρδεσθαι αὐτόν.

⁴¹⁶ BARRETT 1964: 172.

⁴¹⁷ This kind of allegory is what Eustatius would deem as "rhetorical allegory." On this concept see CUCCHIARELLI 1997, an excellent article too often neglected.

⁴¹⁸ "... He calls the hymn a woven garland because they compose hymns by putting together words as in weaving. The unravaged meadow from where the flowers are woven into the garland and where not even a shepherd thinks it proper to graze his animals is an allegory for a virginal and undecentful intention [ennoia]. The flowers of this meadow are the results of wisdom and virtue. No iron has come to cut this meadow and crop its flowers; by 'iron' he means either evil meddlesomeness [philopragmonia] and wrongdoing or the corruption of shameful pleasures, and in this way he makes clear Hippolytus' virginal and guileless character. The bee, however, is an allegory of the soul itself, for

intention, “*ennoia*”, the flowers are wisdom and virtue, the iron represents the corruption of pleasures, and the bee is the soul itself. Clearly, such an interpretation of Euripides’ passages is based on Platonizing concepts.

Working through Kotwick’s conditions for allegoresis, I have shown that her descriptors of ancient allegoresis also work, somewhat problematically, as descriptors of literalists’ interpretations. Although useful categories to think with, literalism and allegoresis in the Classical period fail to provide a clear-cut distinction between different exegetical practices. In contrast to later critics, ancient readers did not subscribe to one or the other methodology; they, instead, constantly negotiated between the need to do justice to the poetics of a fixed text and the need to make its content relevant for later audiences.

In defining the concept of allegoresis we should accept both its literary and textually motivated sides, and the more philosophical and appropriative purposes to which it is subjected. As I have shown, this ambiguity is ingrained in the vocabulary itself in which the same root, be it *αιν*-or *ἀλληγορ*-, is employed to indicate both the idea that the poet spoke enigmatically as well as the conceit that the reader interpreted/appropriated poetry in light of hidden truths. The same can be said about the long scholarly dispute about the origins of allegoresis. Scholars who follow Tate consider allegoresis mostly as a philosophical practice inclined to appropriate myth. Against this tendency, as we have seen, other scholars have tried to emphasize the critical role of the practice. Finally, the analysis of Kotwick’s four features of

the bee is the purest of creatures (whence poets call priestesses ‘bees’). He calls it ‘of the springtime’ either because bees rejoice in the spring because of the flowers or because pure souls are always blooming, and spring is when flowers are produced.” (Hunter)

allegoresis demonstrates that, in terms of exegetical practices, there is very little difference between interpreting a difficult passage and allegorically appropriating an apparently unproblematic one.

In my view, therefore, allegoresis can and should be evaluated in light of this unstable and variable balance between the necessity of adapting traditional poetry to the needs of different audiences and the inherent linguistic and poetical constraints that every interpretation of a fixed text must take into account. Under the various *interpretamenta* of poetic passages that tradition has left us, it is possible not only to observe the work of specific philosophical schools, but also to examine on which linguistic and textual grounds allegorists operated. Certainly, especially when it comes to older cases of allegoresis, the traces of a philosophical appropriative system are easily detectable, whereas the exegetical side of the practice requires further investigation. Yet, there is little doubt that ancient allegorists were assuming that their interpretations were part of a poetic design—that their interpretations were, in other words, supported by texts. As a result, it is not surprising that they took an interest in poetics and tried to ground their interpretations upon legitimate linguistic and textual bases. This is precisely what can be seen, in a nutshell, from a significant example of pre-Hellenistic allegoresis, the Derveni Papyrus, in which the explicit allegorical intent of the commentator to bend the text to his own needs coexists with a minute analysis of its poetics. I devote a study of this work to the last chapter (see 6.2 and 6.3 below). In the next part of my dissertation, I demonstrate how allegoresis, since its origins, was indebted to the two modes of considering texts discussed in this introduction, the philological and internal one, and the philosophical and appropriative

one. In order to do so, I reconsider the sources concerning two sixth century forerunners of allegoresis, Theagenes of Regium and Pherekydes of Syros.

Chapter Five

The Beginnings of Allegoresis: Theagenes of Rhegium and Pherekydes of Syros

5.1 Theagenes of Rhegium: The First Homerist

Often granted the title of “the first allegorist” is Theagenes of Rhegium, a little-known figure active in Magna Graecia at the end of the sixth century.⁴¹⁹ The few details concerning Theagenes’ life and activity mostly stem from the speech *Address to the Greeks* by the Christian apologist Tatian (second century CE) who in chapter 31.2 provides us with a precious list of ancient Greek “Homerists:”⁴²⁰

ad Graec. 31.2= T1 Biondi περί γὰρ τῆς Ὀμήρου ποιήσεως γένους τε αὐτοῦ καὶ χρόνου καθ’ ὃν ἤκμασεν προηρεῦνησαν πρεσβύτατοι μὲν Θεαγένης τε ὁ Ῥηγῖνος κατὰ Καμβύσην γεγονῶς καὶ Στησίμβροτος ὁ Θάσιος καὶ Ἀντίμαχος ὁ Κολοφώνιος Ἡρόδοτος τε ὁ Ἄλικαρνασσεὺς καὶ Διονύσιος ὁ Ὀλύνθιος, μετὰ δὲ ἐκείνους Ἔφορος ὁ Κυμαῖος καὶ Φιλόχορος ὁ Ἀθηναῖος Μεγακλείδης τε καὶ Χαμαιλέων οἱ Περιπατητικοί· ἔπειτα γραμματικοὶ Ζηνόδοτος Ἀριστοφάνης Καλλίστρατος Κράτης Ἐρατοσθένης Ἀρίσταρχος Ἀπολλόδωρος.

Now the poetry of Homer, his parentage, and the time in which he flourished have been investigated by the most ancient writers, by Theagenes of Rhegium, who lived in the time of Cambyses, Stesimbrotus of Thasos and Antimachus of Colophon, Herodotus of Halicarnassus, and Dionysius the Olynthian; after them, by Ephorus of Cumae, and Philochorus the Athenian, Megaclides and Chamaeleon the Peripatetics; afterwards by the grammarians, Zenodotus, Aristophanes, Callimachus, Crates, Eratosthenes, Aristarchus, and Apollodorus.

⁴¹⁹ Despite the fact that very little of Theagenes’s production survives, the five fragments that reached us have received a great deal of scholarly attention. Biondi provides the most recent collection, edition, and extensive commentary of the testimonies (BIONDI 2015), and also furnishes a selective bibliographical overview conveniently organized by themes (BIONDI 2015: 11-13). For a recent overview of Theagenes’ activity with ample bibliographical discussion see FUENTES GONZÁLEZ 2016. Concerning especially Theagenes and allegory see: WEHRLI 1928: 89-91; BUFFIÈRE 1958: 101-105; DÉTIENNE 1962: 65-67; LANATA 1963: 106-111; PFEIFFER 1968; PRESTA 1969; PÉPIN 1976: 97-98; RISPOLI 1980: 243-257; SVENBRO 1984: 108-131; BERNARD 1990: 76-98; ROCCA-SERRA 1990: 77-82; RICHARDSON 1992; BERNABÉ 1998; RAMOS JURADO 1999: 45-59; FORD 1999; ID. 2002: 68-72; LAMBERTON 2002: 187-89; ZUMBO 2002: 324-327; RAMELLI 2004: 53-55; PRIMAVERSI 2005: 59-63; STRUCK 2004: 27-28; MARTINHO DOS SANTOS 2007; DOMARADZKI 2011: 205-228; BOUCHARD 2016: 30-37; POZDNEV 2016; DOMARADZKI 2017: 299-321.

⁴²⁰ On this testimony see especially ZUMBO 2002.

From this testimony, we can safely assume that Theagenes was from Rhegium,⁴²¹ the Greek colony situated on the east side of the Sicilian Strait, and that he flourished⁴²² around the time of Cambyses' reign, that is, between 529-522 BCE. We can also presume that Theagenes studied and wrote about Homer, yet the precise extent of his research and the form of his work/s are matters of conjectures.⁴²³

When it comes to the question of his alleged allegorical interpretation of Homer the relevant text is a scholion (p. 240 Macphail = T 4 Biondi) to *Il.* 20.67-75, the passage where the gods are preparing to fight each other, discussed earlier [ref.].⁴²⁴ The scholion is preserved for us in the *Homeric Questions*⁴²⁵ of Porphyry, a work whose textual history is complex and enigmatic, to say the least.⁴²⁶ Out of the original three or more books that composed the *Homeric Questions*, we directly possess only part of book one, thanks to a single thirteenth century manuscript (Vat. gr. 305).⁴²⁷ The manuscript transmits 32 *zetemata* (sets of questions and answers, see chapter 1

⁴²¹ Theagenes is called ὁ Ῥηγῖνος also in Porph. *QH* 240 MACPHAIL = T 4 BIONDI.

⁴²² The term γεγονός in this context refers to the *akme*, i.e. the flourishing, of Theagenes' life and not his birth. See e.g. PFEIFFER 1968: 9-12.

⁴²³ As we will see below, Theagenes can, in many ways, be considered as a forerunner of the later peripatetic and Hellenistic critical-grammatical activity. Although I do not entirely agree with Cantarella's bold conclusions, his article is a fundamental study on the critical activity of Theagenes. See CANTARELLA 1967. On Theagenes as a textual critic see also MOSINO 1961 and ID. 2002. For a more cautious assessment see ZUMBO 2002. On the biographical elements of Theagenes' work see PFEIFFER 1968: 9-12; GALLO 1995: 7-22. Because of his studies on Homer and his early date the majority of scholars since the time of Wilamowitz (WILAMOWITZ 1932: 129. n.2), argue, in my view inconclusively, that Theagenes was a rhapsode (see recently FORD 1999; ID. 2002: 68-72; BIONDI 113-114). Against this argument see RISPOLI 1980: 249-50 and ZUMBO 2002: 322-23.

⁴²⁴ ἦτοι μὲν γὰρ ἔναντα Ποσειδάωνος ἀνακτος/ ἴστατ' Ἀπόλλων Φοῖβος ἔχων ἰὰ πτερόεντα./ ἄντα δ' Ἐνυαλίῳ θεᾷ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη./ Ἥρη δ' ἀντέστη χρυσηλάκατος κελαδαινῆ/ Ἄρτεμις ἰοχέαιρα κασιγνήτη ἑκάτοιο./ Λητοῖ δ' ἀντέστη σῶκος ἐριούνιος Ἑρμῆς./ ἄντα δ' ἄρ' Ἥφαιστοιο μέγας ποταμὸς βαθυδίνης./ ὄν Ξάνθον καλέουσι θεοί, ἄνδρες δὲ Σκάμανδρον.

⁴²⁵ Although some scholars have questioned the attribution of this scholion to Porphyry (see e.g. ROCCA-SERRA 1990: 78) its paternity is secured by the fact that the scholiast who copied it onto the margin of the manuscript *Escorialensis* 509 explicitly attributes it to Porphyry. See MACPHAIL 2011: 9, and the apparatus at Y 67-75, p. 240. See also n. 15 below.

⁴²⁶ A useful overview in SLATER 2012: 325-6. See also ERBSE 1960: 72-77.

⁴²⁷ On this manuscript see PONTANI 2005a: 201-2.

above) concerning passages within the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in no particular order.⁴²⁸ They are detailed and wide-ranging investigations that touch upon the meaning of Homeric words and his style, discuss the opinions of previous critics, and make ample use of parallel passages both in Homer and outside Homer in order to illuminate the meaning of difficult sections of the text. A prefatory letter addressed to an acquaintance of Porphyry, Anatolius,⁴²⁹ gives us a precious insight into this work. Both the exegetical method employed by Porphyry and its aim are exposed. As for the method, Porphyry claims that Homer is his own interpreter,⁴³⁰ from which it follows that despite one's tendency to read into the text of Homer, attention should be paid to what Homer actually says in his text. (ὥς αὐτὸς μὲν ἑαυτὸν τὰ πολλὰ Ὅμηρος ἐξηγεῖται, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἐκ τῆς παιδικῆς κατηγήσεως περινοοῦμεν μᾶλλον ἐν τοῖς πλείστοις ἢ νοοῦμεν ἃ λέγει [...]).⁴³¹ As for the aim, Porphyry regards his collection of *zetemata* as preparatory exercises (*προγυμνάσματα*) in view of more serious exegetical endeavors on Homer, such as the one carried on in his *On the cave of the nymphs*.⁴³² πειράσομαι τὰ τε ῥηθέντα ποτὲ ἀνενεγκεῖν τὰ τε πάλιν ὑποπεσόντα προσθεῖναι, τὰς

⁴²⁸ This book has been edited but not personally collated by Schrader (SCHRADER 1880: 280-335). Sodano has re-edited it together with the excerpts of those same problems that are found in the b-scholia (SODANO 1970). The work has been translated into Italian by Sodano and in English by Schlunk (SODANO 1973; SCHLUNK 1993).

⁴²⁹ On Anatolius see Eunapius, *Lives of the Sophists*, 475-8.

⁴³⁰ Porphyry famously expresses this concept by the formula Ὅμηρον ἐξ Ὁμήρου σαφηνίζειν in *Zet.* 11, “to elucidate Homer from Homer”. The origin of such a formulation, often attributed to Aristarchus, has been the object of a long scholarly debate. According to Pfeiffer the maxim cannot be Aristarchus’ but see *contra* PORTER 1992: 71-80. On this maxim see also MACHPHAIL 2011: 3-4 and NÜNLIST 2015.

⁴³¹ “Since often Homer explains himself, and we, in most cases would touch upon, following our boyish training rather really know what he says.”

⁴³² On the relationship between de *zetemata* and later exegetical works such as the *De antro* see now FOTINI VILTANIOTI 2019: 21-39 and PONTANI 2019: 41-58.

μὲν μείζους εἰς Ὅμηρον πραγματείας ὑπερτιθέμενος εἰς καιρὸν σκέψεως τὸν προσήκοντα, ταυτὶ δὲ οἶον προγύμνασμα τῶν εἰς αὐτὸν ἀγόνων.⁴³³

The other books of the *Homeric Questions* can only be reconstructed indirectly from those scholia to Homer that had Porphyry's work as their source.⁴³⁴ Porphyry's work was in fact excerpted and then copied onto the margins of manuscripts of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in Byzantine times. The scholia that stemmed from Porphyry are often referred to as *extracts* because they were extracted from Porphyry *Homeric questions* and adapted to specific lines of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. This is the case of the passage that mentions Theagenes which runs as follows:⁴³⁵

QHI ad Il. 20.67-75, 1-7 MacPhail τοῦ ἀσυμφόρου μὲν ὁ περὶ θεῶν ἔχεται καθόλου λόγος, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τοῦ ἀπρεποῦς· οὐ γὰρ πρόποντας τοὺς ὑπὲρ τῶν θεῶν μύθους φησίν. πρὸς δὲ τὴν τοιαύτην κατηγορίαν οἱ μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως ἐπιλύουσιν, ἀλληγορίᾳ πάντα εἰρησθαι νομίζοντες ὑπὲρ τῆς τῶν στοιχείων φύσεως, οἶον ἐν ταῖς ἐναντιώσεσι τῶν θεῶν. καὶ γὰρ φασι τὸ ξηρὸν τῷ ὑγρῷ καὶ τὸ θερμὸν τῷ ψυχρῷ μάχεσθαι καὶ τὸ κοῦφον τῷ βαρεῖ. ἔτι δὲ τὸ μὲν ὕδωρ σβεστικὸν εἶναι τοῦ πυρός, τὸ δὲ πῦρ ξηραντικὸν τοῦ ὕδατος. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ πᾶσι στοιχείοις, ἐξ ὧν τὸ πᾶν συνέστηκεν, ὑπάρχει ἡ ἐναντίωσις καὶ κατὰ μέρος μὲν ἐπιδέχεσθαι φθορὰν ἅπαξ, τὰ πάντα δὲ μένειν αἰωνίως. μάχας δὲ διατίθεσθαι αὐτόν, διονομάζοντα τὸ μὲν πῦρ Ἀπόλλωνα καὶ Ἥλιον καὶ Ἥφαιστον, τὸ δὲ ὕδωρ Ποσειδῶνα καὶ Σκάμανδρον, τὴν δ' αὖ σελήνην Ἄρτεμιν, τὸν ἀέρα δὲ

⁴³³ "I will try to report what was once said and to add what happened later, leaving off the bigger investigation concerning Homer to a time that is more fitting for investigation, in this respect my work is similar to preliminary exercises for the [real] contests concerning Homer."

⁴³⁴ To establish which *scholia* are actually excerpted from Porphyry's work is often a desperate task. Schrader who provides the first edition of Porphyry's extracts to the *Iliad* and to the *Odyssey* (SCHRADER 1880; SCHRADER 1890), included much dubious material. Macphail (MACPHAIL 2011) recently edited the extracts to the *Iliad* from four manuscripts, (Venetus Graecus 453=B, Escorialensis 509=F, Leidensis Graecus 64=Le, and Lipsiensis Graecus 32=Li) whose attribution can be secured by an explicit reference to Porphyry's name (i.e. when the scholiasts introduce the scholion with a symbol that refers to Porphyry or an abbreviation of his name). For a description of the manuscripts and their relationship see MACPHAIL 2011: 8-10. As a result, the extracts edited by Macphail are almost certainly Porphyrian yet much of the scholiastic material that possibly stemmed from Porphyry's work has not been included. The bases for a more comprehensive edition of Porphyry's *Homeric Questions* that can overcome the limits of Schrader's edition have been discussed by Erbse. See ERBSE 1960: 17-77 esp. 72-77 with SLATER 2012: 325-6. Nevertheless, such an edition still remains a *desideratum*. Apart from Schrader, the Porphyrian material relating to the *Odyssey* can now be read in Pontani's ongoing edition of the scholia to the *Odyssey* (PONTANI 2007-), which has now reached book 10.

⁴³⁵ The passage is transmitted in the margins of two manuscripts the *Escorialensis* 509, f. 170r and the *Leidensis Graecus* 64, f. 423r. See MACPHAIL 2011: 240 and SCHRADER 1880: 240.

Ἦσαν καὶ τὰ λοιπά. ὁμοίως ἔσθ' ὅτε καὶ ταῖς διαθέσεσι ὀνόματα θεῶν τιθέναι, τῇ μὲν φρονήσει τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν, τῇ δ' ἀφροσύνη τὸν Ἄρεα, τῇ δ' ἐπιθυμία τὴν Ἀφροδίτην, τῷ λόγῳ δὲ τὸν Ἑρμῆν, [τῇ λήθῃ δὲ τὴν Λητώ], καὶ προσοικειοῦσι τούτοις· οὗτος μὲν οὖν τρόπος ἀπολογίας ἀρχαῖος ὢν πάνυ καὶ ἀπὸ Θεαγένους τοῦ Ῥηγίνου, ὃς πρῶτος ἔγραψε περὶ Ὀμήρου, τοιοῦτός ἐστιν ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως.

The discourse about the gods belongs in general to what is unseemly as well as inappropriate. For he [*sc.* the poet]⁴³⁶ says stories about the gods that are not appropriate. Against this accusation, some propose a solution from lexis believing that everything has been said allegorically with reference to the physical elements, e.g., in the opposition between the gods. For indeed they say that the dry fights with the wet, the warm with the cold, the light with the heavy. Moreover, that the water extinguishes the fire and that the fire dries the water. Similarly for all the elements of which the whole consists of a contrary exists and sometimes there can be a partial destruction but the whole remains eternally. [They also say that] the poet composes battles calling the fire Apollo, Helios, and Hephaestus; the water Poseidon and Scamander. The moon Artemis, the air Hera and so on and so forth. Sometimes he also gives names of gods to psychological dispositions: to wisdom, Athena, to folly, Ares, to desire, Aphrodite, to rational discourse, Hermes, [and they do the same] to the things that are associated with these.

Hence, this way of defending, being very old and from Theagenes of Rhegium, who was the first to write about Homer, is such, *i.e.* is a solution from “lexis.”

The text has been the object of much scholarly discussion⁴³⁷. Focusing especially on the first part of the last sentence (**οὗτος μὲν οὖν τρόπος ἀπολογίας ἀρχαῖος ὢν πάνυ καὶ ἀπὸ Θεαγένους τοῦ Ῥηγίνου, ὃς πρῶτος ἔγραψε περὶ Ὀμήρου**) scholars almost unanimously presume that Theagenes was an allegorist that defended Homer from the accusation of his contemporaries. Both these claims deserve to be better defined if not altogether abandoned.

As I have shown in the previous section, the general question of whether allegoresis arose as a “defensive” or “positive” practice is, in and on itself, a misconceived question. Attempts at showing that Theagenes’ allegoresis was both

⁴³⁶ See *contra* BOUCHARD 2016: 32-33.

⁴³⁷ See n. 1 above

positive as well as defensive are certainly possible and have been explicitly made.⁴³⁸ As for the text at stake here, the scholiast does indeed use the term ἀπολογία which would *prima facie* suggest that Theagenes intended to defend Homer through allegoresis. Nevertheless, a more cautious analysis of the material suggests otherwise. The organization of older exegesis according to zetematic principles, that is by stating a difficulty (in this case the fact that the battle of the gods of the gods are inappropriate) followed by possible solutions (here the fact that gods are not actually gods but natural elements or psychological dispositions), speaks to the ways by which Porphyry, or his excerptor/s, organized the material.⁴³⁹ What works for Porphyry as an apologetic solution to Homer's mishandling of the divine might have been conceived by Theagenes in a much different context. In short, the mere use of the word *apologia* does not allow us to recuperate Theagenes' voice and intention behind his interpretation of Homer.⁴⁴⁰

As for the question of Theagenes' allegoresis scholars usually argue that Theagenes' interpreted the Homeric gods as stand-in for forces of nature, or psychological tendencies, and that *therefore* he read Homer allegorically, that is, as a work that beyond its letter hints at a philosophical system, be it cosmological or

⁴³⁸ DOMARADZKI 2011.

⁴³⁹ Whether the use of the formal language of the *zetemata* that we find especially in the extracts originally belonged to Porphyry or it is the excerptor/s' doing is a question that requires further investigation. See, however, Slater's suggestion. SLATER 2012: 329.

⁴⁴⁰ See also SAVIO 2018: 24 and esp. 28-29 who is rightly skeptical about the fact that Theagenes used allegoresis as a way of defending Homer.

psychological.⁴⁴¹ In so doing, scholars gloss over a fundamental difference.⁴⁴² For it is one thing to say that Theagenes argued that Homer occasionally represented his gods *metonymically* as forces of natures, and another to say that he presumed that Homer composed some passages hinting at further philosophical truths.⁴⁴³ In the remainder of this section I will argue that, as far as our very little piece of evidence goes, Theagenes did no more than point out that in Homer gods are occasionally represented metonymically,⁴⁴⁴ and that, consequently, despite contributing to the development of allegoresis, he can hardly be considered an allegorist.

First, we shall consider what elements of Porphyry's passage actually stem from Theagenes. Scholars have often argued that this passage comes from a Stoic source.⁴⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the main elements of the interpretation can go far beyond the Stoics. Taken individually, each exegetical solution could have been available to every reader of Homer at every time. It does not take a particularly philosophically inclined mind to see that in Homer Poseidon is related to water or Athena to wisdom, for such

⁴⁴¹ One version of such a model has been recently argued for by DOMARADZKI 2011 who stresses the appropriative character of Theagenes' allegoresis, i.e., he does not acknowledge the possibility that Theagenes' inspiration for his interpretation was not Ionian philosophy but Homer's poetics.

⁴⁴² Only a few scholars observe a distinction between Theagenes' exegetical activity and allegoresis proper. See DÉTIENNE 1962: 65-66; and ROCCA-SERRA 1990. More cautious PONTANI 2005a: 26.

⁴⁴³ The consideration that Theagenes was an allegorist has led to a great number of speculations about the "philosophy" of Theagenes, who was allegedly influenced by Ionian philosophers (see esp. DOMARADZKI 2011) or Pythagorean communities (see already DELATTE 1915: 115; and more recently BIONDI 2015: 98-104; a thorough bibliographical overview of the question in FUENTES GONZÁLEZ 2016: 809-810), as well as speculations about the socio-political meaning of his allegoresis (RISPOLI: 1980; SVENBRO 1984: 108-110; FORD 199; ID. 2002: 68-89).

⁴⁴⁴ Consider, among others, the striking expression of *Il.* 2. 426 according to which the Greeks "barbecue over Hephaestus", *σπλάγχνα δ' ἄρ' ἀμπεύραντες ὑπέιρεχον Ἡφαίστιοιο*. On the gods in Homer as metonyms of physical elements see also PRIMAVERESI 2005: 70-74.

⁴⁴⁵ See already SCHRADER 1880: 401-402 who believed that Porphyry's *Homeric Questions*, the *Homeric allegories* of Heraclitus the Grammarian and the *De vita et poesi Homeri* by ps. Plutarch stemmed from a common stoic source. WEHRLI 1928: 90 thought that the scholion transmits elements that predate the Stoics, but that its final form is Stoic. More recently PONTANI 2005a: 26 thinks that the opinions related by Porphyry are Stoics.

relationships are immediately available within the text itself.⁴⁴⁶ Thus, some of these solutions could have certainly been argued for by Theagenes. It is only when taken together that these readings, especially the set of solutions based on the opposition between the elements, can be construed to imply a more complex cosmological system for which a Stoic milieu or, as it has often been argued recently, a Pre-Socratic one⁴⁴⁷ is possible.⁴⁴⁸

It must be noted, moreover, that the scholium is likely the receptacle of a long and composite tradition of allegorical readings that need not be attributed to the mind of a single individual. At least two different sets of solutions, and, therefore, two likely different sources, are detectable. In the first part (οἱ μὲν [...] τὰ λοιπὰ), the battle between gods is read as a battle between elements (the dry against the wet, the hot against the cold, and the heavy against the light). This reading references a cosmological system of opposition between primeval elements. Consistently with such a scheme, the scholium concludes that Homer composed his theomachies by attributing to the elements of the cosmos the names of the gods. The second part of the scholium (ὁμοίως [...] τούτοις) introduces another way according to which Homer named the gods in the poem: gods can be name-bearers for psychological dispositions. This second system, however, is not explicitly tied to the ways Homer composed the battle-scenes but is as a more general device that can be used sometimes (ὁμοίως ἔσθ’

⁴⁴⁶ This fact, too often ignored, was already noted by BUFFIÈRE 1956: 104.

⁴⁴⁷ Among the presocratic elements of the interpretation scholars have often emphasized the influence of Milesian philosophy especially for the theory of the opposition between elements. See esp. BUFFIÈRE 1956: 101-105; SVENBRO 1984: 115-119; DOMARADZKI 2011: 212-219; BIONDI 2015: 61-63. Orphic and Pythagoric influences have been detected too, see BIONDI 2015: 94-105 and n. 443 above.

⁴⁴⁸ As Brittain and Pelliccia note *per verba* the system of oppositions between elements is not so complex as to necessarily require a philosophical mind behind it.

ὄτε καὶ ταῖς διαθέσεσι ὀνόματα θεῶν τιθέναι). Indeed we could imagine many other more compelling contexts than the theomachy in which an interpretation of the gods *qua* psychological dispositions could have arisen.⁴⁴⁹

In light of this, it is not economical to argue that the same interpreter claimed that Homer composed his battles according to a principle of opposition between cosmological elements and, at the same time, on the basis of moral opposition. More likely, the physical and the moral interpretations originally arose in two intellectually different exegetical modes applied to different *loci* in the text.⁴⁵⁰

They then both became standard ways of reading Homer's treatment of the gods and as such they were available to Porphyry.⁴⁵¹ It should be noted, in fact, that Porphyry's note, although it might have been prompted by the analysis of passage 20.67-75, was very unlikely conceived as a mere commentary on the lines. As we can observe from the zetemata of the *Codex Vaticanus*, Porphyry usually starts with a textual difficulty but then moves into more general considerations, extending to many parallel passages from both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. This was likely the case for our note also, which was then adapted, we cannot say to what extent, by a later excerptor to fit lines 20.67-75. Yet the more expansive character of Porphyry's procedure can

⁴⁴⁹ One can think, for instance, of the scene in which Athena appears to Achilles and restrains him from killing Agamemnon in book 1 of the *Iliad* (*Il.* 1, 194-200). The sudden descent of the goddess and her concrete intervention, which nobody but Achilles seems to notice, raises questions about the nature and the representation of the gods in Homer. Did Athena really appear to Achilles in physical form or is she only a personification of wisdom? Heraclitus the grammarian (17-20) has no doubts that the second solution is the right one. Moral allegoresis was especially used to explain gods' appearance to mortals. See Heracl. 28-30; 59; 61-63; 72-73; 75, 9-11.

⁴⁵⁰ The presence of two different and somewhat conflicting explanations of the same passage side-by-side is often the rule in later and derivative works.

⁴⁵¹ Moral and physical allegories, together with the historical ones, are the basis of Heraclitus' allegoresis of Homer. See esp. PONTANI 2005b: 29-30. The theomachy's scene is interpreted following a similar moral and physical sets of solutions also in Ps. Plut. 102 and Heracl. 54-58. On ancient interpretations of the theomachy and their relationship to our scholion see RAMOS JURADO 1999: 50-56.

still be detected.⁴⁵² For instance, Aphrodite and Ares are mentioned in the scholium but not in the text commented upon. The fact that Aphrodite is mentioned is not surprising since she features in a later divine duel against Athena (*Il.* 21.423-433). Much more interesting is the mention of Helios who is absent from the theomachy of books 20 and 21. It has been argued⁴⁵³ that the presence of Helios in Porphyry's passage can be explained on the basis of a passage from Ps. Plutarch⁴⁵⁴ treating the theomachy side-by-side with the love-scene between Ares and Aphrodite from *Odyssey* 8 as two examples of the poet's tendency to speak allegorically. The intrusion of Helios, who plays a part in the story of Ares and Aphrodites, into the text of this excerpt could be explained assuming that Porphyry, or his source,⁴⁵⁵ originally treated the question of Homer's representation of the gods in general terms, without necessarily tying it to one specific passage. This, again, suggests that the end result of Porphyry's compilation is the synthesis of a composite and long exegetical tradition that arose from different textual *loci*, from different times and milieus, and was not the product of a single interpreter.

Once the paternity of the whole content of the scholium to Theagenes has been called into serious question, it is rather arbitrary to attribute to him some solutions over others, the physical system of interpretation over the moral one. Was Theagenes solely responsible for interpreting Hephaestus as fire and Scamander as water? Or did

⁴⁵² The beginning of the scholium refers very generally to passages about the gods that are inconvenient. οὐ γὰρ πρέποντας τοὺς ὑπὲρ τῶν θεῶν μύθους φησίν. Note also the plural μάχας, battles, and the representation of the exegetical solution as a broad device that works for other passages too implied in the phrasing ὁμοίως ἔσθ' ὅτε καὶ ταῖς διαθέσεσι ὀνόματα θεῶν τιθέναι.

⁴⁵³ BIONDI 2015: 74-78.

⁴⁵⁴ Ps. Plu. *Vit. Hom.* 101-102.

⁴⁵⁵ Likely the same source of Ps. Plutarch's passage.

he introduced the entire system of opposition between physical elements?⁴⁵⁶ Those questions cannot be satisfactorily answered.⁴⁵⁷ Yet, if it is impossible to recuperate the content of Theagenes' exegesis, Porphyry's source allows us to recuperate his exegetical method.

To show this point we should come back to the last portion of the scholion.

οὗτος μὲν οὖν τρόπος ἀπολογίας ἀρχαῖος ὢν πάνυ καὶ ἀπὸ Θεαγένους τοῦ Ῥηγίνου, ὃς πρῶτος ἔγραψε περὶ Ὀμήρου τοιοῦτός ἐστιν ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως.

Literally, the passage means: "Hence, this way of defending, being very old and from

Theagenes of Rhegium, who was the first to write about Homer, is such, *i.e.* is a

solution from "lexis".⁴⁵⁸ The logical referent of οὗτος μὲν οὖν τρόπος ἀπολογίας is the

⁴⁵⁶ Against Theagenes' paternity of a physical system of reading speak the ancient sources that attribute the "invention" of this mode of interpretation to Metrodorus of Lampsacus, who was active at least half a century after Theagenes (see 6.1). According to Diogenes Laertius, who follows Favorinus, Metrodorus of Lampsachus was likely the first to study Homer's treatment of nature. (Diog. Laert. II, 11). Although Diogenes' testimony alone does not allow us to presume that Metrodorus read Homer on the basis of physical allegory, Tatian's testimony is clear about it. καὶ Μητρόδωρος δὲ ὁ Λαμψακηνὸς ἐν τῷ Περὶ Ὀμήρου λίαν εὐήθως διείλεκται, πάντα εἰς ἀλληγορίαν μετάγων. οὔτε γὰρ Ἦραν οὔτε Ἀθηναίαν οὔτε Δία τοῦτ' εἰναί φησιν ὅπερ οἱ τοὺς περιβόλους αὐτοῖς καὶ τεμένη καθιδρύσαντες νομίζουσιν, φύσεως δὲ ὑποστάσεις καὶ στοιχείων διακοσμήσεις. (Tat. *Ad Graec.* 21.3). Thus, if we connect Diogenes and Tatian's sources it follows that the first to have interpreted Homer on the basis of physical allegories was Metrodorus and not Theagenes. It should also be noted that Tatian, as we saw above, knew of Theagenes' activity, but when he wanted to ridicule allegoresis he chose as a representative of this technique not Theagenes but rather Metrodorus. Tatian's information about Metrodorus and Theagenes is likely indirect and therefore his testimony is not as conclusive as we wish, yet, at least for the sources from which Tatian is pulling from, Theagenes's was primarily an "homerist", whereas Metrodorus an allegorist. On Theagenes and Metrodorus see also ROCCA-SERRA 1990.

⁴⁵⁷ A brief summary of the scholarly opinion on the question can be found in FUENTES-GONZALEZ 2016: 809.

⁴⁵⁸ The syntax is somewhat clumsy and one wonders if the final ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως is not an explanatory glossa that entered the text when Porphyry's zetema was turned into a scholion. MACPHAIL 2011: 6-8 lists a series of differences between the Vatican text and the text of the extracts. Among these is the use of the formal language of zetematic literature: expressions such as λύεται ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως; ἀπὸ τοῦ ἔθους, *vel similia* do not occur in the Vatican but only in the extracts. It would be, however, too hasty to conclude that every time we find such a phraseology this is the formulation of the scholiast rather than Porphyry's original phrasing. Indeed, as noted by SLATER 2012: 329, the extracts from the Vatican Manuscript are not altered in this way, a fact that suggests that it was Porphyry himself that changed its phraseology in the later books of his work. Be the final ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως an intruded glossa or not the

sentence πρὸς δὲ τὴν τοιαύτην κατηγορίαν οἱ μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως ἐπιλύουσιν ἀλληγορία πάντα εἰρῆσθαι νομίζοντες ὑπὲρ τῆς τῶν στοιχείων φύσεως, οἷον ἐν ταῖς ἐναντιώσεσι τῶν θεῶν. “Against this accusation, some propose a solution from lexis believing that everything has been said allegorically about the natural elements, like in the opposition between the gods.” In this sentence two main thoughts are contained: 1) allegoresis is an exegetical solution ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως 2) everything that refers to the gods (πάντα goes back to “the stories about the gods”) is said allegorically and actually refers to the physical elements. In order to understand in what ways Theagenes is a forerunner of such a method (οὗτος μὲν οὖν τρόπος) we thus first need to clarify the meaning of ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως and then explain its relationship with allegoresis, i.e. with the thought that everything that refers to the gods is said allegorically.

Let us start with the meaning of ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως. Our scholion follows a clear zetematic structure. The theomachy is approached as an interpretative crux, it is ἀπρεπές and ἀσύμφορον, and, therefore, in need of a solution (λύσις). The solution ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως is one among many available to the interpreter to solve the problem. After mentioning Theagenes, the text of the scholium, in fact, continues, still following Porphyry, with other two types of solutions: ἀπὸ ἔθου, and ἀπὸ τοῦ καιροῦ.⁴⁵⁹ The organization of the material in such a way, by problem and solution, is

expression οὗτος μὲν οὖν τρόπος still refers back to the ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως at the beginning of the scholium. By “this method of reading” Porphyry unequivocally means a method ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως.

⁴⁵⁹ Porph. *HQ* Y 67-75, 8-11, p. 242 ΜΑΡΦΑΙΛ ἔνιοι δὲ ἀπὸ ἔθους ἀπολογοῦνται· συγκεχώρηται γὰρ ὑπὸ τῶν πόλεων καὶ τῶν νομοθετῶν τοιαῦτα περὶ θεῶν μὴ μόνον ἄδειν ἐν ποιήσεσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς μυστηρίοις παραδιδόναι, ἐν τε ἱεροῖς ἀναθήμασι καὶ ἕτερα σύμφωνα τοῖς μύθοις κατασκευάζειν καὶ τὸν πέπλον ἀνάγειν ἐνυφασμένον τῆς γιγαντομαχίας. οἱ δ’ ἀπὸ τοῦ καιροῦ τοῦ τότε κατὰ τὴν Ἑλλάδα παραμυθοῦνται· βασιλευομένης γὰρ τότε τῆς Ἑλλάδος καὶ κοινῆ καὶ κατὰ πόλεις, τὸ τῶν βασιλέων γένος αὐξοῦντας ποιεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὡς ἂν μὴ παντάπασι πόρρω εἶναι δοκῆ ἢ ἀνθρωπίνη φύσις τῆς θείας,

so peculiarly Porphyrian that Schrader thought that every scholium with such a structure was from Porphyry's *Homeric questions*. Although Schrader went indubitably too far in its evaluation of what counts as porphyrian material, it is evident that when Porphyry claims that the kind of defense that goes back to Theagenes of Rhegium is ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως he refers to a technical expression with a precise meaning and a precise range of applications.

Combella⁴⁶⁰ has devoted to the meaning of ἐκ τῆς λέξεως a thorough article in which he analyzes every instance of the expression, and its variants, such as ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως, used by our scholion, λέξει etc.⁴⁶¹, in the Homeric scholia. From his analysis of the more than 50 explicit occurrences of this type of solution, Combella rightly argues that the expression “λύσις ἐκ τῆς λέξεως” encompasses a variety of solutions that are based on language and style. More precisely, in the majority of the cases, when a scholion glosses an exegetical solution as ἐκ τῆς λέξεως it refers to the correct understanding of a word, whereas in few others cases what is meant is either the proper understanding of a poetical tropos, or the proper understanding of an expression on the basis of the immediate context.

The following passage from Porphyry's *Homeric Question* condenses three possible applications of the solution ἐκ τῆς λέξεως, two are based on language and one on style.

QHI in 5.576 τὸ “ἔνθα Πυλαιμέναε ἐλέτην” (*Il. 5.576*) μάχεται τῷ ἐν τῇ παρὰ νηυσὶ μάχῃ ζῶντι καὶ ἐπομένῳ τῷ παιδί Ἀρπαλίῳ· “παρὰ δέ σφι πατὴρ κίε

ὑποπλάττειν δὲ καὶ περὶ θεῶν ὅποια περὶ ἀνθρώπων ὀρῶμεν φάσκοντας. τὸ μὲν οὖν λίαν ἐν τε τῷ ἀσύμφωρῳ ταράττον καὶ τῷ ἀπρεπεῖ τοιοῦτόν ἐστι. τὰ δ' ἐπὶ μέρους δίμεν, ὡς μὲν ἀσύμφορα ταῦτα κατηγορεῖται.

⁴⁶⁰ COMBELLACK 1987: 202-19.

⁴⁶¹ COMBELLACK 1987: 204 n.5

δάκρυα λείβων” (*Il.* 13.658). ἡ δὲ λύσις ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως· καὶ γὰρ ὁ Πυλαιμένης ὁμόνυμος εἶναι δύναται, καὶ τὸ μετὰ δέ σφι πατήρ κίε δάκρυα λείβων μετωνυμικῶς· ἐκδέχεται ἢ τοῦ πατρὸς μνήμη. καὶ τὸ “ἔνθα Πυλαιμένεα ἐλέτην” (*Il.* 5.576) οὐ πάντως ἐστὶν ἀνεῖλον, ἀλλὰ κατέλαβον, ὡς ἐπὶ τοῦ “ζῶν ἔλον· ἵπῳ γάρ οἱ ἀτυζομένῳ πεδίῳ” (*Il.* 6.38). οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀγῶνα αὐτοῦ εἶρηκεν, οἷα εἶθε λέγειν τοῖς ἀποθανούσι· τάχα οὖν αὐτὸς μόνον τέτρῳται.

The problem referred by the scholion is that Pylaimenes is killed in book 5 but in 13.658 he is still alive and follows the body of his dead son. This is a classic case of internal contradiction within the poem. The first solution to be deemed ἐκ τῆς λέξεως consists in taking the proper noun “Pylaimenes” as a case of homonymy: the Pylaimenes of book 5 is not the Pylaimenes of book 13.⁴⁶² If one were to find this solution unsatisfactory, the scholion proposes another one: at 13.658, where Homer says μετὰ δέ σφι πατήρ κίε δάκρυα λείβων, the poet is speaking by metonymy. It is not the father himself that follows the body but the father’s memory. Alternatively, there is a third solution. Pylaimenes does not actually die in book five but is only wounded. This solution is based on the examination of the word αἰρέω (cf. ἐλέτην l. 576) which does not necessarily imply that Pylaimenes was killed but could merely mean that he was impaired. To back up this last interpretation, the scholiast further adds the quotation from book 6. 38 where the verb αἰρέω is used of Menelaus “taking” Adrastus alive, and reasons that if Pylaimenes were to be dead the poet would have talked about his funeral. Hence, in this passage, by ἐκ τῆς λέξεως the scholiast means the analysis of the precise meaning of single words (Pylaimenes, and αἰρέω) and the analysis of the poetic tropoi used by the poet (metonymy).

⁴⁶² The same solution from homonymy is applied to Helen’s servant Aethra in *Il.* 3.144. See *sch. vet.*, *ad loc.*

As mentioned above, occasionally, the solution ἐκ τῆς λέξεως does not consist in the analysis of the meaning of a word or a trope but consists in the analysis of the passage in its immediate context, as the following example shows. In book 5 of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus leaves Calypso's island on a raft. He has almost reached land when Poseidon provokes a great storm that throws Odysseus out of his boat. To his rescue comes Ino, the daughter of Cadmus, l. 333. A scholion to this passage asks why Ino is the only one—we should understand the only one among the gods—who saves Odysseus.

Schol. in Od. 5.333a Pontani τὸν δὲ ἴδεν Κάδμου θυγάτηρ: διὰ τί αὕτη μόνη οἰκτεῖρει τὸν Ὀδυσσεύα; λύεται δὲ ἐκ τῆς λέξεως· φησὶ γὰρ αὐτὴν ἄνθρωπον εἶναι τὸ πρότερον· ὡς ὁμοιοπαθῆς οὖν ἀνθρώποις εἰκότως οἰκτεῖρει τὸν Ὀδυσσεύα.

The solution is as follows: Ino used to be a human being, as noted in the following line (*Od. 5. 334*), and as such she is more empathic towards Odysseus' sufferings than the other divinities. Attention to the immediate context (l. 334) is, in this case, the key to solve the issue.

The analysis of the scholiastic corpus conducted by Combellack, thus unmistakably shows that λύσις ἐκ τῆς λέξεως means every attempt at investigating the minute details of a passage and its immediate context both from a linguistic and stylistic point of view.

Combellack has conducted his examination only on the basis of the scholia, some of which actually stem from Porphyry's *Homeric question*. However, the practice of interpreting the text ἐκ τῆς λέξεως is much older.

The passage from chapter 25 of Aristotle's poetics (1461a9-31) devoted to the λύσις πρὸς τὴν λέξιν, another variant of the expression ἐκ τῆς λέξεως, attests that this type of solution was practiced already by Aristotle's time, and while confirming what we infer from the scholiastic literature, it provides a more detailed categorization of the exegetical practices that fall under the heading of ἐκ τῆς λέξεως. According to Aristotle, the solutions based on lexis involve an examination of the following linguistic and poetical aspects (for a thorough description of the following items see below at 6.3):

Γλῶττα: non ordinary words;

Μεταφορά: a broad category that includes what we call "metaphor" as well as cases of metonymy;

Προσωπιδία: accents and breathings;

Διαίρεσις: words' order;

Ἀμφιβολία: grammatical and syntactical ambiguities;

Ἔθος: idiomatic language.

Now that the full range of application of the λύσεις ἐκ τῆς λέξεως has been examined I come back to my main question, *i.e.* what does it mean that Theagenes of Rhegium practiced a kind of defense that could be labeled as ἐκ τῆς λέξεως/ ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως? Clearly, the above examples show that, although Theagenes might have not necessarily operated within the genre of *zetemata*, he must have read Homer paying particular attention to the Homeric text, its language and style, in other words, to his literal meaning.

This conclusion can be further proved in light of two scholia to the Τέχνη γραμματική of Dionysius Thrax⁴⁶³.

(*Sch. Vat. Dionys. Thrac.* p. 164, 23-30 HILGARD = T2 BIONDI) διττή δέ ἐστὶν ἡ γραμματικὴ· ἡ μὲν γὰρ περὶ τοὺς χαρακτήρας καὶ τὰς τῶν στοιχείων ἐκφωνήσεις καταγίνεται, ἥτις καὶ γραμματι<ιστι>κῆ⁴⁶⁴ λέγεται παλαιὰ οὕσα καὶ πρὸ τῶν Τρωικῶν, σχεδὸν δὲ καὶ ἅμα τῇ φύσει προελθοῦσα· ἡ δὲ περὶ τὸν ἑλληνισμόν, ἥτις καὶ νεωτέρα ἐστίν, ἀρξαμένη μὲν ἀπὸ Θεαγένους, τελεσθεῖσα <δὲ> παρὰ τῶν Περιπατητικῶν Πραξιφάνους τε καὶ Ἀριστοτέλους. καὶ μὲν τῆς γραμματικῆς τέλος τὸ εὖ ἀναγινώσκειν, τῆς δὲ γραμματι<ιστι>κῆς⁴⁶⁵ τὸ εὖ γραφεῖν.

There are two kinds of grammar. One focuses on the characters and the pronunciations of the letters and it is also called “grammatistisch.” It is old and precedes the Trojan war since it arose almost together with nature. The other concerns the “Hellenism,” and it is more recent having being started by Theagenes and brought to full capacity by the Peripatetics Praxiphanes and Aristotle. The aim of the latter is to read well, the aim of the former to write well.

(*Sch. Lond. Dionys. Thrac.* p. 448, 12-16 HILGARD = T2a BIONDI) διαφέρει δὲ γραμματικὴ γραμματιστικῆς· ἡ γὰρ γραμματικὴ νεωτέρα ἀπὸ Θεαγένους, τετέλεσται δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν Περιπατητικῶν Πραξιφάνους τε καὶ Ἀριστοτέλους· ἡ δὲ γραμματιστικὴ παλαιά, ἴσως δὲ σχεδὸν ἅμα τῇ φύσει προελθοῦσα. καὶ τῆς μὲν τέλος τὸ γράφειν, τῆς δὲ τὸ ἀναγινώσκειν.

Grammar is different from “grammatistisch.” For grammar is more recent. It starts with Theagenes and was brought to full capacity by the Peripatetics Praxiphanes and Aristotle. The “grammatistisch” is old arising perhaps almost together with nature. The aim of the latter is writing, the aim of the former reading.

⁴⁶³ Dionysius was active in the second half of the second century BCE. A pupil of Aristarchus, he worked especially on Homer’s texts. Chapters 1 to 4 of the Τέχνη γραμματικὴ can be securely attributed to him whereas the subsequent part of the treatise’s paternity is a matter of great debate. For an overview of Dionysius Thrax’s activity see PAGANI 2006. On the question of the treatise’s attribution see MATTHAIOS 2009; PAGANI 2011: 30-37; CALLIPO 2011: 28-34. CALLIPO 2011 provides the most recent critical edition of the Τέχνη γραμματικὴ, with an Italian translation, and commentary.

⁴⁶⁴ The correction is in CLARKE 1968.

⁴⁶⁵ The correction is necessary. Here I follow one of Biondi’s hypothesis (BIONDI 2013: 144). Alternatively, one could read with CLARKE 1968 καὶ μὲν τῆς γραμματι<ιστι>κῆς τέλος τὸ εὖ ἀναγινώσκειν, τῆς δὲ γραμματικῆς τὸ εὖ γραφεῖν. On the question see BIONDI 2013.

The precise meaning of these two notes has been the subject of much scholarly discussion which will not be fully investigated here.⁴⁶⁶ The two scholia provide a commentary upon Dionysius' definition of grammar: Γραμματική ἐστὶν ἐμπειρία τῶν παρὰ ποιηταῖς τε καὶ συγγραφεῦσιν ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ λεγομένων (Dionys. Thrax 1 UHLIG). (Grammar is the empirical knowledge of the things commonly said by poets and prose writers).⁴⁶⁷ They introduce a distinction between a form of less accomplished grammar, the "grammatistike," whose object is the shape and pronunciation of the letters,⁴⁶⁸ and grammar proper of which Dionysus' definition is about.⁴⁶⁹ At least since Eratosthenes' time, grammar proper indicates a "a field of specialization related to the study of (literary) text"⁴⁷⁰ closely associated with what we might nowadays call philology. The mentioning of Praxiphanes and Aristotle as "grammarians" proves this point. Based on the extant fragments, we can reconstruct that Praxiphanes⁴⁷¹ devoted much of his work to the study of literature and language. He commented passages of Homer, Hesiod, Sophocles, and Plato, and was the first,

⁴⁶⁶ For an overview of the main interpretations and questions see FUENTES GONZALÉZ 2016: 804-05. Central to the interpretation of the scholia is the precise understanding of the term ἑλληνισμός "the correct use of the Greek language" which, if we follow Dionysius' definition of grammar derives from the experience with the texts of ancient authors. In reference to Theagenes the term ἑλληνισμός, proper Greek, might be coextensive with Homer's Greek. In all likelihood, Theagenes interpreted Homer on the basis of Homer's *usus* i.e. evaluating difficult terms and expressions on the basis of parallel passages and context. If that is correct, Theagenes already operated according to the principle which will be formalized much later of "elucidating Homer from Homer". See above. On ἑλληνισμός see now PAGANI 2015.

⁴⁶⁷ This is one common translation of the passage. For different interpretations and bibliography see now WOUTERS-SWIGGER 2015: 522-528.

⁴⁶⁸ See also Sex. Emp. *Ad. Math.* 1.44; Philo, *de congressu er. gratia*, 1, 148, 3 with BIONDI 2013.

⁴⁶⁹ On the different definitions of ancient grammar see now WOUTERS-SWIGGERS 2015.

⁴⁷⁰ WOUTERS-SWIGGERS 2015: 518.

⁴⁷¹ For an overview of Praxiphanes see now CORRADI 2020. For an edition of the fragments, and translation with notes of see MATELLI 2012: 1-156.

according to Clement. (*Str.* 1, 16,79, 3),⁴⁷² to receive the title of γραμματικός. As for Aristotle's mention, the commentator was probably thinking of works such as the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* but, possibly, more precisely, of his *Homeric questions*. Sextus' distinction between *grammatistike* and *grammatike*⁴⁷³ goes in the same direction. As representatives of *grammatike*, he, in fact, mentions Hellenistic critics such as Crates of Mallus, Aristophanes, and Aristarchus.

The mentioning of Theagenes as the forerunner of Praxiphanes and Aristotle, whose activity will be continued, according to Sextus, by the Hellenistic textual critics, suggests that Theagenes' grammatical work consisted in the exegesis of literary texts such as Homer. Theagenes, was thus a *protos γραμματικός* not necessarily because working from Homer, he formalized rules concerning the correct use of language, (an activity that will be developed much later) but rather because in his attempt at explaining the poems, he studied their *lexis*, that is the precise meaning of words and the poet's use of *tropoi*, a type of endeavor that will continue to be a consistent part of later *grammatike*, as attested by Dionysus Thrax himself. Μέρη δὲ αὐτῆς ἐστὶν ἕξ· πρῶτον ἀνάγνωσις ἐντριβῆς κατὰ προσῳδίαν, δεύτερον ἐξήγησις κατὰ τοὺς ἐνυπάρχοντας ποιητικοὺς τρόπους, τρίτον γλωσσῶν τε καὶ ἱστοριῶν πρόχειρος ἀπόδοσις, τέταρτον ἐτυμολογίας εὔρεσις, πέμπτον ἀναλογίας ἐκλογισμὸς, ἕκτον κρίσις ποιημάτων, ὃ δὴ κάλλιστόν ἐστι πάντων τῶν ἐν τῇ τέχνῃ.

⁴⁷² Ἀπολλόδορος δὲ ὁ Κυμαῖος πρῶτος (τοῦ γραμματικοῦ ἀντι) τοῦ κριτικοῦ εἰσηγήσατο τοῦνομα καὶ γραμματικός προσηγορεύθη, ἔνιοι δὲ Ἐρατοσθένη τὸν Κυρηναῖόν φασιν, ἐπειδὴ ἐξέδωκεν οὗτος βιβλία δύο γραμματικὰ ἐπιγράψας. ὠνομάσθη δὲ γραμματικός, ὡς νῦν ὀνομάζομεν, πρῶτος Πραξιφάνης Διονυσοφάνους Μιτυληναῖος. (fr. 10 WEHRLI = 9A MATELLI). with MATELLI 2012: 55 n. 5.

⁴⁷³ See above.

To the critical activity of Theagenes also points the following scholion which stems from the grammarian Seleukos (first century CE).

Schol. Hom. Il. 1.381 = T3 BIONDI ἐπεὶ μάλα οἱ φίλος ἦεν: Σέλευκός (fr. 8 M. = 10 D.) φησιν ἐν τῇ Κυπρία καὶ Κρητικῇ „ἐπεὶ ῥά νύ οἱ φίλος ἦεν“, καὶ Θεαγένης δὲ οὕτως προφέρεται· ἀπίθανον γὰρ τὸ ὁ δὲ νυ λῖαν φίλος ἦν.⁴⁷⁴

“Since he liked him a lot:” Seleukos says that in the Cyprian and Cretan editions we read “since he truly loved him,” and thus Theagenes proposes; “he was too much in love” is improbable.

The scholion provides us with a variant reading, ἐπεὶ ῥά νύ οἱ φίλος ἦεν, of the vulgate text ἐπεὶ μάλα οἱ φίλος ἦεν. According to Seleukos such a reading was found in the Cretan and Cypriot editions of Homer and was handed down⁴⁷⁵ by Theagenes. It is difficult to say what were the exact motives that lead Theagenes to advocate his reading.⁴⁷⁶ Possibly he attempted to provide an easier explanation of the passage; he may have found it difficult to admit that Apollo loved Chryses “too much” μάλα and, therefore, choose (or offered) a less problematic reading. Yet, whatever his motives,

⁴⁷⁴ The end of the scholion is difficult to reconstruct. Some scholars think that it contained another variant reading, ὁ δὲ νυ λῖην φίλος ἦεν that did not make it in our Vulgata, against which Theagenes suggests ἐπεὶ ῥά νύ οἱ φίλος ἦεν. See BIONDI 2015: 49. I found it more likely that the end of the scholion offers the reason why the reading ἐπεὶ μάλα οἱ φίλος ἦεν was deemed problematic, i.e. that such a reading implied that Apollo loved Crises “excessively”. In this case, the scholion could be reconstructed as ἀπίθανον γὰρ τὸ ὁ δεῖνα λῖαν φίλος ἦν, as suggested *dubitanter* by Erbse, or *similia*.

⁴⁷⁵ It is difficult to be more precise about the meaning of προφέρεται. Many recent scholars translate it as “prefer” thus implying that Theagenes was making a choice between at least two already existing variant readings. This is the more plausible solution, but it is not impossible that Theagenes emended the text *ope ingenii*, as we would say today and that, after that, its emendation found its way in the κατὰ πόλεις editions. In this second case, a better translation would be “propose.” For different attempts at capturing the meaning of προφέρεται in context see BIONDI 2015: 51 n. 5.

⁴⁷⁶ Biondi emphasizes, in my view excessively, the “moralizing” character of Theagenes’ intervention (see BIONDI 2015: 49-50). If Theagenes actually interpreted the adverb μάλα as “excessively”, the mere expression “such and such is *excessively* dear” is enough to strike the interpreter as an unwarranted paradox.

again, the scholium makes it clear that the center of Theagenes' activity was the letter of Homer text, down to its more minute details.⁴⁷⁷

There is, as we have seen, great consistency between Porphyry's attribution of a way of reading the text ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως to Theagenes and the other sources concerning his activity, but what about Porphyry's conception that the ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως method is comprehensive of allegoresis? Scholars that have analyzed the scholion on the theomachy have often glossed over the expression ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως and its significance.⁴⁷⁸ Lamberton, on the other hand, clearly emphasizes that by using the expression ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως Porphyry does not view allegory as a practice that brings into the text something from outside but conceives of it as a mode of defense from within the text. Allegoresis "is a matter, finally, of sensitivity to the rhetoric of Homer."⁴⁷⁹ Much like Heraclitus the grammarian (see above), Porphyry can argue that, from a textual point of view, Homer organized his battles with cosmological principles in mind because Homer himself throughout the poem often refers to the gods, metonymically,⁴⁸⁰ as natural elements. Allegoresis thus is understood as the natural result of faithfulness to Homer's poetics. The byzantine critic Eustathius reasons in a similar way when he refers to this type of "internal" allegoresis as

⁴⁷⁷ We do not necessarily have to accept CANTARELLA 1967: 22-24's conclusions according to whom this scholion proves that Theagenes produced an edition of the *Iliad*. Compare for instance Zoilus who, as we have seen above (F 13 FOGAGNOLO), it is said to have advocated for a different reading of the text. He did so, however, in his treatise on Homer not in as part of an editorial work. That said, it is likely that Theagenes' work, undertaken in a period in which different versions of the *Iliad* were circulating, might have already been concerned with the desire of establishing a "better" text. On the question see also ZUMBO 2002: 323. On the importance of this source for the issue of Homer's textualization in antiquity see especially CASSIO 2002: 118-19 and PELLICCIA 2003: 116.

⁴⁷⁸ MAYHEW 2019: 23 n. 84 states: "I believe that this [*sc.* the fact that Porphyry considers allegory a λύσις ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως] is an attempt to make allegorical interpretation fit into Aristotle's scheme"

⁴⁷⁹ LAMBERTON 2002: 189.

⁴⁸⁰ See above.

ἀλληγορία ῥητορική and claims that it was already practiced by Aristarchus.⁴⁸¹ As already anticipated, this emphasis on the necessity of an exegesis based on the text's poetics is as old as the Derveni author and is a significant part of how allegorists themselves conceived and justified their exegetical practices.

If from an allegorist perspective textual poetics naturally turns into a philosophical system, it is obviously not the case that every attempt at analyzing Homer's difficulties and obscurity necessarily ended in allegoresis. The following example from Aristotle is particularly interesting in this sense, for, like the scholion on Theagenes, it deals with the problem of gods' representation in Homer and it has wrongly been deemed as a case of allegoresis.⁴⁸² In *Odyssey* 12. 374-375 Lampetia informs Helios about the killing of his cows. This passage stirs some internal exegetical problems because it seems to contradict the fact, stated at *Il.* 5.277, that the Sun sees everything. If the sun sees everything why does he needs Lampetia to inform him of what has happened to his cattle?

To answer the problem Aristotle proposes the following solution: (Porph. *QHO* p. 113 Schrader = Fr. 149 ROSE)

λύων δὲ Ἀριστοτέλης φησίν, ἥτοι ὅτι πάντα μὲν ὄρᾳ ἥλιος, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ ἅμα· ἢ ὅτι τῷ Ἥλιῳ ἦν τὸ ἐξαγγεῖλαν ἢ Λαμπετία, ὥσπερ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἡ ὄψις.

Aristotle solving the problem says that surely the sun sees everything but not everything at once; or that Lampetia was what transmit the information to Helios in the same way as sight is what transmit the information to men.

⁴⁸¹ See CUCCHIARELLI 1997.

⁴⁸² LAMBERTON 1992: xii-xv. Against his view see now BOUCHARD 2016: 47-78 and MAYHEW 2019: 169-194.

Here, Aristotle claims that the relationship between Lampetia, in her capacity of messenger, and Helios is similar to the relationship between sight and men. As rightly shown by Bouchard,⁴⁸³ although this is a case that verges toward allegoresis, it is not conceived as such by Aristotle. Coherently with the principles laid down in chapter 25 of his *Poetics*, Aristotle is here using a solution from lexis. More precisely, he is interpreting Homer's word "Lampetia" metaphorically. The metaphor is of the kind discussed in *Poetic* 21. 147b20-22, whereby in an analogy of the kind A: B = C: D, A can stand for C and B for D. An example given by Aristotle is the expression "shield of Dionysus" to indicate a wine cup, which can be explained by the following analogy shield: Ares = cup: Dionysus. In this passage, Lampetia can stand for sight because Lampetia : Sun = sight : men. Thus Aristotle claims that when Homer says "Lampetia", he is referring figuratively to "the sun's sight." To help Aristotle in his analogy there was probably also the consideration that the name Lampetia is etymologically related to the root λαμπ- of words such as λαμπάς (torch). Although the scholion does not explicitly say so, it is clear that Aristotle is solving the difficulty ἐκ τῆς λέξεως and even if he is claiming that under the name Lampetia, a goddess, a human faculty can be hidden, this is hardly a case of allegoresis.⁴⁸⁴ First, Aristotle does not claim that the Homeric passage can be read in light of a theory of perception. His solution is punctual and merely touches upon a question of Homeric style. The assumption is that Homer used the word Lampetia figuratively, and Lampetia is thus what we might call a case of personification (or metonymy).

⁴⁸³ BOUCHARD 2016: 63-65. In the same vein, see also MAYHEW 2019: 191-94.

⁴⁸⁴ At best, this could be considered a case of ἀλληγορία ῥητορική, according to the definition given by the byzantine critic Eusthatius. See CUCCHIARELLI 1997.

Moreover, Aristotle does not generalize its punctual solution to all the divine apparatus. Finally, Aristotle does not suggest that Homer is aiming at providing his audience with any insights about a theory of perception, hiding it under the literal meaning.

The interpretations of the theomachy that Porphyry deemed as a λύσις ἐκ τῆς λέξεως is in these respects totally different. First of all, although Porphyry agrees that Homer spoke figuratively, much like Aristotle agrees that Homer might have hidden under the name of Lampetia a faculty of perception, he extends the consequences of his presupposition much further, presenting Homer as the designer of a hidden cosmological system. The allegorists that Porphyry quotes are not simply interpreting Homer's theomachy figuratively but are reading the passage as if it contained a cosmological theory, whether Stoics' or Presocratics', about the organization of kosmos. This is particularly evident in the terminology used to represent the opposition between elements. It is the abstract quality of the element (humid, dry, hot, and cold) that it is taken as the oppositional principle and not the elements per se. From a poetical point of view, in Homer Poseidon can stand for water, Hephaestus for fire etc. but that Poseidon is the humid and Hephaestus the hot is an extra interpretative step that is not immediately granted by the text. The use of these abstracts words works well to describe the oppositional cosmological system but less well as an exegesis of the text. Take the case of the fight between the river Scamander and Hephaestus. Fire would logically be the warm element but according to the theory warm fights cold and not humid. The quoted theory thus fails to properly explain the scene. Probably for this reason, the scholiast feels compelled to abandon the abstract

terminology and adds that water, extinguished fire and fire dries water. The impression is that someone has adapted an already-made theory, with its philosophical jargon, to fit the Homeric scene. Such an impression is corroborated by the fact that, as already shown above, the cosmological interpretation alone is not explanatory of the whole battle, but a psychological interpretation is also necessary.⁴⁸⁵ Finally, also note the passage that runs from ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ πᾶσι τὰ πάντα δὲ μένειν αἰωνίως, which, again, has little bearing on the question of the theomachy. The opposition between elements explains the battle between the gods but to say that the elements are corruptible, in their singularity, but eternal, in their totality, is evidently more in service of the philosophical theory than it is of the exegesis of the text.

A second difference with Aristotle is that Porphyry generalizes the allegorical solution and presents it as applicable to the whole divine apparatus. For the allegorists in Homer “everything has been said allegorically with reference to the physical elements” ἀλληγορία πάντα εἰρησθαι νομίζοντες ὑπὲρ τῆς τῶν στοιχείων φύσεως. (As said above, the πάντα here can only refer to the preceding τοὺς ὑπὲρ τῶν θεῶν μύθους). Porphyry is thus claiming that *everything* concerning the stories of the gods in Homer is said allegorically and refers in reality to the physical elements.⁴⁸⁶

Thirdly, Porphyry implicitly claims that Homer has hidden under his divine apparatus a further philosophical meaning. This conclusion derives directly from the first point. If Homer’s scene can be read in terms of cosmology it follows that the poet

⁴⁸⁵ At the very least, it is fair to say that even if the system of opposition between the elements arose from the Homeric text, it emancipated itself from it very quickly.

⁴⁸⁶ As we will see in the next chapter the same kind of generalization is operative in the Derveni papyrus.

composed the episode having a cosmological theory in mind. Homer is thus seen as a proto-philosopher, a title that Porphyry does explicitly attribute to Homer in another passage where an allegorical interpretation in cosmological terms is at stake (cf. *QHI* 15.13 ῥητέον δὲ ὅτι φιλοσοφεῖ Ὅμηρος).

All these elements together illustrate what we already saw in chapter 4, that is, that allegorical interpretation is a technique that by necessity negotiates between the interpreter's efforts to read the text in light of his philosophy and the effort of tying his views onto the letter of the text. Although Porphyry in the scholion emphasizes the textually oriented side of the practice it is no surprise to also find in it traces of an autonomous, and extra-textual philosophical system.

As we have seen, it is impossible to relate with any confidence to Theagenes any of the philosophical systems of interpretation mentioned by Porphyry. Yet, if Theagenes was not responsible for them, why mention him at all? It is probably no coincidence that Theagenes is mentioned right at the end of the passage when Porphyry is stressing that allegoresis is a technique ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως. This suggests that Theagenes wrote upon the Homeric gods, likely commenting upon the theomachy, from the perspective of Homer's lexis. Given that his work is deemed significant by Porphyry for the development of allegoresis, Theagenes must have commented upon the fact that gods in Homer could be related to the elements of nature, or to psychological dispositions. The text of the theomachy, and not the influence of Ionian philosophy, lead him in this direction. For, if it is true that many of the duels between the Olympians are hardly depicted differently than the duels between mortals, the staging of the battle between Scamander, a god but also a river, and Hephaestus

required a different visual solution and the poet chose to represent it as an actual fight between water and fire. Metonymical representation of the gods is already part of Homer's universe. Coherently with his activity as a γραμματικός Theagenes likely commented upon Homer's poetics strategy of representing the gods and noticed that although gods are mostly anthropomorphic they are also metonymical stand-in for physical or even moral concepts. Much like Aristotle commenting on Lampetia, this is probably the extent to which Theagenes' "allegorized" Homer.

The allegorical readings described by Porphyry come instead from a philosophical milieu and presuppose a philosophical system, do not necessarily arise from the analysis of the text, and rest upon the presupposition that Homer hid philosophical truths under in his poetry. It was Porphyry, I claim, that linked them with Theagenes likely to prove a difficult point, *i.e.* that philosophical allegoresis and philological exegesis were all along the same enterprise. This was an especially significant point for Porphyry. The compatibility between philological exegesis and philosophical allegoresis, in fact, is what unifies his whole exegetical production, that ideally begins with the *Homeric Questions*, in which the analysis of the exegetical difficulties of Homer's text is the core, and ends in the *On the cave of the nymphs* where the philological dimension of Homer's poetry is absorbed in the symbolic and philosophical one. Therefore, we should be careful to take Porphyry's view on the question as an apt description of the origins of allegoresis, or a satisfactory account of the actual work of Theagenes. With his study of the lexis of the Homeric poems, and more precisely Homer's metonymic use of divine names, Theagenes must have been an important point of reference for later allegorists. Nevertheless, our evidence hardly

suggests that Theagenes' study of the poetical text was carried out with the intent of demonstrating that Homer hinted at a philosophical-scientific system of knowledge in his verses. For this reason, Theagenes cannot be fully characterized as an allegorist.

5.2 Pherekydes of Syros: The First Allegorical Writer

Pherekydes of Syros has often been considered a contender with Theagenes for the title of the first allegorist.⁴⁸⁷ A native of the island of Syros, in the Cyclades, Pherekydes' activity took place in the middle of the sixth century BCE.⁴⁸⁸ His theo-cosmological work, titled Ἐπτάμυχος (*Seven-Nook*), θεοκρασία (*Divine mingling*), or, simply, θεογονία, according to the Suda,⁴⁸⁹ was possibly the first Greek prose book,⁴⁹⁰ and survives in fragments. In it, Pherekydes narrates the beginning of the universe starting from its eternal divine principles, Zas, Chronos, and Chthonie. The production of three elements, air, fire, and water, their distribution in five nooks, and the appearance of a second generation of gods comes next in the narrative. Other notable episodes are Zas' wedding with Chthonie, and the battle between Kronos' army against the one led by the snake-god Ophioneus. A discussion of the nature of

⁴⁸⁷ See especially TATE 1927; Id. 1934; PFEIFFER 1968: 10-12, and, more recently, STRUCK 2004: 26-7; BOUCHARD 2016: 31. The question of whether Theagenes or Pherekydes was the first allegorist has been properly addressed by DOMARADZKI 2017. On Pherekydes' work and activity see especially KIRK-RAVEN 1958: 48-72; WEST 1963: 157-172; GRANGER 2007: 135-163. SCHIBLI 1990 provides the standard edition of Pherekydes' fragments, a translation, and a fundamental reconstruction of his life and work. Pherekydes' text can now be read also in the Loeb volume *Early Greek philosophy*, II (LAKS-MOST 2016: 158-205). Pherekydes of Syros should not be confused with Pherekydes of Athens. Although some (most recently TOYE 1997) have argued that they were the same person, FOWLER 1999 has convincingly demonstrated that the two authors should be kept distinct.

⁴⁸⁸ Although the sources are slightly controversial Pherekydes' *floruit* can be established between the 544 and 541 BCE. See SCHIBLI 1990: 2.

⁴⁸⁹ F2 SCHIBLI.

⁴⁹⁰ F 1; 2; 9; 10 SCHIBLI. See SCHIBLI 1990: 2-4. On Pherekydes' use of prose see LAKS 2001 and KAHN 2003: 143-5.

souls, frequently referenced in our ancient sources, must have taken place too.⁴⁹¹

Overall, in his work Pherekydes both appropriates traditional mythological narratives as well as opens the door for the speculations of the subsequent pre-Socratic philosophers. A key document concerning the dialectic between *mythos* and *logos*,⁴⁹² Pherekydes' work has an ambiguous status and does not fall easily in any ancient or modern categories of literature and philosophy. It is precisely this difficulty in categorizing the work that led Aristotle to label Pherekydes as a "mixed" author.⁴⁹³

Although Pherekydes' work is sometimes studied for his contribution to the beginning of Greek philosophical inquiry,⁴⁹⁴ for the historians of literature Pherekydes' name is mostly associated with his alleged allegoresis of Homer. According to a passage of Celsus quoted by Origenes in his *Contra Celsum*, Pherekydes interpreted allegorically a passage of the *Iliad*. Given Pherekydes' early date,⁴⁹⁵ Origen's account would make Pherekydes the first Greek to have interpreted a poem allegorically. I will show, however, that there are many reasons to question Origenes' testimony.

In chapter 42 of his sixth book against the second century pagan apologist Celsus, Origenes reports Celsus' critique of the Christian notion of the devil.⁴⁹⁶ According to Celsus, Christians, misinterpreting Greek references to divine conflicts, posited the existence of a being opposed to God. As examples of these Greek divine

⁴⁹¹ A summary of Pherekydes' narrative can be found in SCHIBLI 1990: 128-9.

⁴⁹² See above.

⁴⁹³ Ar. *Met.* 1091b4-12. See below.

⁴⁹⁴ See recently GRANGER 2007: 135-163.

⁴⁹⁵ Both Pherekydes and Theagenes were active in the second half of the VI century. However, Pherekydes was active around 544-541 (see above) whereas Theagenes a little later, between 529 and 522 (see above).

⁴⁹⁶ On this passage see PÉPIN, 448-453.

conflicts, Celsus quotes Heraclitus' passage on the universal strife (F 80 Diels), Pherekydes' theomachy (F 78 Schibli), and alludes both to the mystery cults' stories of the battles between Titans and Giants against the gods, as well as to the Egyptian mysteries about Typhon, Horus, and Osiris.⁴⁹⁷ Although Celsus does not provide a precise interpretation of these narratives, it is evident that he regarded them as "divine enigmas," that is, narratives that hide theological-philosophical truths under their literal meaning. For reasons that are not entirely clear, Celsus deems the truth lying beneath the surface of these stories incompatible with Christian dualistic representations of the divine.⁴⁹⁸ Later on in chapter 42, Celsus goes a step further in his analysis, and argues that already Homer hinted at the same truths contained in Heraclitus, Pherekydes, and the mysteries, in at least two passages of the *Iliad* (I.590-91; 15.18-24).

Orig. *Contr. Celsum* VI. 42, 419, 2-16 Marcovich Οὕτω δ' ἀκούει καὶ Ὀμήρου, ὡς τὰ παραπλήσια τῷ Ἡρακλείῳ καὶ Φερεκύδῃ καὶ τοῖς τὰ περὶ Τιτᾶνας καὶ Γίγαντας μυστήρια εἰσάγουσιν αἰνισσομένου ἐν τούτοις <τοῖς> τοῦ Ἡφαίστου πρὸς τὴν Ἥραν λόγους, φάσκοντος·

Ἦδη γάρ <με> καὶ ἄλλοτ' ἀλεξέμεναι μεμαῶτα
 ῥῖψε ποδὸς τεταγὼν ἀπὸ βηλοῦ θεσπεσίῳ,
 καὶ τοῖς τοῦ Διὸς πρὸς τὴν Ἥραν οὕτως·
 Ἦ οὐ μέμνησ' ὅτε τ' ἐκρέμω ὑψόθεν, ἐκ δὲ ποδοῖν
 ἄκμονας ἦκα δύω, περὶ χερσὶ δὲ δεσμὸν ἦλα
 χρύσειον ἄρρηκτον; Σὺ δ' ἐν αἰθέρι καὶ νεφέλῃσιν
 ἐκρέμω· ἠλάστεον δὲ θεοὶ κατὰ μακρὸν Ὀλυμπον,
 λῦσαι δ' οὐκ ἐδύναντο παρασταδόν· ὄν δὲ λάβοιμι,
 ῥίπτασκον τεταγὼν ἀπὸ βηλοῦ, ὄφρ' ἂν ἵκοιτο

⁴⁹⁷ The myth of Typhon, Osiris, and Horus is interpreted allegorically by Plutarch in *de Is. et Os.* 371a-b.

⁴⁹⁸ As noted by Origen (VI, 42, XX) Celsus does not exactly explain how the Christians misunderstood Greek and Egyptian myths. He vehemently criticizes the Christian notion of the devil for it challenges god's will, yet the mythical stories that he mentions feature arrogant beings that oppose the heavenly power as well. Celsus' emphasis was probably on the fact that the Christian devil can keep on operating in the world against god's will, whereas in pagan mythology the disobedience to god has been dealt with once and for all.

γῆν ὀλιγηπελέων·

He also understands Homer in this sense, saying that he hints at the same truth as Heraclitus and Pherekydes and as those who teach the mysteries of the Titans and Giants, in these works which Hephaestus addresses to Hera:

“For once already, when I intended to defend you, he took me by the foot and hurled me from the divine threshold.”

An similarly the words of Zeus to Hera:

“Dost thou not remember when thou wert hanging from on high, and I let two anvils hang from his two legs and threw golden and unbroken chains around thine arms? And thou was hanging in the aether and the clouds. And the gods struck from far Olympus, but they could not set him free though standing by; but I took him and seizing him threw him from the threshold until he came powerless to earth.” (Chadwick)

In the context of Celsus’ analysis of *Iliad* 15.18-24 we find the reference to

Pherekydes as an allegorist.

Orig. *Contr. Celsum* VI. 41, 419, 17- 420, 5 καὶ διηγούμενός γε τὰ ὀμηρικὰ ἔπη φησὶ λόγους εἶναι τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὴν ὕλην τοὺς λόγους τοῦ Διὸς πρὸς τὴν Ἥραν, τοὺς δὲ πρὸς τὴν ὕλην λόγους αἰνίττεσθαι ὡς ἄρα ἐξ ἀρχῆς αὐτὴν πλημμελῶς ἔχουσαν διαλαβὼν ἀναλογίαις τισὶ συνέδησε καὶ ἐκόσμησεν ὁ θεός, καὶ ὅτι τοὺς περὶ αὐτὴν δαίμονας, ὅσοι ὕβρισταί, τούτους ἀπορριπτεῖ κολάζων αὐτοὺς τῆ δεῦρο ὀδῶ. Ταῦτα δὲ τὰ Ὀμήρου ἔπη οὕτω νοήσαντα τὸν Φερεκύδην φησὶν εἰρηκέναι τό· «Κείνης δὲ τῆς μοίρας ἔνερθέν ἐστὶν ἡ ταρταρὴ μοῖρα· φυλάσσουσι δ’ αὐτὴν θυγατέρες Βορέου Ἄρπυιαι τε καὶ Θύελλα, ἔνθα Ζεὺς ἐκβάλλει θεῶν ὅταν τις ἐξυβρίσῃ.» Τῶν τοιούτων δὲ φησὶν ἔχεσθαι νοημάτων καὶ τὸν περικαλλῆ τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς πέπλον ἐν τῇ πομπῇ τῶν Παναθηναίων ὑπὸ πάντων θεωρούμενον. Δηλοῦται γάρ, φησὶν, ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ ὅτι ἀμήτωρ τις καὶ ἄχραντος δαίμων ἐπικρατεῖ θρασυνομένων τῶν γηγενῶν.

Commenting on the words of Homer he says that the words of Zeus to Hera are the words of God to matter, and that the words to matter vaguely hint that at the beginning it was in chaos and God divided it in certain proportions, bound it together, and ordered it, and that he cast out all the daemons round it which were arrogant, infliction on them the punishment of being sent down here to the earth. He maintains that Pherekydes understood these words of Homer in this way, when he said: “Beneath that land is the land of Tartarus, and it is guarded by the daughters of Boreas, the Harpies and Thyella; there Zeus casts out any of the gods if ever one become arrogant. And he says that such ideas are expressed by the robe of Athena which is seen by every spectator at the oppression of the Panathenaea. For, he says, it indicates that a goddess, who has no mother and is undefiled, overcome those born of earth who are overbold. (Chadwick)

This passage clearly attests that Celsus, but not Pherekydes, read Homer allegorically, that is, he interpreted the mythical narrative, step by step, philosophically. The speech between Zeus and Hera is interpreted as the speech between god and matter.⁴⁹⁹ Hera's punishment is god ordering the matter, and Zeus' menace against the other Olympians becomes god's punishment of the arrogant demons. Appropriately, Origenes labels Celsus' reading by the verb *διεγέομαι* which signifies here an accurate explanation of the passage. Pherekydes' alleged allegorical reading, on the other hand, is much different and, as recently demonstrated by Domaradzki,⁵⁰⁰ does not qualify as allegoresis.

Although Celsus explicitly claims that Pherekydes' interpreted *Iliad* 15.18-24 in the same way as he did, Pherekydes' account is far from being an interpretation of the *Iliad*. The only element that Pherekydes' alleged interpretation and the passage from the *Iliad* share is the punishment of rebellious gods by Zeus, a rather common mythological motif.⁵⁰¹ This suggests that Pherekydes actually did not have any precise text in mind when composing his own passage.⁵⁰² But, even admitting the unlikely possibility that Pherekydes had precisely *Iliad* 15.18-24 in mind when he composed his passage, Pherekydes' account of Tartarus would still not count as an interpretation of Homer. Instead, it would rather be a simple allusion to a Homeric image deprived of his original meaning and deployed in a different context for different purposes.

⁴⁹⁹ The interpretation of the couple Zeus-Hera as god-matter goes probably back to Chrysippus. See PÉPIN, 1976: 451.

⁵⁰⁰ DOMARADZKI 2017, 314-317.

⁵⁰¹ Add a footnote.

⁵⁰² SCHIBLI 1990: 100 n. 54 notes that *Iliad* 8.13 ff. or Hesiod *Th.* 729 ff., two passages where Tartarus is described, would be much better sources of inspiration for Pherekydes' passage.

Indeed, in the extant fragments of his work, Pherekydes never mentions other poets, nor shows any interest in interpreting their text. As I will show below, Pherekydes' use of mythological images must be understood as a case of subversive appropriation, and not exegesis.

Unless, therefore, we take Celsus' wording ταῦτα δὲ τὰ Ὅμηρου ἔπη οὕτω νοήσαντα τὸν Φερεκίδην in a loose sense, *i.e.* as the mere indication that Pherekydes was inspired in his conception of Tartarus by Homer's passage, we must admit that the reference to Pherekydes as an interpreter of Homer's words/lines (ἔπη) is Celsus' own assumption. First, the pagan apologist claims, rightly, that both Heraklitus and Pherekydes reference images of divine struggles to convey theological concepts (*Contra Celsum* VI. 42,418, 8ff). Then, he posits that similar images in Homer can be read theologically too (*Contra Celsum* VI. 42, 419, 2ff) and shows this point through his own interpretation of a passage from Homer. Finally, on the basis of tenuous similarities between Pherekydes' account and Homer' passage, Celsus claims that Pherekydes' account is an interpretation of Homer, when it actually is an originally inspired composition (*Contra Celsum* VI. 42, 419, 17ff). Thus Pherekydes, not differently than Celsus, becomes an interpreter of Homer. Celsus' conclusion is obviously unwarranted. The mere fact that Pherekydes intended his theomachy to be read allegorically does not mean that he casted it as an interpretation of Homer's passage, nor, even, that he believed that Zeus' speech to Hera was meant to be read allegorically.⁵⁰³

⁵⁰³ Of course Pre-Socratic philosophers such as Pherekydes who, according to Celsus, conceived of their gods allegorically, could have been prompted to do so because in Homer the gods are often stand-in's for physical or moral concepts. Yet, this would be a case of appropriation/imitation of an Homeric

The precise reasons why Celsus tries to cast Pherekydes' passage as an interpretation of Homer can only be guessed. On the one hand, by referencing Pherekydes, Celsus is able to sanction his own allegorical interpretation. On the other, by representing Pherekydes as an interpreter of the divine enigmas of Homer, he can claim that Pherekydes' conception of evil is not a later and original development within Greek thought but, instead, that this conception ultimately goes far back, to the early beginnings of Greek "theology." For the pagan apologist, which is trying to show against the Christians that the Greek "theological" tradition is old and consistent, the history of Greek thought is conveniently casted as the history of the interpretation of the Greeks' first "divine" book.

A separate but relevant question concerning Pherekydes' role in the development of Greek allegoresis is whether he intended his own work to be read allegorically.⁵⁰⁴ The majority of scholars has very few doubts about this question. They argue that Pherekydes' work is allusive and symbolic and, although Pherekydes largely uses the same imageries of traditional mythology, his stories are meant to convey a further philosophical message.⁵⁰⁵ Thus interpreted, Pherekydes' work is

technique and not of exegesis of a specific passage. Already Heraclitus the grammarian in commenting upon Empedokles' choice to give to his four elements the names of traditional divinities guessed that Empedokles was "imitating" Homeric allegory. See Heracl. 24.6. On Empedokles, allegoresis, and Homer PRIMAVESI 2005 provides a convincing treatment of the evidence.

⁵⁰⁴ Recently, scholars have been more careful in distinguishing between allegoresis, that is the strategy of interpreting a text allegorically, and "compositional allegory", that is, a mode of composition by which an author hides an ulterior meaning beneath the literal one. See above, chapter 4.2.

⁵⁰⁵ Already DIELS 1888: 15 suggested it when he claimed that Pherekydes' image of the winged tree (on which see below) was an intentional allegory based on Anaximander's conception of a cylindrical earth. SCHIBLI is more cautious than others in qualifying Pherekydes' work as "allegorical" (SCHIBLI 1990: 99-100 n. 54). Pherekydes did not compose a work that was structurally meant to be consistently read on multiple levels. Such works, in fact, were hardly composed before the IV century CE. Nevertheless, I argue that he did use mythological narrative and figurative language to convey ulterior meanings. In this broader sense, Pherekydes did compose an "allegorical" work. On this distinction and compositional allegory in general, see above above.

definitively allegorical in a “strong sense”, to use Long’s words, because its author composed it “with the intention of being interpreted allegorically.”⁵⁰⁶ Yet, it is not always easy to precisely ascertain what makes Pherekydes’ mythological work an intentionally “philosophical” one, one which should be read allegorically. After all, Pherekydes’ work treats the generation of the gods, their marriage, and conflicts, and is, in this respect, very similar to fictional mythological accounts, such as the ones preserved, for instance, in Hesiod’s poems. Given that many modern (and possibly many ancient) readers do not usually approach traditional mythology allegorically, Pherekydes is a striking exception in the context of old mythology. In the remainder of this chapter, I will focus on the major elements that define Pherekydes’ project as intentionally allegorical. The analysis of such elements will capture Pherekydes’ new way of approaching myth, one that is intrinsically linked with the beginning of Greek allegoresis.

There is little doubt that ancient sources regarded Pherekydes’ work as distinct from previous traditional mythological accounts. The most important source in this regard is the passage from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* 1091a29-b12 (=F 81 Schibli).⁵⁰⁷ There, Aristotle contends that mythologists and early poets distinguished between the first principles and the Good.⁵⁰⁸ Aristotle must have had in mind figures such as Hesiod, Musaios, Epimenides and the authors of old Orphic theogonies for which

⁵⁰⁶ On Long’s terminology see above.

⁵⁰⁷ On this passage see SCHIBLI 1990: 89-91 and LAKS 2009.

⁵⁰⁸ “It would seem that there is an agreement between the mythologists and some present-day thinkers, who deny that there is such an element, and say that it was only after some evolution in the natural order of things that both the Good and the Beautiful appeared” (Ar. *Met.* 1091a32-35) [...] “The early poets agree with this view in so far as they assert that it was not the original forces—such as Night, Heaven, Chaos or Ocean—but Zeus who was king and ruler.” (Ar. *Met.* 1091b4-6)

Zeus, i.e. the Good, is not the original cosmological principle. On the other hand—Aristotle claims—Pherekydes, the Magi, and later philosophers such as Empedokles and Anaxagoras do posit the first principle as the best. Particularly interesting for our inquiry is the reference to Pherekydes which is introduced among “those that [are] mixed among them (i.e. the old poets⁵⁰⁹) also by not speaking everything mythically” (οἱ γε μεμιγμένοι αὐτῶν καὶ τῶ μὴ μυθικῶς πάντα λέγειν, οἷον Φερεκίδης καὶ ἕτεροί τινες). Aristotle, though admitting that Pherekydes’ work is similar to that of old poets, explicitly introduces him in a separate and special category.

There are at least two reasons why Pherekydes holds a “mixed” place among the poets in Aristotle’s account. The first and more obvious one is that Pherekydes’ theology departs from traditional mythology for the first time. According to the old poets, Zeus’ reign, that is, in Aristotle’s view, the establishment of the “good,” appeared later on in the cosmological process as the result of the violent deposition of his father. Against these accounts, Pherekydes makes Zeus, i.e. Zas, the first and best principle.⁵¹⁰ Nevertheless, this is not the only reason why Aristotle explicitly considers Pherekydes as a mixed poet. Aristotle states that Pherekydes is mixed “because he did not speak everything mythically” (τῶ μὴ μυθικῶς πάντα λέγειν) thus offering Pherekydes’ mode of composition rather than the content of his work as an element of distinction. For Aristotle, Pherekydes is a poet, but a peculiar one; for, contrarily to other poets, he does not always speak mythically, that is, fictionally. According to

⁵⁰⁹ I accept here Laks’ interpretation according to which Aristotle considered Pherekydes on par with the poets, despite the fact that he wrote in prose. LAKS 2009: p. 637-9.

⁵¹⁰ Strictly speaking, there are three eternal principles in Pherekydes’ cosmology, Zas, Chronos, and, Chthonie. F 14; F 60; F 65; F 66 SCHIBLI.

Laks, this means that Pherekydes abandons, at times, the language of the traditional theological texts and speaks as a philosopher.⁵¹¹ Shall we imagine then, that Pherekydes' mythological images, with their traditional language, alternate with more philosophically sound sections? Though that might be possible, a better option is available. I contend that what Aristotle means by "not speaking everything mythologically" is that Pherekydes' language, though mythological, is meant to hint at philosophical concepts. In other words, though Aristotle does not explicitly use the technical vocabulary of allegoresis, he suggests that Pherekydes designed his work to be read allegorically. As I will show, this impression is not only confirmed by ancient testimonies but also can be proven through some of Pherekydes' extant fragments.

About 800 years after Aristotle, Proclus, commenting on Atlantis' story which Critias narrates at the beginning of Plato's *Timaeus* (Proclus *In Plat. Comm.* I, 129, 9ff. Diehl), reminds his readers that such story is neither fictional nor simply "historical"⁵¹² (ὅτι μήτε μῦθος λεγόμενος μήτε ἱστορία ψιλή). Before arguing his case, he proceeds to enumerate the arguments of those who read the story as a pure myth without further meaning. First,--those people argue-- Plato is generally skeptical of overinterpreting myth, as he shows in *Phaedrus* 229d.⁵¹³ Secondly, Plato's accounts are not as enigmatic as those of Pherekydes; in fact, Plato's most important teachings are clear and unambiguous. δεύτερον δέ, ὅτι καὶ ἡ Πλάτωνος παράδοσις οὐκ ἔστι

⁵¹¹ "Il arrive aussi à Phérécyde de délaisser la langue des théologèmes traditionnels pour parler en véritable «philosophe»". LAKS 2009: 641.

⁵¹² According to Proclus, Origines and Numenius took the story fictionally. See Procl. *In Timaeum* I, 83.25. Instead, Crantor, Plato's first exegete, was among those who claimed that Atlantis' story actually happened. See Procl. *In Timaeum* I, 75.30-76.10. On the meaning of hystoria in Proclus see TARRANT 2007: 63-5.

⁵¹³ The reference is to Socrates' dismissive attitude toward the attempts at rationalizing myth in the context of the discussion of the story of Boreas and Orithyia.

τοιαύτη αινιγματώδης, οἷα ἡ Φερεκίδου, ἀλλὰ περὶ πλείστων δογμάτων διδάσκει σαφῶς = F 89 Schibli). Third, they say, Critias' story is there for the mere enjoyment of the readers. Finally, people that read such a narrative looking for further meanings are no different than those interpreters that waste their time in minute interpretations of Homer.

Although it is difficult to attribute each of these arguments to any specific thinker, it is clear that Proclus is voicing traditional opinions against an allegorical interpretation of Plato's myths.⁵¹⁴ Interestingly, even literal readers of Plato are ready to concede that there exist some texts that need to be read allegorically. One such case is Pherekydes' book. In their mind, Pherekydes' use of myth is not only different than Plato's but also Homer's. Again, Pherekydes is considered in a separate category than older poets, and again the specificity of Pherekydes' position in the tradition is based on the ways his mythological narratives are designed. Differently than Homer's (and Plato's) texts, Pherekydes' work more obviously demands an allegorical interpretation.

Finally, a third ancient author addresses Pherekydes' mode of composition and connects it with allegorical design, that is Isidorus, son of Basilides the gnostic (II century CE).⁵¹⁵ While discussing a puzzling image used by Pherekydes, *i.e.* the winged oak and the robe upon it, he explicitly claims that Pherekydes wrote an

⁵¹⁴ The third of these points should be attributed to Longinus in light of Procl. *In Timaeum* I, 83, 21-25 (thus TARRANT 2007: 225 n. 555). Nevertheless, Tarrant's conclusion that all these four points go back to Longinus is rather speculative. See TARRANT 2007: 75. At any rate, whether they all featured in Longinus or not, it seems unlikely that he was the one to first devise all of them.

⁵¹⁵ On Basilides and Isidoros see TARDIEU 1994: 84-89.

allegorizing theology (αλληγορήσας ἐθεολόγησεν F 76 Schibli).⁵¹⁶ Nevertheless, given that Isidorus does not compare Pherekydes with other mythological texts, we cannot be sure that he considered Pherekydes' allegorical design to be as peculiar as Aristotle and the authors referenced by Proclus did. Yet, it is clear that for Isidorus, Pherekydes' work needed to be read allegorically.

Overall, the passages analyzed above concur in attributing to Pherekydes' work a separate and special position among the traditional mythologists. The reasons why his work is so peculiar are not merely to be found in its content but mostly in his mode of composition. Pherekydes designed a work that demanded allegoresis.

Although recent scholars⁵¹⁷ have not failed to notice Pherekydes' exceptional position between mythology and philosophy, they have mostly devoted their attention to the innovative content of his cosmology rather than to its mode of composition. It has been pointed out, for instance, that Pherekydes starts his theo-cosmology with an eternal triad, Zas, Chronos, and Chthonie, in stark contrast with traditional myth: Ζὰς μὲν καὶ Χρόνος ἦσαν ἀεὶ καὶ Χθονίη· Χθονίη δὲ ὄνομα ἐγένετο Γῆ, ἐπειδὴ αὐτῇ Ζὰς γῆν γέρας διδοῖ. (F14 Schibli). “Zas, Chrono, and Chthonie always were; but Chthonie's name became Earth after Zas gave her earth as a gift.” In so doing, Pherekydes avoids the contradiction of positing non-eternal principles as originators of the kosmos, while maintaining, via the similarities of their names, a connection to the divinities of the traditional myth. Moreover, Pherekydes' work seems to provide a

⁵¹⁶ On this fragment see SCHIBLI 1990: 69-77 and SAUDELLI 2011.

⁵¹⁷ Although FRAENKEL 1951 argued that Pherekydes was “a step backwards” from Hesiod, many subsequent scholars (see esp. SCHIBLI 1990: esp. 133-4; KAHN 2003: 143-5; GRANGER 2007) rightly positioned him as an innovator of traditional mythology who anticipated important philosophical notions.

more morally acceptable depiction of the divine apparatus than traditional mythology. If, according to Xenocrates, Homer and Hesiod depicted wicked gods, Pherekydes made “Good” the first principle, as Aristotle points out.⁵¹⁸ Granger has also pointed out,⁵¹⁹ that by positing a demiurgic God (F 68) Pherekydes “opens the way towards a distinction between divinity and nature and ultimately towards a transcendent divinity outside the cosmos.” These are some of the main innovations that explain why Pherekydes, despite the mythological framework of its work, is often considered a revolutionary thinker.

I will now focus on Pherekydes’ stylistic innovations, by which I mean, quite broadly, Pherekydes’ innovative mode of composition. The most striking stylistic innovation of Pherekydes is undoubtedly his decision to write a theogonical work in prose.⁵²⁰ The ancient sources were likely right in making Pherekydes the first prose writer, as long as we understand, with Kahn, prose as “a discourse that is not only written but aspires to be literary.”⁵²¹ The obvious reason why Pherekydes chose to write a mythological narrative in prose is to distance himself from traditional mythology à la Hesiod, written in hexameter.⁵²² A prose cosmology, in its opposition to cosmology in verse, that is, in its opposition to fictional narrative, has an implicit

⁵¹⁸ See GRANGER 2007: 149-50.

⁵¹⁹ GRANGER 2007: 160-61.

⁵²⁰ On Pherekydes and prose writing see esp. SCHIBLI 1990: 2-4; LAKS 2001; KAHN 2003: 142-45; GRANGER 2007: 137-39, GHEERBRANDT 2018.

⁵²¹ KAHN 2003: 142. Anaximander’s prose work is sometimes considered to be anterior to Pherekydes’ one (see e.g. JAEGER 1947: 67-71). Nevertheless, according to Kahn, regardless of the relative dates, Anaximander “does not fit into any established literary genre and hence does not aspire to represent prose ‘as a division of literature’”. On the other hand, Pherekydes’ theogony in prose is set out to rival Hesiod’s poetical one and as such it introduces prose as “a division of literature”. (KAHN 2003: 142)

⁵²² KAHN 2003, 143-145. See also GHEERBRANDT 2018: esp. 380-81 for whom Pherekydes’ use of dactylic prose is another way of signaling the author’s distancing from traditional hexametric poetry.

claim to greater truth.⁵²³ The same is true for Hecateus who, a few years after Pherekydes, wrote a historical account in prose and explicitly distanced himself, at the beginning of his work (F 1 Jacoby), from the ridiculous stories of the Greek. Overall, I regard Pherekydes' use of prose as a way to signal to his readers that his mythological narrative must be read differently than traditional ones.

Another element that calls for comment is Pherekydes' striking use of proper names.⁵²⁴ Consider the aforementioned beginning of his work. Ζὰς μὲν καὶ Χρόνος ἦσαν ἀεὶ καὶ Χθονίη· Χθονίη δὲ ὄνομα ἐγένετο Γῆ, ἐπειδὴ αὐτῇ Ζὰς γῆν γέρας διδοῖ. The names of the three eternal divinities are certainly Pherekydes' invention. Zas, recalls, evidently, Zeus, yet the new name bestowed upon him by Pherekydes is likely a play on Zao, "to live."⁵²⁵ Chronos is obviously reminiscent of Kronos, father of Zeus in traditional mythology, but through the different spelling the proper name comes to mean "time."⁵²⁶ The name Chthonie, that is, "in" or "under the earth," is Pherekydes' play on the Hesiodic divinity Gaia. These and other plays upon divine names show that Pherekydes is appropriating traditional myth while significantly innovating upon it. To the traditional anthropomorphic divinities, Zeus, Kronos, and Gaia, he substitutes eternal concepts, life, time and, possibly, death, respectively. The change in names thus results from and signals Pherekydes new theological approach.⁵²⁷

⁵²³ KAHN 2003: 142.

⁵²⁴ SCHIBLI 1990: 135-139; KAHN 2003: 144; GRANGER 2007: 144-147.

⁵²⁵ For alternative views see KIRK-RAVEN: 57 and WEST 1963: 50-52.

⁵²⁶ The interpretation of Kronos as Chronos is commonplace in allegorical contexts. Cicero attributes it to the Stoic Balbus (Cic. *De nat. deorum* II, 64). Cornutus (Corn. 6-7) and Plutarch (Plut. *de isid.* 363D) uses it as well. A different interpretative solution of the name Kronos is provided by the Derveni papyrus (col. XIV, 6-10).

⁵²⁷ Puns on proper names are hardly uncommon in Greek literature and the oldest examples are already in Homer (see e.g. *Od.* 19. 407-9). Etymological explanations of names feature prominently also in Hesiod *Theogony*. Thus, for instance, at lines 195-200 Hesiod explains that Aphrodite was called with

The attention to such pseudo-etymological puns on proper names will become a significant way of investigating myth and language as famously testified by Plato's *Cratylus*.⁵²⁸ More precisely, pseudo-etymology is especially significant in the development of allegoresis, as allegorical readers will investigate the sound and the etymology of words to find hidden layers of meaning under the text of a poem. As we will see in the next chapter, the Derveni author is, in this respect, a chief example, since countless of his allegorical readings are based on etymological puns on the names of traditional divinities.

Finally, there are some images of Pherekydes' work whose obscurity cannot but be intentional. Consider in this respect F 76.

ἵνα μάθωσι τί ἐστὶν ἡ ὑπόπερος δρυὸς καὶ τὸ ἐπ' αὐτῇ πεποικιλμένον φᾶρος,
πάντα ὅσα Φ. ἀλληγορήσας ἐθεολόγησεν λαβὼν ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ Χάμ προφητείας
τὴν ὑπόθεσιν (F 76 Schibli)

They do so in order that they may learn what is the winged oak and the embroidered robe upon it, all things that Pherekydes theologized about in veiled language taking his starting-point from the prophecy of Cham.

In this passage, Isidorus the gnostic references Pherekydes' enigmatic image of the "winged oak and the embroidered robe upon it". Aside from its possible interpretations,⁵²⁹ Pherekydes' oak has an undeniably symbolic function, for there is

this name because she was born from the foam (ἀφρός) of the sea, and on the basis of etymology he also explains her epithets Κυθέρεια, Κυπρογενής, and Φιλομμειδής. On Homer and Hesiod etymologies see GAMBARARA 1984: 118-121 and ARRIGHETTI 1987: 13-36. Especially when compared to Hesiod's, Pherekydes' uses of etymologies is original and subversive of the tradition. Hesiod, in fact, uses etymology to explain the reasons for traditional divine names and in so doing he legitimizes them. On the contrary, Pherekydes refuses right-away traditional divine names and devises new ones that, while recalling the old ones, are better suited to their referents. Note, however, that it is not clear if Pherekydes did also use traditional divine names such as "Zeus" and "Kronos" in the later part of his work, as some of the indirect fragments would suggest. On the question see SCHIBLI 1990: 135-39.

⁵²⁸ On etymology and Plato's *Cratylus* see esp. BAXTER 1992. On the ancient practices of etymology see SLUITER: 2015. On etymology in the *Cratylus* and the Derveni Papyrus see below 6.3.

⁵²⁹ For which see esp. KIRK: (CHECK PAGES IN FIRST EDITION); WEST 1963: 167-72; SCHIBLI 1990: 69-77; SAUDELLI 2011.

no immediate way of interpreting it literally. Although having more fragments of Pherekydes' work might help us in better understanding this and other similar images, the fact remains that these images were meant to be puzzling and spark philosophical discussion. Although quite late, Isidorus' source points precisely in this direction when it claims that people philosophize in order to understand the meaning of Pherekydes' tree. Clearly the winged oak is no tree at all, but rather a complex cosmological symbol. The inherent obscurity of this and similar images is another way by which Pherekydes invites his readers not to take everything literally, but rather to decode his obscure images. Obscurity, what the ancients often described by the term *ainigma*,⁵³⁰ as we saw, goes hand in hand with allegoresis. Indeed, especially when the immediate meaning of a text is doubtful does the reader need to look for deeper and hidden meanings.

That Pherekydes conceived his work to be interpreted allegorically can be further proven by analyzing the longest fragment of Pherekydes' work (F 68 Schibli) in its relationship with the proem. The fortunate discovery of a papyrus' fragments (P. Grenf. II, I I = F 68 Schibli) provides us with a significant section of Pherekydes' work describing Zas' wedding with Chthonie.

τῶι ποιούσιν τὰ οἰκία πολλά τε καὶ μεγάλα. ἐπεὶ δὲ ταῦτα ἐξετέλεσαν πάντα καὶ χρήματα καὶ θεράποντας καὶ θεραπαίνας καὶ τᾶλλα ὅσα δεῖ πάντα, ἐπεὶ δὴ πάντα ἐτοιμα γίνεται, τὸν γάμον ποιῶσιν. κάπειδὴ τρίτῃ ἡμέρῃ γίνεται τῶι γάμῳ, τότε Ζὰς ποιεῖ φᾶρος μέγα τε καὶ καλὸν καὶ ἐν αὐτῶι ποικίλλει Γῆν καὶ Ὠγηνὸν καὶ τὰ Ὠγηνοῦ δώματα βουλόμενος> γὰρ σέο τοὺς γάμους εἶναι τούτῳ σε τιμῶ. σὺ δέ μοι χαῖρέ τε καὶ σύνισθι. ταῦτά φασι ἀνακαλυπτῆρια πρῶτον γενέσθαι· ἐκ τούτου δὲ ὁ νόμος ἐγένετο καὶ θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισιν. ἢ δέ μι<ν ἀμείβε>ται δεξαμ<ένη εὐ τὸ φᾶ>ρος

⁵³⁰ See above and STRUCK 2004: 19-51; 170-79.

[...] For him [Zas] they fashion the palaces both many and great; and when they had accomplished all these things, also the necessities and manservants and maidservants and as many other things as are necessary, they perform the wedding. And when it is the third day of wedding, then Zeus fashions a robe both big and beautiful, and on it he embroiders Earth and Ogenos and the abodes of Ogenos. [...] “Since I wish marriages to be yours, I honour you with this. Receive my salutation and be my consort”. These they say were the first anakalypteria, and hence arose the custom for both gods and men. And she responds, receiving the robe from him [...]

Though scholars rightly interpret this passage as a reference to Zeus’

demiurgic power over the kosmos, in principle, there are very few elements that suggest that such a description of Zas’ wedding is something more than a fictional mythological story. Aside from the use of prose and the striking, but not unparalleled, etiological section,⁵³¹ this passage of Pherekydes resembles traditional fictions, in which anthropomorphic divinities carry on quotidian activities such as adorning a palace, getting married, weaving a robe. In principle, such passage, both for his content and style (note the use of the direct speech) could have come straight out of a traditional mythological poem. The beginning of the work, however, provides us with a better context to interpret the symbolical meaning of Zas’ wedding.

As I have mentioned, at the beginning of his work Pherekydes introduces the divine triad Zas, Chronos, and Chthonie. He then comments on Chthonie’s name by

⁵³¹ See ταῦτά φασιν ἀνακαλυπτῆρια πρῶτον γενέσθαι· ἐκ τούτου δὲ ὁ νόμος ἐγένετο καὶ θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισιν. In this section, the author imbeds a aetiological consideration within the dialogue between Zas and Chthonie. Such an interruption of the narrative to make room for an aetiological moment will become standard practice in Hellenistic poetry but it is not totally unparalleled at this point in time. Similar explanatory moment imbedded in the narrative are not uncommon in Hesiod. See for instance the aetiology of sacrificial offerings imbedded in the myth of Prometheus (Hes., *Theog.* 556-558) or the explanation of Aphrodite’s name (Hes. *Theog.* 195-97). The use of unattributed φασίιν (“some people say”) too is attested both in Homer and Hesiod (On unattributed φασίιν in Hesiod and Homer see STODDARD 2004: 49-54). Yet, Pherekydes’ passage for the first time employs an unattributed φασίιν to convey an aetiological consideration. In so doing, he marks his control over the mythical narrative and signals its significance for the reader, creating a quasi-commentary to his story.

saying that Chthonie was called Gaia, when Zeus gave her the earth as a gift. (Χθονίη δὲ ὄνομα ἐγένετο Γῆ, ἐπειδὴ αὐτῇ Ζᾶς γῆν γέρας δίδοι. F 1 Schibli). Though scholars have often pointed out that the two passages refer to the same scene, Zas' wedding gift, the major implications of the relationship between the two fragments have gone unnoticed. In F 1 what Zas gives Chthonie as a gift is γῆ, the earth, whereas in F 68 Zas gifts Chthonie not the earth, but rather a robe with the earth embroidered upon it. Once readers encounter the wedding scene (F 68) they are, therefore, prompted not to interpret Zas' gift as a mere robe, but rather as a stand-in for something else, i.e. the earth, for Pherekydes himself has said so at the beginning of his work. Moreover, when they realize the real significance of the robe with land and ocean upon it, its ulterior meaning, they are compelled to look at the whole wedding scene in a new way and to grant to its elements a further cosmological meaning that transcends the realm of pure fictionality. If the robe is not a robe, but actual earth, obviously Zeus' crafting of it has an ulterior meaning beyond the literal, as does the fact that Chthonie supposedly wears it, and so on and so forth. In other words, Pherekydes provides his reader with two essential clues. First, by pointing toward the fact that the robe of fragment 68 is a metaphor, he invites the reader to look at whole scene of the wedding in search for a second level of meaning. Secondly, he provides his reader with the first clue of his allegorical construction, *i.e.* the robe should be interpreted allegorically as earth. What makes Pherekydes wedding gift so intriguing is not so much the fact that it is part of an allegorical design, but rather that it represents the first, and one of the

rare instances, in which we can appreciate a writer signaling to his readers that in order to understand his work he should look beyond the mere letter of the text.⁵³²

In conclusion, the use of prose, the puns on proper names, the creation of enigmatic images, and the emergence of an authorial voice that guides the readers' interpretation are not coincidental features of Pherekydes' work. Instead they are part of a deliberate design that invites the readers to look for philosophical truths beneath the veil of a fictional narrative. It is likely this allegorical design that led Aristotle to say that not everything is said mythically in Pherekydes' work.

At this point we shall briefly return to our main question, that is Pherekydes' role in the "invention" of allegoresis. As I have shown, Pherekydes was no allegorical reader. His work is not concerned with interpreting the texts of a Homer or Hesiod, but rather with appropriating and innovating upon a vast mythological background. At the same time, however, Pherekydes was certainly an allegorical writer. He invites his readers to question the letter of traditional stories and shows in which ways a mythological fiction can be used to convey further meanings. In this respect, it is clear that Pherekydes is a significant precursor both of later attempts at critically investigating mythological stories as well as later efforts to read the texts that preserve these stories allegorically.

⁵³² Later on some poets will advise the readers more explicitly as to how to read their poems. On the whole, however, overt declaration of allegorical composition are very rare.

5.3 Theagenes and Pherekydes: Philology and Philosophy

In this chapter, I have analyzed the role of Theagenes of Regium and Pherekydes of Syrus in the development of ancient Greek allegoresis. *Stricto sensu* neither of these two authors can be considered an allegorist, yet both their different contributions opened the doors for the later development of the practice.

We have seen (chapter 4) that a key feature of ancient allegorical interpretations is the attempt to strike a balance between 1) reading a poetical text according to its own internal principles, that is, according to the text poetics, and 2) reading beneath the letter of the poem the proof of a philosophically oriented system of truths. Theagenes and Pherekydes can be considered proto-allegorists because they each, respectively, represent one of these two exegetical trends.

Theagenes of Regium was a grammarian, and, accordingly, his main goal was to interpret the poems of Homer. As Porphyry states, he paid particular attention to Homer's lexis, that is the precise meaning of words and the use of figures of speech. Given that Porphyry mentions him in relation to the allegorical interpretations of Homer's theomachy, his exegetical work likely also touched upon the question of the status of the divinities in Homer's poems. Yet, as I have argued, Theagenes' analysis of the Homeric gods did not aim at finding within Homer the proofs of a hidden philosophical system, but rather tackled problems of poetics. For Theagenes the theomachy is thus not necessarily, as it is often argued, an opportunity to find clues about Homer's superior understanding of the kosmos, an opportunity to tackle theological or ethical questions, but rather a chance to study Homer's poetical treatment of the gods. To what extent are the gods in Homer personification of abstract

concepts? Does Homer speak figuratively when he mentions gods? How does Homer visualize the gods?

These kinds of questions are inherently rooted in the text of Homer and are available for every reader to consider, regardless of whether such a reader is committed to an allegorical approach or not. Gods in Homer are, in fact, represented both as human-like characters but do stand-in, at times, for more abstract, be it physical or psychological, concepts. The Theomachy of book 20 and 21 of the *Iliad* is in this respect revealing. One may, for instance, note the differences between the representation of the battle between Scamander/Xantos against Hera and Hephaestus (21.338-380) with that of the other Olympians, such as, for instance, the fight between Ares and Athena (21.391-414). Scamander is represented as an anthropomorphic divinity, with his own genealogy, will, and ability to speak. On the other hand, he is also a great deep-eddying river (μέγας ποταμὸς βαθυδίνης, 20.73) and acts as such. He fights against Achilles with the power of his waves and is defeated thanks to the intervention of Hephaestus who attacks him not with spears, rocks, or fists, but rather with a fire that violently spreads thanks to the wind sent by Hera. To read this battle in terms of the opposition between physical elements, water against fire + air, is in keeping with the poetic representation of the scene and is not necessarily an attempt to go beyond the literal meaning of the passage.⁵³³ Yet, once this interpretation is in place, one can extend this principle of opposition between physical elements and

⁵³³ *Il.* 20.54-66, which immediately precedes the first mention of the theomachy, might have invited the “metonymical” reading of the battle of the gods. It, in fact, represents Zeus, Ades, and Poseidon in their cosmological function as sovereigns of the sky, underworld, and earth, rather than as anthropomorphic characters. Pelliccia drew my attention to the significance of this passage for my argument.

systematically apply it to the other divine duels, even though their representation by the poet does not immediately suggest such an interpretation. The fight between Athena and Ares, for instance, is depicted as any other battle amongst human-like entities, both in terms of the formulaic organization of the scene and in terms of imagery. Ares taunts Athena and then attacks her with his spear, Athena defends herself, responds by throwing a rock, wounds Ares, and finally mocks him. Differently than the battle scenes with Scamander, nothing in such a representation suggests that Athena is acting more wisely than Ares, although allegorists interpret the scene as the fight between two opposite, wisdom and folly. The whole theomachy, therefore, can become a symbolic image, the proof that underneath a mythical narrative Homer hid a cosmological and psychological system.

Of course, we are in the dark as to the precise extent of Theagenes's interpretation of the theomachy but, as I have argued above, the display of a precise set of correspondences between Homer's images and the elements of a philosophical system is a later endeavor. For this reason, I consider Theagenes one step removed from true allegoresis. Given, however, that allegorical readings are ultimately based upon the principle that poets disguised through riddles, personifications, symbols, in a words, through poetic figures, ulterior meanings, it is clear that Theagenes' work as a grammarian, that is, his analysis of the poetics of the Homeric texts, constitutes an essential step in the direction of a fully developed allegorical system of reading.

Compared to Theagenes, Pherekydes of Syrus occupies a diametrically opposite position in the development of ancient allegoresis. First, he does not reference myth in a textualized form. Although he was certainly familiar with the

stories of Homer and Hesiod, he does not mention their texts or narratives but rather freely innovates upon a common and traditional patrimony of mythological motifs. Secondly, he does not even, strictly speaking, interpret myth but rather appropriate it. His goal is not to explain what a mythological episode means but rather to use such an episode in a different context for the sake of imparting philosophical concepts. Given that Pherekydes does not interpret texts nor myths he cannot be considered an allegorist.

That being said, Pherekydes' approach to myth is highly significant for the development of allegorical readings. For the first time with Pherekydes myth explicitly ceases to be a mere enjoyable narrative and triggers, instead, practices of rational investigation. Myth becomes a veil under which are hidden ulterior truths. Pherekydes may not be an interpreter of myth and texts, however, he designed the first allegorical work we know of. It follows that Pherekydes must have expected his audience to be able to practice some form of allegoresis.⁵³⁴

The attempt to be true to the poetics of a text while analyzing it in light of his philosophical under-meanings is what stands at the core of ancient allegorical readings. Theagenes and Pherekydes' works, though not yet fully developed examples of allegoresis, each, respectively, represent one of these two exegetical strands. As I will argue in the next chapter, it is only by the time of the Derveni papyrus, our best preserved pre-Hellenistic allegorical treatise, that we can appreciate how interpreters

⁵³⁴ As I have shown above, it is interesting that Pherekydes feels the need to guide the reader toward allegoresis, through his own authorial voice. In the case of the marriage between Zas and Chthonie, he explicitly gives out to his readers the beginning of the allegorical interpretation by stating that the veil representing the earth is actually earth itself. This might suggest that reading myth allegorically was not yet common practice. Readers were still unaccustomed to it and needed some guidance from the author.

actually try to negotiate between the need to be faithful to the author's poetic and the desire to find in old poetry clues of a philosophical system. Yet, before moving on to the Derveni papyrus a brief historical consideration circa the emergences of allegoresis is in order.

Two main opposite pictures concerning the beginning of allegoresis have generally been proposed. Following in the footsteps of Tate, many scholars believe that the emergence of allegoresis is to be found in the appropriation of mythology by philosophers such as Pherekydes, Erakleitos, and Empedocles. Each of them, in fact, to some extent, uses mythological narrative, obscure language, and names of traditional divinities in a symbolic way, to hide philosophical truths. They were, in other words, "strong allegorists" for they composed works that demanded an allegorical interpretation. On the basis of such picture, one can easily argue that readers accustomed to such a symbolical treatment of the myth,⁵³⁵ that is, readers accustomed to recover hidden meaning below the surface of a text might have applied this same exegetical attitude toward reading traditional poems, poems that were not consciously intended as allegorical. Seen in this way, allegoresis is an "invention" of pre-socratic philosophers. Though they themselves were not necessarily interpreters of Homer or Hesiod, they help fostering a new approach toward myth and language that ultimately allowed readers to read every mythical text allegorically.

⁵³⁵ As Tate himself already points out (1934, 107) it is not necessary to argue that the same philosophers that wrote allegorically actually interpreted the traditional poets allegorically. Indeed, as we have seen in the case Pherekydes, despite Celsus' testimony, it is unlikely that Pherekydes ever interpreted Homeric material.

Against such a picture, other scholars protest that mythical appropriation is the result of textual interpretation.⁵³⁶ Pherekydes could not have used myth symbolically had not myth been codified in a textual form and mythical language been subjected to scrutiny and critique.⁵³⁷ For allegoresis to take place it is necessary, first, to realize that poetic language is potentially ambiguous, that poets can say one thing and signify another. If one were to agree with this general picture, it would follow that the work of textual critics such as Theagenes, who scrutinized the letter of the Homeric text, analyzed its lexis, that is, its vocabulary and style who, in short, studied its poetical language, must have preceded the attempts of Pherekydes and his successors at redefining and appropriating the possibilities of mythical language.

Both pictures have their merits and, once studied side-by-side, ultimately bring forth the two core aspects that, in my view, define allegoresis: 1) the philological *côté* of the practice, i.e. the evaluation of a text in terms of its poetics and 2) the philosophical one, i.e. the evaluation of it in terms of its deeper meanings. Yet, from a chronological perspective, we have very little information to ascertain which one of these aspects of allegoresis came first. If, to paraphrase Tate,⁵³⁸ it does not make much sense to believe that allegoresis sprung from the brain of a grammarian, it is probably equally unlikely that allegoresis sprung from the brain of a philosopher. This is not to say that early grammar and early philosophy, which I exemplified, in this chapter,

⁵³⁶ One such picture can be found e.g. in Morgan 62-67. See also Primavesi for whom the active use of allegory by philosophers such as Empedokles and Parmenides depends upon an older tradition, represented by Theagenes, of reading the narrative sequences of the epic poems allegorically. Theagenes' work, should, in turn, be understood as the natural result of the poets' "metonymic" use of divine names. PRIMAVESI 2005.

⁵³⁷ HAVELOCK 1982 is the seminal study on the importance of textualization for the emergence of rational thought.

⁵³⁸ Tate p. 216

through the work of Theagenes and Pherekydes respectively, are ultimately the same thing. On the contrary, through their different aims and perspectives, these disciplines provide two different and often autonomous modes of reading a text. Actual allegoresis, such as the one preserved in the Derveni Papyrus, emerges as the combination of these two approaches.

Chapter Six

Everything Is Said in Riddles: Metrodorus and The Author of Derveni

6.1 Metrodorus of Lampsachus: Turning Everything into Allegory

After Theagenes and Pherekydes' works laid the foundation for the practice, throughout the fifth and fourth century BCE allegoresis became a widespread mode of discourse. Aristophanes, for instance, made fun of allegoresis at the beginning of his *Peace* 38-49;⁵³⁹ Plato famously referred to it as an established practice of reading poetry in the *Republic* (378d2-378e1) and, likely with an ironical intent, had Socrates engage in an allegorical reading of an infamous passage of the *Iliad*⁵⁴⁰ in his *Theaetetus* (153d).⁵⁴¹ This evidence suggests, beyond any doubt, that reading poetry allegorically was a widespread and recognizable practice by the end of the fifth century. Nevertheless, when it comes to the names and methods of the actual practitioners of allegoresis we are, for the most part, in the dark. Leaving aside, for the moment, the case of the Derveni author, an argument could be made that the sophists were among the earliest proponents of the practice. Still the evidence in this respect is rather murky.⁵⁴² Among the early critics of Homer mentioned in Plato's *Ion* (Stesimbrotus, Glaucon, and Metrodorus), which we encountered in chapter 1 as early "zetematic

⁵³⁹ See Aristoph. *Peace* 38-40 with STRUCK 2004: 39-41. See also the dreams' interpretation sequence at the beginning of the *Wasps* (1-53). On Aristophanes' use of allegory for comedic effect see KIDD 2014: 52-86.

⁵⁴⁰ The passage in question is *Il.* 8.18-27 where Zeus boasts that he is so much more powerful than the other gods that if they tried him in a tug-of-war's game he would be able to drag them all up, along with the earth and the ocean, and let them dangle from Olympus.

⁵⁴¹ On Plato's attitude toward allegoresis see esp. STRUCK 2004: 41-50.

⁵⁴² Among the most recent works on the sophists and allegoresis see DOMARADZKI 2015.

critics,” only Metrodorus of Lampsacus can be, ranked without any doubts among the allegorists.⁵⁴³ Although the evidence concerning Metrodorus is scanty and, in some respects, contradictory, what we do know of his work will further clarify my previous claim about the two sides, the philological and the philosophical, of ancient allegoresis (see chapter 4) and will prepare the terrain for the main topic of this chapter, the Derveni papyrus.

Metrodorus of Lampsacus,⁵⁴⁴ a pupil of Anaxagoras, was active in the last part of the fifth century and is said to have been the first to study Homer’s physical doctrine.

D.L II. 3.11= DK 61.2 Δοκεῖ δὲ πρῶτος [*sc.* Ἀναξαγόρας], καθά φησι Φαβωρίνος ἐν Παντοδαπῇ ἱστορίᾳ, τὴν Ὀμήρου ποίησιν ἀποφύνασθαι εἶναι περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ δικαιοσύνης· ἐπὶ πλείον δὲ προστῆναι τοῦ λόγου Μητρόδωρον τὸν Λαμψακηνόν, γνώριμον ὄντα αὐτοῦ, ὃν καὶ πρῶτον σπουδάσαι τοῦ ποιητοῦ περὶ τὴν φυσικὴν πραγματείαν.

It seems that, just as Favorinus says in his *Miscellaneous Histories*, Anaxagoras was the first to show that Homer’s poetry was about virtue and justice; even more committed to this line of inquiry was his pupil, Metrodorus of Lampsacus, who was also the first to study the physical doctrine of the poet.

It is not made explicitly clear by Favorinus (I-II century CE) that Anaxagoras and Metrodorus of Lampsacus read Homer allegorically; yet, as we will see, fragments DK

⁵⁴³ I share in this respect Richardson’s assessment according to which Metrodorus was “definitively an allegorist,” Stesimbrotus “used a variety of methods, among which it is quite likely that allegory was included,” “whilst in the case of Glaucon no convincing case of allegory can be made.” Note also that Richardson makes a convincing case for Anaximander as an allegorist. (RICHARDSON 1975: 65-77. The quotations are from p. 77). On the development of early allegoresis see now also the survey by PIANO 2016: 277-297.

⁵⁴⁴ Not to be confused with his homonym, the fourth-third century epicurean philosopher. On Metrodorus of Lampsacus “the elder” see NESTLE 1907; WEHRLI 1927: 92-94; BUFFIÈRE 1956: 125-132; LANATA 1963: 244-47; RICHARDSON 1975: 68-71; PÉPIN 1976: 99-101; JANKO 1997: 76-79; HAMMERSTAEDT 1998; CALIFF 2003; STRUCK 2004: 28-29; FUENTES GONZÁLES 2005; MARTINHO DOS SANTOS 2007; DOMARADZKI 2015: 252-53; PIANO 2016: 292-5.

61.3 and 61.4 unequivocally confirm it: Metrodorus' λόγος about Homer's poetry here must then refer to his allegoresis of Homer's poem(s).⁵⁴⁵

Both Tatian's (*Ad Graecos* 21 = DK 61.3) and Philodemus' (*On Poems*, 2. 53-54 = DK 61.4) testimonies give us an insight into Metrodorus' work. In the context of his attack upon Greeks' attempts at understanding their gods allegorically, Tatian says:

καὶ Μητρόδωρος δὲ ὁ Λαμψακηνὸς ἐν τῷ Περὶ Ὀμήρου λίαν εὐήθως διείλεκται, πάντα εἰς ἀλληγορίαν μετάγων. οὔτε γὰρ Ἥραν οὔτε Ἀθηνᾶν οὔτε Δία τοῦτ' εἶναι φησιν ὅπερ οἱ τοὺς περιβόλους αὐτοῖς καὶ τεμένη καθιδρύσαντες νομίζουσιν, φύσεως δὲ ὑποστάσεις καὶ στοιχείων διακοσμήσεις, καὶ τὸν Ἔκτορα δὲ καὶ τὸν Ἀχιλλεῖα δηλαδὴ καὶ τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονα καὶ πάντας ἀπαξαπλῶς Ἑλληνάς τε καὶ βαρβάρους σὺν τῇ Ἑλένῃ καὶ τῷ Πάριδι τῆς αὐτῆς φύσεως ὑπάρχοντας χάριν οἰκονομίας ἐρεῖτε παρεισῆχθαι οὐδενὸς ὄντος τῶν προειρημένων ἀνθρώπων.

Metrodorus of Lampsacus in the *On Homer* has argued in an extremely silly fashion, turning everything into allegory. For he says that neither Hera, nor Athena, nor Zeus are what people who dedicate sacred precincts to them believe but, rather, they are physical substances and arrangements of the elements. And, obviously, you will say that Hector, Achilles, Agamemnon, and, in general, all the Greeks and barbarians with Helen and Paris were introduced as being of the same nature for the sake of economy, none of the aforementioned persons actually existing.

This passage should be compared with Philodemus' testimony which reads:

ἐνιοὶ δὲ καὶ φανεροῦς μαίνονται, καθάπερ οἱ τὰς δύο ποιήσεις Ὀμήρου περὶ τε τοῦ κόσμου λέγοντες πεποῆσθαι μερῶν καὶ περὶ νόμων καὶ ἔθισμῶν τῶν παρ' ἀνθρώποις, καὶ τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονα μὲν αἰθέρα εἶναι, τὸν Ἀχιλλεῖα δ' ἥλιον, τὴν Ἑλένην δὲ γῆν καὶ τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον ἀέρα, τὸν Ἔκτορα δὲ σελήνην καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἀναλόγως ὀνομάσθαι τούτοις. τῶν δὲ θεῶν τὴν Δήμητρα μὲν ἦπαρ, τὸν Διόνυσον δὲ σπλῆνα, τὸν Ἀπόλλω δὲ χολήν.

⁵⁴⁵ Pfeiffer contends that Favorinus' statement about Anaxagoras does "not mean that he explained Homeric poetry as moral *allegory* [...] but that he first made known its ethical tendency" (PFEIFFER 1968: 35 n. 3). See *contra* SIDER 2005: 61-66. If we accept, on the basis of the other fragments, that Metrodorus was an allegorist, then Favorinus' statement also must be a reference to Metrodorus' allegoresis. Since, according to Favorinus, Metrodorus built upon Anaxagoras' method, it must follow that such a method too consisted of reading Homer allegorically. For Favorinus, hence, both Anaxagoras and Metrodorus were allegorist readers. The former interpreted Homer's poetry as alluding to virtue and justice the latter as alluding to the physical world. The two, however, differed in the degree, or commitment, to the method: Metrodorus was more of a strict allegorist (Favorinus does not clarify in what respect) than his teacher Anaxagoras.

Some critics were clearly out of their minds like those who said that Homer's two poems were composed about the parts of the universe and about the laws and customs among men, and that Agamemnon is the ether, Achilles the sun, Helen the earth and Alexander the air, Hector the moon and that the other heroes have been named accordingly. Among the gods, Demeter is liver, Dionysus spleen, and Apollo bile.

As Gomperz already pointed out,⁵⁴⁶ among the critics Philodemus is summarizing here there is certainly Metrodorus whose interpretation of Agamemnon as ether is explicitly attributed to him by Hesychius.⁵⁴⁷ It is more difficult to ascertain, however, whether all of Philodemus' *testimonium* or only a portion of it stems from Metrodorus. Jürgen Hammerstaedt has brought to attention a contradiction between Tatian's testimony and Philodemus'.⁵⁴⁸ According to Tatian, Metrodorus interpreted the gods in Homer as "physical substances and arrangements of the elements" (φύσεως δὲ ὑποστάσεις καὶ στοιχείων διακοσμήσεις). Philodemus, instead, refers to the gods as body parts. Assuming that Metrodorus was consistent in his allegoresis, i.e., that he did not interpret the gods sometimes as forces of nature and sometimes as body parts, it follows that either Tatian's summary is imprecise, or Philodemus' last sentence concerning the gods does not stem from Metrodorus, despite the majority of the scholars assuming so.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁶ GOMPERZ 1873: 37.

⁵⁴⁷ Esch. *Lex.*, s. v. Ἀγαμέμνων: Ἀγαμέμνονα τὸν αἰθέρα Μητρόδωρος εἶπεν ἀλληγορικῶς. (Metrodorus said allegorically that Agamemnon was the ether).

⁵⁴⁸ HAMMERSTAEDT 1998: 29.

⁵⁴⁹ Hammerstaedt thinks that Philodemus' testimony is a summary of different claims that do not necessarily all go back to Metrodorus. Only the section concerning the heroes' interpretation, which is sanctioned by Hesychius, would go back to him. (HAMMERSTAEDT 1998: 29). Indeed, Philodemus seems to have a variety of interpreters in mind when broaching the topic of allegoresis. He even mentions two different systems of allegorical readings--and, therefore likely at least two different interpreters: the physical ("the parts of the universe") and the moral ("the laws and customs among men"). Is he including here a reference to Metrodorus' teacher, Anaxagoras, whom we know from Favorinus interpreted Homer in terms of virtue and justice? On the question of Metrodorus' interpretation of the gods as parts of the bodies the following two points should be considered also. First, a passage from Fulgentius (*Myth* 1.5. 25 = FGrHist 9.4) which mentions an

Both these solutions can be argued for but, for the sake of my argument, I will only consider here what can be attributed to Metrodorus with a greater degree of certainty, i.e., the allegoresis of the heroes as part of the universe.

Another difficulty regarding the interpretation of Metrodorus' fragments concerns the last sentence of Tatian's account (καὶ τὸν Ἑκτορα... προειρημένων ἀνθρώπων).⁵⁵⁰ This portion of text can be interpreted in two ways. All the translators I have consulted,⁵⁵¹ take the participle ὑπάρχοντας as a circumstantial participle and the expression χάριν οικονομίας together with παρεισήχθαι and thus translate the sentence along the lines of Whittaker: "No doubt you will go on to say that Hector and Achilles [...] are entities of the same nature and *were put into the poem for the sake of composition*, not because any of these human beings ever existed".⁵⁵² In short, they maintain that, according to Metrodorus, the heroes were both physical entities and that they were introduced by Homer for the sake of the "composition",⁵⁵³ while, for the most

interpretation of the Muses and Apollo as an allegory for parts of the mouth could stem from Metrodorus. Fulgentius erroneously attributes this allegoresis to one Anaximander of Lampsacus but what he probably meant was either Anaximenes of Lampsacus, or Anaximander of Miletus, or our Metrodorus of Lampsacus (see JANKO 1997: 78; WĘKOWSKI 2010: *ad* BNJ 9 F4). Secondly, physiological interpretations of the gods must not have been uncommon around the time of Metrodorus. Physiology was definitively a matter of interest both for Metrodorus' teacher, Anaxagoras, (see especially DK 59A105) and for his contemporary Diogenes of Apollonia (see especially DK 64B6) and both of them allegorized poetry. On Diogenes and allegoresis see JANKO 1997: 80-87.

⁵⁵⁰ I have printed here the text of the main editors of Tatian, accepted by WHITTAKER 1982. Janko, however, pointed out that the oldest manuscript of Tatian's *Oratio* (V) reads ἐν τῇ ποιήσει παρεισήχθησαν instead of ἐρεῖτε παρεισήχθαι. (JANKO 1997: 77 n. 150). Janko's text provides, overall, a better flow but, aside from the fact that the verb in V, παρεισήχθησαν, should be further emended into παρεισήχθαι to maintain the accusative + infinitive construction, Hammerstaedt is right in claiming that ἐν τῇ ποιήσει is probably an intruded gloss that was aimed at clarifying the expression, χάριν οικονομίας. (HAMMERSTAEDT 1998: 30 n. 13). As is often the case, the *lectio difficilior* is here the best bet.

⁵⁵¹ BUFFIÈRE 1956: 126 n. 8; LANATA 1963: 245; PÉPIN 1976: 100; WHITTAKER 1982; JANKO 1997: 77; CALIFF 2003: 22; REALE 2006.

⁵⁵² WHITTAKER 1982: *ad loc.*

⁵⁵³ When χάριν οικονομίας is taken directly with παρεισήχθαι its meaning must mean something along the lines of "introduced for the sake of poetic economy", that is, for the sake of the poem's design/plot.

part, avoiding to further specify the logical relationship between this two assertions concerning the heroes.

Building upon such a reading, Jürgen Hammerstaedt has brought into question precisely this relationship between the two seemingly contradictory characterizations of the heroes.⁵⁵⁴ How could Metrodorus hold, reasons Hammerstaedt, that the heroes were, at the same time, parts of the universe (τῆς αὐτῆς φύσεως ὑπάρχοντας) as well as poetic characters (χάριν οἰκονομίας ἐρεῖτε παρεισιῆχθαι)? He claims that this passage cannot, therefore, represent Metrodorus' thought and proceeds in showing that the last sentence of the testimony must be Tatian's own *reductio ad absurdum* rather than Metrodorus' own belief.⁵⁵⁵ Hammerstaedt here has been betrayed by his hyper-cautious reading of the evidence. For one thing, his solution is unconvincing insofar as it merely shifts the onus of the contradiction from Metrodorus to Tatian. Moreover, it is hardly coincidental that the same list of heroes mentioned by Philodemus must also appear in Tatian's *reductio ad absurdum*. Given their similarities, both passages must ultimately go back, either directly or indirectly to Metrodorus' *On Homer*. Finally, I do not believe that it would be necessarily contradictory for Metrodorus to say that Achilles and Hector and the other Homeric heroes are both physical elements and fictional poetic characters introduced for the sake of the "story", precisely the opposite. Allegoresis, in fact, can, and mostly does, accommodate two distinct levels of meanings, the poetical/literal one

For this meaning of οἰκονομία see NUNLIST 2009: 24-33. Other options on how to interpret χάριν οἰκονομίας in HAMMERSTAEDT 1998: 31 n. 19.

⁵⁵⁴ HAMMERSTAEDT 1998: 29-32.

⁵⁵⁵ Part of the difficulty lies in the fact that the thought concerning the heroes is put by Tatian into the mouth of his polemical addressees, see ἐρεῖτε, "you will say". Already Anne Bates Hersman was unwilling to attribute the thought to Metrodorus for this reason (HERSMAN BATES 1906: 12). However, although Tatian presents it as a belief held by his pagan opponents, the similarities between this passage and Philodemus/Hesychius, suggest that also this portion of Tatian's text stemmed from Metrodorus.

and the symbolic. It is perfectly reasonable for Metrodorus to hold both that Homer invented his characters for the sake of the story, and that he intended these same fictional *dramatis personae* to have an ulterior physical meaning.

This seeming contradiction does not arise if, against previous readings of the passage, we construe the infinitive παρεισηχθαι with the participle, ὑπάρχοντας, acting as a predicative of the subject, (i.e. X “is introduced” qua Y, where X is the subject and Y is the participle) a standard construction, as the extant parallels show.⁵⁵⁶ “And, obviously, you will say that Hector, Achilles [...] *were introduced as being of the same nature for the sake of economy*, none of the aforementioned persons actually existing”. Based on this interpretation Metrodorus says that Homer, the implicit agent of the passive verb παρεισηχθαι, introduced the heroes in the poem qua parts of the universe in order to be consistent with the other pieces of his allegorical design: the gods. Not only the gods can be read allegorically but so do all the other characters of the poem. The expression χάριν οικονομίας indicates here not so much the structure of the literal story, the plot, but it rather refers to Homer’s crafting of a cohesive allegorical design throughout the whole poem. Once some characters of the poem, the gods, are turned into physical elements, for the allegory to be consistent throughout (χάριν οικονομίας)

⁵⁵⁶ See e.g. Pol. 9.16 ἢ καὶ τὸν ποιητὴν ἂν τις ἐπαινέσειε, διότι παρεισάγει τὸν Ὀδυσσεῖα, τὸν ἡγεμονικώτατον ἄνδρα, τεκμαιρόμενον ἐκ τῶν ἄστρον οὐ μόνον τὰ κατὰ τοὺς πλοῦς, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ περὶ τὰς ἐν τῇ γῆ πράξεις. “And here one may mention with admiration that Homer represents Ulysses, that truest type of a leader of men, taking observations of the stars, not only to direct his voyages, but his operations on land also”. (Schuckburgh); Phld. *Hom* (P. Herc. 1507) καὶ τὸν Ν[έ]στορα παρεισάγων σπεύδ[ον]τα λύειν τὴν [στάσιν] [Ἀχιλλέω]ς πρὸς Ἀγ[α]μέμνονα... “And having represented Nestor as urging the resolution of Achilles’ quarrel with Agamemnon”. Diod. Sic 1.87.2 διόπερ τὸν θεὸν τὸν παρ’ αὐτοῖς καλούμενον Ἄνουβιν παρεισάγουσι κυνὸς ἔχοντα κεφαλὴν. “For this reason, they introduce the god called by them Anubis, as having a dog’s head.” Sch. in *Ap.* I 636a ἔνθεν καὶ τὴν Σεμέλην ‘Θυώνην’ καλοῦσιν, ἐπειδὴ Αἰσχύλος ἔγκυον αὐτὴν παρεισήγαγεν οὔσαν καὶ ἐνθεαζομένην. “Thence they call Semele Thuone, since Aeschylus introduced her as being pregnant and possessed”. On the meaning of ἄγειν-compounds in the scholia see now PELLICCIA forthcoming.

every other character need to be allegorized too. This reading also sheds light upon Tatian's previous statement concerning Metrodorus, who is said to "turn everything into allegory" (πάντα εἰς ἀλληγορίαν μετέγων). Metrodorus did not limit himself to allegorize only some elements of the poem, such as the gods, but he allegorized "everything", coming up with a system of allegorical meanings applicable to all of the characters featured in the poem, gods as well as heroes. In this respect, he probably applied allegoresis to a much broader scope than that of his predecessors; indeed, as we have seen, Favorinus explicitly says that Metrodorus was more committed to allegoresis than was his teacher, Anaxagoras.

I will come back later to the significance of Metrodorus' broad allegorical scope. For now, I limit myself to recapitulate the main points that emerge from the sources that treat Metrodorus' allegoresis. Following in the footsteps of his teacher Anaxagoras, who practiced some form of moral allegoresis, Metrodorus read the Homeric poems as a cosmological allegory. He broadened the scope of allegoresis by interpreting both the gods and the heroes and in material terms. More precisely, he held that Agamemnon was the ether, Achilles the sun, Helen the earth, Alexander the air, and Hector the moon. He interpreted the gods along the same lines. Concerning the gods, it is, however, difficult to be more precise, given that it is not clear whether Philodemus' section treating them as body parts actually stemmed from Metrodorus' interpretative system.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁷ If Metrodorus actually did interpret the gods as body parts and the heroes as cosmological elements, then it would seem, as many scholars have noticed (see, e.g., Domaradzki 2015: 252), that he was referencing Anaxagoras relationship between macrocosm (the heroes) and microcosm (the gods).

What is most striking about Metrodorus' allegoresis is that his solutions do not rely on metonymy or etymology. As we have seen in the previous chapter, allegorists used to argue that, say, Hephaestus is fire, because the god's attribute in myth is fire. Likewise, Hera is air, given the anagram between her name, Ἥρα, and that word for the natural element, ἀήρ. The basis of Metrodorus' allegorical solutions must be found elsewhere. Since Nestle, scholars have suggested that the rationale for Metrodorus' allegoresis must be found within Homer's text.⁵⁵⁸

Achilles is the sun because at *Il.* 19.398 he gleams in his arms like the beaming sun Hyperion (τεύχεσι παμφαίνων ὡς τ' ἠλέκτωρ Ὑπερίων), and at *Il.* 22. 134-35 because its spear gleam like the rising sun (ἀμφὶ δὲ χαλκὸς ἐλάμπετο εἵκελος ἀγῆ ἢ πυρὸς αἰθομένου ἢ ἡελίου ἀνιόντος).⁵⁵⁹ Hector, in turn, is compared to the moon at *Il.* 8.555.⁵⁶⁰ Clearly, in these passages the poet is not saying that Achilles is the sun or that Hector is the moon, still, the text insinuates the analogy and it is very likely that Metrodorus thought of these comparisons as hints left by the poet to unveil his allegorical message. The same analogy between heroes and astral bodies can also be established at a broader textual level and used to understand the interactions between the heroes.⁵⁶¹ Achilles and Hector are presented as the best fighters of their respective armies and they eclipse the other heroes like the sun and the moon eclipse the other astral bodies. Achilles in turn, like the sun eclipsing the moon through its brightness,

⁵⁵⁸ In establishing Metrodorus' rationale behind his interpretations, I take my cue especially from NESTLE 1907; BUFFIÈRE 1956: 125-132; RICHARDSON 1975: 69; CALIFF 2003.

⁵⁵⁹ See already NESTLE 1907: 505.

⁵⁶⁰ See NESTLE 1907: 506. Note, however, that, as shown by CALIFF 2003: 31, these solutions are not always univocal. Achilles' armor is also compared to the moon at *Iliad* 19.374, while other heroes' shining armors are compared to the sun.

⁵⁶¹ CALIFF 2003: 31.

will, at last, blot out Hector. Entire scenes of the poem acquire thus new meaning in light of the cosmological allegory. Think of Achilles' pursuit of Hector around the walls of Troy (opened by the aforementioned comparison of Achilles' spear to the gleaming sun, *Il.* 22. 234-5) which calls to mind the image of the sun and the moon rotating around the earth;⁵⁶² think also of the scene in which Hector strips Achilles' armor from Patroclus which might be read as the moon acquiring its shine because of the power of the sun.⁵⁶³ We know that the interactions between the sun and the moon were especially studied by Anaxagoras, Metrodorus' teacher.⁵⁶⁴ He considered the sun to be a rotating fiery mass/rock⁵⁶⁵ and the moon to be bright because of the reflecting power of the sun.⁵⁶⁶ The two poles of allegoresis, textual analysis and philosophical investigation (in this case the philosophy of his teacher but, more broadly, Ionian natural inquiry) go here hand in hand and help illuminate each other.

The couple Paris/air and Helen/earth lends itself to a similar analysis. Paris embraces Helen at *Il.* 3.448 and likewise, in Anaxagoras' system, the air envelops the earth.⁵⁶⁷ Likewise, Agamemnon is the ether probably because, like Anaxagoras' ether which makes the astral body rotates⁵⁶⁸ and gleam,⁵⁶⁹ Agamemnon sets the Trojan war in motion and allows the heroes to shine by their military actions.

⁵⁶² BUFFIÈRE 128.

⁵⁶³ CALIFF 2003: 31.

⁵⁶⁴ See esp. DK 61.A42.

⁵⁶⁵ DK 61.A1; A19; A42; A73.

⁵⁶⁶ DK 61.A42; A76; B18.

⁵⁶⁷ DK 61A1; A42. See already NESTLE 1907: 508. I wonder if the analogy Paris-air is suggested by the way in which Paris escaped the battle against Menelaus, that is, clouded in mists (see ἐκάλυψε δ' ἄρ' ἠέρι πολλῆ *Il.* 3.381).

⁵⁶⁸ DK 61A42; A71

⁵⁶⁹ DK 61A12.

Two notable features emerge from the reconstruction of Metrodorus' allegorical system: (1) the interrelation between textual analysis and philosophy and (2) Metrodorus' broad allegorical scope. I start with (1). In Metrodorus, textual analysis and philosophy work in harmony. The basis of Metrodorus' allegorical solutions is found within Homer's text—be it the details of a simile, or the broader relationship between the characters that move the plot—and not in the mere details of the god's names or in their mythical attributes. As David Califf rightly argues “if an allegory is to be plausible at all, a critic needs to identify something in the text—no matter how fanciful—that suggests, or at least accords with, the specific allegorical identifications, and the eccentricity of Metrodorus paradoxically necessitates an engagement with the narrative and imagery of the *Iliad* that is broader and deeper than the isolated verbal allegories of many other, more sober, ancient critics.”⁵⁷⁰ What makes Metrodorus' allegoresis “convincing” is that the text can be bent to accommodate a cosmological system and that this system is, in turn, able to explain features of the poem widely regarded as deserving of explanation, such as: a) the relationships among its characters, b) specific episodes (Hector stripping Patroclus' armor or Achilles' pursuit and killing of Hector), and c) the rationale for the poet's choice of similes (Achilles shining like the sun and Hector like the moon). In this sense, Metrodorus' work is that of a true allegorical reader and stands out when compared to the textual analysis of, say, a Theagenes, who, as I have shown in the previous chapter, derived his interpretations of the gods from the text alone. Although, arguably, Metrodorus was interested in the possibility of appropriating Homer's poetry

⁵⁷⁰ CALIFF 2003: 30.

to show that the *Iliad* could fit his philosophical framework,⁵⁷¹ his engagement with the text was not purely cosmetic.⁵⁷²

Metrodorus studied the poem carefully, down to its minute details. Leaving the textually motivated rationale behind Metrodorus' allegoresis aside, ancient sources mention Metrodorus' efforts to understand the meaning of difficult lines of the poem, such as his aforementioned lexical analysis (see chapter 1 above) of the term “το πλεῖον” at *Il.* 10.252.⁵⁷³ Our evidence thus paints Metrodorus in two different colors, both as a textual critic and a philosopher interested in natural phenomena. Though it does not say how exactly these two facets of Metrodorus' activity complemented each other, I have argued, here and in the previous chapter, that it is precisely within the practice of allegoresis that the philosopher as well as the grammarian coexist.

The second point of interest is the scope of Metrodorus allegoresis. Metrodorus worked under the implicit presupposition that Homer did not occasionally hide some physical messages in the poem here and there but that, instead, he construed a coherent system of allegorical meaning throughout (everything in Homer is allegorical, according to Tatian's testimony). As Tatian suggests, once the gods are taken to have an ulterior cosmological meaning, consistent allegorical design (χάριν οἰκονομίας) demands that such a meaning be extended to the other characters of the story. In order to unveil Homer's allegorical design, Metrodorus, as we have seen, extended the allegorical interpretations of the gods to the heroes, that is to say, to the

⁵⁷¹ In Califf's words, “it would seem that Metrodorus has begun with a conceptual framework, in this case Anaxagorean cosmology, and then mapped out the *Iliad* on a preconceived grid.” CALIFF 2003: 30.

⁵⁷² See *contra*, e.g., LANATA 1963: 247.

⁵⁷³ DK 61.5.

totality of the characters of the poem. Given that Metrodorus has to deal with a very extensive and composite poem, his sets of analogies are highly replicable: the same interpretation (Achilles/sun, Hector/moon), as we have seen, accounts for different scenes and moments in the poem (Hector plundering of Achilles' armor, the pursuit around the wall, Hector's ultimate fate) and the same must have been true for his other interpretations. In so doing, Metrodorus was virtually able to cast its allegorical net to every scene of the poem.

Dirk Obbink, commenting upon Metrodorus and Anaxagoras' allegoresis, once rightly emphasized the originality of their approach: "The claim [*sc.* Anaxagoras' idea reported by Favorinus that Homer poetry was about virtue and justice] is remarkable in ancient literary criticism and rhetoric, which (at least until the Neoplatonic movement) has decided difficulty *in speaking about whole works* [my emphasis] or issues important to modern critics, such as unity, textuality, programmatic imagery, or meaning beyond the level of the word, phrase, or gloss."⁵⁷⁴ As I have argued in the preceding chapters, pre-Hellenistic critics such as Zoilus and Megaclides of Athens too are becoming more and more accustomed to deal with questions concerning unity, design, and the totality of a poem. In the development of these influential exegetical questions, allegorists such as Metrodorus, and, as we will see below, the Derveni author had a major role to play. Allegoresis, hence, for Metrodorus is not merely a tool among others to solve this or that morally compromising passages but becomes the main key to understand the poem as a whole, one of the first *-isms*⁵⁷⁵ in the history of

⁵⁷⁴ OBBINK 2003: 180-81.

⁵⁷⁵ I owe this phrasing to CALIFF 2003: 30.

literature, by which I mean, very generally, every doctrinal system (structuralism, post-modernism, feminism...) whose presuppositions inform the reading of a literary work and dictate its interpretation.

It is difficult to say whether Metrodorus produced an allegorical reading of the *Iliad*, scene by scene, from beginning till the end, or if, as it seems more likely, his allegorical system mainly accounted for the most notable moments of the plot. What it is certain is that his efforts paved the road for more cohesive and systematic interpretations of a text as well as prompted subsequent allegorists to make good upon one of their most daring premises: *everything* that is said by the poet is said allegorically.

I have argued that Metrodorus was among the first interpreters we know of, for whom allegory had both a textually oriented dimension and a philosophical one. I have also shown that he did not mean allegoresis as a tool to solve discrete difficulties in the text but that his allegorical system embraced the totality of the poem. Nevertheless, as far as the evidence goes, we are unable to appreciate how exactly did textual criticism and philosophical inquiry complemented each other. Likewise, we cannot say the extent to which Metrodorus' broad allegorical scope allowed a detailed, scene-by-scene (if not line by line) analysis of the entire poem. What is bound to remain unclear for Metrodorus can, however, be studied in some details in the work of another allegorist, the Derveni author, to which I now turn.

6.2 The Derveni Papyrus: a Commentary *ante litteram*

The unearthing in 1962 of a series of tombs at Derveni (10 km north of Thessalonica), brought to light one of the most outstanding literary discoveries of the last century: the Derveni papyrus.⁵⁷⁶ Found among the remains of a funeral pyre on top of tomb A, the papyrus dates, at the latest, to the latter half of the fourth century BCE. It is the oldest literary papyrus preserved to some significant extent to have reached us.⁵⁷⁷ The lower side of the papyrus scroll burned with the pyre, yet large portions of the upper part have been preserved through carbonization. On the whole, the remains of the scroll allow us to reconstruct 28 or 29 columns of writing⁵⁷⁸ which preserve, at best, 17 lines of writing (coll. 25-26 KPT=65-66 JANKO). It remains an open question how many columns are lost from the beginning. According to Janko, an

⁵⁷⁶ Since its discovery, the Derveni Papyrus has been the object of significant scholarly attention and countless publications. A complete bibliography of the papyrus until 1996 is FUNGHI 1997. SANTAMARÍA 2019: 152-157 provides an update of Funghi's bibliography until 2018. Aside from the many important articles that discuss specific issues concerning the papyrus, four major collections of studies, all resulting from international conferences, are worth mentioning: LAKS-MOST 1997; PAPADOPOULOU-MUELLNER 2014; SANTAMARÍA 2019; MOST forthcoming. The most thorough and insightful study on the topic remains BETEGH 2004's monograph. The text of the papyrus has been critically edited for the first time only in 2006 (KPT 2006) although preliminary portions of the text (7 columns) had been made known right after the discovery (see KAPSOMENOS 1964) and an unauthorized edition had been anonymously published in 1982 in ZPE 47. On the circumstances that lead to the anonymous publication, see BURKERT 2014: 113-14. The texts edited after 2006, such as BERNABÉ 2007 and LAKS-MOST 2016 are very close to the *editio princeps*. Close to the *editio princeps* is also SALAMONE 2016, a critical edition of the text accompanied by a French translation, an introduction, and a commentary. On the other hand, Janko's provisional text, adopted by KOTWICK 2017, improves in many respects the *editio princeps*. The methodology followed for this new edition is presented in JANKO 2016 and JANKO in progress. Separate editions of the first highly damaged columns have also been proposed multiple times (see in particular JANKO in progress and PIANO in progress). Unless noted otherwise, when I quote the papyrus, I follow Janko's text as presented in KOTWICK 2017. I, however, maintain the *mise en page* of the papyrus and I refer to the columns using KPT numbering.

⁵⁷⁷ Scholars usually agree on the period between 340-320 as the date in which the Derveni Papyrus was copied (see KPT 2006: 8-9 and KOTWICK 2017: 14-5). Recently, JANKO 2018: 196 n. 7 has argued for a more recent date (375-350). A list of the 9 Greek papyri dating before 300 BCE can be found in JANKO ET AL. 2021: 125. On the find of the papyrus see esp. BETEGH 2004a: 56-73. On the history of its conservation see MACFARLANE-DEL MASTRO 2019.

⁵⁷⁸ PIANO 2016 (see also PIANO in progress) reconstructs 29 columns of writing, Janko 28 (see KOTWICK 2017: 12-3).

omicron sign visible on the left side of column 6 between lines 15-16 should be interpreted as a stichometric annotation meaning 1500. If that is correct, one can deduce, with some approximation, that each column housed circa 33 lines of writing and that we are missing the first 40 columns of the work.⁵⁷⁹ The last preserved column (col. XXVI KPT) was likely the end-column of the scroll, still, it is possible that the original work was made up of more than one scroll of papyrus. All things considered, what we are left with is likely a small portion of the original work.⁵⁸⁰

The major section of the surviving text (coll. VII-XXVI KPT) preserves an allegorical interpretation of an otherwise unknown hexametric Orphic poem. The poem, an orphic “theogony”⁵⁸¹ that shares many similarities with the later Orphic *Rhapsodies*,⁵⁸² was likely composed at some point in the fifth century BCE. It recounts the deeds of Zeus: how he took power from Cronus and how he *re*generated the other gods and the universe.⁵⁸³ The interpretation of the poem was written one or two generations later, around the 400 BCE,⁵⁸⁴ by an anonymous⁵⁸⁵ allegorist who

⁵⁷⁹ JANKO 2016: 12-13.

⁵⁸⁰ Bibliological details can be found in KPT 2006: 4-7; JANKO 2016: 11-13; JANKO in progress; PIANO in progress; PIANO forthcoming.

⁵⁸¹ I follow the majority of the scholars, in using “theogony” as a descriptor of the Orphic poem quoted by the Derveni author. By it I intend, very broadly, a text that speaks about “the origins of the world and the gods, and the events which led to the establishment of the present order” (WEST 1966: 1). It should be noted, however, that the label is problematic, to some extent. As already pointed out by JANKO 1986: 156-8, insofar as the Derveni poem might have also included an eschatological section, it would rather be a *Hieros logos*. BETEGH 2004a: 135, furthermore, rightly claims that the Derveni poem is mostly centered around the deeds of Zeus rather than genealogies and does not narrate the events in chronological order, as is the case in other theogonies. At times (see e.g. SIDER 2014), scholars also refer to the poem as a “hymn”, but Janko’s newly reconstructed text of col. VII, 2 (see KOTWICK 2017: 151; 308) renders this label less appropriate. The question of the definition of the Derveni poem has been thoroughly dealt with by BETEGH 2004a: 135-8.

⁵⁸² See e.g. West 1983; BETEGH 2004a: 138-152.

⁵⁸³ For an account of the theogonic plot see especially BETEGH 2004a: 153-181 and BERNABÉ 2019: 108-125.

⁵⁸⁴ See KPT: 10.

⁵⁸⁵ Many attempts at identifying the author of Derveni have been made, yet, no scholarly consensus has been reached. A summary of the different proposals can be found in KOTWICK 2017: 19-23.

interpreted every theogonic episode mentioned in the poem as part of a physical cosmology reminiscent of the thought of pre-Socratic philosophers such as Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, Diogenes of Apollonia, and the Atomists. According to the Derveni author, Orpheus' poem is only on the surface a recounting the deeds of Zeus; when rightly interpreted, it can be proved to be an account of the creation of the universe through the action of Nous.⁵⁸⁶ In short, the Derveni papyrus bears witness to i) a mythical poem attributed to Orpheus; ii) the physical cosmology of an anonymous fifth-century author which is presented as (but it hardly is) the proper interpretation of the poem.

Without entering into the details and the many difficulties surrounding the reconstruction of the poem and its interpretation, the summary I provide below is a generally accepted approximation of what remains of the poem and its interpretation.⁵⁸⁷ After a proem, the poem starts in *medias res* with the dethroning of Chronos by Zeus. Next, a prophecy uttered by Night to Zeus is mentioned. The narration of a key episode follows: Zeus swallows something, either a phallus or a first-born divinity, Protogonos.⁵⁸⁸ At this point, the poet cursorily refers to the preceding kings, Ouranos and Chronos, and then goes back to the swallowing through which Zeus has encompassed all things. Zeus is then celebrated in a short hymn as “king of all,” and “first and last.” After the hymnic section, the poem describes the

⁵⁸⁶ The cosmology that the Derveni author proposes on the basis of the poem has been discussed on a number of occasions. On the question, see especially BETEGH 2004a: 182-277; KPT 2006: 28-45; MCKIRAHAN 2012; BERNABÉ 2019.

⁵⁸⁷ My reconstruction of the narrative of the poem is particularly indebted to BETEGH 2004a: 92-131. For the interpretation of the poem I especially follow BERNABÉ 2019.

⁵⁸⁸ What Zeus swallows is one of the most debated questions in the literature of the Derveni papyrus. An in-depth treatment of the question is BETEGH 2004a: 111-122. See also, more recently, the opposing solutions of BERNABÉ 2007 and SANTAMARÍA 2016.

rebirth of all things from Zeus (goddess, Ocean and Achelous, and the moon). The poem then moves on to Zeus' sexual desire for his mother Rhea, the last poetic episode referenced in the papyrus. The Derveni author comments upon each of these episodes in turn, assuming that the different gods indicate different functions of the same concept: Ouranos, Chronos, and Zeus, for instance, are each a manifestation of an activity of the Nous, Mind. The different reigns, that of Ouranos, Chronos, and Zeus are interpreted as different cosmological phases. During the reign of Ouranos, the Nous splits an original magmatic mass into different particles. During the reign of Chronos, Nous concentrates together fire particles creating the sun. Zeus' dethroning of Chronos is interpreted as the moment in which Mind, the intelligent air, exerts his control over the element of fire which was predominant during the reign of Chronos. More precisely, Zeus' swallowing is equated to the Mind encompassing and placing the sun at the right distance from the earth, so that proper configuration of matter can happen. Through the swallowing of the phallus or the Protogonos, Zeus becomes pregnant, as it were, with all things, an episode that the commentator interprets as a reference to the fact that matter is eternal, not created, and everlasting. Creation, for the commentator, is a process of re-organization. The goddess that Zeus re-creates after the swallowing, Ge, Meter, Rhea, and Hera, are also interpreted as being different names for the same deity. Likewise, Okeanos is not another divinity but the power of Zeus. Finally, about Zeus' incestuous desire, the commentator denies that Rhea is the "mother" of Zeus. Zeus, that is Mind, was unbegotten and can't, therefore, have a mother.

Now that a general summary of the papyrus has been provided, I move on to the core topics of this chapter: an analysis of the ways in which the Derveni author crafts his interpretation. We would not expect, in fact, that a document that offers such *prima facie* extravagant interpretations, interpretations which go far beyond the plain meaning of the poem, would be coupled with an attention to the *letter* of the poem that we most readily associated with the later exegetical endeavors of Hellenistic critics. The Derveni author, as we will see, discusses the meanings, the forms, and the order of words, uses technical terminology, and quotes parallels from other works in support of his thesis. He analyzes, seemingly, every line of the poem, which he quotes *in extenso*, and, sometimes, paraphrases it. I will discuss these features of the Derveni exegesis focusing first on the scope of the interpretation. Making good upon his claim that a proper understanding of the poem necessitates an analysis of each of his lines from the beginning till the end (col. VII, 6-7), the Derveni author, I argue, ends up producing *de facto* a running commentary of the poem. Secondly (6.3), I will investigate the exegetical techniques deployed by the interpreter showing that they match the techniques that Aristotle recommends in chapter 25 of the *Poetics*.

Since its appearance, the Derveni Papyrus has often been defined as a “commentary.”⁵⁸⁹ This definition has been regularly disputed⁵⁹⁰ and cannot be used, as we will see, without a series of caveats. Indeed many scholars prefer to define the

⁵⁸⁹ See e.g. KAPSOMENOS 1963; TURNER 1968: 205; PFEIFFER 1968: 139 n. 7; 239; WEST 1983: 68-115 esp. 80; LAMEDICA 1991; LAMEDICA 1992; MESSERI SAVORELLI-PINTAUDI 2002: 38; 47; BETEGH 2004b; SCHIRONI 2012: 434; RUSTEN 2014: 126; PIANO 2018: 307 who, however, specifies that only from col. VIII onward the Derveni text can be assimilated to a hypomnema. On the question of the genre see also the bibliographical survey in SALAMONE 2016: 39-46.

⁵⁹⁰ See esp. BURKERT 1986: 5; DORANDI 2000: 19-20; KOTWICK 2017: 46-7.

work more generally as an allegorical exegesis,⁵⁹¹ a monograph⁵⁹² or, simply, a treatise.⁵⁹³ The main pushback against the use of the term “commentary” to define the Derveni Papyrus comes from the realization that “commentary” is a definition that poorly suits the first part of the text.⁵⁹⁴ The first columns are indeed very different from the main surviving portion of the work: they do not present an alternation of lemmata and explanations nor do they deal with an Orphic theogony. Instead, they focus on rituals and eschatology.⁵⁹⁵ Thus, unless one construe the first section of the work as a general introduction to the actual commentary (perhaps in the form of a commentary to the first missing lines of the Orphic poem, as recently suggested by David Sedley),⁵⁹⁶ it is improper to speak of the *whole* of the Derveni papyrus as a commentary. “Treatise,” a more encompassing term, is a better descriptor of the heterogeneous status of the work.⁵⁹⁷ When it comes, however, to the major preserved section of the work (coll. VII-XXVI) the dichotomy “commentary” vs “treatise” acquires a rather different urgency.

The task of distinguishing between a treatise (*sungramma*) or a commentary (*hypomnema*) is not a mere classificatory fetish; each of these terms reveals, in fact,

⁵⁹¹ VIAN 1984.

⁵⁹² WILSON 1983: 85.

⁵⁹³ E.g. Kotwick 2017: 23; JANKO FORTHCOMING

⁵⁹⁴ The realization goes back at least to Martin West 1983 monograph (WEST 1983: 78). Note that this does not prevent West from referring to the Derveni text as a whole as a “commentary” and to his author as a “commentator” (WEST 1983). In 1997, West specifies that, in his view, the section running from col. VII to the end is a commentary (WEST 1997: 81-2).

⁵⁹⁵ On the first columns see esp. BETEGH 2004a: 74-91 and PIANO 2016. The relationship between the first and the second section is one of the most debated issues concerning the papyrus. See Janko forthcoming: esp. 151-152 for a survey of the bibliography on this topic. BETEGH 2004b: 43-4 lists some possibilities of how to reconcile the two sections.

⁵⁹⁶ See SEDLEY 2019 and SEDLEY 2022.

⁵⁹⁷ This is even more true if one accepts Janko’s conclusion according to which the “commentary section” was preceded by as many as 46 columns. (See above)

different, if not opposite, views of the work and its aims. Strictly speaking, the term “commentary” implies that the author of Derveni interpreted a single poem, systematically, line by line, from the beginning till the end in allegorical terms. On the contrary, the term “treatise” comes with no expectations of that sort and can be used to suggest, instead, that the author collected in his work pieces of texts from different sources in random order to suit his allegorical agenda. As we will see, both definitions have their limits but “commentary” or “hypomnema” remains a good approximation to characterize the type of exegesis showcased by the author of the Derveni papyrus in coll. VII to XXVI.

The hypomnema, a technical term by which scholars define one type of ancient exegetical endeavor,⁵⁹⁸ is the ancestor of our modern-day commentaries.⁵⁹⁹ It is an autonomous work in which portions of a literary work/s are quoted and discussed. In this respect, hypomnemata are similar to *sungrammata*, that is, monographs on specific questions, in which the author often quotes and discusses literary passages as a way of supporting his arguments. From a formal point of view, however, the hypomnema differs from the *syngamma* in three major respects: i) it focus only on one single work (or a set of works that form a unity);⁶⁰⁰ ii) the work is quoted and commented upon progressively, in the order in which it was composed; iii) the

⁵⁹⁸ Aside from the hypomnema, under the heading “ancient exegetical works” scholars usually include the *sungrammata*, that is, monographs on specific issues, *hypotheseis*, short prefaces to a literary work, *lexica*, and any kind of textual annotations from the simple interlinear note to the extensive marginal annotations known as *scholia*.

⁵⁹⁹ On ancient hypomnema see esp. DEL FABBRO 1979; DORANDI 2000; SAVORELLI-PINTAUDI 2002; SCHIRONI 2012.

⁶⁰⁰ The notion of “commentary upon multiple texts” coined by Madeleine Henry (HENRY 1986) to describe the Derveni papyrus is self-contradictory; ancient commentaries by definition only focus on one text or a unitary set of texts (think of, for instance, commentaries on a collection of poems). See on this also BETEGH 2004b: 39.

hypomnema is constituted of the alternation between lemmata, that is, extracts from the work commented upon, and explanations of the commentator; lemmata and explanatory sections are visually separated through editorial devices.⁶⁰¹ A good way to determine whether the section of the Derveni Papyrus that runs from coll. VI-XXVI conforms to an hypomnema is, therefore, to test it against each of the three features mentioned above. If the text presents i) quotations coming from a single work ii) in due order, and iii) said quotations are presented as lemmata, then we can conclude that the Derveni author conveyed his exegesis in the form of an hypomnema.

These three features have been thoroughly discussed by Gabor Betegh in his monograph on the Derveni papyrus and in a separate article.⁶⁰² The fragmentary state of the papyrus makes it impossible to be definitive about them, and different possibilities have been advanced by scholars, yet, the conclusions Betegh reaches concerning i) the provenance and ii) the order of the quotations I regard as highly probable. In what follow I will therefore limit myself to a brief summary of his analysis. As for iii) the way in which the author treats the quotations, I show against the scholarly consensus that the Derveni papyrus does fully match the traditional way in which ancient commentators use quotations.

First, the provenance of the quotations. Of the 19 poetic extracts (coll. VIII, 2; VIII, 4-5; XI, 10; XII,2; XIII,1; XIII,4; XIV,6; XV, 6; XV, 13-14; XVI, 3-6; XVI, 14; XVII, 12; XIX, 10; XXII, 12; XXIII, 11; XXIV, 3; XXV, 14; XXVI, 4; XXVI, 6-7)

⁶⁰¹ There exist, however, some cases in which the alternations between quotations and comments are not marked. See e.g. P. Ber. 13413, a commentary on Apollonius' *Argonautica*, and the two cases mentioned in DEL FABBRO 1979:88, that is, P. Oxy. XVII 2086 and P. Flor. II 112.

⁶⁰² BETEGH 2004a: 92-108; BETEGH 2004b.

quoted by the author of Derveni, 16 (coll. VIII, 2; VIII, 4-5; XI, 10; XII, 2; XIII, 1; XIII, 4; XIV, 6; XV, 6; XV, 13-14; XVI, 3-6; XVI, 14; XVII, 12; XIX, 10; XXIII, 11; XXIV, 3; XXV, 14) come from a single poem whose author is called Orpheus.⁶⁰³ This can be shown by the fact that the commentator introduces the hexametric extracts with expressions such as λέγει, he says, δηλοῖ, he shows, *vel similia*; the paternity of the quotation, hence, is left implicit as is the work from which it is taken. Only assuming that the work commented upon is one and the same can the author avoid specifying every time who is the author and from which work the quotation stems. In the three cases, however, in which the author uses material from other texts as part of his exegesis he tends to signal it. Take col. XXII, 11-12 where the author specifies that the extract he quotes comes from a work called the *Hymns*.

—ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἐν τοῖς Ὑμνοῖς εἰρ[η]μένον· “Δημήτηρ [Ρ]έα Γῆ Μήτηρ Ἑστία Δηϊώι.”

And also in the *Hymns* it is said: “Demeter Rhea Ge Meter Hestia Deo”

The specification ἐν τοῖς Ὑμνοῖς is meaningful only if one assumes that the hymns were a work other than the one commented upon.⁶⁰⁴ Note also the use of καὶ which, in Betegh’s words: “shows that the author is invoking this text as a parallel for the point under discussion.”⁶⁰⁵ Similarly, at column XXVI the author quotes two passages of Homer to illustrate a linguistic point (I discuss this column in detail below). Here, he does not specify that the lines come from a different poem but he introduces them with the expression col. XVI, 2 δηλοῖ δὲ καὶ ἐν τοῖσδε τοῖς ἔπεσιν ὅτι ‘ἀγαθὴν’ σημαίνει (it

⁶⁰³ See *contra* e.g. EDWARDS 1991: 205.

⁶⁰⁴ I see no plausible reason why, as sometimes argued (see e.g. FURLEY 2011), the Derveni theogony itself should be included among the “hymns”. On the question see KOTWICK 2017: 308.

⁶⁰⁵ BETEGH 2004b: 40.

is shown also in these lines that the poet means “good”) and col. XXVI, 5 *δηλοῖ δὲ καὶ ἐν τ[ῶ]ιδε* (it is shown also in this line). Again, the *καὶ* suggests that the following quotations are introduced as a parallel and the *δηλοῖ* should be taken as impersonal. The failure of mentioning the provenance of these lines is noteworthy, yet, possibly, the author felt that these hexameters were familiar enough to his audience that further specification would have been superfluous.⁶⁰⁶ At times, the author also introduces his extracts with “spatial” indications such col. XI, 9 *τὰ δ’ ἐπὶ τούτο λέγει*; col. XII, 1 *τὸ δ’ ἐχόμενον ἔπος ὧδ’ ἔχει*; col. XIV, 5 *τὸ δ’ ἐπὶ τούτο*; col. XV, 5 *ἐχόμενον δὲ ἔπος*; col. XVI, 12-13 *ἔτι δ’ ἐν τῶι ἐχομένῳ ἔπει τούτου*; col. XXIII, 10 *τὸ δ’ ἐχόμενον*. In these cases, we can be sure that the extracts immediately preceding and immediately following such expressions come from one and the same work.⁶⁰⁷ All in all, it hence seems highly plausible that the author commented upon one single poem and that occasionally, as it is the norm in ancient hypomnemata, he corroborated his explanations with parallel passages from other works. As for the author of such a poem, our commentator likely attributed it to the legendary Orpheus. Orpheus’ name, mentioned twice at col. XVIII, is, in fact, the only name of a poet cited in the papyrus. Moreover, two quotations, (see col. XVII, 2 and XIX, 10) correspond to verses quoted elsewhere as Orphic.⁶⁰⁸ These elements coupled with the fact that most of the lines

⁶⁰⁶ Betegh notes (BETEGH 2004a: 100; BETEGH 2004b: 40-41) that if we take *δηλοῖ* personally (“he, i.e. Orpheus, shows it”) we must conclude that the Derveni author attributed the Homeric lines to Orpheus, a hypothesis that I found highly implausible.

⁶⁰⁷ I find it unlikely that these expressions refer to the order of the line within the treatise rather than the order of the line within the poem (see KOTWICK 2017: 26), especially given that many of the introductory remarks are phrased having in mind Orpheus’ poem and not the Derveni treatise. See expressions such as “as Orpheus says and shows” in the poem. With these remarks, the commentator is guiding his audience throughout what they do not have immediately at hand, i.e. Orpheus’ poem, not his own treatise.

⁶⁰⁸ For more details on this, see BETEGH 2004a: 98; BETEGH 2004b: 40.

quoted in the poem recall distinctive episodes of later Orphic *Rhapsodies* help securing the identification.

I now turn to the order in which the poetic extracts are quoted. The author quotes the lines of the orphic poem, in their order of composition.⁶⁰⁹ This is suggested mainly by two features: the discrepancy between narrative and chronological order and the already mentioned “spatial” introductions to the quoted lines. It has been often noted⁶¹⁰ that if one reconstructs the Orphic poem following the order in which the quotations appear in the papyrus, the episodes of the reconstructed poem do not match the chronological order of the mythical story. The ruling of Zeus, for instance, is narrated before the birth and reign of Uranus and Chronus which, of course, preceded it. This narrative order is unattested in other Orphic Theogonies and for this reason scholars like Edwards⁶¹¹ concluded that the Derveni author was not following the original order of the lines in the poem when quoting it. Betegh has shown instead that the order of the quotations is a perfectly acceptable one.⁶¹² I believe we can go a step further and claim that it is precisely because the order in which the quotations appear is not chronological that they must represent the order in which the episodes were set in the poem. For, if the goal of the Derveni author was to provide a clear explanation of the cosmogonic process that led to the universe as we know it, why mixing the different phases? Why start with the reign of Zeus, go back to the reign of Chronos

⁶⁰⁹ See *contra* TORTORELLI GHIDINI 1989: 32; EDWARDS 1991: 204-5; RICCIARDELLI APICELLA 1993: 32; CASADESÚS 1996: 78; KOTWICK 2017: 26.

⁶¹⁰ EDWARDS 1991: 204-5; BETEGH 2004a: 106-107; KOTWICK 2019: 176-7; BERNABÉ 2019.

⁶¹¹ EDWARDS 1991: 204-5.

⁶¹² BETEGH 2004a: 106-7; 108-131. So did, before him, West who trusting in the order in which the lines appear in the papyrus provides an *exempli gratia* reconstruction of the lost poem. (WEST 1983: 114-5).

and Ouranos only to then end again with Zeus and the *recreation* of the universe?

From a treatise on the creation of the universe, we would expect a stricter and clearer chronological order. Poetry, instead, which by default resorts to analepsis, prolepsis, ring-composition etc. it is where it is natural to expect, instead, a non-linear recounting of the events. It is perfectly fine for a poem that recounts the deeds of Zeus to start in *medias res* with Zeus's ascent to power, refer back in passing to the previous generations, and then narrate how Zeus encompassed and recreated all things. In conclusion, it is precisely because the author was following the text of the poem from the beginning till the end that he did not relate the events in their chronological order.

The spatial introductions to the poetic extracts already mentioned above also point to the same conclusion. On five occasions (XI, 9; XII, 1; XIV, 5; XV, 5; XVI, 12-13; XIII, 10) the author indicates that the lines he is about to quote follow from the preceding one. Never does he introduce a line with expressions such as “as he says earlier” or “as he said in another section of the poem.” Although it cannot be proven that the author follows the same principle even when it does not use the “spatial” introductory remarks,⁶¹³ their presence is enough to suggest that “there is a *tendency* towards systematicity”⁶¹⁴ and that, overall, the author produced a running

⁶¹³ Aside from the spatial introductions, the author also uses expressions such as “as he [Orpheus] shows in these lines”, “about this or that he says the following”. In these cases, the extracts about to follow are explicitly linked to the author's discussion and are used to support it. Precisely because the author is compelled to follow the order of the poem he cannot always find a logical way to link what comes next in the poem with what he just said in the commentary. Those are the case when, I believe, he resorts to the spatial introductions, mere formal links between extracts and commentary. On this see also below.

⁶¹⁴ BETEGH 2004b: 42.

commentary, that is, he commented upon the lines of the poem progressively in the order in which they were composed.⁶¹⁵

A last piece of evidence, which has so far gone unnoticed, can be added to the discussion. At col. XXII, 12-14, as we have seen above, the Derveni author quotes from the hymns the following extract: “Δημήτηρ [P]έα Γῆ Μήτηρ Ἑστία Δηιώ.” He then goes on explaining the meaning of each goddess starting from the last one, Deo: καλε[ῖται] γὰρ καὶ ‘Δηιώ’ ὅτι ἐδηῖ[ώθη] ἐν τῇ μείξει· δηλώσει δὲ, [ὅτ]αν κατὰ τὰ ἔπη γέν[ηται]. “For she was also called Deo since she was destroyed in the sexual intercourse. He will show [it] whenever he reaches the lines [devoted to this].”⁶¹⁶ Κατὰ τὰ ἔπη must refer here to the point in the poem in which the episode of the sexual intercourse will be recounted (see Kotwick and Lapini),⁶¹⁷ and the whole expression δηλώσει δὲ, [ὅτ]αν κατὰ τὰ ἔπη γέν[ηται] is a sort of “*see below*” signpost. The intercourse, as shown by West,⁶¹⁸ is probably the one between Zeus and his mother Rhea (Rhea is identical with Demeter, Earth, Mother, Estia, and Deo, according to the Derveni author), the result of which will be the birth of Persephone. The story is found in the Orphic Rhapsodies and was probably also recounted in the Derveni poem. In col. XXVI, in fact, the commentator references a line in the poem that talks about Zeus’ desire to copulate with his mother. From this we can we infer the following. Although the Derveni author explains the name Deo as the one that was

⁶¹⁵ It is difficult to say whether the author commented upon each and every line of the poem thus producing a “commented edition” (see MONTANARI 2007) or if he selected some of them.

⁶¹⁶ I follow here the proposal of LAPINI 2019: 176 who argues that Orpheus is the subject of both δηλώσει and γέν[ηται]. Alternatively, the subject of γέν[ηται] could be the word, μείξις, mentioned above.

⁶¹⁷ KOTWICK 2017: 97; 311; LAPINI 2019: 176.

⁶¹⁸ WEST 1983: 93-4.

“destroyed” in a sexual intercourse, he does not specify which intercourse nor which kind of “destruction” Deo endured. He only says that this will become clear when the episode is related in full, later on in his work. This postponement which leaves the audience momentarily in the dark is significant. Why doesn’t our author quote right away the lines devoted to Zeus and Rhea’s intercourse instead of obliquely alluding to them? Clearly, he thought it best to leave off the quotations (and the comment) of these lines to a later part of his work. There might be a number of organizational reasons behind this choice, yet the more obvious one is that the commentator in his work was sticking to the order of Orpheus’ poem and did not want to anticipate a lemma that what was supposed to be explained in full later on, simply to make an exegetical point.⁶¹⁹

The last question to surmise is whether the text of Derveni is constructed upon an alternation of lemmata and commentary portions. While, on the whole, this is the case, a closer inspection suggests also differences between the Derveni text and other surviving examples of hypomnemata.

From a general point of view, clearly marked poetic quotations alternate with explanatory sections in the Derveni text. Col. XVI, 3-15 provides a good representation of the matter:

**“πρωτογόνου βασιλέως αἰδοίου· τῶι δ’ ἄρα πάντες
ἀθάνατοι προσέφυν μάκαρες θεοὶ ἠδὲ θεάιναι
καὶ ποταμοὶ καὶ κρήναι ἐπήρατοι ἄλλα τε πάντα,
ἥσσα τότε ἦν γεγαῶτ’, αὐτὸς δ’ ἄρα μόνος ἔγεντο.”**
[ἐ]ν τούτοις σημαίνει ὅτι τὰ ὄντα ὑπῆ[ρ]χεν ἀεὶ, τὰ δὲ

⁶¹⁹ Modern commentators act more or less with the same principle of economy in mind. When they comment, say, upon the beginning lines of a work and they need to reference what comes later in the work, they either briefly summarize those lines or simply allude to them with a *see below* or a *cf.* Rarely do they quote them in full more than once.

νῦν ἔόντα ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων γίν[ε]ται. τὸ δὲ
“[αὐ]τὸς δὲ ἄρα μόνος ἔγεντο”· τοῦτο δὲ [λ]έγων δηλοῖ
 [αὐ]τὸν Νοῦν πάντων ἄξιον εἶναι μόν[ο]ν ἔόντα,
 [ὡσπερ]εὶ μηδὲν ἄλλα εἶη· οὐ γὰρ [ἐξῆ]ν τοιαῦτα εἶναι
 [τὰ νῦν] ἔόντα ἄν[ε]ν τοῦ Νοῦ. [ἔτι ἐν τῷ ἐχ]ομένῳ
 [ἔπει] τούτ[ου] ἄξιον πάντων [ἔφη]σεν τὸν Νοῦν εἶναι·
“νῦν δ’ ἐστὶν βασιλεὺς πάντ[ων] καὶ τ’ ἔσσειτ’ ἔπ]ειτα.”
 [δηλ]ον ὅτι] Νοῦς καὶ π[άντων] βασιλεύς ἐστι τα]ύτόν.

“Of the reverend king Protogonos; and upon him all the immortal grew, blessed gods and goddess, rivers, lovely sources, and everything else that had come into being at that time, and he himself was alone”. In these lines, he indicates that the things that are always existed and the things that are now come into being from the things that exist. As for the phrase: “and he himself was alone” in saying it he shows that Nous itself being alone is worth everything as if everything else were nothing. For it would not be possible for the things that are now to be such as they are without Nous. Even in the line that follows the one just mentioned he said that the Nous is worth everything: “Now he is the king of all and will be later”. It is evident that the Nous and “the king of all” are the same thing.

As we can see, the author starts with a four lines quotation (ll. 3-6) which he then briefly comments (ll. 7-8). Then, he zooms into the details of the quotation and selects one portion of it “**“[αὐ]τὸς δὲ ἄρα μόνος ἔγεντο”** (“and he himself was alone”) which, again, he quotes and comments upon. Once he is done with the extract, he moves to the next one (ll. 14) and so on so forth. As it is customary with hypomnemata, sometimes the explanation of a line is corroborated by a paraphrase, like in col. VIII, on which see below. Other times single words of the quotations are isolated and commented upon (see, *e.g.*, col. X).

The quotations are visually distinct from the main text by the use of the *paragraphos*. A small stroke placed in the left margin between two lines of writing, the *paragraphos* is a very old and common annotation in papyri.⁶²⁰ It is used to mark

⁶²⁰ TURNER 1987²: 10

any kind of pause and/or separation. It occurs both in prose (often to mark the end of a sentence),⁶²¹ and in poetry (in hexametric texts it marks the end of a section, whereas in lyric texts it can separate the elements of a triadic structure or different stanzas). Often coupled with the double dot it indicates a change of speaker in dramatic texts and dialogues. In hypomnemata, the *paragraphos* often separates lemmata from comments. In this case, it usually appears together with other visual devices such as the ekthesis (the lines quoted begin inside the left margin), a blank space, and/or different types of diplai.⁶²² Within the Derveni papyrus, for the most part,⁶²³ a pair of paragraphoi used alone both above the beginning and below the end of a section of poetry separates poetic extracts from authorial comments. Moreover, quotations of poetry always begin on a new line so that lines of poetry and lines of prose are never mixed. This occasionally produces an unusually short line of prose⁶²⁴ just before the beginning of a poetic quotation. Together with the *paragraphos* this scribal practice contributes marking a visual separation between prose from poetry. Unfortunately, both these elements (the *paragraphos* and the visual separation) are not decisive when it comes to identifying lemmata.⁶²⁵

⁶²¹ On *paragraphos* and prose texts see PARSON 2002. For the use of the *paragraphos* in the Herculaneum papyri see DEL MASTRO 2017: 80-5.

⁶²² See DEL FABBRO 1979: 87-89.

⁶²³ In some cases, the *paragraphos* is missing (Col. VIII, 2; Col. XIII, 1). In others, it works more like a full stop (col. X, 1 0; XIII, 6) and in some other cases its function is debated see RUSTEN 2014: 127-32.

⁶²⁴ The normal length of the lines of writing in the Derveni papyrus is between 30 and 45 characters. In antiquity, the length of a work was measured in relation to a standard unit of measure, the stichos, which corresponds more or less to the length of a hexametric line. No matter how short or long a scribe would make his lines of writing, the length of his work would be indicated in stichoi. The Derveni papyrus is a case of stichometric text because the length of its lines corresponds with the length of a stichos. On stichometry OHLY (1928) remains fundamental. Among the most recent contributions, CORCELLA (2013: 32-5) provides a concise overview with a thorough bibliography.

⁶²⁵ See also BETEGH 2004a: 95-96.

First, editorial separation of the kind discussed above between quotations and explanation is also used, albeit rarely, in non-lemmatic texts. Consider, for instance, P.Oxy. 220, a I-II century CE *sungramma* on prosody which quotes lines of poetry as examples of the different kinds of meters it discusses. In this text too, the literary quotations always start in a new line and are marked both by an *ekthesis* and a *paragraphos*. Secondly, in the Derveni papyrus the unusually short lines of prose also precede non-lemmatic sections like in col. X, 10 where the new paragraph simply marks a change of topic. Finally, short lines and *paragraphoi* also mark quotations that, strictly speaking, are not lemmata. Consider the already mentioned col. XXVI in which the author quotes two extracts from Homer. Both extracts are preceded by a shorter than usual prose line (17 characters in each case, see col. XXVI, 3 and XXVI, 5) and are marked by a pair of *paragraphoi*. Yet, these quotations from Homer are not *sensu stricto* lemmata which the commentator set out to explain. Instead, as we have seen, they are parallel passages, in-text quotations which the author uses in order to strengthen an exegetical point. In this case, then, the scribe did not distinguish between lemmata and commentary but rather between poetry and prose. In conclusion, the presence of these editorial devices alone, although typical of the hypomnematic genre, does not authorize us to conclude that we are in the presence of a hypomnema.

There is, furthermore, a feature that sets the Derveni papyrus apart from other existing ancient commentaries: the prose expressions used to introduce an extract. These comprise expressions such as “this he [the poet] shows in the following line”,

“having said the following” “he shows this by saying the following”.⁶²⁶ Ironically, these introductory expressions are one of the major elements that led Armida Lamedica to conclude, in two influential papers of hers, that the Derveni papyrus was a hypomnema.⁶²⁷ Lamedica is definitively right that the introductory expressions of the Derveni papyrus belong to the traditional vocabulary of ancient exegesis. Yet, she fails to notice that in ancient hypomnema, lemmata are never introduced by prose expressions.⁶²⁸ In commentaries, lemmata are simply quoted, either *in extenso* or in abbreviated form, and all the reader needs to be able to recognize them is the kind of editorial help we discussed above (ekthesis, paragraphos etc.) together with the knowledge of what text the commentary is upon (a piece of information usually provided in the title). This is perfectly economical and there is no reason why the commentator should keep repeating the provenance and the name of the author who composed the quoted lines given that these two elements are always going to be the same throughout the commentary. Ultimately, then, commentaries are made up of independent blocks of lemmata + explanations and there is no necessary continuity of discourse between the explanation of one lemma and the subsequent one. Each time a new lemma is mentioned the explanation starts afresh.⁶²⁹ This is exactly the opposite of what happens in the Derveni papyrus which offers one long continuous discourse,

⁶²⁶ A complete list of introductory expressions can be found in BETEGH 2004a: 94; BETEGH 2004b: 38. Note that Betegh’s list should be updated on the basis of the more recent editions of the text (KPT 2006 and JANKO 2017).

⁶²⁷ LAMEDICA 1991; LAMEDICA 1992.

⁶²⁸ This fact has gone mostly unnoticed in the scholarship. As far as I know, only West briefly mentions it when he says that the Derveni text is “not the type of commentary which consists of a series of independent blocks each beginning with a lemma” (West 1983: 78).

⁶²⁹ This, of course, does not mean that the commentator cannot cross-reference what he argued in previous lemmata. Expressions such as “as it has been shown earlier” and the like are indeed common.

thematically coherent, from the beginning till the end. In this respect, the Derveni papyrus is much more similar to a *sungramma*, a monograph, where an author produces a single cohesive discourse on a topic and integrates it with quotations to support his views.

All things considered, the Derveni papyrus defies the common typology of exegetical texts. He is definitively not a *sungramma* but it is not exactly a fully developed *hypomnema* either. A precursor of the commentary is perhaps the best descriptor.⁶³⁰ The Derveni papyrus, in fact, presents two major characteristics which are exclusive to *hypomenmata* (the *lemmata* comes from the same work and are commented upon in order). Furthermore, I think it is plausible to regard the introductory expressions as an original feature of the genre that was eventually abandoned. It should be noted that although introductory expressions can be avoided in writing thanks to the help of editorial devices of the kind described above, they are unavoidable in any kind of oral form of exegesis. They feature, of course, in Socrates' discussion of Simonides poem in the *Protagoras*, which, can be regarded as a "live commentary" of the *Ode to Scopas*. Especially given the early date of the Derveni papyrus, it is possible that at that time some of the later conventions of the genre were not yet fixed. Lacking a standard citation system, it would not be surprising if in quoting poetry the author deferred to the typical modules of oral exegesis thus incorporating in his writing the introductory expressions typical of oral "commentaries." Assuming this is correct, the Derveni papyrus would, therefore,

⁶³⁰ Pfeiffer was not far from the truth when he defined the DP as a specimen of a pre-Alexandrian commentary. PFEIFFER 1968: 139 n. 7.

represent an important *specimen* in order to investigate the beginnings of the genre and the relationship between oral and written forms of exegesis.

Finally, there is one last item concerning the Derveni papyrus and its genre that deserves to be discussed. As noted by Lamedica,⁶³¹ the Derveni author often reasons in a seemingly inductive fashion. After he is done commenting upon one lemma, he introduces the next one using introductory formulas such as “he shows it [the point made in the preceding explanation] in this line” *vel similia* (cf. e.g. XII, 3). The lemma thus introduced is brought, so it seems, into the commentary as further proof of what has just been said. These lemmata, therefore, have a hybrid status: they strengthen the commentator analysis (much like parallel passages) and, like every other lemma, they provide new exegetical material to be commented upon. Given that explicit inductive methodology is typical of sungrammata and not of hypomnemata, which tend to proceed deductively, this is another feature, largely unnoticed by scholarship, that contributes to the ambiguous status of the Derveni papyrus. Again, we should try to explain it as part of the hypomnematic genre rather than taking it as evidence that the Derveni papyrus was not a commentary.

These introductory formulas are different than the merely “spatial” introductions like “in the following line he says this” etc. Through them, in fact, the author strengthens the impression of a strong connection, in terms of meaning, between one line of the poem and the subsequent one: what Orpheus intended to say in line X is coherent with what he says in line Y, X and Y thus mutually illuminate themselves. As we will see, to show that Orpheus wrote *every line* of his poem as

⁶³¹ LAMEDICA 1992: 328.

coherent parts of a larger allegorical design is the major goal of the Derveni author. In order to achieve it, he underlined how the meaning of one line was coherent with the meaning of another one, and how all of them, ultimately, contributed to the same goal: speaking in coding terms about the universe. The exegesis, presented as a continuous discourse, thus mirrors the commentator's assumption about a strict unity of scope in the poem and the Derveni author, through the formulas I noted, emphasizes how every lemma contributes to the same agenda. Indeed, the Derveni author had one main explicit exegetical goal: to show that everything that Orpheus said is part of a carefully designed allegorical system. His exegetical remarks are completely subordinated to such a goal. In this respect, his work is different from that of many other commentators who, even when they have one main interest, and, arguably used, like the Derveni author, commentaries to prove one main point, they still felt the need to negotiate their overall agenda with the expectation of the genre; they thus end up interspersing the promotion of their own view of the text with unrelated historical asides or glosses of difficult words.⁶³² The Derveni author certainly indulges much less than his later colleagues into the impulse of being hermeneutically comprehensive and his exegesis turns into a one-sided endeavor aiming at proving the allegorical design of Orpheus' poem. What is key, however, is that to prove his point the Derveni

⁶³² A case in point is the so-called cosmogonic fragment of Alcman (P. Oxy. 2390 fr. 2), part of a larger commentary dating to the II century CE on a collection of poems by Alcman. The section running from col. II.22 to III.29 preserves a commentary on an unknown poem by Alcman. As rightly shown by Most (see MOST 1987; see also STEINER 2003), the commentator interprets Alcman's mythological narrative allegorically as a coded cosmogony. The premises are the same as the Derveni author and so is the medium: the commentary. Yet, differently from the commentator of Derveni the anonymous on Alcman did not limit himself to demonstrate that the narrative of Alcman was actually a coded reference to the secrets of the universe but, as any commentator would do, also brought up exegetical points not immediately relevant to his main agenda. Thus, for instance, at column III. 20-1, he interrupts the allegorical reading and glosses the doric form *πρεσγύς* (old man) with the *koine* word for it, *πρεσβύτης*.

author thought it best to analyze the poem progressively, line by line; he decided, in other words, to present his view of the text in the form of a commentary.

I have argued so far that the Derveni exegesis of Orpheus' poem is presented in a form that closely resembles that of a commentary. It shares with later commentaries a progressive and systematic analysis of a single poem. Differently from other ancient commentators, however, the Derveni author explicitly introduces his lemmata with prose formulas and uses the medium of the commentary more to "argue" than "explaining." Finally, I have alluded to the fact that the choice of composing a commentary is a natural consequence of the commentator's agenda. To such an agenda and its relationship to the genre of the commentary I now turn.

The agenda of the Derveni author is explicitly mentioned in col. VII, 4-10, which constitutes a methodological introduction of sort to the commentary.

ἔστι δὲ μ[αντική⁶³³ ἢ] πόησις
[κ]αὶ ἀνθρώ[ποις] αἰνι[γμ]ατώδης, [κα]ὶ [Ορ]φ[εὺς] αὐτ[οῖς]
ἐρίστ' αἰν[ίγμ]ατα οὐκ ἤθελε λέγειν, [ἐν αἰν]ίγμ[α]σ[ι]ν δὲ
[μεγ]άλα. ἱερ[ολογ]εῖται μὲν οὖν καὶ ἀπὸ [το]ῦ πρώτου
[καὶ] μέχρι οὗ⁶³⁴ [τελε]υτ[αί]ου ῥήματος, ὧ[ς] δηλο[ῖ] καὶ ἐν τῷ
[εὐκ]ρινήτω[ι] ἔπει· "[θ]ύρας" γὰρ "ἐπίθε[σθα]ι" ὁ κελεύσας
τοῖ[ς] ὡσὶν αὐτ[οὺς] μὴ θεοὺς ἀ[σεβεῖν] φη[σιν]. τοῖ[ς] πολλοῖς [...]

His poetry is prophetic and riddling to people, and Orpheus did not want to present to them riddles as contests but rather great things in riddles. Hence, he is speaking allegorically from the first till the last word, as he shows in the easily understandable line. For by ordering them to "shut doors" on their ears he is saying [to the many that they should not be irreverent to the gods]

First, leaving aside the supplemented and doubtful μαντική, the author defines Orphic poetry as αἰνι[γμ]ατώδης. The term, a cognate of αἰνιγμα, riddle, is often associated

⁶³³ μ[αντική] West and Struck, followed by Janko: ξ[ένη τις] KPT.

⁶³⁴ <τ>οῦ Janko.

with allegory and allegorical interpretation (see above, ch. 4). Another cognate of αἰνίγμα, that is, αἰνίζομαι, to compose allegorically, is used in col. IX, 10 and XVII, 13 to describe the poet's agenda. The author's first assumption is thus that Orpheus composed a riddling poem whose true meaning is not immediately clear.⁶³⁵

In the second sentence, the author specifies that Orpheus is not telling ἐρίστ' αἰνίγματα but rather ἐν αἰνίγμασιν μεγάλα. If ἐρίστος is indeed the right term here,⁶³⁶ the author provides a contrast between the practice of riddling for its own sake (think, e.g., of riddles' contests in sympotic and other similar settings, on which see above) and the practice of hiding important truths under the veil of poetry. It is to this second "more serious" kind of riddle that Orpheus' poetry belongs. An important specification follows: Orpheus ἱερολογεῖσθαι from the beginning of the poem till the end. As the parallels provided by K. Tsantsanoglou and Sider show,⁶³⁷ the verb, ἱερολογέω, which usually means to recount a sacred story (*hieros logos*), is here used as a *terminus technicus* of allegorical practice, basically, as a synonym of αἰνίσσομαι. According to our commentator, Orpheus is thus speaking allegorically throughout the whole poem. The thought is repeated at col. XIII, 5-6 where we read: "Since he speaks in riddles about the true things throughout all of the poem, it is necessary to talk about

⁶³⁵ Compare this statement with Pl. *Alc.* II, 147b7-d8 according to which *all* poetry is by nature enigmatic, clearly an ironic distortion of the key assumptions of allegorical interpreters according to which the poem/passage they are interpreting is enigmatic. On this passage of the *Alcibiades* and its relationship with the Derveni papyrus see STRUCK 2004: 46-7; STRUCK 2005: 159-60; RUSTEN 2014: 122; RÉAL forthcoming (b).

⁶³⁶ ἄριστος (see in TSANTSANOGLOU 1997: 121-2) and ἀόριστος (LAKS-MOST 2016: 388) have also been considered.

⁶³⁷ TSANTSANOGLOU 1997: 122-3; SIDER 1997: 135 n. 17. See also JANKO 2001: 3 and KPT 2006: 171-2.

each word/line.”⁶³⁸ These sentences thus specify that Orpheus did not only sporadically used coded language to reveal higher truths but that he composed each word as part of a carefully designed system of meaning whose ultimate goal is the revealing of greater truths. In a word, Orpheus’ poem is meant to be an allegorical representation of the working of the universe.

Before discussing the last lines (VII, 8-10) of the introduction, we should look more closely at the main exegetical implications of the author’s assumptions. First, given the ambivalent nature of the poem, it is not surprising that other interpreters misunderstood its meaning and came up with different (literal) readings for it. Though scholars hardly ever emphasize this point, the goal of the commentator is thus also to correct previous mistaken interpretations. This he does four times: in col. VIII and IX he complains that “those who do not understand the words [uttered by Orpheus]” (col. IX 2-3) missed a hyperbaton (see below) and, therefore, ended up with the wrong understanding of the line in question; at col. XII, he points out that those who think that Orpheus used Olympus as a synonym of heaven are mistaken; likewise, in col.

⁶³⁸ ὅτι μὲν πᾶσαν τὴν πόησιν περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων αἰνίσκεται ἔστ’ ἔπος ἕκαστον ἀνάγκη λέγειν. This sentence is obviously a variation on the theme already expressed in the introduction. I find, therefore, Kotwick’s interpretation (KOTWICK 2017: 213-4), according to which the commentator meant to say that every word needs to be interpreted outside of his context, in isolation, highly improbable. First, Kotwick misses the close relationship between this passage and the thought expressed in VII, 7-8. Secondly, “atomization,” the process by which the author focuses on one word and analyzes it in isolation first, is hardly something specific to the methodology of the Derveni author but rather an essential part of every hermeneutical investigation be it allegorical or not (on this see ch. 4 above). Finally, the Derveni author implicitly shows that he regards context as key for understanding the meaning of a word. For instance, in col. XII he claims that in order to understand what “Olympus” means one has to look, in context, at the adjective that accompanies it. Likewise, in col. XXIII the discussion of the epithet that accompanies the name “Okeanos” is key in assessing what Okeanos means. Decontextualization ends up playing an important role in the interpretative strategy of the Derveni author. Yet, the Derveni author would have certainly resented such a characterization of his exegesis, let alone explicitly claiming it for himself, given the great lengths he goes to in order to advertise that his analysis is as systematic, cohesive, and faithful to the poem as possible.

XXIII he corrects the opinion of those who claim that Okeanos was a river (see below); finally, in col. XXVI he protests against those who interpret the expression “*metros eas*” as meaning “his mother” instead of “of the good mother.” In all these cases, the commentator refers to previous (unsuccessful in his view) attempts at interpreting the poem, a fact that, be it noted in passing, indicates there existed a tradition of commenting upon poetry, and upon this poem specifically, well before our commentator produced his work.

Second, by saying that Orpheus provided riddles for the sake of something greater than merely challenging his audience to a battle of wits, the commentator casts his exegetical endeavor as a serious task whose goal is not merely to showcase his hermeneutical skills. The interpretation of the poem is in service of a better understanding of the world and, possibly, deeper participation in the rituals of which the recitation of the poem was a part.⁶³⁹

Finally, the fact that Orpheus spoke in riddles from the beginning till the end compels the commentator to provide a systematic exegesis, an analysis of the poem word by word, line by line. The hypomnema thus becomes the best tool for the job, as the commentator implicitly remarks when he says that “*Since* he speaks in riddles about the true things throughout all of the poem, it is necessary *to talk about each word/line,*” i.e., to write a commentary. The hypomnema, in fact, allows the commentator to pursue a meticulous analysis of each element of the poem while

⁶³⁹ I am merely discussing here the ways in which the commentator represents his exegesis and I am not making claims about the genuine intentions of the author which might well be, as Edmond, e.g., argues, to advertise his skills in the competitive market of the time. See EDMONDS III 2019: 77-99.

achieving that hermeneutical completeness that he was looking for.⁶⁴⁰ Through the use of the commentary, the author can isolate and analyze all of the lines⁶⁴¹ of the poem in due order while showing how every one of them ultimately contributes to the higher meaning of Orpheus' poem.

The commentator's explicit attention to the *whole* poem, in particular, shows that at the time of the Derveni papyrus allegoresis was not merely a tool for solving this or that discrete exegetical problem, as we usually conceive of it. It was a much wider exegetical stance meant to answer questions about the process of the composition of a text, its aims, and overall meaning. It is not only, say, the battle of the gods in Homer that can be read allegorically nor the representation of this or that scene; instead, the whole poem is taken to be construed in a coded way and each element of it serves to hint at the same higher truth. As we have seen, this broader exegetical stance was already operative in Metrodorus, and, as far as we can see from passages such as the *Second Alcibiades* (see above), notions such as "all poetry is allegorical" or "poets (*always*) speak in riddles" are something of a trope. Yet, before the discovery of the Derveni papyrus we lacked significant examples of exegetical works that actually made good upon these hermeneutical premises and tried to prove

⁶⁴⁰ To provide a complete exegesis is, in the case of the Derveni author, a necessary consequence of his assumption that *all* of Orpheus' poem is allegorical. Yet, completeness is, obviously, a desirable hermeneutical quality even outside the allegorical realm. As we have seen above, Aristotle and other critics who preceded him found it awkward that Calchas should only interpret the first part of the snake omen of *Il.* 2.303-332 and omit the last part. As noted by Bouchard (BOUCHARD 2016: 178-9), both literalists and allegorists seek to interpret the totality of a text. As an example, she provides Euripides' willingness to test Aeschylus' tragedies word by word in Aristophanes' *Frogs* (see Arist. *Ran.* 802 and 1998), though in this specific case it is more exegetical meticulousness than completeness that the expression *κατ'ἔπος* seems to emphasize.

⁶⁴¹ It is impossible to conclude whether the Derveni author commented upon each and every line of the poem, a highly plausible hypothesis in light of what he claims, or whether he only chose to go over the most relevant ones.

them by dutifully matching each line of a poem with the corresponding elements of a philosophical system.⁶⁴²

Of course, in this respect, the Derveni author had a much easier task than, say, an allegorical interpreter of Homer. The poem of Derveni is, for one thing, much shorter and cohesive than any other Homeric poem and his theogonic plot lends itself much more naturally to a cosmological interpretation than the epic plot of the Homeric poems. Still, the commentator's attempt to carry forward such an ambitious exegetical program makes the Derveni papyrus an exceptional and groundbreaking example of exegesis of the time.

Before I conclude this section on the genre of the work and its relationship with the hermeneutical agenda of the commentator, I want to return to the last portion of col. VII which I left uncommented. Scholars have often wondered how the commentator could be sure that Orpheus actually spoke in riddles and why his audience should have believe him.⁶⁴³ The commentator's exegesis itself provides an indirect answer to this question. The very fact that the commentator uses a commentary—that is, that he shows that line 1 of the poem can be read allegorically, as can line 2, and 3, and so on, and that, in turn, when read allegorically line 1 and 2 are perfectly consistent, and so are lines 2 and 3, etc. —proves that the poem can

⁶⁴² Even in the later examples of allegoresis what we have are either allegorical analysis of a single scene of a work (think of the analysis of the battle of the gods scene in Homer commented above) or, at best, collections of passages from one work analyzed allegorically (think of the work of Heraclitus). As I have noted above, the closest parallel to the Derveni papyrus in this respect is the commentary of Alcman preserved in P. Oxy. 2390. Yet, the little that remains of it makes any closer connections between the two texts difficult to ascertain.

⁶⁴³ See, e.g., BETEGH 2004b: 45. HUSSEY 1999: 309, too precipitously, as we will see, notes that the Derveni author “does not seek to justify” his exegetical assumption.

easily accommodate an allegorical interpretation. The Derveni commentary, in fact, as we have seen above when discussing the introductory remarks to the lemmata, does not only provide an explanation of the poem but also constantly justifies itself by continuing to argue its case, i.e., that Orpheus spoke allegorically throughout. Moreover, as we will see in the next section of this chapter, the attempt at anchoring every interpretation within the text and deploying sound hermeneutical techniques in order to prove an allegorical reading also contributes to strengthening the audience's faith in the author's assumptions.

In a more direct fashion, however, the commentator does claim that Orpheus provided something like “a little signpost saying ‘There is a hidden meaning, find it’”—precisely that signpost that scholars like Betegh thought was lacking in the Derveni papyrus.⁶⁴⁴ This, I claim, he does precisely at the point in the introduction where I left off. At the end of his introduction (col. VII, 8-9), the commentator refers to a line of Orpheus, (a line that he must have quoted in a lost portion of the commentary immediately preceding col. VII) with the expression “as Orpheus shows (ὡς δηλοῖ) in the easily understandable line.” The use of ὡς δηλοῖ is remarkable for it implies that the commentator regards the Orphic line as proof of what he just said, that is, proof of the fact that Orpheus speaks allegorically from the beginning to the end of the poem.⁶⁴⁵ Given, however, that we have lost the commentator's explanation of the line it is not exactly clear why such a line would prove the commentator's assumption.

⁶⁴⁴ BETEGH 2004b: 45

⁶⁴⁵ This is notable especially because early allegorists are usually silent about the reason why a poet chose to speak allegorically and rarely justify their exegetical method. See STRUCK 2004: 161.

In what follows, I discuss two hypotheses, not necessarily mutually exclusive, which I regard as highly plausible.

The line in question, a well-attested mystery formula,⁶⁴⁶ is not extant anymore but it probably opened the poem. Allusions to it are abundant in ancient literature (see KOTWICK 2017: 159 for references). Later sources⁶⁴⁷ preserve two possible versions of it: i) ἀείσω ξυνετοῖσι· θύρας δ' ἐπίθεσθε, βέβηλοι, I will sing for the wise; but you, profane, shut the doors ii) φθέγξομαι οἷς θέμις ἐστί· θύρας δ' ἐπίθεσθε, βέβηλοι, I will speak to those for whom it is allowed; but you, profane, shut the doors. Whatever was the version quoted by the commentator, the overall message of the line is clear: what follows the formula, i.e., Orpheus' poem, is not meant for everybody. But how was Orpheus able to control the reception of his poem, to make sure it did not end up in the hands of the profane? After all Orpheus' poem was a book⁶⁴⁸ and as such likely to be read by a variety of different people. He does so through allegorical writing, a technique that allows him to communicate only with those who have the skillset to decode the author's riddles and understand the poem's true meaning. Through allegory the great truths Orpheus reveals do not hand up in the wrong hands.⁶⁴⁹ This esoteric justification of allegoresis is something of a *tropos*. We find it explicitly expressed for

⁶⁴⁶ See esp. BERNABÉ 1996.

⁶⁴⁷ The formula is already alluded to by Empedokles (31 B 3.3-5 DK). Version i) is found, e.g., in Stob. 3.1.199; version ii) in, e.g., Clem. Al. *Protr.* 7.74.4.

⁶⁴⁸ The fact that the poem was commented upon in such detail both by the Derveni author and critics who preceded him must imply that the poem had been fixed at a much earlier stage. Moreover, as we will see below, some of the exegetical techniques used by the commentator imply that the work commented upon was read rather than heard. This is, in any case, what scholars have generally assumed about the Derveni papyrus especially given that Orphism is a “bookish religion” *par excellence* see, e.g., BERNABÉ 1996: 18-19 esp. n. 15.

⁶⁴⁹ In col. XXV, 12-13 the commentator explicitly attributes to Orpheus an esoteric agenda. τὰ δ' ἐπὶ τούτοις ἐπίπροσθε π[ο]ιεῖται [οὐ β]ου[λό]μενο[ς] πάντα γιν[ώ]σκε[ι]ν. The following lines he puts forward as a screen not wanting for everybody to understand.

the first time in the second-century *Life of Homer* by Ps. Plutarch. In chapter 92 of this work the author claims that enigmatic language spurs the lovers of knowledge and prevents the ignorant from scorning what they do not understand.⁶⁵⁰ Much like in Ps. Plutarch, the quotation of the mystery formula by the commentator provides a reason as to why it is logical to assume that Orpheus spoke allegorically: he did so because he did not want to be understood by all.

Aside from the esoteric justification, there is a second reason, ignored by the scholarship, as to why this line is relevant to the agenda of the commentator. If taken literally, the expression *θύρας δ' ἐπιθήσθε* “shut the door” must be understood as part of a ritual. The expression was performative and must have prompted the profane to close actual doors. Scholars have thus speculated that originally the formula could have been uttered during a procession, to prevent the people standing in their houses from seeing the sacred objects of cult.⁶⁵¹ Alternatively, the formula could have been shouted by initiates gathered inside a house to prevent people outside from entering or hearing what was going on inside.⁶⁵² Nevertheless, as soon as this formula is used outside of its original context, for instance when it becomes a standard opening of religious texts as in the Derveni case, it turns into a metaphorical intimation not to read ahead unless one has the competence to do so.⁶⁵³ The metaphorical meaning of the formula was certainly already available by Plato’s time. In the *Symposium* (see Pl. *Symp.* 218b), the same formula “put doors over their ears” is used to ask the servants

⁶⁵⁰ On this passage and on esotericism as a justification for allegoresis see STRUCK 2004: 160-1. On “intentional unclarity” for didactic sake see also BETEGH 2004b: 46.

⁶⁵¹ WEST 1983: 82-83; BERNABÉ 1996: 17; BURKERT 2011: 238; PRIMAVESI 2013: 51

⁶⁵² BREMMER 2010: 27; BREMMER 2011: 3-5. On the question see also KOTWICK 2017: 160-2.

⁶⁵³ BERNABÉ 1996: 18-19; KOTWICK 2017: 160-2.

not to pay attention to what the banqueters discuss. If ears, τῶ[ς ὠσὶ]ν is, as it seems,⁶⁵⁴ the best word to fill the lacuna at col. VII, 10, it follows that the commentator of Derveni also understood the expression θύρας δ' ἐπίθεσθε metaphorically, along Plato's lines. The actual doors of the original formula come to signify any means of obstruction used to cover the audience's ears, and the overall expression metaphorically means: "do not listen to what follows," i.e., do not read ahead.⁶⁵⁵

This happens to be the only line of the poem quoted by our author that clearly has a nonliteral meaning. Obviously, as we have seen, Orpheus is not telling his audience to grab actual doors, rather, he uses the word in a different sense. "Doors" is a code for something else, much like Zeus, Chronos, and all the other words of the poem are. The difference is that the expression "shut the doors" is unmistakably a code and nobody would take it literally. If my reading is correct, the much-debated adjective εὐκρινήτωι, "easily understandable,"⁶⁵⁶ which defines the line in question, must mean that this line is easy to understand in that its being symbolic is not under discussion: it can only be taken "metaphorically."⁶⁵⁷ Conversely, the other lines the

⁶⁵⁴ Aside from the parallel in Plato see also Gal. *de usu part.* IV.20.28 Kühn.

⁶⁵⁵ Note that the term Βέβηλοι, profanes, too is somewhat metaphorical if it is true that here it does not have a religious connotation but indicates, more broadly, those who do not understand. On this question see KPT 2006: 174.

⁶⁵⁶ A summary of the possible meanings of the adjective in KOTWICK 2017: 158-9.

⁶⁵⁷ This is not exactly the way in which the term is usually taken. Scholars (see, e.g., KPT 2006: 173; KOTWICK 2017: 158-9) who analyze εὐκρινήτωι as εὐ + the verbal adjective of κρίνω and thus claim that the word means something like "easy to understand," take it to mean that the line is "easy to understand" because it does not have to be interpreted allegorically like the other lines in the poem. I agree that the commentator is suggesting that there is a distinction between this line and the other ones. Yet, the difference lies in the fact that of the two levels on which allegory operates, the literal and the symbolic, here the symbolical interpretation unequivocally imposes itself over the literal. This makes the line easier to understand insofar as the commentator does not have to decide between a literal and symbolic interpretation.

poet discusses can also be taken literally, and actually were taken literally by the earlier critics against whom the commentator reacts (see above).

When the author, then, quotes this line to justify his claim that Orpheus writes allegorically, he not only does so in order to show that Orpheus did not want to reveal his secrets to everybody (esoteric justification) but also because the quoted line is unambiguously riddling and necessarily demands a nonliteral interpretation. If Orpheus speaks in a riddling fashion at the beginning of the poem chances are that he will do so throughout. Hence the formula explains why (ὥς δηλοῖ) the poem must be read allegorically.

This way of justifying allegoresis is not uncommon either. We find it explicitly expressed by Heraclitus “the allegorist” at the beginning of his *Homeric Problems*. After having cursorily gone through some examples of allegory in literature (5.3-11), Heraclitus claims (5.12) that Homer’s image in *Il.* 19. 222-224 (which we discussed at length in ch. 4 above) is an allegory. Homer, in fact, is talking about “agriculture” but he clearly means something else: “war.” Moving from these assumptions, Heraclitus construes the following fallacious reasoning (6.1): since other poets unequivocally used allegory, and since Homer did so as well (at least once!) it follows that allegoresis can (always!) be used to rescue Homer. In other words, finding an instance of actual allegory in a poem justifies the commentator to look for more allegorical passages. I argue that this is, in a nutshell, the same strategy the Derveni author resorts to when he quotes the mystery formula Orpheus begins his poem with in support of his whole exegetical method.

In conclusion, if I am correct, the mystery formula quoted by the Derveni author constitutes, in the eyes of the commentator, precisely that “little signpost” that Betegh and other scholars were asking for (see above). It is a clue Orpheus provided to hint at the fact that his poetry should be read allegorically. The mystery formula, in fact, i) offers a reason why Orpheus would choose to resort to riddles and ii) constitutes an actual unambiguous example of Orpheus’ riddling practice. In conclusion, two of what would later become standard modes of justification of allegoresis were already operative, *in nuce*, in a fifth-to-fourth-century BCE document. This is another striking example of the self-awareness of the Derveni commentator and of the groundbreaking significance of his exegetical methodology.

I have argued that section VII to XXVI of the Derveni papyrus is crafted as a running commentary of an Orphic poem. The choice of the commentary is the natural consequence of the author’s effort to reveal the meaning of Orpheus’s poem lines by line (or word by word). Much like in Metrodorus, the philosophical system of Derveni author englobes the totality of the poem and becomes the key to understand both the poem’s overall meaning and each of the details that compose it. In the following section, I focus on the exegetical techniques that the Derveni author employed to negotiate between the hermeneutical possibilities of Orpheus’s text and his philosophical system.

6.3 The Derveni Author: Etymologies and Πρὸς Τῆν Λέξιν Solutions

Since the first studies on the Derveni Papyrus, scholars have often pointed out that the commentary is based upon a curious mixture of bizarre interpretations that defy

the plain meaning of the text, and a series of sound exegetical techniques that anticipate later Alexandrian hermeneutical analysis.⁶⁵⁸ Comparatively little attention, however, has been paid to an in-depth analysis of each of these exegetical techniques and to their relationship with contemporary and later hermeneutic.⁶⁵⁹ Scholars generally content themselves with singling out some interesting philological devices used by the commentator such as paraphrases, parallel passages, or analysis of the word-order, and, for the most part, emphasize the author's attempt at using etymology (and other similar analogical reasonings) to establish hazardous links between the words of the poem and the reality hidden below the surface of the language. The result is that the Derveni author is often described as professing an almost magical view of language, a view according to which there is full continuity between things and words whose form reflects the ontological status of things.⁶⁶⁰ In this respect, his approach would be radically different from, say, an Aristotle, or a later Alexandrian critic for whom language is the domain of *fiction*, and is clearly separated from reality.⁶⁶¹ In this section, I will first debunk the long-standing myth according to which Derveni author acknowledges a natural correspondence between language and things. Then, I will focus on a series of exegetical

⁶⁵⁸ See, e.g., BURKERT 1968: 443-444.

⁶⁵⁹ The best analysis of the Derveni exegetical techniques to date is KOTWICK 2019. See also SALAMONE 2017: 230-244. In a seminal paper, Madeleine Henry focused on some of the exegetical techniques of the Derveni author and underlined his importance for the understanding of fifth and fourth centuries literary criticism (HENRY 1986). Edmonds III analyzes many aspects of continuity between the Derveni author and the sophists (EDMONDS III 2013: 124-35; EDMONDS III 2019: 77-99). SCHIRONI 2001 shows the clear continuity between two of the interpretations provided by the Derveni author and Aristarchus. RUSTEN 2004 also notes the affinity of the DP with Alexandrian scholarship.

⁶⁶⁰ I am paraphrasing here BOUCHARD 2016: 36, as a summary of the *communis opinio* about the Derveni papyrus' approach to language.

⁶⁶¹ See BOUCHARD 2016: 37. In contrasting the allegorists, such as the Derveni author, with Aristotle and the Alexandrian critics STRUCK 2004, instead, emphasizes the notion of language as a vehicle of obscurity vs language as a vehicle of clarity. As I have been arguing throughout, both scholars propose too sharp a distinction between pre-Aristotelian and Aristotelian approaches to language and *poetics*.

techniques showcased by the Derveni author that, later, even Aristotle will sanction. I conclude that the exegesis of the Derveni author has much more in common than previously realized with later Aristotelian and Alexandrian hermeneutics.

Following in the footsteps of Burkert's seminal work,⁶⁶² scholars usually agree that the Derveni authors show a tendency toward linguistic naturalism.⁶⁶³ Others go as far as conceiving of the Derveni author as "certainly a naturalist."⁶⁶⁴ As evidence, they usually produce two passages of the Derveni papyrus (col. XVIII-XIX and col. XXII) in which names and naming are discussed; yet, above all, they draw attention to the fact that the Derveni author uses etymologies to get at the meaning of a word, a fact that, allegedly, suggests he conceived of a natural relationship between words and things, what we would call signifier and signified. Both these pieces of evidence remain in my view inconclusive. Ultimately, adhesion to linguistic naturalism is not a necessary condition to explain the kind of interpretations the Derveni author produces. Instead, it is the author's assumption that Orpheus crafted and choose to use language in a coded way which fully motivates the commentator's exegetical procedure.

At col. XVIII-XIX the commentator argues that Moira, a name that must have featured in the lost lemma the author is commenting upon, corresponds to the wisdom of the god, Zeus, i.e. Nous.⁶⁶⁵ We have lost the author's full reasoning but it is clear

⁶⁶² BURKERT 1970.

⁶⁶³ See e.g. BAXTER 1991: 130-139; CASADESÚS 2000; BERGOMI 2014. PIANO 2016: 117 claims that the commentator: "comes to consider, in a way, language as a medium of knowledge of the real world in terms that we could define as ontological". "giunge, in qualche modo, a considerare il linguaggio come un mezzo di conoscenza del mondo reale in termini che potremmo definire ontologici."

⁶⁶⁴ SALAMONE 246.

⁶⁶⁵ On the relationship between the terms discussed in these columns (Zeus, mind, air, Mind, wisdom, and breath) see BETEGH 2004a: 200-2.

that his argument started from an examination of a set of everyday expressions such as “Moira spins for them” and “the things that Moira spun, those will happen”.

Col. XVIII, 3-9 οἱ δ' ἄλλοι ἄνθρωποι κατὰ φάτιν “Μοῖραν ἐπικλῶσαι” φασί[ν] “σφισιν” καὶ “ἔσεσθαι ταῦθ' ἄσσα Μοῖρα ἐπέκλωσεν,” λέγοντες μὲν ὀρθῶς, οὐκ εἰδότες δὲ οὔτε τὴν ‘Μοῖραν’ ὅ τι ἐστὶν οὔτε τὸ ‘ἐπικλῶσαι.’ Ὀρφεὺς γὰρ τὴν φρόνησ[ι]ν ‘Μοῖραν’ ἐκάλεσεν· ἐφαίνετο γὰρ αὐτῶι τοῦτο προσφερέστατον εἶ[ν]αι ἐξ ὧν ἅπαντες ἄνθρωποι ὠνόμασαν·

The other men say, according to a common expression: “Moira spins for them” and “the things that Moira spun, those will happen.” In saying thus, they speak properly but they do not know either what “Moira” is, nor what “to spin” is. For Orpheus called the wisdom “Moira”; this seemed to him to be the most suitable out of the names that all men gave it.

Based on this passage, it is clear that the commentator attributes to Orpheus the capacity of name-giver. Orpheus picks the most adequate name, *προσφερέστατον*, among the many used by men to define something. In this capacity, its role has often been compared to that of the name-giver (nomothetes) of Plato’s dialogue, *Cratylus*.⁶⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the similarity should not be over emphasized. Plato’s name-giver and Orpheus have very different aims in mind when establishing names. Plato’s name-giver, in fact, attributes names to things according to a standard of “correctness” ὀρθότης. A correct name is for Cratylus a name that shows the essence of the thing.⁶⁶⁷ There must be, in other words, a natural relationship between the sound pattern of a

⁶⁶⁶ See especially BAXTER 1992: 134-5. This is only one of the many analogies that have been proposed between the *Cratylus* and the Derveni Papyrus. On the relationship between the *Cratylus* and the Derveni papyrus see, among many others, BURKERT: 1970; BAXTER 1992: 130-39; KAHN 1997; HUSSEY 1999: 309-315; CASADESÚS 2000; ANCESCHI 2007; BERGOMI 2014; PIANO 2016: 116-121; SALAMONE 2017: 244-256. The first instance in Greek literature of a nomothetes/onomatopetes is in Aeschylus (Aesch. Ag. 681). There the chorus, drawing on the similarities between the name Helen and the root εἴλ- (to destroy), supposes that an invisible entity that knew what was fated had given Helen her name. On the name-giver see esp. GAMBARARA 1984: 191-5. With reference to the *Cratylus* see BAXTER 1992: 41-48 and ADEMOLLO 2011: 115-124; 138-44.

⁶⁶⁷ See e.g. Pl. *Crat.* E1-2.

word (what we would call the signifier) and the thing the word refers to (signified) for it to be “correct.” Thus, according to one of the many “etymologies” featured in the *Cratylus* (see 399c1-6) the name for man, “anthropos,” is a correct one because it indicates the essence of the thing. The word ἄνθρωπος can be, in fact, analyzed as ἀναθρῶν ἃ ὄπωπε, that is, “observing closely what he saw,” a proper definition for “men” because they are the only animals who investigate what they see. On the contrary, nothing suggests that Orpheus, in the commentator’s view, had the correctness of names in mind when “giving names.” For Orpheus, even if, as we will see below, the natural link between signifier and signified does sometimes play a role in choosing names, what makes a name suitable is whether it produces a good riddle or not.⁶⁶⁸ Consider the passage above about the name “Moira.” Certainly is not because of how its signifier implicates the notion of wisdom that “Moira” is a suitable name for “phronesis.” Instead, I believe, Moira is the most fitting name for wisdom because, much like a riddle, it can be interpreted in at least two ways. On the one hand, as the common expression “Moira spins for them” shows, men can consider Moira to be, quite literally, the old lady of mythology, that lady whose spinning determines the fate of men. These men, I take it, are the ones that the commentator indicates as not knowing what “Moira” really is neither what “spinning” is.⁶⁶⁹ In fact, the expression “Moira spins” can (and should, according to the commentator) be taken symbolically, that is, one should doubt that there exists an old lady whose actual

⁶⁶⁸ HUSSEY 1999: 310.

⁶⁶⁹ Alternatively, we can say that the people not knowing what “Moira” and “spinning” are are those who realize that the expression is metaphorical but do not know exactly what Moira nor the spinning refer to.

spinning influences our life. Once one realizes that the expression is symbolic, Moira clearly must mean something other than its mythological referent and so should her action, “the spinning.” We lack the lines in which the commentator explained how to move from the mythical/literal meaning of the expression to the symbolic/cosmological one, but we do have the end result of the process.

Col. XIX,4-7 “Μοῖραν” δ’ “ἐπικλῶσαι”
λέγοντες τοῦ Διὸς τὴν φρόνησιν ἐπικυρῶσαι
λέγουσιν τὰ ἔοντα καὶ τὰ γινόμενα καὶ τὰ μέλλοντα,
ὅπως χρῆ γενέσθαι τε καὶ εἶναι κα[ῖ] παύσασθαι.

When they say “Moira spins” they actually say that Zeus’ wisdom determines how the things that are, those that have come to be, and those that will come to be must come to be, exist, and cease.

According to the commentator, what men inadvertently⁶⁷⁰ express when they say “Moira spins” is that the wisdom of Zeus determines everything and it is responsible for how everything is and will be in the universe. In other words, the expression “Moira spins” signifies that the wisdom of god acts and shapes the whole universe. Moira is not a person but the practical knowledge of Zeus/Nous in virtue of which he ordains the universe. The analogy is evident: like Moira through her spinning shapes human’s lives, so wisdom is what enables Zeus to shape the universe.⁶⁷¹ To

⁶⁷⁰ Given that the subject of λέγουσι and λέγοντες seems to be those same “other men” that in col. XVIII the commentator said they did not know what “Moira” and “spin” are, it follows that here the meaning of λέγουσι must be that they express the proper meaning without realizing it.

⁶⁷¹ In the *De Mundo*, 401b14 Aristotle (?), likely following an Orphic source, provides an explanation (based on etymology) of the stories about the three Moirai and the spindle. Atropos is in charge of the past, Klotho of the present, and Lachesis of the future. The partition between τὰ ἔοντα καὶ τὰ γινόμενα καὶ τὰ μέλλοντα (XIX, 6) mirrored by the γενέσθαι τε καὶ εἶναι κα[ῖ] παύσασθαι (XIX, 7) occurring in the papyrus, however, is no reason to think, with Gambarara (see GAMBARARA 1984: 180) that the material in the Derveni papyrus and in the *De Mundo* stem from the same source. The Derveni author, in fact, speaks of only one Moira. That being said, it is clearly this notion of a distinction between events in relation to a present, a past, and future time that explains the emergence of three separate entities (Moirai) for a single concept (Moira).

summarize, when Orpheus calls the wisdom of Zeus/Nous Moira it does so most fittingly (προσφερέστατον). Differently from the name-giver of the *Cratylus*, Orpheus does not choose the name “Moira” because its sounds pattern implicates its meaning, he does not choose it in view of its correctness. Rather, Moira is a fitting name because of the ambiguity it entails. Moira could be literally the old person of the myth, or the abstract power (something like the notion of Fate which Moira impersonates) that produces what is inevitable in our lives, as well as in the universe. In so doing, Orpheus creates a little riddle that only the initiate, i.e. those that have a knack for detecting the kind of literary games the poet is producing, are able to crack. This, as we have seen, is perfectly coherent with Orpheus’ overall agenda whose goal is to say “great things in riddles.” To put it differently, according to the commentator, Moira, in the Orphic poem, is not a mythological entity but the abstract concept that the mythological entity signifies. The reason why Orpheus referred to it as Moira has nothing to do with the magical relationship between language and beings or a naturalistic take on language. Simply, Orpheus is exploiting a standard language ambiguity, one that is inherent in the very idea of Greek divinity since at least the Archaic time⁶⁷²—gods are both anthropomorphic entities and abstract functions. The name “Moira” can be taken to be the mythical goddess of the myths with her anthropomorphic features and/or the abstract concept of “fate.”

Another passage often quoted by the proponents of the naturalist/magical view is col. XXII where we read:

Col XXII, 1-10 πάγ[τ’ οἶ]ν ὁμοίω[ς]⁶⁷³ ὠ]νόμασεν ὡς κάλλιστα ἠ[δύ]νατο,

⁶⁷² As I have argued in the previous chapter, the double nature of gods is already attested in Homer.

⁶⁷³ πάγ[τ’ ἄ]νομοίω[ς] : KOTWICK 2016: 2-3.

γινώσκων τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὴν φύσιν, ὅτι οὐ πάντες
ὁμοίαν ἔχουσιν οὐδὲ θέλουσιν πάντες ταυτά·
κρατιστεύοντες⁶⁷⁴ λέγουσι ὅ τι ἂν αὐτῶν ἐκάστωι
ἐπὶ θυμὸν ἔλθῃ, ἅπερ ἂν θέλοντες τυγχάνωσι,
οὐδαμὰ ταυτά, ὑπὸ πλεονεξίας, τὰ δὲ καὶ ὑπ' ἀμαθίας.
Γῆ δὲ καὶ Μήτηρ καὶ Ῥέα καὶ Ἥρη ἢ αὐτή. ἐκλήθη δὲ
'Γῆ' μὲν νόμωι, 'Μήτηρ' δ' ὅτι ἐκ ταύτης πάντα γ[ίν]εται,
'Γῆ' καὶ 'Γαῖα' κατὰ [γ]λῶσσαν ἐκάστοις. 'Δημήτηρ' [δὲ]
ὀνομάσθη ὥσπερ ἢ 'Γῆ Μήτηρ,' ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων ἔ[ν] ὄνομα·

So he named everything similarly, as finely as he could, knowing the nature of men, that is, that not all have a similar nature, nor do they all want the same things. When they have power they say whatever comes to each one's mind, whatever they happen to desire, never the same thing, through arrogance, but sometimes also through ignorance. "Earth" (Ge), "Mother" (Meter), "Rhea", and "Hera" are the same. She was called "Earth" (Ge) by convention,⁶⁷⁵ "Mother" (Meter) because everything is born from her, Ge and Gaia according to the dialect of each man. She was called "Demeter" as "Ge Meter" one name from both.

In this passage, the commentator claims that Orpheus gave names as finely as he could (ὡς κάλλιστα ἠ[δύ]νατο). Again, Orpheus is seen in his role of "name-giver" but, again, the "correct" relationship between name and things is not the standard against which to surmise his choices. Instead, Orpheus "tailors his poetry to the habit and custom of his audience."⁶⁷⁶ Knowing the nature of men, that they all want different

⁶⁷⁴ κρατιστεύον τε{ς} ⁶⁷⁴ λέγουσι : LAPINI 2019: 174

⁶⁷⁵ This is the usual translation of νόμωι in this passage but see also Lapini's "viene normalmente chiamata Γῆ" (LAPINI 2019: 172 n. 5).

⁶⁷⁶ KOTWICK 2016: 2-3. Kotwick's interpretation is based upon the reconstruction πᾶν[τ' ἀ]νομοίω[ς] (now followed also by SALAMONE 2016; see *contra* LAPINI 2019) in lieu of the usually agreed upon πᾶν[τ' οἷ]ν ὁμοίω[ς]. Kotwick translates the newly reconstructed syntagma as "Orpheus named everything differently", meaning that he gives "different names and creates many different gods in his story". Thus Orpheus's naming is perfectly symmetrical with men's attitude to say and want *different* things. I believe we can maintain Kotwick's overall interpretation of the passage (the fact that Orpheus attributes names based on men's habit and custom), even while keeping her predecessors' proposal. As noted by Lapini (LAPINI 2019: 173), ὁμοίω[ς] does not need to be taken absolutely, but can refer to something that has been said before; thus the expression would mean "Orpheus named everything accordingly/according to X". Nothing prevent X from being precisely the poet's attitude to assign different names to the same thing, that is, the meaning that Kotwick was looking for with her new proposal. Moreover, it is a long shot for the newly reconstructed syntagma πᾶν[τ' ἀ]νομοίω[ς] ὠ]νόμασεν to actually express the idea of "giving to each thing multiple different names." In this case also, the adverb more naturally goes together with what has been said before it and means "differently

things, Orpheus adapts his language to desires and opinions that are necessarily multiform. This is how the commentator seems to justify the fact that in Orpheus' poem the same being, i.e. Nous/air ends up having many different names (Zeus, Ouranos, Chronos, Moira etc.). More than an attempt at being ecumenic, however, Orpheus' mirroring of men's usage allows him to exploit the many ambiguities that everyday language provides. In everyday speech, the same thing can be said in different ways for different reasons (Earth is Ge by convention, Mother by analogy, Gaia/Ge based on dialects). Once Orpheus gives a name, he does so based on a rationale that is up to readers to discover. The rationale for giving names can be, as we will see below, a natural relationship between signifier and signified explained via etymology; yet, as this column makes it clear, everyday language too provides a vast array of ways for Orpheus to craft his riddles. For instance, if Orpheus were to say "meter" he would not necessarily mean "someone's mother" but he could very well mean, by analogy, "earth."⁶⁷⁷ This form of analogical substitution, which Orpheus will apply, at times, extremely liberally, is seen as legitimate because it is rooted in everyday language. In short, this column shows that names are not chosen out of an attempt

from X". Ultimately, therefore, given that both adverbs (ὁμοίω[ς and ἀ]νομοίω[ς) are best taken in reference to what preceded them, and what preceded them is lost, the meaning of the passage depends on what we are willing to imagine was said before our expression. I have printed πᾶν[τ' οὐ]ν ὁμοίω[ς because it is more likely that the commentator described Orpheus' take on language in terms of likeness (ὁμοίω[ς) to something he (or some other poet did) rather than unlikeness (ἀ]νομοίω[ς) to what someone else did.

⁶⁷⁷ The ambiguity "mother" "earth" remained a very productive riddle throughout antiquity. A passage of Livy (I.56.4-12) provides, perhaps, the most famous instance: The two sons of Tarquinius Superbus, Titus and Arruns, are sent to Delphi to interrogate the oracle on behalf of their father, the king. With them goes also their cousin, Brutus, the soon-to-become consul of Rome. Once their business is concluded they ask the oracle which one of them would become the next king. The oracle replies that the first to kiss his mother would have power over Rome. Upon returning home, Brutus, realizing that the oracle had another meaning, pretended to stumble and, as he fell, kissed the ground. He knew, in fact, that the earth is the common mother of men.

at mirroring the essence of things, on the contrary, they can also be chosen in order to best suit the differences in language *usus*. To conclude, based on the above passages, proper naming in the Derveni papyrus has little to do with ontology and has, first and foremost, a poetical and rhetorical dimension. Words are chosen primarily in view of the audience: the best word is not the “correct” one but rather the one that constitutes a challenge, a word that is most likely to be misunderstood by many and understood by few.

The strongest evidence usually adduced in favor of Orpheus’ naturalist stance toward language is his use of etymologies.⁶⁷⁸ As Ineke Sluiter has recently reminded us,⁶⁷⁹ when we speak of ancient etymologies we are referring to something that is substantially different from the modern academic practice of etymology. Ancient etymologies are a form of discourse that interrogates the relationship between words and their meanings. The goal of ancient etymological practice is to know why “anything is called what it is called, the reason for the name, and what motivates the namegiver.”⁶⁸⁰ Modern etymology is, instead, concerned with the changes that words undergo through times and tries to connect words with their past forms. Following Gambarara,⁶⁸¹ ancient etymologies can be further distinguished in i) “etymologies” and ii) “para-etymologies”, “paronomasias”, or “puns,” often also referred in literature as “implicit etymologies.”⁶⁸² In the former case, the link between *interpretandum* and

⁶⁷⁸ There is a vast bibliography on ancient etymologies. I found GAMBARARA 1984 historical treatment particularly useful. SLUITER 2015 provides excellent insights on the functions and types of discourse that etymologies represent.

⁶⁷⁹ SLUITER 2015: 897-99.

⁶⁸⁰ SLUITER 2015: 898.

⁶⁸¹ GAMBARARA 1984: 27

⁶⁸² The widespread presence of puns in Greek and Latin poetry has been the object of many of Frederick Ahl’s studies. See, in particular, AHL: 1985.

interpretans is made explicit, and usually follows the template: “it is called X because x.” In the latter, the sonic relationship between *interpretandum* and *interpretans* is not spelled out, it is left implicit.⁶⁸³

Much like in the *Cratylus*, throughout his text, the Derveni author resorts to etymological analysis. The following is a list of his etymologies in their order of appearance:

Col. XIV, 7-8: the name “Kronos” is explained as the Nous that strikes (κρούων Νοῦς);

Col. XIV, 11-13 The name “Ouranos” is explained as Determining Mind (ὀρίζων Νοῦς). The presence of such an etymology is, however, very dubious. There is a lacuna at the beginning of line 12 as well as 13 and the presence of the name Ouranos (which is printed in KPT but not by Janko) is purely conjectural.

Col. XXI, 7-10 the name “Aphrodite” is explained as the one that causes the mixing of things together, because people say ἀφροδισιάζω to indicate sexual intercourse;

Col. XXI, 10-11 Peitho is the one that made the things yield to each other, because yield, εἶκω (here the Derveni likely meant “make one yield”) and persuasion, πείθω, are the same.

Col. XXI, 11-12 Armonia is the one that causes things to fit, ἀρμόζω (KPT), προσαρμόζω (JANKO) together;

Col. XXII, 10 Demeter is equated to Γῆ Μήτηρ, as if Demeter were a compound word;

⁶⁸³ It follows that whereas etymologies can always be accounted for, the presence of para-etymologies in a text is, to some extent, always difficult to demonstrate. Deciding what is an intended pun and what is a pure coincidence is often a subjective matter.

Col. XXII, 12-13 Deo is called that way because she was destroyed/ravaged, ἐδηϊώθη, during sexual intercourse (the reference, as we have seen above, is likely to Zeus' rape of Rea).

As this list shows, etymology is one of the go-to techniques used by the commentator to understand the allegorical meaning of each divinity, i.e. their cosmological function. It follows that, according to the commentator, Orpheus exploited etymologies to create his riddles. But etymology is not the only reason behind the choice of names. As we have seen above, names can be given by convention (ge for earth) and analogical reasoning (earth and mother, Moira and phronesis). Other contributing factors that are kept in mind in explaining names are dialectal differences (see Ge and Gaia in col. XXII, 9) and everyday speech (see the case discussed above of Moira in col. XVIII, 3 and the case of the etymology of Aphrodite which is based on the recognition that in everyday speech people use the term ἀφροδισιάζω for sexual intercourse). All in all, etymology is a powerful tool to explain the names of divinities, and, therefore, their allegorical role in the poem, but it is not the only technique exploited by the commentator.

More importantly, however, this list makes it clear that virtually all cases in which etymology is applied concern proper nouns. I say virtually because there is one case that might be construed as an etymological explanation of a common noun. This is the already mentioned interpretation of the expression “Moira spins”, ἐπικλώθω, as the phronesis of Zeus who determines, ἐπικυρόω. Although in their infinitive aorist forms (ἐπικλῶσαι, ἐπικυρῶσαι), i.e. the form in which they appear at Col. XIX, 4-5,

the two verbs look very similar, I think their similarity is purely coincidental.⁶⁸⁴ For one thing, the Derveni author treats this alleged etymology differently. He does not dwell on it nor makes his thought process explicit like he does with all the other etymologies.⁶⁸⁵ Moreover, as I have explained above, the relationship between “spinning” and “determine/ordain” is an analogical/symbolical one. The spinning of the Moira is both literal, an old lady spinning a thread, as well as symbolic/metaphorical, spinning is an image for shaping fate. According to the cosmological view of the commentator (col. XIX, 4-7), Moira spinning is the wisdom of Zeus *determining*, ἐπικυρώω, “how the things that are, those that have come to be, and those that will come to be must come to be, exist, and cease” (col. XIX, 6-7). In my view, therefore, analogy and not etymology explains the commentator’s interpretation of “spinning” as “determining.”

That the Derveni author only exploits etymologies to explain *proper* nouns is an essential specification, hardly ever made by scholars. It, in fact, clearly distinguishes the Derveni’s approach from the kind of language naturalism explored in the *Cratylus*. The central thesis of Cratylus’ proposal is that *each* being has a natural correctness of name. Such a “natural correctness” can be found through etymology. It follows that not only proper nouns but every noun (ὄνομα) must be shown to be naturally motivated. Thus, as we have seen above, not only the names of divinities but also common nouns such as “anthropos,” according to Cratylus’ proposal, match the essence of what they indicate (Plat., *Crat.* 399c1-6). Claiming that proper nouns are

⁶⁸⁴ See *contra* KOTWICK 2017: 274.

⁶⁸⁵ According to the definition given above, all of the cases in the list are etymologies (explicit etymologies) and not para-etymologies (implicit etymologies).

chosen because of their meaning, because of what they signify is not a sufficient condition of language naturalism. To attach meaning to proper nouns, is, in fact, a common cultural phenomenon that transcends ideas about the nature and the origin of language.⁶⁸⁶ This is particularly true when it comes to Greek poetical tradition. In Kanavou’s words “there is of course no disagreement about the ‘naturalistic’ use of personal names in literature.”⁶⁸⁷ Already Homer exploited proper nouns’ significance. The standard case is the name “Odysseus” which is etymologized many times in the poem.⁶⁸⁸ The most explicit instance is *Od.* 19.406-9 where Odysseus’ maternal grandfather, Autolykus, chooses the name “Odysseus”, Ὀδυσσεύς, for the newborn, because he, Autolykus, hated, ὀδύσσομαι, many people.⁶⁸⁹ Etymologies are exploited to an even greater degree by Hesiod, especially in the *Theogony*. In the words of Vergados, Hesiod “turns the etymology of names into a didactic instrument.”⁶⁹⁰ Through the analysis of the meaning of the gods and goddesses’ names, the poet, in fact, reveals to his audience important aspects about their essence. In Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, the chorus wonders which *unseen entity*—the first instance of the notion of a name giver in Greek literature—gave Helen, whose fate was to destroy (εἴλον> αἶρέω) ships, man, and cities, her tragically appropriate name (Aesch. Ag. 681-92).

⁶⁸⁶ To these days parents often look at the meaning of names, i.e. how their sound pattern matches some other common nouns or expressions, when choosing them for their children. Andrew “means” manliness because in Greek ἀνδρεία means manliness. Matthew “means” gift of god because in Ebrew *Mattityahu* means gift of Yahweh, etc.

⁶⁸⁷ KANAVOU 2015: 15.

⁶⁸⁸ RANK 1951: 51-63 provides a list of all the passages in which there might be para-etymologies and puns on the name Odysseus.

⁶⁸⁹ It has been debated since antiquity whether ὀδύσσομαι has here an active or passive force. See, among others, STANFORD 1952 and, more recently, KANAVOU 2015: 90-106.

⁶⁹⁰ VERGADOS 2020.

These and many other examples show that in literature (the same is likely true, yet more difficult to prove, for everyday usage⁶⁹¹) personal names have meanings and those meanings are accessible through etymology. Poets, no matter their take on the nature of language, are accustomed to exploit etymologies, and their audiences were likely to recognize them even when implicit. It is surprising, therefore, that when it comes to Orpheus and the Derveni papyrus scholars should readily take the presence of etymology as revelatory of the author's peculiar stance toward language. Certainly, differently from a Homer or Hesiod, Orpheus, in the commentator's view, uses etymologies throughout his poem to create a coherent allegorical explanation of the universe. He also clearly belongs within a philosophical/allegorical tradition that should not be completely conflated with the poetical one.⁶⁹² Still, to exploit etymology of personal names in crafting a commentary is a technique that is legitimate⁶⁹³ insofar as etymology is practiced by every poet and its presence in primary as well as secondary texts is motivated by larger cultural beliefs about the nature of personal names, beliefs that transcend specific approaches toward language.

Especially because of his reliance on etymologies, scholars have long maintained that the Derveni author held a naturalist/magical stance on language. I have suggested instead that through etymologies the commentator was using the affordances of language and poetical practice to his advantage. In the next section, I

⁶⁹¹ KANAVOU 2015: 16-17.

⁶⁹² According to the commentator, what Orpheus attempted is, for instance, not dissimilar to what Pherekydes of Syros, one of the "fathers" of Greek allegorical tradition did. Pherekydes, as we have seen above, created a quasi-allegorical cosmology in which the traditional divinities of the Greek pantheon acquire ulterior meaning through etymological processes.

⁶⁹³ The problem is not etymology *per se*, but when and where it is legitimate to seek an etymological explanation.

will show how this is true even for the cases in which the commentator's interpretation does not rely on etymological analysis.

The list of solutions based on language (πρὸς τὴν λέξιν) discussed by Aristotle in chapter 25 of his *Poetics* (1461a9-a31) provides, again, a fitting foil against which to assess the techniques showcased by the anonymous of Derveni. I will briefly discuss every solution listed by Aristotle and show, in turn, that the Derveni Author (DA), a century or so before, already resorted to them in his commentary.⁶⁹⁴

First Aristotle mentions γλῶττα. The definition of this term is given in chapter 21 of the *Poetics*:

Ar. *Poet.* 1457 b1-7 ἅπαν δὲ ὄνομά ἐστιν ἢ κύριον ἢ γλῶττα ἢ μεταφορὰ ἢ κόσμος ἢ πεποιημένον ἢ ἐπεκτεταμένον ἢ ὑψηρημένον ἢ ἐξηλλαγμένον. λέγω δὲ κύριον μὲν ὃ χρῶνται ἕκαστοι, γλῶτταν δὲ ὃ ἕτεροι: ὥστε φανερόν ὅτι καὶ γλῶτταν καὶ κύριον εἶναι δυνατόν τὸ αὐτό, μὴ τοῖς αὐτοῖς δέ: τὸ γὰρ σίγγνον Κυπρίοις μὲν κύριον, ἡμῖν δὲ γλῶττα.

Every noun is either "ordinary" or "rare" or "metaphorical" or "ornamental" or "invented" or "lengthened" or "curtailed" or "altered." An "ordinary" word is one used by everybody, a "rare" word one used by some; so that a word may obviously be both "ordinary" and "rare," but not in relation to the same people. σίγγνον, for instance, is to the Cypriots an "ordinary" word but to us a "rare" one (Halliwell)

Under the heading of γλῶττα, Aristotle does not include only cases of dialectal words but more generally many instances of rare words.⁶⁹⁵ In ch. 25 of the

⁶⁹⁴ A more curtailed version of this section can be found in RÉAL: forthcoming (b).

⁶⁹⁵ Because of its definition and the Cypriot example, the term glossa might be *prima facie* supposed to refer only to cases in which a word is "rare" because it is found in other dialects. Such an impression might be further confirmed by 1458a25 where glossa is defined as a βαρβαρισμός. Nevertheless, although dialectal variety can make a glossa, Aristotle has a wider definition in mind. Examples such as the ones at 1458b20 make it clear. There, for instance, the verb θοινάω 'to feast' is opposed to the ordinary εσθίω not because θοινάω is used outside Attica but rather because of its *recherché* epic nature. Moreover, sometimes, by the term glossa Aristotle might even define unusual combinations of words such as "croaking shores" (1458b31). A glance at these and other Aristotelian examples thus shows that the term glossa defines many cases of "uncommon" usage. The term glossa in this sense,

Poetics he suggests that when a passage raises some interpretative issues the reader should examine whether the issue could be solved by interpreting apparently ordinary words as rare. Thus at the beginning of the *Iliad*, Apollo is said to shoot at the mules first when he is trying to kill the Greek soldiers. Aristotle explains the peculiar decision of the god by saying that the word for mules, οὐρῆας, is also a rare word for “sentinels.” According to this reading, Apollo did not shoot the mules first but actually the Greek sentinels.

The Derveni author reasons in a similar way at col. XI, 1-3:

[τ]ῆς νυκτός. “ἐξ ἀ[δύτοι]ο” δ’ αὐτὴν [λέγει] “χρηῖσαι”
 γνώμην ποιού[με]νος ἄδυτον εἶναι τὸ βάθος
 τῆς νυκτός·

[...] Of Night. He says that “she prophesied from the innermost shrine” meaning to say that the depth of night is unsettling.

The commentator here quotes a line of poetry in which night was said to prophesize from an ἄδυτον. ἄδυτον is a substantive derived from the verbal adjective of δύνω, “to enter,” plus privative α, and therefore means “something that cannot be entered” i.e. “an inner shrine,” “a temple.” This meaning, however, does not suit the commentator, who claims instead that ἄδυτον has an active force and means “never setting.” This adjectival meaning is much rarer but is attested, e.g., in a scholium to Aratus.⁶⁹⁶ While the full reasoning that led the DA to get from the idea that night prophesized from a shrine to that of night being never setting is lost to us, the first step of the process

meaning “rare” word, is first attested in Aristoph. *Daitaleis*, fr. 222 where it primarily refers to the study of difficult words in Homer.

⁶⁹⁶ *Schol. in Ar.*, 362 τὰ γὰρ λοιπὰ αὐτοῦ ἄδυτα [...]. For the other stars of this constellation do not set [...].

consists in interpreting the very ordinary substantive ἄδυτον as deriving from the adjective ἄδυτος in its rare meaning of “never setting.”

Next in his list, Aristotle mentions metaphors. The precise meaning of “metaphor” is given in chapter 21:

Ar. *Poet.* 1457b7-10 μεταφορὰ δὲ ἐστὶν ὀνόματος ἀλλοτρίου ἐπιφορὰ ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ γένους ἐπὶ εἶδος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἶδους ἐπὶ τὸ γένος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἶδους ἐπὶ εἶδος ἢ κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον.

Metaphor is the application of a strange term either transferred from the genus and applied to the species or from the species and applied to the genus, or from one species to another or else by analogy. (Halliwell)

An example of transfer from genus to species is “here stands the ship” where “stands” is the genus in place of the species “lies at anchor.” “10000” instead of “many” illustrates the case of a metaphor from species to genus. The examples of transfer from one species to another are from Empedocles: χαλκῶ ἀπὸ ψυχὴν ἀρύσας and τεμῶν ταναήκει χαλκῶ. Here “ἀρύσας” takes the places of “τεμῶν” and vice versa. Finally, we find metaphors based on analogy. Such metaphors can be formalized as follows: B : A = D : C. In the presence of such a configuration, the poet can metaphorically use D instead of B. Therefore, he can call a cup “Dionysus’ shield” and a shield “Ares’ cup” for a cup is to Dionysus what a shield is to Ares.

As these examples show, Aristotle’s definition of metaphor is much wider than ours,⁶⁹⁷ and encompasses a variety of analogical relationships between words. There are, therefore, many interpretations in the DP that could be loosely analyzed as metaphors. Here, I will limit myself to one case which can be linked rather accurately to one type of Aristotelian metaphor, the one based on analogy.

⁶⁹⁷ It includes, e.g., metonymical relationships.

At col. XIII, 4-11 the Derveni author says:

αἰδοῖον⁶⁹⁸ κατέπινεν, ὃς αἰθέρα ἔκθορε πρῶτος.”
ὅτι μὲν πᾶσαν τὴν πόησιν περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων
αἰνίζεται ἔσθ’ ἔπος ἕκαστον ἀνάγκη λέγειν. ἐν τοῖς
α[ἰ]δο[ῖο]ις ὁρῶν τὴν γένεσιν τοὺς ἀνθρώπου[ς]
νομίζον[τας εἶ]ναι τούτῳ ἐχρήσατο, ἄνευ δὲ τῶν
αἰδοῖων [μὴ γίν]εσθαι, αἰδοῖω εἰκάσας τὸν ἥλιο[ν·]
ἄνευ [γὰρ τοῦ ἡ]λ[ῖο]υ τὰ ὄντα τοιαῦτα οὐχ οἶόν [τ’ ἦν]
γίν[εσθαι]

“he swallowed the phallus/ the reverend one, who first sprang out of aither”
Since he is speaking through the entire poem allegorically about reality, it is necessary to speak about each word in turn. Seeing that people consider all birth to depend on the genitals and that without genitals there can be no birth, he used this word [*sc.* αἰδοῖον] likening the sun to a genital. For without the sun it would not have been possible for such “*things*” to come about [...]

In this passage the commentator states that the word αἰδοῖον, which he takes to mean “phallus” and not “reverend” refers to “sun.” His reasoning is based upon the same analogical principle that defines analogical metaphor in Aristotle’s classification. The phallus (A) is to human generation (B), as the sun (C) is to cosmic generation (D). Therefore, when Orpheus says phallus (A), he actually means, metaphorically, the sun (C).⁶⁹⁹

After metaphors Aristotle discusses *προσῳδία*. By prosody, we usually mean elements connected with the recitation of poetry. Aristotle quotes two examples: *Il.* 2.15 where one can read either δίδομεν (pres. indic.) or διδόμεν (infinitive for imperative). The second example is from *Il.* 23.238 where οὗ is read as οὐ. In this

⁶⁹⁸ I shall not enter here into the much-debated question of the meaning of αἰδοῖον. For a summary of the discussion see KOTWICK 2017: 207-212.

⁶⁹⁹ Where Aristotle and DA differ is that Aristotle is explaining expressions such as “the cup (A) of Ares (D)” (Dionysus = B and shield = C) or the “evening (A) of life (D)” (day = B and old age = C). There the combination of two elements makes it clear that the expression is metaphorical. The DA clearly pushes the envelope when he accepts that the word “phallus” alone can mean “sun.”

case, it is not only the accent that changes but also the breathing (from rough to smooth).⁷⁰⁰ In general, by prosodic ambiguities Aristotle intended every instance of homographs words but not homophones.⁷⁰¹ Accents, breathing, and long or short syllables were, in fact, generally not marked in antiquity and Aristotle still refers to the use of signs to mark prosody as a novelty.⁷⁰² Note that the application of such a technique demands that text upon which the commentator works is written, as Aristotle recognizes in *Soph. El.* 166b1.⁷⁰³

An ambiguity rooted in prosody might be exploited by the Derveni author in col. XXVI, 1-12:

μη[τρ]ός” μὲν ὅτι μήτηρ ὁ Νοῦς ἐστὶν τῶν ἄλλων,
 “ἔᾶς” δὲ, ὅτι ἀγαθῆς, δηλοῖ δὲ καὶ ἐν τοῖσδε τοῖς ἔπεσιν
 ὅτι ‘ἀγαθὴν’ σημαίνει·
 “Ἑρμῆ Μαιάδος υἱὲ διάκτορε δῶτορ ἑάων.”
 δηλοῖ δὲ καὶ ἐν τ[ῶ]ιδε·
 “δοιοὶ γὰρ τε πίθοι κατακίηται ἐν Διὸς οὔδει
 δῶρων, οἷα διδοῦσι, κακῶν, ἕτερος δὲ τ’ ἑάων.”
 οἱ δὲ τὸ ῥῆμα οὐ γινώσκοντες δοκοῦσιν εἶναι
 ‘μητρὸς ἑαυτοῦ.’

[...]“of mother” because Mind is the mother of other things, and “ἔᾶς” because she is good. It is made clear in these verses too that it means “good”: (Hom., *Od.* 8, 335)

“O Hermes, son of Maia, messenger giver of goods”

⁷⁰⁰ The same line is analyzed at *Soph. El.* 166b1 as a case of change in pitch (λέγοντες τὸ οὐ ὀξύτερον) rather than in breathing. We might therefore be tempted to conclude that by prosody Aristotle only considered changes of accents. Note, however, that at 1456b32 Aristotle includes under the heading of μετρικός not only accents, but also quantity and breathing. Moreover at *Soph. El.* 177b3 Aristotle calls the difference between ὄρος and ὄρος a difference in prosody. On prosody in the ancient world see PROBERT 2015: 923-948.

⁷⁰¹ Note that in some psilotic dialects such as Aeolic, words such as ὄρος and ὄρος are both homographs and homophones.

⁷⁰² *Ar. Soph. El.* 177b5-7 ἄλλ’ ἐν μὲν τοῖς γεγραμμένοις ταῦτὸν ὄνομα, ὅταν ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν στοιχείων γεγραμμένον ἦ καὶ ὡσαύτως, κάκεῖ δ’ ἤδη παράσημα ποιοῦνται, τὰ δὲ φθεγγόμενα οὐ ταυτά. “In written language a word is the same when it is written with the same letters and in the same manner, though people now put in additional signs, but the words when spoken are not the same.” (Forster) See also NOVOKHATKO 2020: 94.

⁷⁰³ Παρὰ δὲ τὴν προσφῶδιαν ἐν μὲν τοῖς ἄνευ γραφῆς διαλεκτικοῖς οὐ ῥάδιον ποιῆσαι λόγον, ἐν δὲ τοῖς γεγραμμένοις καὶ ποιήμασι μᾶλλον. “It is not easy to construct an argument relating to prosody in discussions which are not written down, but it is easier in written matter and poetry.” (Forster modified)

And it is clear in this too: (Hom. *Il.*, 24, 527-28)

“For two jars are placed down on Zeus’ floor
of gifts such as they give, one of evils, and another of goods”

But those who do not understand the word think it means “of his own” mother.
(Tsantsanoglou-Parássoglou modified)

Here the Derveni author is commenting upon a missing line of the poem whose general meaning was that Zeus had sex with his mother, μητρὸς ἑῆς (see the above discussion). As part of his attempt to prevent the scandalous meaning, the commentator brings attention to two Homeric passages that he quotes with minor variations: *Od.* 8.335 and *Il.* 24.527-8. In both passages the word ἑάων, genitive plural of the adjective ἐύς meaning “good things,” occurs. On the basis of such passages, the commentator claims that the word ἑᾶς in the Orphic poem, i.e. the genitive singular feminine of the possessive adjective of the third person singular ἐός, meaning “his own,” should be interpreted as a form of the adjective ἐύς. Confusion between the third person adjective and the adjective meaning “good” is attested in antiquity, see, e.g., Apollonius Dyskolus. *Synt* 213.7-8 Uhlig with KTP *ad col.* XXVI.2. I believe that such confusion, in essence, is a prosodic one. The possessive adjective ἑᾶς has a rough breathing whereas the adjective ἐύς has a smooth one. Given that, as we have seen, breathings were not marked in writing, the Derveni author was able to exploit the ambiguity. Caution, however, should be exerted in deeming this passage a clear case of prosody. The derivation of the word ἑάων remains, in fact, unclear⁷⁰⁴ and a few editors of Homer print it with a rough breathing instead of a smooth one.⁷⁰⁵ For

⁷⁰⁴ See esp. NUSSBAUM 1998:130-45.

⁷⁰⁵ On the issue see HAINSWORTH 1988: 369. Note, however, that if the word had indeed a rough breathing, the aspiration would have to be explained as contamination with the forms of the possessive adjective.

this reason, the eventuality that the Derveni author was reasoning in terms of glossa, should also be entertained. The expression μητρὸς ἐῆς ordinarily has the meaning of “his mother,” but ἐῆς, as the analog ἐάων suggests, can also have a much rarer meaning, i.e. “good.”

After prosody, Aristotle considers διαίρεσις (on which see 2.3 above). The term, as convincingly shown by Gallavotti,⁷⁰⁶ does not simply refer to grammatical punctuation but also to the separation (and union) of words apparently united (or separated) in the sentence. In short, διαίρεσις in this context means the syntactical re-arrangement of elements in the sentence.⁷⁰⁷ As an example, Aristotle proposes the following passage of Empedocles:

F35 DK, 14-15: αἴψα δὲ θνητ’ ἐφύοντο τὰ πρὶν μάθον ἀθάνατ’ εἶναι,
ζωρά τε πρὶν κέκρητο διαλλάξαντα κελεύθους·

According to Lucas⁷⁰⁸ followed by Dupon-Roc and Lallot,⁷⁰⁹ the passage can mean “the things, which had been unmixed before, became mixed” if the second πρὶν is taken with ζωρά or “the unmixed thing were mixed before” if the second πρὶν is taken with κέκρητο. Gallavotti,⁷¹⁰ who reconstructs a slightly different text (αἴψα δὲ θνητὰ ἅ ἐφύοντο [...]), interprets the passage otherwise. According to him, if we follow the *ordo verborum*, Empedocles’ passage means: “But soon were born those essences that learned to be substances first immortal and bare (ζωρά), before they had mixed diverting

⁷⁰⁶ GALLAVOTTI: 1974: 208.

⁷⁰⁷ On διαίρεσις see also *Sophistici elenchi*, chs. 4; 19-21, my discussion in 2.3 above, and RÉAL forthcoming (b).

⁷⁰⁸ LUCAS 1968: *ad loc.*

⁷⁰⁹ DUPONT-ROC and J. LALLOT 1980: 396.

⁷¹⁰ GALLAVOTTI: 1974

from their paths.”⁷¹¹ If, instead we connect the expression μάθον εἶναι to the word θνητά we can interpret it as: “and soon, those who were generated, learned to be mortal—the elements that were immortal and bare before, before they had mixed.”⁷¹² I do not believe that we should necessarily settle for Lucas’s solution over Gallavotti’s or vice versa. I found it extremely plausible that Aristotle quoted this passage precisely because it could lead to many different interpretations based on the way a reader might group the words in the sentence.

The Derveni author author resorts to διαίρεσις at col. VIII, 4-12:

**“Ζεὺς μὲν ἐπεὶ δὴ [πατρὸς ἐο]ῦ παρὰ θε[σ]φατ’ ἀκούσας⁷¹³
[ἀ]λκὴν τ’ ἐγ χεῖρεσσι ἔ[λ]αβ[ε]γ κ[α]ὶ δαίμον[α] κυδρόν.”**
[τα]ῦτα τὰ ἔπη ὑπερβατά ἐό[ν]τα λανθά[νει].
[ἔσ]τιν δὲ ᾧδ’ ἔχοντα· Ζεὺς μὲν ἐπεὶ τ[ὴν ἀλ]κὴν⁷¹⁴
[πα]ρὰ πατρὸς ἐοῦ ἔλαβεν καὶ δαίμονα [κυδρ]όν.
[οὔτω] δ’ ἔχοντα οὐκ ἀκούειν τὸν Ζᾶ[ν’ ἀποκαλύπ]τει
[τοῦ πατρ]ός, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀλκὴν λαμβ[άνειν ἀπ’ αὐτο]ῦ.
[ἄλλως δ’ ἔ]χοντα παρ[ὰ] θέσφατα δ[είκνυσι ἄν λαβεῖν
τὴν ἀλκὴν⁷¹⁵]

“When Zeus, having heard his father against the prophecies, took strength in his hands and the glorious daimon.”

It has escaped notice that these words are transposed; (in fact) they are as follows: Zeus when he took the strength from his father and the glorious daimon. In this word order, he [*sc.* the poet] does not reveal that Zeus hears his father, but that he takes strength from him. In the other word order, the impression would be given that he took the power contrary to the prophecies.

Before moving to the explanation of this passage a small textual clarification is in order. At line 4 the transmitted text reads: Ζεὺς μὲν ἐπεὶ δὴ [πατρὸς ἐο]ῦ παρὰ

⁷¹¹ “Ma presto nascevano quelle essenze che appresero di essere sostanze prima immortali e ζορά [schiette], prima che si erano mischiate deviando dai propri cammini” (Gallavotti)

⁷¹² “e presto, quelli che venivano generati, appresero d’essere mortali – gli elementi prima immortali e schietti, prima che s’erano mischiati.” (Gallavotti)

⁷¹³ θε[σ]φατ’ ἀκούσας correxi, cf. col. XIII,1 KPT; θε[σ]φατον ἀρχὴν Π et edd.

⁷¹⁴ ἀλ]κὴν KPT; ἀρ]χὴν Janko.

⁷¹⁵ ἀλκὴν KPT; ἀρχὴν Janko.

θέ[σ]φατον ἀρχὴν. Yet, it is clear from the paraphrase that follows the Orphic line that the Derveni author was reading a slightly different line, i.e. the line as it appears in col. XIII,1. Ζεὺς μὲν ἐπεὶ δὴ [πατρὸς ἐο]ῦ παρὰ θέ[σ]φατ’ ἀκούσας. This is the only way to make sense of col. VIII, 10 where it is said: [οὔτω] δ’ ἔχοντα οὐκ ἀκούειν τὸν Ζᾶ[ν]’ ἀποκαλύπτει [τοῦ πατρ]ός. The plural, παρ[ὰ] θέσφατα, in VIII, 11 points to the same conclusion.⁷¹⁶ The easiest way to explain the transmitted θέ[σ]φατον ἀρχὴν is to regard it as a scribal error.⁷¹⁷

At a first glance, the hexameter quoted by the Derveni author means: “When Zeus, having heard his father against the prophecies, took strength in his hands and the glorious daimon.” The obvious problem with this interpretation is that it states that Zeus acts *against the prophecies*. To prevent this blasphemous meaning, the Derveni author, applies diaresis. He connects the verb ἔλαβεν directly with πατρὸς ἐοῦ. This, I take it, is the hidden ὑπέρβατον referenced in l. 6. As a consequence of this, the preposition παρὰ must be taken, in anastrophe, with what precedes. Once we accept this syntactical re-arrangement, the lines come to mean: “When Zeus, having heard the

⁷¹⁶ Thus already CALAME 1997: 67 n. 3 and KOUROMENONS in KTP: 22-23. KOTWICK 2017: 168 believes that Janko’s reading ἀρχὴν for ἀλκίην at l. 7 supports the version of l. 4 ending in θέ[σ]φατον ἀρχὴν. This is not the case. Even if we were to trust Janko’s reading (I doubt that one can confidently distinguish between a κ and a χ in a spot where half of the letter is missing), Kotwick’s interpretation does not explain the presence of ἀκούειν in l. 10 nor the presence of ἀλκίην in l. 11. Moreover, if one were to actually read ἀρχὴν this would be best explained as a paraphrase not of θέ[σ]φατον ἀρχὴν but rather of [ἀ]λκίην in the subsequent line. “To take power” is a pretty close paraphrase of “to take [ἀ]λκίην, strength, into one’s hands.”

⁷¹⁷ Note that scholars have found other scribal variations in the papyrus, see Kouromenos in KTP: 10. For other explanations of the variant reading see RUSTEN 1985: 126, and WEST 1983: 85-86. KOUROMENONS in KTP: 23 accepts the scribal mistake hypothesis and suggests that the error might have originated because of the presence of the word ἄρχεται in col. VIII, 3. This is unlikely. Perhaps, a reader had glossed the term [ἀ]λκίην in the subsequent line with ἀρχὴν and the note intruded the main text.

prophecies (θέσφατ' ἀκούσας), took from his father (ἔλαβεν πατρὸς ἐοῦ πάρα⁷¹⁸) strength (ἀλκὴν τε) and the glorious daimon (καὶ δαίμονα κυδρόν) into his hands (ἐν χεῖρεσσι)...” This is exactly the meaning that the Derveni author is advocating for at ll.10-11. “In this word order he [*sc.* the poet] does not reveal that Zeus hears his father, but that he takes strength from him.”⁷¹⁹

Another solution πρὸς τῆν λέξιν discussed by Aristotle is ἀμφιβολία, ambiguity. Under this heading Aristotle includes different kinds of ambiguities, especially grammatical ones. He defines it in *Soph. El.* 166a6. Sentences such as το βούλεσθαι λαβεῖν με τοὺς πολεμίους are ambiguous because we cannot determine who is the subject of λαβεῖν.⁷²⁰ For Aristotle the amphiboly is a particular kind of homonymy that works at the sentences’ level.

Amphiboly is exploited by the Derveni commentator at col. XV, 6-7.

“ἐκ τοῦ δὴ Κρόνος αὐτίς, ἔπειτα δὲ μητίετα Ζεὺς”
λέγει ὅτι ἐκ τοῦδε [ἀ]ρχὴ ἐστίν, ἐξ ὅσου βασιλεύει.

“after him in turn was Kronos, and then Zeus the contriver”
He says that there is a beginning from the moment in which he rules.

The expression ἐκ τοῦ is ambiguous, since it can mean “after him,” “from this one” or “from this time.” The problem is a syntactical one and consists in deciding what is the

⁷¹⁸ Note that prepositions like *παρὰ* retract the accent when in anastrophe. See PROBERT: §§ 256-262; §272. For this reason Janko, *per verba*, suggest I classify this passage as a case of prosody. I disagree. The DA explicitly uses the term hyperbaton, which shows that he is thinking in terms of diaeresis. The potential ambiguity between *παρὰ* and *πάρα* only arises as a consequence of diaeresis. It is, however, true that it is thanks to the fact that ΠΑΡΑ in writing can be taken to be both paroxyton or oxyton that the DA can interpret the line in two different ways.

⁷¹⁹ For a different reconstruction of the meaning of this section see KOTWICK 2017: 164-9.

⁷²⁰ In the *Poetics* Aristotle uses to following example of ambiguity: *παροίχωκεν δὲ πλέων νύξ/ τῶν δύο μοιράων, τριτάτη δ’ ἔτι μοῖρα λέλειπται* (Hom. *Il.*, 10.252-3). If *πλέων* means “more than” (adverbial) the meaning would be “of the night more than two parts have past, the third is still left. If *πλέων* means “the greater of” (adjectival) the meaning would be “of the night the greater of two parts has past, the third is still left”.

force of ἐκ + genitive as well as what is τοῦ referring to. It is fairly clear that in the Orphic line the referent of τοῦ is Ouranos (see Kotwick *ad loc.*) and that ἐκ τοῦ must mean “after him.”⁷²¹ The Derveni author, in his paraphrase, instead, does not take τοῦ as referring to Ouranos, but instead interprets the expression ἐκ τοῦ absolutely in the meaning of “from this point in time.”⁷²²

The last solution discussed by Aristotle is ἔθος. With this term, Aristotle means cases of idiomatic usage: Greeks say “wine” instead of “a mixture of wine and water”, “tin” instead of “an alloy of copper and tin”, and refers to Ganymedes as “winepourer” of the Gods although Gods do not drink wine. Readers might object that such examples are cases of metaphors rather than idiomatic usage but Aristotle himself prevents such an objection, at least as far as the last case is concerned, by saying that what counts as ethos can be metaphorical too (Ar. *Poet.* 1461a31 εἴη δ' ἂν τοῦτό γε <καὶ> κατὰ μεταφοράν). Idiomatic usage, today as well as in the fourth century, is indeed full of figures of speech. The difference, which Aristotle does not work out but is an obvious one, is that when a metaphor, or any other kind of non κύριος expression (see 1457b1) is a poetic invention, it can be classified *stricto sensu* as a metaphor or glotta etc. When, on the other hand, it is shared by speakers sufficiently enough to become common it counts as ethos.⁷²³

The Derveni author bases on idiomatic language the interpretation in col.

XXIII, 5-10:

⁷²¹ “From him” is also possible but the presence of ἔπειτα in the second part of the hexameter makes this meaning less plausible.

⁷²² This is the opinion of the majority of commentators. Cf. RUSTEN 1985: 138; KTP 134; KOTWICK 2017: 85; 229. See *contra* JOURDAN 2003: 15.

⁷²³ On ἔθος see also Ar. *Soph. El.* 166a17.

οἱ δ' οὐ γινώσκοντες τὸν
Ὠκεανὸν ποταμὸν δοκοῦσιν εἶναι ὅτι “εὐρὺ ρέοντα”
προσέθηκεν. ὁ δὲ σημαίνει τὴν αὐτοῦ γνώμην
ἐν τοῖς λεγομέν[ο]ις καὶ νομιζομένοις ῥήμασι.
καὶ γὰρ τῶν ἀν[θ]ρώπων τοὺς μέγα δυνατ[οῦ]ντας
“μεγάλους” φασὶ “ῥυῆναι.”

But the ignorant ones think that Oceanus is a river, because he [*sc.* the poet] added “wide-flowing.” He, however, indicates his thought in current and conventional words. For they say that those who have great power among men are very *influential*.⁷²⁴ (Tsantsanoglou-Parássoglou modified)

In this passage, the Derveni author argues that Ὠκεανός is not the mythological name of the river surrounding the earth, but rather a function of the Nous. To sustain his interpretation he needs to explain why Orpheus defines it εὐρὺ ρέοντα, ostensibly an epithet for a river. In order to solve the difficulty the Derveni author proposes to take εὐρὺ ρέοντα as an idiomatic expression (ὁ δὲ σημαίνει τὴν αὐτοῦ γνώμην ἐν τοῖς λεγομέν[ο]ις καὶ νομιζομένοις ῥήμασι). According to him, εὐρὺ ρέοντα is an idiomatic way of indicating people with great power, an expression that is fitting for the Nous.

This terminates the lexical solutions discussed by Aristotle in the *Poetics*. What follow is, however, worth mentioning as well:

Ar. *Poet.* 1461a32-33 δεῖ δὲ καὶ ὅταν ὄνομά τι ὑπεναντίωμά τι δοκῇ σημαίνειν, ἐπισκοπεῖν ποσαχῶς ἂν σημῆναιε τοῦτο ἐν τῷ εἰρημένῳ

When the sense of a word seems to entail a contradiction, one should consider how many senses it could have in the context

Again, there is an indication that the Derveni text antedates Aristotle’s recommendation to be mindful of the context in which words appear. The passage about Okeanos I just illustrated is a case in point. The Derveni author is aware that

⁷²⁴ Literally “have flowed big.” The translation *influential*, which I owe to KOTWICK 2019: 178, captures well the idiomatic imagery upon which the Derveni author bases his solution.

context, the epithet εὐρὸν ῥέοντα, seems to contradict his interpretation of Okeanos qua Nous. He, therefore, has to come up with a reason why the poet defines the nous as “flowing big.” The same principle is operative at XII, 1-12 KPT where the commentator identifies Mount Olympus with time. At the basis of this interpretation is a study of the epithets associated with the name “Olympus.” Orpheus, states the commentator, uses the epithet wide, εὐρύς, when he wants to refer to Olympus qua “heaven” (heaven is, in fact, “wide” and not “long”) but he uses the epithet long, μακρός, when he wants to refer to Olympus qua “time” (time is, in fact, “long” but not “wide”). Scholars⁷²⁵ have noted that this reasoning will be formalized by Aristotle in *Top.* 1 152a33 as: two things are said to be identical if “any accident belonging to the one belongs to the other.” Schironi⁷²⁶ further shows that Aristarchus will later resort to the same principle. While the reference to the *Topica* might be appropriate, at the basis of the Derveni author exegetical analysis in coll. XXIII and XII is the broader presupposition Aristotle expresses in *Poetics* 1461a32-33: words have different meanings based on the context in which they appear.

In this section, I have argued that the Derveni exegesis, despite its untenable and often ridiculous outcomes, is based on sound philological principles. First, the use of etymology, while prominent, does not extend beyond the analysis of proper names. Secondly, the solutions πρὸς τῆν λέξιν discussed by Aristotle in ch. 25 of his *Poetics*, are already exploited by the commentator of Derveni.⁷²⁷ Finally, the Derveni author

⁷²⁵ See BRISSON 1997: 153-154 and SCHIRONI 2001: 11. Note that Schironi seems to be unaware of Brisson.

⁷²⁶ SCHIRONI 2001.

⁷²⁷ It remains a question whether there are cases of προσωιδία in the papyrus (see above). In any event, at least five out of six of the solutions mentioned by Aristotle are found in the Derveni Papyrus.

shows to be well aware of the importance of context when interpreting poetry, another key philological principle that Aristotle formulates in ch. 25 of the *Poetics*.

Two broad conclusions can be derived from what I argued in this chapter. First, the Derveni Papyrus perfectly encapsulates the double-sided nature of ancient allegoresis, which I described in chapter 4. While it is clear that the Derveni author tries to map tenets of the pre-Socratic philosophy onto a poem that seems to have little to do with philosophy, he constructs his readings mindful of the letter of the text. As Jeffrey Rusten once vividly put it, the Derveni author would be lost without constantly referring to the text(s) he is commenting upon.⁷²⁸ Allegoresis has often been demoted by modern scholars as a mere perversion of the letter of the text. The strong continuity existing between the exegetical principles of the Derveni author and those of Aristotle, the father of literalist interpretation,⁷²⁹ instead warns us against this tendency.

Secondly, scholars have often emphasized the differences between the Derveni exegesis and later rigorous philological literary analysis—the kind that Aristotle and the Alexandrian critics practiced. I have shown, instead, that the Derveni papyrus is proof that sound literary analysis was not an “invention” of Aristotle. Both in terms of its making, a line-by-line commentary, (see ch. 2) and in terms of the exegetical principles it showcases, the Derveni Papyrus shows great continuity with later Peripatetic-Alexandrian exegesis, which many modern scholars deem as the beginning of rigorous textual analysis. In the overall very blurred panorama of pre-Aristotelian

⁷²⁸ RUSTEN 2004: 126.

⁷²⁹ While some scholars claimed that Aristotle practiced allegoresis, Bouchard has convincingly shown that not to be the case (BOUCHARD 2016: 47-83). She is followed in her analysis by MAYHEW 2019: 193.

literary exegesis, the Derveni Papyrus provides us with an exceptional insight into the beginnings of philology.

Conclusion

In my introduction, I provide a general overview of my project, a description of its methodology and aims, and a synopsis organized by chapters. Here, I list my findings and suggest new avenues of investigation that my dissertation opens up.

I will start with the list of findings:

1. *Zetemata originated as sympotic games*

While this claim is not new, it has often been contested. I provide further pieces of evidence in favor of a sympotic origin. One of these is the *Certamen*, a sympotic text which gestures at zetematic practices (Chapters One and 2.2–3);

2. *Zetemata are a collaborative and constructive enterprise*

Scholars often consider zetematic practices in terms of an opposition between detractors and defenders of the poets. I show that these two “roles” are not fixed and that detractors and defenders of poetry have a shared goal: a deeper understanding of poetry (Chapter One and chapter 3.1);

3. *The Certamen is mostly a sympotic product*

Most of the games featured in the *Certamen* have a clear sympotic nature. Contrary to what some recent scholars have argued, the *Certamen* only superficially represents a contest between rhapsodes (Chapter 2.2);

4. *The games of the ambiguous propositions in the Certamen mimic ancient exegetical practices*

Often analyzed as an instance of “capping,” this game rests, first and foremost, upon a syntactical re-arrangement of the elements of the sentence, what Aristotle calls

diairesis. It also allows us to capture trends in contemporary poetical exegesis (Chapter 2.3);

5. *Zoilus' Against Homer's Poetry is best understood in the contest of zetematic literature*

Always considered an attack on Homer, this work shows instead a vivid interest in his poems and challenges readers to come up with solutions to many interpretative problems (Chapter 3.1);

6. *Zoilus' critiques of Homer anticipate later trends in scholarship*

Scholars often cast Zoilus' criticisms of Homer as pedantic and extremely biased. I show instead that the types of criticisms he makes are typical of later zetematic investigation and paved the way for an internally motivated investigation of the poetic text. Much before Aristarchus, Zoilus criticized "Homer from Homer" (Chapter 3.2);

7. *Zoilus' critiques of Homer are solely motivated by literary concerns*

While scholars routinely claim that Zoilus critiqued Homer for his morally inappropriate depiction of gods and humans, a more careful investigation of his fragments suggests that no moral intent can be attributed to Zoilus (Chapter 3.3);

8. *While primarily appropriative, ancient allegoresis pays a great deal of attention to the letter of the text*

While allegoresis is often defined in terms of its emancipation from the text, I show that careful analysis of the letter of the text is an important aspect of allegorical interpretation. Ancient allegoresis combines philological and philosophical principles (Chapter Four);

9. *Theagenes was a "grammarian," not an allegorist*

A more cautious reading of Porphyry's testimony on Theagenes' contribution to allegoresis suggests that Theagenes did not necessarily interpret the Homeric Theomachy as a cosmic battle between elements. Instead, he commented upon the ambivalent nature of the gods in Homer: as both anthropomorphic beings and metonymic representations of physical elements and moral attitudes (Chapter 5.1);

10. *Pherekydes wrote an explicitly allegorical treatise but did not interpret poetry allegorically*

Despite common scholarly claims, no source authorizes us to claim that Pherekydes interpreted poetry allegorically. Its contribution to allegoresis consists of having created the first explicitly allegorical treatise known to us (Chapter 5.2);

11. *Metrodorus of Lampsachus applies allegoresis to the entirety of the text of Homer*

The novelty of Metrodorus' approach consists of applying allegoresis not only to a limited section of a text or scene of a poem but to the entirety of the Homeric plot (Chapter 6.1);

12. *The Derveni papyrus is a precursor of the commentary genre*

Despite common scholarly claims that the Derveni papyrus is a treatise, careful analysis of the format and use of quotations suggests that the Derveni papyrus deals with one single poem progressively, and line-by-line (Chapter 6.2);

13. *The Derveni author's allegoresis is based on sound exegetical techniques*

While the Derveni author's allegoresis often leads to absurd results, it is based on the same exegetical principles championed by later literalist critics such as Aristotle and Aristarchus (Chapter 6.3).

As I state in my introduction, a comprehensive study of pre-Hellenistic exegesis needs to also address the role played by the sophists, Protagoras especially. While much ink has been spilled on Protagoras' contribution to the study of language, we are still in the dark as to what Protagoras' goals were. Were his remarks about gender and verbal moods meant to help orators craft better speeches, or did they demonstrate an interest in language qua language? Also, why did he frame his linguistic insights as critiques against Homer? Was that a mere rhetorical strategy or the product of a genuine interest in poetics? The latter hypothesis might find support in a much-studied papyrus fragment (P.Oxy. 221 = Erbse V 78–121) according to which Protagoras understood Homer's *Theomachy* as an "episode" within the larger plot of the *Iliad*. Despite its brevity, this comment points toward a seminal interest in poetical unity. Such a topic would especially benefit from being discussed in parallel with the ancient stories about Stesichorus' blindness and Homer and Hesiod's collaboration in composing the hymn to Apollo (on which see below). Finally, more needs to be done in terms of the study of the exegetical techniques and philological principles at play in Protagoras and Socrates' discussion of the *Ode to Scopas* in Plato's *Protagoras*. Initial work in this direction can be found in the following studies: Brittain's already mentioned "Deinos (Wicked Good) at Interpretation (Protagoras 334–48)" (2017), Baltussen's "Plato *Protagoras* 340-48: Commentary in the making?" (2004) and Giuliano's "Esegesi letteraria in Platone: la discussione sul Carme Simonideo nel "Protagora" (1992).

Aside from the sophists, it has become clear to me while working on this project that the ancient lives of poets constitute an as-yet completely untapped source of information on ancient exegesis. I intend to devote to the lives of the poets a separate

and in-depth investigation. I will end my conclusion by sketching the gist of this future project.

It has long been noticed that the material found in the ancient lives of poets and writers stems from their literary works. Modern scholars⁷³⁰ explain this correspondence by presuming that ancient compilers of biographies mined literary texts searching for information about the authors' lives. There are two main problems with this explanation. First, it does not account for the flourishing of biographies of authors, like Homer, who are absolutely silent about their own persona in their works. Secondly, it does not explain why obvious features of a poetic persona were not exploited by the ancient biographers. For instance, there are no stories about Hesiod as a shepherd, no stories of a drunken Archilochus or a lame Hipponax. The relationship between lives and works can be explained in a different way. Ancient readers fashioned biographical details in order to confront interpretative problems in the literary texts. Biographical narratives initially emerged as aids to the reading of texts and would only later acquire a life of their own.

A small example: according to fifth-century BCE sources, Hesiod's father was a certain Dios. This biographical element is based on line 299 of the *Works and Days*, in which the poet of Ascra refers to his brother as *dīon genos*, that is, "stock of Zeus." Many ancient readers must have wondered why the poet referred to his humble brother with a divine epithet. By claiming that Hesiod's father was Dios, I argue, they tried to solve the exegetical problem and explained the expression *dīon genos* as a play on the poet's parentage: "stock of Dios." Dios, therefore, was born not so much because a

⁷³⁰ See especially FAIRWEATHER 1974, LEFKOWITZ 1981; 2012² and GRAZIOSI 2002.

biographer was examining Hesiod's work looking for his parentage, but rather because readers sought to interpret a problematic epithet. Plato's *Protagoras* 343c-347a independently confirms that similar hermeneutical procedures were rooted in ancient practice. In this parody of literary exegesis, Socrates first infers traits of Simonides' personality from his *Ode to Scopas* and then uses them to interpret that very poem.

After introducing this new model of understanding the relationship between lives and works, my project will investigate three case studies that further support my view. The first establishes a link between the stories of Homer's travels to Athens and the anachronistic mention of Athenian ships in *Iliad* 2, 557–558. These two lines were used as justification for Athens' imperialist ambitions in the fifth century. Athens' rivals, instead, deemed them a fabrication by Solon (or Pisistratus). The story of Homer's travels to Athens, I argue, serves to justify their authenticity: Homer thanked the city for its hospitality by mentioning it in his poem. Here, the relationship between biographical fiction and primary text offers an opportunity to explore ancient anxieties concerning fakes and literary misappropriation. The second and the third case studies, viz. the story of Stesichorus' blindness and Homer's and Hesiod's collaboration in composing the hymn to Apollo, provide a rare insight into how ancient audiences conceived of poetical performance, transmission, and poetic unity.

Analyzing these examples leads to interesting results. It offers not only a more plausible origin story for the emergence of ancient poetic biographies but also makes a substantial contribution to the still broadly uncharted territory of pre-Hellenistic exegetical practices. Through these biographical narratives we can gain an insight into what ancient audiences deemed worth commenting upon and what strategies they

devised to solve literary questions. Finally, my project underscores the hybrid nature of the biographical genre. While biographies of ancient authors are literary creations in their own right, they also perform a more practical function: they frame literary texts and assist with their interpretation.

In conclusion, there is much to be done concerning the earlier days of ancient exegesis. Through my dissertation and future projects, I hope to show that the study of pre-Hellenistic philology is a fruitful, and absolutely exciting, endeavor.

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