

Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters

Edited by

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GREEK-SPEAKING INTERPRETERS

THE AMBIGUITY OF SIGNS:
CRITICAL ΣΗΜΕΙΑ FROM ZENODOTUS TO ORIGEN

Francesca Schironi*

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

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

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

* I would like to thank the anonymous referee and Kathleen McNamee for their useful comments and suggestions, as well as Maren Niehoff for accepting my paper in this volume, though I was not able to attend the Conference “Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters”, Jerusalem, 30.5.–2.6. 2010.

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

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

³ Galen, *In Hipp. Nat. Hom.* in *CMG* 5.9.1, p. 58, 7–9: Ταύτης ὅλης τῆς ῥήσεως Διοσχορίδης ἐκάστῳ στίχῳ προσέγραψε σημεῖον, ὃ καλοῦσιν ὄβελόν, οἷω σημεῖω καὶ Ἀρίσταρχος ἐχρήσατο παρὰ τῷ ποιητῇ πρὸς τοὺς ὑποπτευομένους ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ στίχους.

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

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

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

ALEXANDRIAN CRITICAL SIGNS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁰ Hephaest. *De signis*.

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

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

¹³ *Sch. Od.* 5.247 τέτρηνεν—ἀρμονιῆσιν ἄρασσεν] Ἀριστοφάνης τὸ αὐτὸ ᾤετο περιέχειν ἄμφω. διὸ τῷ μὲν σίγμα, τῷ δὲ ἀντίσιγμα ἐπιτίθησιν.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ARISTARCHEAN CRITICAL SIGNS AND MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE

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

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

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

²⁵ *An. Rom.* 55.29–30: Τ τὸ δὲ κεραῦνίον ἐστὶ μὲν τῶν σπανίων παρατιθεμένων, δηλοῖ δὲ καὶ αὐτὸ πολλὰς ζητήσεις πρὸς ταῖς προειρημέναις.

²⁶ McNamee 1992.

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

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

²⁹ Cf. Pfeiffer 1968: 115, 212.

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

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

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

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

³¹ Erbse 1959.

³² Pfeiffer 1968: 218.

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

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

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

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

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

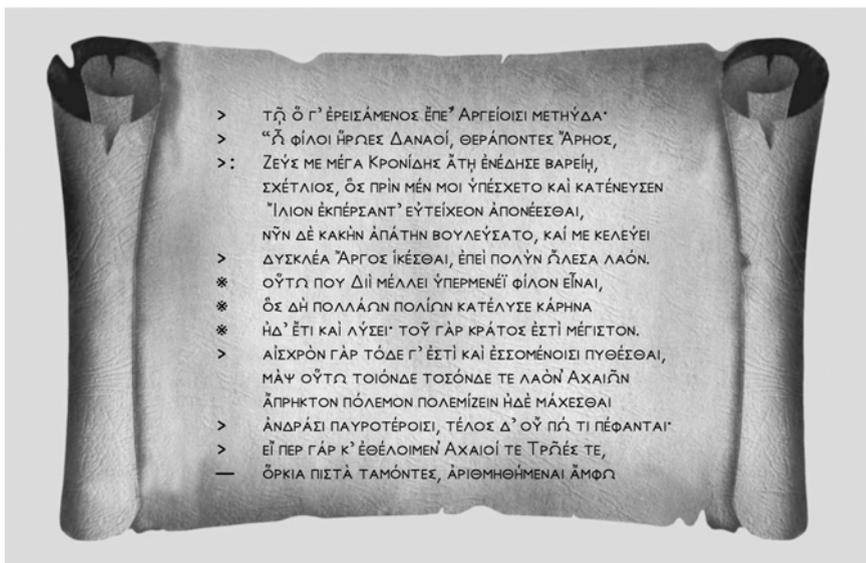
³⁴ For example the first three lines of the facsimile of *Iliad* 2 (ll. 109–111) would have looked like this:

ΤΩΟΓΕΡΕΙΣΑΜΕΝΟΣΕΠΑΑΡΓΕΙΟΙΣΙΜΕΤΗΥΔΑ
 ΩΦΙΛΟΙΗΡΩΕΣΔΑΝΑΟΙΘΕΡΑΠΟΝΤΕΣΑΡΗΟΣ
 ΖΕΥΣΜΕΜΕΓΑΚΡΟΝΙΔΗΣΑΤΗΙΕΝΕΔΗCΕΡΑΡΕΙΗ

³⁵ McNamee 1981 and *ead.* 1992.

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

ΕΚΔΟΣΙΣ (L. 2.109-124)



ΥΠΟΜΝΗΜΑ

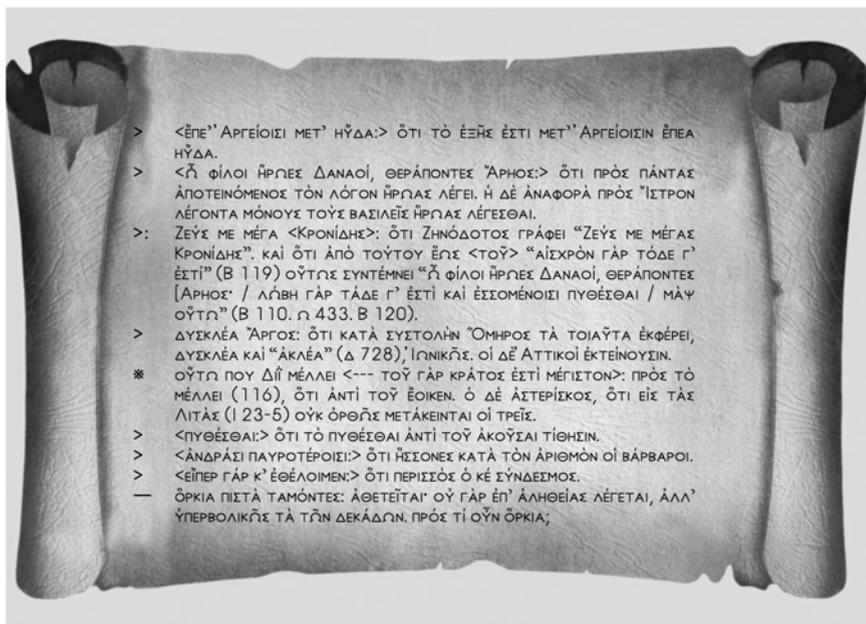


Plate 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴⁰ McNamee 1981: 249–250.

⁴¹ Landon 2002.

⁴² Cf. McNamee 1992: 19–21.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴⁹ Cf. Manfredi 1979: 47–51 (no. 6).

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

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

⁵² McNamee 1981: 253.

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

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

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

⁵³ Cf. McNamee 1981: 248–251.

⁵⁴ McNamee 1981: 252; ead. 1992: 8.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ORIGEN’S CRITICAL SIGNS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁶³ Neuschäfer 1987: 94–96.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ORIGEN'S CRITICAL SIGNS AND MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁷⁸ Epiph. *De mensuris et ponderibus* 7; on the *Hexapla*, see also Epiph., *Panarion* 64.3.5 in *GCS* 31, p. 407.3–408.11; cf. Neuschäfer 1987: 97.

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

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

⁸¹ Taylor 1900: 3.

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

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

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

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

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

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

ORIGEN: IMPROVING ON THE PAST

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

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

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

⁸⁸ Neuschäfer 1987.

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

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

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

⁸⁹ Cf. Neuschäfer 1987: 103–122.

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

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