Homer, the Bible, and Beyond

LITERARY AND RELIGIOUS CANONS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

EDITED BY

MARGALIT FINKELBERG

& GUY G. STROUMSA

BRILL JERUSALEM STUDIES IN RELIGION AND CULTURE

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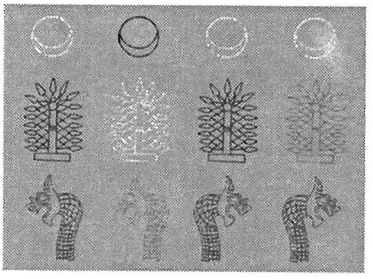

JERUSALEM STUDIES IN RELIGION AND CULTURE

— EDITORS —

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Volume 2

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: BEFORE THE WESTERN CANON

MARGALIT FINKELBERG AND GUY G. STROUMSA

The future of the so-called Western Canon is one of the most hotly debated issues of the day. For some, the canon is an instrument of the racial, class, gender, and other forms of cultural domination, which has led to arbitrary exclusion from our consciousness of the entire domains of our cultural legacy.[1] For others, it is perceived as the quintessence of this legacy, the revision of which will endanger the very existence of Western civilization.[2] There is reason to believe that what is perceived today, somewhat unhistorically, as a unique crisis, can be put into perspective by students of ancient societies.

Although one of the main objectives of current cultural canon theories is to create a universal typology of cultural phenomena, the modern cultural situation, surprisingly enough, is in fact the only one that these theories are prepared to envisage. The historical horizons addressed in the rapidly growing field of cultural canon studies rarely reach further back than the French Revolution, which means that their framework of reference is principally confined to the historical period to which these theories themselves belong. By all standards, this reflects a faulty methodology. In so far as contemporary canon studies claim to propose universal models of canon-formation, and in so far as the historical models they actually take into account are the modern ones, the only typological approach they are able to embrace is that of an a priori generalization of the modern situation and its uncritical application to other cultures and other historical periods. This is what makes the material offered by civilizations of the ancient world potentially so important. The ancient

[1] The theory of the "cultural capital" belongs to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. It was applied to the issue of the Western Canon in J. Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago, 1993).

[2] See for example H. Bloom, *The Western Canon* (New York, 1994).

world offers us the historical perspective of civilizations as a whole and allows us to study cultural phenomena in the *longue durée*. The non-religious canons, like those of ancient Mesopotamia or ancient Greece and Rome, in that they afford a parallel to our own civilization, seem especially promising in this respect. It is a pity, therefore, that the ancient material is only too rarely addressed in canon studies. The present volume, which originates in a conference on Mechanisms of Canon-Making in Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Societies, held in December 1999 by a research group bearing the same name that was active at the Institute for Advanced Studies, Jerusalem, in 1999-2000, is an attempt towards filling this gap.

1

Odd as it may appear, there seems to have been no comparative study of canon.[3] As far as the ancient world is concerned, canon studies focus either on literary (Greco-Roman) or religious (Judeo-Christian) canons, without making an attempt to bring these two fields together.[4] This was not what could be expected at the dawn of modern historical scholarship two hundred years ago. When Friedrich August Wolf, with his *Prolegomena ad Homerum*, opened the era of Homeric studies in 1795, the model he used was the one then being developed for the study of the Old Testament.[5] That the two main constituents of the Western Canon, the ancient Israelite canonical text as represented by the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Greek canonical text as represented by the Homeric poems, were being studied side by side was seen as only too natural at the time. "Until well into the eighteenth century," Walter Burkert wrote in *The Orientalizing Revolution* (1984), "the Hebrew Bible naturally stood next to the Greek classics, and the existence of cross-connections did

[3] This fact has been noted by J.Z. Smith, "Sacred Persistence: Toward a Redescription of Canon," in his *Imaginig Religion* (Chicago, 1982), 36-52.

[4] See e.g. A. Van Der Kooij and K. Van Der Toorn (eds.), *Canonization and Decanonization: Papers Presented to the International Conference of the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religions (LISOR), Held at Leiden 9-10 January 1997* (Leiden, 1998), an important volume which is however entirely dedicated to the discussion of religious canons.

[5] See F.A. Wolf, *Prolegomena to Homer*, Translated, with introduction and notes by A. Grafton, G.W. Most, and J.E.G. Zetzel (Princeton, 1985).

not present any problems. Jephtha's daughter and Iphigenia were interchangeable models even in the realm of opera."[6] This fruitful collaboration was interrupted, never to be revived again, in the first half of the nineteenth century, when the "discovery" of Sanskrit, instead of stimulating a pluralistic approach to the widening spectrum of ancient civilizations, gave rise to the idea of a Indo-European cultural unity exclusive of the world of the Old Testament and of the Ancient Near East in general.[7] To resume the process at the point where it stopped and thus to overcome the mutual isolation between civilizations of the ancient world which was artificially created thereby is one of the objects of this book.

Similarly, the study of other canonization processes in the ancient world, and in particular in late antiquity, seems to be in need of fresh approaches. While dramatic new insights have been provided to the canonization processes of these texts in the last fifty years, since the discoveries of Qumran and Nag Hammadi, relatively little has been done in terms of comparison. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, very little attention has been devoted to the fact that various canonization processes in the late antique world did not develop independently of one another, but are linked by dialectical relationships. The canonization of the Mishna, for instance, should be seen in parallel to that of the contemporary canonization of the New Testament: both are meant to provide a key to the correct understanding of the Old Testament, which both the Jewish and Christian communities claim their own during the second century.[8] Moreover, the complex phenomena of canon-making or remodelling in late antiquity do not seem to have been understood properly. In a sense, we could talk about "secondary" canonizations processes at work during that period, in contradistinction to the "primary" processes during the second half of the first millennium B.C.E. Carsten Colpe has recently argued that the Buddhist and the Israelite traditions represent the two main systems of canonical

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[6] W. Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution. Near Eastern Influences on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*, Tr. M.E. Pinder and W. Burkert. (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), 1. See also M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon. West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford, 1997), x-xi.

[7] These phenomena have been highlighted and analyzed, inter alia, by M. Bernal, *Black Athena*, vol. I (Ithaca, N.Y., 1984), and M. Olender, *Les langues du paradis* (Paris, 1987).

[8] See G.G. Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (Leiden, 1996), ch. 5.

writings, or "filiations of canons", in the history of religions.[9] There is no arguing that the Christian canon, as it crystallizes between the second and the fourth centuries C.E., represents, with the addition of the New Testament, a radical transformation of the Jewish Biblical canon.

But *verus Israel* is only one side of the Christian revolutionary redefinition of the relationships between religion and culture. The other side is the integration of the cultural canon of the Greco-Roman world, with Homer at its core, into a new synthesis: while this canon is identified as "false", in that it carries pagan knowledge and values, it remains nonetheless at the core of the educational system accepted by the Christian elites in the fourth century. In a sense, one could say that the decision of patrician families in the Eastern Empire not to establish Christian "religious" schools, but to give their sons a traditional Hellenic education (together with the Gospel, of course), is the single most dramatic step toward the formation of European culture, which sought to integrate the Greek literary canon with the Israelite religious canon. In fact, three highly different bodies of texts, Homer and much of the Greek literary tradition, the Septuagint, and the New Testament, were integrated into a complex web, where both cultural and religious memory reflected the two sides of the new cultural identity which would become that of nascent Europe in late antiquity. To borrow a metaphor from the field of modern biology, one could talk of the "double helix" structure of the Western cultural matrix. Oddly as it may seem, this "double helix"—usually referred to as "Athens and Jerusalem"—has not received all the attention it deserves.

The main drive behind this volume was thus the intention to bridge between the Greco-Roman and the Judeo-Christian traditions. Most of the participants belong to either of these two broad fields of research. Today, however, it would not be enough to formulate the problem only in terms of "Athens and Jerusalem". Much work has been done recently on similar issues in other cultural realms.[10] The Mesopotamian and Iranian perspectives permit us to broaden our approach to ancient civilizations where similar questions to the ones

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[9] C. Colpe, "Sakralisierung von Texten und Filiationen von Kanons", in A. and J. Assmann (eds.), *Kanon und Zensur: Archäologie der literarischen kommunikation II* (Munich, 1987), 80-92.

[10] See for instance L.L. Patton (ed.), *Authority, Anxiety, Canon: Essays in Vedic Interpretation* (Albany, N.Y., 1994).

we are focusing upon were asked in somewhat different ways. It is time to put energies together and seek to understand the mechanisms of canon-making and rules of transformations of canons from the point of view of the general history of culture.

2

As pointed out in several chapters of this volume, there is no general consensus concerning the term "canon" (see especially the contributions of Stephen Chapman and Hagith Sivan). It seems, however, that we have been able to develop, at least partially, a language that would permit us to use the same tools in order to analyze together the rather different traditions that stood in the focus of our attention. Thus, it was proposed to speak of "foundational texts", in order to find a common denominator and to overcome the split between the "literary" and the "religious". In this sense, both Homer and the Bible (i.e., both the Hebrew scriptures and the Christian Bible) can certainly be called "foundational" (see e.g. the contributions of Margalit Finkelberg and David Stern). The Chinese texts, discussed by Andrew Plaks at our weekly meetings at the Institute, provided highly illuminating examples of the limitations of our categories and concepts. Plaks made it clear for us that the Confucian classics, in particular, cannot for the most part be considered either as "literary" or "religious" in the usual sense. Rather, they establish models for intellectual as well as behavioural wisdom. They can thus be seen, in an obvious way, as "foundational texts".

Foundational texts, then, in that they embody the essentials of a given community's collective self-consciousness, are the indispensable factor by means of which its ethnic, cultural, or religious identity is articulated. As Christoph Markschies puts it in the specific context of his discussion, "canonization processes should be understood within the framework of Jewish and Christian self-definition". This would equally be true of the role that the poems of Homer played in Greek civilization: "These poems became the universally accepted frame of reference, in fact, the only frame of reference upon which the cultural language common to all those who belonged to the ancient Greek civilization was formed, and therefore an inseparable part of the identity of those who saw this civilization as their own" (Finkelberg). The conception of the foundational text can thus be useful in drawing a meaningful distinction between different

categories of canonicity. Indeed, not only Homer and the Bible, but also some literary corpora as they come to light in the contributions of Hubert Cancik and Amiel Vardi; codices of law as addressed by Sivan, or philosophical and mystical texts privileged by exclusive groups of the initiated, as discussed in the contributions of Robert Lamberton and Moshe Halbertal, can be defined as "canonical"; yet, while the latter are characterized by different degrees of class, ethnical, or religious exclusivity, only the former are envisaged as universally applicable vis-à-vis the community as a whole.

Another hallmark characteristic that crosses the boundaries between the literary and the religious canons is the hermeneutical attitude developed in any given society towards the canonical text. This conclusion emerges in more than one contribution to this volume. "The first millennium [Assyrian] corpus is more or less closed and textually fixed. There is little new invention, and little adaptation of the received text. The texts are old and authoritative, as is sometimes indicated by the attribution of divine authors or authors from a time past. Their canonicity, their intention and ability to prescribe a direction is not in defining what newly created literature should be like. It is rather in the never-ending project of hermeneutics" (Niek Veldhuis). "Eventually, probably in the early Islamic period if not already at the time of Khusrau, the Avesta became a closed canon, but the process of innovation and expansion still went on, quite consciously, in a parallel line of transmission, that of the exegesis and commentary on the text, mostly in the Middle Persian vernacular, which is known as the Zand" (Shaul Shaked). "It was by interpreting the standard text of the [Homeric] poems rather than by interfering with it that Homer's adaptation to changing circumstances normally proceeded. To borrow the terms introduced by Moshe Halbertal, "textual closure" of the Homeric corpus was accompanied by "hermeneutical openness" towards it—a sure sign of the canonical status that the text of Homer had acquired" (Finkelberg). "Neoplatonists from Porphyry in the third century —the student and literary executor of Plotinus—to Proclus in the fifth, and beyond, explicitly privileged certain texts we would classify as non-philosophical and treated them as potential sources of wisdom, for which special hermeneutic techniques were sometimes required". (Lamberton) "What these examples show, then, is that the mechanics of canonization in Rabbinic Judaism are constituted by a process of reading. By applying to a corpus of (written or oral) litera-

ture a certain type of reading—we could call it a type of interpretation—and by demonstrating that (written or oral) literature's capacity for sustaining that type of interpretation, the literary text is proven to be canonical—that is to say, to be able to sustain the weight of authority and the burden of meaningfulness appropriate to a canonical text" (Stern).

As several contributors emphasized, it would be an over-simplification to unreservedly associate the canonical status of a given text with its textual fixity. Canonization of the text is an ongoing process, and fixation is only one of the stages in canon-formation. "Another issue of increasing debate within biblical studies concerns the relationship between textual fixation and canonicity. . . . The appropriate conclusion to be drawn is thus that canonicity is not necessarily dependent upon the stabilization of a particular text, although these two processes are clearly to be joined in some way. At Qumran there apparently existed neither a fixed text nor a definitive list of canonical books, yet the idea of a cumulative body of authoritative scripture is everywhere evident" (Chapman). "The main aspect of canonization in the narrow sense, that is, a unified and coherent list of selected texts, lay in the distant future, also in the sense that the canonizing process. . . . is a never-ending one" (Grottanelli). "It is clear, however, that the book was not made canonical simply by the fact that it was written down. Canonization certainly preceded the process of written redaction. The canonical scripture existed independently of any attempt to turn it into a written text. . . . But if one understands by a canon a closed box of scriptures, set once and for all, to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be substracted, this is not a concept that applies to the history of the Zoroastrian canon" (Shaked).

Neither can the distinction between oral and written texts be considered any longer as a reliable guide of the text's elevation to a canonical status. As Hayden Pelliccia shows in his analysis of the performance of the Homeric epics, the oral version of a given text can be no less fixed than a written one, while Guy Stroumsa argues that the new medium of the codex adopted by early Christians functioned at the border of accepted literacy, presenting, in a sense, "an oral form of literacy". According to Shaul Shaked, oral transmission is in fact more trustworthy than the scribal preservation of a canonical text: "Although it is more precarious, and is perhaps more liable to loss of material when the schools of transmission are dis-

persed under pressure of conquest and assimilation to alien cultures, when the system works well the careful memorization of a text seems to guarantee a higher degree of fidelity in transmission than can be the case in a chain of copying. This is demonstrated by the transmission of the Vedas, by the transmission of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, and by the transmission of the Avesta." The distinction between oral and written texts is only functional in the prophetic and esoteric traditions, where the living word, which embodies the divine truth open only to the chosen ones, is opposed to the written text, which is accessible to all. This would be equally true of the Hebrew prophets (Grottanelli); of Zoroastrianism (Shaked); of the Christian Gnostics (Stroumsa, Markshies), and at a later stage of the Jewish Kabbalah (Halbertal).

In all the different cases surveyed, the text's transmission through various education systems has proved to be essential. This central place in education, perpetuated by various social tools and means of communication (Cancik, Vardi, Stroumsa) is, we suggest, the most salient characteristic of foundational texts in both ancient and modern societies. At the same time, "society" is far from being a monolithic entity, and canonization is not perpetuated automatically. Although some authors has paid due attention to this fact (see especially the contributions by Vardi and Markshies), a careful comparative analysis of the sociological background of the processes of canon-making seems to be an urgent desideratum for future research. In particular, the focus of the inquiry should move to the specific agents and recipients of those processes and to their *modus operandi.* Beyond various mechanisms of canon-making, it is the whole production of meaning in ancient societies that should be analyzed, at its various stages and in the dialectical relationships between different functions of written texts and oral traditions, public space and esoteric teachings, intertexts and hermeneutics. In other words, while this collection of essays does not claim to present a full-fledged theory of ancient canons, it does hope to suggest a new impetus for the comparative study of ancient cultures.

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MESOPOTAMIAN CANONS

NIEK VELDHUIS

1. *Introduction*

Literature in ancient Mesopotamia has a history that spans more than two and a half millennia. Literary texts in Sumerian appear shortly before the middle of the third millennium B.C.E., several centuries after the invention of writing. I will come back to this corpus later on. For now, may it suffice to say that these earliest Sumerian texts are very difficult to understand. The most obvious reason for this difficulty is the nature of the writing system in this period. Writing was invented for administrative use. There was no need to represent all the morphological elements of the Sumerian verbal and nominal system. Syntax in an administrative text is largely determined by the structure of the administrative operation itself.[1] Or, to put it otherwise, though the early administrative texts used language for their communication system, they were not meant to represent language as such. In the early literary texts the lack of morphological and syntactic explicitness greatly hampers understanding. We must assume that the texts were known before they were written or read. They were aides de memoire, rather than the actual carriers of information. The only texts that we can read with some confidence are those that were transmitted to later periods of cuneiform.

The end of Mesopotamian literature is traditionally posited around the beginning of the common era when cuneiform dies out. This position is heavily challenged today, and for good reasons. Cuneiform is a writing system that is almost exclusively used on clay, much

[1] The origins of cuneiform writing and the language represented therein have been the subject of much debate recently (see R. K. Englund, "Texts from the Late Uruk period", in: P. Attinger and M. Wäfler [eds.], *Mesopotamien. Späturuk-Zeit und Frühdynastische Zeit. Annäherungen 1*, [Fribourg, 1998], 15-233), but hardly concern us here. The essential rôle of lay-out in the syntax of early administrative texts was brilliantly discussed by M. W. Green, "The Construction and Implementation of the Cuneiform Writing System", *Visible Writing* 15 (1981), 345-372.

less on stone.[2] Clay tablets were kept in private or official archives or (in the first millennium) in libraries. Cuneiform archives or libraries were preserved when the building in which they were kept was destroyed.[3] They were hidden below the debris and may even be baked in case of fire. Other tablets were simply thrown away, to be found by archaeologists among other garbage. Whatever other writing there was in Greek, in one of the many variants of Aramaic, or in other languages we hardly know. The leather or papyrus on which such texts were written perished long ago. Nowadays, those scholars who can read cuneiform generally know little about Arabic, Syriac or Greek and vice versa. There may well be much more of a continuity in literature and in culture in general than we can see within the confines of narrow academic specialties. The study of the transmission and continuity of Mesopotamian culture beyond the Persian and Hellenistic periods is one of the important recent developments in Assyriology and Ancient History.[4]

Before we can start discussing 2500 years of Mesopotamian literary history we need to pay attention to the concept 'Mesopotamia'. This concept, according to one author, 'has the disconcerting ability to dematerialize completely'.[5] Mesopotamia is the name of a Roman province, referring to the lands between the Euphrates and the Tigris. In ancient times we are, in fact, talking about at least two very different entities: Babylonia in the South and Assyria in the North. Babylonia is a loose collection of cities with their surrounding country sides, supported by an agriculture that heavily depends on irrigation. From times immemorial the cities are the centres of commerce, culture, religion, and political power. Assyria, less dependent on irrigation, is more evenly populated, centred around

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[2] Another medium for writing cuneiform was the wax board: a wooden board covered with wax. In the first millennium wax boards were used for library texts. S. Parpola, "Assyrian Library Records", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 42 (1983), 1-30. These writing boards shared the fate of the Greek and Aramaic literature of the time.

[3] Paradoxically, tablets in buildings that were not destroyed followed their regular life-cycle and had very little chance to end up in a modern museum.

[4] See S. Dalley, *The Legacy of Mesopotamia* (Oxford, 1997); M. J. Geller, "The Last Wedge", *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 87 (1997), 43-95; and M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon. West Asiatic Influences on Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford, 1997).

[5] See N. Yoffee, "The Late Great Tradition in Ancient Mesopotamia," in: M. E. Cohen, D. C. Snell, and D. B. Weisberg (eds.), *The Tablet and the Scroll. Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William W. Hallo*, (Bethesda, 1993), 300-308, esp. 302.

a single royal city. Babylonian gods live in their cities, Ninurta in Nippur, Nanna in Ur, Inanna in Uruk, Marduk in Babylon. Their position in the pantheon is related to the political strength of their respective home cities. In Assyria the god Assur is the single head of a divine hierarchy.[6]

This contribution deals with two periods in the history of this non-existing Mesopotamia: the Old Babylonian period, around 1800 B.C.E., and the Neo Assyrian period, around 700 B.C.E.. Babylonian culture in the Old Babylonian period is indeed very Babylonian[7] and has little to do with far-away Assyria, about which we are ill-informed anyway. For first millennium Assyrian history, however, the concept Mesopotamia may be useful to some extent. At least from the Assyrian point of view it was important to see a cultural continuity between the North and the South. Culture, in the sense of cultural capital, as a means to be a cultivated person, was very much Babylonian culture. Literature in Assyrian palace libraries is mainly composed in an artificial and archaizing literary Babylonian dialect. Even the royal inscriptions by Assyrian kings, boasting about their campaigns in foreign countries, are not in Assyrian but rather in Babylonian. Whatever second millennium literature found its way to first millennium Assyria is Babylonian in origin and sings the glory of Babylonian heroes and gods such as Gilgameš and Ninurta. In times of war between Babylonia and Assyria, among the treasures that Assyrian kings brought home as precious booty were tablets with Babylonian inscriptions.

2. *Old Babylonian Literature*

Old Babylonian literary texts are written in Sumerian and come in great majority from Nippur[8] in central Babylonia. They constitute a major element in scribal education. By this time Sumerian was a dead language, a language mainly used for scribal and ritual purposes. Literary texts are used to introduce beginning scribes to this

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[6] See M. Van de Mieroop, *The Ancient Mesopotamian City* (Oxford, 1997), in particular Chapter 4.

[7] 'Babylonian', however, should not be taken in an essentialist way. The country was ruled by the time by an Amorite dynasty and several minority groups are known to have existed.

[8] Nippur was the most important religious and academic centre in Babylonia until the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

language and to the culture that came with the scribal profession. Old Babylonian Sumerian literary tablets belong to the same corpus as lexical and mathematical exercises.[9]

Sumerian literature has a broad variety of complexity, topics, styles, and genres. There are adventurous stories about legendary rulers of the past, such as Gilgameš, Lugalbanda, and Enmerkar as well as narrative texts about gods. There is a large body of hymnic literature, praising gods, kings, and temples. There is a group of so-called city-laments, poetic descriptions of the destruction of a city, its temples and its inhabitants, in most cases ending with a positive note about their subsequent restoration. The label 'wisdom literature' has often been used to include the widest variety of texts. I wish to restrict this term to those compositions that clearly intend to give practical or ethical instructions about various ways of life. It includes a large body of proverbs, and a few longer texts such as 'The Farmer's Instructions' also called the Sumerian Georgica, and 'Šuruppak's Instructions to his Son'. Finally there is a variety of light-hearted literature. This last category includes debate poems between animals, seasons, or tools (Bird and Fish; Summer and Winter; Hoe and Plough), as well as hilaric descriptions of life at school, involving a lot of name calling, obscenities and spanking.

Before I start discussing this corpus, let me clarify one more point. It is well nigh impossible at this point to present an all-encompassing overview over Old Babylonian Sumerian literature. Several compositions are available only in old and unreliable editions, others have not been edited at all. This particular problem is being remedied at a high speed by a web-based project of the Oriental Institute in Oxford. With broad international co-operation they have managed to put out a significant portion of the corpus of Old Babylonian Sumerian literature and they are determined to bring this project to completion in the near future.[10] Even so, however,

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[9] There is a large literature on Old Babylonian schools. See N. Veldhuis, "The Cuneiform Tablet as an Educational Tool", *Dutch Studies on Near Eastern Languages and Cultures* 2 (1996), 11-26 and most recently K. Volk, "Edubba'a und Edubba'a-Literatur: Rätsel und Lösungen", *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 90 (2000), 1-30, with references to earlier literature.

[10] J.A. Black, G. Cunningham, E. Robson, and G. Zólyomi, The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature, http://www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk/, (Oxford, 1998). This site may be consulted for editions, translations, and bibliographic data for all the Sumerian compositions referred to in this article. The main contribution of the Oxford web site is to provide an entire overview over the known Sumerian

the reconstruction of Sumerian literature will never be complete. Clay tablets are almost always broken. Most literary tablets do not contain an entire composition, but an extract of between 15 and 60 lines. In modern research Sumerian compositions must be pieced together as jig-saw puzzles. Few compositions may be reconstructed in their entirety. The future will no doubt bring more tablets and fragments to our knowledge, bridging ever more gaps in the reconstruction of the corpus. Yet, chances that this will lead to a complete picture are virtually nill. Quite to the contrary: new tablets will produce new variants and new versions of known compositions, and thus add to the awareness of the many versions and variants that did not survive the ravages of time.[11]

How does Old Babylonian literature relate to its own past? The Ur III period, approximately the last century of the third millennium, is probably responsible for the creation of the heroic narratives around Enmerkar, Lugalbanda, and Gilgameš,[12] legendary or semi-legendary kings of Uruk.[13] The Ur III dynasty originated in

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literature at a single place, accessible to specialists and non-specialists alike. The absence of discussion to justify choices of translation and interpretation may give the impression that the translations are reasonably certain and uncontroversial. The opposite is true. Sumerian is relatively badly known, both lexically and grammatically, so that any translation is bound to be controversial. See J. A. Black, *Reading Sumerian Poetry* (London, 1998), Chapter 2 for various aspects of this problem and its repercussions for the modern consumption of Sumerian literature.

[11] The corpus of literary texts that was recently found in Tell Haddad (ancient Meturan) may illustrate the point (A. Cavigneaux and F. Al-Rawi, "New Sumerian Literary Texts from Tell Haddad (Ancient Meturan): A First Survey", *Iraq* 55 [1993], 91-105). The tablets have significantly added to our knowledge of the Sumerian Gilgameš narratives, in particular Gilgameš and the Bull of Heaven (A. Cavigneaux and F. N. H. "Al-Rawi, Gilgameš et taureau de ciel [Šul-mè-kam] [Textes de Tell Haddad IV]", *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale* 87 [1993], 97-129) and Gilgameš' Death (A. Cavigneaux and F. N. H. Al-Rawi, *Gilgameš et la mort. Textes de Tell Haddad VI avec un appendice sur les textes funéraires sumériens* [Cuneiform Monographs 19, Groningen, 2000]; and N. Veldhuis, "The Solution of the Dream: A New Interpretation of Bilgames' Death", *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 52 [2001], 133-148). The pieces from Nippur that were known previously differ in many details from the Tell Haddad versions, so that we now have at least two incomplete versions of both narratives.

[12] The five independent Sumerian Gilgameš narratives are to be distinguished from the so-called Gilgameš epic in Akkadian. See below.

[13] See in general B. Alster, "Epic Tales from Ancient Sumer: Enmerkar, Lugalbanda, and Other Cunning Heroes", in: J. M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (New York, 1995), 2315-2326. We have no contemporary inscriptions of these kings. They are known, for instance, from the Sumerian Kinglist (T. Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List* [Assyriological Studies 11, Chicago, IL, 1939]). This list is

Uruk. The ancient and legendary kings of Uruk played an important rôle in the royal legitimation of the time. Šulgi, the most important king of this dynasty, calls himself brother and friend of Gilgameš.[14] We have very few actual manuscripts from the Ur III period for these narratives. The dating of these compositions to the Ur III period proceeds mainly on contents. The few literary Ur III fragments we have include a Lugalbanda story and two Gilgameš texts.[15] The Lugalbanda piece is related to the Old Babylonian Lugalbanda story, but in a rather loose way. One of the Gilgameš fragments corresponds to the narrative Gigameš and the Bull of Heaven.[16] The Old Babylonian Nippur version of this story is known only in a very fragmentary fashion. Comparison with versions from other places reveals that the Ur III fragment represents a version of its own. The second Ur III Gilgameš fragment does not seem to relate to any of the known narratives from later periods. Tentatively, we may conclude that the corpus of Ur III literary texts was transmitted, though selectively and without a clear concept of a fixed composition. This picture is confirmed by the fact that the narrative Gilgameš and Huwawa, in which Gilgameš and Enkidu kill the monster Huwawa in the cedar forest, is known in Old Babylonian Nippur in two rather different versions. We may describe the heroic narratives of the legendary kings of Uruk as foundation myths of the Ur III empire, but we must keep in mind that this did not prevent those stories from being in flux. Also, asserting that the Sumerian Gilgameš narratives go back to Ur III originals we must concede that we do not have the faintest idea what these Ur III period ver-

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probably of Ur III origin, too (see C. Wilcke, "Genealogical and Geographical Thought in the Sumerian Kinglist", in: H. Behrens, D. Loding, and M. T. Roth (eds.), *Dumu-E_2-dub-ba-a. Studies in Honor of Åke W. Sjöberg*, [Philadelphia, 1989], 557-571; an Ur III exemplar of the list has recently been identified).

[14] See J. Klein, "Šulgi and Gilgameš: Two Brother-Peers (Šulgi O)", in: B. L. Eichler, J. W. Heimerdinger and Å. W. Sjöberg (eds.), *Kramer Anniversary Volume. Cuneiform Studies in Honor of Samuel Noah Kramer* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976), 271-292, and Wilcke (1989), 220-221.

[15] Many of the Ur III literary fragments are still unpublished and are known only from scattered footnotes in scholarly publications. A comprehensive study of these texts was undertaken by Gonzalo Rubio in his doctoral disseration (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore 1998). This dissertation is at present unavailable, but the publication of a revised version has been announced.

[16] See A. Cavigneaux and F. N. H. Al-Rawi, "Gilgameš et taureau de ciel (Šulmè-kam) (Textes de Tell Haddad IV)", *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale* 87 (1993), 97-129.

sions looked like. Moreover, we must acknowledge that the Ur III period knew Gilgameš stories not present in the Old Babylonian record. The corpus of Ur III heroic narratives around the early Uruk kings is, therefore, largely a matter of guess work.

Another group of texts that may elucidate the relation between Ur III and Old Babylonian Sumerian literature is the royal hymn. Royal hymns in Sumerian praise the king mainly for his piety, his building activities, his maintenance of the canal system, his wisdom, his scribal, musical and athletic skills. They may refer to martial skills and accomplishments in war, but such themes seem not very important. In volume royal hymns form one of the most important groups of literary texts. We have more than twenty hymns to king Šulgi lesser numbers for the other kings of this dynasty. There are almost thirty hymns extant for Išme-Dagan, a king of the early Old Babylonian Isin dynasty. Other kings were less extravagant, but the tradition of composing such hymns continued at least until the times of Abi-Ešuh in the late Old Babylonian period.

Jacob Klein pointed out in some detail that some of the hymns to Išme-Dagan extensively use themes, structures, and expressions found in hymns to Šulgi.[17] A hymn commemorating the construction by Šulgi of a ritual boat for the goddess Ninlil is mirrored by a hymn for Išme-Dagan commemorating the construction of a ritual chariot for Enlil. Enlil and Ninlil are the divine couple presiding over the Sumerian pantheon. The Šulgi hymn describes the boat part by part in florid, metaphoric language:

> Your timber is a šatur serpent, crouching on its paws.
> Your punting-pole is a dragon, sleeping a sweet sleep in its lair.
> Your oars are sigsig snakes, their bellies pressed upon the waves.
> Your floor-planks are the flood of the pure Euphrates, sparkling altogether.

The translation is uncertain in many details, but the poetic strategy is clear enough. Such a part by part description with praise in metaphoric language is a known device in Sumerian poetry.[18] The

[17] See J. Klein, "Building and Dedication Hymns in Sumerian Literature", *Acta Sumerologica* 11 (1989), 27-67 and J. Klein, "Šulgi and Išmedagan: Originality and Dependence in Sumerian Royal Hymnology", in: J. Klein and A. Skaist (eds.), *Bar-Ilan Studies in Assyriology Dedicated to Pinhas Artzi* (Ramat Gan, 1990), 65-136.

[18] A hymn to the goddess Nungal, the lady-prison, describes the door that keeps the wicked in and the good guy out in a similar way, addressing in animal imag-

same device is used in the description of the chariot in the Išme-Dagan hymn:

> Your sudin is a thick cloud, embracing the horizon all over.
> Your rope-fastened pegs are a great net, laid out over heaven and earth.
> Your rope-box is a whip and a goad, which rouse up the donkeys.
> Your pole-pin is a wide-open net which does not let the evil-doer escape.

Again, there are a lot of uncertainties here. The sudin, in the first line of the translation, is literally a bat. We do not know what part of the chariot was called 'the bat', perhaps it is a mere homonym. Anyway, an allusion to the flying bat is used in the comparison with the dark cloud that covers the horizon.

The use of this kind of enumeration is not restricted to the two hymns compared here. Still, the syntax by which the metaphors are expressed and the general context of a large number of structural similarities between the two hymns proves that this is not a coincidental similarity. Steve Tinney, in a reaction to Klein's analysis, has maintained that the Išme-Dagan hymns do not merely copy their predecessors. They express an ideology that is different. Where Šulgi cast hist net widely, Išme-Dagan's interest are primarily centered on Nippur and its deities.[19] The hymnic tradition was actively used in the production of new texts with new contents and a new relevance. Išme-Dagan's court poets knew their classics and used them for their own purposes.

Ur III literature was transmitted to the Old Babylonian period but not in a wholesale fashion. Some compositions were handed down

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ery the bolt, the door wing, the door socket, and so on. This stylistic form is a subset of a more general device of enumeration in a litany-like fashion. The Home of the Fish describes the banquet for which all kinds of fish are invited, all of them called by name. A hymn to the shepherd god Dumuzi enumerates at length all kinds of grasses and weeds that the various kinds of sheep in his flock are eating. Perhaps it is instructive to note that there is no Aristotelian concept to describe this device, which renders it all but invisible. There is still no general study dedicated to this very important aspect of Sumerian poetics (but see M. Civil, "Feeding Dumuzi's Sheep: The Lexicon as a Source of Literary Inspiration", in: F. Rochberg-Halton (ed.), *Language, Literature, and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner*, [New Haven, 1987], 37-55).

[19] See S. Tinney, *The Nippur Lament. Royal Rhetoric and Divine Legitimation in the Reign of Išme-Dagan of Isin (1953-1935 B.C.E.)* (Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 16, Philadelphia, 1996), 74-80; E. Flückiger-Hawker, *Urnamma of Ur in Sumerian Literary Tradition* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 166, Fribourg, 1999), 65-68 has argued that Išme-Dagan also used the hymns to Urnamma, Šulgi's predecessor.

rather faithfully, even preserving particularities of Ur III orthographics.[20] Other texts were reworked, survived in various versions, or remained in a constant flux. Still other texts were forgotten. Some of the new compositions use the inspiration of older examples. This is a living literature. A literature that reflects on its own past not so much by preparing faithful editions or by writing commentaries but by adaptation and new production.

There is a small corpus of texts that preserves a tradition that goes back all the way to the very beginning of Sumerian literature. This corpus includes a collection of proverbs,[21] a collection of sayings by Šuruppak to his son,[22] a hymn to the temple of Keš[23] and a number of lexical texts.[24] The relation between the Old Babylonian copies and their earlier versions is in need of a thorough investigation. It is complicated by the fact that over the centuries orthography and the writing system itself changed so much.[25] At least some of these compositions in their Old Babylonian versions are provided with either Akkadian translations, or with glosses explaining the archaic orthography, or with both. Here we have traces of an academic interest in transmitting ancient texts, in understanding their contents, and in preserving the knowledge of ancient orthography.

The ancient texts are marked by a temporal distance. They were not adapted to the needs or the taste of the present. As such this corpus represents an awareness of history. This is the literature of an irrevocable past. The Ur III literature that was used, expanded, and adapted in the Old Babylonian period is a literature that is preserved and read and used, serving to indicate how literature proper is to be written. The two corpora thus display very different rela-

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[20] J. Klein, "The Independent Pronouns in the Šulgi Hymns", *Acta Sumerologica* 22 (2000), Forthcoming.

[21] B. Alster, "Early Dynastic Proverbs and other Contributions to the Study of Literary Texts from Abū Ṣalābīkh", *Archiv für Orientforschung* 38/39 (1991-1992), 1-51.

[22] See B. Alster, *The Instructions of Suruppak. A Sumerian Proverb Collection,* (Mesopotamia. Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology 2, Copenhagen, 1974); C. Wilcke, "Philologische Bemerkungen zum *Rat des Šuruppag* und Versuch einer neuen Bewertung", *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 68 (1978), 196-232.

[23] R. D. Biggs, "An Archaic Sumerian Version of the Kesh Temple Hymn from Tell Abu Salabikh", *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 61 (1971), 193-207.

[24] See provisionally N. Veldhuis, "The Sur_9-Priest, the Instrument ^{gis}Al-gar-sur_9, and the Forms and Uses of a Rare Sign", *Archiv für Orientforschung* 44/45 (1998), 115-128, esp. 125-127.

[25] M. Civil and R. D. Biggs, "Note sur des textes sumériens archaïques", *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale* 60 (1966), 1-16.

tions to the past. Both may be called 'canonical', though in very different senses of the word. The ancient corpus answers our expectation of a text that is faithfully transmitted over many centuries. Two of these compositions—The Instructions of Šurrupak and The Keš Temple Hymn—entered the regular Old Babylonian school curriculum and are, therefore, known in numerous copies. There is no indication that their contents were more authoritative—in a moral or religious sense—than other compositions read in school. The corpus that was transmitted from the Ur III period is not 'canonical' in the sense of a closed canon that invites interpretation. It is rather a literary canon, defining what literature is and how new literature is to be produced. As an educational canon it serves to define a class of people. Scribes were identified by their knowledge of Sumerian. As an Old Babylonian proverb says: a scribe who does not know Sumerian, what kind of a scribe is that? The cultural competence expected from a scribe included knowledge of this corpus of literary texts.

3. *First Millennium Literature*

First millennium literature is known to us primarily through libraries, the greatest and most famous of which is that of the Neo Assyrian king Assurbanipal at Nineveh. This enormous collection of learning happened to be the very first major find of cuneiform texts in the middle of the nineteenth century. One and a half century later we are still far removed from a comprehensive publication of these finds, let alone a full evaluation of its contents. Yet, some things have become sufficiently clear. The library mainly consists of traditional scholarly and ritual texts. Divination, including the rituals to avert predicted evil is the single most important group. In addition to the library texts the excavations in Nineveh brought to light an important body of letters and reports, written by scholars for the king. These letters and reports deal with the interpretation of celestial phenomena and other divinatory matters.[26] It has been argued that 'Assurbanipal

[26] For the authors of letters and reports to the king see now the important study by D. Brown, *Mesopotamian Planetary Astronomy-Astrology* (Cuneiform Monographs 18, Groningen, 2000), in particular Chapter 1. Brown argues that the extraordinary importance of celestial divination in the Neo Assyrian period, and the special place of the astrological specialists in the entourage of the king brought about the paradigmatic shift that eventually led to mathematical astronomy.

collected his tablets in order to remove power from the hands of [...] consultants and retain it himself. His ability to check prevented advisors from [...] wilfully misrepresenting the scholarly tradition, and it therefore gave him independence from whims and plots in the court'.[27] Literary texts, such as the famous Gilgameš epic, have attracted a large amount of scholarly and public attention, but play a subordinate rôle in the library at large.[28] These literary texts are mainly in Akkadian,[29] though some are Sumerian-Akkadian bilinguals. The literature we find here is not Neo Assyrian strictly speaking. As I have emphasized above, the cultural background of this literature is predominantly Babylonian. We find copies of the same texts at various places in both Babylonia and Assyria over a period of several centuries.

The first millennium body of literature is very different from the Old Babylonian Sumerian corpus. Most of Sumerian literature was lost. A few texts survived the centuries and are found in first millennium libraries in bilingual fashion. The Sumerian Gilgameš narratives had been reworked and integrated into an Akkadian Gilgameš epic as early as the Old Babylonian period. Over the millennia the psychological make-up of Gilgameš changed considerably.[30] The hero of the Sumerian tales is a hero indeed. He goes out to fight enemies and monsters and appears as the victor almost as a matter of course. In the Old Babylonian Akkadian version Gilgameš is more of a tragic hero. Hints to his tragic character may already be found in the Sumerian stories, in particular in the narrative that relates Enkidu's death. But now, in the Akkadian epic, we have a continuous story that starts out with a heroic quest and ends with the unavoidable acceptance of death in relation to the meaning of life. In the first millennium, finally, Gilgameš' Odyssey turns out to be a quest for

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[27] See S. J. Lieberman, "Canonical and Official Cuneiform Texts: Towards an Understanding of Assurbanipal's Personal Tablet Collection, in: T. Abusch, J. Huehnergard, and P. Steinkeller (eds.), *Lingering over Words. Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran*, (Atlanta, 1990), 305-334, esp. 327.

[28] See A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia. Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, Revised Edition completed by Erica Reiner (Chicago, 1977), 16-17.

[29] The term 'Akkadian' is used as a collective for the Assyrian and Babylonian dialects of the main Semitic language written in cuneiform.

[30] W. Moran, "The Gilgamesh Epic: A Masterpiece from Ancient Mesopotamia", in: J. M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, (New York, 1995), 2327-2336.

wisdom. It is the tale of an adventurer king in search of immortality who eventually resigns and realizes that the only immortality available is a textual one. It is the tablet box with the tablets that narrate his quest that will make him immortal.[31]

The Gilgameš epic thus reflects on its own textuality. It is not the only literary composition to do so. I will discuss two more examples. First, the Erra narrative relates the wars and the destructive powers of the plague god Erra.[32] In its closing paragraph it says:

> The one who assembled the composition about him was Kabit-Ilani-Marduk, the descendant of Dabibi
> It was revealed to him in the middle of the night; and when he recited it upon waking, he did not leave anything out,
> he did not add a single word;
> Erra heard and approved it.

What the last sentence means becomes clear when we look at the manuscripts of Erra, the actual clay tablets. Some of them are amulets: the tablet itself—the physical object—has become a protective tool.

Texts claiming divine inspiration are rather rare in Mesopotamia, though our example is not entirely unique. The famous so-called Catalogue of Texts and Authors provides authorial names for a number of compositions.[33] Most of these authors are human beings, some of them are gods, in particular Ea, the god of wisdom and cunning. Up to the first millennium Mesopotamian literature had been an anonymous literature—with very few exceptions. Authors still play a minor rôle in the textual reception and consciousness. Where a text is referred to in a letter or in a learned composition, it is always by first line, or incipit, never including an author's name. Yet, the fact that we find names of authors and compilers—real or imaginary—of such texts as omen compendia, the bilingual Ninurta tales Lugale and Angin, the Gilgameš epic, and the Erra narrative is important enough. An author has authority over the text he has

[31] The Gilgameš epic was newly translated by A. George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh. A New Translation* (New York, 1999). See P. Michalowski, "Sailing to Babylon, Reading the Dark Side of the Moon", in: J. S. Cooper and G. M. Schwartz (eds.), *The Study of the Ancient Near East in the 21st Century. The William Foxwell Albright Centennial Conference* (Winona Lake, 1996), 177-193; and idem, "Commemoration, Writing, and Genre in Ancient Mesopotamia", in: C. Shuttleworth Kraus (ed.), *The Limits of Historiography. Genre and Narrative in Ancient Historical Texts* (Leiden 1999), 69-90.

[32] Translation in Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia. Creation, The Flood, Gilgameš, and Others.* (Oxford, 1989), 282-315; see Michalowski (1996), 186.

[33] W. G. Lambert, "A Catalogue of Texts and Authors", *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 16 (1962), 59-77.

composed. A traditional text is owned by whoever is part of this tradition. A text with an author has a proper form and an erratic one. The proper form is the one as conceived by the author. The erratic one deviates from that standard. To be sure, we do not necessarily need an author for the concept of a good, original text. My point goes the other way round: the emergence of authors' names demonstrates that something has changed in the concept of a text.

Reflection on textuality takes place in a quite different way in the so-called creation story or, by its incipit, Enūma Eliš. As has been asserted by various authors, this creation story is not about creation at all, it is about the rise of Marduk, city-god of Babylon, to the head of the pantheon.[34] The composition famously ends with the fifty names of Marduk. This is a learned piece of work in which fifty names of Marduk are explained by complicated hermeneutical techniques.[35] The names are in Sumerian. They are analysed with fantastic etymologies, sometimes involving complex transformations. Thus a Sumerian word may be replaced by a homonym, or by an entirely different word that happens to be written by the same cuneiform sign. The complicated relationship between Sumerian and Akkadian writing is used for hermeneutical ends. The etymological techniques are not explained; knowledge of the complexities of the writing system and its possibilities are presumed. This, in other words, is a text that speaks from expert to expert. Moreover, it is a text that only makes sense in writing. The fifty names of Marduk may only be understood by someone who understands the intricacies of the cuneiform writing system, it is lost in recitation.[36]

Enūma Eliš is related to the learned tradition of the lexical corpus. First millennium lexical texts are bilingual. They provide a

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[34] See P. Michalowski, "Presence at the Creation", in: T. Abusch, J. Huehnergard, and P. Steinkeller (eds.), *Lingering over Words. Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran*, (Atlanta, 1990), 381-396; H. L. J. Vanstiphout, "Enuma Elish as a Systematic Creed. An Essay", *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 23 (1992), 37-61.

[35] See J. Bottéro, "Les noms de Marduk; l'écriture et la 'logique' en Mésopotamie ancienne", in: M. De Jong-Ellis (ed.), *Essays on the Ancient Near East in Memory of J.J. Finkelstein*, (Hamden, 1977), 5-28.

[36] Enūma Eliš in fact was recited at different occasions (see B. Pongratz-Leisten, "Neujahr(sfest). B. Nach akkadischen Quellen", *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 9 [1999], 294-298 and G. Çagirgan and W. G. Lambert, "The Late Babylonian Kislimu Ritual for Esagil", *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 43/45 [1993], 89-106). The ritual tablets in question are very late, but it is generally believed that it represents an older custom.

Sumerian word with an Akkadian translation. As is well known, words ordinarily do not have a single translation. The solution of the lexical texts is to be as inclusive as possible. All Sumerian—Akkadian correspondences, in all possible contexts, were simply enumerated. Only in exceptional cases we may find an indication of the context in which the translation or use is valid. These lists provide a rich source for the kind of etymological reasoning that we find in the Fifty Names of Marduk. Similar techniques are found in some categories of commentary texts. Commentary texts exists for several divinatory series, for medical texts and for a number of literary compositions. One type of commentary simply explains difficult words. The other type indulges in the kind of etymological analysis described above. Stephen Lieberman has pointed out the relations between these techniques and later rabbinic hermeneutics.[37] What is of importance here is that such exercises only make sense in a world where texts and writing have their own inherent authority.

The inherent authority of traditional texts may further be illustrated by first millennium colophons.[38] Such colophons may go at lengths to assure the reader that the copy he has in his hands is an accurate one, and was collated against the original. Even tablets which—according to the colophon—were 'hastily excerpted' often claim accuracy: 'copied according to the original; collated'.[39]

There is another, perhaps more entertaining way to illustrate the attitude to written texts in first millennium Mesopotamia, and that is humour, in particular parody. Humour has had a place in Mesopotamian literature from its very beginning. The early proverbs from the middle of the third millennium include rather sexist expressions about women and female sexual parts. They were no doubt considered very funny in the all-male world of scribes. Humour in Old Babylonian Sumerian compositions largely plays on human

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[37] See S. J. Lieberman, "A Mesopotamian Background for the So-Called *Aggadic* "Measures" of Biblical Hermeneutics?", *Hebrew Union College Annual* 58 (1987), 157-225.

[38] For colophons in general see H. Hunger, *Babylonische und assyrische Kolophone, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 2* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1968) and L. E. Pearce, "Statements of Purpose: Why the Scribes Wrote", in: M. E. Cohen, D. C. Snell, and D. B. Weisberg (eds.), *The Tablet and the Scroll. Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William W. Hallo* (Bethesda, 1993), 185-193.

[39] The difference between tablets 'hastily excerpted' and library copies, therefore, is not that the latter claim to be more accurate. The library copies were produced to be consulted in the future, the excerpts indicate that they were made for a specific purpose (ritual or didactic).

shortcomings. The texts describing school life are full of stupid pupils calling each other names or being spanked by short-tempered teachers. The dispute poems, such as the dispute between Hoe and Plow, derive part of their entertaining value from the humiliation of the proud. The expensive and complicated plow turns out to be so much less useful than the simple hoe.[40] One type of humour, however, seems to be almost entirely absent and that is parody.[41] First millennium literature is more productive in this respect. I will discuss two examples.[42] One is a fragmentary text called the Tale of the Fox, and probably related to later Reynaert stories. It parodies—among other things—heroic narratives. Heroic narratives introduce direct speech by one of several traditional formulas, most famously: 'he opened his mouth and said: ...'.[43] In the Tale of the Fox the speech by the dog—who is portrayed as a braggart—is introduced as: 'he opened his mouth and barked'. This text is well-edited in W.G. Lambert's *Babylonian Wisdom Literature.*[44] It has been extensively studied[45] and is widely known in the Assyriological community as well as beyond. Another text, less well-known, parodies a variety of scholarly and literary text types. This text so far received only rather poor editions. In one of the first attempts[46] the composition was understood as a most serious description of the fate of human beings at the last

[40] H. L. J. Vanstiphout, "On the Sumerian Disputation between the Hoe and the Plough", *Aula Orientalis* 2 (1984), 239-251.

[41] There is one certain and one possible example of Old Babylonian parody. The Akkadian incantation edited by W. G. Lambert, "Another Trick of Enki?", in: D. Charpin and F. Joannès Marchands (eds.), *Diplomates et empereurs : études sur la civilisation mésopotamienne offertes à Paul Garelli* (Paris, 1991), 415-419 plays with the rules for regular incantations to produce an absurdity and may therefore be listed as the earliest example of straight parody. The Rulers of Lagaš (E. Sollberger, "The Rulers of Lagaš", *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 21 [1967], 279-291) is a reaction to the Sumerian King List (which leaves out all references to Lagaš and its kings), using parts of its structure and phraseology. However, it seems to be a rather serious reaction, no doubt with serious political or ideological motives.

[42] Futher examples are discussed by Michalowski (1999), 84-87.

[43] For the introduction to direct speech in Akkadian see M. E. Vogelzang, "Patterns Introducing Direct Speech in Akkadian Literary Texts", *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 42 (1990), 50-70.

[44] See W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford, 1960), 186-209; partial new translation in B. R. Foster, *Before the Muses. An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda, 1993), 837.

[45] See H. L. J. Vanstiphout, "The Importance of 'The Tale of the Fox'", *Acta Sumerologica* 10 (1988), 191-227, with previous literature

[46] See E. Ebeling, *Tod und Leben nach den Vorstellungen der Babylonier. I. Teil: Texte* (Berlin, 1931), 9-19.

judgement. Three years later the book was effectively destroyed in a review by Von Soden,[47] who was the first to point out in print the parodic nature of our text. We now have an excellent recent translation of some passages in Benjamin Foster's *Before the Muses*.[48] Since Foster's work a few important new fragments were published, so that it is well worth spending some time on this fascinating composition.[49]

The text consists of six sections, each perverting a different text type. It begins with a god list. God lists are closely related to lexical lists. They represent truly venerable traditional knowledge. In our present text each god is related to a city:

3	^{d}mu-mi-tum	šar-rat kiš^{ki}	Mumitum	queen of Kiš
4	^{d}be-lum	EN eš$_3$-nun-na^{ki}	Belum	lord of Ešnuna
5	^{d}INANA	EN ^{d}šul-gi ^{d}NANNA	Ištar	lord of Šulgi-Sîn
6	^{d}šar-ra-hu	ša kiš^{ki}	Šarrahu	from Kiš
7	^{d}za-ba$_4$-ba$_4$	ša hu-ub-ša$_2$-an^{ki}	Zababa	from Hubšan
8	^{d}a-a hu-ub-ša-an^{ki}	LUGAL ša ra-pi-qa^{ki}	Ajja-Hubšan	king of Rapiqa
9	^{d}ar-man-nu	ša šu-ša$_2$-an^{ki}	Armannu	from Susa
10	^{d}Inšušinak	ša E$_2$.GAL.MEŠ^{ki}	Inšušinak	from Ekallate

In those cases where the god is known we may observe that he or she is placed one line too low. Zababa belongs to Kiš, and Ajja-Hubšan presumably belongs to Hubšan, and so on. Ištar is, of course, not a lord, but rather a misstress. There may well be something more sophisticated behind this list, or perhaps not. In the second section the text continues with a first person account by a woman, who compares herself to several animals and brags about her appearance. A short quotation (slightly adapted from Foster's):

> Among the long ones, the short ones, there is no girl like me!
> My limbs are like those of an elephant, my face like a hyena's
> I tower like a tortoise, I have no rival.

The text continues like this for several dozens of lines, but the section is only partially preserved. The humour may be less sexist than it seems at first sight. There is only one mortal who can brag in Mesopotamian texts, and that is the king, a male. Some of the expressions used here are directly borrowed from this royal bragging,

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[47] W. Von Soden, "Review of Erich Ebeling, Tod und Leben nach den Vorstellungen der Babylonier", *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 37 (1934), 411-420.

[48] See Foster (1993), 824-826 with bibliography.

[49] The additional tablets and fragments are *VS* 24, 118; *CTN* IV, 204-206. Prof. W.G. Lambert, who is preparing a new edition, kindly informed me of the existence of many unpublished fragments, mainly of Babylonian origin.

such as 'I have no rival', or the metaphorical description of the limbs. That the braggart is female here, comparing herself to an elephant, is a double perversion of a well-known text-type. More than the female of the species it is the king himself who is mocked here indirectly.

The next section is not so much a parody of a text, but a mocking description of various professions. The aluzinnu, the jester, pretends that he is able to perform all those specialized professions. Here I quote Foster's translation:

> "Jester, what can you do?"
> Of the whole of the exorcist's craft, nothing's beyond me.
>
> "Jester, how do you exorcise?"
> Here's how: I take over the haunted house, I set up the holy water,
> I tie up the scape goat,
> I skin a donkey and stuff it with straw.
> I tie a bundle of reeds, set it on fire, and toss it inside.
> I spared the boundaries of the house and its surroundings,
> But the haunt of the house, the serpent, the scorpion, are not spared.

Here is a specialist whose remedy destroys the house that he is supposed to exorcise. Note that the exorcist is one of those learned people who would be versed in all the technical and literary texts of the time.

The fourth section seems to describe an heroic quest, the details of which are lost in breaks. In section five we arrive at the chapter divination. Here are a few examples:[50]

3'	šum-ma ina nab-re-e ku-ṣum it-tab-ši	If it is cold during the Nabrû festival
4'	a-kil ^{lu2}NAR.MEŠ ina ga-ši-ši il-la-lu$_4$	they will hang the chief singer on a stake:
5'	am-me-ni ina nab-re-e ku-uṣ-ṣum ib-ba-ši	'why is it cold during the Nabrû festival?'
6'	šum-ma hum-mu-ru ina la-sa-mi u-tah-hir	If a cripple is delayed in running
7'	GU$_2$.GAL ID$_2$ i-kas-su-ma ana ID$_2$ i-nam-du-u	they will bind the canal inspector and throw him in the river
8'	a-di hum-mu-ru la-sa-ma i-ba-'-u$_2$	until the running cripple arrives.
9'	šum-ma šu-ri-pu ina ID$_2$ it-ta-har-miṭ	If ice melts in a river
10'	dam-qu-ti LUGAL![51] ṣu-ba-ti-šu-nu i-tab-ba-lu-ma	they will strip off the clothes of the king's choice troops

[50] *CTN* IV 205 column iii.

[51] The text has NI, which seems to make no sense. Confusion between LUGAL and NI is hard to imagine in Assyrian writing, but is easier to understand if the copy in question has a Babylonian ancestor.

11'	a-na UDUN em-me-ti u_2-šer-ri-du-šu$_2$-nu-ti	they will put them in a hot oven
12'	a-di šu-ri-pu-u ina ID_2 šin-nu-u_2 i-tan-li-pu	until the blocks of ice in the river freeze together two by two

The perversion of regular divination texts works on a number of levels. The chief singer is the professional who is supposed to sing the learned liturgical laments in Sumerian. We know little about the Nabrû festival, but the omen suggests that such laments were used there. Here, however, the chief singer is reduced to lamenting his own fate: why is it cold during the Nabrû festival? The omen about ice in the river is quite telling. Omens generally describe something unusual or irregular. The remarkable phenomenon receives an interpretation such as 'there will be misfortune in the land', or: 'the enemy will not succeed'. If there ever was any ice in a Babylonian or Assyrian river, it was surely melting. 'If ice melts in a river' is a parody by itself. Then the choice troops of the king are stripped off their clothes and put in a hot oven. This play with hot and cold makes fun of a well-known technique in divinatory texts where the protasis—the phenomenon observed—and the apodosis—the prediction—are related by way of association. The final sentence—until the blocks of ice freeze together two by two—is an extension not related to anything in regular divination texts. A nice point, however, is the verbal form *i-tan-li-pu*. The verb *itlupu* is used primarily in so-called teratological omens, omens deriving their prediction from monstruous births, either human or animal.[52] The poor creatures are described as having arms, legs, or other body parts grown together. Our text indulges in the formation of a complicated, hyper-correct, verbal form, with a secondary dissimilation of a reduplicated /l/: *ītanlipu*, a form not attested anywhere else as far as I know. This learned form is used to describe something that the compiler of this text must have regarded as utterly impossible: blocks of ice in a river freezing together.

The final section of our text is a mock-menology. Menologies prescribe by month and day what actions are advisable or not. They are related to divinatory texts. Our text is about food, and—predictably—prescribes a rather disgusting diet. I quote again Foster's translation:

[52] E. Leichty, *The Omen Series Šumma Izbu* (Texts from Cuneiform Sources 4, NY, 1970).

In January, what is your diet?
Thou shalt dine on goose eggs and dung, embedded in sand,
and cumin infused with Euphrates water in ghee.

In February, what is your diet?
Thou shalt dine on hot bread and donkey's ass,
stuffed with dog turds and fly dirt.

And so on.[53]

The entire composition has been interpreted by some commentators as recording an actual performance of an aluzinnu or jester.[54] This, I believe, is very unlikely for two reasons. First, the aluzinnu appears in section three but there is no reason to assume that he plays a rôle in the other sections as well. Morphology identifies the aluzinnu as a male and the main protagonist of section two as a female. This has led to speculation about the aluzinnu as a transvestite, but it seems much more natural to read the sections as seperate entities. Second, the humour behind this text is mainly based on a parody of learned texts. It is hard to see how such humour could work in an actual performance outside the world of texts. The unity of the composition is not to be found in the aluzinnu or his performance, but in the textual world that it ridicules.

As to the cleverness of the humour behind this composition, I am not overly impressed. The importance of this text is that parody is only effective if the text parodied has sufficient status. The text, once again, reflects on the textual nature of the intellectual universe of the first millennium.

4. Conclusion

First millennium canonical texts do not derive their canonicity from divine sanction or divine inspiration. The few hints at divine inspiration I have mentioned may not be compared to the Biblical model. They are also very different from the canonical body of literary texts from the Old Babylonian period. The Old Babylonian Sumerian corpus is a living, changing corpus. The first millennium corpus is

[53] This particular section was interpreted by E. Ebeling (1931) as the punishment for the sinner after the last judgement.

[54] Foster (1993), 824; W. H. Ph. Römer, "Der Spassmacher im alten Zweistromland, zum 'Sitz im Leben' altmesopotamischer Texte", *Persica* 7 (1976), 43-68, in particular 53-55.

more or less closed and textually fixed. There is little new invention, and little adaptation of the received text. The texts are old and authoritative, as is sometimes indicated by the attribution of divine authors or authors from a time past. Their canonicity, their intention and ability to prescribe a direction is not in defining what newly created literature should be like. It is rather in the never-ending project of hermeneutics.

The comparison between Old Babylonian and first millennium corpora of texts reveals that the notion of text itself developed and changed dramatically. Old Babylonian schools used the heritage from the past freely. They transmitted, re-created, and used the old tradition as inspiration for new compositions. The texts were written, first of all, for educational purposes. The concept of a library does not seem to exist. Knowledge was located in the heads of school masters, not in collections of tablets. First millennium libraries contain repositories of reliable knowledge, knowledge about writing, knowledge about divination. Divination itself is a textual business. Gods have written their messages in the heavens or on the liver of a sacrificial sheep. Divination is hermeneutics, no less than reading a traditional cuneiform text. Knowledge of this heavenly writing, as it is called, is the scholarly way to know the world. It is intricately related to knowledge of the writing system and the way this knowledge is represented in texts. Knowledge and wisdom are entrapped in texts talking to texts about texts and the intricacies of writing. In this self-contained world we find the wise Gilgameš who finally found immortality in writing his biography. His shelf-neighbours in the royal library are long lists of Sumerian words with their translations, endless observations of the skies, monstruous births, earthquakes, the behaviour of ants, the physiognomy of humans, and so on. We need to conceptualize the variety of compositions in the Assurbanipal library as a body of texts that defined the undoubtedly small intellectual elite of the time. Scholars have started to realize that complicated mathematical-astronomical tables are not essentially different from astrological divination.[55] They belong to the same intellectual discipline. And so do literary and lexical texts. They are all part of an essentially textual technique for the production of meaning.

[55] See Brown (2000) with earlier literature.

HOW THE BIBLICAL CANON BEGAN: WORKING MODELS AND OPEN QUESTIONS

STEPHEN B. CHAPMAN

Recent discussion about canonization within the field of Old Testament or Hebrew Bible studies[1] provides a helpful vantage-point from which to identify several key methodological issues for comparative work on the phenomenon of literary and religious canons, especially in antiquity. In this essay, I hope to offer a contribution to such comparative work with the following thesis: efforts to reconstruct the process of biblical canon formation have consistently raised certain basic methodological issues for historical-critical scholars of the Bible; furthermore, the way in which such scholars have chosen to respond to these issues has largely determined the shape of their historical reconstructions. In this way, historical theories about biblical canonization have not been 'neutral', but instead reflect the working out of various phenomenological assumptions about the process of 'canonization' itself.

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[1] While I would like to employ a 'neutral' term for this literature, especially given the original context for these remarks at the Hebrew University, I am not at all convinced that such neutrality is possible. This conviction is not only a matter of my own social location (as a Christian scholar), but also involves the different referents denoted by alternative terms. For example, 'Hebrew Bible' implies a contrast with the Greek Bible or Septuagint (LXX), while 'Old Testament' does not. Because this essay pertains to both the Hebrew and the Greek biblical traditions, as well as the relationship between them, 'Hebrew Bible' cannot function as an adequate umbrella term. Moreover, although I would agree that the term 'Old Testament' was foreign to pre-Christian Judaism, I remain unconvinced that 'Hebrew Bible' does better justice to the precise hermeneutical position and role of this literature for ancient Israel. Cf. F.E. Greenspahn, "Does Judaism Have a Bible?", in: L.J. Greenspoon and B.F. Le Beau (eds.), *Sacred Text, Secular Times*, (Omaha, 2000), 1–12. By using 'Old Testament' I do not intend to impose a network of Christian theological presuppositions upon this literature, but rather positively to describe the status of Israel's Scriptures as a *venerable collection* for both Early Judaism and Early Christianity. In addition to these historical issues, moreover, it also seems fairer not to disguise from the reader the nature of my own social location and religious commitments.

First I shall relate the standard critical theory of Old Testament canonization and highlight the choices and assumptions that have given it its characteristic form. Then I shall explore the possibility of a critical alternative to the standard theory and evaluate some important methodological questions such an alternative poses. Hopefully, this focus on methodology and unresolved questions within the field of biblical studies will prove helpful to scholars in other fields who are also working on issues of canonization and closely related questions about 'scripture' and 'the classic'. I believe there is a pressing need for increased interdisciplinary work along these lines for scholars of comparative religion in particular.[2]

1. *The Standard Theory*

The standard critical theory regarding the canonization of the Old Testament describes a linear three-stage process corresponding the three main literary divisions of the later Masoretic canon: *Torah*, *Nebi'im* and *Ketubim* (or the Law, the Prophets and the Writings). Religious tradition within both Judaism and Christianity had generally claimed mosaic and prophetic authorship for this scripture and believed that it had been collected and preserved in an unbroken chain of transmission.[3] In contrast, historical critical scholarship on the Bible developed and promoted a theory of three stages of canonization beginning with the original form of the book of Deuteronomy, which was regarded as the 'lawbook' discovered during the reign of King Josiah (2 Kings 22–23).

According to H.E. Ryle, whose 1892 volume still represents the

[2] For important recent comparative work on this topic, see J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis* (Munich, [2]1997); M. Levering (ed.), *Rethinking Scripture* (Albany, 1989); R. Fernhout, *Canonical Texts*, trans. H. Jansen and L. Jansen-Hofland (Amsterdam/Atlanta, 1994); A. van der Kooij and K. van der Toorn (eds.), *Canonization and Decanonization* (Leiden/Boston/Cologne, 1998); L.V. Rutgers, P.W. van der Horst, H.W. Havelaar and L. Teugels (eds.), *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World* (Leuven, 1998); J.F.A. Sawyer, *Sacred Languages and Sacred Texts* (London/New York, 1999); G. Sheppard, Art. Canon, EncRel (E) III, (New York, 1987 = 1988), 62–69; W.C. Smith, *What is Scripture?* (Minneapolis, 1993); idem, "Study of Religion and the Bible", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 39 (1971), 131–40; M. Tardieu, *La Formation des Canons Scripturaires* (Paris, 1993); H.M. Vroom and J.D. Gort (eds.), *Holy Scriptures in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Amsterdam/Atlanta, 1997).

[3] E.g., Josephus, *Against Apion*, I, 37–43; b. Baba Bathra 14.

culmination and most complete statement of this critical theory, the first stage of canonization was completed when the Torah or Pentateuch was officially promulgated by Ezra in the mid-fifth century B.C.E.,[4] just prior to the schism between Jews and Samaritans which Ryle dated to 432 B.C.[5] The Samaritans had famously restricted their biblical canon to the Pentateuch alone, leading most scholars of Ryle's day to assume that the Samaritans had simply *retained* the canon as it had existed at the time of their separation from Judaism. Sometime before the end of the third century B.C.E., Ryle theorized, the books of the Prophets were 'canonized', a development reflected in chapters 44–49 of the book of Ecclesiasticus or Ben Sira. A third-century date also seemed implied by the inclusion of the book of Daniel (usually dated ca. 165 B.C.E.) within the Writings rather than among the apparently then-closed collection of prophetic books, where it appeared more properly to belong. The Writings as a whole were thought by Ryle to have received official approval by the end of the first century A.D., perhaps at a rabbinical 'council' held in Jamnia (or Yavneh) in about A.D. 90, an event which also would have therefore 'closed' the entire canon.

Ryle's work on the biblical canon continues to be significant because the three-stage critical theory he so fully worked out still appears in textbooks and critical introductions to the Bible up to the present. Although the twentieth century saw any number of new exegetical theories and critical revisions within the field of biblical studies generally, the three-stage theory of canonization maintained a remarkable dominance. As John Barton has noted:

> "On the face of it there is agreement among scholars on only one matter concerning the canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures: that the present threefold division into Law (*tōrâh*), Prophets (*nbî'îm*) and Writings (*ktûbîm*) provides a rough guide to the *relative* date at which these collections were regarded as 'canonical scripture'. The Law was already a fixed entity at the time when the later books of the Prophets were still being composed, and the Prophets were complete at the time when the last of the Writings were taking shape."[6]

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[4] For a discussion of why the dating scheme of B.C.E. and C.E. is neither 'neutral' nor satisfactory *especially* within work on comparative religions, see Smith, Scripture, 258–59, n. 55.

[5] H.E. Ryle, *The Canon of the Old Testament* (London/New York, 1892), 93.

[6] J. Barton, "The Significance of a Fixed Canon of the Hebrew Bible", in: M. Sæbø (ed.), *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament* (Göttingen, 1996), 67–83, here 68. His emphasis.

Thus, the standard critical theory of canon formation actually conceives of three *discrete* acts of canonization, one for each of the three subcollections of the later canon. What this implied, as Ryle proceeded to make quite explicit, is that no individual book was to be considered 'canonical' until the *entire subcollection* in which that book was found had been 'closed'. Ryle's reasoning at this point had everything to do with his understanding of what 'canonization' implied: that certain writings had been "*separated* from all other writings as the sacred and authoritative expression of the Word of God".[7] Expanding from this basically exclusive conception of 'canon', Ryle revealed in the details of his treatment how he presupposed a 'canon' to be *per definitionem* nationally-observed, officially-authoritative and literarily-delimited.[8]

2. *Criticism and Revisions of the Theory*

Although still considered a 'rough guide' to the process of biblical canonization, the standard theory of the canon has been subjected to an increasing number of strong challenges from various directions.

Already by the mid-twentieth century, several crucial supporting arguments for the theory had been rendered suspect. First, work on the Septuagint suggested that the threefold division of the Masoretic canon was not necessarily the only, or even the oldest, canonical order to have existed in antiquity.[9] If the Masoretic order was a later development, or simply one order among others in antiquity, in what sense could it be said to function as a reliable guide to the historical development of the canon? Second, the notion of a rabbinical 'council' in Yabneh and its role in 'closing' the Hebrew canon became disputed.[10] Could—or should—the slender references to rabbinic

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[7] Ryle, *Canon*, 17. My emphasis.

[8] For further discussion, see R.T. Beckwith, The *Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism* (London, 1985), 66–67, 129, 131–37; S.B. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets* (Tübingen, 2000), 3–7.

[9] P. Katz, "The Old Testament Canon in Palestine and Alexandria", *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentlische Wissenschaft* 47 (1956), 191–217 (cf. *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 49 (1958), 223); J.C.H. Lebram, "Aspekte der alttestamentlichen Kanonbildung", *Vetus Testamentum* 18 (1968), 173–89.

[10] E.g., J.P. Lewis, "What Do We Mean by Jabneh?" *The Journal of Bible and Religion* 32 (1964), 125–32 = S.Z. Leiman (ed.), *The Canon and Masorah of the Bible* (New York, 1974), 254–61.

discussions at this time about certain biblical books which 'made the hands unclean' be regarded as pointing to official 'canonical' decisions? Third, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls would increasingly shed new light on the textual situation in the last two centuries B.C.E. Although the precise evaluation of this new evidence would be slow, it was apparent almost immediately that a variety of texts and text types had existed prior to the point at which the canonical text was 'fixed' and an 'exclusive' canonical order (or 'list') began to function authoritatively for all Jewish groups. A further development arising from work on the Dead Sea Scrolls was the establishment of a much later date for the text of the Samaritan Pentateuch, and thus a correspondingly later date for the so-called 'Samaritan schism' as well (now routinely dated to the Maccabean period).[11]

Finally, the massive influence of the form-critical method, which emphasized the antiquity of the oral traditions *behind* the received form of the text, began to call into question more basic assumptions about the relationship between literary growth and the process of canonization.[12] For example, historical-critical scholars had usually viewed the book of Deuteronomy as representing the beginning of Israel's canonical process, but analyzed the literary pre-history of the Pentateuch in terms of the Yahwist ('J'), Elohist ('E') and Priestly ('P') sources reconstructed from the books of Genesis–Numbers. However, what was the relationship between the 'canonization' of Deuteronomy and the literary growth of the Pentateuch or, for that matter, between the 'canonization' of Deuteronomy and the literary growth of the prophetic books? Had these other non-pentateuchal books been in existence, but not yet achieved canonical status when the Pentateuch did? If the literary existence of a book could not alone provide sufficient indication of its 'canonical' status, neither could the process of canonization be easily divorced from the history of the literary growth of the books the canon contained.

The effect of the form-critical perspective for work on the biblical canon was apparent in the first Old Testament Introduction to use

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[11] R.J. Coggins, *Samaritans and Jews* (Atlanta, 1975); J.D. Purvis, *The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Origin of the Samaritan Sect* (Cambridge, 1968); idem, "The Samaritans and Judaism", in: R.A. Kraft and G.W.E. Nickelsburg (eds.), *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters* (Philadelphia, 1986), 81–98.

[12] B.S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, 1979), 53–54.

the form-critical method programmatically—Otto Eißfeldt's *Einleitung* of 1934.[13] Eißfeldt's attention to the pre-literary development of the biblical books led him to make an analogous, but at the same time quite innovative claim about the pre-literary development of the biblical canon: "The formation of the Old Testament canon reached its conclusion... only in the second century A.D. But its pre-history begins centuries and millenia beforehand. Its point of origin was the belief that certain human utterances actually represented the Word of God, and as such claimed a special authority for themselves".[14] The second 1956 edition of Eißfeldt's Introduction was translated by P.R. Ackroyd into English[15] and not only made a powerful impact upon Anglo-Saxon scholarship generally, but also provided the necessary catalyst for a particular British–American discussion about canonization that emerged in the 60s and 70s, a trend now associated with biblical scholars like P.R. Ackroyd, B.S. Childs, R.E. Clements and J.A. Sanders.[16]

In retrospect it appears that one effect of this form-critical attention to the canon's *pre-history* was to split the field into two groups with two different understandings of the term 'canon'. It is probably accurate to say that until this point in time the word 'canon' had usually been used to refer properly to the *late extrinsic fixing* of the contents, order and text of the biblical books.[17] Beginning with

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[13] O. Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Tübingen, 1934).

[14] Idem, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Tübingen, ^{2}1956), 692 (my translation). The original reads: "Erst im 2. Jhr. n. Chr. hat... die Bildung des alttestamentlichen Kanons ihren Abschluß gefunden. Aber ihre Vorgeschichte beginnt Jahrhunderte und Jahrtausende vorher. Ausgangspunkt ist der Glaube daran, daß bestimmte Äußerungen von Menschen tatsächlich Gotteswort darstellen und als solche besondere Autorität für sich in Anspruch nehmen können."

[15] Idem, *The Old Testament* (New York, 1965).

[16] E.g., P.R. Ackroyd, *Continuity. A Contribution to the Study of the Old Testament Religious Tradition* (Oxford, 1962) = in his *Studies in the Religious Tradition of the Old Testament* (London, 1987), 3–30; idem, "The Vitality of the Word of God in the Old Testament. A Contribution to the Study of the Transmission and Exposition of Old Testament Material", *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 1 (1962), 7–23 = in his *Studies*, 61–75; B.S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia, 1970); idem, *OT Introduction*; R.E. Clements, *Prophecy and Tradition* (Atlanta, 1975); J.A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (Philadelphia, 1972).

[17] R.C. Leonard, *The Origin of Canonicity in the Old Testament* (Diss., Boston University, 1972), 35, points out the important exception to this view found in C. Steuernagel, *Lehrbuch in der Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Tübingen, 1912), 88. (I regret not knowing Leonard's dissertation about Old Testament canonization

Eißfeldt, however, the term 'canon' came increasingly to be used by some scholars as a more *intrinsic* category, largely synonymous with the religious authority of biblical traditions and texts *prior* to any official 'closing' of the canon.[18] In turn, several other scholars strongly objected to this new usage, arguing that 'scripture' was a more appropriate term for reference to authoritative religious texts, but that 'canon' should be reserved for reference to a fixed and exclusive scriptural corpus.[19]

This terminological impasse continues to plague discussions of canonization within biblical studies, in New Testament as well as in Old Testament scholarship.[20] It would not be going too far, I think, to say that at present there exists no real consensus in the field at all about how to define the term 'canon', with the result that it has become all the more essential for each scholar to describe the assumptions and connotations he or she brings to such an investigation.[21] As J.

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when I wrote my own. His work is particularly strong on the history of scholarship and would have been helpful in that regard. He should also be credited with having made a significant contribution to the discussion about Old Testament canon formation as it was evolving in the early 70s.)

[18] E.g., Sanders, *Torah*, 56: "By canon we mean here not a story or tradition, which had been stabilized and set for all time; that is only a secondary and late characteristic of canon. Rather, we mean the seat or reference of authority." Cf. Leonard, *Origin*, 66–72, who argues that the 'exclusive' sense of 'canon' is in fact a later secondary development in the history of the literature.

[19] The first attempt to make a thoroughgoing distinction between 'scripture' and 'canon' was made by W. Staerk, "Der Schrift– und Kanonbegriff der jüdischen Bibel", *Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie* 6 (1929), 101–19. Staerk's basic position has been upheld by J. Barr, "Childs' Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture", *Journal of the Study of the Old Testament* 16 (1980), 12–23; idem, *Holy Scripture* (Philadelphia, 1983); A.C. Sundberg, Jr., "The Old Testament in the Early Church", *Harvard Theological Review* 5 (1958), 206–26; idem, *The Old Testament of the Early Church* (Cambridge, 1964); idem, "The Protestant Old Testament Canon. Should it be Re-Examined?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 28 (1966), 194–203; idem, "The Old Testament. A Christian Canon", *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30 (1968), 143–55 = in: Leiman (ed.), *Canon*, 99–112; idem, "Reexamining the Formation of the Old Testament Canon", *Interp* 42 (1988), 78–82; T.N. Swanson, *The Closing of the Collection of Holy Scripture* (Diss., Vanderbilt University, 1970). E. Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible* (Grand Rapids/Leiden, 1999), 55, provides a current example of this direction in scholarship when he insists that "A strict definition of canon will... include these... concepts: conscious decision, unique status, necessarily binding."

[20] Cf. the confusing discussion of terminology in L.M. McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon* (Peabody, ²1995), 6–21.

[21] On this point, see Ulrich, *Scrolls*, 53 n. 4. The following distinction between a 'broad' view of canon and a 'strict' view is also based upon Ulrich's treatment; cf. his 55.

Barton has pointed out brilliantly in a recent study of New Testament canonization, the conception of 'canon' used by New Testament scholars has contributed in no small way to the historical conclusions they draw about the canon in their work.[22] The same dynamic is also clearly evident in Old Testament scholarship. Those scholars who understand 'canon' more broadly—as a criterion of religious authority—tend quite unsurprisingly to date the emergence of a canon early.[23] Those scholars who use the term 'canon' narrowly—as a 'closed' list of books—date the existence of a 'canon' much later.[24]

I would like to suggest that each of these groups has yet to address adequately that part of their argument called into question by the other. On the one hand, those scholars who posit an early canon of Torah and Prophets have not yet given a compelling account of what they mean by religious 'authority' and the manner in which such authority would have functioned historically and sociologically. One way of stating the problem for these scholars would be to say that they must better explain the *difference* between the process of the Bible's literary growth and the establishment of the canon proper, rather than simply fusing the two. On the other hand, those scholars who date the canon quite late continue to overlook the need for a more persuasive account of the 'pre-canonical' status of Israel's scriptures. For them, in my judgment, the opposite but related problem applies: what is the precise *link* between the process of canonization and the lengthy process of the Bible's literary development?[25]

3. *Canon as 'Intertext'*

In my own work I am attempting to develop another sense of the term 'canon', one that I think illuminates a particular aspect of the process of biblical canonization also crucial for the task of Old Testament interpretation generally.

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[22] J. Barton, *Holy Writings, Sacred Text* (Louisville, 1997).

[23] E.g., Beckwith, *Canon*; idem, "A Modern Theory of the Old Testament Canon", *Vetus Testamentum* 41 (1991), 385–95; D.N. Freedman, *The Law and the Prophets* (Leiden, 1962), 250–65; idem, "Son of Man, Can These Bones Live?" *Interp* 29 (1975), 171–86; idem, Art. Canon of the Old Testament IDB. S (Nashville, 1962), 130–36; S.Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture* (Hamden, 1976).

[24] E.g., Barr, *Scripture*; J. Barton, *Oracles of God* (Oxford/New York, 1986); McDonald, *Canon*.

[25] For further explanation of this issue, see Childs, *OT Introduction*, 60–62.

Joseph Blenkinsopp opened up an intriguing new direction for canonical studies in 1977 by pointing to two passages which, by virtue of their date, literary placement, vocabulary and themes, appear to provide evidence for the way in which the biblical canon was conceived and literarily-constructed: Dtn 34:10–12 and Mal 3:22–24 [E 4:4–6].[26] As Blenkinsopp observes, it is quite likely that both of these passages were not only written as later appendices to the books in which they are now found, but also that they were intended to function as conclusions to the wider collections of Torah and Prophets, in which the books of Deuteronomy and Malachi (respectively) occupy final position. In Dtn 34:10–12 the life and work of Moses are praised as pre-eminent in Israel's history. In Mal 3:22–24 Moses and Elijah are presented as the twin standards of Israel's faith. Blenkinsopp's significant accomplishment has thus been to show how these references are intended to serve as hermeneutical guides for the reading of the canon itself, in effect setting forth the way that the scriptural collections of Torah and Prophets were viewed in relation to each other already in antiquity.

Implicit in Blenkinsopp's thesis about these passages is the further point that there was a conception of the entirety of Israel's scriptural heritage even *before* the final fixing and delimitation of the canon. In fact, it is precisely this *conception* which has given the canon its received form and not *vice versa*. It therefore comes as no surprise that the conception adumbrated in these two biblical passages—Moses and the prophets, or, the Law and the Prophets—survives to become the standard way to refer to the biblical canon as a whole in Second Temple Judaism.[27] In fact, what these passages indicate is something that appears to have been *constitutive* of the particular canonical process that resulted in the Old Testament: the literary influence of the growing collection upon *itself*, that is, the way in which the various writings were editorially integrated within an evolving collection.

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[26] J. Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon* (Notre Dame, 1977).

[27] Such phrases occur very frequently in the New Testament: e.g., Mt 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Lk 16:16, 29, 31; 24:27; Jn 1:45; Acts 13:15, 39–40; 24:14; 26:22; 28:23; Rom 3:21. With some variation, this conception may also be found in 2 Mac 15:9; 4 Mac 18:10; CD 7:15–17; 1 QS 1.2–3; 4Q397.14–21.10–11; 4Q504 3.12–13; Philo, Vit. Cont., 25. Cf. S.B. Chapman, "'The Law and the Words' as a Canonical Formula Within the Old Testament", in: C.A. Evans (ed.), *The Interpretation of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Sheffield, 2000), 26–74, esp. 68–69.

In my judgment, to refer to the biblical writings at this stage of transmission as 'scripture' does not do justice to their editorial interrelatedness, a literary phenomenon that also serves to indicate the existence of the Old Testament as an intertextual collection *prior* to the emergence of an 'exclusive' canon. For this reason, I have argued that it is sometimes useful to employ the term 'canon' for the biblical writings prior to their final delimitation, not as a loose reference to their 'authority', but as a means of indicating the way in which they were read, understood and edited together as an entity or scriptural 'intertext' long before there was anything like a 'closed' canonical 'order' or 'list'.[28] Judging from the exegetical evidence, this scriptural 'intertext' was not as integrated as a single 'book',[29] but also not as random or diffuse as the image of a number of individual scrolls in a jar suggests.[30]

Following Eugene Ulrich's lead, perhaps an appropriate way to conceive of the biblical writings prior to their 'official' canonization (in the narrower exclusive sense) would be along the lines of a 'core' of books or even a collected 'anthology',[31] but to my mind—and I think this is a crucial distinction—an anthology in which an editorial effort has been made to shape the whole in a particular direction. At the same time, it also seems to me quite important that the canonical process preceding the Bible did not flatten out or harmonize the particularity of the various writings contained within the collection, but instead preserved a *range* of witnesses. In this way, the biblical 'canon' is best understood as not only fixing an outer interpretive boundary, but also as establishing an inner interpretive space in which plural readings are possible, even necessary.

This sense of 'canon' as an intertextual collection of scriptures matches my understanding of the most important way the term 'canon' has been used by my teacher Brevard Childs, whose use of terminology has sometimes been criticized by other biblical scholars for being unclear or inconsistent.[32] Although Childs himself acknowledges that he has used the term in several different senses,[33]

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[28] The term 'intertext' is from G. Sheppard, *The Future of the Bible* (United Church of Canada, 1990). See also the lapidary conclusion of Leonard, *Origin*, 95, "It may be said that the Old Testament canon was a reality before it became a problem."

[29] *Pace* Ulrich, *Scrolls*, 19.

[30] *Contra* Ulrich, *Scrolls*, 20–21.

[31] The term 'anthology' is used by Ulrich, *Scrolls*, 60.

[32] E.g., Barr, *Scripture*, 75; Ulrich, *Scrolls*, 53–61.

[33] He also now refers to the term 'canonical' as a 'cipher'. See B.S. Childs,

I consider the heart of his claim to lie in the same intertextual direction as I am attempting to chart here. Writing recently, Childs summarizes his position as follows: "... the editors shaped the biblical material throughout the various levels of transmission by means of signs, signals and structural features so that the reader could be guided in construing Scripture canonically, that is, kerygmatically."[34] Or, as Gerald Sheppard, another of Childs's students, similarly explains, canon as 'intertext' means that "the editors in the late stages of the formation of the biblical books registered their assumptions that these books belong together."[35]

It seems to me that, although the terms 'scripture' and 'canon' may often be used synonymously, 'scripture' refers primarily to the inspired status of a writing or a collection of writings (i.e., 'holy scripture') and not to the possibility of the interrelationship or intertextuality of such writings. For this reason, I have suggested that the term 'scripture' is more appropriate for *discrete* holy writings, or for collections of holy writings in which the individual portions do *not* appear to have been edited or literarily-shaped towards each other.[36]

Because there is little clear evidence for the mutual influence of *written* traditions of law and prophets upon each other *prior* to the period of the Deuteronomists, and much evidence for such influence beginning within deuteronomic circles and among later deuteronomistic tradents, I have proposed that 'canon' is a legitimate and sometimes helpful term for use in reference to a deuteronomistic collection of scriptures.[37] Here I would follow most historical-critical scholars of the Old Testament in viewing the kernel of the canon to have been formed by an early version of the book of Deuteronomy. However, it also seems to me that the history of the evolving 'canon' should concern itself just as much with the books of the Deuteronomistic History as with those of the Pentateuch. Of course, the narrower sense of the term 'canon' can—and probably in some

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Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments (Minneapolis, 1992), 70–71.

[34] Idem, "On Reclaiming the Bible for Christian Theology", in: C.E. Braaten and R.W. Jenson (eds.), *Reclaiming the Bible for the Church* (Cambridge, 1995), 1–17, here 10.

[35] Sheppard, *Future*, 29.

[36] See Chapman, *Law*, 106–110.

[37] On this point, contrast Ulrich, *Scrolls*, 52, "In my view, 'the canon' as such is a post-biblical topic." In this formulation the 'as such' assumes the very definition it purports to explain.

contexts should—continue to be used in reference to the later development of a fixed and exclusive collection of books, but perhaps with the further recognition that this development may have been more gradual and, therefore, in a sense less significant than is often supposed. In my judgment, later canonical 'decisions' were for the most part confirmatory in nature, usually securing *de jure* approval for writings that already possessed *de facto* authority.[38]

4. *Early Hermeneutics*

If we grant the existence of a conception of the canon as a 'whole' prior to its final delimitation, a remaining interpretive issue turns on how to describe the *character* of that conception.

Blenkinsopp interprets the reference to Moses' incomparability in Dtn 34:10–12 as a verdict on two competing claims to religious authority within early Judaism: the priestly and the prophetic, or (respectively) the theocratic and the eschatological.[39] The denial of parity between Moses and the prophets in this passage thus means for Blenkinsopp a rejection of the religious authority of eschatological prophecy by a postexilic priestly theocracy, whose interests the Torah protected and promoted. Not only does Blenkinsopp think that the canonization of the Torah was intended to subordinate the rival authority of prophecy, he also theorizes that the canonization of the Torah was largely responsible for the postexilic decline of prophecy.[40] He argues that the ending to the prophetic collection in Mal 3:22–24 restores the dialectical tension between institution and charisma which the conclusion to the Torah had sought to

[38] R.A. Maxwell, "Sacred Books: The Canon of the Hebrew Bible at the End of the First Century", in: J.F. Hall and J.W. Welch (eds.), *Masada and the World of the New Testament* (Provo, 1997), 302–16, esp. 313. Moreover, in my judgment it remains an open question as to whether the 'fixed and exclusive' connotation of 'canon' was ever officially adopted by the various main Jewish and Christian traditions, or whether the 'fixed and exclusive' definition owes something to popular (mis)understanding. For reflections on this topic, cf. A. Dulles, "The Authority of Scripture. A Catholic Perspective", in: F.E. Greenspahn (ed.), *Scripture in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Nashville, 1982), 14–14 and M. Fishbane, "Jewish Biblical Exegesis. Presuppositions and Principles", in the same volume, 92–110. 'Common sense' investigations based upon what 'most people think' or on dictionary definitions are especially susceptible to blurring popular understanding and official doctrine. E.g., Ulrich, *Scrolls*, 56 n. 17.

[39] Blenkinsopp, *Canon*, 87.

[40] Ibid., 94.

overcome,[41] but nowhere explains satisfactorily how a prophetic collection of scripture managed to emerge as canonical at all in what he conceives as the period of the Torah's religious supremacy.

In my judgment, this particular problem has actually constituted a major difficulty for the standard theory of biblical canonization ever since it was formulated. If a Torah-only canon was established at the time of Ezra, especially if it was *intended* to subordinate prophetic authority, as Blenkinsopp claims, then what kind of social and religious dynamics led to the addition of prophetic writings to the canon over the next two hundred years? Which social group in postexilic Israel would have sponsored the inclusion of the prophetic writings, and would not this process have affected an understanding of Torah (*qua* Pentateuch) as the supreme religious authority within Israel?[42]

More recent exegetical work on the two passages Blenkinsopp identified[43] lends support to an alternative theory of biblical canonization, elements of which have appeared in scholarship persistently throughout the last century as a minority view. For example, rather than *only* seeing the prophets as subordinated to Moses in Dtn 34:10–12 (which is clearly *part* of the text's intention), I have argued that in this passage Moses' pre-eminence is itself expressed in predominantly prophetic terms. It seems quite striking to me that at the conclusion of the Torah, Moses is described not as Israel's great 'lawgiver' but as the greatest of the *prophets*, a characterization which thus serves canonically not only to link the book of Deuteronomy to the book of Joshua following, but also the Torah to the Prophets.[44] Similarly, both Torah and Prophets re-appear thematically at the

[41] Ibid., 121–23.

[42] One of the few efforts to confront this problem squarely has been made by R. Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, 2 vols., trans. J. Bowden (Louisville, 1994). Albertz claims that the Deuteronomistic History was not canonized at first because it was 'offensive' to Israel's Persian overlords in the postexilic period (II, 547–48). According to Albertz, however, it was the theocratic (!) scribes responsible for the books of Chronicles who felt that the books of the Prophets deserved canonical status (II, 547; 550–51) and therefore worked to integrate them into Israel's scriptural corpus (II, 553–54).

[43] For a description and evaluation of this work, see Chapman, *Law*, esp. 111–49.

[44] Cf. H.-C. Schmitt, "Das Spätdeuteronomistische Geschichtswerk Genesis I – 2 Regum XXV und seine theologische Intention", in J.A. Emerton, *Congress Volume* (Leiden, 1997), 261–79; M.A. O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis* (Fribourg/Göttingen, 1989), esp. 66.

end of the book of Malachi, as we have seen. In fact, deuteronomistic belief concerning a 'prophet like Moses' (cf. Dtn 18:15, 18) seems to provide not only the conceptual basis for these two canonical appendices, but also for a host of linguistic and thematic connections between the book of Deuteronomy and the books of the Former Prophets, often referred to for just this reason as the 'Deuteronomistic History'.[45]

R.E. Clements suggested along these lines in 1975 that the books of the Former Prophets should be viewed *together* with the Pentateuch as comprising the first corpus of scripture within Israel.[46] Even earlier, in 1962, David Noel Freedman had proposed something similar, maintaining that a 'Primary History' consisting of Genesis–2 Kings had already existed by the sixth century B.C.[47] However, Freedman's work also seemed to imply (especially at first) a completed version of the Latter Prophets by the end of the sixth century, an impossibly early date.[48] Because of problems with his dating, and because of the prominence of deuteronomistic material in the Former Prophets and its relative absence in Genesis–Numbers,[49] I am more inclined to follow the general outline of Clements's reconstruction rather than Freedman's. However, in different ways both Clements and Freedman opened up the possibility that a collection of 'Law and Prophets' functioned as an early 'central core' of scripture.[50]

Furthermore, as Clements points out, passages like 2 Kg 17 (especially v. 13) indicate that the Deuteronomists believed the prophets to have proclaimed a unified message, one possessing the *same authority* as the law of Moses. He summarizes:

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[45] Cf. R. Rendtoff, "The Place of Prophecy in a Theology of the Old Testament", in his *Canon and Theology* (Minneapolis, 1993), 57–65.

[46] Clements, *Tradition*, 55.

[47] Freedman, *Law*. Freedmans's theory is adumbrated in R.H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York/London, 1941), 57, as pointed out in Leonard, *Origin*, 97 n. 2.

[48] For additional criticism of Freedman's reconstruction, see Blenkinsopp, *Canon*, 99–100.

[49] See J. Van Seters, "The Deuteronomistic Redaction of the Pentateuch: the Case Against It", in: M. Vervenne and J. Lust (eds.), *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic Literature* (Leuven, 1997), 301–19. For a more optimistic view about the presence of deuteronomistic elements within the Tetrateuch, see J. Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch* (New York/London, 1992), 122–23 and *passim*.

[50] Freedman, *Law*, 250. For comparable conceptions and similar language, in spite of other differences, cf. Barr, *Scripture*, 54; Ulrich, *Scrolls*, 60.

> "Thus, in principle, both the Former Prophets and a significant part of the Latter Prophets were considered to share in the authority which belonged to the law of Moses. This no doubt fell short of the very far-reaching authority which the idea of an Old Testament canon was ultimately to imply, but it none the less represents a very significant step towards it. What is striking is that it witnesses to a conception of 'the Law and the Prophets' which set them side by side as sharing together in this special 'canonical', or 'proto-canonical' authority. Instead of indicating a growth of the Old Testament canon which began with the Law and added the Prophets to this as a later, secondary stage, it suggests rather a very early joining together of 'the Law and the Prophets', each of which subsequently underwent a good deal of expansion and further editorial development. The question of the priority of the Law or the Prophets, therefore, which is of quite considerable importance for an overall theological evaluation of the Old Testament, is set in a fresh light."[51]

On Clements's theory, the process of canon formation *began* with the Deuteronomistic History, Deuteronomy was later separated from the History and joined with Genesis–Numbers in order to form the Pentateuch, and over time the historical books were increasingly combined with the books of the Latter Prophets so as to create a more extensive collection of Prophets.[52] Among other implications, his reconstruction would mean that there was never a time at which the Torah (or Pentateuch) was the sole 'Bible' of Israel, but that Torah and Prophets existed together as a deuteronomistic canon (or 'intertext') from the very inception of the canonical process.

5. *Open Questions*

I would now like briefly to discuss four central methodological issues concerning the biblical canon that are provoked by this alternative reconstruction of its formation.

1. The first issue has to do with the tradition-historical context for canonization.[53] The standard theory of canonization begins with the

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[51] Clements, *Tradition*, 55.

[52] Clements, *ibid.*, 47–48, also entertains the notion that the 'non-mention' of the 'latter' prophets within the Deuteronomistic History may be explained by the early circulation of collections of their words together with the History.

[53] This is an area badly in need of greater attention, as noted some time ago by J.N. Lightstone, "The Formation of the Biblical Canon in Judaism of Late Antiquity. Prolegomenon to a General Reassessment", *Studies in Religion* 8 (1979), 135–42.

adoption of Deuteronomy as a 'lawbook' and concludes the first stage of canon formation with Ezra's 'book of the law'. According to this theory canonization is a fundamentally *legal* process in which the binding nature of the literature is emphasized.[54] Even Clements, who sees much more complementarity between legal and prophetic traditions within Deuteronomism, continues to locate the earliest canonical impulse within a legal context.[55]

It should be noted that this legal understanding of canonization has had two regrettable corollaries within biblical scholarship: first, the tendency to characterize postexilic Judaism as a 'legalistic' religion; and, second, the view that the process of canonization represents spiritual declension rather than religious vitality. Julius Wellhausen once infamously gave expression to just this view: "... it is a thing which is likely to occur, that a body of traditional practice should only be written down when it is threatening to die out, and that a book should be, as it were, the ghost of a life which is closed."[56] Happily, more recent biblical scholarship has criticized both of these prejudices, and increasingly views both postexilic Judaism and its literary activity as quite vital and creative.[57]

It should not be forgotten, however, that another important scholarly proposal locates Deuteronomy and the origins of the canon as

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[54] E.g., J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 409. Cf. P.R. Davies, "Post-exilic Collections and the Formation of the Canon", in: J.W. Rogerson and P.R. Davies (eds.), *The Old Testament World* (Cambridge/New York, 1989), 360–75, here 372. Cf. E. Zenger, et al., *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Stuttgart/Berlin/Cologne, ^{3}1988), 22–27.

[55] Clements, *Tradition*, 57; idem, *Old Testament Theology* (Atlanta, 1978), 15–19, 120–26.

[56] Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 405 n. 1. Here Wellhausen stands very much within a liberal Protestant theological tradition reacting to the 'high' view of scripture characteristic of Protestant orthodoxy. Cf. F. Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, ed. and trans. R. Crouter (Cambridge, 1996), 18–54, esp. 50: "Every holy writing is merely a mausoleum of religion, a monument that a great spirit was there that no longer exists; for if it still lived and were active, why would it attach such great importance to the dead letter that can only be a weak reproduction of it?"

[57] For further background and analysis of anti-Jewish prejudice in scholarly treatments of the postexilic period, see R. Rendtorff, "The Image of Postexilic Israel in German Old Testament Scholarship from Wellhausen to von Rad", in his *Canon*, 66–75. For a recent historical evaluation of the postexilic period and its literary activity that is much more positive, see M. Hengel, "'Schriftauslegung' und 'Schriftwerdung' in der Zeit des Zweiten Tempels", in: M. Hengel and H. Löhr (eds.), *Schriftauslegung im antiken Judentum und im Urchristentum* (Tübingen, 1994), 1–71, esp. 16.

arising within *prophetic* tradition.[58] According to these scholars, the process of canonization has its origin in the effort to preserve revelatory 'words' or oracles.[59] Another tendency in scholarship has been to view *ritual* as the original socio-historical context of the canon.[60] Other scholars have suggested that the roots of the canonical process lie within a tradition of historiography.[61] More recently, still other scholars stress a *scribal* background for Deuteronomy and the canon, trenchantly noting that without scribes to copy and transmit the literature no process of canonization could have been initiated, let alone been successful.[62]

I suspect that it is a mistake to think that we must choose only one of these possibilities, and that the roots of the biblical canon are likely to be found in all of these traditional contexts.[63] I wonder, however, whether it might not be helpful at precisely this point to engage in comparative dialogue with scholars of other literary canons, especially other canons of religious scripture. Are there phenome-

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[58] See W.R. Arnold, "Observations on the Origins of Holy Scripture", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 42 (1923), 1–21, esp. 16; W.J. Beecher, "The Alleged Triple Canon of the Old Testament", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 15 (1896), 118–28, esp. 127; Blenkinsopp, *Canon*, 147.

[59] E.g., P.R. Ackroyd, "The Old Testament in the Making", in: P.R. Acroyd and C.F. Evans (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible,* 3 vols. (Cambridge/New York, 1963–70), I, 67–112. Cf. R. Smend, *Die Entstehung des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart, ^{2}1981), 18 n. 12, "Jedes Prophetenwort enthählt von vornherein einen Geltungsanspruch, der es auf Kanonizität hin angelegt sein läßt." ("Every prophetic word contains from the beginning a claim to authority, which points in the direction of canonization.")

[60] See G. Östborn, *Cult and Canon* (Uppsala, 1950); E.E. Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Tübingen/Grand Rapids, 1991–92). A related approach may be found in the work of those who have attempted to situate the origin of the canon within a reconstructed covenant tradition; see M.G. Kline, "The Correlation of the Concepts of Canon and Covenant", in: J.B. Payne (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Old Testament* (Waco, 1971), 265–79; Leonard, *Origin*.

[61] Freedman, *Law*. Now see also M. Haran, *Ha-Asupah Ha-Mikra'it* (Jerusalem, 1996) [Hebrew]. Cf. the discussion in P.R. Davies, *Scribes and Schools* (Louisville, 1998), 46–48. The best argument against this view is still that offered by Ryle, *Canon*, 7—namely, that the canonical literature advocates a particular religious point of view which thus supersedes any straightforward goal of preserving the past or pursuing a merely antiquarian interest.

[62] See Davies, *Scribes*; M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford, 1972).

[63] With the exception of the reconstructed covenant renewal ceremony, an idea that has never recovered from its demolition by E. Kutsch, *Verheissung und Gesetz* (Berlin/New York, 1973); L. Perlitt, *Bundestheologie im Alten Testament* (Neukirchen–Vluyn, 1969).

nological similarities between biblical canon formation and the processes that have resulted in the formation of other canonical collections? Would such similarities assist us in determining whether certain traditions or social groups are more likely than others to play a decisive role in the process of canonization generally? Is 'canon' a helpful topic for discussion within the comparative study of religions, or are canons and canonization finally unique to their respective historical contexts and communities?

2. The second issue I would like to mention has to do with treatments of canonization that appeal to 'power' or 'self-interest' as explanatory categories.

It has become rather fashionable in work on the biblical canon to say that canonization is really about 'power'.[64] Ellis Rivkin has provided a particularly influential example in the history of the debate:

> "The Pentateuch was thus the outcome of efforts to solve problems in a Yahwist society. It was not primarily the work of scribes, scholars, or editors who sought out neglected traditions about the wilderness experience, but of a class struggling to gain power. Since the Pentateuch does not spell out any power or authority for scribes, scholars, or redactors, it is gratuitous to assign to them—powerless as they were—the power to decide who speaks for Yahweh. The storytellers or redactors were not free agents but were subordinate to power groupings who [sic] utilized whatever communicating means were at hand to make known their claims."[65]

Philip Davies has developed this highly cynical direction of interpretation further, arguing along Marxist lines that biblical literature "emerged as a political-cultural product of the Jerusalem 'establishment'",[66] that "scribes write what their paymasters tell them to, or allow them to, which means generally that they write to safeguard or increase the power and prestige of the monarch or the temple",[67] and that the goal of the ideologically-driven process of biblical canon formation was the creation of a fictive past authorizing the 'interests' of the ruling class.[68]

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[64] E.g., G. Bruns, "Canon and Power in the Hebrew Scripture", *Critical Inquiry* 10 (1983–84), 462–80 = in: R. von Hallberg (ed.), *Canons* (Chicago, 1984), 65–83 = Bruns, *Hermeneutics Ancient and Modern* (New Haven/London, 1992), 64–82.

[65] E. Rivkin, *The Shaping of Jewish History* (New York, 1971), 30.

[66] P.R. Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'* (Sheffield, 1992), 20.

[67] Ibid., 107.

[68] Ibid., 120.

In my judgment, such views may be somewhat helpful as a critical reaction against naively idealistic approaches to canonization, but they also tend to be highly misleading because of the extreme manner in which they are formulated. I have no doubt that canons serve political purposes, or that the investigation of these purposes may help us illuminate a canon's historical process of growth. Is, however, a canon's political dimension really to be treated as the *only*, or even the *most decisive*, factor at work in the canonical process? "The question", as the literary scholar Robert von Hallberg has helpfully summarized, "... is not whether canons serve political functions but rather how fully their political functions account for their origins and limit their utility."[69]

In a brilliant article, the philosopher and literary critic Charles Altieri has maintained that although canons are ultimately constituted by the self-interest of the individuals and social groups, the category of 'self-interest' must be treated in a more nuanced manner than is often the case.[70] Drawing on Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor's distinction between 'preferences' and 'strong evaluations',[71] Altieri has argued for a second level of self-interest in which ordinary personal perferences may be restricted, not on the basis of some universal norm, but because certain preferences will conflict with the second-order choices or 'strong evaluations' chosen by a human agent.

To use Altieri's example, if someone desires to be a courageous person, then that individual must bind him- or herself to particular acts and attitudes over a lengthy period of time. He or she cannot do cowardly things. He or she must consistently perform courageous acts and maintain a courageous personal stance. Such second-order choices are not only characteristic of human beings, as Taylor argues, for Altieri they are also precisely the kind of contrastive choices that are aired and debated within canonical literatures. In other words, literary canons involve for Altieri the projection of

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[69] R. von Hallberg, "Introduction", in: R. von Hallberg (ed.), *Canons* (Chicago, 1984), 2–3.

[70] C. Altieri, "The Idea and Ideal of a Literary Canon", *Critical Inquiry* 10 (1983–84), 37–60 = in: R. von Hallberg (ed.), *Canons* (Chicago, 1984), 41–64 (I shall cite the latter version). Cf. the somewhat modified version of this essay in Altieri, *Canons and Consequences* (Evanston, 1990), 29–46.

[71] C. Taylor, "What is Human Agency?" in: T. Mischel (ed.), *The Self* (Oxford, 1977), 103–35 = in: Taylor, *Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge, 1985), 15–44. Cf. Taylor, "Self-interpreting Animals", in his *Human Agency*, 45–76.

'strong evaluations' on the part of the canonical tradents and provide an ongoing forum for the individual and communal debate between 'strong evaluations' and 'preferences'.[72]

This more nuanced view of 'self-interest' suggests that the function of a canon for its individual tradents and its community of readers is not simply to preserve the past or to project a particular ideology, but rather to provide for the reflective consideration of present ideological commitments and for the possibility of an ongoing reformulation of ideals.[73] In a sense, such a perspective *does* represent a more 'idealist' approach to canons and canon-making, but not in the older sense of a foundationalist reliance upon transhistorical norms. Rather, it is to recognize that canons and canon-making have a powerful imaginative function for their readers which is not reducible to mechanical or political factors.[74] It is to affirm that canons are 'idealistic' *as well as* pragmatic in their function for a community. In my judgment, we need to be able to investigate *both* of these dimensions (i.e., the 'material' and the 'idealistic') if we are to illuminate the nature of canons and canonization more fully.

This topic is particularly in need of increased attention from a comparative perspective, I would argue, largely because such questions, while crucial, are in fact rarely posed in the scholarship on canons and canonization.[75]

3. Another issue of increasing debate within biblical studies concerns the relationship between textual fixation and canonicity. More than any other scholar, Eugene Ulrich has sought to extend the implications of text-critical work on the Dead Sea Scrolls for questions of

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[72] Altieri, *Idea*, 44.

[73] Ibid., 54. Cf. J. Berlinerbau, "Preliminary Remarks for the Sociological Study of Israelite 'Official Religion'", in: R. Chazan, W.W. Hallo and L.H. Schiffman (eds.), *Kī Baruch hu* (Winona Lake, 1999), 153–70, esp. 158–60; R. Alter, "The Double Canonicity of the Hebrew Bible", in: D. Biale, M. Galchinsky and S. Heschel (eds.), *Insider/Outsider* (Berkeley/London, 1998), 131–49.

[74] For a literary argument also reaching this conclusion, see H. Adams, "Canons. Literary Criteria/Power Criteria", *Critical Inquiry* 14 (1988), 748–64.

[75] For a fascinating exception and an example of the kind of work I think would bring fresh insight to what have in many ways become old and unprofitable debates, see H. Lazarus-Yafeh, "Self-Criticism in Jewish and Islamic Traditions", in: B.H. Hary, J.L. Hayes and F. Astren (eds.), *Judaism and Islam* (Leiden/Boston/Cologne, 2000), 303–19. Given the need for such work, one mourns especially deeply the death of Prof. Lazarus-Yafeh.

Old Testament canon formation.[76] He adduces his text-critical theory of 'multiple literary editions' as support for his further judgment that 'canon' is a late development within the history of the Old Testament.[77] However, Ulrich also concedes that 'canon' is a designation properly made of *books*, not of texts.[78] Such a concession weakens Ulrich's argument rather than strengthening it. If 'canon' does *not* depend upon a fixed text, then is a 'canonical' work not more likely to *precede* a fixed text than to follow it? Would this not suggest an earlier date for a 'canon' rather than a later one?[79]

In fact, in my judgment the real significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for the study of the Old Testament canon lies not in a discovery of textual pluriformity *per se*, but in the realization that such pluriformity already existed at Qumran *together with* the formal idea of a canon (i.e., 'Moses and the prophets'). The appropriate conclusion to be drawn is thus that canonicity is not necessarily dependent upon the stabilization of a particular text, although these two processes are clearly to be joined in some way. At Qumran there apparently existed neither a fixed text nor a definitive list of canonical books, yet the idea of a cumulative body of authoritative scripture is everywhere evident. The 'idea' of the canon *preceded* its precise definition.[80] What certainly did not occur in the case of the biblical canon was a later, purely extrinsic, conferral of religious authority!

This distinction between textual fixity and canon may prove especially helpful in discussions with scholars of other canons, particularly canons that have experienced significant textual fluidity over time. A connection with oral 'canons' or canons whose transmission has been primarily verbal also lies close to hand at this point. In this way the biblical canon may be more similar to such traditions than is ordinarily thought.

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[76] Ulrich, *Scrolls*.

[77] Ibid., 76.

[78] Ibid., 57. Cf. R.E. Murphy, "The Old Testament Canon in the Catholic Church", *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 28 (1966), esp. 191.

[79] Ulrich, *Scrolls*, 59–60, appears to deal with this problem by restricting the proper definition of canon to a 'list', but this narrow definition is very much open to question, as I have shown here.

[80] Cf. the description of a 'core canon' at Qumran by J.C. VanderKam, "Authoritative Literature in the Dead Sea Scrolls", *DSD* 5 (1998), 382–401, esp. 384.

4. The last issue I would like to mention concerns a few further implications for the question of the priority of the Law or Prophets, in the direction first suggested by Clements.

From the perspective of the standard theory of canon formation, with its insistence that the Torah was canonized *by itself* under Ezra in the mid-fifth century B.C.E., the usual move has been to assume that the Torah (or Pentateuch) was *always* considered more 'authoritative' within the context of the canon. Once the three-stage linear theory is called into question, however (especially if the alternative view of 'the Law and the Prophets' as an early complementary collection of scriptures is entertained), then the evidence of a hermeneutically-privileged Pentateuch in the period before the Rabbis becomes considerably less compelling.

Of course, at some point in time the Torah (*qua* Pentateuch) *did* become hermeneutically-privileged within Jewish understanding of the canon. Nevertheless, a number of important issues will turn on just *when* this understanding emerged and when it may be said to have been adopted by *all* of mainstream Judaism. For example, it is now beyond question that prophetic scripture was also used for the derivation of *halakhah* at Qumran.[81] The issue presently at stake is whether this practice should be construed as 'typical' or 'sectarian' in the late Second Temple period.[82]

References to 'the torah' or 'the law' in certain books of the Apocrypha (e.g., 1 Mac 2:49–68) and the New Testament (e.g., Jn 10:34; 15:25; 1 Cor 14:21) sometimes involve the citation of textual material from the Prophets and the Writings. Just what is the textual range of such 'torah' references in Second Temple literature? I think there is a strong case to be made that the dogmatic elevation of the Pentateuch within the canon began as a post-biblical development with Early Judaism, paralleled perhaps by the hermeneutical privileging of the Prophets within Early Christianity.[83] If this is so, then both Early Judaism and Early Christianity would have retained the same formal canon, but weighted its subcollections in

[81] L.H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Philadelphia, 1994).

[82] E.g., Schiffman, *Reclaiming*, 248, labels this practice 'sectarian', but does not offer a defense of this judgment other than the 'sectarian' nature of the community in general. Cf. E. Qimron and J. Strugnell (eds.), *Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford, 1994), 133.

[83] On such privileging within Early Christianity, see D.M. Farkasfalvy, "Prophets and Apostles. The Conjunction of the Two Terms Before Irenaeus", in: W.E. March (ed.), *Texts and Testaments* (San Antonio, 1980), 109–34.

strikingly different ways. For this reason I think we are in great need of further investigation into what might be termed the early canonical hermeneutics of both religions—that is, the manner in which the biblical canon was apparently viewed as a whole and its literary subcollections were related hermeneutically to each other within that whole, both in theory and in practice.

The consequences of such study will have profound effects for our understanding of the history of Early Judaism, its relationship to Early Christianity and the strikingly different ways that Jews and Christians continue to read, interpret and seek to live out the Scriptures they also still hold in common.

ON WRITTEN LIES

CRISTIANO GROTTANELLI

1. *The Lying Pen of Scribes*

If the construction of the biblical canon in the narrow sense—or rather of the various biblical canons—was the authoritative distinction between inspired texts and texts that are not inspired, and thus also between texts that tell the truth and lying texts, then a biblical text associating the term *torah Yahweh* to the term *šeqer* (usually translated as "lies", "deceit") is necessarily meaningful in discussing such a construction. This is the case in the passage of the Book of *Jeremiah* I wish to deal with. *Jeremiah* 8:8-9 means something like: "How can you say: 'We are wise, and the *torah* of Yahweh is with us'? Behold, the lying pen of scribes has indeed worked lies! The wise are ashamed, they are terrified, and they are captured. Behold, they have rejected the word of Yahweh; and what wisdom is theirs?"

In my discussion of this passage I shall begin by trying to show by which hermeneutical strategies, and for what reasons, scholars of various denominations have interpreted the embarassing text. Then I shall turn to some more general observations.

Let me begin by reminding my readers that what is usually called the "scholarly consensus" of the translators I shall consider about the time and the writings of Jeremiah and about *Jeremiah* 8:8-9 in particular is based upon shared conjectures and assumptions, treated as facts by most specialists. The main assumptions are the following: 1) that in the time of king Josiah of Judah a holy book was (presented as) found in the temple of Jerusalem; 2) that, as a consequence of that (pretended) discovery, or in any case in connection with that text, a cult reform, dated 621, took place in Judah; 3) that the text in question was actually the biblical book *Deuteronomy*; 4) that *Jeremiah* 8:8-9 was produced by a prophet "speaking some time after Josiah's reform and the publication of the Book of the Torah"

(Fishbane),[1] and finally 5) that in the passage I wish to discuss "Jeremiah presupposes scribal involvement with the Torah but does not condemn the composition itself" (Fishbane).[2] Of course, of these five conjectures, the first three form a commonplace history of the religion of Israel in the monarchic period, while the fourth and fifth represent the *communis opinio* of scholars today on the specific problem of *Jeremiah* 8:8-9. This *communis opinio* is reached in different ways by different modern specialists. I shall begin by examining the strategy of the author I have quoted in expressing my fourth and fifth points, Michael Fishbane, in his book *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 1989.[3]

2. *Fishbane*

Fishbane translated *laššeqer* not as "lying" or "deceitfully" but as "in vain" or as "for naught", leaning heavily on the Greek translation. He writes: "LXX translates *laššeqer eis maten* here (vs. *adikos* or *pseudos* for *šeqer* elsewhere)".[4] Fishbane depends upon Rabbi David Kimhi and Y. Kaufmann for his understanding of v. 8; he writes: "the present interpretation (of that verse) goes against the Massoretic phrasings and basically follows Y. Kaufmann, *Toledot ha-Emunah ha Yisraelit* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1937-1956, iii/2 n. 54); although I have rendered the second phrase as two parallel stichoi, and understand the lamed of *laššeqer* as serving double duty for *šeqer* in the second stichos (cfr. the Targum)". Fishbane chose this interpretation in spite of the fact that *šeqer*, a term that is frequent in the Book of *Jeremiah*, surely means "lie", "deceit" in every other case within that book. Note that the Vulgate has *vere mendacium operatum est stilus mendax scribarum*! It would seem possible to envisage Kimhi's and Fishbane's rendering of the passage as following a hermeneutical tradition, beginning already in the *Septuagint*, and opposed to a tradition reflected in the *Vulgate*. It is not by chance that in the recent English version of the Bible *Tanakh. A New Translation of the Holy Scripture According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*,[5] *Jeremiah* 8:8 is trans-

[1] M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 1985), 34.
[2] Ibid. 36.
[3] Ibid. 33-36.
[4] Ibid. 34, note 43.
[5] *Tanakh. A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia/Jerusalem, 1985), 786.

lated: "How can you say 'We are wise, and we possess the Instruction of the Lord?' Assuredly, for naught has the pen laboured, For naught the scribes!"

3.1. A Christian Strategy: McKane

Other commentaries also strive to play down the implications of *Jeremiah* 8:8-9, but their strategies are different. Let me begin by presenting a "philological" strategy.

In his *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah* that was published in 1986 in the series *The International Critical Commentary*,[6] William McKane adds a *mappiq* to the *he* of the verbal form *'aśah* and thus ends up by substituing the meaning "to work, to compose, to compile", with the meaning "to falsify". The resulting translation is as follows:

> AGAINST WISE MEN AND SCHOLARS (8:8)
> How can you say, We are wise men
> and Yahweh's law is in our custody?
> Undoubtedly it has been changed to falsehood
> by the falsifying pens of scribes!

McKane's strategy is very clear, and rather effective. If the passage refers not to the composition of the Torah (or "law", as McKane translates the term) but to the "editorial elaboration or development" of the written law, then it is clear that the prophet is not condemning "the composition itself" (to say it with Fishbane) but only its transformation by what McKane calls "the falsifying pens of scribes".

3.2. Two More Christian Strategies: Bright and Reuss

The "philological" strategy reflected by McKane's commentary was only one of the possible ways in which the exegesis of this century has dealt and deals with *Jeremiah* 8:8-9. Another approach resulting in the same defensive treatment of the passage is well exemplified by John Bright's treatment of his book *Jeremiah. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, a volume of *The Anchor Bible* series.[7] Bright translated as follows:

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[6] W. McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah* (ICC, Edinburgh, 1986), 185-186. The same "philological" strategy is followed by J.-R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20* (AB, New York, 1999), 514.

[7] J. Bright, *Jeremiah. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, New York, 1965), 60-66.

How can you say, "Why, we are the wise,
For we have the law of Yahweh"?
Now do but see—the deception it's wrought,
The deceiving pen of the scribes!

Bright explicitly denies that the interpretation presented by commentaries such as McKane's (i.e., the idea that "a genuine nucleus has been falsified by later addition") is likely, and adds that such a reading "involves an unnecessary change of pointing". Yet his exegetical suggestions reach the conclusion that "the delusion, or falsehood, which the scribes have created seems to have been not so much the law itself, as the resultant conceit that possession of the law gives all necessary wisdom", and thus the scribes' refusal to hear Jeremiah's prophetic word.

The problem dealt with in different ways by all the scholars we have followed so far is never explicitly mentioned by those specialists, even though it is constantly the object of their preoccupations. The only exception to this rule that I am able to quote goes back to the year 1876. In the first volume of his translation of *Les Prophètes*, that was a part of his huge *La Bible. Traduction nouvelle avec Introduction et Commentaires*, Édouard Reuss wrote.[8]

> Normally, the translators present Jeremiah's contemporaries as saying to the prophet: 'We don't need your words, we have the Written Law of Yahweh'. But this interpretation may not be accepted, because, in the prophet's eyes, that Law and his own instructions could not be opposed to one another, and he could not say that the Law in question had been written to deceive the people.

Though he was original in his explicit description of the problem of *Jeremiah* 8:8-9, Reuss was not very innovative in his translation, that follows no cunning strategy and thus corresponds to John Bright's version of the biblical passage:

> Comment pouvez-vous dire: Nous sommes sages; nous savons bien l'instruction de l'Éternel! Certes, c'est pour vous tromper qu'a travaillé le style nensogner des scribes! Ils seront confondus, ces sages! ils seront consternés et saisis! Voyez, ils ont dédaigné la parole de l'Éternel; quelle sagesse est la leur?

[8] E. Reuss, *La Bible. Traduction Nouvelle avec Introduction et Commentaires. Ancien Testament. Deuxième Partie. Les Prophètes I* (Paris, 1876), 456-457. For this attitude see also e.g. .S.-R. Driver, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah. A Revised Translation with Introductions and Short Explanations* (London, 1906), 49.

But what the translation does not solve is dealt with, if not actually solved, by the commentary that explains the meaning of the words translated as *instruction de l'Eternel*:

> The context requires that we interpret the passage as referring to ritual prescriptions, formulated by redactors who were more or less authorized, by which the Israelites thought they satisfied all requirements of Yahweh. It is precisely such prescriptions that Jeremiah calls *une fausse sagesse*.

It is thus clear that in Reuss's view, though it was not possible to deny that *Jeremiah* 8:8 declared: "It is to deceive you (*scil.* the people) that the lying pen of the scribes has worked", nor that such scribes declared they "knew well the instruction of the Eternal Lord", it was possible to reconcile Jeremiah's statement with the prophet's faithfulness both to the true law of the Lord and to his own prophetic utterings by interpreting the instructions mentioned by the scribes as mere ritual prescriptions. The anti-ritualistic attitude, and even more the idea that the Old Testament prophet would have to be as strong an enemy of ritualism as a Pastor of the Reformation, were typical Protestant stances.

4. *The Problem*

To sum up, the four strategies I have examined were made necessary by the statement found in *Jeremiah* 8:8-9 that the sages who "had" the Torah of Yahweh were not really wise because the lying pen of scribes had somehow worked deceitfully or in vain. This problematic statement was in turn impossible to accept for the believers who read this passage because, as Reuss clearly stated, "the Law (of the Lord) and the prophet's instruction could not be opposed to one another, and Jeremiah could (thus) not say that the Law in question had been written to deceive the people". If one accepted the first three assumptions in my list above, it was vital to reconcile one part of the Holy texts (*Deuteronomy*) with another part (*Jeremiah* 8:8-9), and the only way to arrive at such a reconciliation was by stating that the target of the prophet's attack was not *Deuteronomy* itself but: a) the insincerity of the scribes's piety (Fishbane), b) a text that falsified the original Deuteronomic spirit (McKane), c) not so much the law itself, as the conceit that possession of the law gives all necessary wisdom (Bright), or d) some ritual prescriptions, formu-

lated by redactors who were more or less authorized (Reuss).

Though I think this criticism of the Jewish and Christian exegesis of *Jeremiah* 8:8-9 is important, and does away with many unnecessary scruples and efforts in dealing with that passage, I am aware that such a view is merely the *pars destruens* of an operation that should now proceed to a *pars construens* if it wishes to throw some light on the text I am discussing. Yet before I turn to some more constructive observations, I feel it necessary to stress that what is most important in the approach I advocate is precisely what Arnaldo Momigliano once called the *ars nesciendi*—that is, the awareness that the whole treatment of *Jeremiah* 8:8-9 (and, for that matter, the treatment of the Book of *Jeremiah* in its entirety, and indeed of most biblical texts) is usually based upon assumptions that may well be totally false.

In the present context it is most important to note that the treatment of *Deuteronomy* and of *Jeremiah* 8 by the scholars I have criticized is a treatment that presupposes the canonization of those texts in the shape of the Canons we now know. Reuss's statement is explicit; but all the modern authors quoted above seem to interpret the passage as if they envisaged the two texts as parts of a coherent, unified and selected group of sacred texts among which no major contradiction is acceptable.

While the treatment of *Jeremiah* 8:8 by these modern scholars illustrates retroactive canonization in the narrow sense, it also represents what I would call the perennial quality of canonization in the wide sense, because the interpretations I have discussed should be envisaged as efforts to strengthen the inner cohesion of biblical scripture. In striving towards this goal, the modern interpreters act in ways that are strikingly similar to the behaviour attributed by J. Philip Hyatt (1958) and by others scholars to the "Deuteronomistic editors" of *Jeremiah*.[9] Hyatt does not share the *communis opinio* I have presented at the beginning of my paper: he thinks that "Jeremiah was acquainted with the original edition of *Deuteronomy* but never expressed approval either of the principles or of the methods of the Deuteronomic reforms. Indeed, his outlook was on many important questions diametrically opposed to that of the writers of *Deuteronomy*. The Book of *Jeremiah* as we now have it, however, has received expansions and redaction at the hands of 'Deuteronomistic' editors,

[9] P. Hyatt, *Jeremiah* (IB V, New York-Nashville, 1956).

whose purpose in part was to claim for *Deuteronomy* the sanction of the great prophet". I am not interested in judging Hyatt's theory: what is important in the present context is the logic of that scholar's argument. It is also interesting to note that, paradoxically, Hyatt reconstructs an operation, undergone by the Book of *Jeremiah*, that is strikingly similar to the operation undergone by the *torah* that is denounced by *Jeremiah* 8:8-9 if we accept McKane's interpretation. Moreover, the passage *Jeremiah* 8:8-9, that seems to create problems for modern as well as for ancient exegesis, is apparently precisely one of the few passages in the Book of *Jeremiah* that have escaped the redactional control of the Deuteronomists as that control is (re)constructed by modern scholars. Winfried Thiel wrote in 1973 that *Jeremiah* 8:8-9 was one of the *nur drei Belege* that came from authentic sources (*authentische Sprüchen*) representing the Book of *Jeremiah*'s use of the term *torah*,[10] and Garcia Lopez's recent article *torah* in the *Theologisches Wörterbuch des Alten Testaments*[11] still quotes the same three passages including *Jeremiah* 8:8 as authentic, while the other eight passages containing the term *torah* are described as redactional, *i.e.* Deuteronomistic (*haben redaktionellen, typisch* dtr *Charakter*).

5. *Prophet and Text: a Reciprocal Validation*

If we look at *Jeremiah* 8:8-9 without accepting the assumptions I have criticized at the beginning of this paper, and without the modern retroactive canonizations of the prophetic utterance contained in that passage, we will surely be able to avoid the absurdities of an interpretation based upon an anachronistic view of the text. This does not amount to refusing *any* interpretation: on the contrary, it is the only condition that allows us to recognize the meaning of the passage. For *Jeremiah* 8:8-9 contrasts not two parts of a canon, but the written *torah*, produced by the pen of scribes precisely as the *torah* of the Lord, to the divine Word uttered by the prophet. It is to this contrast that we should turn in order to understand more about the passage in question.

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[10] W. Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1-25* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1973), 59, 100-102.

[11] F.-G. Lopez, "tôrah", in G.-J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, eds., *Theologishes Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (Band VIII, Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln, 1995), coll. 598-637 (especially 614-616).

The most important connections between the text of the *torah* and the oral prophetic utterings are presented in such texts as *Deuteronomy* 18, II *Kings* 22 and II *Chronicles* 34. Two combinations are meaningful: the authority attributed to the oral utterings of a prophetic figure over the validity of a written *torah* in II *Kings* 22 (and II *Chronicles* 34), where the prophetess Huldah is consulted by king Josiah on the newly-found book, and the ruling on the validity of oral prophetic utterings by a written *torah* in *Deuteronomy* 18: 9-22. Even if the text presented as found in the temple in II *Kings* 22 is not *Deuteronomy*, I think the circularity of the two passages is clear and important. May this reciprocal control be useful to help us understand the usages of *šeqer* in *Jeremiah*? In *Jeremiah* the term *šeqer* appears twenty-four times with the meaning "lie, deceit", and thus more frequently than in any other biblical book. One of these twenty-four cases is our passage, *Jeremiah* 8, with its condemnation of the *torah*-holders who think themselves wise and of the lying quality of the scribal pen. Twelve more passages attribute the term *šeqer* to prophets and to their oracular words. The scope and the form of such passages of *Jeremiah* are coherent with what we read in *Deuteronomy* 18:9-22. A case is mentioned in which the prophets condemned are likened to their Fathers who followed a deity who is not the "true" one: this deity is Baal (23:27) and its prophets are dream-prophets, though in the same chapter prophets prophesy false dreams in the name of Yahweh. The expression "prophets of deceit" actually appears in *Jeremiah* (23:27; cfr. 5:31), while in other passages (14:14, 27:15, 29:9, 29:23, 29:31) expressions can be found that are strikingly similar to those of *Deuteronomy*: the rival prophets proffer lies in the Lord's name, and oracles which the Lord did not speak. Of course, the salvation they announce does not come true. It would seem reasonable to suggest that the twelve *Jeremiah* passages in wich the term *šeqer* is referred to *n^{e}bi'im* and the passage *Jeremiah* 8:8-9, in which the pen of the scribes works *laššeqer* reflect a reciprocal control of the kind I have described. But it is necessary to point out two problems that make such an interpretation useless.

6. *The Failure of Prophecy and the Beginning of Canonization*

The first problem, as identified by Robert C. Carroll in his book *From Chaos to Covenant. Uses of Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah*,[12] lies in the fact that "the authentication of prophecy could only be a *post hoc* matter." This is clear in *Jeremiah* 28:9. And it is true both of the authentication of prophecy by *torah* (*Deuteronomy* 18:15-22: "if the prophet's oracle is not fulfilled or verified, it is an oracle which the Lord did not speak"), and in authentication of *torah* by prophecy (Hulda's authentication works because what she prophesied came true). Carroll is quite right when he states that "enormous difficulties (were) involved in producing a criteriology which would demonstrate the authenticity of one group of prophets and the falseness of another group. The Deuteronomists had cast-iron proof of which group was which, because they lived in the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem and, gifted with hindsight, could clearly determine each by empirical means",[13] and that "for the more important task of determining the truth when it really matters (i.e. before a catastrophe) prophecy was a complete failure. No amount of editing the traditions could conceal that colossal failure".[14]

The second problem has to do with another configuration of the combination prophet-*šeqer*. I refer of course to I *Kings* 22 and to what Carroll calls the divine deception of prophets, the case of Michaiah ben Yimla who saw a *ruaḥ* volunteering before the Lord to go and become a *ruaḥ šeqer* on the mouths of no less than four hundred prophets. "Such a motif (cfr. *Jer.* 4:10, *Ezek.* 14:9; *Deut* 13:3) complicates the matter", Carroll writes, "by introducing the notion of Yahweh sending false prophecies to deceive the people (or the kings) and to bring about their destruction (cfr. *Isa.* 6: 9)".[15]

The motif of the divine deception of prophets is thus the most terrible, but not the only weakness in the supposed system of verification based upon a reciprocity between prophetic word and *torah* text. And it is precisely the weakness of that supposed system that explains the systematic editing and integration of parts of the future

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[12] R.-C. Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant. Uses of Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (London, 1981), 173.

[13] Ibid. 172-173.

[14] Ibid. 173.

[15] Ibid. 171. On the same problems, see R.-C. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed. Reactions and Responses to Failure in the Old Testament Prophetic Traditions* (London, 1979).

canons, an editing that includes the work we call Deuteronomistic, and that work's description of the reciprocity between text and prophet. True or false, this work of the scribal pen was made necessary by the very impossibility of making the prophetic verification work. It was not yet a canonization in the narrow sense, but it was the effect as well as the cause of a new approach to the concept of divine inspiration, an approach that made it possible, if not to overcome the failure of prophecy, at least, to say it with Carroll, to conceal it in part by presenting the reciprocal verification of spoken prophetic word and inspired text in a *post hoc* perspective. This is what we are confronted with today within the Biblical texts: the description of a procedure of verification, that is meant to confer authority to a series of texts, and thus implicitely to do away with the living, innovative, oral performance of traditional prophecy. The paradox of *Jeremiah* 8:8-9 lies in the condemnation of *torah*-scribes in a text attributed to an oral prophet but written and edited by scribes. Even if we accept the positions of Thiel and Hyatt, and differentiate between *Jeremiah* 8:8 and other, "Deuteronomistic" passages of *Jeremiah*, we are confronted with this paradox.

This paradox is the symptom of a first, but decisive, step towards the canonization of scripture. The main aspect of canonization in the narrow sense, that is, a unified and coherent list of selected texts, lay in the distant future, also in the sense that the canonizing process, as I have shown at the beginning of this paper, is a never-ending one. But the real corollary of complete canonization, well identified by Jan Assmann in his book *Das kulturelle Gedächtniss*, München 1992, *i.e.* the closing of prophecy, was probably never to come.

SCRIPTURE AND EXEGESIS IN ZOROASTRIANISM

SHAUL SHAKED

Several questions surrounding the history of the Zoroastrian canon are shrouded in mystery, and are therefore the object of surmise and speculation. We do not know when the original texts that form the body of scriptures were composed. We believe—or most of us do—that the earliest layer in the Zoroastrian canon of scriptures, the Gāthās of the Avesta, date back to Zoroaster, the founder of the religion, but many of us do not pretend to know at what period he lived, nor precisely in what region of Iran he was active. Some scholars firmly believe in an early dating of the life of the Prophet, which may go as far back as 1200 BCE or earlier,[1] and others argue with equal conviction for a much later date, around the sixth century BCE[2]—a very significant chronological gap. One important scholar, Gherardo Gnoli, has written a book to prove the early dating of Zoroaster, but since then he has changed his mind and he is now an advocate of the more recent date.[3] The arguments are mostly circumstantial, not factual. They are based in part on traditions that are patently unreliable and themselves the result of late speculations. We are thus ultimately left to make up our minds on the basis of flimsy evidence and on what looks like a question of taste: do we have a preference for an archaic environment, or for a more historical period? Do we regard Zoroaster as an ancient founder of religion, whose period of activity lies beyond all hope of verification and contextual understanding, or as a reformer who belonged to early historical times? I have already expressed the view that no matter how important it is to establish a chronological timetable for Zoroaster's period, in

[1] M. Boyce *A History of Zoroastianism*, 1 (Handb. der Orientalistik I,8,1,2, Heft 2A; Leiden-Köln, 1975), 190, sets the date of Zoroaster at 1400-1000 BCE.

[2] I. Gershevitch, "Approaches to Zoroaster's Gathas", *Iran* 33 (1995), 6ff.

[3] G. Gnoli, *Zoroaster's time and homeland. A study on the origins of Mazdaism and related problems* (Naples, 1980), esp. 175; for the more recent dating: G. Gnoli, *Zoroaster in history* (New York, 2000).

our present state of knowledge, with the very scanty information that we possess concerning the historical situation in Iran before the sixth century BCE, especially in the eastern regions of that country, the long stretch of time between 600 BCE and 1200 BCE is not very meaningful to us historically. We know next to nothing of the political and cultural circumstances of this very long period, and are incapable of relating the contents of the older part of the Avesta to the environment from which it might have grown. There are, it is true, some observations which emerge from a reading of the text. One of these is the fact that the society in which the text was composed relied heavily on the cultivation of cattle and was concerned about hostile groups who seem to be intent on raiding them and robbing them of their animals. This is however not focused enough to allow for placing the Gāthās in a historical context.

The question of dating is one which, at the present stage of our knowledge, we cannot answer in any meaningful way. We do know, on the other hand, from the internal evidence of the scriptures, that the canon that we possess consists of several chronological and dialectal layers, possibly therefore of groups of traditions formed in more than one centre of learning and belonging perhaps to more than one type of religion. We can easily distinguish more than one form of the language of the Avesta, although we cannot assign them to definite places or periods. On the basis of such uncertainties each scholar tries to reconstruct a possible line of development of the Zoroastrian tradition according to certain preconceived notions. I may be expressing a middle view if I say that it seems to me likely that the early period of Zoroastrianism lay close to the beginning of the first millennium BCE, probably in North-Eastern Iran, and that from there it may have spread over a period of time towards the western and southern areas of Iran, where eventually the great Persian empire was established.

We may also assume that in the course of its spread, the canon of scriptures absorbed elements that were not part of the original message of the religion. The body of priesthood that we know to have been active in the historical period of Zoroastrianism—the group of priests known as the Magi—is never mentioned in the Avesta itself, and from external sources, namely from the evidence of Herodotus, it emerges that they were originally part of the population of Media, in the western region of Iran. If this is true, the conclusion must be

that they did not belong to the original followers of the Prophet, but that at some point they took over the transmission of the religion and with it the handling of the text of the Avesta.

The main mode of transmission of the Avesta during its early history was oral rather than written. This is one of the few facts we can be fairly certain about. We are thus dealing with an oral scripture, despite the fact that this sounds like an oxymoron. For a very long period of time, stretching over perhaps fifteen hundred years, the Avesta was not a written book, but was at the same time always considered to be a book. When one compares the examples that are most prominent in history, it seems to be the rule rather than the exception that holy scriptures start their career by a period of oral transmission, rather than as books written in codices. One striking example, and a rather recent one, is the Qur'ān, which was revealed precisely as a an oral book. Its character of orality, with a strong predilection for audible recitation, is still there. The decision to commit such a book to writing is far from natural or self-evident: it requires special determination and justification.

The Avesta was committed to writing apparently towards the end of the Sasanian period, perhaps in the sixth century CE, in a script especially invented in order to reproduce the sounds of the language as recited by the priests as faithfully as possible. We do not know the exact reasons which brought about the decision to write down the Avesta. A fear of its being lost is cited. But an obvious reason could have been the fear that the proper pronunciation might get lost, and the decision to write it down is therefore not so much an act of preserving its contents as one that seeks to conserve its oral transmission as accurately as possible. In this sense it is reminiscent of the decision to write down the mode of pronouncing the Hebrew Bible, devised some time in the eighth century CE, by adding to the script a system of vocalization, which concluded the work of the Masoretes. This might have been an act as important as the decision taken some centuries earlier to write down the Biblical text on parchment scrolls.

Oral transmission has a number of advantages over the scribal preservation of a sacred text. Although it is more precarious, and is perhaps more liable to loss of material when the schools of transmission are dispersed under pressure of conquest and assimilation to alien cultures, when the system works well the careful memorization of a text seems to guarantee a higher degree of fidelity in trans-

mission than can be the case in a chain of copying. This is demonstrated by the transmission of the Vedas, by the transmission of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, and by the transmission of the Avesta. Although in the latter case much material was lost, what survived is on the whole reproduced quite reliably across the vicissitudes of subjugation, dispersion of schools, and exile.

Oral transmission also seems to guarantee a better degree of control over the question as to who will be admitted into the ranks of the transmitters, a crucial question in the history of Zoroastrianism. In a literate society it is not so easy to bar access to books from undesirable elements, while the process of testing and sifting individuals who are to memorize the scriptures is perhaps more effective. Zoroastrianism, at least in its latest phase before the encounter with Islam, felt the need to defend itself against the dangers of heresy by setting limits on those who would be allowed to study the Avesta, and even stricter limits on those who would be admitted to study the Zand, or the interpretation of the scriptures.

It may be assumed that there was some reluctance to allow the Avesta to be written. We have no documents to tell us about the debate that must have taken place before this happened. The decision may have been taken by a person or a group of people at the top of the priestly hierarchy. It may be surmised that this was not a simple matter. In some ways, though, it was not an event of too great a magnitude, when we consider the fact that the text did not stop being memorized and recited orally even after it was committed to writing, and when we consider further that the text was quite likely written in some form even before the official invention of the special script devised for the purpose, before it was placed under two covers in the form of a book. It was almost certainly considered to be "a book" long before the sixth century CE, the time when it was first written in the current script. It seems likely that not only its structure and scope were fixed before, but that there existed copies of the text in two written shapes: one, as a private aide-memoire for individual transmitters; and one, perhaps, as a ceremonial book in the royal treasury, where prestigious documents of various kinds, including the official annals of the kingdom, were regularly preserved. It may be assumed that such a book in the royal archives, if it existed, was not very often consulted.

It is clear, however, that the book was not made canonical simply by the fact that it was written down. Canonization certainly preceded

the process of a written redaction. The canonical scripture existed independently of any attempt to turn it into a written text. When was it canonized? what was the process of canonization? These are questions for which we can come up with no clear answer, not even approximately. But if one understands by a canon a closed box of scriptures, set once and for all, to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be substracted, this is not a concept that applies to the history of the Zoroastrian canon. Zoroastrian traditions indicate that at certain times the scope of the sacred canon of scriptures underwent considerable expansion, and that, at other periods, it suffered from a substantial shrinking or diminution.

At this stage in our discussion it is best to look at the evidence of the tradition:

> [1] When King Wištāsp was finished with the battle against Arjāsp, he sent to the lords a messenger and writings of the Mazdean religion, adorned with all knowledge, concerning many kinds of skills and learning and things of whatever (other matter), in order (to make them) accept the religion. He sent with them a priest with well-trained tongue. Spēdag and Arjrāsp and others from outside Khwanirah came to Frašōštar to enquire about the religion, and he sent them (back) full of knowledge.
> [2] Dārāy, son of Dārāy, commanded that the whole Avesta and Zand as received by Zoroaster from Ohrmazd—two copies of (that) writing be preserved, one in the treasury of the (royal) quarters, and one in the fortress of writings.
> [3] Walaxš son of Aršak commanded that a memorandum be sent to the provinces (to the effect) that they preserve the Avesta and Zand as they had come down in purity, and also the teachings that were derived from them; everything that had survived the damage and destruction of Alexander and the pillage and plundering of the Greeks, (all that,) scattered in the Kingdom of Iran, whether in writing or orally, had been transmitted in the kingdom authoritatively.
> [4] The late majesty King of Kings Ardašīr son of Pābag, on the righteous authority of Tōsar, expressed the wish that all that scattered teaching be brought to the court. Tōsar supervised (the work), accepting that which was certain, and leaving out of authority the rest. He further commanded: '(Come) hither to us! That will be (considered) the whole teaching of the Mazdean religion (concerning) which there is indeed now knowledge and information. There is no going down from that'.
> [5] The King of Kings Shabur son of Ardashir collected again the writings deriving from the religion[4] concerning medicine, astronomy,

[4] The expression *az dēn be* (for which cf. S. Shaked, "Mihr the Judge", *Jerusa-*

movement, time, space, substance, accident, becoming, decay, transformation, logic, and other crafts and skills, which were dispersed among the Indians and the Greeks and in other lands, and caused them to fit the Avesta. Every correct copy he ordered to be deposited in the treasury of the (royal) quarters, and considered establishing every province (?) upon (the principles of) the Mazdean religion.

[6] The King of Kings Shabur son of Hormizd caused, through disputation, all the inhabitants of the country to be without fault, and brought all (theological) discussions to deliberation and examination. After Adurbad won the case by seemly discourse against all those sectarians, students of the *nasks*, and heretics, he (the king) said: 'Now that we have seen the religion in existence, we shall not let anyone (approach) evil religion. We shall exercise greater zeal (over this)'. He (indeed) acted in this manner.

[7a] His present majesty, the King of Kings Khusro son of Kawād, after he vanquished heresy, tyranny (and) great opposition, greatly increased knowledge and detailed deliberation (in) the four estates concerning all heresy through the revelation of the religion.

[7b] He also said this in the religious celebration of *gāh[ān]bār* (?):[5] 'Know the truth of the Mazdean religion. The wise can see it in the material world with confidence through deliberation. It is possible (however) to become of supreme sanctity and a foremost leader essentially not by deliberation, but through purity of thought, speech and action, (by) being kind to the good spirit, and (by) worship of the divine beings in purity through the holy word. We definitely call those persons '*mōbads* of Ohrmazd' who have made manifest to us the vision of *mēnōg*. We insistently request of them vision of *mēnōg* in an abundantly explicit manner, as well as its *gētīg* measure (brought about) by manifestation, both these kinds in complete measure. In addition, thanks be to the divine beings in particular for Iran, [for] the kingdom of Iran has followed the teachings of the Mazdean religion, the perfect knowledge taught by the ancient sages to the whole of (the clime of) Khwanirah.

[7c] With the wise there (can be) no dispute over perversity, so much having been preserved in the language of the Avesta by pure speech and adorned writing in codices and treatises, as well as in sermons and teachings in a language in the manner of the common people.[6] Further, we have recognized all sources of knowledge of the Mazdean religion for this reason, namely, that when any doubtful theories [in] the world, external to the Mazdean religion, reach this place, they are to be examined afresh. Theories alien to the Mazdean religion can-

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lem Studies in Arabic and Islam 2 (1980), 21 [Reprinted in: Sh. Shaked, *From Zoroastrian Iran to Islam* (Aldershot,1995)]) may alternatively mean, as has been suggested: "external to the religion".

[5] The emendation is uncertain. The word indicates the Zoroastrian feasts.

[6] This is a reference of the two components of the transmossion of scriptures: the sacred text in the original and the version in the current language (Middle Persian).

not bring so much acquisition and manifestation of knowledge for the benefit and relief of humanity as may be (reached) through abundance of investigation and deliberation in the learning of a *rad*.[7]
[7d] We decree with utmost desire that all (?) priests who are perceptive, most humble, of good character and good, should study the Avesta and Zand ceaselessly, ever afresh, and should add in a worthy manner from the comprehension of (the scriptures) to the knowledge of the people of the world. Those who say that human beings cannot attain, in the first place, to the knowledge of the Creator, to the marvels of the spiritual beings, and to the manner of the creation affected by the Creator, or else that they can attain to the whole of that, are (to be regarded) as men of little knowledge and as governed by lust.
[7e] Those who say that the revelation of the religion can be known well through the analogy of reality, should be held to be thinkers; those who demonstrate clearly through knowledge, should be held to be religious sages. And since the root of all knowledge is the religion, both by its *mēnōg* power and by its *gētīg* manifestation,[8] that man said wisely (the following): even when it does not hold any particular manifestation of the Avesta it ought to be regarded as a manifestation of the scriptures when someone brings to the children of the gods (?) the religious duties by teaching.[9]

This is evidently an official account of the history of the Zoroastrian scriptures, composed under the authority of King Khusrau son of Kawād (531-579 CE). It reflects a set of traditional notions about the fate and position of the Avesta, and uses some apologetic arguments for specific purposes. For the latter point, let us stress the words

[7] A spiritual leader.

[8] I.e., the invisible and the visible forms of being.

[9] *DkM* 412:3ff.; *DkB* 511. Of the numerous treatments of this text the following may be mentioned: H. S. Nyberg, *Die Religionen des alten Iran*, tr. by H.H. Schaeder (Mitt. d. Vorderasiatisch-aegyptischen Gesellschaft, 43; Leipzig, 1938 [New edition, Osnabruck 1966]), 415ff.; "Sasanid Mazdaism according to Moslem sources", *Journal of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute* 39 (1958), 17f.; *A manual of Pahlavi* I (Wiesbaden, 1964), 107-112; H. W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian problems in the ninth-century books* (Oxford, 1943 [Reprinted, with a new introduction, 1971]), 156f., 218f.; R. C. Zaehner, *Zurvan. A Zoroastrian dilemma* (Oxford, 1955), 31f., 7ff.; G. Widengren, *Iranische Geisteswelt. Von den Anfängen bis zum Islam* (Baden-Baden, 1961), 31ff.; "Leitende Ideen und Quellen der iranischen Apokalyptik", in: Hellholm, D. (ed.), *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near Wast* (Tübingen, 1983), 77-162., 1983:93, 95ff.; G. Ito, "Gathica VI" *Orient* 6 (1970), 19ff.; M. Boyce, *Zoroastrians. Their religious beliefs and practices*; (London-New York, 1979), 94, 103, 113, 117, 133; M. Shaki, "The Dēnkard account of the history of the Zoroastrian scriptures", *Archiv Orientální* 49 (1981), 114-125; H. Humbach, *The Gāthās of Zarathushtra and other old Avestan texts*, in collaboration with J. Elfenbein and P.O. Skjærvø, I (Heidelberg, 1991), 50ff. The passage is here reproduced from S. Shaked, *Dualism in transformation. Varieties of religion in Sasanian Iran* (Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion, XVI; London, 1994), 99-103.

occurring at the end of the passage, in §7. They clearly give authority to the priests to set rules and attitudes having Avestan authority, even if there is no specific scriptural witness to support what they are saying. This is a device that is familiar to us from other religious traditions, notably from Judaism and Islam, where it is laid out as a doctrine, in Judaism, that whatever an authorized student of religion[10] says carries the same weight as things revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai, i.e., the highest divine authority invested in the scriptures.

This history is composed by following the sequence of the great dynasties of Iran. The names of the kings mentioned are usually not those of individual kings, but are to be understood as emblematic for the dynasties involved. The exception to this observation are the names of the last kings, who belong to the Sasanian dynasty, under whose rule the document was composed. In that section of the account the names of the kings are individual rather than representative.

The sequence begins with the mythological era of Zoroastrianism, with King Wištāsp, who is known as the royal patron of Zoroaster, the founder of the religion. It is perhaps significant that the name of Zoroaster is not mentioned at this stage of the history. The text starts with the statement that the scripture was first composed at the time of Wištāsp, but at this period was not yet written down. It was first committed to writing at the time of "Dārāy son of Dārāy" (that is, Darius son of Darius), an emblematic name of a king who represents the dynasty of the Achaemenids. In this period the Avesta is said to have been written down in two copies, deposited in two of the royal archives. This is a theme that recurs in various other sources:[11] one or two copies of the scriptures existed and were preserved in a library or archive. No claim is usually made that the book existed in any other form of writing or in other hands.[12]

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[10] The expression used in the Jewish context is *talmid vatiq*: "Whatever a well-formed disciple will say in the presence of his master—all of this was already transmitted to Moses on Mount Sinai" (*Leviticus Rabba*, 22:1).

[11] E.g., *Ardā Wirāz nāmag* 1:7 ("in the fortress of writings"?), *Šahrīhā ī Ērān* 4 ("in the treasury of fire"); *DkM* 437:20 (in the "treasury of the rulers"); *DkM* 405:18ff. (one in "the fortress of writing" and one in "the treasure of the night" [*ganz ī šabīgān*]). The theme is discussed in detail in H. W. Bailey, ibid, 151ff.

[12] Except that in *DkM* 437:21 there is a reference to "many copies" made from the text, a fact which is a cause for concern, because it made the spread of heresies possible.

The first great calamitous break in the history of Iran took place in the gap between the Achaemenids and the Parthians, who form the subject-matter of the next section (§3). This was the conquest of Iran by Alexander, and the temporary cessation of Iranian sovereignty. From the point of view of the scriptures, this event is viewed as the cause of much devastation and dispersal of the texts. The task of the Parthians, represented by the generic name Walaxš, is described as that of re-assembling the scriptures, both in writing and orally, and of preserving them. There is a hint that the scriptures were contaminated, when we are told that the Parthians strove to perpetuate only those elements which had come down "in purity".

The next four sections (§§4-7) deal with kings of the Sasanian dynasty, under which (and in the service of which) the text was composed. The first king of the dynasty, Ardashīr son of Pābag, engaged in a collection of scriptures. This work continued under his successor, Shābūr. It is here specified that the materials thus assembled encompass the whole range of sciences of antiquity, and the claim is made that the sciences that are in the hands of Greeks and Indians, the foremost bearers of science in the world of Late Antiquity, derive originally from Iran. Another aspect of the work of collecting the text is alluded to in §5. The lore which was brought back from its dispersion in Greece and India and in other countries had to be compared and adjusted to the existing Avesta. So there is a work of editing involved, which seems to entail a project of translation as well as adaptation to the tenets and spirit of the Iranian civilization. We have clear evidence of Greek and Indian philosophical and scientific ideas in the Zoroastrian writings,[13] but it is remarkable that the Zoroastrian tradition gives an implicit admission that it is aware of this fact.

The contribution of Shābūr II (§6) is to have vanquished various sectarians by disputation and coercion. The same concern with heresy is also evident in the period of the last king in this history, Khusrau (§7). It emerges from here as well as from other texts that the attitude to the scriptures was very closely linked to the fear of heresy.[14]

The last big section in the text quoted here, §7, is particularly important. It contains a religious manifesto of King Khusrau, and may be taken to represent the joint stand of the high priesthood of

[13] Cf. e.g. H. W. Bailey, ibid, 80ff.

[14] S. Shaked "Esoteric trends in Zoroastrianism", *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities,* vol. 3, No. 7 (1969), 187ff. [Reprinted in Shaked, *From Zoroastrian Iran to Islam* (Aldershot 1995)].

the time on the burning issues of faith and scripture. This section, which possesses great interest, should be given careful consideration. It speaks of two modes of piety: one is through reflection and deduction from the world, that is to say, apparently, through philosophical and scientific deliberations. This is expressed by the words: "The wise can see [the truth of the Mazdean religion] in the material world with confidence through deliberation" [§7b]. The other way is "not by deliberation, but through the purity of thought, speech and action, (by) being kind to the good spirit, and (by) worship of the divine beings in purity through the holy word" [§7b]. This may sound as a simple and straightforward piety, but it alludes to a deeper, spiritual, even mystical, dimension which exists in Zoroastrianism, and which is not always visible on the surface. This sense is given a more explicit expression by the phrase that follows: "We definitely call those persons '*mōbads* of Ohrmazd' who have made manifest to us the vision of *mēnōg*. We insistently request of them vision of *mēnōg* in an abundantly explicit manner, as well as its *gētīg* measure (brought about) by manifestation, both these kinds in complete measure". The highest goal of the religious quest is the vision of *mēnōg*, a requirement that is almost a contradiction in terms, as *mēnōg*, by definition, is that which is invisible. And yet, the most accomplished men of religion are sustained by the hope of seeing it.

The next paragraph in the king's speech (§7c) specifies how one can verify the teachings which are being propagated in the kingdom. Here again we notice the great fear of heresy. The passage seeks to strike the right balance between openness to new doctrines in the field of sciences with wariness as to the possible infiltration of heretical views.

Passage §7d makes it clear that this balance affects also the two extreme claims, namely, that which maintains that a real understanding of the deity and of the created world and its rules is beyond reach; and the opposite view, according to which it is possible to attain a complete comprehension of the divine and created world.

The last section here (§7e) seems to summarize the previous statements. It makes again a division of the truly religious into two categories, those who think and those who know (intuitively), and comes to the far-reaching claim that we have already mentioned, namely, that any "correct" or "orthodox" teaching is to be regarded as a manifestation of the scriptures, even if it is not directly based on a verse quotation.

What does this text now tell us about the position of the canon of scriptures? We may have our doubts as to the historicity of this account. It is indeed not a "history" but a statement of creed. As such it is a faithful reflection of official attitudes in the last century of Sasanian rule, which was the last phase of the autonomous existence of Zoroastrianism. It tells us how precarious the notion of scripture is in Zoroastrianism. Foreign elements are admitted into it with full right of place, and the scriptures can thus theoretically expand without limit. At the same time grave concerns are felt about the question whether it is appropriate to admit into the body of scripture doctrines that may contain heretical elements.

Eventually, probably in the early Islamic period if not already at the time of Khusrau, the Avesta became a closed canon, but the process of innovation and expansion still went on, quite consciously, in a parallel line of transmission, that of the exegesis and commentary on the text, mostly in the Middle Persian vernacular, which is known as the Zand. This parallel line continued to be for a long time entirely oral, and seems to have been the main channel by which the learned priests communicated the knowledge of the scriptures to the public. Zand became inevitably also the main tool of propagating heretical views, for by means of *zand* teachings Manichaeans, Mazdakite, or members of any other non-orthodox or non-Zoroastrian group could disseminate views which were dear to their hearts under the guise of the Avestan tradition. One encounters warnings not to teach *zand*, meaning perhaps specifically the ability to formulate and create *zand*-type of commentary to the Avesta, to unauthorized persons, that is to say, to people who have not been previously tested to see whether they are firm in their orthodox faith.[15] That heretics did indeed make use of *zand* in order to inculcate their doctrines under the guise of the Avesta is evidenced by the designation of many heretics in Islam, and especially Manichaeans, as *zindīq*s.[16]

Despite the fact that the Avesta was composed in a language that by the beginning of the Sasanian period had been dead for several centuries, it seems even at this stage to be a reality that is capable of growth and change. When nothing could be composed any more in the ancient language, of which even the learned priests had only an imperfect understanding, the Avesta could still undergo change

[15] S. Shaked (1969), 186ff.

[16] An alternative etymology of this designation would regard it as deriving from the Aramaic word *siddīq*.

and adaptation by using the instrument of *zand*. The process of creating *zand* is quite old. Elements of *zand* exegesis may be detected sometimes in the Avestan texts themeselves.[17] We have *zand* texts for which no certainty exists whether they are commentaries of Avestan texts. They may have been composed in the genre and may have alluded to Avestan themes, but not necessarily to actual Avestan compositions.[18] According to the declaration of Khusrau such texts could be perfectly acceptable if they fulfil the requirements of orthodoxy. Historically, they are *zand* texts, but we are in the dark as to the Avesta that is claimed to underlie them. Part of the history of the scripture in Zoroastrianism is the sad fact that a very large part of it was lost after the end of the Sasanian period.

Other traditions of the ancient world had a similar conception of a complementary dichotomy between the ancient scripture and the exegesis in the vernacular, but none expressed this creative opposition in such forceful and candid terms, and none would perhaps regard this dichotomy with such a mixture of abhorrence and attraction. The Zand, as we have seen, was considered to be a source of great danger, and, at the same time, it was clearly the mainstay of the religion, the means by which Zoroastrian thought and practice could be maintained vigorous and throbbing. It was surrounded by restrictions and hedges, but precisely because of this it may have felt to many people to be full of delicious temptations.

[17] This has been pointed out by Dan Shapira in his unpublished dissertation (The Hebrew University, 1999).

[18] This is at least the claim made by Ph. Gignoux, "L'apocalyptique iranienne est-elle vraiment la source d'autres apocalypses?", *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 31 (1985/8), 67-78; "Sur l'inexistence d'un Bahman Yasht avestique", *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 23 (1986), 53-64, *with regard to Zand ī Wahman Yašt* (a position accepted by Cereti in his edition of the text, 1995)—a claim that is only based on absence of evidence.

HOMER AS A FOUNDATION TEXT

MARGALIT FINKELBERG

The Greek heroic tradition once embraced a much wider range of epic poems than merely the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* with which it eventually became associated. Side by side with the Trojan cycle, to which the Homeric poems belong, additional heroic subjects were treated in epic cycles such as the Argonautic saga, the Theban cycle, and others, some of them also attributed to Homer. At an early stage, all the traditional poems dealing with the events of the Trojan War were assumed to be authored by Homer; later, only the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* came to be seen as genuinely "Homeric", whereas the other Trojan epics were attributed to other poets and subsumed under the so-called Epic Cycle. A handful of fragments and a brief summary of the contents excerpted from the *Chrestomathy* of Proclus is all that has remained of the Cyclic poems, and even less than that of other epics.[1] Only the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* survived transmission, eventually to form part of the so-called "Western Canon". While it is pretty obvious that this outcome has much to do with the privileged status that the Homeric poems enjoyed in ancient Greece,[2] it is much less obvious how they acquired this status. In what follows, I will argue that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were intended to supersede the other traditional epics from the very beginning and that they achieved this goal by means of a thorough revision of the heroic tradition and its deliberate adaptation to the new self-image of Greek civilization that emerged in the early Archaic period.

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[1] For general collections see G. Kinkel, *Epicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*. Vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1877); M. Davies, *Epicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Göttingen, 1988); A. Bernabé, *Poetarum Epicorum Graecorum Testimonia et Fragmenta*. Vol. 1 (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1996) (henceforth, Bernabé). For the Epic Cycle see T.W. Allen , *Homeri Opera*. Vol. 5 (Oxford, 1912) (henceforth Allen); H. Evelyn-White, *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns and Homerica* (Cambridge, Mass., 1914); E. Bethe, *Homer, Dichtung und Sage* (2nd ed.). Vol. 2 (Leipzig and Berlin, 1929) (reprinted as E. Bethe, *Der Troische Epenkreis* (Stuttgart, 1966)).

[2] See M. Finkelberg, "The *Cypria*, the *Iliad*, and the Problem of Multiformity in Oral and Written Tradition", *Classical Philology* 95 (2000), 1-11.

1. *Homer and the Epic Tradition*

It is generally recognized today that both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* lean heavily upon the nomenclature of Trojan subjects dealt with in the poems of the Cycle.[3] Take for example Books 2-7 of the *Iliad*, which form a digression from the narrative succession of the story of the Wrath of Achilles. Quite a few episodes in these books are connected with the beginning of the Trojan War, which was the subject of the Cyclic *Cypria*. Odysseus' account of the mustering of the troops at Aulis and the Catalogue of Ships in *Iliad* 2; the Teichoscopia, the duel of Paris and Menelaus and the Helen-Paris encounter in *Iliad* 3; Agamemnon's inspection of the troops in *Iliad* 4; the Trojan scenes in *Iliad* 6; the negotiations about the return of Helen and the building of the Achaean wall in *Iliad* 7—each of these offers a retrospective of an initial stage of the war. The beginning of the war may be evoked in a direct reminiscence, as in Odysseus' reminiscence of the Aulis episode in *Iliad* 2 or Antenor's reminiscence of the embassy of Odysseus and Menelaus to Troy in *Iliad* 3, both told in the *Cypria*.[4] But more often than not the *Iliad* adopts a subtler strategy, in that the episodes properly belonging to the beginning of the war are incorporated into the chronological and narrative setting of its last year. Thus, the seduction of Helen by Paris and Aphrodite in *Iliad* 3, rather than being simply a reminiscence, provides, as was aptly put by Mark Edwards, "a reenactment of the original seduction", the proper context of which is again the *Cypria*.[5] In a similar way, the mustering of the troops described in *Iliad* 2 or the negotiations about Helen and the building of the Achaean

[3] The growing recognition of this fact has been one of the major achievements of the Neoanalytic trend in Homeric scholarship. The works most representative of the methods of Neoanalysis are J.T. Kakridis, *Homeric Researches* (Lund, 1949) and W. Kullmann, *Die Quellen der Ilias* (Wiesbaden, 1960); for comprehensive discussions in English see W. Kullmann, "Oral Poetry Theory and Neoanalysis in Homeric Research", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 25 (1984), 307-23; M.W. Edward, "Neoanalysis and Beyond", *Classical Antiquity* 9 (1990), 311-25; L. Slatkin, *The Power of Thetis. Allusion and Interpretation in the Iliad* (Berkeley, 1991), 9-12. I treat the subject in some detail in M. Finkelberg, *The Birth of Literary Fiction in Ancient Greece* (Oxford, 1998), 141-50. See now also J.S. Burgess. *The Tradition of the Trojan War in Homer and the Epic Cycle* (Baltimore and London, 2001).

[4] *Il.* 2. 284-332; 3. 204-24; cf Allen, 104.1-3; 105. 3-5.

[5] M.W. Edwards, *Homer: Poet of the Iliad* (Baltimore and London, 1987), 196. Cf. W. Kullmann, "Ergebnisse der motivgeschichtlichen Forschung zu Homer", in J. Latacz, ed., *Zweihundert Jahre Homer-Forschung* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1991), 434. For the *Cypria* episode see Allen 103. 2-10.

wall described in *Iliad* 7, properly belonging to the beginning of the war but introduced so as to suit the context of the last year, can hardly be anything else than such "reenactments" of the war's initial stages, again closely parallel to the *Cypria* account.[6]

In fact, what we have here is a narrative technique characteristic of the *Iliad* as a whole, because in the second half of the poem the same strategy of "reenactment" or, to borrow the expression used by Wolfgang Kullmann, "an imitation of a narrative known to us from one of the Cyclic epics", is employed.[7] There, this strategy is used to evoke the last stages of the war which, again, are not described directly in the *Iliad*. It was noticed long ago that the duel between Patroclus and Sarpedon in *Iliad* 16 directly evokes the Achilles-Memnon duel as recounted in the Cyclic *Aethiopis*; again, although the lamentations of Thetis and the Nereids over Achilles in *Iliad* 18. 22-72 are prompted by the death of Patroclus, they evoke Thetis' bewailing of Achilles, also presented in the *Aethiopis*.[8] Likewise, although the Fall of Troy properly belongs with the events described in the Cyclic *Iliu persis*, the death of Hector is represented in *Iliad* 22 as if the city of Troy were already in flames.[9]

What the *Iliad* does for the Trojan War as a whole, the *Odyssey* does for the Fall of Troy and the Returns: the former was the subject of the Cyclic *Aethiopis*, *Ilias parva* and *Iliu persis* whereas the latter was treated in the Cyclic *Nosti*. The *Aethiopis* is evoked in the story about Achilles' funeral told by Agamemnon in the Underworld; *Ilias parva* in Odysseus' meeting with Ajax in the Underworld described by Odysseus in *Odyssey* 11 and in the story of Odysseus' entering Troy as a spy told by Helen in *Odyssey* 4; *Iliu Persis* in the story of the Wooden Horse told by Menelaus in *Odyssey* 4 and by Odysseus in *Odyssey* 11; this same story is also the subject of Demodocus' third song in *Odyssey* 8.[10] The Returns are evoked in Nestor's reminiscences and his story of Agamemnon's death in *Odyssey* 3, in Menelaus' reminiscences in *Odyssey* 4, in Agamemnon's account of his own death in *Odyssey* 11 and, of course, in Odysseus' reminiscences embracing

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[6] Allen 105.3-5, 17-18.

[7] Kullmann, "Oral Poetry Theory and Neoanalysis", 310.

[8] Allen 106. 11-13; the episode is also evoked in *Od.* 24. 36-97.

[9] *Il.* 22. 405-411, cf. Allen 108.6-7.

[10] Achilles' funeral *Od.* 24. 35-92, cf. Allen, 106. 9-16; Odysseus and Ajax 11. 541-64, cf. Allen 106. 20-23; Odysseus the spy 4. 235-64, cf. Allen 107 .4-7; the Wooden Horse 4. 265-89; 11. 504-37; 8. 499-520, cf. Allen 107. 16-21; 107. 27-108.2.

Books 9-12 of the poem; this is also the subject of a song performed by Phemius in *Odyssey* 1.[11] As a result, the *Odyssey*, besides being a poem of the return of the last of the heroes, also acts as a large-scale compendium of the part of the Epic Cycle dealing with the final stages of the Trojan War and the fate of the survivors.

The above seems to indicate that, although they begin *in medias res* and describe two single episodes of the Trojan saga, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* also function as symbolic compendia of the entire history of the Trojan War and the Returns. While the literary merits of this compositional technique were commended as early as Aristotle,[12] it has rarely been taken into account that what is being dealt with is far from purely a matter of composition. As Laura Slatkin and Irad Malkin have shown for the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* respectively, Homer not only evokes other traditions but also neutralizes them by adapting them to his own agenda: thus, the traditional theme of the immortality conferred on Achilles by Thetis is turned in the *Iliad* into one of "heroic experience as a metaphor for the condition of mortality, with all its contradictions", whereas the *Odyssey* transforms the tradition of Odysseus' leaving home for foreign lands into a story of homecoming.[13] This strongly suggests that Homer and the Cyclic epics cannot be placed on one plane as if they were variations on the same theme. By the very fact of reinterpreting the other versions of the Trojan saga, Homer signalizes their subordinate status as regards his own poems and privileges the version that he offers.

At some point in the Archaic Age, Homer's narrative of the Trojan War acquired the extraordinary status of the only narrative worthy of being told at all. In the *Odyssey*, where the Trojan War is already viewed as belonging to the heroic past, "The Doom of the Achaeans and Troy" engages everybody's attention, including that of the gods themselves. The inhabitants of Ithaca, of Phaeacia, of the Island of Aeolia, and even Odysseus himself, are eager to listen to songs and stories about the Trojan War (which, in fact, are the

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[11] Nestor *Od.* 3. 103-200; 253-312; Menelaus 4. 351-585; Agamemnon 11. 404-34; Phemius' song 1. 325-27; cf. Allen 108-109.

[12] *Poet.* 1451a 23-30; 1459a 30-b7.

[13] Slatkin, *The Power of Thetis*, 39; I. Malkin, *The Returns of Odysseus. Colonization and Ethnicity* (Berkeley, 1998), 120-55. Cf. M. Finkelberg, "Homer and the Bottomless Well of the Past", *Scripta Classica Israelica* 21 (2002), 243-50 (a review article of Malkin, *The Returns of Odysseus*).

only songs and stories they listen to), and this is the very subject that is included in the Sirens' promise of bestowing a knowledge greater than human—a promise nobody can resist. That only a savage like the Cyclops can remain ignorant of the Trojan War, as well as of any other mark of human civilization, shows clearly enough that acquaintance with the Trojan saga—and, by implication, with the poems of Homer—was envisaged as a cultural code that united the civilized world.[14]

To sum up, the relationship between Homer and the Trojan tradition is anything but symmetrical. Homer both reshapes the tradition he inherited and adapts it to his own agenda, which as a rule do not concur with those of his sources. This would mean that, rather than offering just another variant of the common tradition, Homer turns earlier traditions about the Trojan war and the Returns into raw material for his poems. That he is nevertheless anxious to show his awareness of his sources indicates that he meant the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* not simply to absorb the other traditions but to supersede them, thus claiming for them the unique status of metaepics.[15] Our next task is to see why this claim became universally accepted.

2. *The Shaping of Collective Memory*

The political and dialectal maps of historic Greece are both the direct outcome of two events that took place at the end of the second—the beginning of the first millennium B.C.E.: the emergence of the Dorians and other northwestern tribes in central Greece and the Peloponnese, and the mass migration of the Mycenaean population to the Aegean shore of Asia Minor and other parts of the Mediterranean. Neither of these events makes an appearance worthy of mention in the Homeric poems.[16] This is not to say that they were not dealt with in the Greek epic tradition as a whole. Thus, it is almost certain that

[14] *Od.* 12.183-93 (the Sirens); 9. 258-80 (the Cyclops). Cf. Finkelberg, *The Birth of Literary Fiction*, 73-74, 95-98; D. Clay, "The Archaeology of the Temple of Juno in Carthage", *Classical Philology* 83 (1988), 195-205.

[15] Cf. R. Martin, "Telemachus and the Last Hero Song", in H. M. Roisman and J. Roisman, eds., "Essays on Homeric Epic", *Colby Quarterly* 29 (1993), 222-40; K. Dowden, "Homer's Sense of Text", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 116 (1996), 47-61; Finkelberg, *The Birth of Literary Fiction*, 154-55. I discuss this issue in greater detail in M. Finkelberg, "The Sources of *Iliad* 7", in H.M. Roisman and J. Roisman, eds., "Essays on Homeric Epic", *Colby Quarterly* 38 (2002), 151-61.

[16] The only explicit reference to the Dorians is *Od.* 19.177.

the lost traditional epics *Aegimius* (often ascribed to Hesiod) and *Naupactia* dealt with the coming of the Dorians, whereas the migration to Asia Minor was certainly treated in the lost epic poem *Melampodia*, also ascribed to Hesiod. And, judging by the evidence of literary sources, the Dorian saga of the "Return of the Children of Hercules" gave the Dorians' own distinctive version of the population movements that shook Greece at the end of the Bronze Age.[17] None of these became part of the mainstream epic tradition, which sees the Trojan War as the main if not the only factor that brought about the end of the Heroic Age. Yet, the very fact that such alternative versions of the end of the Heroic Age did exist strongly suggests that Homer's silence regarding the coming of the Dorians and the subsequent migrations to the East was a matter of deliberate choice.

This is not to say that Homer simply ignored the Dorians. Consider for example the map of Argos as drawn in the Homeric Catalogue of Ships:

> And those who lived in Argos and walled Tiryns, in Hermione and Asine which lie on a deep bay, in Troizen and Eïones and Epidaurus rich in vineyards, and in Aegina and Mases, sons of the Achaeans: these were led by Diomedes, master of the war-cry, and Sthenelus, dear son of the famous Kapaneus. . . . but the commander of all was Diomedes, master of the war-cry.[18]

The Argos of Diomedes is presented in the Homeric Catalogue as spreading over the entire territory of northeastern Peloponnese and the island of Aegina. This picture is boldly anachronistic, in that it corresponds to what were thought to have been the original domains of Dorian Argos (the so-called "lot of Temenus"), presumably restored under king Pheidon in the seventh century B.C.E.[19] As a result, Heroic Age Argos emerges in Homer as if it had already possessed the political and tribal structure that was associated with it in the Archaic period.

Not only does the Argos of Diomedes reflect the Dorian Argos

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[17] On the Dorian charter myth see esp. I. Malkin, *Myth and Territory in the Spartan Mediterranean* (Cambridge, 1994), 33-45

[18] *Il.* 2.559-567. Tr. M. Hammond.

[19] Str. 8.3.33, p. 358; cf N.G. Hammond in *Cambridge Ancient History* (3rd ed.) 2.2 (1975), 694-5, and *Cambridge Ancient History* (2nd ed.) 3.1 (1982), 715. The pseudo-Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* gives a different and apparently a more consistent picture of the domains of Heroic Age Argos; see M. Finkelberg, "Ajax's Entry in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*", *Classical Quarterly* 38 (1988), 38-41.

but the Sparta of Menelaus fairly well corresponds to the Dorian Sparta. However, such geographical entities as Argos or Sparta do not properly belong to the Heroic Age. The centres of the relevant territories were Mycenae, Tiryns, and Amyclae, all of them abundantly represented in Greek legend. Characteristically, Mycenae is the only one of the three whose treatment is historically consistent, in that it was made the capital of the antiquarian kingdom of Agamemnon. Tiryns and Amyclae, whose functions as the administrative and cult centers of pre-Dorian Greece were well known to the Greeks of the Archaic period, were replaced by the more up-to-date Argos and Sparta and, accordingly, marginalized. That is to say, although it was a matter of common knowledge that the Dorians were post-Mycenaean newcomers into the Peloponnese, their descendants could nevertheless easily locate themselves on the map of Heroic Greece that Homer supplied. This suggests that in drawing his picture of Heroic Greece Homer systematically updated the past in such a way that it might fit the present. The most likely motive underlying this practice seems to have been the need to represent the Greece of the Heroic Age as a harmonious Panhellenic whole, already containing the political and ethnic elements present in the Archaic period. Evidently, this could only be done by ignoring the historical facts of the coming of the Dorians and the mass emigration to Asia Minor that it triggered, and by marginalizing the alternative traditions that accounted for those events.

It is difficult to tell what kind of authority, if any, could have lain behind the strategy of updating the past in accordance with the contemporary agenda that Homer adopted. The only thing that can be said with a considerable degree of certainty is that this strategy cannot be separated from large-scale developments that took place at the same period and that are sometimes given the collective name "the eighth-century Renaissance". The Panhellenic cult of Zeus and other Olympians; the Olympian games and other Panhellenic festivals in which these cults found their fullest expression; the free-standing temple with the cult statue of an Olympian deity within it; the canonic epics of Homer and Hesiod celebrating these very deities;[20] the emergence of the hero-cult, and above all the rise of the city-

[20] It is noteworthy that, according to some sources, Homer and Hesiod were directly responsible for the introduction of the mythological stories relating to the Olympian gods, their domains of authority, and their very names. See Xenoph. 21 B 11 DK; Hdt. 2.53.

state itself—all these seem inextricably connected with each other.

The emergence of the hero-cult is especially pertinent to the present discussion. This characteristically Greek cult, closely connected with the cult of the dead, consisted in the worship of personages of Greek legend—many of them the same heroes who were celebrated in the poems of Homer and Hesiod—performed at ancient tombs which were supposed to be their burial places. This remarkable coincidence between the traditional poetry on the one hand and the new religious practice on the other has even given rise to the suggestion that the hero-cult developed under the direct influence of the epic tradition, above all of Homer. But it is perhaps more likely that both expressed the same tendency towards establishing a continuity between prehistoric and historic Greece that became dominant at that period.[21]

Since at least 700 B.C.E. the Dorians of Sparta celebrated a cult of Menelaus, who was generally believed to have been king of Sparta at the time of the Trojan War. Some hundred years later, the Spartans made a considerable effort to locate and to bring to their city the bones of Menelaus' son-in-law Orestes, whom they also made the recipient of a hero-cult. For the Spartans, Orestes was first and foremost king of Amyclae, which had by then become part of their territory. But it was the same Orestes who was universally believed to have been the last pre-Dorian ruler of what was to become the territory of Sparta and whose descendants led the Achaeans, whom the Dorians expelled from their lands, to what was to become the district of Achaea in the northern Peloponnese and eventually to Asia Minor.[22] The Spartans' identification with Menelaus and Orestes,

[21] See J.N. Coldstream, "Hero-Cults in the Age of Homer", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 96 (1976), 8-17; F. De Polignac, *Cults, Territory, and the Origins of the Greek City-State*, Tr. J. Lloyd (Chicago 1995; French edition 1984) 128-49; J. Whitley, "Early States and Hero Cults: a re-appraisal", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 108 (1988), 173-82; I. Morris, "Tomb Cult and the 'Greek renaissance': the past in the present in the 8th century B.C.E.", *Antiquity* 62 (1988), 750-61.

[22] Polybius, himself an Achaean, adduces what was in all probability the standard Achaean version of the events: 'The state of the Achaean nation . . . may be summarized as follows. Their first king was Tisamenos, the son of Orestes, who had been expelled from Sparta on the return of the Heraclidae, and who then proceeded to occupy Achaea.' Polyb. 2.41; cf. Str. 8.7.1 p. 383; Paus. 7.1.2. In addition, the founders of the Aeolian colonies in Asia Minor claimed to be descendants of Orestes' son Penthilos, see Str. 9.2.3, p. 401, 9.2.5, p. 403; 13.1.3, p. 582; Paus. 2.18.6; 3.2.1; cf. 7.6.1-2.

the leaders of the population that they replaced, is consistent with the treatment of Sparta in the Homeric epics. Both clearly indicate the direction in which the updating of the past proceeded at this period.[23]

We have seen that Homer marginalized the epic traditions that offered alternative versions of the end of Mycenaean Greece. There is reason to suppose that at some later stage a similar thing happened both to the tradition represented in the Cyclic epics, which had also once been credited with Homeric authorship,[24] and to the traditional poetry associated with the name of Hesiod. Take for example the theme of the destruction of the Race of Heroes, prominent in the Hesiodic tradition as well as in the poems of the Cycle. According to these sources, the Heroic Age came to an end in two great wars, the Theban and the Trojan, which were especially designed by Zeus to put an end to the Race of Heroes.[25] Although Homer was also engaged in perpetuating the glorious memory of the Trojan War, the theme of the End of Heroes is conspicuously absent in his poems. As Ruth Scodel put it in an important article, "In Homer, the continuity of history from the heroes to the poet's contemporaries is complete."[26] It is clear that Homer's suppressing of the traditional myth of the destruction of the Race of Heroes was again part of a larger strategy purporting to transform the heroic past into one of the main factors in establishing the self-image of the new Greek civilization that replaced Mycenaean Greece at the beginning of the first millennium B.C.E. As a result, it became possible to mention Achilles and Brasidas, Nestor and Pericles in the same breath, as for example in Plato's *Symposium*, simply because they were seen as belonging to the same historical space.[27] Clearly, this could not have

[23] Malkin, *Myth and Territory*, 30, interprets the reburial of the bones of Orestes and other cases of the Spartans' appropriation of the pre-Dorian past as indicative of their 'political use of cult and myth vis-à-vis other Greeks'. Yet, the fact that the same practices are paralleled in the Homeric poems strongly suggests that there was a broad Panhellenic consensus in favour of crediting the Spartans with a Heroic Age past for the sake of their fuller integration into the body of the 'Hellenes'.

[24] Cf. G. Nagy, *Pindar's Homer. The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past* (Baltimore and London, 1990), 72-3.

[25] *Cypria* fr. 1 Bernabé; Hes. *Erga* 159-73; Hes. Fr. 204. 95-105 Merkelbach-West.

[26] R. Scodel, "The Achaean Wall and the Myth of Destruction", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 86 (1982), 35. Cf. B. Hainsworth, ed., *The Iliad: A Commentary*. Vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1993), 320; Slatkin, *The Power of Thetis*, 121.

[27] Pl. *Symp.* 221.

been done had the Race of Heroes continued to be envisaged, as in Hesiod and the Cycle, as an extinct race having nothing in common with the degenerate Iron Race of the present.[28]

Let me emphasize again that we have no reason to doubt that Homer and his contemporaries were well aware that the Dorians were not part of the Heroic Age milieu or that the population of historic Greece was distinctly heterogeneous.[29] Yet this awareness did not prevent them from ignoring such facts or moulding them in accordance with their own agenda. As far as I can see, this agenda consisted in answering the need of creating, beyond the differences dividing the heterogeneous tribes that settled in Greece at the beginning of the first millennium B.C.E., the overarching identity of "Hellenes". By modifying the inherited picture of the heroic past, the new Greek civilization not only acquired the unity it initially lacked but also established a continuity between the Greece of the Heroic Age and historical Greece, in that the former was envisaged as already possessed of the ethnic and political structure characteristic of the latter. It is reasonable to suppose that this attitude to the past issued from a cultural strategy which, to borrow the expression used by the biblical scholar Nadav Naaman, may be defined as "the shaping of collective memory".[30] The Homeric poems were both a by-product of this strategy and its most effective vehicle. The picture of prehistoric Greece that they promulgated became the standard if not the only account of their past that the later Greeks could imagine. So much so that, in his discussion of the Homeric Catalogue of Ships, even so critically minded an historian as Thucydides

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[28] See esp. Hes. *Erga* 174-78: 'Thereafter, would that I were not among the men of the fifth generation, but either had died before or been born afterwards. For now truly is a race of iron, and men never rest from labour and sorrow by day, and from perishing by night; and the gods shall lay sore trouble upon them.' Tr. H. G. Evelyn-White.

[29] Some regions, such as Attica, Arcadia, or Achaea, have never become Dorian, whereas in others the Dorians settled side by side with the former inhabitants to form a symbiosis which often lasted till the end of antiquity. The non-Dorian tribe of Argos, the Hyrnathioi, immediately comes to mind in this connection, but a considerable 'Achaean' population was also present in Triphylia, formally part of Dorian Messenia, and in Laconia itself, where several cities, most notably Amyclae, were captured from 'Achaeans' as late as the beginning of the Archaic Age.

[30] N. Na'aman, "Historiography, the Shaping of Collective Memory, and the Creation of Historical Consciousness in the People of Israel at the End of the First Temple Period", *Ziyon*, 1996, 449-72 [Hebrew]. See also N. Na'aman, *The Past that Shapes the Present: The Creation of Biblical Historiography in the Late First Temple Period* (Jerusalem, 2002) [Hebrew].

took it for granted that the Trojan War was the first genuinely Panhellenic enterprise in Greek history.[31]

3. *The* Iliad *and the Polis*

The change of attitude towards the heroic past could of course not be achieved simply by updating the traditional geography or avoiding reference to the destruction of the Race of Heroes. As far as Homer is concerned, the speeches were the main vehicle in carrying his message. Since the traditional subjects dealing with the Heroic Age were not only universally known but also accepted as historical truth, no poet could permit himself to mould them in a free and independent way: the Trojan War will end with the Trojan rather than the Achaean defeat, Hector will be killed by Achilles and not vice versa, and so on. This is why dissonances between the plot of the poems and what is expressed in the speeches are so important: while the plot is fixed in tradition, the content of the speeches is not; accordingly, the speeches are amenable to expressing the poet's reaction to what he had received from his tradition.[32]

The result may be that the same episode is treated from two perspectives, the traditional and the poet's own. Thus, at *Iliad* 14.364-9 the disguised Poseidon says in his exhortation to the heavily pressed Greeks: "Argives, are we once more to yield the victory to Hector, son of Priam, so he can take our ships and win glory for himself? That is what he thinks and prays, because Achilles is staying back by the hollow ships in his heart's anger. But we will not feel his loss too strongly, if the rest of us stir ourselves to support each other (ἀμυνέμεν ἀλλήλοισιν)." The entire concept of the *Iliad* is based on the premiss that without Achilles' individual contribution Achaean victory is impossible, and the weight the poem places on the single combats of other Achaean leaders shows that this is indeed the prevailing attitude. Poseidon's words, in that they give equal weight to the value of the ordinary soldiers' mutual effort, contradict this attitude, and this is why they leave no trace on the development of the action. But the same idea of the importance of mutual effort

[31] Thuc. 1.3.

[32] Cf. W. Nicolai, "Rezeptionssteurung in der Ilias", *Philologus* 127, 1983, 1-12, on the distinction between the 'affirmative' and the 'kritische Wirkungsabsicht' in the *Iliad*.

occasionally emerges again, as for example in a description of the Greek army on the march at the beginning of *Iliad* 3: "But the Achaeans came on in silence, breathing boldness, their hearts intent on supporting each other (ἀλεξέμεν ἀλλήλοισον)." This passage, one of the few Homeric passages commended by Plato in the *Republic*, is closer to the spirit of the hoplite phalanx as celebrated in the poems of Tyrtaeus (characteristically, this is how it was taken by the scholiast) than to the standard behaviour of the Homeric warrior.[33]

The poems of Hesiod contain very little direct speech, and we can actually be sure that the same was true of the poems of the Epic Cycle. In his discussion of epic poetry in *Poetics* 24, Aristotle writes:

> Homer, admirable in all respects, has the special merit of being the only poet who rightly appreciates the part he should take himself. The poet should speak as little as possible in his own person, for it is not this that makes him an imitator (*mimêtês*). Other poets appear themselves upon the scene throughout, and imitate but little and rarely. Homer, after a few prefatory words, at once brings in a man, or woman, or other personage; none of them wanting in characteristic qualities, but each with a character of his own.

Aristotle's remark that poets other than Homer are very rarely engaged in mimesis can only refer to the composers of other epics, which indicates that the narratives of the latter contained practically no direct speech.[34] This would mean, as simply as possible, that the Cyclic poets had very little to add to the traditional material they inherited. Nothing could provide a sharper contrast to Homer, in whose poems speeches constitute about two thirds of the entire text, serving the main means of characterization and providing, so to speak, a running commentary on the plot. I shall use the *Iliad* as an example.[35]

There is little doubt that the *Iliad* originated in the cultural and political milieu of aristocratic chiefdoms which preceded the formation of the city-state. Contrary to the system of values established with the rise of the polis, according to which the distribution of honour should follow personal achievement, the distribution of

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[33] *Il.* 14. 364-69; 3. 8-9. Cf. Pl. *Rep.* 389e.

[34] *Poet.* 1460a 5-11. Cf. S. Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (London, 1986), 126; Finkelberg, *The Birth of Literary Fiction*, 155-56.

[35] I treat the topic discussed in this and the following section also in M. Finkelberg, "Canon-Replacement Versus Canon-Appropriation: The Case of Homer", forthcoming in H. Vastinphout and G. Dorleijn, eds., *Structure, Function and Dynamics of Cultural Repertories* (Leuven).

honour in pre-city-state society corresponded to a person's social status, which was determined by superiority in birth and wealth. Nowhere is this shown more clearly than in the description of the athletic contests held by Achilles at Patroclus' tomb in *Iliad* 23. In the chariot race, Eumelus who lost the competition is offered the second prize because he is "the best", *aristos*, and Menelaus who came third is again offered the second prize on exactly the same grounds, while in the throwing of the spear Agamemnon receives the first prize without even participating in the contest, only because he is *aristos* and superior to all others.[36] "After all," Moses Finley wrote of Homeric society, "the basic values of the society were given, predetermined, and so were a man's place in the society and the privileges and duties that followed from his status".[37] No wonder, therefore, that the chief motivation behind the Homeric warriors' behaviour was the drive to meet the expectations that ensued from their status. Together with risking one's life in war, these expectations also embraced assistance to and the protection of those to whom the person was tied by the mutual obligations of military alliance, guest-friendship, or vassal relations.[38]

It is however highly symptomatic that the lack of social equality and insufficient recognition of personal merit which directly result from the aristocratic ethos prevailing in the *Iliad* are questioned in the body of the *Iliad* itself. This can be seen first of all in Homer's treatment of the central issue of the poem, the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon. "I have sacked twelve of men's cities from my ships", Achilles says bitterly in *Iliad* 9, "and I claim eleven more by land across the fertile Troad. From all of these I took many fine treasures, and every time I brought them all and gave to Agamemnon son of Atreus: and every time, back there by the fast ships he had never left, he would take them in, share out a few, and keep the most for himself."[39] Homer makes Achilles question the view of honour as bestowed automatically, according to status and birth, and pose the claim of merit as against the claim of rank. "Stay at home

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[36] *Il.* 23. 536-8, 586-96, 884-97.

[37] M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (2nd ed.), (Harmondsworth, 1978), 115.

[38] See A. A. Long, "Morals and Values in Homer", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 90 (1970), 123-26. On the values of Greek aristocracy see esp. W. Donlan, *The Aristocratic Ideal in Ancient Greece*, (Wauconda, Illinois [repr. of Coronado Press, 1980], 1999).

[39] *Il.* 9. 328-33.

or fight your hardest—your share will be the same. Coward and hero are given equal honour", Achilles says elsewhere in the same speech. It is not surprising, therefore, that in his *Politics* Aristotle adduces these Homeric lines in support of the argument that the distribution of honour must be proportionate to one's contribution to the well-being of the community.[40]

But Homer's criticism of aristocratic values goes even further. The main conflict of the *Iliad* is the conflict of honour. It was because of considerations of honour which went against the common interest that Agamemnon took Briseis from Achilles and it was, again, considerations of honour that caused Achilles to withdraw from participation in the Trojan campaign from the moment that his prize of honour, *geras*, was taken from him. The issue of honour is thus woven into the core of the *Iliad* plot. At the same time, it would be wrong to say that the poet of the *Iliad* sides unambiguously with the considerations of personal honour and prestige which move his heroes and the plot of his poem. As I have argued elsewhere, in his treatment of the theme of Achilles' wrath in *Iliad* 11, 16, and 18 Homer criticizes aristocratic individualism and its self-serving value of personal honour, *timê*, and re-interprets the inherited plot of the Iliad in the spirit of the city-state value of *aretê*, personal excellence which benefits the entire community.[41] When in *Iliad* 11 Nestor says that Achilles' abstention from participating in the war will result in that he "will be the only one to profit from his excellence (οἷος τῆς αρετῆς ἀπονήσεται)", or when in *Iliad* 16 Patroclus asks Achilles "what will any other man, even yet to be born, profit from you (τί σευ ἄλλος ὀνήσεται ὀψίγονός περ), if you do not save the Argives from shameful destruction?", and, finally, when in *Iliad* 18 Achilles himself comes to the conclusion that his chosen line of behaviour has resulted in that, instead of being "a saving light to Patroclus or many other companions", he has become "a useless burden on the earth", the concept underlying all these utterances is that by keeping his excellence, *aretê*, to himself Achilles has actually invalidated it and thus almost annihilated his own worth as "the best of the Achaeans".[42]

There can be no doubt that this was not the message which originally informed the poem. Consider again Achilles' words of self-reproach

[40] *Il.* 9. 318-19; Ar. *Pol.* 1267a1-2.

[41] M. Finkelberg, "*Timê* and *Aretê* in Homer", *Classical Quarterly* 48 (1998), 15-28.

[42] *Il.* 11. 762-4, 16. 29-32, 18. 98-106.

in *Iliad* 18: "I have not been a saving light to Patroclus or my many other companions who have been brought down by godlike Hector, but sit here by the ships, a useless burden on the earth." Whereas Achilles' obligations to Patroclus, Achilles' "own" man, are among those values which are seen in terms of the aristocratic code of honour, the very design of the *Iliad* shows that no such terms could originally have been applied to Achilles' attitude to the rest of the Greeks: an aristocratic chieftain is only responsible for his own men and owes nothing to the soldiers led by other chieftains. The clash between the individualistic values of the nobility and the communal values of the city-state produced by this and similar Homeric usages shows that the social perspective adopted in the *Iliad* is a double one.

In his *Reciprocity and Ritual* Richard Seaford defined the *Iliad* situation as Homer's "ideological contradiction", namely, that "aristocratic individualism is on the one hand vital to the community and on the other hand a danger to be controlled by the community". Seaford tends to see this contradiction as reflecting a transitional stage within a single society and thus allows for a degree of historicity in the Homeric poems as we have them; Kurt A. Raaflaub has recently expressed a similar opinion.[43] This, however, is by far not the only contradiction that can be found in the Homeric poems. As A. M. Snodgrass famously argued, the contradictions in Homer's depiction of social institutions cannot be resolved and should be interpreted to the effect that, rather than reflecting a concrete historical society, the Homeric poems offer an amalgam created as a result of centuries-long circulation in oral tradition.[44] Indeed, if we take into account that the language of Homer is a "Kunstsprache" never spoken by any living person; that his formulae for weapons exhibit an impossible combination of military technologies used at different historical periods, and that the same is true of his view of death and the afterlife,[45] we shall see that there is no reason why the situation of Homeric values should be any different.

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[43] R. Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual. Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* (Oxford, 1994), 5-6; K. A. Raalflaub, "Homeric Society", in I. Morris and B. Powell, *A New Companion to Homer* (Leiden,1997), 646-48.

[44] A. Snodgrass, "An Historical Homeric Society?", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 94 (1974), 114-25.

[45] Weapons: D. Gray, "Homeric Epithets for Thing", *Classical Quarterly* 41 (1947), 109-21, reprinted in G.S. Kirk, ed., *The Language and Background of Homer* (Cambridge, 1964), 55-67; death and afterlife: C. Sourvinou-Inwood, *'Reading' Greek Death to the End of the Classical Period* (Oxford, 1995), 12-3, 73-6, 89-92.

In so far as the pursuit of the communal values of the polis emerging in *Iliad* 11, 16, and 18 and the pursuit of the individualistic values of the aristocracy as found in the rest of the poem are mutually irreconcilable, they could not have been held as supreme values at one and the same time. In view of this, it seems wiser to admit that, more than reflecting the state of a concrete historical society, contradictions in Homer's account of values reflect the state of the Homeric text itself. We can suggest, therefore, that at some stage in their history the Homeric poems underwent a thorough reinterpretation which made them relevant to the city-state society. Owing to Homer's extensive use of direct speech, it became possible to incorporate this re-interpretation into the text of the poems without changing their plots. As a result, like the Bible and some other ancient corpora, Homer's became a manifold text, which carried within itself both the original message and its re-interpretation in the vein of later values.

We have seen that the need to consolidate the heterogeneous populations of historic Greece was the most likely reason why the myth of the Heroic Age as delivered by Homer became the foundation myth of the new Greek civilization that replaced Mycenaean Greece at the beginning of the first millennium B.C.E. This however was far from the only function that this myth fulfilled. Greek civilization, perhaps for the first time in history, created a civic society whose ideal of man was not identical to that proposed by religion or philosophy. The Greek concept of human excellence, *aretê*, which embodied this ideal, played a central role in the poems of Homer.[46] No wonder, therefore, that for generations of Greeks the world of Homer became a timeless model against which their own lives were enacted. This is why Plato's Socrates, for example, found it appropriate to account for his position at his trial by comparing his situation with that of Achilles in *Iliad* 18.[47] There was no need for Socrates to embark

[46] For the *Odyssey* version of the same ideal see M. Finkelberg, "Odysseus and the Genus 'Hero'", *Greece and Rome* 42 (1995), 1-14.

[47] Pl. *Ap.* 28cd: 'He [Achilles], if you remember, made light of danger in comparison with incurring disgrace when his goddess mother warned him, eager as he was to kill Hector, you will die yourself—"Next after Hector is thy fate prepared." When he heard this warning, he made light of his death and danger, being much more afraid of living as an unworthy man and of failing to avenge his friends. "Let me die forthwith," said he, "when I have requited the villain, rather than remain here by the beaked ships to be mocked, a burden on the ground." Do you suppose that he gave a thought to death and danger?' Tr. H. Tredennick, with slight changes.

on a lengthy argument in order to explain why he preferred death to exile. The example of Achilles brought his message home with an efficacy that no argument could ever equal.

4. *The Bible of the Greeks*

The codification of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in Athens of the sixth century B.C.E. granted the Athenian state a monopoly over the standard text of Homer. The Homeric poems began to be recited at the prestigious Panathenaic festival, which was among the central events of the public life of the city and of the whole of Greece.[48] They also became the basis of elementary education, to be memorized at schools all over the Greek world. This is why the history of the Homeric poems after their fixation in writing is not simply a history of a written text but that of a written text highly privileged in the civilization to which it belonged. In that, its status is closer to the status of the Bible than to that of other works of literature created in ancient Greece.[49]

Needless to say, the Greek world continued to change also after the codification of Homer. The beliefs and values that informed the Homeric poems altered considerably in the course of time. The Homeric religion especially, with its all too human-like and human behaving gods, soon enough began to be felt inadequate by many. Already in the sixth century B.C.E. Xenophanes accused Homer and Hesiod of having attributed to the gods "everything that is a shame and reproach among men",[50] and Plato's attack on Homer in the *Republic* was very much in the same vein. Nevertheless, in the entire history of Homeric reception, Plato seems to have been the only one who actually recommended systematic censoring of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and even replacing them with hymns to the gods and the praises of good men, which alone would suit the educational reforms

[48] While some scholars connect the standardization of the Homeric text with the tradition of the so-called Pisistratean recension, that is, the codification of the Homeric poems in sixth-century Athens, others place it much earlier, in eighth-century Ionia. At the same time, all these scholars share the contention that Athens of the sixth century B.C.E. played a central role in the transmission of the text of Homer.

[49] Cf. Finkelberg, "The *Cypria*, the *Iliad*, and the Problem of Multiformity", 11.

[50] Xenoph. 21 B 11 DK (cf. also 21 B 1. 19-23).

he proposed in the *Republic*.[51] It was by interpreting the standard text of the poems rather than by interfering with it that Homer's adaptation to changing circumstances normally proceeded.[52] To borrow the terms introduced by Moshe Halbertal, "textual closure" of the Homeric corpus was accompanied by "hermeneutical openness" towards it—a sure sign of the canonical status that the text of Homer had acquired.[53]

As early as the end of the sixth century B.C.E., Theagenes of Rhegium for the first time applied the method of allegorical interpretation to the Homeric religion. As far as we can judge, Theagenes approached the battle of gods, the Theomachy of *Iliad* 20 and 21, in terms of the conflict of physical and cosmic elements. In the fifth century, Metrodorus of Lampsacus interpreted the whole of the *Iliad* in the vein of the cosmological doctrine of the philosopher Anaxagoras.[54] The allegorical approach was also favoured by the early Stoics: their chief purpose seems to have been the identification of the gods of Homer and Hesiod with cosmic elements and forces. The Neoplatonist and Neopythagorean allegorization of Homer, which explicitly aimed at defending the poet against Plato's criticisms, began to appear in the first centuries C.E. and reached a climax in the fifth century, in the work of Proclus.[55]

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[51] *Rep.* 607a, 398d-400d. Note, however, that, according to Richard Janko, it is not out of the question that Zenodotus (3rd century B.C.E.), tried to apply Plato's principles in his editorial work; see R. Janko (ed.), *The Iliad: A Commentary*. Vol. IV (Cambridge), 23.

[52] According to Plutarch, the great Alexandrian scholar Aristarchus (2nd century B.C.E.) deleted 'out of fear' four lines from Phoenix's speech in *Iliad* 9 (458-61), which described how Phoenix considered killing his father in revenge for the curse put on him. Yet, as far as we know, Aristarchus was mainly preoccupied with the *numerus versuum*, working hard on purging the text of Homer from meaningless repetitions that had accumulated in the course of time, and was not in the habit of deleting Homeric lines on account of their content. When he wanted to cast doubt on a line or a passage he simply athetized them (cf. R. Lamberton, "Homer in Antiquity", in Morris and Powell, *A New Companion to Homer*, 44). This is why I find it more plausible that, as Stephanie West argued in a recent article, the lines in question, known to us only from Plutarch's quotations, should rather be taken as belonging to one of the Cyclic poems. See S. West, "Phoenix's Antecedents: A Note on *Iliad* 9", *Scripta Classica Israelica* 20 (2001), 1-15.

[53] M. Halbertal, *People of the Book. Canon, Meaning, and Authority* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), 32-40, esp. 32-33: 'Canonizing a text results in increased flexibility in its interpretation, such as the use of complex hermeneutical devices of accomodation to yield the best possible reading.'

[54] D-K 8.2; 59 A 1 par. 11. Cf. N. Richardson, "Homer and His Ancient Critics", in N. Richardson, ed., *The Iliad: A Commentary*. Vol. VI (Cambridge, 1993), 27-29.

[55] See further R. Lamberton, "The Neoplatonists and the Spiritualization of

Another widespread method of interpretation, closely connected with allegory but not identical with it, was to update Homer by reading into his text the scientific and practical knowledge that accumulated in later epochs, first and foremost after the conquests of Alexander. The Stoics especially were notorious for their attempts to make Homer into an advanced astronomer and geographer. In his readings of Homer, a contemporary of Aristarchus and founder of the Pergamene school, Crates of Mallos, ascribed to the Poet the knowledge of a spherical earth and universe, of the arctic circle and regions of the Far North, of the Atlantic ocean and the western lands in general, and so on, whereas Strabo tried to adjust the geographical horizons of Augustan Rome to Homer's picture of the world. Strabo's polemics with Eratosthenes and his followers in Book 7 of the *Geography* is a good example of the Stoic exegesis of Homer. Eratosthenes claimed, sensibly enough, that although Homer knew Greece fairly well, he was not acquainted with lands and peoples far away from it. Homer's failure to mention the Scythians served as a conspicuous example of his geographical incompetence. In his defense of Homer, Strabo seeks to rehabilitate the Poet by arguing that the fabulous tribes of Hippemolgi, "mare-milkers", and Galactophagi, "curd-eaters", could be none other than the Scythians in poetic disguise.[56]

Moral and values were perhaps even more difficult to adjust than religion and science. We have seen that before being codified the Homeric poems were brought into correspondence with the values of the city-state, above all the communal value of *aretê*. This guaranteed their relevance to city-state society at least till the time of Aristotle, whose treatment of *aretê* still does not differ essentially from what we find in Homer.[57] Yet the ethical theories of the Hellenistic Age no longer addressed the traditional city-state society. As Joseph M. Bryant puts it, "The retreat from Polis-citizen ideals . . . occurred along all philosophical fronts during the Hellenistic period, as the Cynics, Cyrenaics, Skeptics, Epicureans, and Stoics each sought to distance the well-being of the individual from the collapsing Polis framework and to detach *aretê*, or "virtue", from its former dependence on communal service through performance in the roles of warrior and

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Homer", in R. Lamberton and J.J. Keaney, *Homer's Ancient Readers. The Hermeneutic of Greek Epic's Earliest Exegetes* (Princeton, 1992), 115-33.

[56] Str. 7.3.6-10, pp. 298-303. On Strabo and Homer see now D. Dueck, *Strabo of Amasia. A Greek Man of Letters in Augustan Rome* (London, 2000), 31-40.

[57] See Finkelberg, "*Timê* and *Aretê* in Homer", 23-24.

self-governing citizen."[58] This is why Homer's words "Zeus increases and diminishes man's *aretê*"[59] were found inappropriate by Plutarch, who approached them from the standpoint of the second century C.E. In his treatise *How the Young Man Should Study Poetry* Plutarch wrote:

> Particular attention must be paid to the other words also, when their signification is shifted about and changed by the poets according to various circumstances. An example is the word *aretê*. For inasmuch as *aretê* not only renders men sensible, honest, and upright in actions and words, but also often enough secures for them repute and influence (δόξας . . . καί δυνάμεις), the poets, following this notion, make good repute and influence to be *aretê*. . . But when . . . in his reading, he finds this line, "Zeus increases and diminishes man's *aretê*," . . . let him consider that the poet has employed *aretê* instead of repute, or influence, or good fortune, or the like.[60]

Plutarch's treatise deserves our special attention also because it reveals some of the actual methods of guiding students towards what was envisaged by their tutors as the appropriate reading of a given Homeric passage. Thus, he suggests that where Homer's moral judgment is not made clear enough, "a distinction is to be drawn by directing the young man's attention in some such manner as the following":

> If, on the one hand, Nausicaa, after merely looking at a strange man, Odysseus, and experiencing Calypso's emotions (πάθος) toward him, being, as she was, a wanton [child] (τρυφῶσα) and at the age for marriage, utters such foolish words to her maid-servants, "If only such a man as this might come to be called my husband" [*Od.* 6. 244], then are her boldness and lack of restraint (το θράσος ... καὶ τὴν ἀκολασίαν) to be blamed. But if, on the other hand, she sees into the character (το ἦθος) of the man from his words, and marvels at his conversation, so full of good sense ... then it is quite right to admire her.[61]

According to the thorough treatment of the Homeric poems as the ultimate source of all knowledge in the anonymous *Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer*, which was once believed to be written by Plutarch, the fact that Homer often presents "wicked deeds" (πονηρὰ πράγματα)

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[58] J.M. Bryant, *Moral Codes and Social Structure in Ancient Greece. A Sociology of Greek Ethics from Homer to the Epicureans and Stoics* (Albany,1996), 461. Cf. also. M. Finkelberg, "Virtue and Circumstances: on the City-State Concept of *Arete*," *American Journal of Philology* 123 (2002), 35-49.

[59] *Il.* 20. 242.

[60] *Mor.* 24 C.E.; tr. F.C. Babbitt.

[61] *Mor.* 27 AB.

should not prevent us from attributing to him every virtue (πᾶσαν ἀρετήν), for owing to the mixture of good and evil that the Homeric poems offer, "the recognition and choice of the better becomes easier (ἡ τῶν ἀμείνων γνῶσις καὶ αἵρεσις ῥᾷων καθίσταται)."[62]

Contrary to what one might have expected, the transition to Christianity did not bring about a radical change in the Greek attitude to Homer. The Homeric poems and especially the *Iliad* retained their status of school texts till the very end of the Byzantine empire. What is perhaps even more surprising, no serious attempts were made to Christianize them.[63] Offered instead were, again, various methods of interpretation. This for example is how St Basil instructed Christian youths to read pagan texts so as to "accept from them only that which is useful":

> Whenever they [the poets] recount for you the deeds or words of good men, you ought to cherish and emulate these and try to be as far as possible like them; but when they treat of wicked men, you ought to avoid such imitation, stopping your ears no less than Odysseus did, according to what those same poets say, when he avoided the songs of the Sirens.

This meant don't admire the poets "when they depict men engaged in amours or drunken, or when they define happiness in terms of an over-abundant table of dissolute songs", and above all don't pay attention to them "when they narrate anything about the gods, and especially when they speak of them as being many, and these too not even in accord with one another". These reservations aside, Basil, just as generations of pagan interpreters before and Christian interpreters after him, simply took it for granted that "all Homer's poetry is an encomium of virtue" (πᾶσα μὲν ἡ ποίησις τῷ Ὁμήρῳ ἀρετῆς ἔστιν ἔπαινος) and therefore cannot be easily dispensed with.[64]

The capture of Constantinople in 1453 put an end to two and a half millennia of continuous development of Greek civilization. The epic tradition of the Trojan War, which gradually crystallized into the Homeric poems as we know them, accompanied this civilization through all the stages of its existence, thus fulfilling the function of what the sociology of culture calls "the dominant cultural arbitrary".[65]

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[62] *De Homero* 218, tr. J.J. Keaney and R. Lamberton.

[63] See R. Browning, "The Byzantines and Homer", in Lamberton and Keaney, *Homer's Ancient Readers*, 146-47.

[64] *Ad adulescentes* 1.5; 5.6; 4.1-2; 4.4. Tr. R.J. Deferrari and M.R.P. McGuire.

[65] Cf. P. Bourdieu and J.-C. Passeron. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (2nd ed.), tr. R. Nice (London 1990), 5-11.

These poems became the universally accepted frame of reference, in fact, the only frame of reference upon which the cultural language common to all those who belonged to the ancient Greek civilization was formed, and therefore an inseparable part of the identity of those who saw this civilization as their own.[66] This would not only explain why the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* outlived other epics that once circulated in the Greek tradition but also justify treating them on a par with other foundation texts known to us from the history of civilization.

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

TWO POINTS ABOUT RHAPSODES

HAYDEN PELLICCIA

In current controversies over the status of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* during the pre-Alexandrian era the conception of the rhapsode's role is crucial. The more fixed the tradition we posit, the more restricted will be the rhapsode's function, to the point at which he becomes little more than a play-back device. But if the tradition itself is still creative, then that creativity, which might be great or small to a near infinity of degrees, must chiefly reside in the rhapsode himself. Another consideration will be our conception of the overall culture in which the rhapsode functioned: some scholars hold that an "oral culture" is unlikely even to possess the concept of textual fixity, or of verbatim repetition.

The extreme ends of the spectrum of synchronic possibilities might be crudely laid out as follows:

(1a) "oral culture"	(1b) (uncertain on oral vs. literate culture question)
(2a) creative rhapsode, (re-) composing Iliadic and Odyssean poems (among others) in performance	(2b) uncreative rhapsode, performing memorized texts of poems verbatim
(3a) fluid, evolving Iliadic and Odyssean (etc.) poetic traditions	(3b) fixed *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

For the purposes of, e.g., an editor of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, the ultimate goal is going to be to formulate a position on (3), but that will entail taking a position on at least (2) as well. It is my impression that it is primarily if not solely advocates of the left-hand, (a)-style theories who regularly invoke arguments at the level of (1); the failure of supporters of (b)-theories to do so may reflect a thoughtless assumption that Greek culture was "like ours, until proven otherwise", or a reluctance to deduce concrete particulars from debatable global generalizations.

What the scheme above lays out are the synchronic possibilities. The diachronic picture may be quite different. For example, many advocates of right-hand, (b)-style theories are happy to posit the entire left-hand (a)-column as the pre-historic antecedent for the historical (b)-column situation; the divide between the two is the living space of Homer himself, and the key event of this interstitial moment is the dictation of the two poems.

Even as a synchronic account, however, the scheme cries out for greater nuance. "For a given time *x* both (2a) and (3b) cannot be the case" might look like a plausible synchronic claim. But what do we do about known traditions in which everyone involved—performers/expounders and audience—believe that they live in a (2b)/(3b) world, whereas our own standards of measurement align them with (2a)/(3a)?[1]

It is the complexity of even the known possibilities that justifies the scepticism about making concrete deductions from alleged universals of "oral culture" and the like. This leads us to our first point. Even if we leave aside the more extreme "oral culturalists" like Jack Goody, Eric Havelock, and Walter J. Ong, the idea that membership in an "oral culture" is *itself* a determinant of specific kinds of behavior can be felt at work in more moderate accounts; for example, Rosalind Thomas writes:

> Even as late as the fifth and fourth centuries, the concept of fixed, absolutely verbatim accuracy is surprisingly hard to find. It is notorious how variable the supposed copies of Athenian fifth-century (written) decrees can be. Authoritative texts of the great fifth-century tragedians were only produced in the second half of the fourth century under the auspices of Lycurgus, a clear attempt to fix the tragic texts in a period when greater respect for the written word—and fifth century literature—is visible in several areas. It is therefore hard to imagine that the presence of a written text of any poetry in the eighth century could have stifled the tradition of oral composition. How could a written text have such authority in a society which still relied almost over-

[1] I am not here referring only to phenomena like the flexible concept of "line for line, word for word" repetition held by Lord's Yugoslavian *guslars* (discussed below in the text), but also such situations as that described for the *Garuda Purana* in J. Parry, "The Brahamanical Tradition and the Technology of the Intellect" in: K. Schousboe and M. T. Larsen (eds.), *Literacy and Society* (Copenhagen 1989), 39-71, at 55-7. The "editorial" process brought to bear on this tradition, as described on 56 f., bears a striking resemblance to what Gregory Nagy has posited for Aristarchus and Homeric epic.

> whelmingly on oral communication and was to continue to do so for at least another three centuries?[2]

It seems fair to say that the author of this passage assumes that there exists some such thing as oral culture, such a thing as a less oral, more literate culture defined at least partially in contrast to the former ("a period when greater respect for the written word... is visible"), and such a thing as a transition between the two: the (supposed) fact of the transition itself provides the basis for an inference back to the concrete realities of the prior, oral-cultural era ("It is *therefore* hard to imagine that the presence of a written text of any poetry in the eighth century could have stifled the tradition of oral composition" [emphasis added]).

Thomas' argument here proceeds from "the concept of fixed, absolutely verbatim accuracy", which presumably could in theory at least be achieved independently of writing, to the first authoritative fixing of "the tragic texts" in the fourth century, and concludes with an *a fortiori* inference that in an even earlier period (the eighth century) fixed poetic texts could have exercised no significant normative influence on poetic performance. It is not entirely clear if Thomas' extrapolation from fourth century tragic texts proceeds from an assumption that the process of text-fixing was monolithic, or if she cites it as the only significant evidence available. At any rate, her main premiss is the conviction that, down into the fourth century, evidence for "the concept of fixed, absolutely verbatim accuracy is surprisingly hard to find". But some evidence for the *practice* of "absolutely verbatim accuracy" may have been overlooked.

In his Sather lectures (published in 1985) John Herington made the following calculations about the known annual poetic performances in late 6th-century Athens:

> For each annual production of the City Dionysia from at least 508 onward, a total of 500 choristers will have been required for the ten competing dithyrambic choruses of boys; another 500 for the men's dithyrambic choruses; and an unknown number, but certainly not less than thirty-six, for the choruses of the competing tragedians.[3]
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> In the course of the fifth century the number of choristers required annually will have greatly increased. From about 486 B.C.E. as many as 120 for the comic choruses (for details, see [Pickard-Cambridge

[2] R. Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, 1992), 48.
[3] J. Herington, *Poetry into Drama* (Berkeley, 1985), 96.

> (1968)] 83 and 236). From about 440 B.C.E. we must figure in the tragic and comic choruses of the Lenaia festival ([Pickard-Cambridge (1968)] 125). By the end of the century there were also tribal [choral] contests at the Thargelia ([Pickard-Cambridge (1962)] p. 37), and dithyrambic performances of some kind in the Lesser Panathenaia ([Davison (1968) 33]).[4]

A point Herington did not make, since it was not relevant to his subject, is that *all* of these "choristers"—well over a 1000 of them even at the minimum figure—had to learn lengthy poems verbatim.[5] That is the irreducible fact that must be addressed by people taking positions like Thomas' quoted above: the performance of both dramatic and non-dramatic choral lyric demands from the performers perfect verbatim mastery of the texts (whether these texts are written or not).[6] To focus only on the non-dramatic choral lyric perfor-

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[4] Herington (1985), 252 n. 85. The bibliographical references in the quotations are to the following works: J. A. Davison, *From Archilochus to Pindar* (London, 1968); A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb, Tragedy, and Comedy*, second edition, revised by T. B. L. Webster (Oxford 1962); A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, second edition, revised by J. Gould and D. M. Lewis (Oxford, 1968). P. Wilson, *The Athenian Institution of the* Khoregia (Cambridge, 2000) 128 with n. 66, gives a total of 1165 for the mid-to-late 5th century City Dionysia alone (1000 dithyrambic, 120 comic, and 45 tragic [i.e., numbering the tragic chorus at 15]).

[5] Explicit evidence for the memorization of texts, especially poetic ones, is given in n. 31 below.

[6] The principle is succinctly stated by Pickard-Cambridge (1962), 137: "Improvised speeches can hardly have been choral". It has been persuasively argued in the past 15 years or so that epinician poems, long assumed to have been chorally sung, were in fact at least sometimes performed solo. My own view is that the epinician poets, knowing that an honorand's family would want to be able to reperform such a song again and again over many generations, in a variety of formats, as circumstances demanded or permitted, deliberately minimized internal indications committing the performance one way or another. But the new epinician solo-performance model might be suggested for the dithyrambic performances, also. For example, perhaps only one or two choristers sang, while the rest only danced. The question thus becomes, what is the evidence for non-epinician choral performance? Poetic passages that may or may not reflect the practices of ordinary Greek society are probably best left aside (e.g., Hesiod's phrase φωνῇ ὁμηρεῦσαι at *Th.* 39 seems to ascribe choral singing to the archetypal chorus of the muses; but this may represent an idealization). There remains strong evidence that the classical Athenian dithyrambic chorus sang chorally. First, the Peripatetic *Problemata* 918b13-29: οἱ διθύραμβοι, ἐπειδὴ μιμητικοὶ ἐγένοντο, οὐκέτι ἔχουσιν ἀντιστρόφους, πρότερον δὲ εἶχον. αἴτιον δὲ ὅτι τὸ παλαιὸν οἱ ἐλεύθεροι ἐχόρευον αὐτοί· πολλοὺς οὖν ἀγωνιστικῶς ᾄδειν χαλεπὸν ἦν, ὥστε ἐναρμόνια μέλη ἐνῆδον. μεταβάλλειν γάρ πολλὰς μεταβολὰς τῷ ἑνί ῥᾷον ἢ τοῖς πολλοῖς, καὶ τῷ ἀγωνιστῇ ἢ τοῖς τὸ ἦθος φυλάττουσιν. διὸ ἁπλούστερα ἐποίουν αὐτοῖς τὰ μέλη. ἡ δὲ ἀντίστροφος ἁπλοῦν·

mances—above all, the dithyrambic choruses of the City Dionysia, accounting for a full 1000 choristers per year—these are metrically complex[7] song-and-dance[8] routines that will have been performed with precision and accuracy, or not at all. An enormous amount of money and time was spent on training each tribe's two choruses to achieve this mastery, and the chorus members were all ordinary free citizens, and not professionals.[9] While repeat performers may have been fairly common among the adult choruses (though even here you could not continue very far into middle age, since the physical demands were too great),[10] it is in the nature of things that the make-up of the boy choruses changed rapidly as the years passed.[11]

The statistical implications of this last fact are worth exploring.

εἷς ῥυθμὸς γάρ ἐστι καὶ ἑνὶ μετρεῖται. Menander *frg.* 130. 1-4 *PCG* reveals the exceptions that prove the rule: ὥσπερ τῶν χορῶν | οὐ πάντες ᾄδουσ', ἀλλ' ἄφωνοι δύο τινές | ἢ τρεῖς παρεστήκασι πάντων ἔσχατοι | εἰς τὸν ἀριθμόν (on ἄφωνος here, see Wankel on Dem. 18. 191, where it is shown that the word is used of persons from whom something is expected to be heard). Pickard-Cambridge (1968), 241 f. said of this fragment that "it cannot be taken as certain that Menander is speaking of dramatic and not of dithyrambic choruses", since "[f]ifty good voices would be less easy to find than fifteen or twenty-four." On the other hand, it is hard to understand what positions in a circular chorus might be regarded as the ἔσχατοι; A. d'Angour, "How the Dithyramb Got Its Shape", *Classical Quarterly* 47 (1997), 331-351, at 342, has suggested that the circular chorus was invented by Lasus of Hermione for the specific purpose of improving singing performance. For non-theatrical practice, see Xen., *Hell.* 4. 7. 4, which describes an occasion upon which the encamped Spartan army sang a paean, and specifically says πάντες ὕμνησαν. (Cf. Aeschines 2. 162-3) The Arcadians described in Polybius 4. 20. 8-11 (quoted and discussed in n. 31 below) required *all* their male children to participate in choruses, and *all* of them to learn the canonical songs for that purpose—requirements certainly consistent with a practice of choral singing. (Cf. the passages from Plato, *Laws*, also cited in n. 31 below.)

[7] Apparently antistrophic in structure at least through the time of Pindar and Bacchylides; the New Musicians of the late 5th c. introduced astrophic dithyrambs. Cf. the passage from [Arist.] *Probl.* in the preceding note.

[8] Χορεία γε μὴν ὄρχησίς τε καὶ ᾠδὴ τὸ σύνολόν ἐστιν: Plato, *Laws* 654b3 f.

[9] In general, see Wilson (2000), ch. 2. D. M. MacDowell, "Athenian Laws about Choruses", in F. J. Fernández Nieto (ed.), *Symposion* (Cologne, 1989), 65-77, at 72-77, discusses the strenuous measures that were taken to ensure that no aliens or disenfranchised citizens participated.

[10] Plato, *Laws* 664d2-3 and 665b3-6. Cf. Dem. 21. 60.

[11] Cf. Herington (1985), 252 n. 85: "It is unlikely... that anyone would be called upon to sing among 500 *boy* dithyrambists on more than a couple of occasions" (emphasis in the original). When the speaker of Antiphon 6 describes how he went about recruiting his troupe of boy choristers for the Thargelia (6. 11) it certainly does not sound as if participation could be taken for granted (τὸν χορὸν συνέλεξα ὡς ἐδυνάμην ἄριστα, οὔτε ζημιώσας οὐδένα οὔτε ἐνέχυρα βίᾳ φέρων οὔτ' ἀπεχθανόμενος οὐδένι κτλ.).

If, for example, we assign a three-year limit to service as a boy-chorister, then, as a school of choristry, the City Dionysia's boys' dithyrambic contest will have been putting into the pipeline of the citizen population 500 graduates every three years (more than 500 if not every chorister performed for the full three years). This would imply that, in any given year, among the citizens between 20-60 years of age, there would be— potentially (i.e., barring death, exile, etc.)— 6666 who had previously served as boy choristers. For a citizen population of somewhere between 30,000 and 40,000, that is a very high proportion of persons with direct and intimate experience of the verbatim memorization of lengthy and complex poetic texts— between 17% and 22%. And this figure reflects the alumni of just one festival (see the second block of quotation from Herington above); the Thargelia, for example, required 250 boy choristers per year, and there is no guarantee that all these were taken from the number of those performing in the City Dionysia.

It seems strange in view of the above facts to deny to Athens a "concept of fixed, absolutely verbatim accuracy". It is hard to imagine how a *chorodidaskalos* could have succeeded in training a group of 50 boys without possessing a very clear version of such a concept, and without being able to communicate it effectively to his rambunctious (cf. Plato, *Laws* 664e3-5a3) charges as well.

In short, we have every reason to believe that this was a society that had an experience and expectation of the verbatim repetition of precisely fixed poetic texts.

But did this experience, and expectation, extend to include performances of epic—of what we know as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*? Unlike the festival dithyrambs, epic was not performed by large groups of citizen amateurs chosen and trained for the purpose. Epic performances were the province of professionals—the rhapsodes. The question is, what was it that the rhapsodes performed? If we think again of the dithyrambic choruses, we find that two functions, among others, are clearly distinguished: a poet, such as Simonides or Pindar or Bacchylides, composes the dithyrambic song, and choristers are trained to perform the singing and dancing of it. This is basically the composer/performer relationship as it continues to this day in, for example, the performance of the operas of Puccini. In the case of epic the right-hand side or b-group of theorists represented in our earlier scheme believe that precisely the same relationship pertains between the more-or-less fixed texts of the *Iliad* and *Odys-*

sey, i.e., the works of Homer, and the classical rhapsode. Scholars of this camp have often drawn a distinction between the *aoidos*, who is a master of the compositional techniques of the epic tradition, and creates in performance, as an artistic act, the poem eventually transcribed, and the rhapsode, who is uncreative, but is able to memorize and reproduce on demand the creations of the *aoidos*. After the poems created by an *aoidos*—e.g., "Homer"— were transcribed, on this view, the performance of them was basically entrusted to rhapsodes.

It is at just this joint of the argument that the idea of "oral culture" entered into the debate. Lord, in his epoch-making discussion of reperformance in *The Singer of Tales*, showed how the Yugoslavian *guslars* confidently claimed as a line-for-line, word-for-word repetition of another singer's song what was in fact, as they themselves seemed at another level to understand perfectly well, a substantially different re-creation of the song as their own. Lord concluded that for the *guslar* "'word for word and line for line' is simply an emphatic way of saying 'like'",[12] a pronouncement that stands as the ultimate progenitor of arguments like Thomas' above that oral cultures lack the concept of verbatim repetition. But in drawing this conclusion Lord raised an even more tantalizing possibility: the Yugoslavian model includes no uncreative memorizer analogous to the rhapsode defined, as above, in opposition to the *aoidos*; the preservers of the tradition are recreators of it—they are all in effect *aoidoi* themselves.[13]

And yet we have now seen that Athenian society of the 6th and 5th centuries differed from Lord's *guslars* on the all-crucial point:[14] in the performance of choral lyric "word for word and line for line" *cannot* simply be "an emphatic way of saying 'like'"; it means not just word-for-word perfect, but syllable-for-syllable perfect reproduction of the poet's text, and not just by one trained professional, but, in the case of the City Dionysia's dithyrambic choruses, by 50 amateurs.[15]

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[12] A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, 1960), 28.

[13] "[T]he picture that emerges is not really one of conflict between preserver of tradition and creative artist; it is rather one of the preservation of tradition by the constant re-creation of it": Lord (1960), 29.

[14] The principle extends to all communities in which citizen performance in choruses played a significant role, e.g., the 7th century Sparta of Alcman, etc. Which is to say, it extends throughout the Greek world.

[15] Choral singing by even greater numbers is certainly implied for, e.g., the Spartan *Gymnopaidiai*, as possibly also for the Arcadian choruses discussed by Polybius, *loc. cit.* in n. 31 below.

Still, the possibility remains that the processes of epic performance sharply differed from those of choral lyric, and that they more closely conformed to Lord's model. Let us examine the evidence that has been cited in support of this possibility. Here is Gregory Nagy's version of the theory:

> It is... from a diachronic perspective that we can appreciate the institution and even the concept of *rhapsoidoi* 'rhapsodes'... In my earlier work... I concluded: "It is simplistic and even misleading to contrast, as many have done, the creative *aoidos* ['singer'] with the 'reduplicating' *rhapsoidos*." In terms of my evolutionary model for the making of Homeric poetry, the figure of the rhapsode is the very embodiment of an evolving medium that continues, in the course of time, to put more and more limitations on the process of recomposition-in-performance. The succession of rhapsodes linking a Homer in the remote past with Homeric performers in the "present" of the historical period—as extrapolated from such accounts as Plato's *Ion*—is a *diachronic* reality. This reality can only be distorted by any attempt to arrive at a *synchronic* definition of rhapsodes, meant as some kind of foil for an idealized definition of Homer.[16]
>
> Homer is not just the creator of heroic song: he is also the culture hero of this song. To repeat the essence of what I said earlier: ancient Greek institutions tend to be traditionally retrojected, by the Greeks themselves, each to a proto-creator, a culture hero who gets credited with the sum total of a given cultural institution; and it was a common practice to attribute any major achievement of a society, even if this achievement may have been realized only through a lengthy period of social evolution, to the episodic and personal accomplishment of a culture hero who is pictured as having made his monumental contribution in an earlier era of the given society. So also with Homer: he is retrojected as the original genius of heroic song, the proto-poet whose poetry is reproduced by a continuous succession of performers. Conversely, each successive performer of Homer is one step further removed from this original genius: in Plato's *Ion*, for example, Socrates envisages the rhapsode Ion as the last in a chain of magnetized rings connected by the force of the original poet (533d-536d). In Plato's mythical image of Homer and his successors, the magnetic force of the poetic composition weakens with each successive performer. Pictured as the last, or at least the latest, replicant of Homer, Ion becomes the weakest of all replicants.[17]

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[16] G. Nagy, *Homeric Questions* (Austin, 1996), 82.

[17] Nagy, *Homeric Questions*, 92 f., repeating and modifying his earlier *Pindar's Homer* (Baltimore, 1990), 55 f. Cf. also his *Poetry as Performance* (Cambridge 1996), 60 f., "Homer and Plato at the Panathenaia: Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives" (*Contextualizing Classics*, ed. by T. Falkner, D. Konstan, and N. Rubin [Lanham, 1999], 127-155, at 134 and 148), and *Greek Mythology and Poetics* (Ithaca

Nagy's thesis is basically bipartite, contrasting a reality with a myth: (1) the reality is that there are singers who perform some songs, some Iliadic, some Odyssean, others other; they have no idea of a text, very little of fixation; they compose or recompose in performance. Over the years audience requirements in certain locales, for example—and above all—Athens at the Panathenaea in the 6th century, demand a certain uniformity. Other places and audiences are less restrictive. (2) Interacting and to some extent affecting this reality is a myth providing the song tradition with a first founder: Homer, who may never have existed, is invented and retrojected to the head of this tradition as its *prōtos heuretēs*; performers in this tradition are felt to be imitators of this founding figure—successive links in a performance chain ("as extrapolated from such accounts as Plato's *Ion*") leading back to Homer.

It is out of (2), the idea of a pristine original performer/performance, that there develops a notion of a pristine "text"; but this notion is a myth, not a reality, for the only thing there is that comes close to being a "text" are random and haphazard transcripts of the real thing, i.e., performances.

Obviously Nagy's account is designed to replace the theory that there existed texts of Homer (and a pretty clear idea of what a text of a poem means), and that there were rhapsodes who memorized and performed and interpreted these fixed texts. What is more, Nagy's bipartite, myth-vs.-reality model aims not only to supplant that theory, but to provide an explanation for how we were misled into thinking it the case: we were seduced by the myth; we thought there really was a Homer, and we anachronistically assumed that this also meant there was a text of his poems.

A problem for proponents of models like Nagy's here, developed from Lord's, is, what to do with Homer? For Greeks from very early on conceived of and represented Homer as like in kind to other poets, including the composers of memorized texts like those performed in the dithyrambic contests, and his poems as differing from those texts only in size and degree of artistic greatness. So it is a virtue of Nagy's theory that he provides an explanation of this fact, troublesome to his own claims: performers—rhapsodes—conceive of themselves as successive links in a performance tradition, and "Homer"

1990), ch. 3, especially 42. Nagy's claims about "the succession of rhapsodes" are endorsed in the reviews of M. D. Usher (*Classical Philology* 92 [1997], 382-7) and M. Nagler (*Classical Journal* 93 [1997-8], 197-202).

is simply an invention that has been "retrojected as the original genius of heroic song, the proto-poet whose poetry is reproduced by a continuous succession of performers".

It is evident that the concept of rhapsodic succession is key to the argument here: it is the device by which Nagy is able to explain away Homer's otherwise inconvenient presence on the scene. What is the evidence that Greeks and their rhapsodes possessed and used such a concept? Nagy says that he has "extrapolated" it from Plato's *Ion*,[18] where we are given "Plato's mythical image of Homer and his successors": "Socrates envisages the rhapsode Ion as the last in a chain of magnetized rings connected by the force of the original poet (533d-536d). In Plato's mythical image of Homer and his successors, the magnetic force of the poetic composition weakens with each successive performer."

The problem is that the *Ion* says nothing about successive rhapsodic performers. The magnetized rings of Socrates' image represent (1) the god, from whom hangs (2) the poet, from whom hangs (3) the performer, from whom hangs (4) the audience. So the concept of rhapsodic succession is not available here for extrapolation.[19]

On the contrary, the image of the rings assumes a sharp distinction between the "creative *aoidos*" and the "'reduplicating' rhapsode", i.e., it maintains precisely the dichotomy that Nagy argues against. This is not really surprising, since the dichotomy's presence in modern scholarly theories is largely owed to and derived from the *Ion*.[20] We may note now that not only does the dialogue assert (and

[18] Nagy in fact says "from *such accounts as* Plato's *Ion*" (emphasis added), but he nowhere that I know of cites any other accounts.

[19] In one of his earlier formulations of this theory Nagy seemed aware of the problem (*Pindar's Homer*, 55): "With Homeric poetry... the notion of composer is drastically retrojected, from the standpoint of the performers themselves, to a proto-poet whose poetry is reproduced by an unbroken succession of performers; Socrates can thus envisage the rhapsode Ion as the last in a chain of magnetized rings connected by the force of the original poet Homer (Plato *Ion* 533d-536d). *More accurately we may say that Ion is the next to last in the chain with relation to his audience, who would be the last link from the standpoint of the performance* (*Ion* 536a)" (emphasis added). But then Nagy continues with the illegitimate "extrapolation" anyhow: "The implication of Plato's construct is that the magnetic force of the poetic composition weakens with each successive performer." M. Clarke, in his review of *Homeric Questions* (*JHS* 119 [1999] 180), seemingly endorses Nagy's claim: "the rhapsodes' evocation of their inspirational link to the original Homer, as represented in Plato's *Ion*, is born of the same need to explain the developed unity by recourse to myth."

[20] In spite of the fact that Phemius, ὁ Ἰθακήσιος ῥαψῳδός, is referred to by Socrates in the dialogue as also a composer of poetry (533c1), which indicates that

make the rhapsode depicted accept) that the rhapsode serves a function radically different from that of his poet, Homer (who is quoted as text), but it aligns Homer with all the other kinds of poet, including *inter alios* the composers of dithyrambs, and contrasts them all with their performers and interpreters, of whom Ion himself is one (*Ion*, 535e7-536b5; cf. 534b7-c4). In other words, it assumes that the relationship between Homer and his performers, the rhapsodes, is fundamentally the same as that pertaining between the dithyrambic poets and their performers, the choruses of men and boys competing in the festival contests—the relationship which we saw earlier to be one of verbatim memorization and reproduction of a fixed text.

Is this representation of the relationship between poet and performer simply an aberration of Plato's? A peculiarity of the image of the rings is that it is both diachronic and synchronic: Tynnichus of Chalcis (534d4-e1), inspired by the muse, composed (ἐποίησε) no worthwhile poem other than that wonderful paean which everybody sings (ὃν πάντες ᾄδουσι). With the present tense ᾄδουσι, "everybody" subsequent to the composition of Tynnichus' poem is represented as more or less timelessly possessing and singing it; the original interaction between the muse and the poet, on the other hand, is conceived as a one-time historical event: ὁ θεὸς ἐξεπίτηδες διὰ τοῦ φαυλοτάτου ποιητοῦ τὸ κάλλιστον μέλος ᾖσεν (534e6-535a1). Similarly, the relationship between rhapsodes and Homer is depicted as being like that between "everybody" and Tynnichus' paean: present tense.

The implication of the whole discussion, unsurprising to most of us, is that the poet creates something historically, as a one-time event,

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the terminology was not inflexible. On the other hand, we probably should not think that the two functions were not distinguished in his mind. For example, it is notable that when Socrates presses Ion to explain what in Homer he, *qua* rhapsode, is especially expert on, it never occurs to Ion to propose the Odyssean discussions of Phemius and Demodocus. The latter is characterized by Homer as being in direct contact with the muse (*Od.* 8. 73; cf. 63 f., 479-81 and 488-91; see also 22. 347 f., of Phemius), and so would occupy the place of poet, as opposed to performer, in the image of the magnetized rings. It is certainly conceivable that Ion's dimwitted lapse here is a Platonic joke, but if so it is one that nonetheless highlights how removed from the compositional process the contemporary rhapsode (and not just in Athens, given Ion's nationality and international ubiquity) is conceived as being. The pertinent (and presumably determinative) analogy of the time (especially now that the reperformance of dramatic "classics" had become customary) must have been the relationship of the tragic actor to the tragic poet.

and the thing he creates survives permanently as an entity succeeding generations can come into contact with, take inspiration from, and, above all, perform. This created entity has of course usually been thought of as a text, embodied in the early stages we do not know precisely how. Nagy's "extrapolation" from the *Ion*, and his theory of the retrojected Homer, were designed to provide an alternative to this conclusion. But the legitimacy of this alternative has now been put in doubt, and, with its removal, it is hard to avoid giving the obvious literal meaning to Socrates' juxtaposing of past and present tenses: they represent a historical act of composition, on the one hand, and, on the other, a de facto eternity of subsequent performances or other modes of experiencing the thing composed, whatever they might be. Such a juxtaposition is not unique to Socrates and Plato; it can be found, for example, a century earlier, in Pindar's 7th *Nemean* ode, where the poem's speaker (20-23) reflects on the power of Homeric poetry:

ἐγὼ δὲ πλέον' ἔλπομαι
λόγον Ὀδυσσέος ἢ πάθαν
διὰ τὸν ἀδυεπῆ γενέσθ' Ὅμηρον·

ἐπεὶ ψεύδεσί οἱ ποτανᾷ <τε> μαχανᾷ
σεμνὸν ἔπεστί τι.

I believe that Odysseus' reputation came to surpass his actual experience through sweet-singing Homer; for there is something awe-inspiring in his lies and winged art.

The aorist infinitive in indirect discourse, γενέσθαι, does not in this case refer to the act of creation, but to a historical event (a change) quite explicitly tied to that act by the prepositional phrase διὰ τὸν ἀδυεπῆ Ὅμηρον.[21] Once this (allegedly) reputation-changing thing has been brought into being, it remains ever available for characterization in the present tense (ἔπεστι).[22]

[21] Cf. the similar formulation, here applied to Homer himself, at Isocrates, *Paneg.* 157: οἶμαι δὲ καὶ τὴν Ὁμήρου ποίησιν μείζω λαβεῖν δόξαν ὅτι καλῶς τοὺς πολεμήσαντας τοῖς βαρβάροις ἐνεκωμίασεν.

[22] Cf. Pindar, *I.* 3/4. 55-7, ἀλλ' Ὅμηρός τοι τετίμακεν δι' ἀνθρώπων, ὃς αὐτοῦ [*scil.* Ajax] | πᾶσαν ὀρθώσαις ἀρετὰν κατὰ ῥάβδον ἔφρασεν | θεσπεσίων ἐπέων λοιποῖς ἀθύρειν. Cf. Simonides 542. 12 *PMG*: νέμεται... φάτο for a comparable instance of this juxtaposition of temporalities. The aorist alone is applied to Homer's composing by Xenophanes in 11.1 D-K (cf. 10) ; cf. Simonides 19. 1 *IEG*^{2}.

Assuming, as my translation and interpretation does,[23] that the dative personal pronoun οἱ, construed with the present tense ἔπεστι, refers to Homer, Pindar here seems to approximate our own habit of referring to the *text* of Homer as the *person* "Homer". The use of present-tense verbs to refer to the Homeric texts is the established norm already for Herodotus (e.g., 2. 116)[24] and Thucydides (3. 104. 4-6).[25] It is another passage of Plato, however, that makes the idiom as clear as can be: during the opening byplay of the *Phaedrus*, Socrates guesses (228a5-c6) that Phaedrus, who has been disingenuously downplaying his ability to reproduce Lysias' speech, has actually spent the time to memorize it verbatim, both by listening to Lysias speak or perform it, and then by studying the text itself. Phaedrus admits the principle, but insists that he hasn't gotten so far with the memorization process as Socrates thinks—he has mastered only the basic gist of the arguments (228d2-3: τὴν διάνοιαν σχεδὸν ἁπάντων), not the *ipsissima verba* (228d1-2: τά γε ῥήματα οὐκ ἐξέμαθον), so he will at best be able to give Socrates a summary account. But then Socrates notices a presumably cylindrical object under Phaedrus' cloak, and demands to see it (228d6-e2):

> δείξας γε πρῶτον, ὦ φιλότης, τί ἄρα ἐν τῇ ἀριστερᾷ ἔχεις ὑπὸ τῷ ἱματίῳ· τοπάζω γάρ σε ἔχειν τὸν λόγον αὐτόν. εἰ δὲ τοῦτό ἐστιν, οὑτωσὶ διανοοῦ περὶ ἐμοῦ, ὡς ἐγώ σε πάνυ μὲν φιλῶ, παρόντος δὲ καὶ Λυσίου, ἐμαυτόν σοι ἐμμελετᾶν παρέχειν οὐ πάνυ δέδοκται.
>
> *Yes, my dear; but you must first show what you have there in your left hand under your cloak; for my guess is that it is the actual speech itself. If that is the case, then understand this about me, that I love you very much, but if Lysias, too, is here, then I am determined not to furnish myself to you to take your exercise upon.*

Socrates seems to conceive of the text of the speech as being potentially available in several forms: the written one (text^{w}); the one reproducible by Phaedrus had he completed the memorization process (text^{m}); and a defective version of text^{m} representing the uncom-

[23] The text is not entirely secure; my interpretation is in line with that of most other commentators, though some have thought that οἱ might refer to Odysseus; this would create the same juxtaposition, but at one further remove.

[24] The subject of the first two verbs is Homer: κατὰ παρεπρίησε ἐν Ἰλιάδι... ἐπιμέμνηται δὲ... ἐν Διομήδεος ἀριστείῃ· λέγει δὲ τὰ ἔπεα ὧδε κτλ.

[25] The deployment of verb tenses here is more complicated; note especially: δηλοῖ δὲ μάλιστα Ὅμηρος... ἐν τοῖς ἔπεσι τοῖσδε, ἃ ἐστιν ἐκ προοιμίου Ἀπόλλωνος... ἐτελεύτα τοῦ ἐπαίνου ἐς τάδε τὰ ἔπη, ἐν οἷς καὶ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπεμνήσθη... τοσαῦτα μὲν Ὅμηρος ἐτεκμηρίωσεν κτλ.

pleted memorization. Socrates decisively rejects this last in favor of text^{w} when it emerges that text^{w} is in fact available. This text is "Lysias": *if Lysias, too, is here*, then Socrates is *determined not to furnish himself to Phaedrus to take his exercise upon*, i.e., in attempting to perfect his memorization.

The practical interchangeability of text^{w} and text^{m} is implied in some other contemporary discussions, specifically of Homer. In Xen., *Mem.* 4. 2. 10, Socrates, having been told by Euthydemus that the latter wishes to be ἀγαθός, asks ἀγαθός at what? Various craft possibilities are canvassed, the last of which is this:

> ὡς δὲ καὶ τοῦτο ἠρνεῖτο, "Ἀλλὰ μὴ ῥαψῳδός;" ἔφη· "καὶ γὰρ τὰ Ὁμήρου σέ φασιν ἔπη πάντα κεκτῆσθαι." "Μὰ Δί' οὐκ ἔγωγ'," ἔφη· "τοὺς γάρ τοι ῥαψῳδοὺς οἶδα τὰ μὲν ἔπη ἀκριβοῦντας, αὐτοὺς δὲ πάνυ ἠλιθίους ὄντας."
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> *"Perhaps a rhapsode, then? They tell me you have a complete copy of Homer." "Certainly not! Rhapsodes, of course, have perfect mastery of the poems, but are themselves extremely stupid."*[26]

The (jocular) assumption appears to be that the most likely reason why a person would bother to acquire a complete text of Homer is that he intends to become a rhapsode: the text of Homer (text^{w}) is conceived as the basis for becoming a performer of Homer (text^{m}). In the same author's *Symposium*, 3. 5-6, Socrates asks each of the guests what form of expertise or knowledge he most prides himself on. Here is the exchange with Niceratus:

> "ἀλλὰ σὺ αὖ," ἔφη, "λέγε, ὦ Νικήρατε, ἐπὶ ποίᾳ ἐπιστήμῃ μέγα φρονεῖς." καὶ ὃς εἶπεν· "Ὁ πατὴρ ὁ ἐπιμελούμενος ὅπως ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς γενοίμην ἠνάγκασέ με πάντα τὰ Ὁμήρου ἔπη μαθεῖν· καὶ νῦν δυναίμην ἂν Ἰλιάδα ὅλην καὶ Ὀδύσσειαν ἀπὸ στόματος εἰπεῖν." "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 ἀν' ἑκάστην ἡμέραν;" "Οἶσθά τι οὖν ἔθνος," ἔφη, "ἠλιθιώτερον ῥαψῳδῶν;" "Οὐ μὰ τὸν Δί'," ἔφη ὁ Νικήρατος, "οὔκουν ἔμοιγε δοκῶ." "Δῆλον 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."
>
> *"And so, Niceratus," he suggested, "it is your turn; tell us what kind of knowledge you take pride in." "My father was anxious to see me develop into a good man," said Niceratus, "and as a means to this end he compelled me to memorize the*

[26] Transl. E. C. Marchant, Loeb, modified.

poems of Homer in their entirety; and so even now I can repeat the whole Iliad and the Odyssey by heart." "But have you failed to observe," questioned Antisthenes, "that the rhapsodes, too, all know these poems?" "How could I have failed to notice that," he replied, "when I used to listen to their recitations nearly every day?" "Well, do you know any tribe of men," went on the other, "stupider than the rhapsodes?" "No," answered Niceratus; " I certainly don't." "No," said Socrates; "and the reason is clear: they do not know the inner meaning of the poems. But you have paid a good deal of money to Stesimbrotus, Anaximander, and many other Homeric critics, so that nothing of their valuable teaching can have escaped your knowledge."[27]

West, among others, assumes that the phrase ἀκροώμενόν γε αὐτῶν ὀλίγου ἂν' ἑκάστην ἡμέραν refers to the time of speaking, and that Niceratus is saying that "he listens to [rhapsodes] every day" *right now*. West concedes that this interpretation is problematic: Niceratus' comment is "a colloquial exaggeration, no doubt, but we must take it that they could indeed be heard on many occasions".[28] The colloquial exaggeration will disappear, however, if, with the Loeb translator and, e.g., Bowen,[29] we take the participle as a present-for-imperfect, and refer it to the time of Niceratus' study of Homer: he learned the poems from the text-memorizers and text-teachers called rhapsodes, hired by his father for the purpose:[30] one text^{m} serves to create another.[31] In the passage from the *Memorabilia* quoted

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[27] Transl. O. J. Todd, Loeb, modified.

[28] M. L. West, *Studies in the Text and Transmission of the* Iliad (Munich, 2001) 19.

[29] Xenophon, *Symposium*, with an introduction, translation and commentary by A. J. Bowen (Warminster 1998) 41.

[30] Margalit Finkelberg infers the existence of professional memorizers from a phrase in the opening scene of the *Phaedrus*, where Phaedrus denies that he has been able to memorize verbatim Lysias' speech, as Socrates assumes he has (227d6-228a3): πῶς λέγεις, ὦ βέλτιστε Σώκρατες; οἴει με, ἃ Λυσίας ἐν πολλῷ χρόνῳ κατὰ σχολὴν συνέθηκε, δεινότατος ὢν τῶν νῦν γράφειν, ταῦτα ἰδιώτην ὄντα ἀπομνημονεύσειν ἀξίως ἐκείνου; πολλοῦ γε δέω. As Finkelberg points out, ἰδιώτην—"a mere amateur"—implies a contrast term: the trained professional. The existence of such professional memorizers raises all sorts of tantalizing possibilities. We can compare Phaedrus' words here with what Thucydides says at 1. 22: ὅσα μὲν λόγῳ εἶπον ἕκαστοι ἢ μέλλοντες πολεμήσειν ἢ ἐν αὐτῷ ἤδη ὄντες, χαλεπὸν τὴν ἀκρίβειαν αὐτὴν τῶν λεχθέντων διαμνημονεῦσαι ἦν ἐμοί τε ὢν αὐτὸς ἤκουσα καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοθέν ποθεν ἐμοὶ ἀπαγέλλουσιν.

[31] The deliberate memorizing of poetry, usually specified with a form of μανθάνειν (compounded or not; the passages listed by *LSJ* s. ἐκμανθάνω III give a good sample, several of which I include here) is well-attested, though infrequently is any indication given whether the source-text is a text^{m} or a text^{w}. **(I) Memorization, nature of source-text specified**: (1) Theophrastus, *Char.* 27. 6 (on ὀψιμαθία), tells of an old man past 60 sitting through show after show in an effort to memorize the songs (27. 7): καὶ ἐν τοῖς θαύμασι τρία ἢ τέτταρα πληρώματα ὑπομένειν τὰ ᾄσματα ἐκμανθάνων—this is a clear instance of "one text^{m} serving to create another". (2)

earlier, by contrast, Socrates assumed, as he does also in the *Phaedrus*, that a text[w] could be used to create a text[m]. The at least *in posse* functional equivalency of the two types is thus demonstrated.[32]

The contempt expressed for rhapsodes in both Xenophontic passages is striking: they are "stupid"; nobody is "stupider than rhapsodes". This contempt is also manifested in Plato's depiction of Ion. It is clear that in all three works we are catching a glimpse of a contemporary debate about education: if, as Niceratus' father among many other believes, Homer is the indispensable basis of a sound education, then why are those who know Homer best so stupid?[33] Plato has many harsh things to say about poetry, and will make

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When in the opening scenes of the *Phaedrus* Socrates conjures up the process by which he imagines Phaedrus to have mastered Lysias' speech (not a poetic text, obviously) it is a sequence of repeated aurally based efforts, brought to perfection by reference to a written text (228a6-b2): εὖ οἶδα ὅτι Λυσίου λόγον ἀκούων ἐκεῖνος οὐ μόνον ἅπαξ ἤκουσεν, ἀλλὰ πολλάκις ἐπαναλαμβάνων ἐκέλευέν οἱ λέγειν, ὁ δὲ ἐπείθετο προθύμως. Τῷ δὲ οὐδὲ ταῦτα ἦν ἱκανά, ἀλλὰ τελευτῶν παραλαβὼν τὸ βιβλίον ἃ μάλιστα ἐπεθύμει ἐπεσκόπει. **(II) Memorization, nature of source-text unspecified**: (1) Pl., *Laws*, 666d8-10 ἡμεῖς γοῦν, ὦ ξένε, καὶ οἵδε οὐκ ἄλλην ἄν τινα δυναίμεθα ᾠδὴν ἢ ἣν ἐν τοῖς χοροῖς ἐμάθομεν συνήθεις ᾄδειν γενόμενοι (to which compare 810e6-811a5). (2) Aeschines 3. 135 prefaces a quotation from Hesiod as follows: λέξω δὲ κἀγὼ τὰ ἔπη· διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ οἶμαι ἡμᾶς παῖδας ὄντας τὰς τῶν ποιητῶν γνώμας ἐκμανθάνειν, ἵν' ἄνδρες ὄντες αὐταῖς χρώμεθα. (3) Polybius 4. 20. 8-11, on the remarkable custom of *universal* song-memorization among the Arcadians: ταῦτα γὰρ πᾶσίν ἐστι γνώριμα καὶ συνήθη, διότι σχεδὸν παρὰ μόνοις Ἀρκάσι πρῶτον μὲν οἱ παῖδες ἐκ νηπίων ᾄδειν ἐθίζονται κατὰ νόμους τοὺς ὕμνους καὶ παιᾶνας, οἷς ἕκαστοι κατὰ τὰ πάτρια τοὺς ἐπιχωρίους ἥρωας καὶ θεοὺς ὑμνοῦσι· μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα τοὺς Φιλοξένου καὶ Τιμοθέου νόμους μανθάνοντες πολλῇ φιλοτιμίᾳ χορεύουσι κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν τοῖς Διονυσιακοῖς αὐληταῖς ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις, οἱ μὲν παῖδες τοὺς παιδικοὺς ἀγῶνας, οἱ δὲ νεανίσκοι τοὺς τῶν ἀνδρῶν λεγομένους. ὁμοίως γε μὴν καὶ παρ' ὅλον τὸν βίον τὰς ἀγωγὰς τὰς ἐν ταῖς συνουσίαις οὐχ οὕτως ποιοῦνται διὰ τῶν ἐπεισάκτων ἀκροαμάτων ὡς δι' αὑτῶν, ἀνὰ μέρος ᾄδειν ἀλλήλοις προστάττοντες. καὶ τῶν μὲν ἄλλων μαθημάτων ἀρνηθῆναί τι μὴ γινώσκειν οὐδὲν αἰσχρὸν ἡγοῦνται, τήν γε μὴν ᾠδὴν οὔτ' ἀρνηθῆναι δύνανται διὰ τὸ κατ' ἀνάγκην πάντας μανθάνειν. (4) From earlier on in the same chapter of Theophrastus, *Char.*, quoted under (I) (1) above (27.1-2): the old man memorizes ῥήσεις (tragic? for use in a sympotic "capping game" like that described in Clearchus 63, cited in n. 37 below? cf. also Pl., *Laws* 811a2), but then forgets them when reciting at a party: ὁ δὲ ὀψιμαθὴς τοιοῦτός τις, οἷος ῥήσεις μανθάνειν ἑξήκοντα ἔτη γεγονὼς καὶ ταύτας λέγων παρὰ πότον ἐπιλανθάνεσθαι. (5) The famous story in Satyrus' *Life of Euripides*, 39. XIX 11-30 and Plutarch's *Life of Nicias* (29. 3-5) about the Athenians saved through their ability to recite Euripides obviously implies memorization. (6) The terrors of compulsory memorization are evoked in Ephippus 16.1-3 *PCG*.

[32] Cf. the two-stage memorization process envisaged by Socrates *Phdr.* 228b6-a2, quoted and discussed in the preceding note.

[33] Socrates tactfully explains that the rhapsodes know the words but do not have true understanding of the meaning, which Niceratus himself has achieved through studies elsewhere.

playful jokes at poets' expense; but he does not speak of them as if they were an especially contemptible breed of lower servant, and it is hard to imagine that he would ever have put Euripides into a dialogue claiming to be an outstandingly good general. The two functions, rhapsode and poet, are clearly dissimilar in Plato's mind. And in the *Phaedrus* he even gives dramatic expression to the difference between the two, leaving no doubt which he regards as the superior: while Phaedrus gives a verbatim rhapsode-style performance of Lysias' text[w], Socrates performs as an *aoidos*, composing his own work, and doing so in direct contact with inspirational goddesses.[34]

The evidence of Plato and Xenophon can of course be gotten around by somebody who is determined to avoid its thrust: the two authors are somewhat late, and they are Athenian, etc. It is surprising, however, that not only do they assume the *aoidos*/rhapsode distinction, but they preserve no trace or memory of any alternative to it. What is more, Ion was not an Athenian, but an entirely international figure, a citizen of Ephesus, arriving in Athens from a victory in Epidaurus.[35] Are we to imagine that when he quotes Homer to Socrates he is tacitly prefacing each passage with the

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[34] *Phaedr.* 238d5: he interrupts himself to say that he seems to have suffered something divine (δοκῶ τι σοί, ὥσπερ ἐμαυτῷ, θεῖον πάθος πεπονθέναι;), and predicts that he will be often νυμφόληπτος as the speech progresses (τῷ ὄντι γὰρ θεῖος ἔοικεν ὁ τόπος εἶναι, ὥστε ἐὰν ἄρα πολλάκις νυμφόληπτος προϊόντος τοῦ λόγου γένωμαι, μὴ θαυμάσῃς). Then, at the end of this, the first speech, he reiterates the suggestion that he has been possessed by the nymphs (241a): ἆρ' οἶσθ' ὅτι ὑπὸ τῶν Νυμφῶν, αἷς με σὺ προύβαλες ἐκ προνοίας, σαφῶς ἐνθουσιάσω; Cf. 235c4-d1, and see the discussion in M. Finkelberg, *The Birth of Literary Fiction in Ancient Greece* (Oxford 1998), 8-9, especially with note 25.

[35] I stress this point because it is crucial for Nagy's "evolutionary model" that the most serious fixing or stabilizing of the Homeric texts occur in Athens, under the influence of the Panathenaic Rule, i.e., the requirement that each rhapsode performing in the festival take up the poem where his predecessor left off ("rhapsodic sequencing" in Nagy's terminology). For the theory's purposes, Athens must be isolated as atypical, because it supplies the bulk of our evidence, and that evidence does not suggest that the "Iliadic" and "Odyssean" traditions were being subjected there to a lot of in-performance creativity, which the theory locates, conveniently, elsewhere, away from our main body of evidence. A curious by-product of this idiosyncratic Athenocentrism is that Nagy and his followers tend to assume that any passage in which contestants are said to perform "in sequence" refers to the Panathenaic Rule. Thus Erwin Cook ("'Active' and 'Passive' Heroics in the *Odyssey*" [*The Classical World* 93 (1999), 149-167], 159 with n. 29) notes that Odysseus' narrative in *Od.* 9-12 "picks up where Demodokos left off": "This observation is relevant to G. Nagy's argument... that the Homeric epics display awareness of the principle of rhapsodic [sequencing]... Demodokos... sings the story of the Trojan Horse, known from the *Iliou Persis*, and the narrator continues with a simile that dramatizes the

qualification "(As your local Athenian version goes:)"?[36]

What is more, the picture given us by the two fourth century

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immediate aftermath of that story [i.e., the sack of Troy, by way of the bereavement of the Trojan women]. Odysseus himself continues the narrative with his *Apologoi*, thus bridging the *Iliou Persis* and the *Nostoi*. It is, moreover, Odysseus himself who requested the Trojan Horse story, so that he is responsible for the fact that these stories are related in their proper sequence." What such a sequence might have to do with a rule governing the performance of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is left unexplained; at any rate, the sequence is lacunose: the important events that took place in the immediate aftermath of the sack of Troy, related by Nestor at *Od.* 3. 130 ff., have been omitted from it. Nagy himself attempts to impose Panathenaic allusions upon Plato's *Timaeus* and *Critias* ("Epic as Music: Rhapsodic Models of Homer in Plato's *Timaeus* and *Critias*", in K. Reichl (ed.), *Oral Epic: Performance and Music* [Berlin, 2000], 41-67), claiming that when, for example, Critias takes up from Timaeus τὸν ἑξῆς λόγον, the Panathenaic Rule is being evoked (55-65). But here as elsewhere Nagy, like Cook, has overlooked another obvious model for the sequential ordering of competing performers—what we might call the *Panhellenic* Rule of *Sympotic* Sequencing, ἐπὶ δεξιά. We are given a good glimpse of this rule in another dialogue of Plato's, the *Symposium*, where explicit reference is made to the "sequencing" of the speakers (177d2-5, 214b9-c5, 222e10-223a5), and to its consequences: the later speakers have a more difficult task than the earlier ones because the obvious material has already been used up (177e3–5, 193e4-194a7; cf. 214c6-8 for another type of handicap; these passages parallel *Critias* 108a5-c6 precisely). What is more, sympotic performances here, as elsewhere, are spoken of in explicitly "agonistic" language (194a1 ἠγώνισαι, 194a6 τὸ θέατρον), the occurrence of which elsewhere Nagy assumes must refer to the contests of the Panathenaea. Nagy's attempt to equate the speeches of these Platonic dialogues with Panathenaic rhapsodic performances fails on other grounds, also: in order to bring under the Panathenaic umbrella Critias' Atlantis story, which Critias says derives from an unfinished poem of Solon's, Nagy tells us that "Solon's poetry is rhapsodic poetry": it was composed in meters also used by Archilochus, and in Plato's *Ion* "the rhapsode . . ., who is about to compete in the Panathenaia (530b), is represented as a grand master in performing the poetry of Homer and Hesiod, as also of Archilochus". Whatever the logical merits of this argument might be (and Nagy might have better supported his claim at least as it concerns Archilochus simply by citing Heraclitus 42 D-K, quoted in n. 38 below), his characterization of Ion precisely inverts what the text of Plato actually says about this "grand master": when Socrates asks him if he's an expert on Homer alone, or on Hesiod and Archilochus also (πότερον περὶ Ὁμήρου μόνον δεινὸς εἶ ἢ καὶ περὶ Ἡσιόδου καὶ Ἀρχιλόχου;), Ion's emphatic reply is οὐδαμῶς, ἀλλὰ περὶ Ὁμήρου μόνον· ἱκανὸν γάρ μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι: "Are you good at only Homer, or at Hesiod and Archilochus, also?" "Absolutely not! Only at Homer—that is quite enough."

[36] Nagy and others (e.g., C. Dué, "Achilles' Golden Amphora in Aeschines' *Against Timarchus* and the Afterlife of Oral Tradition" [*Classical Philology* 96 (2001), 33-47]) make much of the variants in fourth century quotations from Homer, finding in these too the traces of "authentic" performance tradition. Good method would require that they account also for textual irregularities in quotations from other sources, many of which are unlikely ever to have belonged to such a tradition. For example, Coxon says "The text of Plato's quotations from Parmenides is noticeably inaccurate" (A. H. Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides* [Assen, 1986], 3). (I suppose

authors for rhapsodes is entirely consistent with what we have inferred about the composition and performance practices of the dithyrambic choruses (etc.) from Herington's calculations for the late 6th and 5th centuries. We have absolutely no reason to think that the practices for Homer were any different, except in as much as the great length of the Homeric poems had required that their reproduction be entrusted to full-time professionals. We have also seen that Pindar speaks of Homer in the same significant syntactic terms as Plato does, a century before him. And while there is no direct evidence that supports the theory of a fluid, evolving, and creative rhapsodic tradition in the late 6th and early 5th centuries, what evidence there actually is implies a fixed text:[37] besides the Pindar passage examined, Heraclitus and Xenophanes, neither of whom is

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it is not beyond imagining that someone will undertake to demonstrate that Parmenides' thought was embodied not in a fixed text, but in an evolving and variable performance tradition.) In the article cited Dué examines the variant text of *Il.* 23. 77-91 given in Aeschines 1. 149; here, the golden amphora which appears in the vulgate only in line 92, just after the line at which Aeschines' quotation ends, is worked in in 2 lines between 83 and 84. Her argument (44 f.) that the Aeschinean references to the amphora point to an extra-Homeric tradition in which Achilles does not die and "pass into obscurity in the underworld", but "achieve[s] immortality through cult" is puzzling to me. In Agamemnon's telling (*Od.* 24. 72-79), Achilles' ashes were mixed together with Patroclus' in what is evidently this same golden amphora, and the whole thing was then buried. It is Agamemnon's shade that tells all this to Achilles' shade, down in Hades—i.e., both are entirely dead. How it can be that the presence of this same golden amphora in Aeschines can per se "point to" a non-Homeric tradition in which Achilles doesn't die ("here we have a glimpse of the immortality that is so important in the tradition outside of the *Iliad*", 45) is not made clear.

[37] The Peripatetic Clearchus contrasted the (praiseworthy, literate and cultivated) sympotic pastimes of the ancients (οἱ παλαιοί) with the degenerate, food-obsessed (i.e., Archestratean) recreations of his own day (Ath. 10. 457c-f = Clearchus 63 Wehrli); the first example of the former he cites is this: one guest quotes a line of verse, and each (successive) guest in turn must quote the line that comes (successively) next. The game obviously assumes a fixed text. The text of Clearchus himself, however, is unfortunately a bit in doubt: τῷ πρώτῳ ἔπος <ἦ> ἰαμβεῖον εἰπόντι τὸ ἐχόμενον ἕκαστον λέγειν. With Meineke's supplement epic is included (as Athenaeus certainly assumes it is in his following discussion). For the application of ἔπος to (dramatic) iambic verse, cf. Ar. *Frogs* 862 (Dover *ad loc.*, along with *LSJ* s. ἔπος IV. c., interprets as "lines", though Stanford *ad loc.* maintains that ἔπος never clearly means 'lines, verses' in Aristophanes" and here means "words"). On the possibility that the *Theognidea* preserve evidence of a second Clearchean kind of "capping" game, see M. Vetta, "Identificazione di un caso di catena simposiale nel *corpus* teognideo" (*Lirica greca da Archiloco a Elitis: Studi in onore di F. M. Pontani* [Padua 1984], 113-126); the problem of how improvisation combined with written or fixed texts is discussed on 124-6.

an Athenian, use the name "Homer" quite clearly to refer to the poems, and, as stable ones, "from which all mankind has learned", as the latter figure puts it.[38] Theagenes of Rhegium in the late 6th century wrote a book about Homer[39] which included *lemmata* from the poet's (evidently fixed) text.[40]

All of this evidence, too, must be "gotten around" in order to clear the way for a still-fluid, evolving tradition of Homeric poetry in the late archaic and classical periods. At the very least, those who endeavor to do so should no longer appeal for support to the unsupported dogma that the culture of the time possessed no concept or practice of verbatim accuracy in the reproduction of poetic texts.[41]

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[38] Heraclitus 22 B 42 D-K: τόν τε Ὅμηρον ἔφασκεν ἄξιον ἐκ τῶν ἀγώνων ἐκβάλλεσθαι καὶ ῥαπίζεσθαι, καὶ Ἀρχίλοχον ὁμοίως.(It seems unlikely that Heraclitus was referring to the actual persons.) Xenophanes 10 D-K: ἐξ ἀρχῆς καθ' Ὅμηρον ἐπεὶ μεμαθήκασι πάντες...

[39] 8. 2 D-K: Theagenes of Rhegium, ὃς πρῶτος ἔγραψε περὶ Ὁμήρου.

[40] 8. 3 D-K (=Σ A *Il.* 1. 381): ἐπεὶ μάλα οἱ φίλος ἦεν: Σέλευκός φησιν ἐν τῇ Κυπρίᾳ καὶ Κρητικῇ "ἐπεί ῥά νύ οἱ φίλος ἦεν", καὶ Θεαγένης δὲ οὕτως προφέρεται. C. D. Graninger pointed out to me the significance of this datum in this context. (Richard Janko has informed me that A. C. Cassio makes a similar point from this scholium in a forthcoming volume edited by Franco Montanari, *Omero 3000 anni dopo* [Genoa].) Cf. R. Pfeiffer, *The History of Classical Scholarship* I (Oxford 1968), 11.—That the Theagenes cited in the scholium is not identified as "of Rhegium" doesn't amount to much; the Rhegian is the only Theagenes known to us, *and* to the compilers of the *Suda*, to have written on Homer (D-K 8. 4): Θεαγένους χρήματα:... εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι δύο Θεαγένεις, εἷς μὲν ὁ περὶ Ὁμήρου γράψας, ἕτερος δὲ ὁ ἐπὶ μαλακίᾳ σκωπτόμενος.

[41] This paper has been improved by the comments and suggestions of Margalit Finkelberg, and also by those of Charles Brittain, Richard Janko and Stephanie West.

STANDARDIZATION AND RANKING OF TEXTS IN GREEK AND ROMAN INSTITUTIONS

HUBERT CANCIK

1. *The Rhapsodic Contest: Standardization and Ranking*

1. In Greek and Roman literature, there exist several lists of authors who are recommended by scholarly authority for the use in schools and libraries as well as for private lecture. There is the list of the ten most important rhetors,[1] of the nine best lyric poets,[2] of the five best tragic poets[3] and that of the epic[4] poets. The criteria according to which the authors are included in or excluded from a reading list are called κανόνες—"guidelines". A paradigmatic author might be called the "canon" of his genre.[5] What was the impulse that drove the Greeks to become a canon- making species?[6]
2. In the beginning, there were public institutions, festivals, contests, prizes and rankings. Every year in August, on the birthday of Athene, the Athenians celebrated the main festival for their city-goddess[7] The Archon Hippocleides (566/65) added musical, gymnic and equestrian

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[1] (Ps.-)Plut., *Vit. X Or.* (Aeschines, Andocides, Antiphon, Deinarchus, Demosthenes, Hypereides, Isaeus, Isocrates, Lysias, Lycurgus): Plut. Mor. 832 B-852 E.

[2] Alcaeus, Sappho, Anacreon, Alcman, Stesichorus, Ibycus, Semonides, Bacchylides, Pindarus.—Cf. Didymus, περὶ λυρικῆς. Some add Corinna und get a 'canon' of ten lyric poets. All lists of this kind are handed down with considerable variations.

[3] Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Ion, Achaios of Eretria.— Cf. the three old comic poets in Hor., *Sat.* 1,4,1: Eupolis atque Cratinus Aristophanesque poetae.

[4] Homer, Hesiod, Antimachus, Panyasis, Apollonius of Rhodes, (Pisander): Quint., Inst. or. 10,1,53-54.

[5] Dion. Hal., *De Thucydide* 1 (plural = criteria) and 2 (singular = Thucydides).

[6] Similar lists: the seven miracles of the world; the seven sages; the nine Muses; the twelve gods.

[7] L. Deubner, *Attische Feste* (Berlin, 1932 [= reprint 1956]); A. Mommsen, *Feste der Stadt Athen* (Leipzig, 1898), 61-69.

contests which were to be held every fifth year.[8] The music contest started with the recital of an epic, since this was supposed to be the most solemn genre. Therefore, in an Athenian inscription (ca. 400-350 B.C.E.), recording the contests and the prizes, scholars have supplied the first line—out of nothing, but convincingly:[9] <prizes for the rhapsodes>. Three prizes were provided for the rhapsodes: precious crowns, probably different in weight and degree of craftsmanship. Five prizes were awarded to kithara-singers, others to men who sang accompanied by the flute and to flute-players. The regulations for the contest (νόμοι, δόγματα ἔθη τοῦ ἀγῶνος)[10] guaranteed the participants fair and equal conditions; occasionally that meant standardized texts.

3. The festival of the Great Panathenaia was institutionalized in the middle of the sixth century, as were the main regulations of the contest. The rhapsodes should recite only Homer,[11] anyhow a favourite author in the sixth century.[12] At the Athenian contest, the rhapsodes were forced "to go continuously through the verses, taking on, where the former left off".[13] Our source (4th/3rd century) adds: "as they do it till now". It is Hipparchos (died in 514), son of Pisistratus, to whom this rule is attributed. The same rule is ascribed to Solon, in the beginning of the sixth century.[14]

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[8] The expansion of the Panathenaia begins before Pisistratus; cf. M.P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion.* Vol. I (München, ^{3}1967), 719-721: the policy of the tyrants in the field of religion.

[9] G. Dittenberger, *Sylloge*^{3} nr.1055 (= IG II 965). For the supplement cf. *Syll.*^{3} nr.959 (*Chiorum victores*): ἀνάγνωσις—ῥαψωιδία—ψαλμός—κιθαρισμός etc.—For recitals of epic poetry cf. ibid. nr.457 (Thespiae, ca. 250 B.C.E.); nr.509 (*Catalogus victorum Soteriorum*, ca 225 B.C.E.); nr.958 (Keos, beginning of the 3rd century, line 3-6): "to give the rhapsode a part of the sacrificial meat"; nrs.389; 424; 489; 711, section L (*synodus technitarum*), line 30 (Delphi).

[10] *Syll.*^{3} nr.457 (Thespiai, ca. 250 B.C.E.).

[11] Lycurg., *In Leocraten* 102 (ca. 331 B.C.E.): "your fathers, thus, have understood Homer as a serious poet; therefore they have made a decree, that on every fifth Panathenaia only his verses from all poets should be recited [...]". Cf. Plut. *Per.* 13.

[12] Hdt. 5,67 on the contest in Sicyon (Peloponnesos) under Cleisthenes (ca. 600-565): "Cleisthenes was an enemy of the Argeens; therefore he stopped the *agones* performed by the rhapsodes in Sicyon, because of the Homeric verses, since, in these, the Argeens and Argos are very often hymnically celebrated." Cf. the Spartan tradition on the introduction of Homer in Greece.

[13] (Ps.-)Plato, *Hipparchus*, p.228b (2nd half of 4th century B.C.E.): Hipparchus, son of Pisistratus, says Socrates, "was the first to bring the verses of Homer into this country (Attica), and he forced the rhapsodes, to go continuously through the verses taking on where the former left off (ἐξ ὑπολήψεως ἐφεξῆς), as they do it till now [...]".—Cf. the evolution of drama under the Peisistratides: Nilsson, *Griechische Religion* I, 720 ff.

[14] Dieuchidas of Megara (2nd half of 4th century B.C.E.), *Megarika* book V, on

> "He (i.e. Solon) wrote a law that the recitations of Homer shall follow in fixed order: thus the second reciter must begin from the place where the first left off."

In order for this rule to work, each rhapsode had to have the appropriate part of the text. The organizers, consequently, had to have at their disposal a complete text, which served as the norm according to which the parts were assigned to the rhapsodes. The tradition that renders Pisistratus a 'redactor' of the Homeric poems has, from the agonistic point of view, some intrinsic logic.[15]

4. The organization of the Panathenaia is a good and early testimony to the forces which create standard texts, and to the mechanisms through which a favourite author's work is established as a 'canonical' text. There are the needs of the contest requiring equal conditions for all participants. There is also the issue of public awareness, i.e., the audience of citizens. And, finally, there is the mechanism of control through the magistrates of the festival, that is through the state, not the priests of Athene.

In the sixth century, Homer was not only a widely accepted author, but his poems were understood as historical poetry. Thus, political claims could be proved by means of his texts. The temptation was great to add some convenient verses, or, vice versa, to remove them as falsified by the Athenians,[16] or else to forbid the recital of Homer altogether, as did Cleisthenes of Sicyon.[17]

The Spartan tradition on how Homer was introduced into Greece was formed later (4th century B.C.E.) and in competition with the older Attic tradition. The rivals fought for the "possession" of a 'canonical' author and the possibility to exploit him. The Spartans, however, did not argue with the birthplace or tomb of the poet, as did

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a law of Solon (archon 594 B.C.E.), in: Diogenes Laertius 1,57 (= *FGrHist* nr.485 frg.6): τά τε Ὁμήρου ἐξ ὑποβολῆς γέγραφε (Solon) ῥαψωιδεῖσθαι, οἷον ὅπου ὁ πρῶτος ἔληξεν, ἐκεῖθεν ἄρχεσθαι τὸν ἐχόμενον. Μᾶλλον οὖν Σόλων Ὅμηρον ἐφώτισεν ἢ Πεισίτρατος < ... >, ὥς φησι Διευχίδας ἐν πέμπτωι Μεγαρικῶν. ἦν δὲ μάλιστα τὰ ἔπη ταυτί: «οἱ δ' ἄρ' Ἀθήνας εἶχον» καὶ τὰ ἑξῆς. (Il. 2,546 ff.).—Different compensations for the lacuna have been proposed, among which: Jacoby (comm. a.l.): <ὃς ἔπη τινὰ ἐνέβαλεν εἰς τὴν ποίησιν αὐτοῦ>; Merkelbach (following Leaf): <ἐκεῖνος ἄρα ἦν ὁ τὰ ἔπη εἰς τὸν κατάλογον ἐμποιήσας, καὶ οὐ Πεισίστρατος> (R. Merkelbach, "Die pisistratische Redaktion der homerischen Gedichte", *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 95 [1952], 23-47, esp. 29).

[15] Cicero, *De or.* 3,137: (Pisistratus) qui primus Homeri libros confusos antea sic disposuisse dicitur, ut nunc habemus.

[16] In particular, the catalogue of ships was a matter of dispute; cf. Scholia to Z 119 ff.; η 80 etc.—This dispute presupposes a written text, though no written text is required for the recital as such. Oral presentation does not exclude written sources.

[17] Hdt. 5,67.

many other cities. They presented a written "Ur-exemplar" (archetype), which their legendary king Lycurgus had once brought to the Peloponnesos, directly from Homer's own country.[18] This occurred at such an early stage that he could even have met Homer personally.

2. *The Dramatic Contest: Standardization and Ranking*

2.1 *The Dionysia at Athens*

1. The Athenians celebrated their three festivals for Dionysus every year from January to March. These festivals became important in the sixth century, "probably through the politics of Pisistratus".[19] The festivals—Lenaia and the Great urban Dionysia—were controlled by the state, the Archon Basileus and the Archon Eponymos respectively. They were open to the whole Hellenic world. The program included processions, contests of choruses of boys and men, dramatic contests for comedy, tragedy and satyr play.
2.The history of the dramatic contests, their regulations, participants and their ranking are well known. Scholars, ancient and modern, have scrutinized the tradition—and, as will be seen, they had wonderful materials at their disposal. Every year, the poets applied for a chorus and, through this, for the opportunity—and the financial means—to have their plays performed.[20] Specimens of their texts were recited; the archon decided to which poet a chorus should be "given".

For the great urban festival, there were to be rehearsed as follows: ten dithyramb choruses for boys, ten for men, five choruses for comedies and three for tragedies. These circumstances—public festival, finances, time table—and the requirement of a fair contest set standards and helped to develop criteria for the ranking. The judges were chosen by means of a complicated procedure:
(1) The ten Attic administration districts (*phylai*) proposed a certain number of candidates;
(2) ten persons, one from each *phyle*, were selected by lot, just before the beginning of the performance;

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[18] Plut., *Lyc.* 4,4: "[...] Lycurgus sailed to Asia [...]; there he came upon Homer's poems for the first time, which apparently had been preserved by the descendants of Kreophylos, [...] he copied them readily and put them together in order to bring them back. [...] Lycurgus was the very first to make this poem known." Cf. Ael., *VH* 13,14.

[19] A. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens* (Oxford, ²1968), 58; L. Deubner, *Feste*, 123-134; 138-142.

[20] For the pro-agon see A. Pickard-Cambridge, *Festivals*, 67, 84.

(3) these ten swore a public oath to give an impartial verdict;
(4) immediately after the contest, each of these 'judges' wrote his vote on a tablet and put it into an urn—we do not know of any debate among them;
(5) the archon drew, at random, five tablets out of the urn, and these votes determined the ranking, which was then made public.

The judges were called *kritaí*, not *dikastaí*, as in law;[21] their role was to decide the contest (κρίνειν τὸν ἀγῶνα).[22] Scholars doubt "that there was any demand of critical capacity".[23] Still, even the most judicious literary 'criticism' of our times is derived from that source.

3. The promoters of the festival wrote their protocols, parts of which were published while most remained in the archives. The documents, later edited by scholarly research, were published on public monuments or as introductions to the dramatic texts in our manuscripts.[24]

At the end of the introduction to Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, we read the following official note about the performance (διδασκαλία): "The drama was performed under the archon Philokles, in the second year of the 80th Olympiad (i.e. in 459/8 B.C.E.). The first was Aeschylus with *Agamemnon*, *Choephoroi*, *Eumenides*, *Proteus* as satyr play. The choregos was Xenocles from Aphidna."

This sober information is confirmed by an inscription which lists the winners at the Dionysia:[25]

"Under Philokles (459/8):
boys' contest in dithyramb ...
men's contest in dithyramb ....
comedy: ....
tragedy: Xenokles of Aphidna was choregos,
Aeschylus performed (ἐδίδασκεν)
Under Habron (458/7):
boys' contest ..."

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[21] Note, however, that contest metaphors may appear in a judiciary context, cf. e.g. Demosth., *De corona*, 1: the speaker sees himself in an *agon* with the Athenians.

[22] Cf. Ar., *Ra.* 873; *Ach.* 1224; *Av.* 445; Nu. 1115: Plut., *Cim.* 8,7-9: ἡ τῶν τραγωιδῶν κρίσις. Cf. the Euboean law on engaging artists (294-288 B.C.E.; IG XII,9, 207; *IG* XII Suppl. p.178; A. Pickard-Cambridge, *Festivals*, 306-308, esp. 306): "On the judgement (κρίσις). When the agon is held, the judges shall decide (κρινόντων οἱ κριταί)."

[23] A. Pickard-Cambridge, *Festivals*, 97.

[24] G. Jachmann, *De Aristotelis didascaliis* (Göttingen, 1909).

[25] *IG* II² 2318, col.II (A. Pickard-Cambridge, *Festivals*, 104-107; esp. 104).—Cf. POxy 2256 frg.3: "Under Ar ... [date] was victor Aeschylus with his plays Danaides, Amymone. Second was Sophocles ...".—Cf. the arguments and *didascaliae* to Aeschylus' *Seven* and *Persai*.

Sophocles "gained the first place ('victory') twenty times, often the second, never the third."[26] These results are a compliment to the Athenian judges and reflect the fact that Sophocles' rank in the classical 'canon' was in keeping with the tradition of their agonistic judgement. On the other hand, Sophocles' *Oidipous Tyrannos* won second prize, the same tragedy that, already for Aristotle, was the paradigm of tragic *poiesis*; Sophocles was defeated by Philocles—a name that few persons will remember.[27]

2.2 *The great theatre reform of Lycurgus in Athens (ca.330 B.C.E.)*

In the late- or post-classical epoch (second half of the fourth century), the Athenians had to struggle with the ever-growing power of the kings of Macedonia.[28] Therefore, they erected a statue of the Goddess Democratia and organized a cult for her. By this, they set the model for similar cults of the French Republic in the 18th century.[29]

The leading statesman of those years was Lycurgus, a pupil of Plato and Isocrates.[30] He administrated the financial affairs of Athens as well as the public building activities, and passed laws to reform the theatre;[31] among them were:
(1) regulations for comic actors in the contest held on the third day of the Anthesteria festival;
(2) institution of an agon for Poseidon in Piraeus;
(3) restoration of the Dionysus theatre; erection of bronze-statues for Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides; and,

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[26] *Vita Sophoclis*, §8.—The number of tragedies attributed to him—130 according to *Vita Sophoclis* §18, which refers to Aristophanes of Byzantium—must be related to the regulations of performance (problem of tetralogies) and to the number of Dionysia at which they were performed.—Cf. A. Pickard-Cambridge, *Festivals*, 98, 278.—In addition to the titles and the number of works, the victories and the ranks reached in the contests must have been mentioned in the πίνακες; this is shown by the reference to Aristophanes of Byzantium (257-180 B.C.E.), πρὸς τοὺς Καλλιμά χου πίνακας.

[27] Dicaearchus in Codex Sophoclis Parisinus 2712 (saec. XIII).

[28] Ch. Habicht, *Athen. Die Geschichte der Stadt in hellenistischer Zeit* (München, 1995), 33-41: B. Hintzen-Bohlen, *Die Kulturpolitik des Eubulos und des Lykurg. Die Denkmäler und Bauprojekte in Athen zwischen 355 und 322 v.Chr.* (Berlin, 1997), passim; N. Loraux, *L'invention d'Athènes* (Paris, 1981).

[29] A. Raubitschek, "Demokratie", *Hesperia* 31 (1962), 238-243. For the cults of the French Revolution cf. M.-L. Biver, *Fêtes révolutionaires à Paris* (Paris, 1979).

[30] D.L. 3,46.

[31] (Ps.-)Plut., *Vit. X Orat.*, nr.7, 840-841: Lycurgus of Athens (ca. 390-324). The text is not dated; the ultimate source is probably Philiskos of Miletos (*FGrHist* nr.337 bis) who wrote a life of Lycurgus, shortly after his death.

(4) regulations for the restaging of "old dramas" concerning the authenticity of the text and, probably, the conditions for these plays to be performed in the contest.

Our source reads as follows:

> "[Lycurgus made a law] to write down and keep their tragedies in public (archives) and that the clerk of the City should read them (simultaneously) with the actors (of these tragedies); for it should not be possible to act them against those (public) texts."
>
> [...] καὶ τὰς τραγωιδίας αὐτῶν ἐν κοινῶι γραψαμένους φυλάττειν καὶ τὸν τῆς πόλεως γραμματέα παραναγινώσκειν τοῖς ὑποκρινομένοις· οὐκ ἐξεῖναι γὰρ <παρ'> αὐτὰς ὑποκρίνεσθαι.

This regulation makes evident how standardization and 'canonization' go smoothly hand in hand.

2. The restaging of older dramas that had already been performed in a contest became, in the time of Lycurgus and Demosthenes, an accepted procedure.[32] The list of the Great Dionysia gives an instance, for the year 387/6:[33]

> Ἐπὶ Θεοδότου· παλαιὸν δρᾶμα πρῶτον παρεδίδαξαν οἱ τραγωιδοί.
> "Under Theodotus: for the first time the tragic actors performed, in addition, an old drama."

For the year 340/39 the inscription reads:

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[32] *Vita Aeschyli* §12 (probably on tragedies of Aeschylus' Nachlass which had not yet been performed): "The Athenians, however, appreciated Aeschylus so much that they made the following decree after his death: whosoever should be willing to rehearse (διδάσκειν, scil. and perform) the plays of Aeschylus should be given a chorus. [...] He won not few victories after his end." Cf. scholion to Ar., *Ach.* 10: "By public decree only the plays of Aeschylus were performed even after his death".

[33] *IG* II^2 2318 (= A. Pickard-Cambridge, *Festivals*, 101-106) Athens, Theatre of Dionysus(?)/ Acropolis; cf. Quint., *Inst. orat.* (ca. 95 C.E.), 10,1,66: tragoedias primus in lucem Aeschylus protulit, sublimis et gravis et grandilocus saepe usque ad vitium, sed rudis in plerisque et incompositus: propter quod correctas eius fabulas in certamen deferre posterioribus poetis Athenienses permisere. suntque eo modi multi coronati.— W. Peterson, in his commentary, remarks: "It seems inconsistent with our knowledge of the statute passed by the orator Lycurgus (396) enacting that official copies of the plays of the three great tragedians should be made and that no new performance should be allowed without a comparison of the acting copy with the state manuscript. Perhaps Quintilian misunderstood the phrase δράματα διεσκευασμένα, commonly applied to plays revised by the author himself with a view to a second representation."—But cf. J. N. Madvig (*Kleine Philolog. Schriften* (Leipzig, 1875), 464-465) who believes revised versions of Aeschylus to be plausible during the second half of the 4th century.

"In the time of Theophrastus: the comic actors performed, in addition, an old drama."

The statues of the three tragic heroes[34] erected by Lycurgus can be connected with ritual. After Sophocles' death, at an unknown date, the Athenians decreed that, every year, he should receive offerings of incense and perhaps other gifts like flowers and wine (or milk), because of his virtue.[35] Public heroization concludes a long process, namely the creation of the classical author. He becomes a monument, is worshipped, and gets public guarantees for his texts to be unalterable.

2.3 *From administrative texts to historical research*

1. The tragic texts in the ancient—and our—bookshops and libraries derive from the copies in the Athenian archives and from the acting copies used on the stage by unscrupulous theatre managers and actors.[36]

The criteria of the ancients—and ours—according to which certain texts are extolled and others condemned, were developed in the debates of the public, in the decisions on the admission of a play made in the *pro-agon* and in the *agon* which ended in a ranking of the poets (κρισείς). The parodies of tragic texts in Aristophanes' comedies, and his remarks on tragic poetry in the *Frogs* (405 B.C.E.) presuppose an educated and judicious public which was capable of enjoying his allusions.[37]

Historical research sprang up from the protocols of the magistrates which were in charge of the festival; it led to the biographies of the authors, to literary history in Aristotle's collection of *didascaliae*[38] and,

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[34] Already Aristophanes' parodies in the *Frogs* (405 B.C.E.) show that Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were the three great tragic poets of his epoch. Cf. F. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles* Vol. 7 (Basel, 1953), frg. 179: Herakleides Pontikos, Περὶ τῶν τριῶν τραγωιδοποιῶν; short comment p.123.

[35] *Vita Sophoclis* §17 (source: Istros).—Cf. *Vita Aeschyli* §11: a hero cult in Gela for Aeschylus.

[36] Cf. U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Euripides Herakles I. Einleitung in die griechische Tragödie* (²1895 reprint Darmstadt, 1959), 124-133.

[37] Cf. the development of the exegesis of Homer; religious and moral problems with the indispensible classic led to allegoresis or condemnation (Xenophanes, Plato).

[38] Aristotle, frgs. 618-631 (Rose); from two further works we have only the titles in Diog. Laert. 5,26: Νῖκαι Διονυσιακαί α' (published about 345 B.C.E.) and Περὶ τραγωιδιῶν α'; cf. Aristot., *Ath. pol.* 56; see A. Wilhelm (ed.), *Urkunden dramatischer Aufführungen in Athen* (1906) (Amsterdam, 1965), 13 to the winner list in *IG II* 971 (*IG II*² 2318) which may be derived from Aristotle.

finally, to the recommendations found in ever shrinking reading lists for schools.[39]

2. The passage from contest and administrative texts to research, schools and libraries may be elucidated by two examples.

a) In the years 334/32 B.C.E., the Delphic authorities honoured Aristotle and Callisthenes, his collaborator, for their scholarly work.[40] They had compiled a list of the winners of the Pythian contests since Gylida of Delphi (591/90 B.C.E.) and a list of the magistrates who had organized the contests. The list (πίναξ) was transcribed on a stele. The stele was erected in the sacred precinct. Thus, the results of historical research that was based on the records were published in a monumental form through the same administration which had organized the festival.

b) The transformation of agonistic documents—written and, sometimes, published (in extracts) to honour the *polis* and its magistrates—into literary history can be observed in the fragments of a list of Greek comic poets. The list presents the names of the poets, probably in chronological order, followed by the date, contest, rank and title of their plays. The leading category was no longer the contest, but the poets' lives and works. The pattern looks as follows:

Name of poet A
his first places
I at the Great Dionysia
name of archon 1 (= date 1)
title of play 1
name of archon 2 (= date 2)
title of play 2 etc.
II at the Lenaia
name of archon 1 (= date 1)
title of play 1 etc.
his second places
I at the Great Dionysia
name of archon 1 (= date 1)
title of play 1 etc.
his third places
etc.

[39] A 'school-canon' with seven plays of Aeschylus, seven of Sophocles and ten of Euripides was compiled in the 2nd century (or later).

[40] Inscription at Delphi, ca.334/32: Syll.[3] 275 = *FGrHist* 124 T 23.—We have fragments from Callimachus' Πίνακες καὶ ἀναγραφὴ τῶν κατὰ χρόνους καὶ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς γενομένων διδασκάλων (cf. A. Pickard-Cambridge, *Festivals*, 70; for further epigraphical evidence see ibid. 72-74).

Name of poet B
his first places
etc.

The inscription was found in Rome, probably written in Rome about 100 C.E., and designed, perhaps, to decorate the walls of a prestigious library.[41]

3. *The Contest of Philologists: Standardization and Ranking in the Roman School*

3.1 *Lecture in Roman school*

1. Roman schools were private enterprises. There were no examinations for teachers supervised by the state nor fixed curricula for pupils. Teachers worked at their own risk, as they were—with a few exceptions—not paid by the municipality. They could open a school if they wanted to do so, but they could not be sure to get school fees from their pupils. Thus, in contrast to the Attic paradigm—theatre, contest, public control of texts and actors—the Roman school was a loosely organized private institution.

Nevertheless, if there was to be formal education at all—that is, an education separated from the natural socialisation in family, tribe, by religion or profession—there must have been standards. Schools need a limited number of topics to be taught and goals that can be reached within a fixed time. Therefore, the question of standards and ranking rises again.

2. On all levels of the Roman school, learning by reading played a considerable role. All pupils needed texts, and several identical items of the same author needed to be available in the classroom. Quintilian, the famous pedagogue and teacher of rhetoric, describes the method of *praelectio*, from his own practice. The teacher reads aloud from his text; the pupils follow him in their texts "with their eyes", as is explicitely stated:[42] *pueri scripta oculis sequantur.* This is education in a book-culture that did not develop a book religion.

The teacher explains the meaning of difficult words, composition and the logic of the argument. This procedure is called *lectio* (ἀνάγνωσις) and *interpretatio* (ἐξήγησις). Already on this level of teaching, standardized texts are necessary.

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[41] *IG* XIV 1097-1098 = Wilhelm, *Urkunden*, 194-208; A. Pickard-Cambridge, *Festivals*, 120-122.

[42] Quint., *Inst. or.* 2,5,4.

3. And the teacher needs accepted authors. Already for the first reading—*qui primi legendi* (Inst. or. 2,5,18-26)—"the best", the classical, authors should be chosen, not modern or archaic ones; they should be suitable for male children, bright and clear: and this means, in Quintilian's view, Livy's histories and Cicero's speeches. Cicero himself is a criterion, a 'canon': after Cicero you may read those authors that are most similar to him, says Quintilian.[43] The *lectio* is an important part of the studies of a rhetor and advocate-to-be, who must expound his case in a detailed, sober and effective narrative. For the *lectio*, however, you need a pure text, which can be achieved only by a strongly critical mind. The old philologists, declares Quintilian, were quite severe:[44]

> "[...] they were not content with obelising lines or rejecting books whose titles they regarded as spurious as though they were expelling a supposititious child from the familiy circle, but also established some authors in the class [sc. of accepted authors] and took others altogether out of the number."

The philologists have power and responsibility: according to their critical judgement (*iudicium*), they have the power to admit or expel authors and texts. Here, scholarship becomes an institution of control.

3.2 *"The 'canon' given by the philologists" (Quintilian 10,1)*

1. The advanced orator is confronted by similar needs as are the beginners. Quintilian compiled, in the tenth book of his *Introduction to Rhetoric*, several lists for his students to read in order to become perfect orators: *qui auctores legendi sunt* (*Inst. or.* 10,1,37). This goal determines the selection and weight of a genre and its authors; lyric poetry, for instance, is not important for the practice of an orator.

Out of Greek epic poetry, Homer and Hesiod are recommended first, for obvious reasons. Three further authors are proposed with the following characteristics:[45]

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[43] Quint., *Inst. or.* 2,5,19 f.: ut quisque erit Ciceroni simillimus; cf. Dion. Hal., *De Thucydide* 1-2 (see above §1.1).

[44] Quint., *Inst. or.* 1,4,3 [De Grammatice]: nam et scribendi ratio coniuncta cum loquendo est et narrationem praecedit emendata lectio, et mixtum his omnibus iudicium est: quo quidem ita severe sunt usi veteres grammatici, ut non versus modo censoria quadam virgula notare et libros, qui falso viderentur inscripti, tamquam subditos submovere familia permiserint sibi, sed auctores alios in ordinem redegerint, alios omnino exemerint numero. (English translation from LCL with modifications).

[45] Quint., *Inst. or.* 10,1,53-54: [Homer—Hesiod; ...] Contra in Antimacho [flor.

> "On the other hand, Antimachus deserves praise for the vigour, dignity and elevation of his language. But although practically all teachers of literature rank him second among epic poets, he is deficient in emotional power, charm, and arrangement of matter, and totally devoid of art. Thus it becomes perfectly clear what a difference there is between coming near [to an author] and being second to him. Panyasis is regarded as combining the qualities of the two, being inferior in point of style, but surpassing the one [Hesiod] in the choice of his subject and the other [Antimachos] in its arrangement. Apollonius is not admitted to the lists drawn up by the philologists because the critics, Aristarchus and Aristophanes, included no contemporary poets."

In constructing his literary list, Quintilian uses the patterns and terminology of Greek music contests: the first, the second place, the winner of the crown, the very next to the first; to overcome or to be behind (*superare/ deficere*). The consensus of philologists (*consensus grammaticorum*) decides on the rank of a poet as did the board of judges in the contests.[46] The same terminology is used to establish the rank of Vergil "in the class of authors":[47]

> "he is second (after Homer) nearer, however, to the first than to the third."

3.3 *Ranking of Roman comic poets: the 'canon' of Volcacius Sedigitus*

The first 'canon' of Latin literature was made up by Volcacius Sedigitus, a Roman poet and scholar whose *floruit* was about 130 B.C.E..[48] His canon is part of a literary history (*de poetis*), written in

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ca. 405] vis et gravitas et minime volgare eloquendi genus habet laudem. sed quamvis ei *secundas* fere grammaticorum consensus *deferat* et adfectibus et iocunditate et dispositione et omnino arte deficitur, ut plane manifesto appareat, quanto sit aliud *proximum esse*, aliud *secundum*. Panyasin [flor. ca. 480] ex utroque mixtum putant [grammatici] in eloquendo neutrius *aequare* virtutes, alterum tamen ab eo materia, alterum disponendi ratione *superari*. Apollonius [flor. ca. 220] *in ordinem* a grammaticis datum non *venit*, quia Aristarchus [flor. middle of 2nd century] atque Aristophanes [died ca. 180] neminem sui temporis *in numerum redegerunt*.—Quintilian's source for the epic 'canon' is either Dionysius of Halicarnassus or a common source. (English translation from LCL with modifications.)

[46] Cf. Quint., *Inst. or.* 10,1,59: *receptis Aristarchi iudicio*; ibid. 1,4,3: *iudicium*.

[47] Quint., *Inst. or.* 10,1,86: secundus [post Homerum] est Vergilius, propior tamen primo quam tertio; ibid. 10,1,85: Idem nobis per Romanos quoque auctores ordo ducendus est. The term *ordo* is frequent in this context: 1,4,3; 10,1,54.—A special case is the permanent comparison which the Romans were bound to draw between the Greek paradigm and their own merits: Elegea quoque Graecos provocamus—ibid. 10,1,93 (agonistic term); in comoedia maxime claudicamus—ibid. 10,1,99; At non historia cesserit Graecis—10,1,101 (a wrestling metaphor?) nec opponere Thucydidi Sallustium verear—10,1,101 (like a pair of fighters); cf. 10,1,105.

[48] His list is labeled 'canon' already in the 19th century. Th. Ladewig, *Über den*

iambic verses and describing a typical scene, namely: The experts are debating, without result, on the question of who is to be considered the best comic poet. Volcacius, with strong self-confidence, cuts off the uncertainty (*error*) by his own "judgement" (*iudicium*), once and for all.

Therefore, he proposes not only his candidate for the first place, but attributes a numbered rank to every Roman comic poet, their total amounting to a round figure (ten).
The text reads as follows:[49]

Multos incertos certare hanc rem vidimus,
Palmam poetae comico cui deferant.
Eum meo iudicio errorem dissolvam tibi,
Ut, contra si quis sentiat, nihil sentiat.
Caecilio palmam Statio do mimico.
Plautus secundus facile exuperat ceteros.
Dein Naevius, qui fervet, pretio in tertiost.
Si erit, quod quarto detur, dabitur Licinio.
Post insequi Licinium facio Atilium.
In sexto consequetur hos Terentius,
Turpilius septimum, Trabea octavum optinet,
Nono loco esse facile facio Luscium.
Decimum addo causa antiquitatis Ennium.
"We see that many hesitantly strive
Which comic poet they'd award the palm.
This doubt my judgement shall for you resolve;
If any passes a contrary sentence, senseless he.
The palm I give mimic Caecilius Statius.
Plautus holds second rank without a peer;
Then Naevius third, for passions and for fire,
If there is [a prize] to be given to the fourth
it should be given to Licinius.
Licinius I make follow, then, Atilius.
These let Terentius follow, sixth in rank.
Turpilius seventh, Trabea eighth place holds.
Ninth place I gladly give to Luscius.
As tenth I add Ennius because of his renown [age]."

Since most of his didactic poetry is lost, we can only suspect which criteria and arguments Volcacius mustered in order to justify his judgement. He represents the scholarly dispute in a situation of

Kanon des Volcacius Sedigitus (Neustrelitz, 1842); cf. M. Schanz/ C. Hosius, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* (München, ^{4}1927 [=1966]), I, 165 ff.

[49] Volcacius Sedigitus (flor. ca. 130 B.C.E.), *De poetis* (in: Gell., *Noct. Att.* 15,24; translation from LCL with modifications).—The *symposion* is a very popular event where debates in the field of literary criticism used to be held. Cf. the debate between Aeschylus and Euripides with Sophocles as arbiter in Aristophanes' *Frogs*.

contest, as the dispute of a jury using an agonistic form and language: numbered ranking, prizes and a palm for the first. The prize for the fourth place is introduced with reservation, since awarding more than three prizes in a dramatic contest seems unusual to Volcacius.[50]

To conclude: The first 'canon' in Latin literature betrays clearly the Greek *agon* as the "Sitz im Leben" of Greco-Roman canon making.

4. *Conclusion*

1. Ranking in contest is the origin and structure of the reading lists in Quintilian and elsewhere.
In the case of drama, we can observe how the administrative documents of the festivals are transformed into literary history.
2. Contest, including musical, epic, lyric and dramatic contests, implies rules and standards; it requires judges, a large number of participants and an open, public space.
3. In the Greco-Roman world, standardization of texts and—in a certain sense—canonization were developed in the following institutions:
– musical contests loosely connected with religious feasts and organized by the community;
– schools (private institutions); and
– scholarship (philologia, private and public).
4. There are, of course, other institutions that needed, produced and controlled authoritative and standardized texts: e.g. law, ritual, medicine. These needs were felt and duly satisfied in many ancient cultures. What seems to be new in Greco-Roman culture is the creation of a public space for literature.

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[50] Cf. above n.41, the places for Greek comic poets in the Athenian list: *IG* XIV 1097-1098.—Concerning the place of comedy in the Roman *ludi scenici* there are some remarks in: J. Blänsdorf, "Voraussetzungen und Entstehung der römischen Komödie", in: E. Lefèvre (ed.), *Das römische Drama* (Darmstadt, 1978), 91-134, esp. 112 ff.—W. Beare, *A Short History of Roman Drama in the Republic* (London, ^{2}1955). We have only scarce knowledge about contests at the *ludi scenici*.

CANONS OF LITERARY TEXTS AT ROME

AMIEL D. VARDI

When I was asked by the organizers of this project to discuss Roman canons, I was faced with two main difficulties: I was not sure in what sense one can speak of literary 'canons' in the ancient world, and I was even less sure as to what 'Roman' could mean in such a context.

In modern literary studies, as for example in Harold Bloom's recent monograph titled *The Western Canon*, the term normally refers to a more or less authoritative or standard list of works representing the best literary products of a specific culture or era. A similar concept of 'canon', if it is to be applicable to the ancient world, should consist of the following notions (a) a list (b) of selected literary works, (c) which are regarded as sharing a special value (being the only ones extant, the best, the most representative, or the most suitable for a specific purpose); in addition such a list should also be (d) more or less standard and generally known, as well as (e) authoritative, in the sense that it is generally accepted or at least acknowledged when it is rejected. This too is a relatively modern sense of the term 'canon', formed in the eighteenth century in analogy to the theological canon of biblical books officially accepted by the Christian Church as genuinely inspired. The Greek word *kanon*, meaning 'rule' or 'yard stick', was never used in the modern literary sense of 'canon', nor is the theological sense attested before the fourth century CE[1]. But the concept, or rather, cluster of kindred concepts, was not alien to the classical mentality, and was represented, for example, by the term 'classicus' coined by Aulus Gellius in the second century C.E., by

[1] The modern sense of 'canon' is first used in D. Ruhnken's preface to his edition of Rutilius Lupus (Leiden, 1768), p. xcv = *Opuscula varii argumenti*[2] (Leiden, 1823), 386. For the history of the term, see H. Oppel, "Κανών. Zur Bedeutungsgeschichte des Wortes und seiner lateinischen Entsprechungen (regula—norma)", *Philologus*, Suppl. 30.4 (1937); R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* I: *From the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford, 1968), 204-8. For the Christian denotation, Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 6.25.3.

terms such as 'ordo' or 'numerus' used by Quintilian, or by the Greek term *enkrithentes,* 'those judged worthy of inclusion'. We possess several lists of this type from Hellenistic and Roman sources, to which I shall presently turn. But before that I must revert to my second difficulty, that of referring to any of these lists as 'Roman'.

The well known fact that Roman cultural institutions are very much dependent on Greek ones is particularly prominent in Roman enumerations of literary works, which very often list Greek as well as Roman authors. The reading list offered by Quintilian in the tenth book of his *Institutio Oratoria*, for instance, enumerates first Greek authors, and then Latin ones, thus reproducing the physical structure of Roman public libraries, in which Greek and Latin texts were stored in two distinct wings. Furthermore, some of the lists of Greek authors offered by Roman scholars are so closely dependent on similar lists from Greek sources, that it would be pointless to discuss them in isolation. And finally, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, one of the authors whose list of recommended reading will concern us in this article, was a Greek, writing in Greek, and his canon contains only Greek authors, but he was operating in Rome of the Augustan age. So also was Caecilus of Caleacte, believed by many to have been the original creator of one of the most influential ancient canons, that of the Ten Attic Orators.[2] In spite of the title of my discussion, I shall, therefore, permit myself to encroach upon Hellenic territory and try to offer a brief sketch of the way Hellenistic canons were received and developed at Rome.

People resort to enumerating literary works for some very strange reasons. In many cases they do this in order to establish an authority for their own views by amassing all previous supporters and carefully suppressing or scornfully dismissing counter views. At other times they resort to enumeration in order to establish precedents for what others consider an abominable fault in their behaviour. Poor Ovid, for instance, writing apologetically from his exile in Tomi, lists many Greek and Latin authors who composed lascivious amatory poems like his own. Similar lists, though apparently more successful ones, are later found in a letter of Pliny at the turn of the first century, in Apuleius' speech in his defence from 159 C.E., and in the fourth-century poet Ausonius of Bordeaux.[3] Such enumerations,

[2] See below, pp. 139-140.

[3] Ov. *Trist.* 2.361-470; Plin. *Ep.* 5.3.3ff.; Apul. *Apol.* 9-11, pp. 10-12 Helm; Aus. *Cent. Nupt.* 130, p. 153 Green.

which we would not call 'canons', nevertheless exhibit the same attempt to embrace as many works of a specific type as possible, which is an important characteristic of the first kind of systematic lists of literary works compiled in the ancient world.

The context to which comprehensive canons most naturally belong is that of literary histories, which often try to provide a systematic and exhaustive survey of particular literary forms or even of all the literature available for examination. Such attempts were particularly characteristic of Hellenistic philology, associated first and foremost with the library of Alexandria, and later expanding to other cultural centres such as Pergamon, Rhodes and eventually Rome as well. We credit Callimachos of Cyrene, the most prominent scholar in mid-third-century Alexandria, with the first scientific effort at a comprehensive history of Greek literature. His huge work, the *pinakes*, in 120 rolls, presented a bibliography of Greek literature and a catalogue of the Alexandrian Library, organized by subject and genre, and including some biographical notes on the authors he mentions and the first line of each of their works. His catalogue thus reveals an attempt to classify and array the material he collects, which according to Jack Goody, is one of the major contribution of lists to human thinking.[4] Similar enterprises were carried on by Callimachus' successors, though on a smaller scale and with more refined generic specifications. We also hear of catalogues of rhetors and of comedy writers created in the Pergamene centre,[5] and the Romans, who called such comprehensive lists *indices*,[6] refer to similar catalogues of tragedians (Cic. *Hort.* fr. 8 Grilli), philosophers (Sen. *Ep.* 39.2) and epic poets (Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.57).

But though it was once held that most Alexandrian canons were of the comprehensive type, comprising all the material available at their time,[7] it is nowadays generally assumed that it was in the studies

[4] J. Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge, 1997), esp. 81, 105, 109-110.

[5] See Pfeiffer, *History* (cf. n. 1), 133.

[6] *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (Leipzig, 1900–), s.v. II.C.3. The term *index* is also used for catalogues of the works of a specific author; see e.g. Plin. *Ep.* 3.5.2 (his uncle's writings), Gell. 3.3 (Plautine comedies).

[7] See esp. U. von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, "Die Textgeschichte der griechischen Lyriker", *Abhandl. der Gesellschaft der Wissensch. zu Göttingen* n.s. 4.3 (1900), 63-71; and the discussions of L. Radermacher, in: A.F. von Pauly, G. Wissowa et al. (eds.), *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1894-1972), 10 (1919), s.v. "kanon", 1874, 1877 and R. Pfeiffer, *History* (cf. n. 1), 205.

of Callimachus' successors, notably those of Aristophanes of Byzantium and Aristarchus, both librarians in Alexandria in the second century B.C.E., that comprehensive canons were first replaced by selective ones. We learn from Quintilian that the Hellenistic poet Apollonius Rhodius was not admitted by these scholars into their canon of epic poets, since Aristophanes and Aristarchus did not include authors of their own time in their lists (*Inst.* 10.1.54). But these critics did not base their selection on chronological considerations alone. Quintilian thus speaks of *tribus receptis Aristarchi iudicio scriptoribus iamborum*—'the three iambic poets approved by the judgement of Aristarchus' (*Inst.* 10.1.59),[8] from which it is clear that the Alexandrian critic did not eschew evaluative considerations in establishing his list of the most representative authors of this genre. And from a remark of Cicero we can infer that Aristarchus even specified his own preferences among the poems of those authors he decided to include in his canon (*Att.* 16.11.2).

We do not know the exact form in which the canons of Aristophanes and Aristarchus were originally shaped, whether they were merely lists of authors or formed part of a detailed discussion of each genre. They could also have been incorporated in some prefatory remarks attached by the Alexandrian scholars to their editions of, or commentaries on, ancient authors. Some of the lists which have come down to us from much later times appear in similar contexts, such as Cicero's comprehensive history of Latin Oratory in his *Brutus*; the short treatise *de Poematibus* of the late-fourth-century grammarian Diomedes (H. Keil (ed.), *Grammatici Latini* [Leipzig, 1855-80], I.482-92); the preface to a commentary on Lycophron by the Byzantine scholar Johanes Tzetzes (pp. 1-4, Scheer[2]), and an epitome of a handbook of literature by a Proclus, perhaps the fifth-century Neoplatonist (apud Phot. *Bibl.* 239 Henry),[9] who seems to preserve much of the teaching of the Alexandrian scholar Didymus from the last century B.C.E.. We even possess one example of a bare list of Greek authors, arranged by genres, but devoid of any contextual discussion, in a little text of around the tenth century C.E., represented in a number of Byzantine MSS.[10] In Rome, similar enumerations

[8] Cf. *Inst.* 1.4.3. Passages from Quintilian are quoted from M. Winterbottom's translation in: *Ancient Literary Criticism*, ed. by D.A. Russell and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1972), with some minor changes.

[9] See D.A. Russell, *Criticism in Antiquity*[2] (Bristol 1995), 154.

[10] *Coisl.* 387 (originally from Mt. Athos, *cod. Ath.* 229, saec. X, f. 153v); *Bod.*

of authors could very well have fitted into the work by the Roman playwright Accius titled *Didascalica*, from mid-second century B.C.E., which might have been the object of a polemical canon of Ten Latin Writers of Comedies preserved from the verse treatise *de Poetis* by Volcacius Sedigitus, of around the year 100 B.C.E..[11] On the basis of the type of work in which Volcacius' canon was included, together with the evidence from Diomedes' *de Poematibus*, we may assume that similar enumerations of authors could well have been included in other Roman treatises *de Poetis* and *de Poematibus*, notably those of Varro and Suetonius, from which we have only a few fragments. Yet other contexts in which we find canonical lists are discussions of cultural history such as that of Velleius Paterculus 1.16-18.

But beginning with the last century B.C.E. or possibly a little earlier, canons begin to appear in a new context and assume a different function. We suddenly find lists of authors serving as recommended reading lists in manuals of rhetoric. This development is closely connected with the introduction into rhetorical theory of the doctrine of *mimesis* or *imitatio*, which regards imitation of the styles of great masterpieces as one of the primary sources of eloquence, and one no less important than either natural talent (*ingenium*) or any teachable technique (*ars*).[12] It is generally assumed that this development originated in the then flourishing school of Pergamon, which, unlike the Alexandrian centre, was much interested in rhetoric, and where rhetoricians, grammarians and literary critics collaborated in stylistic research. It has also been suggested that the school of Pergamon was quick to adopt the trendy Atticist movement, which was opposed to the florid, ornamental and opulent Asianist style in oratory, and adhered to that of the old Attic orators, especially Lysias. This, as we shall see, might have had a significant role in shaping the Canon of Ten Attic Orators encountered a little later on. But

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saec. XV, f. 359b; *Vat.* 1456, f. 487. See esp. O. Kröhnert, *Canonesne Poetarum Scriptorum Artificum per Antiquitatem Fuerunt?* (Diss. Königsberg, 1897). The text is also reproduced in H. Usener, *Dionysii Halicarnassensis Librorum de Imitatione Reliquiae* (Bonn, 1889), 130-131; W. Peterson, *M. Fabi Quintiliani Institutionis Oratoriae Liber Decimus* (Oxford, 1891), xxxvi; J. Cousin, *Études sur Quintilien* I (Paris, 1935), 570.

[11] Volcacius Sedigitus, fr. 1, Qapud Gell. 15.24; see further J.F. D'Alton, *Roman Literary Theory and Criticism* (London, 1931), 64-6; M. Coccia, "Il canone di Volcacio Sedigito", *Studi Romani* 7 (1959), 62-5.

[12] See G. Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton, 1963), 332-3; D.A. Russell, "De Imitatione", in D. West and T. Woodman (eds.), *Creative Imitation and Latin Literature* (Cambridge, 1979), 1-16, esp. 5-7 and the bibliography cited there, 201, n. 1.

what is more important for us at the moment is that the lists of authors recommended by rhetoricians as models for imitation did not include speeches alone, but also many works of poetry, historiography and philosophy.

Cicero's treatise *de Oratore* is already governed by the idea that much reading, in all literary types, is essential for the training of an orator. But the first comprehensive reading list for orators we possess comes from a generation or so later, from an epitome of a work titled *peri Mimeseos* ('on Imitation') by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (fr. 6, II.204-214 U.-R.). Almost a century later we find the well known 'canon' of Quintilian appearing in exactly the same context: it is a recommended reading list, said to be chosen especially for the purpose of enriching one's vocabulary and stylistic versatility (e.g. *Inst.* 10.1.1, 44, 59), and it is followed by an enthusiastic discussion of the benefits of imitation. We have similar lists in later Greek rhetorical works, such as the treatise *peri Ideon* ('On Types of Style') by Hermogenes from the second century C.E., which provides lists of prose writers alone and only mentions the need for further reading in the poets.[13] (A scheme of the canons offered by most of the scholars just mentioned appears in table 1.)

If we compare Quintilian's enumeration with that of Dionysius, we cannot escape noting their striking resemblance: the same four pre-Hellenistic epic poets appear in both, and in the same order; the same short list of only four lyric poets out of the canonical nine; and the same prominent position of Menander as the only representative of comedy in Dionysius, and of new comedy in Quintilian. Actually, the similarity goes much beyond the names of authors reproduced in the table. It involves the evaluative criteria and reasoning both authors provide for their choice and we can at times even detect the same wording behind Quintilian's Latin. The two canons have been carefully studied by H. Usener, W. Peterson, and J. Cousin[14], who all came to the conclusion that both authors must have been using a common source rather than depending on each other, though the latter two believe Quintilian knew Dionysius' work as well. The common source is variously ascribed to the literary

[13] 2.10-12; see further I. Rutherford, *Canons of Style in the Antonine Age: Idea-Theory in its Literary Context* (Oxford, 1998), 37-63.

[14] Usener, *D.H. Imit.* (cf. n. 10), 110-142; Petereson, *Quint. Inst.* 10 (cf. n. 10), xxx-xxxvii; Cousin, *Études* (cf. n. 10) I.547-73; see futher in M. Scotti, "I 'canoni' degli autori greci", *Esperienze Letterarie* 7 (1982) no. 2, 74-91, at 89-90.

investigations of third-century scholars from Alexandria or to a reading list formed in the Pergamene school in the second century B.C.E..

But the similarity between canonical lists is not confined to these two authors alone. The names of the four epic poets given by both Dionysius and Quintilian are also present in Proclus, Tzetzes and the Byzantine MSS, though these add a fifth writer, the archaic Pisander, author of an early epic about Heracles, which was well known to the Alexandrians (see table 1). Quintilian, let us note, does not ignore Pisander altogether, but includes him in a supplementary enumeration of four epic poets which he says others might have suggested adding to his reading list (*Inst.* 10.1.56). The other epic writers he mentions in this category are the Hellenistic poets Nicander and Euphorion, who would not have been included in the Alexandrian canon, and the archaic Tyrtaeus, not an epic poet at all, but mentioned, as Quintilian explains, since he is considered 'second to Homer' by Horace (*Ars* 401). It appears, therefore that Quintilian too was aware of a canon of five pre-Hellenistic epic poets, but chose not to include Pisander in his reading list for the future orator. This is also Quintilian's manner when dealing with the iambic poets, where he mentions the Alexandrian canon of three, but includes only Archilochus in his list (*Inst.* 10.1.59), and similarly in his discussion of lyric poetry, where he acknowledges the canon of nine, but admits only four of them (ib. 61-4). But the fact that Dionysius admits the same four epic poets and the same lyric ones, cannot be fortuitous, and suggests that these restricted selections of four poets in each of the two genres was already present in the common source of Dionysius and Quintilian. If so, I suppose we must assume either that this common source was more similar to Quintilian's list, providing both the recommended short list and the established full canons, which Dionysius chose not to mention; or that the common source contained only the recommended short list, to which Quintilian added the references to the full canons known in his day. In either case, if we assume that their common source was a rhetorical enumeration of recommended reading, we may conclude that at least for the poetic genres, ancient rhetorical reading lists were not compiled independently, but were based on the Alexandrian canons of representative authors.

But, since the later Hellenistic and Roman reading lists, such as those of Dionysius and Quintilian, were formed with an eye on both

the Alexandrian canons and the later rhetorical reading lists, we should, in dealing with them, attempt to determine the exact stage at which each generic canon they refer to was established. The canon of three tragedians was probably the first to be formed, to judge by the title *On the Three Tragedians* of one of the books of Heraclides of Pontus from the fourth century B.C.E..[15] We have Quintilian's testimony to the fact that the standard list of three iambic poets was already formed by the Alexandrian scholars. It also seems safe to ascribe to them the canon of Nine Lyric Poets, which is attested already in Hellenistic epigrams. This canon was known to Petronius, Seneca and Quintilian, and it is likely that when Horace, in the first poem of his first book of *Odes*, expressed his wish to be included among the lyric poets (l. 35: *quod si me lyricis vatibus inseres*), he was already alluding to the Hellenistic list of Nine.[16] It has been suggested that enumerations of three representatives of a genre, such as Aristophanes' canon of iambic poets, were formed in analogy to the triad of tragedians.[17] This may also be the case with the three writers of Old Comedy, Aristophanes, Eupolis and Cratinus, who form the stable nucleus of most enumerations of this type of poetry, and appear already in Horace's *Sermo* 1.4.1-2: *Eupolis atque Cratinus Aristophanesque poetae | atque alii quorum comoedia prisca virorum est.* This enumeration of Horace's is, of course, not a real canon, but it illustrates a very typical context in which enumerations of authors were included, as well as another important function of selective canonical lists in antiquity. What was originally an enumeration of the best representative writers within a specific genre in a given literary corpus, came to be considered a list of archetypal examples which every future author in that genre had to follow, and against which all future works of the type would be evaluated. As such, the canonical authors may be called *kanones* in the original Greek sense of the word, and we do indeed find some ancient writers using the term in the sense of 'a standard model of the genre and one by which other works would be judged'[18]. The authors occupying the first position in the canons

[15] Cf. D.L. 588.

[16] See *AP* 9.184; 9.571; Petr. *Sat.* 2.4; Sen. *Ep.* 27.6; Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.61; and the evidence collected in H. Färber, *Die Lyrik in der Kunsttheorie der Antike* (München, 1936) II.22-4; M. Davies, *Poetarum Melicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Oxford, 1991), I.1-3.

[17] Radermacher, "kanon" (cf. n. 7), 1877.

[18] E.g. D.H., *Pomp.* 3.16, II.239.8-10 U.-R.: Ἡρόδοτός τε γὰρ τῆς ἰάδος ἄριστος κανών, Θουκυδίδης τε τῆς Ἀτθίδος; Phot. 20b25; 35b33; and see further in Scotti, "canoni" (cf. n. 14), 84-7.

are, of course, the ones most readily adopted as generic prototypes. We thus find Horace naming Archilochus as the model of his iambic poetry, and his contemporary Propertius names Callimachus and Philetas as the Greek archetypes of his elegies.[19] As can be noted in table 1, the names of the latter two Hellenistic poets appear in almost all our enumerations of writers of elegy, and may therefore be considered canonical. But, since, as Quintilian tells us, the Alexandrian critics did not include Hellenistic authors in their canons, the standard list of elegists must have been established relatively late, sometime between the late second century B.C.E. and the Augustan age in which Propertius was already referring to it.

I shall not enter into the lists of historians and philosophers, but conclude my survey of the standard representatives of each genre with some remarks on the canon of orators. The first clear reference to an established canon of Ten Attic Orators is found in the reading list provided by Hermogenes in the second century C.E. (*Id.* 2.10, 401.5 Rabe), and it is also represented in a Pseudo-Plutarch treatise on the *Lives of the Ten Orators* and in the Byzantine lists. Unlike the rest of the standard enumerations we have examined, this one lays no claim to represent the whole of oratory but professedly limits its selection to a specific style of speeches, the one favoured by the Atticists of the last two centuries B.C.E.. Alan Douglas has seriously doubted whether Quintilian's reference to 'ten orators Athens had raised in a single *aetas*' (*Inst.* 10.1.76) can refer to this canon, whose members span from Lysias to Dinarchus. He therefore concludes that the canonical list of Ten Attic Orators was not known to Quintilian, and that there is thus no evidence for that canon before the second century C.E..[20] But the debate between Asianists and Atticists had by Quintilian's day lost much of its point and second-century cultural discourse appears to be a less suitable ground for the production of such a canon, the so called 'Atticism' of that period being concerned mostly with vocabulary rather than with rhetorical style and ornamental devices as it used to be in the Atticist movement of the second and first centuries B.C.E.. I therefore tend

[19] Hor. *Ep.* 1.19.23-5: Parios ego primus iambos | ostendi Latio, numeros animosque secutus | Archilochi, non res et agentia verba Lycamben; Prop. 3.1.1: Callimachi Manes et Coi sacra Philitae, | in vestrum, quaeso, me sinite ire nemus.

[20] Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.1.76: Sequitur oratorum ingens manus, ut cum decem simul Athenis aetas una tulerit. See: A.E. Douglas, "Cicero, Quintilian, and the Canon of Ten Attic Orators", *Mnemosyne*[4] 9 (1956), 30-40.

to accept the prevailing view that the Canon of Ten was nevertheless formed much before Quintilian's time, either in the Pergamon school in the second century B.C.E., or by an Atticist of the following century, such as Caecilius of Caleacte, operating in Rome under Augustus, who is reported to have written a treatise *On the styles of the Ten Orators.*[21] This, therefore, is our only example of a canon which was originally formed within the domain of rhetoric and with an eye on stylistic imitation.

To sum up this part of my argument, we find in the ancient world two distinct kinds of selective enumerations of authors: the earlier, Alexandrian, lists of representative authors of each genre, and the later lists of authors recommended as models of style for those wishing to practice oratory, which were often compiled on the basis of the Alexandrian canons. These enumerations are not altogether fixed, but they do reveal much similarity, which means that at least in their theoretical treatises, ancient rhetors preferred to adhere to a rather fixed core of authors. Even when they decide to deviate from the standard list, as Quintilian occasionally does, they feel the need at least to acknowledge the traditional list. Furthermore, for each genre these enumerations provide a rather constant core, with the first position in each generic list particularly stable: Homer, Archilochus, Pindar, and Menander, the same authors who also serve as the archetypes of their genre.

The same scheme of a stable core with flexible periphery also emerges from Teresa Morgan's study of the authors used in school-text papyri from Egypt, and may therefore be considered a characteristic of ancient literate education[22]. To what extent the standard reading lists reproduced by rhetoricians in their theoretical treatises reflect what was actually taught in ancient rhetorical schools we

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[21] *Suda*, s.v. *Kaikilios*. For a Pergamene provenance: J. Brozoska, *de Canone Decem Oratorum Atticorum Quaestiones* (Diss. Breslau, 1883); by Caecilus of Caleacte: P. Hartmann, *de Canone Decem Oratorum* (Diss. Göttingen, 1891); I. Worthington, "The Canon of the Ten Attic Orators", in idem (ed.), *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action* (London, 1994), 244-63; N. O'Sullivan, "Caecilius, the 'Canons' of Writers, and the Origins of Atticism", in W.J. Dominik (ed.), *Roman Eloquence. Rhetoric in Society and Literature* (London, 1997), 32-49. I find it hard to accept R.M. Smith' argument for an Alexandrian origin, in "A New Look at the Canon of the Ten Attic Orators", *Mnemosyne*[4] 48 (1995), 66-79, which is based primarily on the claim that the rest of the lists provided by Quintilian are all Alexandrian, ignoring, for instance, the list of elegists, which, as we have seen, could not have been.

[22] T. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge, 1998), 71-3.

cannot say.[23] They were certainly not authoritative. There was no official institution in the ancient world which would prescribe a fixed syllabus or issue a list of authoritative authors, and each compiler could vary his canon according to his purposes or personal taste.[24] Dio of Prusa, for instance, recommends only a very short list of essential reading to a friend wishing to embark on a career of public speaker: nothing but Menander and Euripides of the dramatists; of all other types of poetry, only Homer; two or three historians and orators, and no real need for the philosophers (*Or.* 18.6-13). Though we may suspect that Dio's recommendation was meant to be provocative, it might not have been all that far from what many pupils of his day were actually taught. Morgan's survey of the authors used in schooltext papyri reveals that the hard core of texts used in the schools of Egypt consisted mainly of the three poets Dio recommends: Homer, Euripides and Menander.[25] We should however remember that these papyri do not reflect what was taught in the schools of rhetoric but rather in those of the grammarians at earlier stages of education, and the core of authors represented in them does indeed correspond to the reading list recommended by Quintilian for pupils of that stage: Homer, Vergil, some tragedy, [new] comedy and especially Menander, and a choice of lyric poetry (*Inst.* 1.8.5-12).[26]

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[23] It does, for instance, seem suspicious that we have no other indication of any Roman author of that period who did read Panyassis or Pisander. (The single references to Panyassis and to Pisander in the astronomical treatise of Hyginus [*Astr.* 2.6, 2.24, ll. 300, 993 Viré] are probably echoed from his Hellenistic sources. The mention of Pisander among the most ancient epic poets in the late treatise *de Musica* ascribed to Censorinus [Keil, *Gramm. Lat.*, VI.607.3] needs nothing but an acquaintance with the standard canon; Macr. *Sat.* 5.2.4-5 and probably also Serv. *ad Aen.* 211 must refer to Pisandrus of Laranda of the early 3rd century C.E. [see E. Fraenkel, *Journal of Roman Studies* 38 (1948), 141; R.G. Austin's commentary on *Aen. 2* (Oxford, 1964), 104-5]; but Eusthatius, Macrobius' expert of Greek literature, might have known something of Panyassis' work [*Sat.* 5.21.19]). I would not, of course, dare to suggest that Quintilian himself had not read all the authors he recommends. But let us note that he did not have to read them in order to compile his list.

[24] Cf. Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.42-4. Note that in his list of Latin authors Quintilian sometimes refers to the judgement of others (86, 89, 93, 102, 113, 130), but does not hesitate to speak from personal experience ('uidetur mihi', 98) and express his personal views (e.g. on Seneca 125-31). Pliny, on the other hand, claims that who the authors one should read (clearly, in order to improve one's stylistic skills) is too well known to need specifying ('Qui sint hi adeo notum probatumque est, ut demonstratione non egeat', *Ep.* 7.9.16).

[25] Morgan, *Literate Education* (cf. n. 22), 69 and her table 15, p. 313.

[26] To be precise, Quintilian distinguishes between different levels of pupils both

Furthermore, if we examine the authors most readily referred to in the writings of educated Romans of the imperial time it seems that the core of texts most of them were familiar with were those of Cicero, Sallust and Vergil among Latin authors, and Homer, Euripides and Menander among the Greek.[27] That Vergil, Terence, Cicero and Sallust were considered the basic Roman texts is also attested in the *Exempla Elocutionum* of the late fourth-century rhetorician Arusianus Messius (Keil, *Gramm. Lat.*, VII.449-515), and later by Cassiodorus, who calls them the *quadriga Messii* (Keil, *Gramm. Lat.*, VII.211.3).[28] We can, therefore, speak of yet another Roman 'canon', that of the core of basic texts most educated Romans actually encountered in the course of their studies, probably already at the grammarian's schools.[29] The sanctioned status of this canon in Roman society is clearly revealed by the manner in which Archaists of the early second century C.E., who challenged it, chose to proclaim their alternative canon: Hadrian, we are told, preferred Cato to Cicero, Ennius to Vergil and Caelius to Sallust (*HA*, *Hadr.* 16.6), and similarly, in Tacitus' *Dialogue on Orators*, the archaists are described as 'those who prefer Lucilius to Horace, and Lucretius to Vergil' (*Dial.* 23.2). However, this canon of the basic texts used in education is one we can reconstruct from ancient sources, not an enumeration we actually find spelled out before the late fourth century C.E., and we may note that Quintilian's list of recommended reading for the schools of the grammarians is far less specific than his syllabus for pupils of rhetoric in book 10, and gives mainly general outlines in generic terms. The influence on such a canon of the traditional canonical enumerations may therefore be assumed to be less compelling, and indeed this canon is not only far less extensive than the 'ideal' reading lists recommended by Quintilian and other rhetoricians for more ad-

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in the earlier stages of education (*Inst.* 1.8.6, 2.5.18-20) and in rhetorical studies (10.1.58, 131).

[27] Morgan, *Literate Education* (cf. n. 22), tables 18-19, pp. 317-9.

[28] Cf. Aus. *Prot. ad Nep.* 45-7, 56-65 (pp. 25-6 Green)—Homer and Menander, Horace, Vergil and Sallust as schooltexts.

[29] H.-I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité* (Paris, 1965), 404-6; S.F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome from the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny* (London, 1977), 215-9. The inclusion of Augustan poets in this canon might not have occurred before the time of Nero; see R. Mayer, "Neronian Classicism", *American Journal of Philology* 103 (1982), 305-18. This is not to say that Augustan poets were not already cherishing a hope to be included in the canon; see J.E.G. Zetzel, "Re-creating the Canon. Augustan Poetry and the Alexandrian Past", *Critical Inquiry* 10 (1983), 83-105.

vanced stages of education, but also does not share the tendency of those lists to represent all the literary genres acknowledged by the Hellenistic literary critics.[30] It is, however, noteworthy that the authors included in this basic canon are those occupying the first place in their genre in the more extensive canons.

But to come back to the extensive canonical lists of both literary critics and teachers of rhetoric, let us note that the uniformity they reveal goes beyond the authors they name, and is even more manifest in their structure. As can be seen in table 2, they all tend to include the same generic categories and in the same order: epic is always first, then elegy, iambus and lyric with very little variation, then the dramatic genres, and the prose ones.[31] The order in which these genres appear, as noted by Peter Steinmetz, is based on Alexandrian principles of arrangement: the classification of literature into poetry and prose, the originally Aristotelian bipartite division of the poetic genres into dramatic and non-dramatic (as opposed to the tripartite Platonic system which also distinguishes pure narrative literary forms from those which mix dramatic and narrative modes), the classification of the non-dramatic poetic genres according to their metre and their arrangement in roughly the historical order in which they made their appearance in archaic Greece, first epic, then elegy and iambus and then lyric.[32] We may also note that the literary types included in this generic scheme represent Greek archaic and classical literature far better than that of the Hellenistic age, in which other genres, some of them altogether new and experimental, were thriving. We may therefore assume that this retrospective classificatory system was established, if not already in the structure of Callimachus' catalogue, by one of the Alexandrian scholars continuing his project. Aristophanes of Byzantium is known to have done some re-arranging of Callimachus' *pinakes*, and his successor

[30] In *Inst.* 1.8.6 Quintilian explicitly mentions elegy, iambic and sotadic verse as well as parts of the works of lyric poets as unsuitable for the reading of young pupils.

[31] Though at the beginning of his list Quintilian speaks generally of 'types of reading' ('genera lectionum', *Inst.* 10.1.45, cf. 104 and 'sui cuiusque generis auctores' in Plin. *Ep.* 7.9.15), he then sometimes refers specifically to 'genres' ('opus', 67, 69, 72; cf. Hor. *Ars* 86).

[32] P. Steinmetz, "Gattungen und Epochen der griechischen Literatur in der Sicht Quintilians", *Hermes* 92 (1964), 454-66, at 459-63; see also H. Dahlmann, "Varros Schrift 'de poematis' und die hellenistisch-römische Poetik", *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Meinz* (1953, no. 3), 89-158, at 149-58; Russell, *Criticism* (cf. n. 9), 150-2.

as librarian at Alexandria, Apollonius, was for some reason nicknamed ὁ εἰδόγραφος (which we might translate 'the one who wrote down a classification of genres').[33]

But more important than the actual time when this generic scheme of ancient canons was first formed, is the fact that the rhetors chose to adopt it when sitting down to compose their reading lists, and that we find the same generic scheme governing many other discussions of literary types, even those which are not concerned with providing canonical lists of authors, such as Horace's short discussion of poetic genres in lines 73 to 85 of his *Ars Poetica*.[34] Quintilian openly confesses to the obligation he feels to follow this scheme when at the end of his enumeration of recommended Greek authors he says: 'I must keep to the same order in dealing with Roman writers also' (*Inst.* 10.1.85). This adherence to a standard scheme is not in itself surprising. When asked to produce a list of items, we very seldom come out with a random one, and mostly we arrange it by using a pre-existing classification and ordering system.[35] But the adoption of such a standard scheme in enumerations of literary types has some serious implications. It entails, for instance, that reading lists arranged by it

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[33] For the order of the librarians at Alexandria, see P.M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford, 1972), I.321-333. For Apollonius, Pfeiffer, *History* (cf. n. 1), 183-4; C. Calame, "Réflexions sur les genres littéraires en Grèce archaïque", *Quaderni urbinati di cultura classica* 17 (1974), 113-28, at p. 125, n. 28. According to the *Etymologicum Magnum* (p. 295.52), Apollonius' main contribution was a classification of the Pindaric odes into musical types (εἴδη), which might explain his nickname. But other Alexandrian scholars were also engaged in classifying literature into εἴδη without earning such an appellation.

[34] C.O. Brink (*Horace on Poetry*, II: *The 'Ars Poetica'* [Cambridge, 1971], 161-2) objects to the idea that Horace was here following the traditional generic scheme since, as he rightly remarks, lines 80-82, which appear between the references to iambos and to lyric poetry, are already concerned with tragedy and comedy. He is probably also right in claiming that the discussion of tragedy and comedy in lines 89-98 does not belong to the same passage and should not be called upon in order to restore the scheme. However, since Horace does keep to the sequence epic-elegy-iambs, and returns to treat lyric poetry immediately after his remark that tragedy and comedy adopted the metre of the iambic genre, it seems that his slight deviation from the traditional scheme derives from the fact that his main issue in this passage is the metrical differentiation of genres, and not the distinction between mimetic and diegetic manners of representation.

[35] See J. Goody, *Domestication* (cf. n. 4), 109-110, and for the relation between canons and generic systems in general A. Fowler, "Genres and the Literary Canon", *New Literary History* 11 (1979), 97-119; idem, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge MA, 1982), 213-34. Note, however, that not all Roman enumerations of genres or authors follow this generic scheme (e.g. Vell. 2.36; Stat. *Silv.* 5.3.146-58; Tac. *Dial.* 10.4).

have no room for genres which do not appear in the scheme. We may, thus, note that none of our canons mentions epigram,[36] which throughout the Hellenistic age, and particularly from the end of the second century B.C.E. was one of the most productive genres in both Greek and Latin literature. Some of these epigrams are indeed highly obscene, perhaps too obscene to be incorporated in a school syllabus. But the fact that in book 10 Quintilian does mention the iambic poetry of both Archilochus and Catullus, excludes this explanation for their omission from his reading list. Furthermore, epigrams seem an especially suitable type of reading for Roman orators of the first century C.E., often known for their epigrammatic style. In a very strict sense, epigrams may thus be considered an un-canonical genre, not because they were not read, taught, or even deemed profitable, but simply because they came to be a significant literary type after the generic scheme of canons was established. One can even wonder whether this was not also the case with the most un-canonical genre of late antiquity, the so called 'Greek Novel.'

At times, however, Quintilian does manage to refer to genres which do not form part of the Greek generic scheme. In his discussion of Cicero's speeches, for instance, he inserts a brief recommendation of the orator's dialogues and epistles (*Inst.* 10.1.107; cf. *ib.* 129 on Seneca). He allows himself an even bolder deviation from the Greek scheme in adding a special entry for satire, the originally Roman genre of which he is so proud (*Inst.* 10.1.93). The position he finds for this new entry in his canon is, however, significant: It comes just before iambus, allowing it to pass as an extension of the traditional iambic genre, which is not an altogether outrageous suggestion whether historically or thematically.[37] The same trick seems to be adopted also by Diomedes, who lists satire just after iambus and epode (Keil, *Gramm. Lat.*, I.485.30), and similarly, Horace affixes to his discussion of elegy a note on 'that very short type of elegy' (*Ars* 75-8), which we usually take to refer to epigram.[38]

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[36] 'Epigram' in Caesius Bassus (Keil, *Gramm. Lat.*, VI.312.8) in all probability stands for Elegy with which it shares the metre. For the affinity between the two genres, see B. Gentili, "Epigramma ed elegia", in *L'épigramme Grecque. Entretiens de la Fondation Hardt* 14 (Vandoevres/Genève, 1968), 39-81.

[37] Note that Apuleius (*Apol.* 10) regards Lucilius as *iambicus*.

[38] See Gentili, "Epigramma ed elegia" (cf. n. 36), p. 46; Brink, *Ars Poetica* (cf. n. 34), 165. Note also that though in accordance with Hellenistic practice Quintilian lists Theocritus among the epic poets, he seems to feel that bucolic poetry is a

Another characteristic of ancient canonical enumerations is that unlike modern canons, they list authors rather than works, and consequently do not normally allow for value differentiation among the works of a single author. In the standard Greek canons, furthermore, each author is listed only once, even though some of them wrote in a number of different genres. Again, this is in accord with the corpus of archaic and classical literature which was the object of Alexandrian retrospective research.[39] But the force of this habit of naming each author in one generic category only, extends even to canonical lists which do allow for the inclusion of Hellenistic authors. Callimachus, for instance, who both preached *polyeideia* and wrote in several different genres himself, is mentioned only as an elegiac poet, regardless of his hymns, iambics, lyrics and epigrams. In this respect Quintilian's canon of Latin writers deviates from the Greek one: Cicero is listed under oratory as well as philosophy, Ovid is numbered with the writers of epic, elegy and tragedy, Horace among the authors of satire, iambic, and lyric poetry, and Seneca, treated separately at the end of Quintilian's reading list, is said to have handled virtually every branch of study, including speeches, poetry, letters and dialogues (129). The explanation for this apparent anomaly might be that the relatively young and not all that rich Latin literature could not provide Quintilian with enough authors to enumerate for each genre. Even so he can come up with the names of only two lyric poets. In all the other genres, on the other hand, his lists of Latin writers are longer than those of the Greek. Of course, Quintilian's main concern in providing his list is with the Latin style of his Roman students, and it is but natural that he would recommend to them more Latin reading than Greek.

But Quintilian's longer lists of Latin authors might have had yet another motivation, which we may call 'ideological'. Throughout his book, and particularly in his canon, Quintilian is trying to establish Roman literary achievement *vis à vis* the Greek. With shame he admits the Greek superiority in composing comedy (*Inst.* 10.1.99), and laments

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distinct literary type ('in suo genere Theocritus', *Inst.* 10.1.55). By the time of Diomedes 'bucolica' is no longer listed with epic, but between the iambic variety and tragedy, in the position occupied by lyric in the traditional scheme (Keil, *Gramm. Lat.*, I.486). A certain dissent from the traditional (metrical) classification of genres may also be reflected in Quintilian's description of the lyric poet Stesichorus as 'epici carminis onera lyra sustinentem' (*Inst.* 10.1.62).

[39] Finer classifications differentiating between sub-types of the lyric as well, would, of course, call for the mention of, say, Sappho or Pindar in more than one category.

the *egestas verborum* of the Latin language, but he is also anxious to point out all instances in which Roman achievement does not fall short of the Greek. *Elegia quoque Graecos provocamus*—'in elegy too we can offer a challenge to the Greeks' (ib. 93); *At non historia cesserit Graecis*—'but in history we do not need to yield to the Greeks' (101); and finally: 'It is our orators, however, who in particular can put Latin eloquence on a par with Greek' (105). If we look for a reason why Quintilian chose to adhere to the standard generic scheme of Greek canons, it is probably here that we should find it. In almost each genre that the Greeks have, we can rival their achievement or at least come close to it. And for every canonical author they offer, we can produce a serious rival. True, no one can rival Homer, but, Quintilian says, 'of all the poets of that genre in either Greek or Latin, Vergil undoubtedly comes nearest to Homer' (85); second indeed, but nearer to the first than the third. Similarly with historians: 'I should not hesitate to match Sallust with Thucydides; and Herodotus should not be angry to find Livy put on a par with him' (101) And in oratory, *Ciceronem cuicumque eorum fortiter opposuerim*—'I should happily pit Cicero against any Greek writer' (105) including the great Demosthenes.

Furthermore, if we examine the discussions of the most prominent representatives of each genre in Quintilian and other detailed reading lists, we find that many of the standard authors they give are also ascribed a standard quality characteristic of their style. Thucydides is normally credited with conciseness, Demosthenes with a forceful and grand style, and Menander almost inevitably with the realism for which he was already admired by Aristophanes of Byzantium. The authors Quintilian names as the Roman rivals of the great Greeks are consequently ascribed the same standard quality as their supposed models: Sallust is as concise as Thucydides, Cicero as grand and forceful as Demosthenes, and though Quintilian finds no Roman writer of comedies worthy of comparison with Menander, we may note that in judging Terence and Caecilius Statius other Romans often expect to find in them the same realistic portrayal of character traditionally, or should we say canonically, ascribed to Menander.[40]

The Roman habit of representing Latin authors as rivals of the great Greeks is quite an old mechanism developed by Roman society to counter its inferiority complex *versus* the Greeks.[41] It also owes

[40] E.g. Varro, fr. 301 Funaioli; Suet. *Vita Ter.*, *ad fin.*; Gell. 2.23; Donatus *ad* Ter. *Andr.* 447.

[41] E.g. Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.50, 57-8; Vell.2.9.3; see further C.O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry*, III *Epistles Book 2* (Cambridge, 1982), 84-97.

much to the rhetorical doctrine of *imitatio*, which insists that imitation be accompanied by *aemulatio*, by an attempt to rival the model and to surpass it in the very virtues in which it excels.[42] Quintilian's list of models shows how the cultural institution of the canon was also yoked to Roman ideological convictions.

We can also assume ideological motivation for the fact that unlike the Greek canon, Quintilian's enumeration of Latin authors is not limited to old masterpieces. As can be seen in table 1, Dionysius' reading list does not include even Hellenistic authors. Though both Quintilian's list of Greek writers and the rest of the Greek canons do name some relatively late authors, they all stop at the height of Hellenistic poetry, and the latest author they allow is Euphorion of the late third and early second century B.C.E..[43] In contrast, for almost every genre in his list of Roman writers Quintilian mentions some very recent authors, and though he makes a point of not including living persons, he nevertheless praises the achievement of his contemporaries, whose names, he says, would appear in the canons of future generations[44]. The impression such a representation is meant to create is, I suspect, one of great but long past and gone Greek achievements, whose only successors are their lively Roman rivals.

But canons do not respond to nationalistic ideologies alone. Once we have more or less standard lists of recommended reading, these almost inevitably become a social instrument serving the elite both as a token by which to identify its members and as a mechanism of exclusion, distinguishing it from the unlearned masses. Mastering a canon such as Quintilian recommends is a costly enterprise, affordable only to those who could also attend the rhetor's school, and consequently encouraged by this very class in order to maintain its distinction. Following the Roman revolution, Roman aristocracy, which for many generations was also the intellectual elite, gradually lost much of its distinction in terms of political influence and financial assets. This might well explain the increased insistence on intellectual assets which we find in authors of the second century C.E.. Rather than a tool one should strive to acquire in order to become a more accomplished orator, thus better fulfilling one's civic obliga-

[42] See D.A. Russell, "De Imitatione" (cf. n. 12), 10-11; A. Vardi, "Diiudicatio Locorum" *Classical Quarterly*[2] 46 (1996), 492-514, at 500-502.

[43] Cf. Steinmetz, "Gattungen und Epochen" (cf. n. 32), 464-6.

[44] E.g. Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.94, 96, 98, 104, 122.

tions and obtaining distinction in the forum and assemblies, we find in this period that learning becomes a goal *per se*, and a mark of the well bred gentleman. The literary canon thus acquired a new function: no longer a scholar's enumeration of the best representatives of each literary genre, nor a list of recommended reading for those wishing to practice oratory, but a body of texts every educated person should be familiar with, which is more or less what we mean by 'literary canon' nowadays. It would be misleading to suggest that this idea of the *canon* was not known to Roman thinking before the second century. But it is in this period that it becomes a dominant concept, and it is from one of our main second century texts, the *Noctes Atticae* of Aulus Gellius, that the renaissance humanists adopted both our modern idea of a literary canon and the term *classicus*, which used to designate it till "classicism" became a dirty word and the more neutral term *canon* was adopted.[45]

But let us note that it is here that uniformity becomes a prerequisite of canonical enumerations. Though earlier enumerations, as we have seen, also reveal a high degree of uniformity, for a list of representative writers or of recommended reading this is an incidental characteristic, the result of habit and traditionalism. But for a body of texts to function as the common mark of all the learned, standardization seems an absolute necessity. And yet, surprisingly enough, neither Gellius nor any other ancient authority provides us with an ordered enumeration, similar to those we have been examining, of the texts a well educated Roman should be familiar with. We may, of course, ascribe this omission to the fact that the evidence we possess represents only a small fraction of ancient literature. But the omission tends to occur in much later discussions of the literary canon too.[46] Even Harold Bloom, in his professedly reactionary defence of the the Western

[45] Gell. 19.8.15 (Fronto): *Ite ergo nunc et, quando forte erit otium, quaerite, an 'quadrigam' et 'harenas' dixerit e cohorte illa dumtaxat antiquiore vel oratorum aliquis vel poetarum, id est classicus adsiduusque aliquis scriptor, non proletarius.* (So go now and inquire, when you chance to have leisure, whether any orator or poet, provided he is of that earlier band, that is to say, any classical or first-class writer, not one of the common herd, has used the forms 'quadriga' or 'harenae'). The term reappears in this sense in the circle of Erasmus at the beginning of the 16th century; see R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* II: *From 1300 to 1850* (Oxford, 1976), 84, and for later use: G. Luck, "Scriptor Classicus", *Comparative Literature* 10 (1958), 150-158; R. Williams, *Keywords. A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London, 1976), 51-9.

[46] Cf. W.V. Harris, "Canonicity", *Publication of the Modern Language Association in America* 106 (1991), 110-21, at 111.

Canon, is careful to remark that the vast list of over three thousand canonical works he provides is not only virtually impossible to master, but is also neither closed nor authoritative.[47] I therefore have a suspicion that the absence of specified lists of this last type is not fortuitous. As long as the exact body of texts marking the learned is not clearly defined, it can still be used to establish differentiation in degrees of erudition, to encourage the continuous seeking of further learning, and occasionally, to expose one's opponents' ignorance by pointing out yet another text they should have read, but haven't.[48] A closed list, like that of the biblical scriptures,[49] on the other hand, surrenders the key to initiation into the hands of the masses, which is all very well for religious proselytism, but which elites, even the intellectual ones, don't like doing.[50]

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[47] H. Bloom, *The Western Canon* (New York, 1994), 37.

[48] Several instances of this sort are depicted by Gellius, e.g. 1.2, 5.21, 6.17, 15.9, 20.10; cf. Apul. *Apol.* 30, pp.35.22-36.3 Helm. T. Morgan (*Literate Education* [cf. n. 20], 74-89) similarly sees in the scheme of a fixed core and open periphery of the texts taught in schools a mechanism of controlling access to the intellectual elite which she also finds in the fact that pupils in the ancient world were evaluated by competition rather than by passing curricular exams as in modern education, and that ancient educational institutions did not supply a diploma confirming the pupil's mastering of certain fixed requirements.

[49] Cf. Joseph. *Ap.* 1.38, and the distinction between 'Aristotelian' and 'Judaeo-Christian' canons in J. Gorak, *The Making of the Modern Canon* (London, 1991), 17-23.

[50] I am grateful to M. Winterbottom for his careful reading of this essay and for letting me have the handout of a class he gave in February 2000 on "Quintilian and the Idea of a Canon", which was of great use in this study. The research involved in preparing this essay was supported by The Israel Science Foundation founded by the The Israel Academy of Science and Humanities.

Table 1: Ancient lists of Greek Poets

	D.H. *de Imitatione*[i]	Quint. *Inst.* 10.1	Diomedes, *de Poematibus*[ii]	Proclus apud Photium[iii]	Byzantine MSS[iv]	Tzetzes, *Schol. Lycophr.*[v]
Epic	Homer Hesiod Antimachus Panyassis	Homer Hesiod Antimachus Panyassis HELLENISTIC: Apollonius, Aratus, Theocritus MENTIONED BUT "NOT INCLUDED": Pisander, Nicander, Euphorion, Tyrtaeus	(Homer)	Homer Hesiod Pisander Panyassis Antimachus Kyklos, Kyprii	Homer Hesiod Pisander Panyassis Antimachus	Homer Hesiod Panyassis Antimachus Pisander
Elegy		Callimachus Philetas	Callimachus Euphorion	Callinos Mimnermus Philetas Callimachus	Callinos Mimnermus Philetas Callimachus	Callimachus Mimnermus Philetas
Iambus		Archilochus (mentions canon of Three)	Archilochus Hipponax	Archilochus Semonides Hipponax	Semonides Archilochus Hipponax	Ananius Archilochus Hipponax
Lyric	Pindar Simonides Stesichorus Alcaeus (no generic tag)	Pindar Stesichorus Alcaeus Simonides (mentions Canon of Nine)			Alcman Alcaeus Sappho Stesichorus Pindar Bacchylides Ibycus Anacreon Simonides	Stesichorus Bacchylides Ibycus Anacreon Pindar Simonides Alcman Alcaeus Sappho Corina
Tragedy	Aeschylus Sophocles Euripides	Aeschylus Sophocles Euripides			Aescylus Sophocles Euripides Ion, Achaios	Aeschylus Sophocles Euripides Arion, Thespis, Phrynichus, Ion, Achaios
Old Comedy		Aristophanes Eupolis Cratinus	Aristophanes Eupolis Cratinus		Epicharmus Cratinus Eupolis Aristophanes Pherecrates, Crates, Plato	Atistophanes Cratinus Plato Eupolis Pherecrates
Mid. Comedy					Antiphanes, Alexis	
New Comedy	Menander	Menander	Menander Diphilus Philemon		Menander Philippides Diphilus Philemon Apollodorus	Menander Philemon Philistion

i Fr. 6, II.204-214 U.-R.
ii Keil, *GL* I.482-92.
iii Phot. *Bibl.* 239 Henry.

Table 2. Order of genres in ancient enumerations

Hor. *Ars* 73-85[vi]	**D.H. *de Imitatione***	**Quint. *Inst.* 10.1**	**Diomedes, *de Poematibus***	**Caesius Bassus, *de Metris***[vii]	**Proclus apud Photium**	**Tzetzes, *Schol. Lycophr.***	**Byzantine MSS**
Epic Elegy Iambus Comedy Tragedy Lyric	Epic Lyric (no generic tag) Tragedy Comedy History Philosophy Oratory	Epic Elegy Iambus Lyric Old Comedy Tragedy New Comedy History Oratory Philosophy	Epos Elegy Iambus Bucolica Tragedy Old Comedy New Comedy	Epos Epigramma (=Elegy?) Iambus Lyiric Tragedy [dramatic] Satura, Praetexta Comedy, Latin popular drama	Epic Elegy Iambus Lyric	Epic Lyric Iambus Tragedy Old Comedy New Comedy Elegy Epigram	Epic Iambus Tragedy Old Comedy Middle Comedy New Comedy Elegy Lyric Oratory History

vi See n. 33.

vii Keil, *GL* VI.312.7-9; cf. n. 35.

EARLY CHRISTIANITY— A RELIGION OF THE BOOK?

GUY G. STROUMSA

Religion as we know it has been recently said to be an invention of early Christianity.[1] While such a statement may be somewhat hyperbolic, one can hardly argue that Christianity did not transform, sometimes to a radical extent, perceptions of religion current in the Roman empire.[2] The early Christians transformed the cultural memory they had inherited from both Jews and pagans, and which eventually became that of the nascent Europe. It is as a new kind of "textual community" that they were able to reach this major achievement. This was predicated upon new perceptions of the Holy Scriptures and their role in the self-definition of the community and its place in the complex web of relationships between late antique religious traditions. The following pages intend to clarify some aspects of this cultural and religious transformation.

1. *Ahl Al-Kitab*

The expression *ahl al-kitab*, "People of the Book," is a cardinal feature of Qur'anic revelation, which would play a major role in medieval Islamic law and society. As such, it has been the object of many studies. Oddly enough, however, very little research seems to have been devoted to the origins of the expression as it appears in the Qur'an.[3]

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[1] M. Sachot, *L'invention du christianisme* (Paris, 1999)

[2] See G. G. Stroumsa, *Barbarian Philosophy: the Religious Revolution of Early Christianity* (WUNT 112; Tübingen, 1999), introduction.

[3] See G. Vajda, "Ahl al-kitab," *Encyclopedia of Islam* (2nd. ed.), I, 264-266. The learned article, (as well as the appended bibliography) is mostly devoted to the concept in medieval Islam. Similarly disapapointing from our perspective is R. Paret, *Kommentar und Konkordanz zum Koran* (Stuttgart, 1971). For the occurences of the locution, see for instance R. Blachère, tr., *Le Coran* (Paris, 1966), Index, s.v. "Détenteurs de l'Ecriture." According to him, there are twenty five mentions of the locution refering to Jews, two or three to Christians, and seven to both Jews

In the Qur'an, *ahl al-kitab* usually refers to Jews, but also to Christians, and there are even a few cases in which Muhammad refers quite clearly to *both* Jews and Christians. Here are a few instances:

> "Say: People of the Book! Come now to a word common between us and you, that we serve none than God, and that we associate not aught with Him, and do not some of us take others as Lords, apart from God? And if they turn their backs, say: Bear with us, that we are Muslims.[4] (3.57) [Here Muhammad adresses the Jews of Medina, in order to convert them to Hanifism]
>
> "People of the Book: Go not beyond the bounds in your religion, and say not as to God but the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary..." (4.169)
>
> "People of the Book, now there has come to you Our Messenger, making clear to you many things you have been concealing of the Book, and effacing many things. There has come to you from God a light, and a Book manifest..." (5.18)
>
> "The unbelievers of the People of the Book and the idolaters would never leave off, till the clear Sign came to them, a Messenger from God, reciting pages purified, therein true Books." (98.2)

The locution *ahl al-kitab* does not appear to have had any clear antecedents, in either Greek, Syriac, or Hebrew. Indeed, "People of the Book," whatever its meaning, cannot be a self-designation. As far as we know, Jews did not call themselves "People of the Book." Their holy scripture had a name: the Torah. The Hebrew expression *'am ha-sefer* appears only much later.[5] Similarly, as we shall see, late antique Christians did not define themselves as "possessors of the Book." They could perhaps mention the Gospels, or the New Testament, or even the whole Bible as the sacred text of God's revelation, but there is no indication that they ever called themselves "people of the Book." For the Manichaeans too, the Christians' competitors in aggressive proselytizing throughout the ecumene, holy books were highly significant artifacts. Among them too, however, one does not encounter any self-definition as "people of the Book."[6]

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and Christians. Vajda notes that the term does not occur before the end of the Meccan period, adding that *kitab* usually denotes the Pentateuch and the Psalms.

[4] I quote the translation of A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (London, 1955).

[5] I am unaware of any study of the theme. Moshe Halbertal, *People of the Book Canon, Meaning, and Authority* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997) does not discuss its origins.

[6] On the possible contacts between Manichaeism and the earliest strata of Islam, see M. Gil, "The Medinan Opposition to the Prophet," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 10 (1987), 65-97, and *idem*, "The Creed of Abu Amer," *Israel Oriental Studies* 12 (1992), 9-58.

The expression, then, seems rather to represent the common denominator of various communities bound by similar, but not identical religious beliefs and practices. The author of the Qur'an could observe, in the complex ethnic and religious mosaic of the Near East, different claims to respect various books containing God's prophecies.

As modern commentators of the Qur'an point out, however, the singular (*kitab*) refers to either a generic term (each community possesses a different book, but what interests the author of the Qur'an is the very fact that they possess *a* book) or to a single concept (the various communities have received the same heavenly Book). If the Qur'anic author had meant to emphasize the fact that Jews and Christians each had their own sacred book, he would probably have said *ahl al-kutub* (in the plural).[7]

The Qur'anic concept is not quite that of a comparative historian or a phenomenologist of religion. For Muhammad, the "Book" (*kitab*) also has a precise meaning, to which he refers on various occasions in the Qur'an: the *umm al-kitab* (lit. "mother of the book"), the heavenly prototype of the divine Book, revealed on different occasions in history, but never before in its entirety, to various religious communities, until the final and total revelation of the Qur'an.[8] Incidentally, far from being an invention of the Qur'an, the heavenly Book had played a significant role in the imaginary (*imaginaire*) of the ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean cultures, including, of course, Judaism during the Second Temple period and early Christianity. The Heavenly Book is usually "the Book (or the Tablets) of Life (or of Destiny)," where those who will live are inscribed.[9]

I do not intend to discuss here the meanings of the Qur'anic *kitab*. My purpose is twofold. First, I mean to call attention to the fact that in the early seventh century, the idea of the *Book*, however construed, could play a central role in religious imaginary, as well as in socio-

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[7] See for instance the discussion in G. Widengren, *Muhammad, the Apostle of God, and His Ascension (King and Saviour V)* (Uppsala, Wiesbaden, 1955). esp. Chapter 6: "The Heavenly Book," 115-161.

[8] See G. Widengren, ibid.. Cf. M. Cook, "'Anan and Islam: Origins of Karaite Scripturalism," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 9 (1987), 161-182, on the intriguing phenomenon of Scripturalism in early Islam.

[9] The relevant texts have been collected and analyzed in L. Koep, *Das himmlische Buch in Antike und Christentum* (Theophaneia 8; Bonn, 1952).

logical representations in the Near East. Second, the appellation *ahl al-kitab* shows that late antique Christians were clearly identified by outsiders as possessing a book of divine origin, and that this possession was a major criterion of their identity. The testimony of the Qur'an, then, is enough to question the justification of the question mark in my title. In an obvious sense, early Christianity was a "religion of the Book," since for the Christian (as well as for the Jewish) communities there was a canon of authoritative texts that remained at the center of their identity. As the *bon mot* has it, indeed, "Christianity is the only religion born with a Bible in its craddle."[10] The abundant literature produced by the early Christians was soon classified, as for instance by Eusebius, who divides Christian writings into those "acknowledged, disputed, and heretical."[11] It is certainly the case that Christianity was so perceived by Greek and Roman polytheist authors who polemicized with it. The Christian devotion to holy texts was widely known in the Roman Empire, as shown by Lucian's *Peregrinus* (11-12), for instance. In some cases, even, pagan philosophers reproached the Christians for their lack of respect for their own scriptures (i.e., the Septuagint, whose commands they interpreted metaphorically rather than simply obeying them).[12] It is also as such that Christian intellectuals perceived their faith from the very beginning, and wished to be perceived—as *Verus Israel.*

In his *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, published in 1873, F. Max Müller argued that two main traditions of "book religions" could be observed in the religious history of mankind, the one stemming from Israel, while the other is best reflected in Buddhism.[13] To be sure, this dual taxonomy reflects the then widely perceived opposi-

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[10] See C. F. Evans in *Cambridge History of the Bible*, I, 232; cf. A.C. Outler, "The 'Logic' of Canon-making and the Tasks of Canon-criticism," in W.E. March, ed., *Texts and Documents: Critical Essays on the Bible and Early Church Fathers* (San Antonio, 1980), 264-265, and H. Y. Gamble, Jr., "Christianity: Scripture and Canon," in F. M. Denny and R. L. Taylor, *The Holy Book in Comparative Perspective* (Columbia, SC, 1985), 36-62, esp. 37. See further C. F. Evans in the *Cambridge History of the Bible*, I, 232, and S. Morenz, "Entstehung und Wesen der Buchreligion," in his *Religion und Geschichte des alten Ägypten* (Cologne, Vienna, 1975), 382-394. elsewhere in the same volume, Morenz states: "Das Christentum ist eine Buchreligion" calling the idea of a Book religion "Israel's gift to the world" (8).

[11] Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.7. Cf. ibid., 6.23, for the development of commentaries since the time of Origen.

[12] This is one of the main arguments of Celsus in his *Alethes Logos*. See Origen, *Contra Celsum*, I.

[13] F. M. Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion* (London, 1873), 102 ff.

tion between Aryans and Semites, dubiously established upon the discovery of the linguistic families and the differences between Indo-European and Semitic languages.[14]

Since the days of Max Müller, historians of religions have been aware of some striking similarities, in either content or structure, between various literary corpora in different religious traditions. They have been using the Islamic concept of "Peoples of the Book" in a generic sense quite naturally, without really reflecting upon its real significance or applicability. Often, rightly or wrongly, the modern concept seems to be used as a more "neutral" and less loaded term than "monotheism" when referring to Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Too little has been written upon the various ways in which these three religions (and other religious movements in the late antique Near East, such as Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism or Mandaeism) conceive of their holy books. Mani consciously established a set of scriptures, to which the early Manichaeans attached a great importance. Their canon included a Pentateuch of Mani's books, and they seem to have written their holy books with particular care, and even to have illustrated them—a fact not attested elsewhere.[15] About the Mandaeans, our knowledge is much vaguer, and it is not even clear that one can speak of a scriptural canon in their case.[16] Indeed, a taxonomy quite similar to the one presented by Müller, although much more precisely developed, was recently proposed by Carsten Colpe.[17] Its author suggests to see two main and complex vectors (*Filiationen*) of religious canons, the one launched by the Buddhist texts and the other starting with the Hebrew Bible. This last vector obviously, goes through the New Testament, the Mishnah, and Mani's works, up to the Qur'an and beyond.

Years ago, R. Travers Herford insisted upon the fact that such texts as the Theodosian Codex and the Babylonian Talmud had been redacted in the same period, crucial for the formation of medieval culture, which also saw the crystallization of Church law and the

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[14] On this topic, see in particular M. Olender, *Les langues du paradis: Sémites et Ariens: un couple providentiel* (Paris, 1987).

[15] See for instance M. Tardieu, *Le Manichéisme* (Paris, 1981).

[16] This is argued by Dan Shapira in a forthcoming study.

[17] C. Colpe, "Sakralisierung von Texten und Filiationen von Kanons," in J. Assmann and A. Assmann, eds., *Kanon und Zensur* (Munich, Paderborn, 1987), 80-92.

blossoming of Patristic literature.[18] More recently, Wilfred Cantwell Smith has spoken about the "Scripture movement" of Late Antiquity, characterizing the period in which Christianity grew as an "age of scriptures."[19] By focusing on aspects of the status and significance of the holy or canonical books in early Christianity, the following pages seek to contribute to a better understanding of the place of scripture in an "age of scripture."

For the historian, scriptures do not descend from heaven, nor do they exist in a vacuum. By their very nature, they play a central role for those communities which define themselves through them. In a study on literacy and power, A. K. Bowman and Greg Woolf have proposed to speak of "textual communities," and they refer to the "sacral graphocentrism" of the early Christians, while Robin Lane Fox speaks of "sacred literacy," and Moshe Halbertal, in his work on the canonization of classical texts in the Jewish tradition, similarly writes about "text-oriented communities."[20] In late antiquity, perhaps more than in any other observable period, the identity of various communities was defined by their attitude to their holy book(s) and its (their) place in the *Weltanschauung*, in cult, as well as in daily hermeneutics.

Studies about canonical scriptures have too often focused exclusively on the lists of texts included in a given canon, and in the time and conditions of their inclusion. In other words, such studies have tended to remain exclusively literary in their approach, neglecting the broader historical and cultural context of the mechanisms of canon-making. The so-called School of "canon criticism" has attempted to tackle this problem.[21] If its success has been only partial, this stems probably from the fact that its proponents have too often phrased their questions within a theological, rather than a historical framework. There are various possible references to the holy text, for instance through vision (icons) or through audition. As

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[18] R. Travers Herford, *Some Ancient Safeguards of Civilization* (London, 1933).

[19] W. C. Smith, *What is Scripture? A Comparative Approach* (London, 1993), 56 and notes. See already J. Leipold and S. Morenz, *Heilige Schriften: Betrachtungen zur Religionsgeschichte der antiken Mittelmeerwelt* (Leipzig, 1953), 7-13.

[20] A. K. Bowman and G. Wolf, eds., *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1994), 12. R. Lane Fox, "Literacy and Power in Early Christianity," in *ibid.*, 126-147 and notes; M. Halbertal, *People of the Book* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), 1 *et passim*.

[21] See for instance B. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: an Introduction* (London, 1984).

Robin Lane Fox has shown, books entered the imagination of the early Church in highly different ways.[22]

2. *The Oral Character Of The Christian Movement*

From its very beginnings, as told in the *Acts of the Apostles*, the Christian Church appears to offer some radically new channels to Divine revelation. One deals here with a religious movement whose oral character almost erases the traditional centrality of the Jewish scriptures. Meeting in Jerusalem, Jesus's disciples found a strange way to celebrate the Festival of Pentecost, or *Shavu'ot*. It is not clear whether the passage from an essentially agricultural to one denoting the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai had already been accomplished in the first century. Our first unambiguous evidence on this remarkable transformation of *Shavu'ot* and its meaning dates from the second century.[23]

> While the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among hem, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. (Acts 2: 1-4)[24]

As we can gather from this passage, the gift of prophecy is to be found in each believer. Moreover, the expression of the divine spirit, which was traditionally preserved in the holy scripture, has now returned to prophetic orality, and can be expressed in apparently meaningless words. The first Christian community , then, encouraged "speaking in tongues," i.e., free and oral expression of the Holy Spirit, or prophecy. In the same book of *Acts*, the apostles are described as *agrammatoi* and *idiotai*. As they endeavor to keep prophecy alive, rather than to pay respect to Biblical prophecy, they can hardly be said to perceive themselves as a "people of the Book."[25]

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[22] R. Lane Fox, "Literacy and Power." See further Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (Harmondsworth, 1986), 304-308.

[23] See in particular Joseph Tavori, *Jewish Festivals in the Time of the Mishnah and Talmud* (Jerusalem, 1995) [Hebrew], 154-151.

[24] I quote according to the New Revised Standard Version.

[25] C. Forbes has collected and sought to analyze a vast array of texts dealing with phenomena of religious ecstasy and inspired language in the ancient world.

Papias attests to the importance of the oral tradition in the early Church.[26] The oral character of the Gospels stems from their very nature: they are meant to tell the life of the Savior, and to register his *ipsissima verba*: What is demanded from the reader, moreover, is to seek to adjust his own life and behavior, insofar as it is humanly possible, to those of Jesus, to practice what became later known, in the West, as the *imitatio Christi*. Such a demand entails an attitude to the text fundamentally different from the one which was implicitly expected toward the sacred or otherwise revered text in ancient societies. The Torah in Israel and Homer in Greece were certainly treated in highly different ways in the two societies. Yet, in both cases, it was *the text itself* which had become the supreme object of veneration, and sometimes the supreme object of literary imitation. The Islamic concept of the *i'jaz al-Qur'an* (inimitability of the Qur'an) would later reflect a similar attitude: the language of the revealed text is so beautiful that it cannot be imitated—which entails that it sets the standard of literary perfection. But in the case of the Gospels, it is the figure of Jesus which was immediately and directly perceived, beyond the text itself, to be the only legitimate object of imitation. Incidentally, the fact that Jesus's *ipsissima verba* were the most treasured part of the Gospels soon brought to the growth of a whole literature of Gospels claiming to keep the true version of the words of the Savior. The complex process through which the New Testament emerged and through which the texts that constitute it became distinguished from apocryphal literature is directly related to this multiplication of Gospels.

Such an attitude was strengthened by the recognition that the language of most texts of the New Testament was clearly devoid of literary beauty. These texts were written in the plainest of languages, a fact readily pointed out by the intellectual opponents of Christianity, who saw there yet another argument against the new, crude faith. Christian intellectuals could not but concur, wearing this accusation as a badge of honor. Indeed, the Gospels were written in simple language, since Christianity claimed to offer salvation equally to all, to the simple and uneducated as well as to the literate; this

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Unfortunately, Jewish sources, which should have been obvious candidates for parallels to Acts, are conspicuously absent from this collection. See C. Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment* (WUNT, 2te. Reihe, 75; Tübingen, 1995).

[26] In Eusebius, *H. E.* 3.39.2-15.

was a new kind of philosophical school, ready to recognize its barbarian origins, and offering salvation equally to all, also across educational borders. Such a position is reflected clearly, for instance, in Origen's *Contra Celsum*, or in the concept of *sermo humilis*, which received its classical (or should one say canonical?) treatment in a seminal essay by Erich Auerbach.[27]

Moreover, the Septuagint, the first canonical text of the early Christian community, is itself a translation. It is only within a tiny minority that any kind of desire for the original text of the Bible could be expressed. Indeed, Jerome's insistence on reading the Hebrew text in order to seek the *hebraica veritas* remained the exception rather than the rule, also among intellectuals: as their correspondence shows, Augustine could only express an almost total lack of comprehension in front of Jerome's sustained efforts. The dramatic cultural and religious significance of this attitude cannot be overemphasized. The fact that Christian theologians and *literati* satisfied themselves with reading their holiest text in translation only highlights the radically new attitude of Christians to languages. For the Christians, there is no sanctity pertaining to language itself, and there is no Holy Tongue. The Septuagint is simply the recognized text, since the Holy Spirit presided over its formation, and it is endowed of the same value as the Hebrew text itself. It was this same freedom which would permit them to soon translate the Gospels into different new languages, from Coptic to Gothic.[28] Quite clearly, these translations, which were even in some cases the first texts ever written in those languages, became a major instrument in the Christian missionary campaign.

It would be a mistake, however, to overemphasize the importance of the New Testament text in the dramatic success of the conversion movement. In his important synthetic work on literacy in the ancient world, William Harris has noted that literacy remained very limited in the Roman world, and it would be an illusion to believe

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[27] E. Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, transl. W. R. Trask (Princeton, 1968), 70-76.

[28] See G Bardy, *La question des langues dans l'Eglise ancienne* (Paris, 1948). The Christian missionaries' willingness to introduce the Gospel to all cultures and peoples entailed some kind of linguistic and ethnological curiosity, unknown among pagans. See G. G. Stroumsa *Barbarian Philosophy: The Religious Revolution of Early Christianity*, 56-84.

that Christianity was spread *mainly* by means of the written word.[29] The new faith, like its parent religion, considered itself to be a "religion of the Book." In contradistinction to Judaism, however, it offered its soteriological message to all and sundry without demanding any real educational preparation. Rabbinic Jewish societies, on the other side, both in Palestine and in Bablylonia, put a strong emphasis in its educational approach on scripture-reading (or cantilating) skills.[30] For those Christians who could not read the scriptures (the great majority of the faithful), short summaries of dogma were written, canons of the faith, in some sense (*kanôn tês pisteôs*), as reported, for instance, in the mid-fourth century, by Cyril of Jerusalem. As Dieter Georgi has shown long ago, moreover, religious propaganda in the Roman world, also among Jews and Christians, was mainly of an oral character.[31] It would then seem that Christian literacy was a literacy of a new, revolutionary kind, "an oral form of literacy," as Robert Pattison calls it.[32] In this context, William Graham's study of the oral (and aural) aspects of religious scriptures in various religions is significant, as it highlights some of the complex ways through which scriptures are made present in various religious systems and societies.[33] Among the responses provoked by Harris's important book, Mary Beard points out that Roman paganism, far from being a "text-free" religion, devotes a considerable significance to writing, in numerous ways.[34] On his side, Keith Hopkins insists, in his "Conquest by Book," on what he calls the "sub-elite" literacy among late antique Christians, and on the essential part this played in the Christian "conquest" of the Roman empire. As a major instance, he refers to Coptic, a language which originated as a "script of protest," a fact reflected in many of the preserved manuscripts,

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[29] W. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 299.

[30] See C. Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen, 2001), a comprehensive work which emphasizes the limits of Jewish literacy.

[31] D. Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Edinburgh, 1986 [German original, 1964]), ch. 2, 83-228.

[32] R. Pattison, *On Literacy: The Politics of the Word from Homer to the Age of Rock* (New York, Oxford, 1982).

[33] W. A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral aspects of scripture in the history of religion* (Cambridge, 1987).

[34] M. Beard, "Writing and religion: Ancient literacy and the function of the written word in Roman religion," in M. Beard et al., *Literacy in the Roman World* (Journal of Roman Archaeology; Supplementary Series, 3; Ann Arbor, MI, 1991), 35-58.

which stem from Gnostic, Manichaean, or monastic circles, all of them, in different ways and varying degrees, marginal movements. Stressing the dynamic interaction between the written and the oral, Hopkins concludes that its peculiar attitude to the body of its scriptures and other, connected texts permitted Christianity to develop the religious coherence essential for any understanding of its eventual victory over traditional religion and culture in the Roman Empire.[35] Words indeed have much power, especially when they are holy, but this power is reflected in a number of ways, orally as well as in their "original" written form. Words are spoken, sometimes hurled at, like in polemics, which played such an important role in inter-religious contacts in late antiquity.[36]

In the ancient world, and far beyond, all cultures remained highly oral, and literacy remained, even in the best of times, the privilege of very few. In such cultures, books were often used as instruments for the authentication of texts, rather than as the means for their communication. This fact helps to explain why in the conversion movement launched by Christianity, the role of books must have remained modest.[37] As most Christians could not read, they heard the holy texts, or rather small parts of them, some of the most expressive or powerful stories, figures, and words, through "preaching, catechesis, apologetical debates, intramural theological disputes, and personal edification."[38] The strong warning against too much free access to the scriptures, as reflected in Cyril of Jerusalem's *caveat* in his *Catechetical Homilies*, may not necessarily reflect an insatiable interest in scripture on the part of most individuals.[39] As Robin Lane Fox reminds us, "scriptural study must have ranked

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[35] K. Hopkins, "Conquest by Word,", in M. Beard et al., *Literacy in the Roman World*, 133-158.

[36] See in particular R. Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, London, 1995). See also the analysis of uses of religious writings in late antique North Africa in P. J. Griffiths, *Religious Reading: the Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion* (New York, 1999), 148 ff.

[37] Manichaeism seems to have provided a rather different picture, for instance in North Africa, where it seems to have appealed mainly to intellectuals, at least if we judge from the literary evidence (mainly Augustine's polemical works).

[38] H. Y. Gamble, Jr., *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven, 1995), 141. For aspects of reading in early Christianity, see further E. A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton, 1999), esp. 45-69.

[39] See n. 44 below.

almost as low as sexual fidelity" among late antique Christians.[40]

Another essential aspect of the oral dimension of early Christian doctrines, which however cannot be dealt with here, is the existence of oral traditions, often of an esoteric nature.[41] Such traditions, in particular, seem to have been cultivated by the Gnostics. Indeed, it is probably due to the success of these traditions among the Gnostics and other radical heretics that they were fought against, especially in the course of the second century, and eventually discarded. The status of orality was a major axis of the confrontation between Gnostics and Catholics.[42] Moreover, as has often been pointed out, the formation of the scriptural canon in second century Christianity was directly related to the various polemics with Gnostics, Marcionites, and Montanists.[43]

In a study on the birth of the New Testament canon, Adolf Martin Ritter has claimed that Early Christianity (as well as, to some extent, Rabbinic Judaism) never quite became a "religion of the book," despite the canonization of its scriptures.[44] Ritter establishes his claim mainly upon the fact that the early Church never succeeded in transforming the writings brought together (mainly as a reaction to Marcion) in the Old and in the New Testament into a real and single unit. Such a lack of perfect unity in the biblical corpus, incidentally, is also the case in Judaism, as Ritter notes. If neither Judaism nor Christianity can be truly considered to be "religions of the Book," however, something might be wrong with the epistemology! It seems to me that Ritter's mistake, here, lies in his overly rigid conception of "religion of the Book," and in his unwillingness to recognize the permeability of the borders between the written and the oral. My argument here, then, is of a different nature, and focuses upon the

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[40] R. Lane Fox, "Literacy and Power in Early Christianity," 146.

[41] See for instance G. G. Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (Studies in the History of Religion 70; Leiden, 1996).

[42] See J.D. Dubois, "L'exégèse des gnostiques et l'histoire du canon des Ecritures," in M. Tardieu, ed., *Les règles de l'interprétation* (Patrimoines; Paris, 1987), 89-97.

[43] I intend to deal elsewhere with the relationship between canonization and polemics.

[44] H. M. Ritter, "Die Entstehung des neutestamentlischen Kanons: Selbstdurchsetzung oder autoritative Entscheidung?", in J. Assmann and A. Assmann, eds., *Kanon und Zensur: Archäologie des literarischen Kommunikation II*, 93-99. His remarks deserve to be quoted in full: "Zu einer 'Buchreligion', so meine Schlussbemerkung, ist das Christentum über die Kanonisierung seiner 'Hl. Schriften' noch weniger geworden als das Judentum, wenn auch (teilweise) aus anderen Gründen."

nature of the Christian movement itself, and on its attitude to literacy and to literary and religious tradition altogether.

Another questioning of the characterization of early Christianity as a "religion of the Book," developed quite independently from Ritter, was recently provided by Bernhard Lang. Lang starts by stressing the obvious: Jesus's teaching was only oral, and he did not write anything. The centrality of salvation for the first Christians, then, meant that practices such as baptism were much more important than even an intensive and close contact with the Bible—its reading and study as well as its cultic use. According to Lang, the canonization of the Christian Bible stemmed both from practical needs of theological education and from the influence of synagogue liturgy. All in all, concludes Lang, Christianity cannot be said to be inherently a "religion of the book." Both Ritter's and Lang's observations were made in somewhat *en passant*, without elaborating on their potentially dramatic significance and implications. From our own perspective, however, this question is of crucial importance, and we must probe further aspects of the ambivalent attitude toward scripture in early Christianity.

In his synthetic work, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, Harry Gamble Jr. adopts a broad perspective, integrating the Christian attitude toward the canonical books with the more general question of the status of literacy among Christians in the early centuries.[45] Gamble analyses the various uses of books among Christians during the first centuries, both in church, i.e., in public cult, and in private: up to the fourth century, there was a clear distinction between public an private reading of canonical books. Cyril of Jerusalem, for one, insists on the fact that "what is read in church should not be read privately".[46] Gamble also calls due attention to other, perhaps not less important, uses of the Scriptures, for instance as magical protection, or in magical incantations. Gamble's working hypothesis, according to which the use and status of books and reading among Christians was similar to what obtained in the society at large. Such a method has the obvious advantage of permitting the use of large scale arguments, where evidence is scarce. But

[45] Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church, passim.*

[46] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.* 4.36. Cf. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 231. The private use of scriptures was studied by Harnack long ago, in his *Über den privaten Gebrauch der heiligen Schriften in den alten Kirche* (Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Neue Testament, V; Leipzig, 1912)

it is also seriously flawed and deeply misleading, since much of this evidence may not be applicable to the Christian case. The early Christians, even before the end of the second century, and despite some quite peculiar behavioral patterns, remained a rather porous society, never isolated from the world at large, and rather different from what sociologists call an "enclave society." None the less, there is no good reason to believe that their attitudes to texts in general, and to their holy books in particular, was not different from that of surrounding society. It stands to reason to assume that also in this as in other domains, the early Christians showed a great sense of independence and originality. The very fact that they did not feel bound by cultural and religious traditions permitted them, in many ways, to be innovative. The early development of Christianity can be characterized as nothing less than a religious revolution, not only *vis-à-vis* Judaism, but, more generally, in relation to all previous perceptions of religion.[47] Radically new, too, was the Christian conception of scripture, as well as the status and use of books altogether in the early Church.

Robin Lane Fox has argued that Christianity offered "a less reverential attitude to the written word" than that extant in both Judaism and in traditional culture in the Roman empire.[48] This is certainly true, but falls short of adequately characterizing the attitude of early Christianity to the written word. The matter is more complex. The scriptural origin of Christianity certainly prevented it from developing into a textless or oral religion. Hence the Christian ambivalent attitude to books. More precisely, one can argue that Christianity soon developed an attitude to literacy and the written word which was quite new, or even revolutionary, an adjective used by David Pattison.[49] For him, popular, spoken language was a central character of earliest Christianity. Thus, the quarrel of the Church with the Empire can to a great extent be summed up as that be-

[47] See Stroumsa, *Barbarian Philosophy*, Introduction: "Early Christianity as Religious Revolution," 1-5.

[48] See R. Lane Fox, *The Unauthorized Version: Truth and Fiction in the Bible* (London, 1991), 147. Cf. the strikingly different perception of things by David Potter, who insists on the opposition between pagan attitudes to their prophetic books to those of Jews and Christians, whose need to reconcile between different versions, rather than choose between them, was due to the idea of canonical scriptures. See his *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius* (Cambridge, Ma., 1994), 60 and 216.

[49] D. Pattison, *On Literacy*, 73.

tween two opposed attitudes toward language, traditional and "high," or new and "low." In Pattison's words, this background entailed the development in Christian civilization of conflicting systems of literacy.[50] The popular, "low" level of early Christian teachings meant that the literary ideals current in Greco-Roman culture were not applicable to Christianity. On all counts, then, books, at least as they had been perceived in the upper classes of pagan society, do not seem to have occupied a major place in the early Christian mind.

3. *Codex and Canon*

As is well known, the codex appeared toward the end of the first century of the common era, and the first mention of a codex is found in Martial's *Epigrams* (I.2), written in 84-86 C.E. It is only gradually, and at first quite slowly, that the codex replaced the roll, until the end of the fourth century. The shift from roll to codex, then, is synchronic to the victory of Christianity in the Roman empire. As one scholar has it: "By the fourth century, the ultimate triumph of the new religion over paganism was matched by an equally final ouster of the roll by the codex as the standard book form."[51]

Much has been written in the last decades on the transition from roll to codex. Thanks to Colin H. Roberts and T. C. Skeat, in particular, we know now some of the parameters of this passage, from the end of the first to the end of the fourth century.[52] The importance of the replacement of roll by codex can hardly be overemphasized. This might be considered as one of the most momentous developments in the history of the book, perhaps as important as Gutenberg's invention of printing. Codices had numerous advantages on rolls. They were cheaper to produce, since the text was written on both sides of the papyrus or parchment, they were more compact, and thus easier to carry. They were also more conveniently used. Reference from passage to passage was made much simpler.[53] In short, circulation of ideas was at once transformed.

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[50] *Ibid.*, 68.

[51] J. Dufy, "Books," in G. W. Bowersock, P. Brown, O. Grabar, eds., *Late Antiquity: a Guide to the Postclassical World* (Cambridge, MA., 1999), , 346. See further G. Cavallo, "Between *volumen* and Codex: Reading in the Roman World," in G. Cavallo and R. Chartier, eds., *A History of Reading in the West* (Amherst, Mass., 1999), 64-89.

[52] C. H. Roberts and T. C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (London, 1983).

[53] Ibid., 44.

Now, in contradistinction to what happened in society at large, and also, of course, among the Jews, the Christian adoption of the codex was instant and universal. Roberts and Skeat have found that of all extant biblical papyri, only two do not come from codices.[54] By the late second century, codices had become a Christian characteristic, or even "a Christian innovation."[55]. In this regard, one has even spoken of a "Christian *obsession* with the codex.").[56] We must reflect upon this puzzling phenomenon. In particular, the Christian use of the codex seems to be directly related to the new form of "religion of the Book" developed by the Christians.

As missionaries of a *religio illicita*, the Christians were certainly interested in cheap and compact books, which were more practical than the traditional rolls.[57] The codex, then, can also be said to fit the essentially demotic character of Christianity. According to Roberts, this conclusion is borne out by the hands of the Christian manuscripts, which are usually not particularly elegant. Christian books were meant for practical use rather than being part of cultic activity, like the scrolls of the Torah in the synagogue cult.[58] A similar functionalism of books can be found in the so-called "Cologne Mani Codex,"an official biography of the Prophet of light. This is the smallest extant codex from the ancient world, whose tiny dimensions were probably meant to avoid police scrutiny in fourth-century Egypt. Another advantage of the codex on the roll, then, was that it could be hidden relatively easily, a useful feature for an outlawed religious group.

The theory of the Jewish origins of the Christian codex, as propounded by Roberts and Skeat, has been submitted to serious ob-

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[54] Roberts and Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex*, 53. Cf. articles and bibliography in *TDNT* and *Neue Pauly*, s.v., "Buch." See the excellent review article of M. Mc Cormick, "The Birth of the Codex and the Apostolic Life-Style," *Scriptorium* 39 (1985), 150-158.

[55] R. Lane Fox, "Literacy and Power in Early Christianity," 141. This fact in itself would be enough to invalidate Gamble's working hypothesis on the parallelism between attitudes towards books in the general public in the Empire and among Christians.

[56] Mc Cormick, "The Birth of the Codex," 154 (emphasis mine, G. S.)..

[57] This is the main thrust of M. McCormick, "Birth of the Codex."

[58] C. H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (London: British Academy, 1979), 15. M. McCormick, "The Birth of the Codex" is a review article of this book. On the passage from Jewish scroll to Christian codex in early Christianity, see for instance the interesting evidence and argument of R. S. Bagnall, "Jesus Reads a Book," *Journal of Theological Studies* 51 (2000), 577-588.

jections, in particular by Joseph van Haelst, whose argumentation has however failed to convince me.[59] What counts most, however, is not so much the question of the origins. The Christians may not have invented the codex. But they were faster to use its dramatic advantages than anybody else, and this is what we must explain. Van Haelst sees three main reasons for the early propagation of the Christian codex. The Gospel was not a regular book, but a constantly used manual of life. It was a new kind of book, which was not submitted to the cultural constraints of the *volumen*. For the first Christian communities, with their *episkopoi*, *presbyteroi*, *diakonoi*, dispersed throughout the *oikoumenè*, the codex permitted a faster an more coherent circulation of ideas between them.

For the Christians, the codex permitted more easily the consignment of various books of the Bible together, thus enabling the passage from the plural *biblia* to the single Bible. It seems probable that the codex was immediately felt by Christians to be more convenient than the roll to carry their message. The use of the codex thus had a real impact upon the formation of the Christian Biblical canon and the notion of the Bible as a single corpus of writings.[60]

All these practical advantages, however, are not in themselves enough to explain the immediate and universal character of the Christian choice of the codex over the roll. This choice must stem from the inner logic of the Christian religion. In order to break with a hallowed cultural practice, the early Christian writers must have had some powerful *religious* reasons or justification. These religious reasons seem to have never been adequately analyzed.

Roberts and Skeat mention two possible origins for the Christian codex. According to the first theory, the *Gospel of Mark* would have been written in Rome, on a parchment note-book, and then copied on papyrus in the East, perhaps in Alexandria. This would have set a precedent, then universally followed. It is the second theory, how-

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[59] J. van Haelst, "Les origines du codex," in A. Blanchard, ed., *Les débuts du codex* (Bibliologia 9; Turnhout, 1989), 13-35. See also in the same volume C. Sirat, "Le livre hébreu dans les premiers siècles de notre ère: le témoignage des textes," ibid., 115-124. Sirat's conclusions support those of van Haelst: "L'hypothèse des sources juives pour le codex chrétien ne s'appuie ni sur les textes ni sur l'archéologie." (124).

[60] See L. Nees, "Codex,", in G. W. Bowersock, P. Brown, O. Grabar, eds., *Late Antiquity*, 383. See further H. G. Snyder, *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World: Philosophers, Jews and Christians* (London, New York, 2000).

ever, which has the favors of the two learned papyrologists. In an appendix to his *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, the Rabbinic scholar Saul Liebermann had argued that papyrus tablets were used by Tannaitic Rabbis to record halachic pronouncements.[61] In a sense, these tablets constituted a primitive form of the codex. Liebermann suggests that they might have set an example and thus become the source of the Christian codex. The first Christians, who were Jews, were not so much interested in legal matters as in the words of their Savior. In Jerusalem or in Antioch, they would then have used the same technique in order to copy Jesus's words and the story of his life, death, and resurrection. According to Liebermann, it is probably here that the codices of the Gospels, and then of other Christian books, found their origin. The importance of Liebermann's hypothesis can hardly be overemphasized. If he is correct, says Irven Resnick, "the history of the codex must be dramatically rewritten."[62]

It should perhaps be noted that in Judaism, the ubiquitous presence of the Holy Book(s) of the Torah achieved a paradoxical consequence: it prevented, or at the very least strongly limited, the writing of (other) books. For the Rabbis, in a sense, the only legitimate book was the Torah, the Book of the divine revelation. Its commentaries, i.e., all other books, should only remain oral, never consigned in book form. There is very little evidence indeed for Jewish books in Rabbinic culture before the Gaonic period, a point clarified in some powerful recent research.[63]

When the Christians decided upon the codex, they knew that this was running against current practice, both among Jews and pagans. It should be a matter of puzzlement that such a weak, persecuted, dispersed religious community was able to reject almost instinctively all accepted traditions of writing, opting for a medium which was quite new and untested, and which certainly could not have been

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[61] S. Liebermann, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York, 1950), 203-208.

[62] I. M. Resnick, "The Codex in Early Jewish and Christian Communities," *Journal of Religious History* 17 (1992), 1-17, esp. 11. Resnick points out the existence of theological consequences to the Christian introduction of the codex. I wish to thank David Stern for having called my attention to this excellent article.

[63] See the important research of my colleague Shlomo Naeh, "The Structure and Division of *Torat Kohanim* (A): Scrolls," *Tarbiz* 66 (1997), 483-515 [Hebrew]. See further Y. Sussman's study on "Oral Torah", in *Meḥkarim ba Talmud* 3 (Jerusalem, forthcoming) [Hebrew]; Sussman argues that in the Pharisian and Rabbanite tradition, for about one thousand years, one avoided writing books, in order not to threaten the unique status of the bible.

endowed with any of the cultural or religious respect attributed to scrolls. We must therefore conclude that the Christian decision to use the codex to register the words and deeds of their Lord, and the writings of his apostles was genuinely a revolutionary decision. They were going here against all established norms, and this attitude certainly was not made to grant them the modicum of support, sympathy or respect of which they were so much in need.

When adopting the codex, the Christians were announcing, as loudly as they could, that they were rejecting the most respected cultural and cultic traditions, preferring to them the use of an untested new means of communication. They were using writing, but in such a way that they were on purpose remaining at the border of accepted literacy practices.

There were also some theological consequences to the appearance of the Christian codex. The codex strengthens the popular or "demotic" character of Christianity: this is a new kind of book, unfettered by tradition, solely valued from a functional point of view, and which can be translated with no damage to its content. Again, the codex facilitated the perception of the Bible, Old and New Testament, as one single book. This fact goes a long way to explain the missionary success of early Christianity.

4. *Conclusion*

We can now return to Pattison's suggestion that Christianity represented a revolutionary form of literacy. But we can now be more precise: this revolution had as its core a new attitude to the scriptural support of the divine revelation. What soon became the holy Book of the Christians was a book of a new kind, which could, without any loss of hieratic power, be translated in any language. It could thus circulate throughout the constantly growing *oikoumenê,* be read, commented upon, listened to, and its stories were soon reproduced visually in what would become Christian art. The scriptural side of the early Christian revolution was, then, one of its central aspects. These conclusions are in agreement with those of my colleague Doron Mendels, in his recent study on *The Media Revolution of Early Christianity.*[64] In this study, Mendels shows that Eusebius's

[64] D. Mendels, *The Media Revolution of Early Christianity: an Essay in Eusebius* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1999).

Ecclesiastical History proposes a "marketing strategy" for the Christian faith quite unknown before.

In other words, early Christianity was indeed a religion of the Book, but one of a kind previously unknown. One might point out here that religious creativity is by no means limited to the field of theological ideas. On the contrary, it seems that each successful new religious movement, at least among those called "religions of the Book," owes its success to new ways of literary publicity and propaganda. This is obviously true in the case of the Hebrew Torah scrolls and in early Christianity, as we have seen, but also in the case of Mani, who invented a new way of writing Middle Persian, more efficient than the traditional Pahlevi alphabet. The same will also be true for Islam, the first religion to make use of paper for its religious propaganda. Such a technical creativity is directly linked to the newness of religious movements which are not tied to traditional ways of expression. The fact that the Christians were beyond the pale did set them free from cultural traditions.

Such a conclusion clearly bears upon the quest for the mechanisms of canon making in ancient societies. This question should be treated at length elsewhere. Here I wish simply to point out that the early Christian meaning of *kanôn* is by no means limited to a list of holy books. On the contrary, *kanôn* also referred, in early Christian parlance, to action, such as the ritual action of the divine liturgy, as Hubert Cancik has recently shown.[65] Moreover, *kanôn* meant, even before it refered to a list of books (as *kanôn tês graphês*), the *kanôn tês pisteôs*, or *regula fidei*, a short list of beliefs to be held, and repeated orally, as we have seen above. The *kanôn tês pisteôs*, indeed, precedes the *kanôn tês graphês*.[66] In Robert Grant's words, "the embryonic orthodoxy of Christianity in the second century was built upon a common core of books accepted by most Christians, Gnostics included, and the presupposition for the beginning of a canon of Scripture is a relatively fixed norm of faith expressed by the acceptance of books regarded as authoritative."[67] In other words, there is an

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[65] H. Cancik, "Kanon, Ritus, Ritual: Religionsgeschichtliche Anmerkungen zu einem literaturwissenschaftlichen Diskurs," in M. Moog-Grünewald, ed., *Kanon* (Heidelberg, 1997).

[66] C. H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt*, 72. See the very thorough study of H. Ohme, *Kanon ekklesiastikos: die Bedeutung des altkirchlichen Kanonsbegriffs* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 67; Berlin, New York, 1998).

[67] R. M. Grant, in *Cambridge History of the Bible*, I, 286.

inherent relationship between the canon of scripture and the rule of faith, which is quite peculiar to the early Christian case.

In his recent book on the canonization of the Old Testament, Stephen Chapman argues that while Rabbinic Judaism decided to emphasize the Law (and to put less emphasis on the prophets), early Christians seem to have devoted much effort to retain the prophets, rather than the Torah.[68] The consequence of this bifurcation, according to Chapman, is the radical distancing between orthodox Judaism and Christianity in the Roman world and in late antiquity. Both religions then developed different kinds of religious language. Just as Christianity had invented a new concept of the holy scriptures, it established a new kind of religious language.

Christianity was from the beginning, rather than a religion of the book, one of the "paperback" (if one is allowed an anachronic metaphor). The power of diffusion linked to both the codex and the radical movement of translation, helps to explain the success of Christianity in the ancient world. To use a metaphor famous in the late nineteenth century, if Christ won over Mithra, this may well be, to a great extent, because of the codex.[69]

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[68] S. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets: A Study in Old Testament Canon Formation* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 27; Tübingen, 2000).

[69] See D. Diringer, *The Book before Printing: Ancient, Medieval and Oriental* (New York, 1982), 275-335 (Ch. 7: The Book follows Religion). In his *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), the historian of Greek religion Walter Burkert speculates that in the world of the future, established upon the totally new ways of communications permitted by computers, religion, which permits contacts and connections between individuals, may not be needed, or even possible. Such a daring hypothesis may well not be proven true. Judging from the example of early Christianity, however, it is quite probable that the contemporary revolution in the means of communications will also bring to a parallel religious revolution.

THE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IN ANTIQUITY
Some New Horizons For Future Research

CHRISTOPH MARKSCHIES

As church-historian Hans Lietzmann once wrote, the history of the canonization of the New Testament is one of the most difficult topics in the field of research in ancient Christianity.[1] This is why, in this essay, I will give only a paradigmatic sketch and not a well painted picture.[2] I plan to concentrate on *three different points*. First I would like to make some remarks on the question of modelling. Then, to the well known picture of canonization, I would like to add two forgotten regions and also a text that is already known but has not been interpreted precisely yet. I turn first to remarks on the question of modelling.

1. *Question of Modelling*

Without a doubt, it is necessary to use models to reconstruct the process of the formation of the Christian biblical canon. One main reason lies in the poverty of our sources: We only possess 14% of the Christian literature of the 2nd century that, according to our sources, must have existed once. But, an important question is *which* model describes the historical development conveniently and which

[1] H. Lietzmann, *Wie wurden die Bücher des Neuen Testaments heilige Schrift?* (Tübingen, 1907), 2f. = K. Aland (ed.), *Kleine Schriften, Vol. II Studien zum Neuen Testament* (Berlin, 1958), 17: „Die Aufgabe ist sehr schwer; denn die Kanongeschichte gehört, was im allgemeinen dem Nichtfachmann nicht deutlich zu werden pflegt, zu den allerkompliziertesten Teilen der kirchenhistorischen Wissenschaft".

[2] The following contribution is a revised and shortened selection of two presentations held in Jerusalem. The whole material will be published soon by the publishing house Mohr-Siebeck (Tübingen) in a chapter of my book *Kaiserzeitliche christliche Theologie und ihre Institutionen. Prolegomena zu einer Geschichte der antiken christlichen Theologie*. Parts of this chapter will be published in the journal *Apocrypha* in 2002.

model is less suitable to describe the process. Personally, I am always astonished how frequently the model of a crisis and therefore the rhetoric of a crisis is used by learned scholars in these contexts: "Canon as a reaction to a crisis" or—a little bit more polemically—"Canon as an emergency brake". I do not think it is necessary to gather a large number of examples or names of authors for this model; every scholar who holds the thesis that Marcion was the creator of the Christian canon is also a representative of the 'emergency-brake-model', as can be shown by help of a sentence by Hans Freiherr von Campenhausen. In his view, the Gnostics and Marcion caused a "crisis of the canon of the Old Testament in the 2nd century".[3] In a series of popular lectures of the year 1907, Hans Lietzmann painted a terrifying picture of a Christian church in great danger: "Von zwei, ja von drei Seiten drohte der Kirche Gefahr, und diese Gefahr zwang sie, den Kanon zum Abschluß zu bringen" (from two or indeed three sides the church was threatened and forced to close the canon):[4] Gnostics, Marcionites and Montanists are normally *the* evil enemies of the Church, and the whole picture of the 2nd century is painted in these colours of crisis, battle, oppression and war. If we look at a normal introductory book on ancient Christianity, already the headings will inform us of the great crisis of the Christian movement in the 2nd century and of the successful attempt of the mainstream church to manage this crisis with the three early Catholic norms ("frühkatholische Normen"): confession, hierarchy and even canon. My teachers taught me this picture, which mainly goes back to German church historians of the 19th century, namely Albrecht Ritschl,[5] and—I confess—I taught this model for some years to my students.

But is this widespread view really correct? Could it be possible that this view of crisis and the rhetoric of crisis is the only kind of picture that the orthodox Church Fathers would like to suggest? In my opinion, the picture of a crisis is not *in toto* but, in greater parts, the self-image of the mainstream church and of their theologians. In their rhetoric, Gnostics, Marcionites and Montanists were evil dangerous animals, determined to eat honest orthodox Christians;

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[3] H. Freiherr von Campenhausen, *Die Entstehung der christlichen Bibel* (Tübingen, 1968), 76-122.

[4] Lietzmann (1907), 63 = 59.

[5] St. Alkier, "Frühkatholizismus (Begriff)", *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*[4] III, 402.

in their rhetoric, the church, by the help of the Holy Spirit, survived this great war to finally triumph. In my article "Alte Kirche", published in the fourth edition of the German Encyclopaedia, *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, and in other contributions, I have argued for substituting this picture of a great crisis by a more convenient and—hopefully more convincing—picture. I propose to reconstruct the history of ancient Christian theology in the 2nd century according to the model of a laboratory:[6] A great number of different thinkers tried to solve the same fundamental theological problems on different levels with often similar tools. These were problems that arose from the biblical message after it had come into contact with Graeco-Roman culture, and in particular, with the learned atmosphere of the great cities. The tools were often quite similar—a seemingly Platonizing method, often applied without understanding, or, in the best case, at the level of Platonic schoolbooks such as the introduction of Albinus/Alcinoos.[7] I believe that the above is sufficient for elucidating my position that the laboratory model is more convenient and convincing than the old model of crisis within Catholic Christianity. But, it is possible to support my proposition by a closer look at our theme, the formation of the Christian canon.

I would like to start my examination by seeing the problem from the perspective of one of the members of our group on canonization. Guy Stroumsa has argued, in a learned article for the Rudolph-Festschrift in 1994 in his last paragraph under the heading "Mishnah and New Testament,"[8] for an understanding of the process of New Testament canonization in comparison with the contemporary process of the canonization of the Mishna. During the last few years, a number of scholars have taken up this impulse; I mention here only the contribution to the Leiden-Colloquium on "Canonization and Decanonization" in 1997 by Ziony Zevit.[9]

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[6] Ch. Markschies, *"Alte Kirche"*, *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*[4] I, 344-360, esp. 353: „Das 2. Jh. erscheint als eine kirchliche 'Klärungsphase' bzw. als ein theologisches 'Laboratorium', weniger als eine Krise des Christentums" (contrary to H. Lietzmann).

[7] Alcinoos, *Enseignement des doctrines de Platon.* Introduction, Texte établi et commenté par J. Whittaker et traduit par P. Louis, (Paris, 1990).

[8] G. Stroumsa, "The Body of Truth and its Measures. New Testament Canonization in Context", in: H. Preissler and H. Seiwert, H. Mürmel (eds.), *Gnosisforschung und Religionsgeschichte. Festschrift für Kurt Rudolph zum 65. Geburtstag* (Marburg, 1994), 307-316, esp. 314-316.

[9] Z. Zevit, "The Second-Third Century Canonization of the Hebrew Bible and

Stroumsa writes: "The Jewish communities underwent in the second century a series of traumatic events (the Bar Kochba war and its terrible consequences for the Palestinian Jews, revolts, their repression, and also epidemics, for the Jews of Egypt and Cyrenaica)".[10] However, this sentence makes it quite clear that the situation of Jews and Christians is incomparable; if I applied the term "crisis" to the situation of second-century Jews in Palestine and Egypt, then it would be impossible to apply the same term in a strict sense to the laboratory of Christian theology at the same time. We have learnt that our picture of a "constant threat of persecution" does not fit the circumstances of the 2nd century very well, but I do not want to go into detail on this well-known point. In his aforementioned article, Guy Stroumsa offers another and more convincing model to describe the common outlines of Jewish and Christian history in the 2nd century, when he declares: "Canonization processes should be understood as part and parcel of religious and social processes of identification."[11] Or, to say it with the title of the McMasters University research project: Canonization processes should be understood within the framework of Jewish and Christian self-definition.[12] I do not deny that a process of self-definition or of self-identification is combined with certain experiences of crisis. But, such a process is also a sign of health, strength and wellness; in other words, this process may represent just the opposite of a crisis. In my opinion, only such an altered picture and a careful selection of suitable models will allow us to determine the probable position of movements such as Gnostics, Marcionites, Montanists and the diverse Jewish-Christian groups in the history of the formation of the Biblical Canon, as well as their precise function in this process.

In my opinion, a clear yet misleading consequence of the rhetoric of crisis and of the 'emergency-brake model' is that, generally, the influence of Gnostic groups on our process is strongly overrated. There is a frightening example of this tendency in an article written by Helmut Koester (which, at first glance, is not too closely linked with our subject of canonization). In 1991, Koester argued

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Its Influence on Christian Canonizing", in: A. van der Kooij and K. van der Toorn (eds.), *Canonization and Decanonization. Papers presented to the International Conference of the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religions* (Leiden, 1998), 133-160, esp. 152f.

[10] Stroumsa (1994), 315.

[11] Stroumsa (1994), 314.

[12] E.P. Sanders (ed.), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, Vol. I The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries* (Philadelphia, 1980).

for the improbable thesis that the Gnostics were the first ones to adopt a specific and clear concept of the New Testament writings as inspired documents. He wrote:

> "The shift that was taking place with Clement of Alexandria and, most subsequently, with the great Alexandrian theologian Origen is most significant. Until then, only the Old Testament, as an inspired and prophetic document, called for a spiritual and allegorical interpretation that was capable of uncovering its hidden truths insofar as they referred to the events of salvation. Only Gnostic circles had found that the sayings of Jesus were also secret revelation that required an interpretation accessible exclusively to those who were initiated to the circle of the truly elect. The Alexandrian theologians, especially Origen, adopted the Gnostic principle and extended the concept of inspiration to the gospels and to the letters of Paul, that is, to the literature that formed the nucleus of the Christian canon developed by Irenaeus and Tertullian".[13]

However, in my opinion—and not only in my opinion—the principles of Origen's exegesis were not principles of the Gnostics and do not at all presuppose a Gnostic theory of inspiration, but were the principles of ancient scientific hermeneutics.[14] For the Alexandrian theologians it was a question of successful acculturation[15] to adopt the principles of scientific exegesis from the pagan scientists. But not all scientists overrate the influence of Gnostic groups. Guy Stroumsa, for example, in his aforementioned article in the Rudolph-Festschrift, fortunately rejects the thesis that there had existed a fixed canon of Gnostic writings in the sense of a closed corpus, an "alternative scripture".[16] He rather argues that there had been a widespread and, from a philological point of view, excellent translation of Gnostic texts that bear the rather ambiguous title "The Gnostic Scriptures".[17]

But what of the old thesis that the canon, established by the

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[13] H. Koester, "Writings and the Spirit: Authority and Politics in Ancient Christianity", *Harvard Theological Review* 84 (1991), 353-372.

[14] Ch. Markschies, „Origenes und die Kommentierung des paulinischen Römerbriefs—einige Bemerkungen zur Rezeption von antiken Kommentartechniken im Christentum des dritten Jahrhunderts und ihrer Vorgeschichte", in: G.W. Most (ed.), *Commentaries—Kommentare* (Aporemata) (Göttingen, 1999), 66-94.

[15] M. J. Herskovits, *Acculturation. A Study of Culture Contact* (Gloucester, 1938), 2-12 and U. Gotter, „'Akkulturation' als Methodenproblem der historischen Wissenschaften", in: W. Essbach (ed.). *wir / ihr / sie. Identität und Alterität in Theorie und Methode* (Würzburg, 2000), 373-406, esp. 384-399.

[16] Stroumsa (1994), 313; Ch. Markschies, *Die Gnosis* (München, 2001), 85-101.

[17] B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Garden City, 1987).

mainstream Church, was a kind of restriction against the influence of the diverse secret oral traditions and written treatises of the Gnostics? There was certainly a debate between some Gnostics and other Christian theologians on the value of the oral tradition; Irenaeus, in his work against the Gnostics, referred to three Valentinian arguments for the higher value of the oral tradition in comparison with the written tradition:[18]

a) The preaching of the Apostles, laid down in the written books of the New Testament, had taken place before they received perfect γνῶσις (haer. III 1,1[19]);
b) The scriptures used within the Church are imperfect and deficient; one needed the tradition, according to the Apostle, handed down by word of mouth (1Kor 2,6), to interpret the written scriptures correctly (haer. III 2,1); and:
c) The (written) tradition of the Apostles is not trustworthy, because the Apostles mixed the words of the saviour with rules of the Jewish law and because the saviour revealed himself sometimes under the influence of the Demiurge, not of the supreme God and Father (haer. III 2,2 and III 5,1).

So this Valentinian line of argumentation was at first sight a powerful vote for the oral tradition against the written tradition of the mainstream church. However, this in fact meant a powerful vote for the usage of their own Gnostic scriptures, in which—according to their statement—one should find traces of the right oral tradition. And so, at second glance, the argumentation of the Valentinians surprisingly equalled the argumentation of the majority or mainstream church. Irenaeus, for example, also thought that it was necessary to use the κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας to interpret the scriptures correctly, as we have seen. Naturally, in spite of this, Irenaeus argued in his work strictly against the three Valentinian points:

a) The Apostles preached with perfect γνῶσις (III 1,1),
b) They revealed their entire knowledge to their pupils and held nothing secret, as Irenaeus himself learned through contact with Polycarpus in Smyrna; and finally,
c) Irenaeus denied that there was any difference between the oral and the written tradition.

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[18] W.A. Löhr, „Kanongeschichtliche Beobachtungen zum Verhältnis von mündlicher und schriftlicher Tradition im zweiten Jahrhundert", *Zeitschrift für die neuetestamentische Wissenschaft* 85 (1994), 234-258, esp. 243f.

[19] Iren., haer. III 1,1 (SC 211, 20,7-10 Rousseau/Doutreleau).

But this powerful argumentative effort cannot conceal the similarity in the structure of their argumentation. Both dealt with a rule for the interpretation of the scripture, independent of the fact that Irenaeus declared that scripture was fully sufficient while the Gnostics held that it was deficient. They both tried to write down this rule: Irenaeus in the form of certain short and spontaneously-worded "*regula-fidei*-definitions;"[20] and some—but definitely not all—Valentinians in the form of pseudo-apostolic treatises. Perhaps the divine plan of salvation, the "Heilsplan", was for Irenaeus more linked with the concrete church, whereas for the Valentinian Gnostics it was more connected with an esoteric mystery, destined only for a handful of inspired Gnostics; but all these differences are questions of quantity not of quality. In other words, no great difference in the hermeneutical theory concerning orality and literacy of scripture existed between the mainstream theology and the Valentinian Gnostics.[21] This striking similarity would become still more clear had I the space to examine the view of Clement of Alexandria as well. To make one point very clear: The purpose of this contribution is not to minimize the real portion that Gnostic groups had in the ongoing debate concerning the boundaries of authoritative scripture in second century Christianity. However, the more I learn the less convinced I am of simple models like the "emergency-brake model", of simple rhetoric like the rhetoric of crisis, and of simple theories about causality in historical developments.

Another topic related to our first point, i.e., the question of modelling, will be mentioned only briefly. In my opinion, it is far more important to realize the different levels of authority in one and the same concept of "canon". It is interesting to note that already contemporary Jewish sources distinguished carefully between different levels of "canonical authority"; I refer to a recent thesis by Bernhard Lang, which holds that the 'Writings' of the Hebrew Bible should be considered a "secular" or "literary" canon.[22] Here, I only mention the well known passage in Josephus, *Contra Apionem*:

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[20] H. Freiherr von Campenhausen, „Das Bekenntnis Eusebs von Caesarea (Nicaea 325)", in: id., *Urchristliches und Altkirchliches. Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Tübingen, 1979), 278-299, esp. 288-293.

[21] This point is ignored by Löhr in his article "Kanongeschichtliche Beobachtungen" (see note 18).

[22] B. Lang, "The 'Writings': A Hellenistic Literary Canon in the Hebrew Bible", in: *Canonization and Decanonization*, 41-65.

> „From the death of Moses until Artaxerxes (...) the prophets subsequent to Moses wrote the history of the events of their own times in thirteen books (...). From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets".[23]

Already in 1961, Albert C. Sundberg held the opinion that texts of Christian authors also imply such a theory of different levels of canonical authority. It is, for example, possible to tell from passages by Irenaeus (haer. III 13-15) and Tertullian (Marc. IV 2-3) that here, Luke is seen to have a status of "dependent canonicity". For Irenaeus, Luke is only a *sectator et discipulus apostolorum* (III 10,1) in the same way as Mark is only *interpres et sectator Petri* (III 10,6). It follows from these texts that Luke and Mark claim canonicity not from their own rights, "but are dependent upon apostolic teachers for their authority".[24] Parenthetically, it is a sign of his education (or perhaps more a sign of his skill) that Irenaeus at the same time used this argument against Marcion: It is not allowed to separate the apostle from his pupil and to receive only the apostle and not his pupil (III 14,1/2).

2. *The Bible in Oxyrhynchus*

In my opinion, one of the greatest problems of most contributions to the research in our field is the concentration on great theologians and their concepts of canonization, particularly the focus on later lists of biblical books like the famous and notoriously unclear "*Canon Muratori*".[25] This partly puzzling, partly unsurprising concentration has been typical for the research on the Christian Biblical Canon

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[23] Jos., c.A. I 40/41 ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς Μωυσέως τελευτῆς μέχρι τῆς Ἀρταξέρξου... οἱ μετὰ Μωυσῆν προφῆται τὰ κατ' αὐτοὺς πραχθέντα συνέγραψαν ἐν τρισὶ καὶ δέκα βιβλίοις. ...ἀπὸ δὲ Ἀρτ αξέρξου μέχρι τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς χρόνου γέγραπται μὲν ἕκαστα, πίστεως δ' οὐχ ὁμοίας ἠξίωται τοῖς πρὸ αὐτῶν διὰ τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι τὴν τῶν προφητῶν ἀκριβῆ διαδοχήν (Translation by H.St.J. Thackeray [LCL 186], Cambridge/M. and London 1976 [= 1926], 179).

[24] A.C. Sundberg, "Dependant Canonicity in Irenaeus and Tertullian", *Studia Evangelica* 3 (Berlin, 1964), 403-409, esp. 403.

[25] G.M. Hahneman, *The Muratorian Fragment and the Development of the Canon* (Oxford, 1992); J.D. Kaestli, "La place du Fragment de Muratori dans l'histoire du canon: A propos de la thèse de Sundberg et Hahneman", *CrSt* 15 (1994), 609-634.

since the times of Johann Salomo Semler in the late 18th century; I dare say that certain relatively new orientations of the Study of History obviously have not reached those New Testament scholars and church historians who have devoted their energy to Canon research. For a more convincing picture, the horizon of research must be expanded substantially. For example, the traditional attention to great theologians and to the juridical system should be supplemented by the examination of which types of canons and books of contents of canons appeared in the public, liturgical and private lives of ancient Christians. Preliminary research along these lines was submitted, for example, by Adolf von Harnack and Harry Gamble. Harnack wrote a small book with the title, "Über den privaten Gebrauch der heiligen Schriften in der alten Kirche",[26] but all his material was taken from a monograph of the late 18th century, which Harnack unfortunately forgot to mention. And Gamble based his work, "Books and Readers in the Early Church," on some valuable articles in the relevant encyclopaedias.[27] Although these contributions exist, it is extremely difficult at present to answer the following simple questions: Who really did possess a bible? Where could such texts be bought? Which manuscripts or codices were used by an average Christian community? Which canonical texts were at the disposal of an ordinary layman, and which could one find in an average community library? When searching for answers in the well known basic introduction by Barbara and Kurt Aland with the English title "The Text of the New Testament", it becomes quite apparent that clear answers to such questions are at present far from our understanding. I have omitted, for lack of space, a long German quotation with many instances of "perhaps", "should" and other formulations of this kind, which indicate serious doubt.[28]

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[26] A.v. Harnack, *Über den privaten Gebrauch der heiligen Schriften in der Alten Kirche* (Leipzig, 1912).

[27] H.S. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church. A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven, 1995).

[28] „In der Frühzeit *dürften* sämtliche Abschriften durch Privatleute vorgenommen worden sein, die Benutzung eines der Skriptorien (...) verbot sich insbesondere in Zeiten der Gefährdung und Verfolgung der Christen. Natürlich war es *möglich*, daß Christen unter den Schreibern Abschriften in 'Heimarbeit' anfertigten. Das früheste christliche Skriptorium *könnte* um 200 n. Chr. in Alexandrien anzusetzen sein, aber es hatte lediglich Bedeutung für die ägyptische Kirchenprovinz. Bis dahin müssen wir überall und anderswo auch später, und zwar bis zum Anfang des 4. Jh. mit 'Kleinserien' von Handschriften rechnen (...). Die diokletianische Verfolgung bedeutet einen tiefen Einschnitt (...) in die Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Textes.

But I believe it is possible to reach safer ground for better grounded answers and so to open new horizons for research in the canon; or, to apply Moshe Halbertal's convincing distinction: to widen the research towards the field of the *formative* canon.[29] I would first like to draw your attention to a study by Eldon Jay Epp in the Festschrift for Tjitze Baarda.[30] Although Epp's contribution is titled, "The New Testament Papyri at Oxyrhynchus in Their Social and Intellectual Context", his article contains mere statistics. To draw the kind of picture that the title describes, it would be necessary to evaluate his statistics and to consult other works in addition. I present here a few remarks on the city as background. In late antiquity, Oxyrhynchus was an ecclesiastical center with a bishop and thirty churches in the fourth century[31] and forty churches in the sixth century.[32] One Jewish synagogue is mentioned in the papyri[33] and several members of the Alexandrine μουσεῖον lived there as well.[34] We all are aware of the problems of calculating the number of the inhabitants of a city in antiquity. I cite here only a recent study by Fichmann and argue for 30.000 inhabitants[35] during the fourth century (a great theatre holds

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Die zahllosen in der Verfolgung vernichteten Handschriften mußten ersetzt werden und zusätzlich die überaus vielen nach der 'konstantinischen Wende' entstehenden Gemeinden neu damit versorgt werden. Die äußeren Möglichkeiten für die Errichtung kirchlicher Skriptorien an allen Bischofssitzen (...) waren jetzt gegeben" (B. Aland and K. Aland, *Der Text des Neuen Testaments. Einführung in die wissenschaftlichen Ausgaben sowie in Theorie und Praxis der modernen Textkritik* [Stuttgart, ²1980], 80f.—Single words emphasized by Ch. Markschies).

[29] „Texts form a *normative* canon; they are obeyed and followed, as, for example, are Scriptures and legal codes. They can also be canonical as a constitutive part of the curriculum; such texts are not followed in the strict sense but are taught, read, transmitted, and interpreted. These texts establish a *formative* canon, and they provide a society or a profession with a shared vocabulary" (M. Halbertal, *People of the Book. Canon, Meaning, and Authority* [Cambridge, 1997], 3).

[30] E.J. Epp, "The New Testament Papyri at Oxyrhynchus in Their Social and Intellectual Context", in: W.L. Petersen, J.S. Vos & H.J. de Jonge (eds.), *Sayings of Jesus: Canonical and Non-Canonical. Essays in Honour of Tjitze Baarda* (Leiden, 1997), 47-68.

[31] Epp, New Testament Papyri, 54; POxy XI, 26.

[32] POxy XI, 1357 for 535-536.

[33] POxy IX, 1205.

[34] Epp, New Testament Papyri, 57: PMerton I,19 (from 31.3. 173) and POxy XVIII, 2192.

[35] J. Krüger, *Oxyrhynchos in der Kaiserzeit: Studien zur Topographie und Literaturrezeption* (Frankfurt/M. and New York, 1990); I.H. Fichmann, „Die Bevölkerungszahl von Oxyrhynchos in byzantinischer Zeit", *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 21 (1971), 111-120; for further relevant literature see E.J. Epp, New Testament Papyri, 60.

between eight- and twelve-thousand spectators[36]). Despite all the aforementioned problems, it is quite clear that in the second and third centuries, the total number of Christians in the city certainly would not have exceeded the rate of approximately five percent; recently, there was a provocative yet stimulating article on this subject by Keith Hopkins.[37]

We return now to our theme "canon." According to the sources known until now, 28 New Testament papyri of the second, third and fourth centuries were discovered in Oxyrhynchus.[38] These contained six fragments of the Gospel according to Matthew, five of the Gospel according to John, and three of the Epistle to the Romans, among others. It is interesting that no traces of any New Testament scriptures were found among the papyri. There is no evidence of the Gospel of Mark in ancient Oxyrhynchus, nor of certain Pauline and pseudo-Pauline letters (2Cor, Eph, Phil, Col), or of the eminently important pastoral letters. As for the counter-calculation of non-canonical and apocryphal writings, the papyri collections included: four fragments of so-called apocryphal Logia of Jesus, four fragments of the Shepherd of Hermas, seven fragments of different apocryphal acts and apocalypses, and no more than one fragment of every other scripture.[39] Before any conclusion can be drawn from this material, the special character of the manuscripts must be taken into consideration. Already Colin H. Roberts and also Eldon Jay Epp have found that almost all manuscripts show no traces of text critical remarks, leading both scholars to conclude that these papyri must have been destined for

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[36] E.G. Turner, „Roman Oxyrhynchus", *The Journal of Egyptian Archeology* 38 (1952), 78-93, esp. 81.

[37] K. Hopkins, „Christian Number and Its Implications", *JECS* 6 (1998), 185-226.

[38] Epp, New Testament Papyri 52.

[39] A small number of apocryphal logia of Jesus from the 3/4th century was found (POxy I, 1; IV, 654/655 = EvThom, VIII, 1081 SophJC, and L. 3525; PRyl. III, 463; X, 1224; XLI, 2949, PLond Christ 1 [EvMaria]), Hermas (I,5; III 404; XV 1828, L. 3528) see Apokalypse Peter (PVindobG) Acta Petri (VI 849) , Irenaeus (III 405, but see IV, 264f.), an apologetic text (XVII, 2072), an anti-judaic dialog (XVII, 2070), a prayer (III, 407); a hymn (XV, 1786), a gnostic text (I,4; XII, 1478, PapHar 107) and further material (II, 210). From the later 4th century Hermas (IX 1172 3526, XIII 1599; L. 3527); Didache (XV 1782); Acta Joh (VI, 850); Aristides, Apology XV 1778; Passion of Dioskur L. 3529; ApocBar III, 403 (apocalyptical fragments XVII 2069; liturgical fragments XVII 2068; prayer VII, 1058 three sermons XIII 1601, 1602; XVII 2073); three amulets (PSI 719; Pamst 26, SB 10762), a gnostic magic text (VI 924) and a prayer (XII, 1566), see C.H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (London, 1979), 22.

practical purposes.[40] E.J. Epp expressed no reservations in generalizing this conclusion when he says: "What is relevant, however, is that early Christian books were essentially *practical* and produced for use in the life of the Christian community".[41]

I now would like to draw three conclusions from this material: (1) With our normal interest in 'great theologians' and their theology of scripture on one hand, and our general interest in legal decisions concerning the canon of the Bible on the other hand, we displace the mere fact that a large number of Christians knew the Bible only from short passages in the liturgy. The number of Biblical papyri in Oxyrhynchus is quite small. (2) No evidence could be found for one single *complete* edition of the Bible. While having access to a complete edition of the Bible seems absolutely natural to us, it seems to have been absolutely rare in antiquity. And finally, (3) The number of non-canonical books is quite small, with the one great exception of the Shepherd, which was an extremely popular book in ancient Christian communities, as we know from other sources.

3. *Canon and library*

In an appendix to this contribution, there is a list of 19 papyri and ostraca. All these materials contain Christian lists of books, mainly dated from the fourth to the eighth centuries, including catalogues of Christian libraries in monasteries and slips of paper with the contents of a parcel. Presumably, you will not be surprised when I tell you that the conclusions drawn from this material are the same as those we obtained from the Oxyrhynchus-material. This similarity verifies the thesis that we have discovered something characteristic.

Two points are striking concerning our 19 lists or catalogues: (1) Our lists—in the same way as the Oxyrhynchus-material—reveal that not every private library, community library or monastery library possessed a complete edition of the Bible. Some parts of the Holy Scripture are missing in some libraries. Obviously, liturgical books with biblical readings were more interesting for a Christian community as well as for a monastery. Caspar René Gregory, a pioneer

[40] See Epp, New Testament Papyri, 67 criticizing Roberts (1979), 9f. 14. 21-25.

[41] Epp, New Testament Papyri, 67, see also Gamble (1995), 66 and 77f.

of New Testament text criticism at the beginning of our century and a personal friend of Adolf von Harnack, thus wrote:

> „Die liturgischen Bücher sind die Hauptbücher der Gemeinden gewesen. Es kam für eine Gemeinde, für ein Kloster, weniger darauf an, Handschriften der neutestamentlichen Bücher zu haben, denn solche fanden eben keine Verwendung im öffentlichen Gottesdienst; sie konnten höchstens für den Geistlichen oder den Gelehrten von Interesse sein".[42] (The Liturgical books were the main books for the communities. There was only little need for communities, for a monastery, to have special manuscripts of the writings of the New Testament; they were of interest only for priests or for scientists).

A complete edition of the New Testament appears only in six lists (lists 2, 13, 15, 17 and 18), but a complete edition of the whole Bible is still missing. It is important to understand the fact that a Bible-book, written in uncialis, would have filled more than 400 pages[43] and thus would have been extremely expensive for a small community or for a simple layman. The emperor Constantine ordered—as is generally known—50 volumes of parchment Bible-codices in splendid workmanship; but the expenses of this order were so extremely high that the emperor had to ask one of the *rationales* (καθολικοί), i.e., one of the heads of the financial departments of the dioceses, before ordering, and the codices were so heavy that two carriages of the imperial post were needed for the transport.[44] Space does not allow me to analyze the number of single biblical books or other details. As we have seen, we reach exactly the same conclusions as when regarding the Oxyrhynchus-material; this is also true for the relation between canonical and non-canonical books.

Certainly, we did not cover the whole rich field of "canon and library" with my short remarks on the 22 lists; there are many interesting texts which could be considered here. In the acts of the Martyrs of Scili, a very small village in Numidia, we find the following scene: After he had concluded the whole session, the Roman

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[42] See for example Aland (1980), 172-178 and the thorough documentation in C.R. Gregory, *Textkritik des Neuen Testamentes I* (Leipzig, 1900), 327-386 (quotation p. 327).—Th. Skeat, "The Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Vaticanus, and Constantine", *Journal of Theological Studies* 50 (1999), 583-625, esp. 616: „Manuscripts of the entire Greek bible are extremely rare at any period".

[43] For details for the majuscules see Aland (1980), 113f. and p. 134f. diagram 39.

[44] See A. Demandt, *Die Spätantike. Römische Geschichte von Diocletian bis Justinian 284-565 n.Chr.* (München, 1989), 346.

proconsul Saturninus asked the Christians one last question:

Saturninus proconsul dixit: 'Quae sunt res in capsa vestra?'

And one of his victims answered:

Speratus dixit: 'Libri et epistulae Pauli viri iusti.[45]

Libri et epistulae Pauli viri iusti, "some books of the Bible and the Epistles of Paul, of a righteous man". We learn from this sentence that, around the year 180, Christians in Roman Northern Africa did not yet regard the Pauline Epistles as part of their Bible-books, and counted them separately. However, the Greek translator of the Acts, who translated them immediately after they had been written in Latin, corrected the phrase and translated: "The books, normally used among us, and the Epistles of Paul, which belong to them".[46]

Finally, with the document of the 39th Festal-Letter of Athanasius, we are able to confirm this picture. Every contribution to the field of canonization mentions this letter. As it is well known, the bishops of Alexandria used such letters to announce the exact date of the Easter-Sunday and the time of fasting beforehand, and also to deal with actual theological problems.[47] However, the main problem with this normal interpretation and usage of the 39th Festal-Letter of Athanasius in the canon-literature is that, in most cases, only a small number of lines of the letter are used. Undoubtedly, the bishop of Alexandria enumerates in this letter of the year 367 the full number of Biblical books under the label, "writings that have been put in the Canon". But most contributions leave out the context of this often-cited passage. That is not surprising, since the transmission of the letter is extraordinarily poor: Only fragments have survived, with

[45] R. Knopf, G. Krüger & G. Ruhbach, *Ausgewählte Märtyrerakten* (Tübingen, 1965), 29, 18f.; see also H. Leclerq, *Art. Bibliothèques* (Paris, 1925), 860-862, esp. 860f.

[46] J.A. Robinson, "Passio martyrum Scilitanorum", *Analecta Bollandiana* 8 (1889), 6-8; F. Ruggieri, *Atti dei martiri scilitani* (Rome, 1991), 71-74; for the analysis of the Greek text, Lietzmann (1907), 49. Already A. Harnack, *Das neue Testament um das Jahr 200. Theodor Zahn's Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons [Bd. 1 Hälfte 1] geprüft* (Freiburg, 1889), 37 had pointed to the importance of the separate citation of the Epistles of Paul for the history of the canon; against Th. von Zahn, *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons, 1. Bd. Das neue Testament vor Origenes* (Erlangen und Leipzig, 1888) (= Hildesheim 1975), 102f.

[47] A. Külzer, Die "'Festbriefe' (ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΑΙ ΕΟΡΤΑΣΤΙΚΑΙ)—eine wenig beachtete Untergattung der byzantinischen Briefliteratur", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 91 (1998), 379-390.

most of them in the Coptic language, and only a few in Greek.[48] Before I translate and comment on these passages, I shall provide some remarks regarding the previous passages, which are preserved only in Coptic. While the opening of the letter is still missing, it is quite clear that the theme of the letter is 'Christ as teacher'. The fourth sentence of the first preserved Coptic fragment runs as follows: "In brief: He, Christ, became for all in all things a teacher". In the following passages, the author explains how Christ has become a teacher to Paul, the apostle, a teacher to the pupils of Paul and so on. And, like a refrain, Athanasius always repeats the sentence "He, Christ, is the only teacher", αὐτὸς δικαίως ἐστὶ μόνος διδάσκαλος.[49]

But why was it necessary to treat the theme Χριστὸς διδάσκαλος in the year 367? Athanasius returned in 366 from his fifth and, as it was to turn out, final exile from his see in Alexandria;[50] he died only seven years later, in 373. Scholars traditionally have assumed that the bishop during the years between 367 and 373 enjoyed a state of relative peace. But the 39th festal-letter is a witness that proves this assumption wrong. As David Brakke has shown recently,[51] Athanasius opposed two influential groups with his refrain "Christ is the only teacher" in his own local church: the Melitians and the Homoeans. Athanasius used to call this group „Arians" (as still some scholars today do, unfortunately Brakke as well), but this group in fact consisted of adherents to the imperial church-policy of the emperor Constantius. These were no disciples of Arius, but followers of the 'normal' Alexandrine subordination of the Son in regard to the Father. Thus, the ancient as well as the modern designation as 'Arians' is pure polemics.[52]

We return now to the letter. Athanasius impressed upon his readers that Melitians and Homoeans only appeared as if they would celebrate Easter, since they did not obey the traditions of the forefathers. And

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[48] Σ.Ν. ΣΑΚΚΟΥ, Η ΘΕΟΡΤΑΣΤΙΚΗ ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ ΤΟΥ Μ. ΑΘΑΝΑΣΙΟΥ, in: ΤΟΜΟΣ ΕΟΡΤΙΟΣ: ΧΙΛΙΟΣΤΗΣ ΕΞΑΚΟΣΙΟΣΤΗΣ ΕΠΕΤΕΙΟΥ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΑΘΑΝΑΣΙΟΥ' 373-1973), ed. by Γ. Ι. ΜΑΝΤΖΑΡΙΔΟΥ (Thessaloniki, 1974), 129-196.

[49] § 9 (p. 176,16f. S.).

[50] Ch. Markschies, *Alta Trinità Beata. Gesammelte Studien zur altkirchlichen Trinitätstheologie* (Tübingen, 2000), 238-246.

[51] D. Brakke, "Canon Formation and Social Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt: Athanasius of Alexandria's Thirty-Ninth *Festal Letter*", *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994), 395-419; see also M. Tetz, "Athanasius und die Einheit der Kirche", *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 81 (1984), 196-219.

[52] Markschies (2000), 300-307.

here I cite again the Coptic text in my own translation: "But we, we will again celebrate the feast according to the traditions of our forefathers, because we have the holy scriptures; they are fully sufficient to instruct us perfectly".[53] The polemical meaning of this sentence is quite clear: Melitians, Arians and Homoeans follow and obey not the traditions of the forefathers, which are revealed in the holy scriptures, but instead establish new teachings on the basis of other writings and doctrines. Another consequence of this idea is that the Melitians', the Arians' and the Homoeans' Easter is not a real Easter and that Christians who take part in such a celebration will not celebrate a real Easter. This is the first main issue of the 39th festal letter of Athanasius, unfortunately not preserved in the Greek fragments and so often overlooked.

However, I believe that the following key issue is also of great interest, since here Athanasius gives the reason why he later enumerates the "canonical books". I cite verbatim, and here starts the Greek fragment:

> "Since, however, we have spoken of the heretics as dead but of ourselves as possessors of the divine writings unto salvation, and since I fear (...) that some guileless persons may be led astray from their purity and holiness by the craftiness of certain men and begin thereafter to pay attention to other books, the so-called apocryphal writings, being deceived by their possession of the same names as the genuine books, I therefore exhort you to patience when, out of regard to the Church's need and benefit, I mention in my letter matters with which you are acquainted".[54]

The Coptic text differs a little and seems to me the original text: "I therefore exhort you: Take care of yourself and look, whether those books, which you know, are the same books, which I will mention in regard to the Church's need and benefit". And in the following sentences Athanasius paraphrases the prologue of the gospel of Luke:

> "It being my intention to mention these matters, I shall, for the commendation of my venture, follow the example of the evangelist Luke and say: Since some haven taken in hand to set in order for themselves the so-called apocrypha and to mingle them with the God-inspired Scripture, concerning which we have attained to a sure persuasion, according to what the original eye witness and ministers of the

[53] L.Th. Lefort, *S. Athanase. Lettres festales et pastorales en copte* (Leuven, 1955), 1-72, esp. 68f. ; see also § 15 (p. 177,18-20 S.).

[54] § 16 (p. 177,25-178,8 S.).

> word have delivered unto our fathers, I also, having been urged by true brethren and having investigated the matter from the beginning, have decided to set forth in order the writings that have been put in the canon, that have been handed down and confirmed as divine, in order that everyone who has been led astray may condemn his seducers and that everyone who has remained stainless may rejoice, being again reminded of that".[55]

I pass over now the well known lists of Biblical books and pay attention only to the last passage. The translation reads:

> "These are the springs of salvation, in order that he who is thirsty may fully refresh himself with the words contained in them. In them alone is the doctrine of piety proclaimed. Let no-one add anything to them or take anything away from them".[56]

μηδὲις τούτοις ἐπιβαλλέτω, μηδὲ τούτων ἀφαιρείσθω τι: Let me remind you only briefly what Willem C. van Unnik has shown in a brilliant article[57] that this formula is a very traditional formula, having been used since biblical times to protect the authoritative word of God, although normally in a slightly different version: μήτε προσθεῖναι μήτ' ἀφελεῖν. And the Greek fragments conclude:

> "And although, beloved, the former are in the canon and the latter serve as reading matter, yet mention is nowhere made of the apocrypha; they are rather a fabrication of the heretics, who write them down when it pleases them and generously assign to them an early date of composition in order that they may be able to draw upon them as supposedly ancient writings and have in them occasion to deceive the guileless".[58]

Here ends the Greek text; according to the Coptic fragments. Athanasius sharply criticized in the following particular apocryphal books and showed that the whole heretical development was foreseen by the Bible: „For the time will come when they will not stand wholesome teaching, but will follow their own fancy and gather a crowd of teachers" (2Tim 4,3).

Here I would like to end my translation of the Coptic fragments and add some conclusions concerning the entire letter. Normally, a

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[55] § 17 (p. 178,8-179,1 S.).

[56] § 27 (p. 181,4-7 S.).

[57] W.C. van Unnik, "De la règle μήτε προσθεῖναι μήτε ἀφελεῖν dans l'histoire du canon", *Vigilia Christiana* 3 (1949), 1-36 = ibid., *Sparsa Collecta. The Collected Essays Vol. 2: I Peter, Canon, Corpus Hellenisticum, Generalia* (Leiden, 1980), 123-156.

[58] § 31 (p. 182,2-7 S.).

few lines of the 39th festal letter are cited in books on the Christian Biblical canon, in which one can read sentences such as: „In his 39th festal letter of 367 Athanasius of Alexandria expressed his view on those scriptures, that are received by the church, and communicated a list of the recognized books of the Old and New Testament".[59] In reality, Athanasius attempted with this letter to accomplish three goals: First, to establish a closed canon of Christian scriptures (or, to say it more precisely: to drum a specific canon into the heads of simpler Christians); second, to use, among learned theologians, a more or less established canon to demolish the authority of free teachers like Arius;[60] and third, to solidify his authority as the sole bishop of the only Christian community in Alexandria. In view of the whole letter, it seems to me absolutely clear that not only did the simpler Christians and simpler priests of Egypt know nothing about the exact number of Biblical books, but also that the Alexandrine Bishop himself had "to investigate the matter (i.e., the canon) from the beginning" (in Greek: καὶ μαθόντι ἄνωθεν ἐξῆς...), before he was able to enumerate the exact number of canonical biblical books. Or, obversely, without serious research, a learned theologian and bishop of the metropolis Alexandria was not able to tally the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament.

And so I can only emphazise the conclusion of the aforementioned article by David Brakke: "To speak of the history of the formation of the single Christian biblical canon may oversimplify the development and interaction of diverse forms of early Christian piety, which carried with them unique practices of scriptural collection and interpretation—that is, different kinds of canons".[61] Perhaps one should sharpen this statement even a little bit more to a point: It is not only a question of diverse forms of piety, collecting and interpretation, but also of different tables of contents, as we have seen from the effort of Athanasius to gather a complete list of canonical books. So much for the 39th festal letter of Athanasius—I hope to have shown that it is necessary to deepen research further by a more careful reading of the sources, and by recognizing their historical context.

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[59] W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung, Vol. 1 Evangelien* (Tübingen, [6]1990), 2.

[60] Brakke (1994), 404, points to the beginning of the Thalia, and counts Arius as one of the free and inspired teachers of Alexandria.

[61] Brakke (1994), 419.

I would like to return to Hans Lietzmann's phrase that I mentioned at the beginning of this contribution. In 1907, he opened his aforementioned series of popular lectures under the title „Wie wurden die Bücher des Neuen Testaments heilige Schrift?" with the still valid statement that the history of the canonization of the Christian Bible forms one of the most complicated parts of the science of church history[62]. I do not see a need to add anything to this statement—except perhaps my general observation that the most complicated parts of a science tend to be the most exciting parts.

Appendix: Book-lists on Papyrus
(a preliminary catalogue)

(1) P. Ash. Inv. 3; 4th cent. (Oxford);[63]
(2) Ostr. Inst. Franç. Cairo IFAO 13315, from the monastery of Appa Elias, probably 5th cent.;[64]
(3) P. Wessely Prag. gr. I 13; 5th/6th cent.;[65]
(4)-(8) 5 coptic ostraca and papyri from the monastery of Epiphanius, Theben, 6th/7th cent.:[66]
(4) Ostr. Cairo inv. 44674.18 (= Crum nr. 554, p. 116/294);
(5) P. Metropolitan Museum of Art inv. 14.1.523 (= Crum nr. 555, p. 294);
(6) Ostr. Cairo 44674.106 (= Crum nr. 556, p. 294);
(7) Ostr. MMA 12.180.133 (= Crum nr. 557, p. 295);
(8) Ostr. MMA 14.1.501 (= Crum nr. 558, p. 295);
(9) P. Graec. Vindob. 26015; 7th/8th cent.;[67]

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[62] Lietzmann (1907), 17.

[63] C.H. Roberts, "Two Oxford Papyri", *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 37 (1938), 184-188 = van Haelst, *Catalogue des papyrus littéraires Juifs et Chrétiens* (Paris, 1976), nr. 1192 (p. 359).

[64] Leclerq (1925), 878-884; R.-G. Coquin, "Le catalogue de la bibliothèque du couvent de saint Élie 'du rocher'", *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* 75 (1975), 207-239; text p. 209-212, traduction p. 214-219 = KSB I, hg. v. M.R.M. Hasitzka (MPER 23), (Wien, 1993), nr. 012, p. 9-12.

[65] C. Wessely, "Catalogus librorum saeculi V-VI.p. Ch. n.", in: *FS zu Ehren Emil v. Ottenthals* (Innsbruck/München, 1925), 184f. = nr. 1200 van Haelst (p. 361); R. Dostálová, "Der „Bücherkatalog" Pap. Wess. Gr. Prag. I 13 im Rahmen der Nachrichten über Bücher aus frühchristlicher Zeit", Βυζαντινά 13 (1985), 535-47.

[66] W.E. Crum and H.G.E. White, *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes II* (New York, 1926) (=New York 1973), nr. 554-558, p. 116/294f.

[67] H. Gerstinger, "Ein Bücherverzeichnis aus dem VII.-VIII. Jh. n.Chr. im Pap. Graec. Vindob. 26015", *Wiener Studien* 50 (1932), 185-192 = nr. 1199 van Haelst (p. 361).

(10)-(12) 3 coptic ostraca:[68]
(10) Egypt Exploration Fund 273 (= Crum nr. 457, p. 75/42);
(11) Egypt Exploration Fund 241 (= Crum nr. 458, p. 75/42);
(12) Cairo 8110 (= Crum nr. 459, p. 75f/42)
(13) Oxford, Bodleiana nr. 486; coptic ostracon;[69]
(14) P. f 46; 8th cent.;[70]
(15) P. BM London Or. 5301(14);[71]
(16)-(18) 3 coptic ostraca from Vienna:[72]
(16) KO 620 (= Till nr. 147, p. 37);
(17) KO 679 (= Till nr. 148, p. 37);
(18) KO 446 (= Till nr. 149, p. 37);
(19) Papyrus of the former Phillipps-Library (Cheltenham) [o. nr.].[73]

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[68] W.E. Crum, *Coptic Ostraca* (London, 1902), Nr. 457, 458, 459, p. 42.

[69] W.E. Crum, *Varia Coptica. Text, Translations, Indexes* (Aberdeen, 1939), nr. 117, p. 47.

[70] E. Kahle, *Bala'izah. Coptic Texts from Deir El-Bala'izah in Upper Egypt* (Oxford, 1954), Vol. I, nr. 56, p. 482.

[71] W.E. Crum, *Coptic Manuscripts, bought from the Fayyum* (London, 1893), nr. 44, p. 60-62 = W.E. Crum, *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1905), nr. 704, p. 312.

[72] W.C. Till, *Die koptischen Ostraka der Papyrussammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek. Texte, Übersetzungen, Indices* (Wien, 1960), nr. 147-149, p. 37.

[73] Short Texts from Coptic Ostraca and Papyri, nr. 166 p. 41.

THE NEOPLATONISTS AND THEIR BOOKS

ROBERT LAMBERTON

The ancient Greeks might aptly be called people of the word, but decidedly not people of the Book. That is, they reveled in their own words, in their speech acts—and their fascination with these peculiar products of their minds and bodies amounted to an unprecedented narcissism in the use of language. They refined them, polished them, developed a whole science of their production—and most of all, they preserved them. In the process, decisions were made about which of these products were the best, and so worthy of emulation, sometimes in the form of imitation, by those who aspired to do even better than their predecessors. Devoted as they were to their own words, however, the Greeks never collectively embraced or privileged a specific corpus of texts such that they might be thought of as scriptural, as a Book.

It needs no special pleading, then, to establish that the Greeks had no scriptural canon, but the status of canons in several other contexts in the Greek world remains problematical. By the fourth century B.C.E. their collections of preserved texts came to form the basis of the great libraries of the Hellenistic world. The Protean list known as the "Alexandrian canon", laying out a cultural map of the proper objects of emulation among the authors of the past, genre by genre, came to function as an ideal that shaped both Greek and Roman elite education. Still, it was not really a canon. Quintilian, who provides the richest account of it in the literature, calls it the *ordo a grammaticis datus* (Inst. Or. 10.1.54), and immediately expands it, by adding not just Latin authors (understandably neglected by the Greek scholars who created the original) but by adding more Greeks, authors whose omission by the Alexandrians Quintilian felt a need to correct. If, then, a canon is a list of texts characterized by stability, the *ordo* was not a canon.

Along with stability, we expect a canon to have, or to be invested with, authority. The striking thing about the authority of the *ordo*

is that it was of an exclusively esthetic nature. This fluid list of the best literature of the past represented a remote, indeed a virtually inaccessible, ideal of culture—and the function of that culture was the production of more and better texts, the perfection of a *facundia*—an eloquence—that contributed to and expressed the exalted status of a tiny fraction of a percentile of the population.[1]

Collectively, the Greeks (and the Romans to the extent that they aspired and consented to be, intellectually and esthetically, Greeks) had many books but no Book. We look in vain among them for texts that were privileged or endowed with any other authority than that of exemplary literary value. Most striking of all is the absence of the demand that exemplary texts be true. Even the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, entrenched in the modest but crucially formative role of first texts to be read and copied and studied in Greek education, were more derided than applauded, in the rare instances where their truth value was an issue at all. Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Plato himself railed at Homer, with no apparent impact on his currency as first author. Most striking of all is the fact that, after Plato, nobody seemed to care anymore—perhaps because Aristotle and the Peripatos successfully shifted discourse about poetry away from content and in the direction of form, toward the esthetic object and its impact, precisely the issues where the rhetorical tradition was at home. For the next half millennium, the truth value of Homer ceased to be an issue. It was self-evident that poets were liars, The Poet no less than all the rest. When the issue again arose, beginning in the high Roman empire, we shall see that the terms of the debate were entirely new.

If Greco-Roman culture had, collectively, no Book, there were nevertheless groups within that culture who did privilege certain texts in ways at least distantly analogous to those that prevail in the monotheisms—the only true peoples of the Book. In the Greco-Roman world, these groups ranged from the esoteric, initiatory societies of the devotees of so-called mystery religions to the relatively open and permeable schools of higher learning—and in particular the schools of philosophy. In the former instance, certain texts were manifestly scripturalized, interrogated, and adopted as guides to some otherwise inaccessible truth. In the philosophical schools, the situation was more complex.

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[1] On the *ordo* and the realities of Greco-Roman education, see Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge, 1998), 37-38 and passim.

Among Greek intellectual traditions, that of Plato was initially singled out by the monotheisms as the most assimilable, a fact to which both Philo and Augustine bear ample witness. As the best known school tradition of the Roman Empire, later Platonism is also remarkable among the ancient philosophical schools for the way in which it privileged certain texts as paths to some truth. This is, of course, paradoxical when we look back at the dialogues of Plato, where on the one hand the appropriateness of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as educational texts is challenged and denied in favor of "new myths" to be invented for the purpose—and where, more generally, distrust of the written word is a pervasive theme. Plato, in the *Republic* and elsewhere, seems to wage war against the authority of written texts, particularly poetic ones, while in the next generation, that of Aristotle, the issue was no longer even polemical. For Aristotle and the Peripatos, Hesiod or, for that matter, Empedocles might, despite their annoying, obscurantist poetic mode of expression, provide evidence for certain archaic, pre- or proto-philosophical apprehensions of the nature of things—but their value was entirely evidential and whatever they might yield would be of use only in understanding the antecendents of newer, more up-to-date and sophisticated views, themselves closer approximations to the truth.

It is something of a paradox, then, that Neoplatonists from Porphyry in the third century—the student and literary executor of Plotinus—to Proclus in the fifth, and beyond, explicitly privileged certain texts we would classify as non-philosophical and treated them as potential sources of wisdom, for which special hermeneutic techniques were sometimes required.

It is these non-philosophical texts and the Neoplatonists' use of them that will concern us here, but their status must be viewed against the background of the philosophical canons themselves and the sense in which the ancient philosophical schools privileged their own core texts. To yield any real insight, of course, the issue would have to be addressed school by school and even scholarch by scholarch, but an overview may serve to point to the diversity of attitudes attested, and at the same time to give some preliminary definition to philosophical canonization in the Greek schools.

There seems to be a scale of possibilities here ranging from the pedagogy of the Cynics (where books presumably had little or no part)[2] to the communities of the Epicureans, where the founder's

[2] This must have been true at least at the extreme represented (parodically) in

portrait was prominently displayed and his texts treated as privileged, if not exclusive possessions. We do not, to the best of my knowledge, hear of Epicureans giving courses on specific texts of Epicurus, but it is clear that the study of those texts and the mining of them for principles of conduct and thought were central to their activity.[3] The philosophy of Epicurus was in fact unique in its accessibility to his followers in the founder's own words, and though their individual philosophical activity seems typically to have taken the form of independent essays and treatments of problematic topics (as the gradually emerging example of the oeuvre of Philodemus illustrates), what bound them together as an intellectual community was adherence to a relatively short list of prominent principles easily derived from the founder's texts. These included disinterested and remote divinities, atomism, and of course, pleasure (or lack of pain) as a goal in itself.

Neither the Platonists nor the early Peripatos were so fortunate in their texts. Under the first two successors of Aristotle, Theophrastus and Straton, the school seems to have shrunk from some two thousand students (according to Diogenes Laertius, 5.37) to very few (on the anecdotal evidence of Plutarch, *De tranquilitate animi* 472e), before being taken over by the dim Lykon, who in Diogenes Laertius's account sounds more like a headmaster than a philosopher. We can only surmise just what these students had in front of them for texts—aside from the popular or exoteric works of Aristotle, which circulated continuously until they disappeared from the direct manuscript tradition in the later years of the Roman Empire. The "esoteric" or "school" works of Aristotle, supplemented by those of Theophrastus, were edited in the mid-first century B.C.E. by Andronicus of Rhodes, with whom the rich tradition of Aristotelian commentaries begins. The early Peripatos clearly built on Aristotle's work in several areas, notably the natural sciences, comparative politics, and logic. The Aristotelian teachers of this period are assumed to have imparted to their students what from our perspective are the cen-

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Lucian's *Peregrinus*, but the range of Cynic practice was very great, and although much is lost, they clearly generated a vast literature of diatribe and protreptic.

[3] On Epicurean communities, problems of documentation, and the importance of emulation, see esp. Diskin Clay, "Individual and Community in the First Generation of the Epicurean School," and "A Lost Epicurean Community," both essays now reprinted in his *Paradosis and Survival, Three Chapters in the History of Epicurean Philosophy* (Michigan, 1998).

tral doctrines of the Aristotelian texts Andronicus was to edit—but the details of influence and even of access are far from certain.[4]

It is important to understand, though, that the activity of the Peripatos, often compared to that of the modern university, seems not in any meaningful way to have been text-oriented. It was compartmentalized and analytic, involving research in relatively clearly defined disciplines ranging from logic to biology to politics and poetics. Each of these was independent and progressive, cumulative in its accomplishments. Texts might be objects of study, or tools for the acquisition of knowledge, but they were never ends in themselves. The "esoteric" works of Aristotle, once rendered accessible, generated a vast literature of commentary. The core of the contribution of the Peripatos to the history of philosophical inquiry, however, is the logical works, the *organon*, studied and commented and built upon not just by self-styled Aristotelians but by Platonists and others alike. Virtually every known scholarch of the later *Platonic* tradition in Athens and Alexandria wrote on Aristotelian logic. This "tool" was the defining text, if there was one, of Greek philosophy in general, and it was not a text that prescribed the truth about anything. It was a workbook, an exercise book for learning the forms and the limits of logical discourse—learning the use of language and reason to arrive at conclusions and formulations that are, given the limitations of human intelligence, sound. Beyond the era of the ancient schools and on into that of the monotheisms, in those environments where disputation and hence analytic thought are prized, it is these texts from the Greek tradition that we find as objects of study again and again.[5]

The story of the Platonists' relationship to the text of Plato's dialogues is more complex than any of the others mentioned thus far. The fact that around 100 B.C.E. Posidonius is credited with a commentary on the *Timaeus* is an indication that he taught a course the subject of which was not cosmogony or cosmology or the world, but the *Timaeus*.[6] Philosophical education in the tradition of Plato seems

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[4] John Lynch, *Aristotle's School, a Study of a Greek Educational Institution* (Berkeley, 1972), esp. 135-62. More recently, and from the perspective of the revival, H. B. Gottschalk, "Aristotelian Philosophy in the Roman World from the Time of Cicero to the End of the Second Century AD," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.36.2 (1987), 1079-1174, esp. 1083-97.

[5] On the legacy of the *organon* in early Christianity, see Richard Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1995), 134 and passim.

[6] Posidonius fr. 85 (Edelstein and Kidd), cf. frr. 86c and 86d

from the first generation to have involved study of the dialogues—not, if you like, "merely" exoteric like the *Protrepticus* of Aristotle, but dramatizations for a general literary audience of both the means and the content of philosophical inquiry as Plato understood it. The Platonists also had Plato's lecture "On the Good"—for what good it may have done them—but otherwise it seems that the texts of Plato they had before them and studied were by and large the ones we read today. Their access to the words and thought of their founder was probably not significantly different from our own.

The dialogues are both highly seductive (and hence tried and proven protreptic texts) and deeply problematic, for their very elusiveness. It is therefore no surprise that they should have generated a huge literature of commentary from within the schools of Platonic philosophy, extending from the end of the second century B.C.E. down to the sixth C.E.. The hermeneutics of this literature of commentary is for the most part quite pragmatic. Iamblichus, early in the fourth century C.E., is credited with the formulation of the powerful interpretive principle that each dialogue has a unique *skopos*—a thing envisioned, a target, or goal, or subject.[7] In practical terms, this strategy offers a solution to the *poikilia* (or "diversity") of the dialogues, their dramatization of sound and unsound argument on a range of topics. Armed with this interpretive tool, Iamblichus and his followers were able to satisfy their own demand for intellectual and compositional unity and focus—they organized the meaning of the dialogue and its parts around the *skopos* they postulated. One thinks of Gadamer's famous insight that we take hermeneutic control of the texts we read by means of the questions we ask them. Iamblichus is credited as well with the definition of the Platonic curriculum as it was to be taught down through the end of the polytheist educational tradition, though he may in fact have found most of the elements already in place.

Thanks to the account of Iamblichus's curriculum in an anonymous sixth-century preface to Plato, we can say that, from shortly after the year 300 at the latest, students of Platonic philosophy typically read a sequence of twelve dialogues, hierarchically arranged according to their subjects.[8] They learned ethics from the *First Al-*

[7] See John Dillon, ed., *Iamblichus Chalcidiensis in Platonis dialogos commentariorum fragmenta*, (Leiden, 1973), 92, 2-5.

[8] L. G. Westerink, ed., *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* (Amsterdam, 1962), later *Prolégomènes à la philosophie de Platon*. Texte établi par L. G. Westerink

cibiades, the *Gorgias*, and the *Phaedo*, logic from the *Cratylus* and the *Theaetetus*, and physics (in the ancients' broad sense of the term, encompassing what we call, thanks to Aristotle, metaphysics) from the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* (paradoxical as that might seem). Grounded in those three basic disciplines, they went on to theology by way of the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, culminating in the *Philebus* on the highest good. Finally, all of this was brought together in a reading of the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides*, the dialogues that synthesized Platonic teaching on nature and theology, respectively.

These are precisely the dialogues on which the preserved and attested commentaries—in large part, the reading and lecture notes of scholarchs—concentrate.[9] The relatively few exceptions, notably Proclus's massive commentary on the *Republic*, are testimony to specialization on the part of individual teachers (in this case, Syrianus, the acknowledged source of much of what his student Proclus had to say about the dialogue). Proclus's *Republic* commentary is formally distinct as well, consisting of isolated chapters (in some cases, explicitly lectures) on larger problems in the interpretation of the dialogue. These commentaries, taken collectively, are the richest testimony to the centrality, within the curriculum of the Platonic schools, of the dialogues singled out by Iamblichus.

We need look no further for the core of the Neoplatonists' books. To be educated in Platonic philosophy meant to have read them and to have heard the opinions of the experts of the day on the problems they posed. Platonic education, though, was more than this, and important as the dialogues were, there is reason to believe that the general lecture course came first, the reading of Plato's works only later.[10] Platonists also studied mathematics, and for some, apparently including Hypatia, it was a specialty. They also often studied rhetoric, though as the biographies reiterate, this was treated as a propaideutic rather than a component of the study of Platonic philosophy. Not all of the courses and lectures they offered and listened to, in any case, were primarily exercises in the explication of the dialogues. This is clear from what we can reconstruct of the

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et traduit par J. Trouillard, avec la collaboration de A. Ph. Segonds (Collection Budé) (Paris, 1990).

[9] Cf. R. Lamberton, "The Schools of Platonic Philosophy of the Roman Empire: the Evidence of the Biographies," Yun Lee Too (ed.), *Education in Greece and Rome* (Leiden, 2001, 433-58)

[10] J. Dillon, *Alcinous, The Handbook of Platonism* (Oxford, 1993), xiv.

teaching of Plutarch, in the late first and early second centuries (in his relatively modest way a teacher of Platonic philosophy even if not a scholarch), and notably in that of Plotinus in the third. Both the Athenians and the Alexandrians of the fourth, fifth and early sixth centuries devoted a good deal of time to mathematics. (For those who create a hierarchy of truths by placing at the top those which are applicable to the largest number of specific instances, statements like the Pythagorean theorem must of necessity take on a very special importance.) The schools of Platonic philosophy of the later Empire were *organized around* the study of the dialogues, but they did and studied a great deal more, besides.

Beginning in the second century, we begin to see among Platonists indications of a new interest in texts from beyond the philosophical tradition—and notably, texts of non-Greek origin. These appear alongside the dialogues of Plato as potential sources of something of value, and are taken, by various Platonists at various times, to encompass a truth that is real and recoverable. These texts range from the very familiar and very old—archaic Greek poetry—to the decidedly foreign—the Book of Genesis and books of Egyptian and Iranian wisdom—and the decidedly new—the *Chaldaean Oracles*, composed in the second (if not the third) century by two known and named "theurgists", but nevertheless credited with the capacity of delivering something of philosophical value.

These three categories of texts are treated quite differently, and though all seem to have been privileged in new ways in this period, the traces that they have left on the surviving literature are quite uneven.

We may start with the middle category, simultaneously the broadest and the least satisfactorily defined: what Momigliano called "alien wisdom". The source to which scholars turn for the proclamation of a new philosophical Orientalism in the high empire is a programmatic statement cited by Eusebius from an obscure but pivotal figure of the second century named Numenius. In a book whose title echoed that of the unpublished lecture of Plato, *peri tagathou*, he wrote,

> [With regard to theology] it will be necessary, after stating and drawing conclusions from the testimony of Plato, to go back and connect this testimony to the teachings of Pythagoras and then to call in those peoples that are held in high esteem, bringing forward their initiations and doctrines and their cults performed in a manner harmonious with

> Plato—those established by the Brahmans, the Jews, the Magi, and the Egyptians.[11]

Numenius was, as far as we can tell, not even a teacher, much less a scholarch, but on matters of psychology, among others, his ideas so nearly anticipated those of Plotinus that the latter was accused of appropriating his work. Numenius also wrote a history of the early Academy and its "betrayal" of dogmatic Platonism that has the unexpected virtue of being extraordinarily funny in its parodic portraits (frr. 24-28, Des Places). He defined his own position, then, in terms of the traditions of school Platonism, even if that definition was in large part negative. There is no mention of texts in the programmatic fragment from "On the Good"—only *teletai* and *dogmata*—but Numenius, who was from Apamea in Syria, demonstrated elsewhere that he had at least an elementary knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures (and this in turn explains in large part why the Church fathers liked to cite him). What access he may have had to the *dogmata* of Brahmans, Magi, and Egyptians we do not know. His notions about these intellectual traditions may in fact have been quite naive. What is important from our point of view is only that he took those traditions of wisdom seriously and tried to find in them ideas (and practices) compatible with his notions of the theology of Plato—itself conceived as fundamentally Pythagorean.

Implied in Numenius's program, then, is an incorporation into school Platonism of an Orientalism of a sort that had been spreading through Greek intellectual life since the time of Alexander. We are probably safe in assuming that he knew virtually nothing of substance of the thought of the "Brahmans"—indeed his notion of them may well have been no more sophisticated than the portrait of naked, levitating Pythagorean sages provided by the Alexander romance. Egypt was another story. Even the dialogues of Plato provided support for the notion that there was wisdom to be found in Egypt, and a thousand years later, Alexandrian Platonists were still writing about "Egyptian wisdom," as Damascius's *Life of Isidore* testifies. Strikingly absent from all this, however, is any indication that texts of Egyptian origin, tapping ideas authentically deriving from Pharaonic Egypt, played any role. Plutarch, who gives us in his "Isis and Osiris" the earliest account of Egyptian religion from a Platonist

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[11] Fr. 1a, Des Places. Cf. R. Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian* (Berkeley, 1986) 60 with n. 53.

of the Roman Empire, writes of myths and practices, but not of texts. Whatever texts first- and second-century devotees of the Egyptian Gods may have had were clearly kept secret and did not escape the initiatory seclusion in which they were stored. Iamblichus, two centuries later, tapped "Hermetic" doctrine when he wrote *On the Mysteries*, and from his time we can see the far-reaching influence of the body of Greco-Egyptian literature we know as the *Hermetica*. Along with the *Chaldaean Oracles*, to which I shall turn in a moment, these are perhaps the most influential texts in the Platonic "underground" of the later Empire. Their influence, along with an emphasis on theurgy and other ritual or magical practice, is coextensive with that of Iamblichus—which is to say that it is pervasive in the Platonism of the schools of Athens and Alexandria in the fifth and sixth centuries.[12] Pervasive though it was, however, its impact on the curriculum of the schools—likewise to be traced to Iamblichus, as we have seen—is less obvious. A Hermetic "system" parallel to Platonic metaphysics and to the Chaldaean "system" was clearly of importance for Proclus, but of the three, it was primarily the dialogues of Plato that provided texts for study and analysis. The evidence, once again, is that of the commentaries. The Platonists' books, the ones they taught, were primarily those on which they wrote commentaries and the overwhelming bulk of that commentary served for the explication of Plato and Aristotle.

Of privileged texts that were unashamedly and unambiguously new, the *Chaldaean Oracles* were perhaps the only example, and they constitute a decidedly odd one. The Neoplatonists who took these texts seriously distinguished carefully, if perhaps not clearly, between what they took to be the words and ideas of the theurgists, the vehicles of these oracular uterances, and those of the oracles themselves, spoken by various gods (and in particular Apollo and Hecate). If the utterances could indeed in some sense be taken to be those of the divinities in question, then the wisdom imparted was therefore timeless, and might be seen as antecedent not just to Plato,[13] but to all the other privileged texts that were not granted the status of revelation.

Of the theurgists themselves (Julian the Chaldaean and his son,

[12] On the *Hermetica*, and their use by the Neoplatonists, see Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes* (Cambridge, 1986).

[13] H. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy* (nouvelle édition par Michel Tardieu) (Paris, 1978), 445-46, with loci in Iamblichus and Proclus.

known simply as Julian the Theurgist) we have only anecdotal evidence from late and problematic sources—in particular the *Suda*—evidence which is in some instances at odds with statements by earlier and generally more reliable authors.[14] If the stories could be believed, they would locate the theurgists firmly in the period from Trajan to Marcus Aurelius. The *Oracles*, however, are at best obscurely visible in the literary record before Porphyry, late in the third century. Hans Lewy was convinced that Porphyry himself was the pivotal figure, introducing the oracles into the school of Plotinus and clothing them in philosophical respectability.[15] But if Porphyry was the first to bring these texts—famously characterized by E. R. Dodds as "theosophical rubbish"—within the sphere of school philosophy, he also explicitly circumscribed their usefulness, recommending them only for those unable to embrace the philosophical life. The *Oracles* had a manifest relevance to Porphyry's own obsession with the embodiment and fate of the soul—a subject on which he was, by his own account, both tireless and tiresome (*Vit. Plot.* 13). But if Porphyry maintained that these texts might serve some purpose for the unphilosophical, he nevertheless distinguished clearly between the advantage they might bring such people and the complete liberation of the soul. This was a state that he, along with his teacher Plotinus and most of the later polytheist Platonists, took to be accessible only through embracing the philosophical life and so cultivating the rational, unified, "highest" soul and correspondingly allowing the passions and appetites to wither away. True, we find parallel to this commitment, and impinging on it, the Iamblichean emphasis on ritual and theurgy as paths leading to the same goal as philosophy. The tension between these two notions of the ends and means of philosophy was a tangible focus of philosophical concern around the year 300, when both Porphyry and Iamblichus were active. Subsequently, however, the two tendencies clearly managed successfully to occupy the same space. The later Platonists *both* studied Aristotle and the dialogues of Plato *and* pursued wisdom and the liberation of their souls through ritual and magical means. The fact that we have far richer documentation of the former activity is responsible for the fact that we view the schools of Athens and Alex-

[14] Garth Fowden, "Pagan Versions of the Rain Miracle of A.D. 172," *Historia* 36 (1987), 83-95.

[15] H. Lewy, [n. 13 above], 449-56, esp. 456.

andria as the direct extension of the earlier schools of Greek philosophy. Evidence for the latter activity comes largely from the biographies of the scholarchs, and even there is presumably underplayed. The books of Hermetic and Chaldaean wisdom had a similar role in the schools: their presence is undeniable, but obscure. For whatever reason, these texts bound up with ritual, which seem to have played an important role in the polytheists' resistance to Christianity, seem never to have been able to penetrate, much less to displace, the philosophical core of the curriculum.

Even if the rituals associated with the oracles were subordinated to the real work of philosophy, however, the *Chaldaean Oracles* clearly remained privileged texts for the later Platonists. Whatever magical procedures were involved in their use were clearly practised in the time of Porphyry and Iamblichus, and the text itself had a place in the Platonic curriculum, at least in Athens. The proof of this is that Proclus, in the fifth century, wrote a commentary on the *Oracles*, now lost. The *Oracles* are frequently mentioned in the surviving works of Proclus, and it is clear that over the two centuries since Porphyry studied them in Plotinus's school, the Platonists had discovered more and more "parallels" between the ontology they themselves developed out of Plato and the ontological system they discovered in the *Oracles*. By the fifth century, these had come to stand as complementary evidence for the truth of the ontological hierarchies the Neoplatonists derived from the text of Plato, and there is little point in denying that *some* students of Plato, at any rate, bought into the notion that this complementary evidence came straight from the mouths of the gods. Even if, for purposes of study, ritual and text were effectively divorced—and this is by no means certain—we have here the single example in these circles of the incorporation into the curriculum of a text that had a ritual dimension. This is perhaps less surprising when we consider that Proclus himself wrote an extant collection of hymns to the Olympian deities. Surrounded by a Christian majority, some of whom were their own students, the later polytheist Platonists seem inevitably to have taken on many of the characteristics of their environment.

We have still before us one remaining category of texts that were privileged in new ways by the Platonists of the Roman Empire: archaic Greek poetry. Here again, the picture is complex and to make things more difficult, the history of the special treatment of these texts is an extraordinarily long one. From a classical perspective, there

were four semi-mythic poets who stood at the source of Greek tradition, Musaeus (of whom we can say little), Orpheus, Homer, and Hesiod. Despite the Aristotelian maxim that whatever is oldest is most respected, this oldest Greek poetry does not constitute a uniform category, nor was it afforded uniform respect. In the chronology of myth, Orpheus was the oldest of these poets, since Orpheus was an Argonaut and the voyage of the *Argo* was situated a generation *before* the Trojan War. Orpheus also had the most developed mythic persona: no one tries to convince us that Homer or Hesiod visited the underworld to bring back a lover—or that they charmed the trees and the wild animals with their songs.

Orphic poetry itself has had an odd history. We have a good deal of it—an intact version of the *Argonautica* as performed by Orpheus, as well as a generous volume of fragments. Until a generation ago, it was possible—and popular—to assume that none of this poetry predated the Hellenistic period, that it all fell in the category of "late" pseudepigrapha that can tell us nothing about classical or archaic Greece. The chance discovery in 1963, near Thessaloniki, of a charred fourth-century B.C.E. papyrus—the first and oldest ever recovered from Greek soil—changed all that.[16] We now know that Orphic poetry—poetry spoken through the persona of Orpheus—was read in the time of Socrates and before, and we ourselves can actually read a small sample of that poetry. Most of what has been transmitted as Orphic is certainly later, but in the fifth century B.C.E. Orphic poetry was submitted to a mode of analysis, illustrated in the papyrus text, that has distinct affinities with later developments in the interpretation of Homer. It was, after all, Orpheus who was known in the Hellenistic period simply as "The Theologian"—much the way Homer might be designated simply as "The Poet". What all this suggests is that Orphic poetry, down to the Hellenistic period, was a privileged possession. If almost all of it is lost, and if what we have is later pseudepigrapha, that is because it was at the opposite end of the scale of accessibility from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Its readers seem to have been devotees, initiates, who kept Orpheus's poems to themselves, and among themselves subjected them to paradoxical and implausible interpretive strategies—treated them,

[16] The sad state of the study of this important but elusive document may be sampled in André Laks and Glenn W. Most (eds.), *Studies on the Derveni Papyrus* (Oxford, 1997). Of particular value is the bibliography (175-86) prepared for the volume by Maria Serena Funghi.

in a word, as scripture. We have at best a few windows into this tradition of poetry and its interpretation. The Derveni Papyrus is the first. Perhaps the latest is the moving portrait provided by one of the last Platonic scholarchs, Damascius, of an Alexandrian friend of his own predecessor, Isidore. This man lived late in the fifth century of our era, over a millennium after the Orphic interpretive text from Derveni was written. Damascius's account of Sarapion offers a vivid portrait of one of the last polytheist Platonists and his books:[17]

> Isidore befriended this man, who in piety and his overall philosophy of life surpassed all others except Isidore himself. He was so full of the truth in his behavior and speech that he provided a living example of the well-known adage ""Keep your light under a bushel"[18]—so that I doubt if any of his younger or older contemporaries would have known his true nature. Nor did anyone else know what kind of man Sarapion was, nor indeed would I have this knowledge now, had not [Isidore] himself described Sarapion to me. For he said that there was no way that Sarapion could ever be persuaded to meet other people, especially as he hardly ever left his house once he grew old. He lived alone in a tiny house, embracing a life of utter solitude, in contact with a few of his neighbors only when absolute necessity required it. [Isidore] said that Sarapion was exceptionally pious, going round dressed as a private citizen to the holy places wherever festival custom took him. But most of the time he spent at home, leading a life which was not that of a man, but quite simply a god-like existence, constantly addressing prayers and hymns to himself or to the divine, or rather meditating in silence. A seeker of the Truth and a man with a theoretical cast of mind, he could not bear to occupy himself with the technicalities of philosophy, but immersed himself in those vigorous concepts which fill one with God. For this reason he possessed and read almost nothing except the writings of Orpheus, putting his questions as they arose to Isidore who was as it were invested with the absolute theological knowledge. It was only [Isidore] whom he recognized as a kinsman and received at home. Indeed [Isidore] thought he saw in him the legendary golden age of Cronus. He spent his entire life in deed and word focusing his attention and concentrating as far as possible on the inner and the indivisible.
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> So great was his contempt for material goods that he owned nothing except for two or three books, among which was the poetry of

[17] Polymnia Athanassiadi (ed. and tr.), Damascius, *The Philosophical History* (Athens, 1999). Fr. 111 (265-69). I have cited her translation with a few interpolations and modifications.

[18] The Greek is *lathe biosas*—a controversial Epicurean injunction: more literally, "Let no one notice that you live your life."

> Orpheus. And such was his scorn for bodily pleasures that from his earliest youth he offered his body the bare necessities only, while remaining throughout his life completely undefiled by sexual intercourse. Besides he so disdained social honors that not even his name was known in the city; nor would it have become known afterwards, had not some god desired to grace humanity with a model of the golden age of Cronus, so that this expression would not appear to refer merely to a legend, unsupported by historical evidence.... [Sarapion] made Isidore his heir, having no relatives, since he considered no one else worthy of his property—that is, of his two or three books.

What we see here is clearly the scripturalization of a text, but of one we know so imperfectly that it is impossible to say much more about its stabilization or canonization. It was used by a community, which defined itself through the text itself. It is probable that this community was never large, but in any case we see it most clearly only in the brief biography of this peculiar recluse who must have been one of its last survivors, and who brought his own difficulties in the interpretation of Orpheus to the prominent local teacher of Platonic philosophy.

Teachers of Platonic philosophy interpreted and took seriously other old poetry in the fifth and sixth centuries. Proclus of Athens was the most conspicuous among them. He read and commented on—and so presumably taught—the "Golden Verses" attributed to Pythagoras. He also pondered the meaning of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. I've written elsewhere about his extensive defense of Homer against the Socrates of the *Republic*.[19] It occupies two books of his commentary on that seldom-taught dialogue, and any satisfactory account of it is far beyond the scope of this paper. I would like to close, though, by evoking some of the strangeness of Proclus's relationship to Homer.

The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were, in the fifth century of the common era, the introductory texts read and copied by schoolchildren learning to read and write Greek. They had served that function for perhaps a millennium and were to go on doing so in the schools of Byzantium. Everybody who knew Greek knew Homer. By the fifth century, however, a majority of those schoolchildren were being raised to be Christians. A century earlier, the polytheist emperor Julian had made a vain attempt to prevent Christian teachers from reading such texts with children—but like much imperial legislation, this order

[19] See n. 11, above.

was unenforceable. Why Julian wanted to stop such teaching is vividly illustrated in a letter by his contemporary St. Basil of Caesarea on teaching polytheist texts to young Christians. Basil and his coreligionists were very sophisticated in their use of texts—much more so than Julian. They knew how to deliver an *Iliad* and an *Odyssey* stripped of theological authority—texts that could serve as sources of edifying anecdotes and messages consistent with and supportive of Christian ideals. What those texts claimed about the gods might either be swept aside or debunked, the myths exposed for the contradictory but attractive fables they were to become for the subsequent European tradition. This is what Julian dreaded and opposed as best he could.

In Proclus's time, the battle had long been lost. The epics had survived the gods. Every day, in every elementary classroom, they were being taught by teachers who mocked their theology—often undoubtedly evoking the same absurdities that had been the target of critics of Homer in the centuries before Plato. Proclus, like several of the other later scholarchs, is presented by his biographer as a restorer of temples and of neglected cults. It is clear from his discussion of the Homeric poems in the *Republic* commentary that he blamed the neglect of those cults and the collapse of the Greco-Roman order in large part on perverse or ignorant readers. Those who saw in the episode of the "Deception of Zeus" or the "Song of Ares and Aphrodite" only the humor and the obscenity of the surface of the fiction were the real barbarians at the gates. And they were already inside and in control of the educational system. Proclus's response was clearly to teach the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as he understood them, elucidating their theology with the help of a rich tradition of commentary that had accumulated for centuries. But he did it only for his tiny circle of advanced students of Platonic philosophy. With them, he shared the keys that unlocked the old stories and revealed the truth behind the screen of fiction—but he demanded that they keep those interpretations to themselves and not expose them—along with Homer and the theological truths he wove into his fiction—to the scorn of the ignorant. The Homeric poems, the elementary school texts of antiquity, had become, among the last polytheists, material reserved for graduate courses of severely limited enrollment.

The anecdote with which Proclus's biographer Marinus sums up his teacher's assessment of contemporary popular culture is perhaps

the most revealing of all the tales of the Neoplatonists and their books. Himself the most eminent representative of an interpretive community that was dwindling to the point of extinction, Proclus (Marinus tells us, *Vit. Pr.* 38)

> was accustomed often to observe, "If I ruled the world, of all the old books I would have preserved only the [*Chaldaean*] *Oracles* and the *Timaeus*, and I would hide all the rest from our contemporaries, since those books do serious harm to some of those who read them casually and uncritically."

CANONIZING LAW IN LATE ANTIQUITY: LEGAL CONSTRUCTS OF JUDAISM IN THE THEODOSIAN CODE*

HAGITH SIVAN

Oxymoronic as the title may appear it is time, perhaps, to move the debate about canons and canonization from its literary-theological cradle to a socio-historical context.[1] Having spent an entire semester pursuing the notion of canon and of canonization I can begin, without tremor, with the statement that there is no agreement regarding these terms even among theologians.

One exception appears to be a certain understanding that in any socio-cultural system canons fulfill the functions of stabilization, orientation and identity making by means of decreeing and dogmatizing.[2] Implicit in this perception is an assumption that canons also have the power to convert and that their rejection implies decanonization as marginalization.

For the sake of this paper I am assuming, rightly or wrongly, that 'canonization' entails a deliberate presentation of a mythic normativity for a carefully targeted audience. The presenters of such a compilation aspire to delineate a normative code of behavior from which, in turn, they derive their own authority to control its recipients.

A prime example of this type of a canon is provided by legal texts and especially by legal codes. In the ancient world only legal compilations came into being attendant by explicit canonic and universal aspirations. From the Code of Hammurabi to the Roman and barbarian law codes of Late Antiquity, the desire to regulate society

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[1] For focus on the former see the recent collection entitled *Canonization and Decanonization*, A. van der Kooij and K. van der Toorn (eds.), (Leiden, 1998).

[2] H. J. Adriaanse, "Canonicity and the Problem of the Golden Mean", in *Canonization*, 315.

had regularly generated corpuses of authoritative pronouncements. Such texts manifest at birth the ingredients that later become indispensable for canons, including super-human inspiration, authority, power, prestige, status, unity and closure.[3] As expressions of a distinct court culture these texts need to be explored against a larger context of contemporary polemics over power and control.

For the modern investigator legal codes or canons present the advantages of a specific temporality and an explicit identity. The making of legal codes can be subjected to a precise chronological scrutiny and to an exploration of the motives of the initiating personalities. Their validation, a moment that can be placed in a specific context of time and space, can be compared, to a point, to 'canonization'.[4] Paradoxically perhaps, this very specificity entails the ultimate invalidation of legal codes. By their very nature they require ongoing interpretation and constant updating. Herein lies their demise.

1. *Law as Canon: The Theodosian Code*

To examine in some detail how legal canons are made and how in turn they manufacture canonic stereotypes that outlast the primary text I am using the Theodosian Code, the first massive legal code of Roman antiquity.[5] By an imperial order of the year C.E. 429 a committee of legal experts was commissioned to gather thousands of imperial constitutions of the past century.[6] Such laws would essentially be those of the Christian emperors of Rome, Julian excluded. To create a final and "definite code statement of Roman law" as envisaged by the emperor, these specialists had to sift through thousands of imperial constitution, selecting, editing, revising and abridging the laws destined for inclusion.[7] Only constitutions that, in the

[3] To use a few of the terms employed by J. Z. Smith, "Canons, Catalogues and Classics", in *Canonization*, 295-309, passim.

[4] D. Ritschl, "Bemerkungen zur Koalgulation von 'Stories' and zum Phänomen der Kanonisierung" in *Canonization*, 383.

[5] See now the perceptive analysis of J. Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1999). Similarly, T. Honore, "The Making of the Theodosian Code", *Zeitschrift für Savigny Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, römische Abteilung* 104 (1986), 133-222. See also, T. Honore, *Law in the Crisis of Empire 379-455 AD: the Theodosian Dynasty and its Quaestors* (Oxford, 1998) and J. F. Matthews, *Laying Down the Law: A Study of Theodosian Code* (New Haven, 2000).

[6] *Codex Theodosianus* 1.1.5.

[7] Harries, 64, for the quote.

opinion of the committee, incorporated matters of a general import based on widely applicable and recognizable legal principles could be included. By a process of elimination, then, the Theodosian code acquired a closure that left out numerous laws that appeared too specific to serve adequately the vision of the emperor Theodosius II of himself as the great law giver of Rome.

According to the imperial novella that accompanied the validation of the Code the emperor described its purpose as "a true undertaking of our time" and one meant to "dispel the darkness", giving "the light of brevity to the laws".[8] In other words, a code to end all other codes. Another law reflects the concern of the imperial government to prevent forgeries, contamination and the circulation of unauthorized copies:

> The license to publish copies has been assigned to you only [namely to two appointed imperial officials] so that the production of copies shall be provided for [by] you alone. We decree that no other person may traffic in either the publication or the production of copies since it is certain that the hazard of falsification (is bound) to occur [Violators of this law] should be constrained by a threat of a fine and by penalties appropriate to sacrilege to cease all surreptitious activity (Gesta Senatus 8, C.E. 443, trans. Pharr).

Through its association with the sacred person of the emperor the code, like all other imperial documents, became not only sacred but also an object of potential sacrilege. It could not claim divine revelation but its illicit duplication by an unauthorized authority was tantamount to impiety. By appropriating the vocabulary of theological canonization, the imperial law code entered the arena of contemporary polemics over orthodoxy (below).

In C.E. 437, on the occasion of the nuptials of the emperor's daughter with the emperor of the western provinces of the empire, the Code was launched in Constantinople. A year later it was presented with much pomp and ceremony to a select and admiring senatorial public at Rome. We are well informed of the occasion. Its significance extends beyond the immediate circumstances that accompanied the maiden journey of the Code from the court in Constantinople to the city of Rome. There is no similar description of initial presentation for any of the canons of antiquity.

To greet the Code at Rome numerous senators were convened to a special session to behold the book in its pristine splendor. In

[8] C. Pharr (trans.), *The Theodosian Code* (Princceton, 1952), Nov. 1.

the absence of the emperor the text was treated as the representative of the imperial majesty. During the presentation the distinguished senators were expected to lend their voices to form a choir of approval. Their enthusiastic shouts confirmed the allegiance of the senatorial class to the imperial establishment and to its laws.

Echoing imperial anxieties regarding the duplication and dissemination of the Code, the senators clamored, 10 times, that, "many copies of the Code must be made and kept in the governmental office" (*Gesta* 5, Pharr). They exhibited greater emotion as they repeated, 25 times, the pious request that, "many copies should be made so that the established laws may not be falsified" (ibid). Their idea of falsification was linked with the use of abbreviations, rather than fully spelt words and terms, and with the employment of annotations, namely legal abbreviations.

These acclamations provide invaluable insights into the problems attendant on the mechanisms of preserving canonic text in their original entirety. Besides the appearance of unauthorized copies circulating texts were also subject of misinterpretation through the use of scribal techniques and other means of recording. Concerns regarding the purity of transmitted texts, moreover, were hardly the domain of the imperial chancellery alone. Since the second century the battle between orthodoxy and heresy extended to arguments over the accuracy and canonicity of sacred and patristic texts.[9] Even authors that held no pretensions to biblical status became pawns in campaigns to ensure the accuracy of authorial ascription and of textual criticism. Perhaps not surprisingly, those branded as 'heretics' turned out to be the pioneers of lower and higher criticism.[10]

In an ideological context where contests of words became as crucial as conflicts over the territorial integrity of the empire lists of acceptable and condemned modes of behavior became chief instruments of theoretical strategies.[11] The Theodosian Code joined the battlefield over normativity or 'orthodoxy' in Late Antiquity with its own "intellectual authoritarianism" and constructs of identity and authority.[12] Its aspiration to delineate the contours of an ideal com-

[9] M. Vessey, "The Forging of Orthodoxy in Latin Christian Literature: A Case Study" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000), 505.

[10] Vessey, 506, with R. M. Grant, *Heresy and Criticism: The Search for Authenticity in Early Christian Literature* (Louiville, 1993).

[11] R. Lyman, "A Topography of Heresy: Mapping the Rhetorical Creation of Arianism", in: M. R. Barnes and D. H. Williams (eds.), *Arianism after Arius*, (Edinburgh, 1993), 47.

[12] Harries, 64, for the quote.

munity converged through a long series of prohibitions that excluded numerous categories from membership in the Roman-Christian commonwealth.[13] In the landscape that the Code projected constructs of identity focused primarily on two categories of person, namely public servants and the religiously incorrect.[14]

By meting harsh penalties for misdemeanor in office the emperors attempted to strike a balance between their own autocracy and their bureaucracy. By penalizing heretics, pagans and Jews, in the same legal breath, the imperial establishment marshaled its resources to defend the integrity of catholic Christianity while, at the same time, drawing sharp distinctions between those who belonged and the 'other'. The Code thus created a moral universe headed by a caring ruler who was both responsive to problems but also stern with violators.[15] Adherence to the laws, like demonstrable loyalty to the correct form of creed, became the criterion of affiliation and of exclusion.

2. *The Manufacturing of Legal Stereotypes: The Case of the Heretic Jew*

Late ancient search for authoritative models often recruited the past to serve the present. Theological writers, for example, relied on a systematic compilations of past knowledge and on select quotations.[16] Theodosius II recruited his imperial predecessors to create a power base for himself. Their laws, through participation in his Code, provided irrefutable proof of the imperial tradition of law giving as well as of continuous imperial care for the welfare of the empire. They also point to a fundamental shirt of attitudes between 312, when Constantine adopted Christianity, and 438, the date of the issuance of the Theodosian Code.[17]

At the start of the period the conversion of Constantine inaugurated a restructuring of the relationship between the ruler and the

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[13] On the concept of 'commonwealth', G. Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth. Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993), passim.

[14] Harries, 142 and passim.

[15] Ibid, 58.

[16] Cf. P. Gray, "The Select Fathers: Canonizing the Patristic Past", *Studia Patristica* 23 (1989), 21-36.

[17] F. Millar, "The Jews of the Graeco-Roman Diaspora between Paganism and Christianity, AD 312-438", in: J. Lieu, J. North and T. Rajak (eds.), *The Jews among Pagans and Christians* (London, 1992), 119.

ruled in terms of religious affiliation.[18] In this context, the presence of Christian slaves in Jewish households, for example, became a major concern and the subject of numerous imperial laws.[19] At its other end Theodosius II, "preserver of the laws" (*Gesta* 5), "consecrated by his most sacred name" (*Gesta* 2) the Code that enshrined the permanent inferiority of the religious 'other'.[20] From a *religio* Judaism became *superstitio*.[21] The Jew became associated with a heretic mode of living. Equally striking is the redaction of Judaism into two wholly foreign concepts (*religio* and *superstitio*) that negated its universalism. The law thus sought to resolve theological tensions between Christianity and Judaism that were irreconcilable.[22]

Perhaps by accident the critical chronology of the Theodosian Code, namely the decision in 429 to 'canonize' the law of late antiquity through its codification, and its completion in 437, coincided with two important laws on Jews and on Jewish affairs. In May 429 Theodosius II ordered the transfer of the dues ordinarily collected for the Palestinian patriarchs to the imperial fiscus.[23] The law signaled the demised of an all important Jewish institution and, possibly, a shift of allegiance on the part of the diaspora Jews away from Palestine.[24] In January 438 the same emperor formulated a

[18] Millar, 103.

[19] Millar, 117. The laws have been conveniently assembled and annotated by A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit, 1987).

[20] On the Jews and the Theodosian Code see J. E. Seaver, *Persecution of the Jews in the Roman Empire* (Lawrence, 1952) (an abridged version of a 1946 Cornell PhD). I am indebted to Jim Seaver for sharing with me his pioneering work in this field; K. L. Noethlichs, *Die gesetzgenerischen Massnahmen der christlichen Kaiser in 4 J. gegen Haretiker, Heiden und Juden* (Cologne, 1971); C. Vogler, "Les juifs dans le Code Theodosien", *Le point theologique* 33 (1979), 35-74; B. S. Bachrach, "The Jewish Community of the Later Roman Empire as seen in the *Codex Theodosianus*", in: J. Neusner and E. S. Frerichs (eds.), *To See Ourselves as Others see us. Christians, Jews, "Others", in Late Antiquity*, (Atlanta, 1985), 399-421; G. Stemberger, *Juden und Christen im Heiligen Land* (Munich, 1987), 237-47.

[21] Millar, 118-19. On the legal condition of the Jews in the Roman empire see the numerous studies of M. A. Rabello, including "The Legal Condition of the Jews in the Roman Empire" in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II, 13, ed. H. Temporini and W Haase (Berlin, 1980). See also the comprehensive survey of M. Pucci (Ben Zeev), *Jewish Rights in the Roman World: The Greek and Roman Documents Quoted by Josephus Flavius* (Tubingen, 1998).

[22] See the perceptive remarks of J. Dan, *On Sanctity* (Jerusalem, 1997), 22 [Hebrew].

[23] *Codex Theodosianus* 16.8.29, with Linder, 320-323 for text, translation and commentary.

[24] On the patriarchs, D. Goodblatt, *The Monarchic Principle. Studies in Jewish Self-Governmetn in Antiquity* (Tübingen, 1994), 132ff. and L. I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (New Haven, 1999), passim.

Jewish policy that crystallized previous imperial trends of grouping Jews with pagans, heretics and Samaritans as 'monstrosities' (*feritates*), mad and blindly senseless.[25]

In marginalizing the Jew into a position of an outlawed heretic neither Theodosius II nor his imperial predecessors were entirely innovative. They merely carried to its seemingly logical conclusion existing theological premises regarding orthodoxy and heresy. The path had been charted, among others, by leading theologians of the fourth century. In a series of catechetical lectures Cyril, the bishop of Jerusalem in the mid fourth century, presented monotheism as crucial for Christian identity. It was, however, a monotheism that excluded much of the Graeco-Roman religious landscape of the time, pagan, Jewish and (Christian) heretic.[26] In Cyril's mind, moreover, there was little doubt, moreover, who was worse. "Hate all heretics" was his conclusion.[27] Their power to pollute equaled that of pagans, Jews and fornicators.[28]

This arbitrary juxtaposition of monotheists and polytheists engineered the consignment of Jews, pagans and heretics to an amoral landscape where no orthodox Christian could possibly dwell. Branding heretics as Jews further classified them as intrinsically alien and deeply destructive on account of their innate resistance to conform to the projected normativity.[29] The characteristics of their behavior served as a negative norm for orthodoxy, justifying their ultimate exclusion not only from the fold of (orthodox) Christianity but also from society at large.[30]

From the fifth century onward Imperial laws adopted similar techniques of classification by creating a separate intellectual genealogy for opponents of orthodoxy. The laws of the emperor Honorius (395-423) cast invaluable light on this process. Responding to the north African scenery where bitter theological strife had been gradually eroding the power base of the government in the prov-

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[25] *Novella* 3 with Linder, 323-337 (text, translation and commentary).

[26] Lyman (above note 11), 49.

[27] *Cat. Lec.* 6.20 with Lyman, 49. See also J. W. Drijvers, "Promoting Jerusalem: Cyril and the True Cross", in: J. W. Drijvers and J. W. Watt (eds.), *Portraits of Spiritual Authority. Religious Power in Early Christianity, Byzantium and the Christian Orient* (Leiden, 1999), 79-95.

[28] *Cat. lec.* 6.32-6 with Lyman, 49.

[29] See the influential analysis of A. Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecue IIe-IIIe siècles* (Paris, 1985), passim, esp. 87 with Lyman, 46-7.

[30] Ibid.

ince the law's chief aim was to extend legal protection to the catholic church and its officials:

> Since we establish in the eternity of the present law what should be observed by all We desire that it shall come to the knowledge of all, through display of letters and the publication of edicts so that if anyone shall break forth into this sort of sacrilege and invade catholic church or cause any injury to its priests, its ministers or to the cult itself, the crime shall be made known *And lest the Donatists and the worthlessness of the other heretics and the others, who cannot be persuaded to join the cult of the catholic communion, namely the Jews and the gentiles whom the people call pagans* decide that what was constituted in the laws previously given against them cooled down, let all the judges know that their precepts must be obeyed with faithful devotion.[31]

Reminding the audience of the sanctity claimed for the emperor, the law justified imperial intervention in circumstances of which the court knew very little.[32] In fact, the African issue that had elicited the above-quoted constitution had little to do with either heretics or Jews. It involved, in its early stages, only the pagan and the catholic residents of a small Numidian town and it could have remained a local matter but for two enterprising bishops. One was the bishop of the town itself who decided to bypass local officials and to take his grievance in person to the court in Italian Ravenna; the other was no less than Augustine of Hippo who used his familiarity with imperial law, as well as his formidable rhetoric and court contacts, to paint a somber picture of the African situation. The arrival of the former coincided with the recent rise to power of Olympius, a new imperial favorite who used the opportunity to demonstrate his newly acquired position and his affinity with the orthodox ecclesiastical establishment.

Aiming to instill order in the small town whose case had elicited imperial intervention the bulk of the lengthy constitution was devoted to mobilizing judicial and military resources to protect the catholic church and its personnel. Within this context the the reference to Jews, pagans and Donatists may have been merely an afterthought.[33] But its insertion and its language emphasized a stereo-

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[31] Cons. Sirm. 14, Linder, 241-255 (text, translation and commentary). The italics are mine. The quote is from Linder, 249.

[32] Harries, 91, with an analysis of the background of *Sirm.* 14 on which my following comments rely.

[33] Harries, 90.

type of the religious 'other' as a source of chaos and disorder. The marginalization of the Jew, then, in lore, theology and law, began with a rhetorical exercise of classification.

Particularly evocative is the association of Jews with pagans. Unlikely and implausible at first glance, this verbal juxtaposition served as a powerful reminder of the abhorrence in which paganism was held by church and government alike. In the words of Firmicus Maternus, a recent convert to Christianity in C.E. 346, emperors were expected to use their law to implement popular sentiment and theological arguments:

> There remains only very little for your laws to accomplish, whereby the devil may lie prostrate and overthrown before them, and the baneful contamination of a dead idolatry shall have vanished away Raise aloft the banner of faith! Need commands you, most sacred emperors, to exact vengeance and punishment upon this evil! This is prescribed to you by the law of the supreme deity, that Your Severity should follow up on all fronts the crime of idolatry.[34]

Militancy in law and militancy in theology combined to generate a canonic image, a stereotype of the non-catholic, be it a pagan, a Jew or a heretic that could be freely invoked upon need to reinforce the all pervasive damage that their religious vocation could incur. In 408 another law of Honorius announced that:

> The audacity of Donatists, heretics and Jews disclosed new and unusual deeds. They want to throw the sacraments of the catholic faith into disorder. Beware lest this plague proceed and spread widely and contagiously.[35]

The words delineated an image of chaos and of potential destructive collaboration between enemies of church and state. The insinuation proved seductive. It gave rise, for example, to the an all pervasive image of the collaborating Jew, a figure that aided the adversaries of Christian Rome, be they the Persian in 614 or the Muslims two decades later.[36] In a climax of verbal violence and judicial savagery the demonizing of the Jew, as of the 'other' in general, intended to erect boundaries in a complex social and reli-

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[34] *De errore profan. relig.* 20.7; 24.8f.; 28.6; 29.1, with R. MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire*, p. 91 for translation, and p. 159 note 12.

[35] *Codex Theodosianus* 16.5.44, with Linder, 239-241 (text, translation and commentary).

[36] H. Sivan, "Synagogal Poetics and Polemics: Jews, Jerusalem and the Sasanids", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 41 (2000), 277-306.

gious landscape.[37] The permeability of these artificially erected boundaries is reflected, in particular, in laws regarding conversion and apostasy:

> A Jew who, unlocking for himself the gate of eternal life, delivers himself to our holy rituals and chooses to become Christian, should not be subjected to either harassment or molestation at the hands of the Jews. If any Jew believes that a Jew who had become Christian should be harassed by injury, we want the perpetrator of such an insult to be subjected to penalties according to the severity of the crime.[38]

The copy from which the compilers of the Theodosian Code elicited the general principle that an apostate merited governmental protection was found in the African provincial archives. Promulgated in October 335, the text was posted in Carthage nearly five months later. The mechanisms of recording, diffusion and publication raise the question of public reading. Regardless of the efficacy of the implementation of this and other imperial laws, the act of collective public perusal of their posted copies and the availability of official and unofficial transcriptions was power unto itself. By generating occasions of public assemblies the government engendered a sense of solidarity among readers. Silently, at times eloquently if obliquely, the law of the empire became an audible if not visible participant in numerous late ancient disputes.[39]

Imperial laws on Jews and on Judaism in Late Antiquity display remarkable monotony and are often repetitious. This repetition, often taken by modern scholars to signal their inefficiency, must be understood rather as a deliberate staking of canonic claims. It added strength to the law, reassured citizens of the imperial set of mind and of what laws ought to be observed.[40] Like endless theological disputes about the same minute point, the repetition of imperial laws refined imperial positions on the subject under observation and legislation.

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[37] On judicial savagery, R. MacMullen, "Judicial Savagery in the Roman Empire", *Chiron* 16 (1986), 147-66, repr. in Idem, *Changes in the Roman Empire. Essays in the Ordinary* (Princeton, 1990), 67-77.

[38] *Sirm.* 4 (*Codex Theodosianus* 16.8.5) C.E. 335 with Linder, 138-144 (trans. modified).

[39] I know of no study that examined the public reading of the laws. On the relationship between power and word see P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* (Madison, 1992). For late ancient circumstances of active socializing, R. Lim, *Public Disputations, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1995), passim.

[40] Harries, 86-7.

Thus:

> It does not bother us to admonish repeatedly that those imbued in the Christian mysteries shall not be forced to adopt the Jewish perversity which is alien to the Roman Empire and abjure Christianity. And if someone should believe that this should be willfully attempted, we order that the instigators of the deed with their accomplices shall suffer the punishment decreed in the former laws, for it is graver than death and crueler than massacre when someone abjures the Christian faith and becomes polluted with the Jewish incredulityIf someone shall attempt to rise against this law let him know that he shall be punished for high treason.[41]

To lend credence to a legal construct of Judaism as deeply alien to Roman and Christian traditions the emperor recruited his predecessors and their laws. The collective legal authority of all the emperors who legislated on Christian (and other) slaves in Jewish households and on Christian converts to Judaism, the two topics of the above quote, was marshaled to support the severity of the penalties. In combating the crossing of religious boundaries the Theodosian Code, as a whole, could rely on texts whose very inclusion ensured a canonic status.

Posing as a mediator and arbiter of internal relationships within social groups the law attempted to drive a wedge into existing networks. By discrediting Judaism it tried to prevent conversion; and by threatening Jews, it strove to protect Jewish apostates to Christianity. A change of religious affiliation, previously an individual matter of independent choice, emerged as a subject of imperial supervision and legislation. If Judaism became *superstitio*, law became theology.

Dogmatizing and reducing realities into sharp and monochromatic contrasts concealed the complexities in which Jews, Christians, and pagans lived and interacted. But the language of opposition also cast into relief underlying tensions. As the sermons of John, the golden-mouthed bishop of Antioch and later bishop of the capital Constantinople, demonstrate, catholic Christians were curious enough about Judaism to attend synagogue services and major Jewish feasts.[42] Their

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[41] *Codex Theodosianus* 16.8.19 (C.E. 409), Linder, 256-8.

[42] M. Simon, "La polemique ani-juive de Jean Chrysostome et le mouvement judaisant d'Antioche", *American Journal of Philology* 4 (1936), 403-21, reprinted in Idem, *Recherches d'histoire judeo-chretienne* (Paris, 1962), 140-53; W. A. Meeks and R. A. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries* (Missoula, 1978);

interest, however, did not extent to conversion. Rhetorical *reductio ad absurdum* could, occasionally if rarely, also reflect existing extremism. The fragments of Damascius preserve a tale about Zeno, a philosophical Jew of Alexandria, who demonstrated his new religious conviction (to Christianity? to philosophy?) by riding a white ass through the synagogue on the Sabbath.[43] Perhaps the apostate relied on the protection of the law, if the tale has an authentic core. The point is that Roman law defined a Jew in terms of non-affiliation with catholic Christianity; Zeno of Alexandria defined himself as a transgressor of the Law of Moses.

Whether or not the Theodosian Code aspired to combat visible or invisible Jews, namely the socially recognizable or the Jew in disguise, remains an open question.[44] Nor can it be assessed through contemporary Jewish sources. Indeed, the very lack of direct Jewish response to the increasing decapacitation of Judaism can be interpreted in a variety of ways. It may reflect an ignorance of Roman law, but this seems unlikely. It may hint at the gap between reality and legal theory in which Jews could continue to live and prosper in spite of the law. The silence, if interpreted correctly, may not be a silence at all. For precisely when Theodosius II set in motion his grand plan of creating a definite body of Roman law, a group of rabbis launched a similar enterprise with the redaction of the Palestinian Talmud in Roman Palestine.[45]

This is not the place for a detailed investigation of Jewish reactions to the canonization of legal constructs through the Code. Its subtleties require a separate study. To illustrate, briefly, its complex-

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R. A. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the late Fourth Century* (Berkeley, 1983).

[43] M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* II (Jerusalem, 1980), n. 550=P. Athanassiadi, ed. and trans., *Damascius. The Philosophical History* (Athens, 1999), n. 67.

[44] On these terms see D. Engel, "The Concept of Antisemitism in the Historical Scholarship of Amos Funkenstein", *Jewish Social Studies* 6 (1999), 111-129, esp. 118.

[45] The date of the redaction of the PT has been a source of much scholarly debate. On the PT, the Palestinian rabbis, and Roman and Jewish law see the superb studies of Catherine Hezser, *Form, Function and Historical Significance of the Rabbinic Story in Yerushalmi Neziqin* (Tübingen, 1993); *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen, 1997); and "The Codification of Legal Knowledge in Late Antiquity: The Talmud Yerushalmi and Roman Law Codes", in: P. Schafer (ed.) *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture* (Tübingen, 1998), 581-641.

ities, I will summarize the point made in a detailed study of Roman and Rabbinic regulations on intermarriage.[46] Where the Palestinian Talmud discusses non-Jewish marriage partners it uses a general biblical term (*goy*) instead of the Mishnaic 'foreigner' (*nokhri*). This usage appears to emphasize the applicability of biblical and later marital bans to all non-Jews, pagans and Christians alike. Entering the debate on the status of children of parents of mixed religions, the PT sends a mixed message (Kidd 64d).[47] As desirable as marriage within the group of faith may have been, rabbinic references to non-Jews show that contacts between Jews and gentiles were too frequent to allow for complete separation.

Ironically perhaps, where rabbis failed or forbore to penetrate the domicile, Roman law stepped in. An imperial constitution of 388 succinctly prohibited marriage between Christians and Jews. Violators of the law could be prosecuted according to the rules governing adultery. Legal rhetoric simplified a web of complex relationships. In its pursuit of canonicity the redacted Theodosian Code "imposed an imperial world view on the governed" as the emperors "stifled dissent and created a harmony based on law and religious orthodoxy".[48]

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[46] For full analysis see H. Sivan, "Rabbinics and Roman Law: Jewish-Gentile/Christian Marriage in Late Antiquity", *Revue des etudes juives* 156 (1997), 59-100. See also M. Satlow, *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity* (Princeton, 2001).

[47] For the relevant passages and their rhetoric of inclusion and exclusion, M. Satlow, *Tasting the Dish. Rabbinic Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Atlanta, 1995), 86-96.

[48] Harries, 214.

ON CANONIZATION IN RABBINIC JUDAISM

DAVID STERN

To speak about the dynamics of canonization in Rabbinic Judaism and its literature—the topic of this essay—one must inevitably begin with the Hebrew Bible and the dynamics of *its* canonization. It is no exaggeration to say that the canonization of the Bible remains to this day one of the great literary mysteries of all time. How did a collection of initially separate documents become *ta biblia*, and then those books *the* Bible? It was believed by many scholars for a considerable period that the final closure of the Hebrew Bible was the product of a collective decision made by the Rabbis at a certain "Council of Jamnia," a synod held at the academy of Yavneh roughly around the year 90 C.E. where the Rabbis discussed the status of the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes under the rubric of the question as to whether or not these books "defile the hands" (*meṭam'im et ha-yadayim*), a code-word, supposedly, for possessing sacred, canonical status (M.Yadayim 3:5). This discussion was connected by scholars with other passages regarding "books that are to be hidden away" (*nignaz*) (B.Shabbat 13b, 30b) and "outside books" (*sefarim ḥitsonim*) (M.Sanhedrin 10:1, B.Sanhedrin 28a). Taken together, these passages created a picture of a Rabbinic synod that was imagined to be comparable to the synod of Laodicea held in the middle of the 4th C. that supposedly helped finalize the Christian canon.[1] The point of such a synod, it was assumed, was to rule that certain books were "in," and others "out." The process of canonization, in other words, was primarily one of definition by exclusion.

The existence of such a council was essentially disproven in 1964

[1] For a helpful review of the early views, see Zevit, Ziony, "The Second-Third Century Canonization of The Hebrew Bible and Its Influence on Christian Canonizing," in: A. Van Der Kooij and K. Van Der Toorn (eds.), *Canonization and Decanonization: Papers Presented to the International Conference of the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religions (LISOR), Held at Leiden 9-10 January 1997* (Leiden, 1998), 133-60, esp. 139 and notes there.

by J.P. Lewis who pointed out that other Tannaitic sources recorded debates among rabbis several generations later over the very same books which supposedly had been "canonized" at Yavneh.[2] The supposed council, then, had obviously made no binding decision. A few years later. S.Z. Leiman reviewed all the Talmudic and Midrashic evidence for the supposed Rabbinic "canonization" of the Bible and came to similar conclusions, namely, that there was no evidence for a synod or any other acts of "canonization" on the part of the Rabbis.[3] Further, Leiman showed that the various terms and expressions mentioned above not only do not refer to acts of canonization; quite the contrary, some of them, like *nignaz*, probably apply specifically to books that were considered holy and that were hidden away precisely on account of their holiness.

While Lewis' and Leiman's work laid to rest the reigning scholarly hypothesis about the Bible's canonization, their achievement also had the effect of essentially returning the question to square one: If there was no synod, then how was the Bible canonized? How did the Biblical books come to possess that singular status of being Biblical? Who—or what—decided on the Bible's contents? If the process of canonization was *not* an exclusionary process, then what was it?

There are, in fact, two separate issues involved in the question of Biblical canonization. The first is the question of the "closing" of the canon: the limiting of the books within its purview (whether by conscious or formal decision or through informal process); their tripartite division into three sections (today known as the Torah or Pentateuch; the Prophets; and the Writings or Hagiographa); and the ordering and sequencing of books in each section. The pre-Lewis and Leiman consensus saw the process of canonization as transpiring in three stages, with the Torah being fixed around 400 C.E. (roughly during the time of Ezra), the Prophets around 200 B.C.E., and the writings as late as 100 C.E. (Yavneh). Leiman and others have revised this view so as to make the tripartite collection in its entirety canonical around 150 B.C.E.[4] Ziony Zevit has recently come

[2] J. P. Lewis, "What Do We Mean by Jabneh?," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 32 (1964), 125-32.

[3] S.Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence*, (Hamden, Conn., 1976).

[4] Leiman, 129-35; see now A. Van Der Kooij, "The Canonization of Ancient Books Kept in the Temple of Jerusalem, in: *Canonization and Decanonization*, 17-40, for a helpful confirmation of this view and refinement thereof.

to a similar conclusion, arguing for the existence of an "implicit" canon by the end of the 2nd c. B.C.E. that probably took shape in Jerusalem but that was also widely current among Jewish communities in the Diaspora.[5]

This canon was not, however, the only one accepted by Jews. As the documents at Qumran strongly suggest, there were somewhat different, more inclusive "non-Pharisaic" canons accepted by other groups of Jews in the ancient world.[6] Further, even to the extent that the books in the Bible were canonized, the text itself was not yet fully stabilized. While it may seem counter-intuitive to us, the process of canonization, as scholars have shown, tends to precede the standardization of the text.[7] The Rabbinic canon may be called, however, proto-Masoretic, to use James Sanders' term; as it existed in the Torah scroll even during the Rabbinic period, this proto-Masoretic text was already accompanied by various para-textual markings, scribal signs and sigla like the *puncta extraordinaria*, the dots on top of certain words, the suspended letters, the inverted nuns bracketing passages, and so on—indications of some early types of scribal/editorial intervention in the text.[8]

These issues of canonization as I have just described them are separate, however, from the second aspect of canonization which has to do less with its history than with its mechanics and dynamics: How did a book become canonical? How did it attain that unique status that we know of as "the canonical"? As we know, the term "canon" is used in its modern sense for the first time only in the 18th c.[9] Further, it is a literary term that is quintessentially Christian, and

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[5] Zevit, Ziony, "The Second-Third Century Canonization of the Hebrew Bible and Its Influence on Christian Canonizing," in: *Canonization and Decanonization*, 133-60.

[6] Zevit, 140-41.

[7] Moshe Greenberg, "The Stabilization of the Text of the Hebrew Bible, Reviewed in the light of the Biblical Materials from the Judean Desert," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 76 (1956), 157-167; idem., 'The Use of the Ancient Versions for Interpreting the Hebrew Text," *Congress Volume* (Gottingen, 1977), 131-148.

[8] J.A.Sanders, "Cave 11 Surprises and the Question of Canon,", *McCormick Quarterly* 21 (1968), 291. On paratextual signs, see E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, 1992), 49-67; and S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York, 1950), 38-46.

[9] In D. Rhunken's preface to the edition of Rutilius Lupus in *Historia Critica Oratorum Grecorum* (1768); for the history of the term, see R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship I: From the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford, 1968), 204-8.

therefore almost inevitably bound to be problematic if applied to Jewish tradition. Most models of the *process* of canonization are modeled upon the history of the Christian canon, that is, as being largely the result of a process of exclusion and as having been determined significantly, if not exclusively, by ideological/theological considerations. Such a model was implicitly present in the "Jabneh-synod" hypothesis described earlier. So, too, the still oft-cited explanation that the Song of Songs was admitted into the canon only once its allegorical interpretation had been invented is an example of an ideologically-driven view of the process of canonization, based upon the certain belief that the inclusion of a carnal love poem within Sacred Scripture was a theological impossibility.[10]

But if there was no synod or other formal decision upon the "canonicity" of the books in the Hebrew Bible, then how did the Bible attain its "Biblical status"? In the famous Prologue to the Book of Ben Sira, Ben Sira's grandson indicates that his father had devoted himself to "the study of the Law, the Prophets, and other books of the ancestors." The latter term, *patrios*, suggests that one defining feature of these books was their authority for the author's ancestors, that is, the fact that they were somehow considered not only ancient but part of the (national) tradition and, hence, worthy of being studied and thus "canonical." But why these ancestral books and not others? Part of the reason may have to do with the fact that they were believed to be prophetic. Other books, like Ben Sira itself, were considered authoritative but, because they were known to have been composed after prophecy had ceased, could not be considered sacred or canonical.[11] But, again, how did those books whose divinity was fully established, like those in the Torah or the classical prophets, come to own that status? Menahem Haran has recently argued that many books in the Bible, particularly in the Pentateuch, are anthologies or compilations of earlier traditions which were already considered authoritative, if not sacred, at the time they underwent compilation. According to Haran, the very work of anthologization-namely, the composition of the final redacted work—was in essence its canonization; indeed, Haran has even suggested that this work of anthologization involved the inclusion of virtually all traditions

[10] For a good recent treatment of the history of the canonization of the Song of Songs, see David Carr, "The Song of Songs as a Microcosm of the Canonization and Decanonization Process," in: *Canonization and Decanonization*, 173-89.

[11] Leiman, 128

that had survived.[12] In this sense, the process of canonization may have been the formalization of an implicit process of inclusion (rather than of exclusion, as in the case of the other model I have described). And a still further step in this same process may have been the passage of the Bible from being *ta biblia*, a library of books, to become *ton biblion*, The Book.

My purpose in this paper, however, is not to offer new ideas about the history of the Bible's canonization but to consider some of the practical features of the Bible's place in Rabbinic Jewish culture in Late Antiquity and to suggest certain ways in which the Rabbis' attitude to the Bible helped to shape the ways in which they canonized their own literature, albeit not consciously or programmatically. To be sure, it would be anachronistic to argue back from the later process of Rabbinic canonization to the much earlier one of the Bible but, if nothing else, this exercise may help us understand better what we mean by canon in later Jewish tradition.

1. *The Bible in the Rabbinic period*

There are, in fact, not one but two Bibles in the Rabbinic period—what we might call the liturgical Bible, on the one hand; and the study-Bible, on the other. Let me begin with the former.

By the "liturgical Bible," I mean the Torah not only as the text of the Hebrew Bible read publicly in the synagogue service, but even more, as a material object endowed with the status of a quasi-holy artifact.[13] The texts cited earlier as the most famous evidence for

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[12] M. Haran, *HaAsupah Hamikrait (The Biblical Collection)* (Jerusalem, 1996), 28-54 [Hebrew].

[13] For the history of the physical scroll and its technology, see now M. Haran's series of exemplary essays, "Book-Scrolls in Israel in Pre-Exilic Times," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33 (1982), 161-73; "Book-Scrolls at the Beginning of the Second Temple Period: The Transition from Papyrus to Skins," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 54 (1983), 111-22 (="Megilot Hasefarim Bitehilat Yemei Bayit Sheini" *Eretz Yisrael* 16 [1960], 86-92 [Hebrew]); "Bible Scrolls in Eastern and Eastern Jewish Communities from Qumran to the High Middle Ages," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 56 (1985), 21-62.; "Book-Size and the Device of Catch Lines in the Biblical Canon," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 36 (1985), 1-11; "On Archive, Libraries, and the Order of the Biblical Books", in: Sarah Japhet (ed.), *Hamikra Bire'i Mefarshav: Sefer Zikaron Le-Sarah Kamin* (Jerusalem, 1994), 223-34 [Hebrew]. Still useful is Ludwig Blau's *Studien zum althebraeischen Buchwesen und zur der biblischen Literaturgeschichte* (Budapest, 1902); cf. E.N. Adler's useful English précis, "Professor Blau on the Bible as a Book," in: E.N. Adler, *About Hebrew Manuscripts* (London, 1905; repr. New York, 1970), 51-63.

the canonization of the Hebrew Bible—the passages about books being hidden away (B.Shabbat 13b, 30b) and being capable of imparting impurity (M.Yadayim 3:5)—are, if nothing else, testimony to the emergence in antiquity of the Bible as a holy book with very specific, mandated physical properties. Thus, Mishnah Yadayim 4:5 tells us:

> Aramaic passages translated into Hebrew, and Hebrew passages translated into Aramaic, and passages written in palaeo-Hebrew script, do not defile the hands. They defile the hands only when they are written in Assyrian characters, on parchment, and in ink.

It is not the words per se of the text that decide whether or not the Torah imparts impurity but the material features of the words—"how" they are written. Scholars have still not offered a fully satisfactory explanation for the enigmatic phrase "defile the hands," but, if nothing else, one obvious effect of the stigma was to protect the parchment by discouraging people from coming into direct contact with it.[14] Indeed, this rationale seems to be the gist of the famous explanation presented in B. Shabbat 14a where Rabbi Meharshaya explains that the reason for the stigma was to prevent priests from placing their terumah-offerings inside the ark where rodents found them and ate the scrolls along with the terumah! So, too, the laws of *genizah*—"hiding away" certain books of the Bible, for example—are, as already noted, specifically enjoined for holy objects which must be removed from human use precisely because they are holy. Those objects to be hidden away in this fashion—buried, in other words—are worn-out Torah scrolls and other undeniably sacred objects like the various implements used in the Temple which were said to have been hidden away from all human use after the Temple's destruction; they are considered,

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[14] For a list of all passages about books "that defile the hands," see Leiman, 104-110; and for discussion including review of previous views, 110-20. Leiman, 116: "the purpose of the decree was to protect Torah scrolls from being mishandled." More recently, Sh. Friedman, "The Holy Scriptures Defile the Hands—the Transformation of a Biblical Concept in Rabbinic Theology," in: M. Brettler and M. Fishbane (ed.), *Minha le-Nahum* (JSOT Supplement Series 154, Sheffield, 1993), 117-32, has argued that the phrase "defile the hands" is actually a displacement of "impart holiness to the hands" and reflects an archaic notion of contagious holiness that had become obsolete and incomprehensible by the Rabbinic period. For still another recent view, see Martin Goodman, "Sacred Scripture and 'Defiling the Hands'," *Journal of Theological Studies* 41 (1990), 99-107, who also connects the prohibition with an increasing concern among the Rabbis with the perfect *appearance* (my italics) of the Biblical text lest it be confused with other similar looking but non-sacred and non-canonical texts.

in short, so valuable as to deserve the same treatment otherwise reserved for humans. And finally, it is not surprising that there emerge laws during this period governing the practical use of the Torah in the synagogue, namely, the way the Torah is to be chanted aloud, its sound being simply another aspect of the text's "materiality." The passage in M. Sanhedrin 10:1 listing persons who "have no share in the world-to-come" includes, famously, "one who reads the outside books (*'af ha-qore bi-sfarim ha-ḥitsonim*)." As Haran has noted, the term *korei* refers to the use of the special liturgical tune or *nigun*, specifically the *ne'imah*, that was prescribed for the reading aloud of biblical books in the liturgy (Megillah 32a).[15] The law, in other words, is against not reading but *chanting* these books, and thereby violating and misappropriating the liturgical distinctiveness of the sound of the biblical books.

The passages I have cited represent only a portion of the laws as they are found throughout the Mishnah as well as in the Talmud, primarily though not exclusively in the tractate Megillah, and as they were eventually collated and "canonized" in a post-Talmudic tractate called Soferim ("Scribes") that was edited around the 8th C. The earliest of these laws, however, may have been promulgated as early as the first half of the first century C.E.,[16] and they already testify to the remarkable process through which a physical scroll containing a sacred text was itself turned into a sanctified object. Further, this phenomenon and its underlying theology seem to be unique to Rabbinic Judaism. Neither the phenomenon nor the Rabbis' belief in the sacrality of the physical Torah scroll has precedents or parallels in ancient Near Eastern or Greco-Roman civilization.[17] To be sure, there are some precedents in the Bible for the special treatment of scrolls, but if the Rabbinic construction of a holy scroll is modeled upon any precedent, I would suggest that it is the sanctuary itself—an idea that, within Rabbinic tradition, actually surfaces explicitly in the Middle Ages, where one name for the Bible comes to be *mikdashyah* (although, as Nahum Wieder has shown, this term as applied to Scripture first appears in the Damascus Document and then reappears in Karaite literature several centuries before it ap-

[15] Haran, 134-35 and surrounding pages.

[16] Leiman, 120

[17] Goodman, 103, who connects the uniqueness of the phenomenon and the possibility that the Rabbis may have been embarrassed by the possibility that gentiles may have thought that the Jews considered their scrolls to be gods.

pears in medieval Rabbinite tradition).[18] The implicit identification of the Torah with the sanctuary/Temple may also lie behind the paradoxical laws of the book's ability to impurify the hands. Indeed, in this respect, the laws may recall the no less paradoxical laws of the red heifer whose ashes purify the impure person while simultaneously contaminating the priests who prepare the ashes for their purifacatory role. To be certain, the sanctuary is not the only possible precedent for the torah scroll as a holy book-like object. The other obvious parallel is that of the *shnei luhot habrit*, the two tablets containing the 10 Commandments (*edut*, Exod. 40:20) which were kept in the *aron* of the tabernacle. But unlike the luhot, the Torah is not a unique or singular object nor is its creation as a physical object in any way divinely inspired. Rather, what is most unique about the Torah-scroll with its holy features is that it is a *humanly*, not divinely, produced object—indeed, a *reproducible* object—whose holiness is a construction of Rabbinic halakhah, not even of divine command. As the passage from M. Yadayim 4:5 cited earlier prescribes, a Torah-scroll must be composed in the square letters of so-called Assyrian script, on parchment, and in ink. The first of these prescriptions—the fact that the Torah must be composed in Assyrian script—is the most telling because, as is well known, the Hebrew Bible was originally written not in the square letters of the Assyrian script but in the different ones of palaeo-Hebrew. The shift in scripts took place sometime between the 5th and 3rd centuries B.C.E.[19] and before this time—all the way back to the time of Moses himself—the Torah was written in palaeo-Hebrew. To what extent the Rabbis themselves were aware of the fact that the Assyrian letters had

[18] N. Wieder, "'Sanctuary' as a Metaphor for Scripture," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 8 (1957), 165-74. It is worth noting as well that one of the earliest conventions for Bible illustrations, attested already in the earliest masoretic codices, is the depiction of the *klei kodesh*, the various Temple implements; it is almost as though the physical book of the Bible is not only the figurative mikdashyah but also represents its physical attributes.

[19] On this transition, see E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 217-20. As I go on to remark, the Rabbis' consciousness of the fact that their Torah scrolls were not identical to the "original" one would seem to lead to other problems: for example, if they recognize that the Assyrian letters were not the Torah's original script, then how could the Rabbis have interpreted the significance of the shapes of the Torah's letter, or of the scribal crowns on top of the letters, as Akiba supposedly did, as though they *were* divinely given? Admittedly, there do exist other passages in Rabbinic literature that seem to respond to these questions; see Tosefta Sanhedrin 4:7-8 for an alternative scenario for the transition from palaeo-Hebrew to the Assyrian script.

replaced the far more ancient palaeo-Hebrew script is a question we need not answer. But the Mishnah certainly testifies to the fact that such scrolls in Palaeo-Hebrew were still being written in the Mishnah's own time. What the Mishnah reflects, minimally, is a consciousness on the part of the Rabbis that the definition of the Torah-scroll is halakhic, that is, Rabbinically-ordained, not divinely modeled.[20]

As we have just seen, the emergence of the material Torah as a holy book in the Rabbinic period is largely unparalleled. Is the same true as well of the other aspect of the Bible in Rabbinic Judaism, the Torah as a study-book? It is to this question that I now wish to turn. It is hardly necessary to point out that the words and laws of the Torah—by this I mean the TaNaKH as a whole, not just the Pentateuch—were a major focus of study by the Rabbis and that its verses and words are ubiquitous in Rabbinic literature, forever being quoted, paraphrased, and alluded to. In a sense, the words of the Bible may be said to have served as the prism, the lens, through which the Rabbinic sages looked at and refracted their conception of the world. The Torah was also the one literary text in Rabbinic culture that normatively existed in written form (as opposed to the other corpus of Rabbinic traditions known collectively as the Oral Torah, to which I will shortly return). Yet even though the Bible existed as a written document, much circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that people—the Rabbis—knew the Bible as a text they had heard, memorized, and carried around in their heads as a memorized text rather than as one they had read and studied in a scroll and therefore remembered in its spatial context on a writing surface.[21] While Rabbinic culture is often described as an oral culture, it was much more a culture of memorization, and nothing epitomized and reflected this culture of memorization more than midrash—the term in Rabbinic Judaism for Bible-study—with its many peculiar and singular features.

An enormous amount has been written in the last fifty years on midrash, and it is not my intention here to present either an intro-

[20] Again, compare Friedman's comments on the transformation of contagious holiness and impurity from being quasi-magical phenomena to halakhic ones.

[21] For some preliminary remarks on this feature of midrash, see J. Kugel, "Two Introductions to Midrash," in: Geoffrey Hartman and Sanford Budick (eds.), *Midrash and Literature* (New Haven, 1986), 94-97. I have spelled out the larger ramifications of Kugel's insight in an as yet unpublished article, "Who Were the First Jewish Readers of the Bible? A Speculation."

duction to midrash or a survey of midrash scholarship. What I would like to do, however, is draw briefly on some of the things that modern scholarship has shown about the hermeneutics and exegetical practices of midrash to help us understand better how the Rabbis conceived of the Bible.

Of all its many insights, perhaps the greatest achievement of modern midrash scholarship has been to show that, for all its exceptional features and idiosyncracies, midrash is not in fact as bizarre or unusual or sui generis as it may first appear to be. Thus, as numerous modern studies have shown, the hermeneutical techniques of midrash have parallels in many different interpretive traditions in the ancient Greco-Roman and even earlier Mesopotamian worlds, including legal interpretation, scholiastic interpretation of Greek epic and myth, and dream interpretation.[22] And the rabbis themselves seem, in varying degrees, to have been aware of these affinities.[23] This does not mean that the Rabbis believed that the Bible was just another book to be interpreted like other books; quite the opposite, there is no question they would have immediately denied the Bible's comparability to any other book. For our purposes, however, what the affinities between the modes of exegesis applied to the Bible and those applied to other books in the Late Antique world provide is a kind of index to understanding the position of the Bible in the world of the Rabbis—a position that is often, though not always helpfully, described through the use of the word "canonical." As we have already seen, the term "canonical" is fraught with methodological and historical difficulties; as it has been used in the past to describe the Bible, it has more often than not led to misunderstandings and distorted views of the Bible's status. Accordingly, if we wish to understand the Bible's singular status within ancient Jewish culture, it would be worthwhile to look elsewhere in Late Antique literature

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[22] The major works relevant to this contribution are those of Saul Lieberman, particularly *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York, 1950); D. Daube, "Alexandrian Methods of Interpretation and the Rabbis," in: *Festschrift Hans Lewald* (Basel, 1953), 27-44. and reprinted in: H.A. Fischel (ed.), *Essays in Greco-Roman and Related Talmudic Literature* (New York, 1977), 165-82; J. Tigay, "An Early Technique of Aggadic Exegesis," in: H. Tadmor and M Weinfeld (eds.), *History, Historiography, and Interpretation* (Jerusalem, 1983), 169-89; cf. as well M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 1985).

[23] See, for example, the preface to the Beraita of the 32 Middot of R. Eliezer which explicitly justifies midrashic interpretation through recourse to dream-interpretation.

for comparable works—that is, for literary compositions in other ancient cultures that were looked upon by their readers with a reverence similar to that the Rabbis paid the Bible. Of all such works, Homer offers the most helpful comparison for a literary work in Late Antique culture.[24]

2. *The Bible and Homer*

The affinities between Homeric exegesis beginning with the Alexandrian scholiasts and Biblical interpretation as pursued by the Rabbis has been treated in much scholarship.[25] Yet beyond the specific hermeneutical principles and exegetical techniques that the two separate traditions of literary interpretation share is their common allegorical bent—not allegorical in a philosophical sense, to be sure, but allegorical insofar as both traditions of interpretation seek to assert that their subjects texts mean something other than what they say on the surface. As a type of allegorical interpretation, midrash would have been intelligible to gentile interpreters—and *was* (as evidenced by its use by early Christian exegetes). Further, both the Bible and Homer were the foundational educational texts of their respective cultures; studying them was an education precisely because it was a way of shaping their students' cultural identity, providing them with a shared mode of discourse.[26] Thus, both the Bible and Homer were claimed by (at least some of) their readers to be the sources of all scientific, philosophical, and cultural knowledge—the origin, in other words, of all intellectual tradition. "Turn it and turn it over, for all is in it," Ben Bag Bag is famously quoted as saying about Torah in M. Avot (5:22). So, too, Homer was considered the fount of eternal wisdom, in the words of the author of *De Homero*, the pseudonymous biography of Homer.[27] Not unlike Homer, the

[24] In what follows, I am much in debt to the presentation of Robert Lamberton in "Homer in Antiquity," in: I. Morris and B. Powell (eds.), *A New Companion to Homer* (Leiden, 1997), 33-54.

[25] See the scholarship cited in note 22 above.

[26] Philip S. Alexander, "'Homer the Prophet of All' and 'Moses Our Teacher'—Late Antique Exegesis of the Homeric Epics and of the Torah of Moses," in: L.V. Rutgers and P.W. Van der Horst (eds.), *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World* (Leuven, 1998), 127-142; 137.

[27] Lamberton, 46-47, basing himself largely on Pseudo-Plutarch, *De Homero*, now translated with commentary by J.J. Keaney and Robert Lamberton (eds.and trans.), [Plutarch], *Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer* (Atlanta, 1996).

Bible was studied by the Rabbis as a kind of encyclopaedia of all knowledge (which, for the Rabbis, meant above all an encylopaedia of the entire corpus of Rabbinic tradition). Especially in later midrash, as scholars like Mark Hirshman have suggested, the study of Torah became the occasion or the organizing rubric for the study of everything worth knowing.[28]

Yadayim 4:6 recounts a debate between the Pharisees and Sadducees over the question as to whether Holy Scriptures "impurify the hands."

> The Sadducees say: We have a quarrel to pick with you, O Pharisees. For according to you, the Holy Scriptures defile the hands whereas the writings of Homer would not defile the hands. [The Pharisee] Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai (40-80) replied: Have we naught against the Pharisees save this?! According to them the bones of an ass are clean while the bones of Johanan the High Priest are unclean! The [Sadducees] answered him: [We agree with that law because] their uncleanness corresponds to their dearness (*hibatan*), so that no man would make spoons out of the bones of his father and mother. [Johanan ben Zakkai] replied to them: So too the Holy Scriptures, their uncleanness corresponds to their dearness (*hibatan*). The writings of Homer, which are not dear (*havivin*), do not defile the hands.

The Sadducees, who unquestionably accepted the complete sanctity, authority, and "canonicity" of Holy Scripture, nonetheless rejected the law of impurifying the hands on the grounds that it was irrational (thereby proving in the process that these laws can't possibly have anything to do with canonization). In their argument with the Pharisees, they use the works of Homer as their foil—precisely because, I would suggest, they understand Homer to be the pagan analogue to the Bible. The Pharisees and the Saduccees both agree in respect to the Bible's *hibbah*, its "dearness," a feature that denotes both its value and its belovedness. What they disagree about is whether such *hibbah* translates into the capacity to produce contagious impurity.

Not that the positions of the Bible and Homer in their respective cultures were exactly identical. For one thing, Homer was the subject of criticism, particularly from philosophers like Plato, in a way that the Bible, or Moses, never was. Even so, there were similarities. The philosophical critique of Homer created in response a defense that was essentially the origins of the allegorical interpreta-

[28] Mark Hirshman, "The Greek Fathers and the Aggada on Ecclesiastes: Formats of Exegesis in Late Antiquity," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 59 (1988), 155-65.

tion of Homer. Similarly, there exist in the Bible episodes and passages that were especially problematic for Jews living in Late Antiquity—the story of Jacob's deception of Isaac, for example, or a verse like Exod. 22:2—that similarly "required" interpretation in order to make them palatable.

My point in all this is to suggest that the status of the Bible in Rabbinic culture was, in fact, more similar to that of Homer in the Late Antique pagan world than is commonly acknowledged. Further, it may be helpful, if only heuristically, to consider the two texts' "canonical" status comparatively. By juxtaposing the two texts, we may also be able to understand better some of the stranger dimensions of their status in the Late Antique world—for example, the negligible influence these two texts actually exerted upon Late Antique writers. Thus, while the Bible's presence in Rabbinic literature is ubiquitous, the Rabbis nonetheless seem deliberately to have shied away from imitation, direct continuation, or competition with the Biblical model. Just as Homer in the Roman schools "served as an ideal of Greek eloquence and poetic power" but as "an inspiration rather than a model for imitation,"[29] so too the Bible formed the base text of the Rabbinic curriculum, but students did not study the Bible in order to learn to imitate it or to write "more" Bible. In fact, the literary forms of Rabbinic literature—from midrash through the Talmud—could not be more different than those found in the Bible. The same is true of the Rabbinic imagination. As a form of late revisionist mythography, Rabbinic aggadah tends to dwell in the cracks and lacunae of Biblical narrative; it loves nothing more than to take a character barely mentioned in the Biblical story, like Serah bat Asher or the ram in the story of the binding of Isaac, and flesh her or it out into a full-fledged character. Here too, there are parallels with late Antique revisionist myth in its various forms, whether they be Virgil's *Aeneid* or Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* both of which "extend" the epic past by exploiting its minor characters and less fully-narrated episodes and turning them into major protagonists and plots. Similarly, piyyut, the liturgical poetry of the Rabbis, is utterly different from biblical poetry, as many scholars have shown. And even Rabbinic halakhah, despite its ultimate reliance upon the Torah as the fount of absolute legal authority, is fully aware of its often tangential relationship to its supposed "source." As M. Hagigah (1:8)

[29] Lamberton, 45

states, "[The laws about] the cancellation of vows are suspended in air and unsupported [by sources in Scripture]. [The halakhot about] the Sabbath, festivals, and the profaning of consecrated things are like mountains suspended on a hair. Here there is little Scripture and many halakhot. Civil law, temple service, purities and impurities, and incest [laws] have something to support them. They are the essence of the Torah (*gufei torah*)." The Bible, in other words, may have been formative, but it was not always influential in practice; its presence and authority were invoked more than they were actually applied. Here, too, one might look at the relatively insignificant influence of Homer upon later Greek poetry and literature for a comparable situation.[30]

3. *The Bible and Canonization in Rabbinic Judaism*

For all the sketchiness of these last remarks, I hope they at least suggest how complex and nuanced the Bible's place in the Rabbinic world really was, and how the singularity of its status may be illuminated by comparison with the place of Homer in the Late Antique world. In point of fact, as we have seen, the cultural canonicity of the Hebrew Bible in the Rabbinic world—what the Rabbis called the Written Torah—was seriously complicated, if not compromised, by its relationship to the other main entity of Rabbinic tradition, the Oral Torah. This last point brings us to our final topic, namely the canonization of Rabbinic literature itself.

Rabbinic literature is the literary condensation of the Oral Torah whose basic myth is familiar: at Mt. Sinai, God revealed and gave to Moses to transmit to the children of Israel not one but two Torahs: the Written and the Oral, the latter of which was transmitted by mouth, orally, from Moses to Joshua to the elders down to the Rabbinic sages who taught it orally among themselves. During this latter period, the Oral Torah underwent its first stage of literary condensation when R. Judah the Prince selected and edited the traditions that he considered most authoritative in the form of the Mishnah around the year 220 C.E. Whether the Mishnah was actually written down by R. Judah and his disciples at this point, or whether it was memorized and "published" as a memorized text that

[30] Lamberton, 48-51

was publicly recited has been a matter of scholarly debate since the early Middle Ages.[31] But there is no question that this text, the Mishnah, then became the primary subject of study in Rabbinic circles until finally two texts reflecting Mishnah-study in its institutionalized form slowly crystallized and were finally edited—first, as the Palestinian Talmud at the beginning of the 5th C., and later as the Babylonian Talmud at the beginning of the 6th.

We know relatively little about the early literary history of the Mishnah. The Mishnah itself makes clear that R. Judah's work was only the last of several attempts to gather together the various teachings of the Rabbis, and modern scholarship has confirmed this fact by showing that the Mishnah itself is to a significant extent a compilation of earlier compilations of tradition.[32] Our major source for the final compilation and reception of the Mishnah is found in a famous epistle written by the late 10th C. Babylonian Gaon Sherira Gaon (966-1006):

> When the people saw the beauty of the structure (or the smoothness) of [R. Judah's] Mishnah, its true reasoning and exact expression, they forsook all the other mishnayot they were learning. These laws of R. Judah's mishnah spread all over the land of Israel. While the other laws were forsaken and became like *beraita* (outside texts), consulting them was like consulting a commentary or a (more) lavish version. But the authoritative source was only these laws [of R. Judah's Mishnah]. Israel accepted (the laws of R. Judah's Mishnah) as soon as they saw them, confidently (and without hesitation). There is no person who disagrees with them on this.[33]

As David Weiss Halivni writes, "the impression one gets from this passage of R. Sherira Gaon is that R. Judah's Mishnah was an instantaneous success" and that it received its canonical status almost upon its appearance.[34] In point of fact, as Halivni goes on to demonstrate, it is clear from a critical analysis of the Talmudic discus-

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[31] The classic statement on the oral publication of the Mishnah is in Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 85-88. For a recent criticism of Lieberman and a review of other possible positions, see Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (Tubingen, 2001), 427-35.

[32] For a review of the scholarship, see G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrashic Literature*, trans. M. Bockmuehl (Minneapolis, 1996),124-39.

[33] B.M. Lewin (ed.), *Iggerret Rav Sherira Gaon* (Haifa,1921), 30. Transl. by D.Weiss-Halivni, "The Reception Accorded to Rabbi Judah's Mishnah," in: E.P. Sanders et al (eds.), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* (Philadelphia, 1981), Vol. 2, 205.

[34] Halivni, 205Hhh h.

sions of the Mishnah that there was opposition to R. Judah's Mishnah virtually from the moment of its appearance; that many of R. Judah's codificatory decisions were disregarded and overruled; and that in many cases later sages simply ignored his decisions and politely sidetracked them. Although the Gemara, the bulk of the Talmud, presents itself as a kind of commentary on the Mishnah, in many cases it simply ignores the Mishnah's presentation and substitutes for the Mishnah's version of a law the elaboration of an alternative, even conflicting tradition. And so, Halivni writes, even if R. Judah himself was revered as "our holy teacher," and if the unanimously adulatory reception that the Mishnah received was due to R. Judah's personal prestige, his work, though it became canonical in some respects, did not attain the success to which it aspired.[35]

Yet what the Mishnah did not accomplish for itself, the Talmud does achieve, and not only for the Mishnah, but for the oral tradition in its entirety. Before proceeding, however, two separate processes need to be distinguished—that of canonization, on the one hand, and sacralization, on the other. Similarly, the Mishnah itself, as a distinct literary work, also must be distinguished from the Oral Torah in its entirety (with the latter including many traditions R. Judah did not include in the Mishnah).

As many scholars have recognized, the myth of the Oral Torah does not emerge as a full-fledged notion with its own name until relatively late in Rabbinic tradition; its earliest appearance is in texts dating from the 3rd and 4th centuries.[36] Even so, the embryonic idea of an oral tradition certainly predated its full emergence and from its inception served to legitimate and substantiate the authority, if not sacrality, of Rabbinic tradition in general. What needs to be emphasized, however, is that what was canonized was the tradition in its entirety, not any specific literary work. Thus, even though the Palestinian and the Babylonian Talmuds both present themselves explicitly as commentaries upon the Mishnah, the thrust of their discussions goes far beyond the Mishnah.[37] We shall shortly see how

[35] Halivni, 212.

[36] See, for example, Sifre Deut. no.351 (L. Finkelstein, *Sifre ad Deuteronomium* [1939; repr. New York, 1969], p. 408) and Sifra Behukotai 8:12. On the entire problem, see Stemberger, 31-34.

[37] See Halivni, passim; David Kraemer, "The Formation of Rabbinic Canon: Authority and Boundaries," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110 (1991), 613-30, esp. 618-19.

this is true, but it is noteworthy that lists of the Rabbinic curricula almost always speak of the genres of the Oral Torah—midrash, halakhot, aggadot—never of its specific documents.[38] Thus, the term *mishnah* often refers to the Oral Law, and *talmud* to midrash.[39]

Yet if it was the tradition that was canonized—accepted as authoritative—then how did this process of canonization take place? The answer to this question is, simply, by being studied as though it *was* Torah—that is to say, through many of the same principles that midrash utilizes to read Scriptures.[40] In the remainder of this essay, I would like to illustrate this point through a few examples.

Among all the axiomatic beliefs about Scripture implicit in midrash, two stand out as especially prominent. The first of these is what we might call the principle of omnisignificance, namely, the belief that every word and particle in the Bible is meaningful. The second is the principle of the unity of the divine message contained in the Bible (i.e. the TaNaKh) in its entirety. In midrash, each of these axioms generates a corresponding exegetical project—the principle of omnisignificance, to prove that everything is indeed meaningful; the principle of unity, the need to show, on the one hand, that there is nothing inconsistent or contradictory between the different parts or verses of the Bible; and on the other, to demonstrate the possibility, wherever feasible, of drawing connections between as many seemingly *unrelated* verses as possible.

The following passage, from Ber. R. 22, is perhaps the classic statement of the principle of omnisignificance:

> "And she [Eve] said: I have begotten a man with the help of (*et*) God" (Gen. 4:1). R. Yishamel asked R. Akiba: Since you served Nahum of Gimzo for 22 years, and he taught that every [occurrence of the words] *ak* and *rak* is a term of limitation, and that every [occurrence of the words] *et* and *gam* is a term of inclusion, what is the meaning of the word *et* in this verse?

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[38] On this, see J. Goldin, "The Freedom and Restraint of Haggadah," in: *Studies in Midrash and Related Literature*, 253-55; W. Bacher, *'Erkhei Midrash* (1922; repr. Jerusalem, 1970), 24-25 [Hebrew].

[39] For example, see Tanhuma, Ki Tisa, 34.

[40] I am hardly the first to draw a connection between the Talmud's "exegesis"of the Mishnah and midrashic exegesis of Scripture. See, for example, D. Weiss Halivni, *Midrash, Mishnah, and Gemara* (Cambridge, 1986). J. Neusner in: *Midrash In Context* (Atlanta, 1988) also makes this point (esp. pp. 53-110), but his categories are quite different. Neither Halivni nor Neusner connects the exegetical project to canonization.

> He replied: If the verse had been written, "I have begotten a man God," the verse would have been difficult [to understand] because it would have implied that "I, a man, have begotten God." That is why it needs "*et* God." R. Ishmael said: "For it is no empty thing from you" (Deut. 32:47) [which means]: if the verse seems to be empty, then it is "from" [i.e.because of] you. But what does "*et* God" *really* mean? In the past, Adam was created from the earth, and Eve from Adam; but from now on, it shall be "in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26): Neither man without woman, nor woman without man, and neither of them without God's presence (*shekhinah*). (Ber. R. 22:2)

The passage is a complicated one, and for many reasons.[41] Somewhat confusingly, although quite typically for midrash, R. Ishmael formulates his theoretical statement about the omnisignificance of Scripture in the form of a midrashic interpretation, in this case of Deut. 32:47, *ki hu lo davar reik mekem*, "For it is no empty thing for you." The syntax of the Hebrew verse is difficult, particularly its use of the phrase *mikem*, literally "from you," when it should be "for" or "to" you, and this problem the midrash solves by breaking the phrase in its middle so as to read it, in effect, as: "there is nothing in the Bible that is empty [of meaning], and if there seems to be, it is "from you"—that is, on account of *your* failure to appreciate its deeper meaning. In the remainder of the passage, the two rabbis who figure in it, give competing interpretations for the word *et*—a preposition in Hebrew that essentially lacks any substantive meaning and whose main function is to identify the direct object (although in the verse that is the actual subject of this midrash, Gen. 4:1, the word has the prepositional meaning of "with"). Each interpretation explains the significance of the particle, but R. Ishmael's in particular demonstrates powerfully what it means to find omnisignificance in every word in Scripture: the two letters in the word, *alef* and *tav* are, respectively, the first and last letters in the Hebrew alphabet—its alpha and omega, as it were—and Ishmael takes them accordingly, as an epithet for God, the alpha and omega of existence, as it were.

The following example illustrates the principle of the unity of Scripture in its different aspects.

[41] It is also more than a little ironic that Ishmael's and Akiba's interpretations in the passage are, as it were, switched from what one would normally expect from each exegete. The interpretation here attributed to Akiba is far more typical of Ishmael's characteristic exegesis (rationalistic, stylistic, non-homiletical), while the interpretation attributed to Ishmael is far more typical of Akiba (based on a particle, homiletical, highly figurative).

"... and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water" (Exod. 15:22).
R. Joshua said: This is to be taken literally.
R. Eliezer says: But was there not water underneath the feet of the Israelites, since the earth is but floating upon the water, as it is said, "To Him who spreads the earth upon the waters" (Ps. 136:6) ? How is it then that Scripture can say, "and they found no water"? This was simply to tire them out.

Others say: The water which the Israelites took along with them from between the clefts [of the Red Sea] gave out at that time. Accordingly, what is the meaning of "and found no water"? That even in their vessels they found no water, as when it is said, "And their nobles send their lads for water; they come to the pits, and find no water; they return and their vessels are empty" (Jer. 14:3).

The allegorists (*dorshei reshumot*) say: they did not find words of Torah which are likened to water. And whence do we know that words of the Torah are likened to water? It is said, "Ho, every one that is thirsty, come for water" (Isa. 55:1). It was because they had been without words of Torah for three days that they became rebellious. And it was for this reason that the elders and the prophets instituted the reading from the Torah for the Sabbath and for the second and the fifth day of the week. How so? They read on the Sabbath, and they skip only one day after the Sabbath. Then they read on the second day and skip the third and fourth. Then again they read on the fifth day and skip the day preceding the Sabbath. (*Mekhilta Vayassa'* 1, ed. and transl. J.Z. Lauterbach JPS: Philadelphia, 1933; Vol. II, 89-90)

This passage offers four different interpretations of the words in the verse "and they (the Children of Israel) went three days in the wilderness and found no water". The first, attributed to R. Joshua, says the statement in the verse is to be taken literally. The second, attributed to R. Eleazar, draws on Ps. 136:6 to argue that it was impossible that the Israelites could not find water (for the entire earth is spread over waters); what the verse must then mean is that God made it impossible for them to find water in order to tire them out. The third interpretation argues that they could find no water in the vessels they had brought with them from Egypt, and to prove this, cites Jer. 14:3, a verse that otherwise has no connection with this passage; this is a classic example of using one verse to gloss another. Finally, the fourth example, attributed to the *dorshei reshumot*, the interpreters of "sealed things," commonly translated in English as "the allegorists," do indeed interpret the word "water" here allegorically as signifying "Torah," and cite Isa. 55:1 as the prooftext for their allegorical interpretation—another instance of using one verse

to gloss another. This interpretation is then used as the basis for a kind of aetiology as to why the Torah is read in the synagogue three times week. Why? So that three days should not pass without there being Torah—that is, water—in the community.

In sum, then, this passage demonstrates the unity of Scripture in several ways. The second interpretation reconciles a potential contradiction between two verses. The third connects two unrelated verses. And the fourth connects the verse in the Written Torah to a legal practice concerning the Written Torah that derives from the Oral Torah (namely, Rabbinic tradition).

Our last passage illustrates the other side of the principle of unity with its need to reconcile all contradictions or inconsistencies in Scripture.

> "Six days shall work be done (*yei'aseh melakhah*)" (Exod. 31:15). One verse says, "Six days shall work be done," while another verse says, "Six days shall you labour and do all your work (*ve'asita kol melekhtekha*)" (Exod. 20:9) How can both these passages be fulfilled? When the Israelites do the will of God, then: "Six days shall work be done." Their work is done for them by others.... And when the Israelites do not do the will of God, then: "Six days shall you labor and do all your work." (Mekhilta Shabbata), ed. Lauterback, III, 206-207.

The "problem" behind this midrash is a stylistic anomaly: Exod. 31:15 is in the passive while Exod. 20:9 is in the active voice. In any other literary context—other than midrash, that is—this difference would hardly be taken as an inconsistency. Yet this is precisely how the midrash does take it; or at the very least, the midrash exploits the change in voice for the purposes of a homily. As is often the case with midrash, it is hard to tell if the Rabbis have found an honest problem in Scripture, or if they have created one in order to solve it. For our purposes, though, it is important to note that even a purely stylistic inconsistency like this can be the occasion for interpretation.

These examples will suffice to show how these two midrashic axioms about the nature of Scripture—its omnisignificance and its unity—yield exegetical forms that proceed to interpret Scripture on their basis.[42] Significantly, the same techniques are used to inter-

[42] Note that the significance that these two principles assume in Rabbinic exegesis, and harmonization in particular, makes especially good sense in light of Haran's claim that canonization was the anthologization of earlier traditions into single compositions. Harmonization is so important precisely because it is necessary to

pret the Oral Torah—which is to say, to read the Oral Torah *as Torah.*

Unfortunately, because of lack of space, it is impossible for me in this context to analyze a lengthy Talmudic passage in detail in order to prove this point. What I would like to do instead is simply summarize a passage from the first chapter of the Babylonian Talmud to the tractate Berakhot and to show how the Gemara, in the passage, applies to the Mishnah and to the corresponding traditions of the Oral Torah at large the same exegetical techniques that we have seen midrash apply to Scripture.

The subject of the chapter is the Shema' prayer, one of the two main prayers of the Rabbinic liturgy. The prayer, which consists of several blessings plus passages of the Bible, including Deut. 6:4, "Hear O Israel," is recited twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, a practice which is itself derived from another verse recited in the Shema'—Deut. 6:6, "recite [these instructions]... when you lie down and when you get up," which the rabbis understood in a hyper-literal sense as legislating the time when the verses (i.e. the Shema') were required to be recited. The main concern of the Mishnah, however, is the proper time when you are supposed to recite the prayer. In other words, when does "evening" begin, and when does "morning"—and then, for how long thereafter? The first Mishnah in the chapter deals with the evening recitation of the Shema', the second with the morning. The third mishnah deals with the proper posture one is to assume while reciting the prayer, while the fourth and the fifth mishnayot in the chapter deal with the structure and content of the Shema"s blessings. In the case of the latter two mishnayot, however, I:4 deals first with the morning Shema' while only afterwards does I:5 treat the evening prayer—the opposite order, in other words, to that found in the first two mishnayot. (The morning and evening prayers are also somewhat different in other respects.)

The Gemara on this chapter begins with a pair of questions. First, the Gemara asks, where does the Tanna – that is, the unnamed sage who is the author of the Mishnah's ruling—"stand" when he begins, "From what time?" In other words, what is the Tanna's Biblical source that obligates him to recite the Shema' in the first place? And second, why does he deal first with the evening Shema' and only

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prove repeatedly, over and over again, that these compositions are not mere anthologies or compilations—that everything in them *is* unified, and that there is nothing in them that is not significant in its own right.

second with the morning prayer? The first answer he gives is the verse cited earlier, Deut. 6:6, "you shall recite [these instructions]... when you lie down and when you get up"—a verse that answers both questions, since, first, it provides a Scriptural source for the recitation of the prayer *and,* second, it lists the prayers in a specific order—evening first, morning second. Characteristically, the gemara proceeds to cite a second verse that offers much the same answer, but then it asks a further question: If the Biblical verse speaks of the evening prayer first and of the morning second, and if R. Judah followed this order in the first two mishnayot in the chapter, then why, in Mishnayot I:4 and I:5, does he diverge from this Scripturally ordained order and treat the morning prayer first and the evening prayer second?

This question, I propose, is precisely of the same order as the question asked in Mekhilta Shabbata about Exodus 31:15 and 20:9, the two verses which the midrash treated as being inconsistent, if not contradictory, because one is in the passive voice and the other in the active. There, as here, the difference is one we might call stylistic, since, after all, there is no substantive difference between them in meaning, and one of them —the morning *or* the evening prayer—had to be mentioned first. Their order, in other words, is trivial. For the Gemara, however, as for the midrash, nothing in Torah—Oral or Written—is trivial; even such an assymetry constitutes an inconsistency, and an explanation that the variation in sequence is merely stylistic is intolerable because, for the Rabbis, such an answer suggests that *something* in the text is without meaning. Hence the need to ask the question and to respond to it. Ironically, the answer that the Talmud gives happens to be close to a "stylistic" explanation—the Gemara explains that, because R. Judah was treating the laws of the morning Shema' in I:3 he continued to deal with the same prayer in I: 4 before returning to the evening prayer in I:5. There is a kind of ring structure to the sequence, in other words. Still, the fact that the Gemara feels the necessity to ask the question indicates to what extent the Rabbis considered the Mishnah an extraordinary text identical to the Torah in which even sequence and order matter. It is difficult to imagine the Rabbis asking the same question of an "ordinary" text (like, say, Homer).

Next, after completing the discussion we have just summarized, the Gemara turns to the Mishnah's own answer to the question, "From when can one recite the evening Shema'?"—namely, "from

the time that the priests enter to eat their terumah (the special priestly tithe)." Now the Mishnah, as we know, consists of R. Judah the Prince's own selection of those traditions from the Oral Torah that he considered most authoritative. And yet, as Weiss-Halivni has demonstrated, the Talmud frequently ignores the tradition(s) that R. Judah selected and cites others, treating them as at least equally important as R. Judah's selection (and not infrequently, more so). In this case, the Gemara cites an entire series of alternative traditions offering other additional markers for the time to recite the evening Shema'—(1) from the time that a poor man comes home to eat his bread with salt till he rises from his meal; (2) from the time people come home to eat their meal on a Sabbath eve; (3) from the time that the stars appear; and (4) from the time that most people sit down to eat their meal. In a truly complicated discussion, the Gemara sets out to harmonize all these different formulations and to show—as best as it can (it doesn't quite succeed)—that they all agree. The Gemara's project, in other words, is multi-pronged: to eliminate any possible discrepancies or contradictions between the Mishnah and the other traditions of the Oral Torah, *and* even more ambitiously, to harmonize and unify the many fragmentary and seemingly inconsistent pieces of tradition—to prove, in other words, the integrity of the entire tradition of the Oral Torah through a unified field theory, as it were. Here, again, the project does *not* quite succeed: the Talmud manages to harmonize virtually every divergent opinion until it is left with two conflicting versions of one rabbi's view, and this discrepancy the Talmud explains as the result of two different oral traditions as to what the rabbi originally said. Strictly speaking, the project is in fact virtually impossible because tradition is by definition inconsistent, fragmentary, and unsystematic. What is most important, however, is the attempt—that is, the desire to construct a unified tradition which can assemble and encompass the manifold heritage of the past. And to the extent that this effort is central to the Talmud's project of canonizing the Oral Torah, that project was a process of inclusion (and not exclusion), much as it was in the case of the Written Torah, as we saw earlier.

The examples I have cited do not exhaust the hermeneutics of the Talmud or its exegesis of the Mishnah even in regard to its canonization. As a number of scholars have recently shown, attitudes of Amoraim particularly from the fourth generation onward, and especially in regard to such questions as making emendations to the

Mishnaic text, indicate a growing feeling of reverence towards the literal text of the Mishnah and point to a nascent sense of its singularity if not sacralization.[43] The exegetical techniques that stand behind this changing attitude also have parallels in Rabbinic exegesis of the Torah. Let me emphasize, however, that my purpose here has not been to provide a comprehensive description of Mishnaic exegesis in the Babylonian Talmud; nor have I meant to give a full analysis of Talmudic discourse or even to suggest that the hermeneutic procedures I have identified exhaust all possible types of Talmudic exegesis. Rather, I am merely trying to show that Oral Torah acquires the "canonical" state of being treated as *Torah* through being studied and interpreted via the same techniques and hermeneutical methods as are applied in midrashic literature to the Written Torah.

What these examples show, then, is that the mechanics of canonization in Rabbinic Judaism are constituted by a process of reading. By applying to a corpus of (written or oral) literature a certain type of reading—we could call it a type of interpretation—and by demonstrating that (written or oral) literature's capacity for sustaining that type of reading and interpretation, the literary text is proven to be canonical—that is to say, to be able to sustain the weight of authority and the burden of meaningfulness appropriate to a canonical text. To be canonical in this context means to be Torah. Note, however, that this process of canonization is not identical to that of sacralization, nor does it require or necessitate the ascription of divinity to the text's origins. While the myth of the Oral Torah emerges in its full shape in the Talmudic period (see J. Peah 2, 17a; B. Megillah 19b, B.Berakhot 5a), the earliest explicit evidence for the attribution of divine inspiration to the composition of the Mishnah as a specific literary document comes only in the twelfth century, in the famous statement of Judah Halevi (d. ca. 1141) in the Kuzari (Part 3, par. 67).[44]

Canonization through interpretation, as I have described it, is also

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[43] See, for example, A. Cohen, "Halakhic Criticism vs. Literary Criticism in the Talmudic Sugya", *Asupot, An Annual in Jewish Studies* 3 (1989), 331-346 [Hebrew], who uses the term "sacralization" (*hitkadshut*) (337); D. Henschke, "Abbaye and Rava—Two Approaches to the Tannaitic Corpus," *Tarbiz* 49 (1980), 187-93 [Hebrew]. My thanks to Naftali Cohen in an as yet unpublished article for bringing these issues and articles to my attention.

[44] Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture*, 198, n. 609. Cf. as well S. Asaf, "'Am Hasefer' Vehasefer," in: *BeOhalei Yaakov* (Jerusalem, 1943), 1-26.

a reproducible process. In the course of post-Talmudic Jewish history through the Middle Ages, the process is extended and applied to the Babylonian Talmud itself, first in Ashkenaz, later in Sefarad (where, indeed, the canonicity of the Talmud is initially challenged by figures like Maimonides); and then, in a widening circle, it is eventually applied even to the commentators upon the Talmud—first, the early commentators, then later ones, albeit to a lesser degree and without ascribing divine inspiration to them or to their works.[45] And to some extent , even the first aspect of the Torah's canonicity—its material sacrality as evidenced in what we called "the liturgical Torah"—also comes to be attributed to the Oral Torah and to its literary documents. As we have seen, orality itself is a medium of materiality, and the Rabbis were insistent upon maintaining the separateness of the two Torahs by insisting upon the difference between the two mediums. "Things which were stated orally [must be presented] orally, and things which were stated in writing [must be presented] in writing" (P. Megillah 4:1, 74d). Such orality extended to public performance, where there was another rule governing how the texts must be read aloud: one sage, Rabbi Shefatia, added in the name of R. Yohanan, that just as the Bible must be read with a melody (*ne'imah*), so too Oral Torah must be taught (*shoneh*) with a song (*zimrah*) (B. Megillah 32a)—the two terms presumably referring to two separate cantillation systems. There are of course no legal strictures on the writing down of the Oral Torah in the way that there are for a Torah scroll; how could there be? But when the Talmud finally does get written down in the early Middle Ages, it is copied in a scroll just like a written Torah.[46] And eventually, in 1519/20-23, when Daniel Bomberg for the first time publishes (and paginates) an edition of the entire Babylonian Talmud, the text receives *de facto* and *post factum* a material shape that historically becomes as fixed as that of the written Torah. Indeed, the page becomes so fixed that there are even homilies expounding on the symbolic significance of its typographical design—why the initial word of its chapter is enclosed in a panel; why every page has four wide lines of Rashi's commentary at its top, and so on.[47]

[45] For some discussion of this process, see M. Halbertal, *People of the Book* (Cambridge, 1997), esp. 90-128.

[46] See *pro temp* Sh. Friedman, "An Ancient Scroll Fragment (B. Hullin 101a-105a) and the Rediscovery of the Babylonian Branch of Tannaitic Hebrew," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 86 (1995), 9-50.

[47] See Marvin J. Heller, *Printing the Talmud* (Brooklyn, 1992), 61 note.

No other Hebrew or Jewish book ever quite receives the same "material" canonization as does the Hebrew Bible or the Babylonian Talmud, but that is partly because only these two books are Torah. In the full sense of the term, the dynamics of canonization as a process of reading, as its first develops in Late Antiquity among the Rabbis, eventually becomes the paradigm for the canonization of much of the rest of Jewish literature, at least until modernity. And this paradigm comes not only to define the very nature of the traditional Jewish book. In its own way, it becomes very representative of Jewish tradition itself.

FROM ORAL TRADITION TO LITERARY CANON: SHEM TOV IBN GAON AND THE CRITIQUE OF KABBALISTIC LITERATURE

MOSHE HALBERTAL

Literary canons might be looked upon as attempts to solidify previous oral traditions into authoritative canonical texts. The emergence of literary canon endows a tradition with authority and endurance, which is independent from the localized and bounded channels of oral transmission. Yet such transformation might undermine that same tradition it aimed at solidifying. This essay which revolves around the emergence of Kabbalah as a literary corpus, examines what I believe is one of the most powerful reflections on such a complex process.

In the middle of the 13th century Meir Ibn Sahula, a Castillean kabbalist, described his kabbalistic learning as acquired from books rather than authors. According to his testimony, he was already in possession of a sort of kabbalistic library of writings from Provence and Gerona, and his knowledge was not based on a continuous oral transmission but on critical synthesis of differing textual traditions. In his commentary on *Sefer Yetzirah*, he writes:

> "For several years already, I have been studying these things relating to all secrets, starting with the *Sefer Habahir*, which explains some matters, and the writings of Rabbi Asher who wrote the *Perush Shlosh Esreh Middot* and the *Perush Hashevu'ah*, and Rabbi Ezra, Rabbi Azariel and Rabbi Moshe ben Nahman, all of blessed memory. Also, I studied those chapters. And I acquired some of the commentary on *Sefer Yetzirah* attributed to Rabbi Moshe bar Nahman of blessed memory, but I was unable to acquire all of it" (MS Rome Angelica 1/145, p. 2b).

The existence of a kabbalistic library, whose items are enumerated by Ibn Sahula, and which serve as the basis for his kabbalistic knowledge, teaches us about the rapid shift from oral tradition to an independent literary corpus.

This development stands in stark opposition to Nachmanides'

Kabbalah, who attempted to safeguard Kabbalah as an oral tradition ascribed to Sinai, preseved and transmitted under strict esoteric constrains.[1] In Nachmanides' conception, Kabbalah is as well a closed knowledge in which human reasoning is completely incapable of expanding and innovating. Nachmanides formulated his approach to Kabbalah as closed knowledge in his introduction to his commentary on the Torah:

> "Now behold I bring into a faithful covenant and give proper counsel to all who look into this book not to reason or entertain any thought concerning any of the mystic hints which I write regarding the hidden matters of the Torah, for I do hereby firmly make known to him [the reader] that my words will not be comprehended nor known at all by any reasoning or contemplation, excepting from the mouth of a wise Kabbalist speaking into the ear of an understanding recipient. Reasoning about them is foolishness; any unrelated thought brings much damage and withholds the benefit. "Let him not trust in vanity, deceiving himself", for these reasonings will bring him nothing but evil as if they spoke falsely against God, which cannot be forgiven, as it is said, "The man that strayeth out of understanding shall rest in the congregation of the shades."... let them take moral instruction from the mouths of our holy Rabbis: "Into that which is beyond you, do not seek; into that which is more powerful than you, do not inquire; about that which is concealed from you, do not desire to know; about that which is hidden from you, do not ask. Contemplate that which is permitted to you, and engage not yourself in hidden things" (*Perush Haramban*, I, pp. 7-8; Chavel, I, pp. 15-16).

It is of no surprise that the challenge to Kabbalah as an Oral tradition is accompanied in the writings of Meir ibn Sahula with challenging its nature as a closed knowledge. Rabbi Meir promotes the value of independent research, as he writes at the opening of his commentary: "We must investigate the words according to our understanding, and walk in them in the paths walked by the prophets in their generation and in the generations before us, during the two hundred years of kabbalists to date, and they call the wisdom of the ten *sefirot* and some of the reasons for the commandments Kabbalah" (ibid.). Rabbi Meir relies on the historical traditions he possesses relating to the kabbalistic tradition. Unlike Nahmanides, Rabbi Meir grounds the roots of this tradition, not in Sinai, but in

[1] See M. Idel, "Nahmanides: Kabbalah, Halakha and Spiritual Leadership", in: Moshe Idel and Mortimer Ostow (eds.), *Jewish Mystical Leaders and Leadership in the 13th Century* (Jerusalem, 1998), 15-96, [Hebrew]. For an extensive discussion on orality and textuality in the transmission of Kabbalah, and for another approach to Nachmanides see E. Wolfson, 'Beyond the Spoken Word: Oral Tradition and

the previous two hundred years of Kabbalah. The restriction of the scope of the tradition empowers the investigative position and his reliance on reasoning.[2] Furthermore, later in his composition, he undermines the conception of authority that Nahmanides claimed for his own kabbalistic position: "at each point, I shall mention the position of Nahmanides of blessed memory, in his own name, and then try as best I can to contradict or support it". Ibn Sahula also presents an attitude towards esoteric questions different than that of Nahmanides. In the context of an exegetical argument with Nahmanides over the issue of *keter* and *en sof*, he raises an argument reminiscent of the words of Rabbi Asher against the writing of hints: "It seems to me that he should not have revealed it here in this way but through more expansive language and a lengthier introduction, that he build a more sturdy fence so that others may not stumble over it, as it is written, "what is amazing to you, do not expound" (ibid., p. 108b).

The transformation which was attested at Rabbi Meir's writings is part of a general trend edeveloping among the Kabbalists in Castile. The writings of the kabbalists of Castille, who were active in the mid-13th century, are, in part, of a markedly exoteric nature. Isaac the Blind described the situation in Castille in extremely acerbic language: "for I have heard of the lands around you and of the people of the town of Burgos that they speak openly in the marketplaces and streets as frightened and confused people".[3] It may be that his words were directed against the kabbalists of the *Hug Ha'iyun*, the most exoteric circle in the early Kabbalah.[4] This circle has bequeathed us a large number of creative and daring pseudoepigraphal works, which neither display any unity of thought, nor rely on any clear and recognized line of transmission. This obscure circle did not attempt to preserve a relation of familial tradition or careful transmission from teacher to disciple; rather, these writings derive their authority from a mythical

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Written Transmission in Medieval Jewish Mysticism' in *Transmitting Jewish Tradition: Orality, Textuality and Cultural Diffusion*, Y. Elman and I. Gershoni ed. New Haven 2000, pp. 166-224.

[2] In another context, he refers to the relation between Kabbalah and logical reasoning: "I did not receive this from tradition, but I say 'open my eyes that I may gaze on the wonders of your Law'." (Ibid., 100b).

[3] The letter was published and discussed by Gershom Scholem, in: Y. Ben-Shlomo and M. Idel (eds.), *Studies in Kabbalah I* (Tel Aviv, 1998), 9-10, [Hebrew].

[4] On this matter, see M. Verman, *The Book of Contemplation* (Albany, 1992), 27. On the words of Isaac the Blind, see G. Scholem in: Y. Ben Shlomo and M. Idel (eds.), *Kabbalah Studies* (Tel-Aviv, 1985), p. 141, [Hebrew].

figure in whose name they speak and through which they attempt to break through the closed circle of tradition. The transformation of the Kabbalah into a literary corpus intensified in the last third of the 13th century through the writings of Yosef Gikatila, Moshe de Leon and others. These kabbalists created a voluminous kabbalistic literature, whose epitome was the Zohar. The Zohar presents a perfect alternative to the concept that the Kabbalah is closed knowledge, a feature that was analyzed by different scholars.[5]

A critical, sharp and perspicacious look at the process of transformation of the Kabbalah into a literary corpus in the 13th century, as well as one of the richest discussions of the question of esotericism I know of, may be found in the work *Badei Ha'aron* of Shem Tov Ibn Gaon. Shem Tov Ibn Gaon, one of the students of RaSHB"A, and a distinguished follower of Nahmanides' Kabbalah in the early 14th century,[6] sought to revive the concept of the Kabbalah as a primarily oral tradition, and counter the widespread transgressions of the limits of secrecy of the second half of the 13th century. As a member of this circle, and as a proponent of the closed nature of Kabbalistic knowledge, he attempted to found the authority and power of Nahmanides' Kabbalah on a continuous tradition whose sources were at Sinai:

> "For no sage can know of them through his own sagacity, and no wise man may understand through his own wisdom, and no researcher through his research, and no expositor through his exposition; only the kabbalist may know, based on the Kabbalah that he received, passed down orally from one man to another, going back to the chain of the greats of the renowned generation, who received it form their masters, and the fathers of their fathers, going back to Moses, may peace be upon him, who received it as Law from Sinai. And they are listed in my *Keter Shem tov*, just as I received them from my masters, the great Rabbi Shlomo ben Rabbi Avraham ben Aderet, of blessed memory,

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[5] See Y. Liebes, "The Messiah of the Zohar—to the Messianic nature of R. Shimon bar Yohai", in: *The Messianic Idea in Israel: A Symposium in Honor of Gershom Scholem* (Jerusalem, 1982), 132-181 [Hebrew]; idem., "Eros ve-Zohar", *Alpayim* 9 (1994), 67-119. On the centrality of innovation in the Zohar, see D. Matt "'Matnita Dilan': Technique of innovation in the Zohar", in: J. Dan (ed.), *The Zohar and its Generation* (Jerusalem, 1989) (=*Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 8 [1989]), 123-146 [Hebrew].

On the relation between secrecy, disclosure and eros, see also E. Wolfson, "Occultation of the Feminine and the Body of Secrecy in Medieval Kabbalah", in: E.R. Wolfson (ed.), *Rending the Veil: Concealment and Secrecy in the History of Religions* (New York, 1999), 113-148.

[6] For Shem Tov Ibn Gaon and his works, see D. Sh. Levinger, "Rabbi Shem Tov ibn Gaon", *Sefunot* (1963) 7-40 [Hebrew].

> and Rabbi Yitzhak ben Rabbi Todros, may his soul rest, who received it from the mouth of Rabbi Moshe ben Rabbi Nahman (Nahmanides) of blessed memory, and the pious Rabbi Isaac the Blind of blessed memory, son of the great master, Rabbi Avraham ben Rabbi David, the righteous one of blessed memory, whose wisdom was known and whose nature was exemplary" (*Badei Ha'aron*, p. 27).

At the beginning of the 14th century, this tradition was in conflict with the concept of the Kabbalah as literature. Shem Tov begins his discourse with the following warning:

> "For I have found something of which every man whom the spirit of God is within must take heed. This is the saying of our Sages, 'from the mouths of authors and not from books'; lest he find books written with this wisdom, for perhaps the whole of what he received is but chapter headings; then he may come to study such books and fall in the deep pit as a result of the sweet words he finds there; for he may rejoice in them, or desire their secrets or the sweetness of the lofty language he finds there. But perhaps their author has not received the Kabbalah properly, passed down orally from one to another; he may only have been intelligent or skilled in poetry or rhetoric... and have left the true path, as our Sages of blessed memory warned, 'in the measure of his sharpness, so is his error". Perhaps he also came across other books that the instructed kabbalists referred to merely in passing, and he does not know why or in what measure" (*Badei Ha'aron*, pp. 25-26).

Shem Tov Ibn Gaon is aware that kabbalistic knowledge has become literature, and is no longer an oral tradition that has been written down. Consequently, he emphasizes one of the essential distinctions between the transmission of closed knowledge and the rise of literature. The controlled transmission of chapter headings avoids the use of rhetorical literary devices, because the tradition derives its reliability from its spare and precise formulation. The creative and rhetorical nature of kabbalistic literature, on the other hand, has an anti-traditional dimension. A text of poetic character is not merely a conduit for the transmission of traditions. Such a text establishes itself as an object worthy of regard in its poetic dimensions, which are not strictly means for transmission of knowledge. Consequently, from the point of view of the kabbalist, who sees the Kabbalah as closed knowledge, reliability and art are contradictory. It may very well be that Shem Tov Ibn Gaon was warning his readers against the Zohar, which is the epitome of the development of the Kabbalah as literature, as its marvelous literary qualities are powerfully seductive. Indeed, the tremendous difference between the Kabbalah as literature and the Kabbalah as tradition may be wit-

nessed in the gap between the Zohar and Nahmanides' writings. Nahmanides' writings are devoid of any literary quality. They have no narrative frames or mythic characters, nor do they display complex weaves of midrashim and explanations, whereas in the Zohar we find these elements in abundance. The seductive appeal of the literary kabbalistic works threaten its status as a precise tradition handed down by Moses on Mount Sinai; it is this threat that Shem Tov struggled with.

Another element undermining the structure of closed knowledge is the pseudo-epigraphical nature of this literature. Shem Tov relates to this dimension later on in his writings: "God forbid, for the earlier instructed ones and the bearers of tradition have already proclaimed against this, saying that the wise man should not read any book unless he knows the name of its author. And this is just, for when he knows whom its author is, he will understand its path and intention, (transmitted) from one man to another until the members of his generation, Thus, he may know if its author was a legitimate authority, and from whom he received it and whether his wisdom is renowned" (*Badei Ha'aron*, ibid.). The pseudo-epigraphic literature, like the writings of the *Hug Ha'iyun*, which was attributed to the enigmatic image of Rabbi Hamai, claimed for itself the status of independent canonical literature. The nature of its author, his place in the kabbalistic tradition, and his reliability as a transmitter of oral tradition, all vanish in this type of literature. Consequently, Shem Tov Ibn Gaon warns his readers against such literature. Later on in his writings, Shem Tov contrasts the ways of his masters with those of the pseudo-epigraphic literature: "For all of them (=Shem Tov's masters) were careful not to compose unattributed literature, writing only in their own names. Furthermore, they never explained anything based on their own knowledge, unless they made public to all readers how they arrived at such knowledge through their own reasoning. They publicized their names in their works so that all who come after them may know what guarded measure and in which paths light may be found" (ibid., p. 29). The transmission of tradition entails the keeping of genealogies. The name of the author and his place in the authoritative line of transmission is the source of his strength and the authority of his knowledge. Similarly, whoever writes down the secrets of the Torah transmitted from Mount Sinai must carefully distinguish between what was transmitted to him and what he says of his own knowledge, as was practiced by Shem Tov's masters, according to his testimony.

As a consequence of his approach to the oral nature of Kabbalah, Shem Tov Ibn Gaon comes to see even the canonical works of the Kabbalah- *Sefer Yetzirah, Sefer Habahir* and *Sefer Shiur Komah*—as a function of oral transmission:

> "And now I shall return to the warnings and reminders that I mentioned and say that in our day there are no well-known works of Kabbalah that rest on firm foundation except for those I mentioned. In any case, if a person receives from the mouth of a well-known kabbalist the transmission of the *Sefer Yetzirah*, *Sefer Habahir* or the chapter of *Shiur Komah*... these may serve as supplementary knowledge for him, and it is worthy for the instructed one to cleave unto them, to memorize the principles until the words and chapters he received from his master be etched upon the tablet of his heart with a pen of iron and lead, so that he may not need any book, when he reads it in a chant or repeats it in tune" (*Badei Ha'aron*, p. 32).

The preceding canonical kabbalistic works, which risked becoming 'literature', derive their authority, according to Shem Tov, from the framework of oral transmission: "if he receive them from the mouth of a well-known kabbalist". Even after these works have been transmitted to the disciple, Shem Tov places restrictions on their function as written literature. The student must repeat the chapters and sayings and learn them by heart, through chanting and song.

Aside from the essential distinctions that Shem Tov Ibn Gaon makes between the secrets of the Torah as tradition and as closed knowledge and the secrets of the Torah as literature, he also describes the kinds of writing and esoteric transmission practiced in the esoteric tradition of Nahmanides. This testimony, written down in order to revive Nahmanides' concept of kabbalistic knowledge and restore its authority, is of exceptional quality. In one passage the RAVa"D and the RaSHB"A are described as the strictest of kabbalists in esoteric matters:

> "My master, the RaSHB"A of blessed memory also composed a special prayer for himself, in which he hinted at the correct chapter headings, and composed a commentary based on some of the sayings of the Talmud, which may be understood on an explicit level, and may serve to refute the claims of heretics; but he inserted in hints one or two words which reveal some of the secrets to the ear of the kabbalist. Yet he did not explain all of them, nor did he hint at all of them, as the pious sages Rabbi Ezra and Rabbi Azariel of Gerona, of blessed memory, had already done so earlier, in their compositions explaining the *haggadot* (*Badei Ha'aron*, p. 28).

In the RaShB"A's commentary on the *haggadot*, unlike those of Rabbi Ezra and Rabbi Azriel, except for the occasional word, there are no esoteric hints. Thus, the reader of the extant commentary on the *haggadot* of the RaShB"A will find difficulty identifying him as an esotericist. The RaShB"A's style of writing contains a concealed criticism of the exegetical path chosen by Rabbi Ezra and Rabbi Azriel in their commentaries on the *haggadot*. Those commentaries were designed to explain the esoteric level of the *aggadah*. The RaShB"A advocated restricting, rather than expanding those commentaries. Shem Tov describes the path taken by the RAV"aD in terms close to the strict approach of the RaShB"A: "and the RAV"aD, of blessed memory, provided hints only at places where he saw it absolutely necessary and no more, and he had enough in what his son the master [Yizhak the Blind] revealed , as he was known for this wisdom which he received from (the RAV"aD's) mouth" (ibid). In contrast to the RAV"aD and the RaShB"A, the path of Nahmanides was seen as more generous and methodical in its providing of enigmatic hints:

> "The great master Rabbi Moses ben Nahman of blessed memory also wrote his book and his commentary on Job, and in each and every place hinted at hidden things, in order to properly awaken the reader, based on what he had received. Nevertheless, he made his words very enigmatic, for it is written, "honey and milk are under your tongue", etc... He also commented only the first chapter of *Sefer Yetzirah*, for he received no more from other kabbalists. But the great pious Rabbi Isaac the Blind of blessed memory explained it in its entirety, as he received it" (ibid, p. 29).

Nahmanides hinted everywhere at what he received, but his words are enigmatic and his commentary on *Sefer Yetzirah* cover only the section for which he had received an esoteric tradition.

Shem Tov describes a style of writing different from the enigmatic hints of Nahmanides or the almost total silence of the RaShB"A and the RAV"aD, in his description of a no longer extant kabbalistic text, which, according to Shem Tov, was composed by Rabbi Avraham ben Yizhak, who was the RAV"aD's father in law: "For Rabbi Avraham, Head of the Court, of blessed memory, wrote down chapter headings alone. And I saw them publicizing wonderful words to awaken all kabbalists; wherever they may find a word of them in Scripture, it may awaken them" (*Badei Ha'aron,* ibid.). This minimalistic text, which Shem Tov testifies that he viewed as the pole dia-

metrically opposed to kabbalistic "literature", is made up of a mere list of words and lacks all rhetoric or poetic dimension. This list contains no hint, reference or instruction, and is nothing more than a set of reminders, in Shem Tov's words: "mere chapter headings". This may be the primary and pure form of the transmission of chapter headings—a list of key words. In the esoteric tradition described by Shem Tov, we find a complex variety of approaches to the hidden. But what all the works to which Shem Tov is faithful have in common is the assumption that writing in hints is a conduit for transmission of secret traditions, and not an attempt at creating a kabbalistic literature.

In addition to the description of the different levels of esoteric writing, Shem Tov also documented the process of oral transmission, as it took place in the houses of study of his masters, the RaShB"a and Rabbi Yitzhak ben Todros:

> "And I saw some of the students who received some of the esoteric matters and began with the chapter headings, received from the mouths of our masters, may their souls repose. But they were not diligent in their studies as befit their capacities, and left the eternal life to repose in the ways of the world, so that my masters regretted what they had transmitted to them, and did not add to their teaching. When they transmitted (this knowledge) to me, they did so on condition that I would not transmit it to others except under three conditions that must be fulfilled by any one who comes to receive matters of the initiates: the first is that he be a Talmudic scholar, the second—that he be forty years old or more, and the third—that he be pious and humble in spirit" (*Badei Ha'aron*, P. 30).

The expression "to receive the matters of *haveruť*" is a technical term for initiation. In the passage above, one such process of initiation is described. A great deal can be learned from this passage, specifically because it describes a case in which the process failed. According to this rare description, oral transmission is not the organized, systematic transmission of Torah secrets. As in written transmission, it was also done through hints, and a little at a time. The student received the chapter headings and his masters examined how he developed and understood them on his own; only when he was found worthy did they expand the range of hints and transmit additional chapter headings, and so on. This method of transmission provides the masters with long-term control over the learning process, and enables the process to be halted at various points. Furthermore, this method attempts to put into practice the conditions for entry into

esotericism, namely, that the student must be wise and understand out of his own knowledge. According to this condition, one who is worthy of secrets already knows them on his own—that is, the previous knowledge of the Torah secrets transmitted to the student is what prepares him to be worthy of receiving them.

The paradoxical sense of this Mishnaic condition is further reinforced by the text of the more reliable Mishnah manuscripts. In the Kaufmann and Parma manuscripts the text reads "*haḥaḳam vehevin mida'ato*" ("wise and understood of his own knowledge"). The reading "*mevin mida'ato*" ("wise and understands of his own knowledge") refers to the student's capabilities, whereas the reading "*vehevin mida'ato*" is a statement of fact. One may only transmit to one who knows the secret on his own, who already understood of his own knowledge. The transmission of the secret thus becomes a problem, for if the student fulfilled the conditions for initiation and understood of his own knowledge, there is no need to instruct him, whereas if he does not understand of his own knowledge, he is unworthy of receiving the secret. The transmission through hinting, which is gradually amplified in accordance with the student's own progress, reflects the circular nature of the condition. Consequently, even teaching to selected individuals through oral transmission must be based on hints, by means of which the student can prove that he knows the matters of his own knowledge and capacities. The circular conditions of entry are the profoundest expression of the elitism of the esoteric. One may not join the esoteric circle, as it is based on a tautology—whoever knows the secret is worthy of receiving it. Esotericism thus entails a strong sense of privacy: 'only those who already understand me can understand me'.

There is something else we may learn from Shem Tov's testimony on the initiation proceedings. The hinted and gradual transmission of knowledge was accompanied by a commitment on the part of the student to accept the restrictions on further transmission of that knowledge.[7] Shem Tov describes this commitment as an integral part of the process of transmission: "When they transmitted (this

[7] The commitment not to transmit the secret has a judicial dimension as well. See the later example of a contractual commitment of the disciples of Shlomo Luria, published by Z. Rabinowitz, 'From the Geniza ha-Dtolnait', *Ẓion* 5 (1940), 125-126 [Hebrew]. See also G. Scholem, 'A Binding Contract of the Ari's disciples', *Ẓion* 5 (1940), 133-160 [Hebrew]. See also Liebes, 'The Messiah of the Zohar', in: *The Messianic Idea in Jewish Thought*, 136, n. 199; 158, note 251 [Hebrew].

knowledge) to me, they did so on condition that I would not transmit it to others except under three conditions, to any one who comes to receive the matters of the initiates: the first is that he be a Talmudic scholar, the second that he be forty years old or more, and the third that he be pious and humble in spirit" (ibid). This passage is one of the first mentions of the restriction of transmission to those over forty; if indeed it was practiced in the school of the RaShB"A, designates a severely restrictive tendency in instruction.[8]

An additional restriction mentioned by Shem Tov—"that he be a Talmudic scholar"—was designed to create a situation in which the realm of closed knowledge would remain the sole property of the Torah scholars. This restriction had institutional and social significance that far surpassed the question of the student's aptitude for receiving Torah secrets. Esoteric teachings might pose a threat to authority structures and halakhic frameworks, because they present themselves as the inner meaning of religion. The attempt to restrict the Kabbalah to traditions transmitted amongst Torah scholars is a means of preventing its becoming a body of knowledge and authority that could compete with the halakhic world. This restriction creates an identity between the esotericists and the Torah scholars, so that the threatening force of esotericism might be harnessed to increase the power of the Torah sages. Esotericism thus draws its authority from its transmission through the institutional frameworks of the halakhic masters and receives legitimacy, as an integral part of the tradition, because the halakhic masters take it under their auspices. Undoubtedly, strict esoteric concepts of the Kabbalah were common among halakhic masters, as claimed by Moshe Idel.[9] The personalities whose esoteric practices were described by Shem Tov were outstanding halakhic scholars: Rabbi Avraham, head of the Rabbinical Court, the RAVa"D, Nahmanides, the RaShB"A, Rabbi Yitzhak ben Todros; to this list we may add Rabbi Yonah Girondi. By contrast, Rabbi Ezra, Rabbi Azriel and the kabbalists of Castille, who slackened the reins of esotericism, did not belong to the rabbinical elite.

Shem Tov's composition touches directly on the relation between the halakhic scholars and esotericism. Shem Tov usually avoids

[8] On age restrictions for study, see M. Idel, 'On the History of the Prohibitions to Study Kabbalah', *AJS Review* 5 (1980), 1-20 [Hebrew].

[9] See M. Idel, "Raby Moshe ben Nahman: Kabbalah, Halakha and Spiritual Leadership", *Tarbiz* 64 (1995), 550-559 [Hebrew].

mentioning the names of the kabbalists and compositions which are the targets of his criticism. Aside from the kabbalists of Provence and Gerona, on whom Shem Tov bases what he considers the proper tradition, the only ones mentioned among the kabbalists of Castille are the Cohen brothers and Rabbi Moshe of Burgos:

> "For I have heard it said, two seeds at the summit of a tall tree, that they made themselves stronger than rock and emery, to receive from the mouths of holy ones, the heads of the academies, and the seed of great men; they moved their legs and toiled all their days and nights to fastidiously study their chapters. Verily, they are the sages, the pious brothers Rabbi Yitzhak and Rabbi Yaakov Cohen, the sons of Rabbi Yaakov Hacohen of blessed memory, whose birthplace is the town of Suraya, which is also my birthplace, for their family is related to mine. They died without leaving male issue, and they left their riches and the greatness of their wisdom in the hands of their student the sage Rabbi Moshe of blessed memory, the son of Shim'on from the town of Burgos. But because they were not of my time, and I did not walk in their path, I avoided speaking of them; I only knew their aforementioned student, whom I met in the days of my youth, and I saw that it was a straight and suitable way that he chose for himself, for he was pious and humble and decent in all his ways. But as I did not test his wisdom, I have remained silent and avoided following his way as one who shelters me in his tent. I only know that they were not great teachers of the Talmud, which is the pillar of learning of what is above and below and for the four winds of the world in its length and breadth, for the truth shall be taught through its ways" (*Badei Ha'aron*, p. 33).

Although the Cohen brothers and Rabbi Moshe of Burgos are not linked directly to the chain of tradition of the Kabbalah of Nahmanides, as constructed by Shem Tov, his evaluation of their trustworthiness is quite restrained. The Cohen brothers are described as bearers of tradition, that they learned from holy ones, while their disciple, Rabbi Moshe of Burgos, with whom he was well acquainted in his youth, is described as a man of stature. The Kabbalah of the Cohen brothers and Rabbi Moshe of Burgos is indeed of an esoteric character in comparison with the *Hug Ha'iyun* and the kabbalists of Castile who followed them. In the writings of the Cohen brothers, and especially in the case of Rabbi Moshe of Burgos, who transmit traditions from the school of Nahmanides, the Kabbalah is perceived as closed knowledge.[10] In spite of this, Shem Tov re-

[10] "These hints cannot be understood, except if received from mouth to mouth (going back to) Moses on Mount Sinai". See D. Abrams, *The Book of the Orah of Rabbi Ya'akov ha-Cohen* (Doc. Diss., New York University, 1993), 215. See also, ibid,

fused to include them in the kabbalistic canon he created, because they were not halakhic scholars: "I only know this, that they were not great teachers of the Talmud".[11] The esotericists of Nahmanides' circle derive their credibility and authority from their being Talmudic scholars. The rabbinical elite attempts to keep the esoteric tradition within its own domain, so that it will not become a competing institution of authority and inspiration.[12] Shem Tov Ibn Gaon presents us with a polemical picture, full and rare, of an esoteric tradition that has lost its power. He describes the features of this tradition, drawing a profound distinction between tradition and literature, by providing a sharp and vivid description of the esoteric practices of writing and of oral transmission.

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236. On the Cohen brothers and Moshe of Burgos, see G. Scholem, "The Kabbalah of R. Yizhak ben Ya'akov ha-Cohen—R. Mosheh of Burgos the Disciple of R. Yizhak", *Tarbiz Supplement* 4 (1933) [Hebrew]. See for example, the words of Moshe of Burgos on the Kabbalah: "far and strange from the eyes of all, without deliberation or reasoning, it is the faithful Kabbalah which is transmitted to all bearers of hidden wisdom" (ibid, p. 208).

[11] It is of interest to note that the expression "two seeds at the summit of a tall tree", with which Shem Tov describes the Cohen brothers, appears in the writings of Rabbi Yitzhak Cohen on those who know the secrets of the *sefirot* of the left side: "for this is a path in which, aside from myself, only two or three have trodden. They are seeds at the summit of a tall tree, the ancient wise men, the sages of Sepharad who made use of the palace of Samael" (see G. Scholem, "The Kabbalah of Raby Yaakov and Raby Yitsḥak sons of Raby Yaakov Hakohen: Sources and the History of Kabbalah before the Unveiling of the Zohar", *Madaëi ha-Yahadut*, II, (1926), 224), [Hebrew]. It seems that there is a direct reference, perhaps even ironic, of Shem Tov to the writings of the Cohen brothers themselves.

[12] The tension erupted into a full-scale confrontation between Shem Tov's master, the RaShB"A and Avraham Abulafia. Among other subjects characterizing this tension, we may mention Abulafia's complete liberation from the bonds of esotericism, to the dismay of other kabbalists, as Abulafia himself describes: "although I know that among the kabbalists are many who did not reach perfection, and thought they had perfected themselves by not revealing esoteric matters, I do not heed their thoughts, even when they condemn me for disclosing things, for in this matter, my opinion is much different from or opposite to theirs" (*Otzar Eden Ganuz*, Oxford manuscript, 1580). On this issue, see M. Idel, "The Rashba and Avraham Abulafia: The History of a Neglected Kabbalistic Polemic" in: D. Boyarin (ed.), *Atara le Haim: Studies in Talmudic and Rabbinic Literature in Honor of Professor Haim Zalman Dimitrovsky* (Jerusalem, 2000), 231-235 [Hebrew].

AFTERWORD
CANONIZATION IN THE ANCIENT WORLD: THE VIEW FROM FARTHER EAST

ANDREW H. PLAKS

This afterword has been solicited to provide a parting glance at the topics discussed in this volume from the 'outside perspective' of the classical Chinese textual tradition. This collection of studies was conceived as an inquiry into the mechanisms and significance of canon-formation in the ancient world, grounded as far as possible in a comprehensive—if not global—frame of reference. To this end, the semester-long seminar conducted on this subject at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University in the winter of 1999 was designed in such a way as to embrace a broad sweep of cultural contexts up to and including that of ancient China, which I was delighted, if ill-equipped, to represent. For a variety of organizational and practical reasons, however, the scope of the conference that capped the season was restricted to the chain of contiguous civilizations following the path of Alexander the Great from Greece and Rome eastward through the ancient Near East to the Fertile Crescent and the Iranian plateau—stopping conspicuously short at the Indus. This omission could be justified as leaving merely two ancient literary civilizations: the Indic/Buddhist and the East Asian/Confucian outside the purview of our deliberations, though these last two traditions, one notes with some regret, may well comprise the bulk of mankind's textual history.

The organizers of the Jerusalem conference presumably had no ideological intention of marginalizing these latter civilizations, or of prioritizing one 'East' at the expense of another. Still, there may well have lurked within their minds the (not unreasonable) assumption that the further east one moves beyond the familiar terrain of the classic Mediterranean and West Asian worlds, the more likely one is to encounter extrinsic, or downright exotic parameters of human cultural development that need not conform to the models generat-

ed in these other spheres. The truth is, however, that when our quest for cross-cultural universality brings us to the farther reaches of the 'East,' we discover there a picture of canon-formation that is anything but 'eccentric,' one that in fact, on many accounts, sits at the dead center of this subject of inquiry. To say this is not to blithely invoke the well-known traditional Chinese vaunt that their cultural and political realm (the'Middle Kingdom') is the center of the universe. Nor is it to insist upon a simplistic scenario of east-west cultural diffusion among 'axial age' civilizations, compelling as such a view may sometimes be. The point is simply that in tracing the history of the general phenomenon of canon-making, the development of the so-called 'Confucian Classics' presents what is in certain senses the clearest and fullest example of the collective paradigms of canonization that are represented—only in a partial and uneven manner—by each of the other cultural systems deployed to the west of the Sinitic hub of the axis of ancient civilizations.

Before attempting to defend this view of the centrality of the Chinese model of canon-formation, it is first necessary to outline the common ground shared by the other textual traditions considered in this volume. Reading through the essays assembled here, one may well gain the initial impression that this 'common ground' is very thin, that these studies reflect very diverse—perhaps incommensurable—understandings of what is meant by 'canon' in the first place. Most obtrusively, the respective working definitions of this term reflect a basic division between its conventional use as a near synonym for revealed 'scripture' (see the pieces by Veldhuis, Stern, Halbertal, Grottanelli, Chapman, Markschies, Stroumsa, and Shaked on Babylonian, Jewish, Christian, and Zoroastrian scriptures) and the essentially secular perspective of those that more or less follow contemporary usage with respect to the 'great books' of a given culture (see the essays by Vardi, Finkelberg, Sivan, Lamberton, and Pelliccia on the Greco-Roman canon). The editors of this volume make an attempt to downplay the distinction between canonic texts attributed to divine revelation and those ascribed to more secular forms of inspiration, and they try to paper over the gap between these two opposing concepts by falling back upon the very vague expression 'foundational texts,' indicating not much more than that these books are all of great cultural significance. This vagueness, however, provides the 'constructive ambiguity' within which the individual scholars present their penetrating analyses and interpretations of the most

controversial aspects of canonicity: such questions as whether a given corpus is held to be 'closed' or 'open,' whether the boundaries of inclusion and the criteria of exclusion are fixed or elastic, whether a given set of texts is seen as singular and unique, or as forming a subset of a larger literary corpus, and the most controversial issue of all: where these canonic traditions fall along the spectrum from oral to written modes of expression. These are vexed issues that do not admit of any easy consensus or simplistic resolution. And so, wherever we find 'common denominators' among the different textual histories brought together here, we still must ask whether these simply represent a minimal baseline of comparability, or rather indicate a shared commensurability that is meaningfully denominated by the respective uniqueness of each civilization?

Given the widely varying sets of textual materials and the sharply divergent literary histories represented in these pages, it is all the more remarkable that one still observes a number of distinct points of resonance in the separate stories they each have to tell about the processes of canon-formation and its cultural significance.

The first of these points of overlap has to do with the complex interrelation between oral and written modes of textuality that figure in the general concepual framework of canonicity. In contrast to the widespread misconception of canonic texts as fixed bodies of dogma 'written in stone,' in the majority of the cases discussed in this volume we witness the gradual accrual of cultural value to texts that seem to have simply 'emerged'— autochthonously, as it were— out of ageless oral traditions, well before the formal conferral of authority upon any fixed redactions. The predominantly oral character of this so-called 'primary' stage of canonization is not particularly remarkable in itself, as one naturally tends to assume—inaccurately in some instances—that as a rule oral composition and transmission should precede written versions of texts in the history of human culture. This, of course, is the presumption that generally underlies the idea of revealed scripture. Far more interesting in this context are the manifold cultural dynamics that impel ancient thinkers at one stage or another to commit oral teachings and narratives to the fixity of the chisel and the pen, and the ways in which this transition is qualified by the tenacious survival of canonical oral traditions of recitation and exegesis alongside of—and occasionally competing with—the fixed texts of sacred scripture or literary classics.

A second major area of convergence we can perceive within our medley of ancient texts concerns the precise historical mechanisms by which political and cultural authorities at some later point confer 'secondary' canonic status upon particular textual traditions. The specific configurations of these processes naturally differ from case to case, but all of our contributors seems to speak in one voice in denying the popularly held notion of a synod or other council of sages granting the imprimatur of canonicity in a single shining moment of beatitude. Still, the element of official promulgation, or at least retroactive recognition, of the unique status of privileged texts remains an indispensable piece of the historical puzzle, an eventuality that seems clearly correlated, to one degree or another, with the gradual committing of ancient wisdom to the written word. The precise nature of this correlation, however, remains a chicken-or-egg question: does formal canonization simply follow and reflect the ongoing transition from oral fluidity to written fixity, or is the step-by-step consolidation of oral teachings into written redactions the direct consequence of the investing of canonic authority.

Notwithstanding the unique paths of development taken by each of the textual traditions investigated here, the separate studies are united in their common emphasis on the central role of learned transmission at the core of the phenomenon of canon-making. The various forms of textual exposition—from master to disciple, from exegete to reader, and eventually in formal 'schools' of orthodox or esoteric doctrine—are all of necessity rooted in the direct medium of oral teaching. But with the transition from oral to written texts, the canonic traditions gradually take on the bookish aspect of the scholastic curriculum. This observation leads a number of our contributors to suggest that the most essential measure of canonicity may be the degree to which a given textual corpus becomes the object of traditional modes of study. In pursuing this line of reasoning, we can go one step further and focus on the particular ways in which canonic texts are turned to academic purposes: as pools of doctrinal and literary formulations of wisdom cited as 'proof-texts' (the best-known examples in the 'western' traditions being, of course, citations of Homer in Hellenistic learning, and of the Bible, Koran, or Avesta, in the theological writings of the monotheistic faiths), as fountainheads of literary genres, archetypes, topoi, and elevated style, and as compendia of teachings that supply both the terms and the topics of discourse for secular and sacred philosophical speculation.

In short, a 'canon' may be defined very succinctly in this light as a text that supports learned exegesis. It is important to note here that neither reverent citation of proof-texts nor scholastic focus on narrowly defined theological issues need necessarily turn traditional canons into receptacles for petrified dogma. In a number of cases the opposite is true: the more unchallenged the intellectual authority of a set of texts, the more they may become the focus of exegetical disputation—discounting, of course, literalist and fundamentalist uses of scripture. And so, the ongoing historical process of 'closing the canon' may, paradoxically, result in greater and greater degrees of hermeneutical 'openness.'

A final area of agreement among scholars of canon-formation from Rome to Persia is the notion of canon as both a matrix and a catalyst for forging ethnic and cultural identity. This may be seen to be, in a narrow sense, a natural outgrowth of the function of canonic texts as a nucleus of traditional education, and thereby as a fount of the koine of cultivated discourse in each culture. But it also suggests that the cultural significance of the canons of the great textual traditions of the ancient world may also lie in their power to engender what Guy Stroumsa, following Bowman and Woolf, has termed 'textual communities'—referring not simply to self-contained esoteric cults, but rather to the broad cultural self-definition of all members of a society who accept the unique importance of a particular set of writings. Here we meet a final paradoxical aspect of the phenomenon of the classical canon. On one hand, while each of the major canonic corpora, by its very encyclopedic breadth, makes the explicit or implicit claim of embodying the total ground of wisdom for all mankind and for all times, each also affirms, almost in the same breath, the counterclaim of comprising the mental baggage and the 'collective memory' of a single historical community—sometimes in a rather narrow ethnocentric sense. What this means is that, in a very fundamental way, the cultural identity of a Christian or a Jew, a Roman or a Greek, a Muslim or a Zoroastrian, is less an expression of doctrinal allegiance or narrow belief, and more a direct function of the acceptance of a parochial body of texts as constituting a universal wellspring of truth.

The proposition that these points of agreement among the scholars represented here do not simply describe a few incidental areas of overlap but rather mark out the basic parameters of canon-making in the ancient world is substantially strengthened when we in-

troduce the complex historical development of the Confucian 'classics' into the equation. By each of the measures of canonicity outlined above for the major ancient civilizations to the west of China and India—namely: the organic evolution of dominant oral textual traditions, the mechanics and the venues of formal processes of 'official' recognition, and the cultural significance of the canonic corpus once it is in place—the early Chinese experience of canon-making corroborates these common underpinnings even while underlining certain unique aspects of Far Eastern literary civilization. In the remaining pages of this afterword, I will summarize what I see as the most salient points of historical fact regarding this process of development in China, with an eye toward reaffirming and expanding our non-specific model of canon-formation in the great civilizations of antiquity.

1. First, the circumstances of the earliest appearance of the textual traditions that would eventually crystallize into the canonic *Book of Songs* (*Shijing*), *Book of Documents* (*Shujing*), and *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*), as Confucianism matured from its modest roots into a comprehensive system of thought, provide very strong confirmation of the non-centrality of the revelational model of canon formation. While each of these three collections of ancient texts contains rich lodes of liturgical, mythical, ritual and divinatory materials of profound importance for our understanding of archaic Chinese religion, their original rise to canonic status is largely free of the sort of religious implications one might expect of revered repositories of ancient lore (though later they were indeed applied to religious functions in certain phases of popular culture, as well as in connection with the imperial sacrificial cult). This is especially true of the *Book of Songs*, the first of the early 'classics' to show up on the screen of ancient Chinese culture as a seminal text in the curriculum of the emerging Confucian school. By the so-called 'Spring and Autumn' period (770-481 B.C.E.), abundant literary evidence (though all of admittedly late compilation) attests to the widespread use of citations from the *Songs* in the ritualized rhetoric of diplomatic intercourse and other 'public' functions. But the use of even its most solemn and stately hymns for liturgical purposes seems to have had only marginal significance until a much later period. Similar observations can be made regarding the *Book of Documents*, whose most 'mythic' passages relat-

ing the deeds of the 'Sage-Emperors' and their arch-enemies at the dawn of the Chinese world-order apparently reflect only the late date of composition of the relevant sections in the collection; and the *Book of Changes*, in which the transformation from a rather technical divination manual into a book of 'wisdom literature' and metaphysical speculation also transpired at a much later point in time.

2. By the Warring States Period (481-221 B.C.E) all three of these 'foundational texts' had cleary acquired an elevated status within the rich and diverse corpus of historical and philosophical writings characterizing this age of intense intellectual activity. Passages known to us from later recensions of the *Songs* and the *Documents* show up as proof-texts and as topics of disputation in a wide range of Warring States texts, the earliest of them appearing in certain rare manuscripts recently unearthed at various archaeological sites in China. In addition, they are cited in a variety of core Confucian works: the *Analects* (*Lunyu*), *Mencius*, the *Zuo Commentary* (*Zuozhuan*) on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and certain treatises of the 'ritual corpus'—notably the *Great Learning* (*Daxue*) and *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong*)—all of which were themselves eventually incorporated into the canon as independent titles. At the same time, they also provide almost obligatory points of rhetorical reference in a broad range of Warring States philosophical texts attributed to thinkers not necessarily associated with the Confucian intellectual lineage. The basic scope and content of these canonic texts remain surprisingly stable despite the vagaries of their oral transmission and of their conversion to written redactions (the latter phase showing very considerable orthographic instability due to the nature of the ancient Chinese script). Moreover, the overall shape of the corpus, commonly enumerated as the 'five (or six) classics,' was a matter of near consensus in a number of late Warring States writings. On the other hand, however, we already observe by this stage the beginnings of remarkable hermeneutical diversity, with the first signs of separate lines of transmission and exegesis of the canonic traditions now becoming visible. And the gradual adoption and incorporation of important layers of exegetical material into the framework of the basic texts themselves—most obviously in the case of the three 'commentaries' on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and the 'Ten Wings' appended to the *Book of Changes*—give rise to a conspicuously 'elastic' sense of

the boundaries of the Confucian canon, setting the stage for very substantial expansion and readjustment in later centuries.

3. By most accounts, the formal conferral of official canonic status on these texts transpired during the years of the Western (or 'Former') Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.- 8 C.E.), and this watershed event is traditionally dated to the reign of Emperor Wu (sometimes even pinpointed to the year 134 or 136 B.C.E.)—though the practice of granting imperial recognition to particular texts and expositors was already underway under the short-lived dynastic regime of the Qin immediately preceding the ascension of the Han (221-206 B.C.E.). In practical and institutional terms, this process consisted not in sweeping decrees of promulgation of the entire canonic array, but rather in the awarding of imperial sponsorship in piecemeal fashion to specific scholastic lineages entrusted with the reconstitution and exposition of the Confucian corpus, in alignment with court factions and scholarly cliques motivated by both intellectual and patently political aims. The entire impulse to 'fix' the canon in this period is generally understood to have been guided by the overweening ambition of the early Han rulers to establish the enduring legitimacy of their new 'imperium'—in a manner reminiscent of the grand imperial project of Augustan Rome—on the foundations of an all-embracing moral and cultural revival. In doing so, they propagated a set of myths, still widely believed to the present day, about the devastating 'burning of the books' supposed to have taken place under the evil Qin tyrant, followed by the monumental labor of restoring the 'lost' Confucian heritage, aided by the adventitious 'rediscovery' of old texts allegedly hidden for safekeeping in the walls of ancient ruins. The sifting of fact from fancy, truth from rhetoric, in the actual details of this process is the business of Chinese political history, but mention should be made here of several implications of this story for our general review of ancient canon-making. First, the official elevation of the Confucian classics to supreme authority goes hand in hand with the gradual committing of each textual tradition to written redactions as their primary mode of existence (only at this point were the venerable texts of the *Songs*, *Documents* and *Changes* irrevocably attached to the term *jing* and treated as fixed canonic books). Still, even after the stakes of the game of canonization had been raised to the highest order of imperial sanction, and the canonic corpus came more and more to look like inviolate scripture, the texts

themselves were never endowed with sanctity as physical objects—even though they were periodically 'carved in stone,' on monumental stelae exhibited in the imperial precincts to serve as 'authorized' standard texts for citation throughout the realm. Moreover, the overall outlines of the Confucian corpus were never fully 'closed.' It remained open to significant expansion at later stages of development—most visibly with the addition of the 'Four Books' and the 'Minor Classics' at different stages, and continued to generate lively exegetical controversy through the remainder of the Han and subsequent dynastic periods.

4. As they passed through the stages of primary and secondary canonization, the Confucian classics came to embody not just a limited corpus of writings on ritual and moral philosophy, but the cultural foundation of Chinese civilization in its entirety. Already by the late Warring States period the idea was commonly expressed—in both the pious praise of followers and the mockery of detractors—that to be a Confucian was to be a student and teacher of a particular core set of texts. Moreover, these texts were by no means the exclusive patrimony of self-defined Confucians alone; they profoundly inform the thoughts and writings of Mohists, Legalists, Daoists: the full spectrum of early Chinese 'disputers of the Dao.' With the Confucian canon firmly established as the primary fount of proof-texts and the terms of intellectual discourse in ancient China, their study became something far more demanding than simple pious recitation. It required a lifelong commitment to a rich scholastic and exegetical enterprise, much like the open-ended demands of Mishnaic and Talmudic learning. In the traditional Chinese context, this universe of canonic discourse later culminated in what was to become the hallmark of the Imperial political and social order: the much-vaunted classical examination system. At its worst, this system represented nothing more than slavish memorization of dogma in the service of elite self-replication of the most corrupt sort; but at its best it encouraged and even demanded textual mastery and exegetical insight of the highest order. Ultimately, the experience of learning, teaching, and expounding upon the Confucian canon set the lines not only of a narrow sectarian identity, but of cultural self-definition for the entire East Asian world. Just as to be a Jew, a Christian, a Muslim or a Zoroastrian meant to internalize and live by a set of ancient sciptural monuments, and just as to be a proud

bearer of Hellenic civilization or its Roman incarnation meant to treasure the classical works of Homer and the tragedians, so too, to be a Confucian in premodern China meant first and foremost to uphold, in theory at least, both the timeless wisdom and the contemporary moral guidance of the ancient classics.

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INDEX

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