Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters

Edited by
Maren R. Niehoff
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GREEK-SPEAKING INTERPRETERS
Critical signs (σηµεία) as a philological tool were invented in Alexandria when grammarians started working on the ‘past’ literature of the Greeks, preparing scholarly editions and forming a canon of Greek authors. Later on, scholars working on less canonic or non-Greek authors also employed the Alexandrian σηµεία: Valerius Probus, for example, used them in his editions of Lucretius, Virgil, and Horace while Galen mentions a certain Dioscorides, who under the Emperor Hadrian made an edition of Hippocrates where he marked the spurious passages with obeloi. 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.

In order to shed new light on this question, I would like to approach it from a comparative point of view, focusing in particular on Origen’s use of these σηµεία. In one respect, Origen offers better evidence because, unlike for the Alexandrian scholars, we do have many of Origen’s original works, at least in the exegetical realm—for example, we have some of his commentaries, while those of the Hellenistic scholars are lost. We also...
have his own testimony on how and why he used critical signs. The analysis of Origen’s use of Alexandrian critical signs aims at two goals: first, Origen might help us to understand better how the Alexandrians used critical signs; second, the analysis of Origen’s editorial work and of how he used and—in part—changed the system of Alexandrian σηµεῖα will also highlight the ‘necessary’ improvements that the Alexandrian system needed. This analysis will show how Origen to some extent introduced these improvements by creating a more reader-friendly system of critical signs.

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

**Alexandrian Critical Signs**

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

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Venetum⁶ and the Anecdotum Harleianum⁷ 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 Hephaestion” (2nd century C.E.) clearly says that critical signs were used for comedy, tragedy and lyric poetry. Latin sources like the Anecdotum Parisinum⁶ 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 (Ϲ) and the antisigma (Ↄ) 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.


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


¹⁰ Hephaest. De signis.

¹¹ Cod. Par. Lat. 7539 (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 ὦ ξεῖνοι τίνες ἔστε] τοὺς μετ’ αὐτὸν τρεῖς στίχους ὃ μὲν Ἀριστοφάνης ἐνθάδε σηµειοῦται τοῖς ἀστερίσκοις, ὅτε δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ Κύκλωπος λέγονται, καὶ διότι τοῖς ἀστερίσκοις παρατίθησιν, ὡς ἐντεῦθεν μετενηνεγµένων τῶν στίχων. On the asteriskos in papyri of Homer and other authors, see now Nocchi Macedo 2011.

¹³ Sch. Od. 5.247 τέτρηνεν—ἀφονησθεν ἀρασσεν] Ἀριστοφάνης τὸ αὐτὸ ἤμετα περιέχειν ἄµφω. διὸ τῷ μὲν σίγµα, τῷ δὲ ἀντίσιγµα ἐπιτίθησιν.

to a ‘N(ota)B(ene)’ for us. Aristarchus also used a particular type of diple, the so-called diple periestigmenene, the ‘dotted diple’ (>:), to mark those passages where he argued against his predecessor Zenodotus and against his Pergamene contemporary Crates of Mallos.\textsuperscript{15} Of the σηµεῖα employed by his predecessors, Aristarchus kept the Zenodotean obelos for athetesis\textsuperscript{16} and the Aristophanic asteriskos for repeated lines.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 Anecdoton Romanum, for example, Aristarchus used the antisigma (Ω) alone for lines whose order was transposed and that were unfitting for the context;\textsuperscript{19} the use of the antisigma to mark the wrong ordering of lines seems to be confirmed by the scholia.\textsuperscript{20} Aristarchus used the antisigma periestigmenon,\textsuperscript{21} the ‘dotted’ antisigma (·Ω·), for passages which contained tautologies. In one instance, however, a tautology is marked with the antisigma and the stigme, if we trust the scholia in the Venetus A: according to Sch. II. 8.535–7,\textsuperscript{22} Aristarchus marked three lines (II. 8.535–7) with the antisigma and marked the following three lines (II. 8.538–40) with a stigme, 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 Anecdoton Romanum (for transposed/unfitting lines) but

\textsuperscript{15} An. Rom. 54.16–18: η δὲ περιεστιγµένη διπλῆ πρὸς τὰς γραφὰς τὰς Ζηνοδοτείους καὶ Κράτητος καὶ αὐτοῦ Ἀριστάρχου καὶ τὰς διορθώσεις αὐτοῦ.
\textsuperscript{17} An. Rom. 54.21–22: ὁ δὲ ἀστερίσκος καθ’ ἑαυτὸν ὡς καλῶς εἰρηµένων τῶν ἐπῶν ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ τόπῳ ἐνδὰ ἐστὶν ἀστερίσκος µόνος.
\textsuperscript{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.
\textsuperscript{19} An. Rom. 54.25–26: Ω τὸ δὲ ἀντίσιγµα καθ’ ἑαυτὸ πρὸς τοὺς ἐνηλλαγµένους τόπους καὶ ἀπάδοντας.
\textsuperscript{20} Sch. Il. 2.188a (Ariston.): πρὸς τὴν τάξιν τῶν ἑξῆς (sc. B 203–5) τὸ ἀντίσιγµα.
\textsuperscript{21} An. Rom. 54.27–28: Ω τὸ δὲ ἀντίσιγµα περιεστιγµένου παρατίθεται ὅταν ταυτολογῇ καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν διάνοιαν δεύτερου λέγῃ.
\textsuperscript{22} Sch. Il. 8.533–7 (Ariston.): αὕριον ἢν ἄρετὴν «—ἔταιροι»: ὅτι ἢ τούτους δὲ τοὺς τρεῖς στίχους µένειν, οἷς τὸ ἀντίσιγµα παράκειται, ἢ τοὺς εἴης τρεῖς, οἷς αἱ στιγµαὶ παράκεινται (sc. Θ 538–40) εἰς γάρ τὴν αὐτὴν γεγραµµένοι εἰς διάνοιαν.
rather it is used according to Aristophanes’ system since Aristophanes too used the *antisigma* (together with a *sigma* and not with a *stigme*) to indicate lines with the same content.\textsuperscript{23} Another very rare Homeric sign is the *kerauion* (‘sign shaped like a thunderbolt’: \(\text{T}\)) whose meaning is uncertain. With reference to Homer, the *kerauion* is mentioned only in *Sch. Od. 18.282*, a line marked by Aristophanes because it was εὐτελής ‘mean’.\textsuperscript{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”.\textsuperscript{25}

Greek literary papyri provide a wider array of critical signs, as Kathleen McNamee has demonstrated,\textsuperscript{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*,\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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;\textsuperscript{29} still, they used critical σηµεῖα. This

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

\textsuperscript{24} *Sch. Od. 18.282: παρέλκετο\] ἀντὶ τοῦ ἐφέλκετο. εὐτελὲς τοῦτο, διὸ καὶ κεραύνιον παρέθηκεν Ἀριστοφάνης.

\textsuperscript{25} *An. Rom. 55.29–30: Τ τὸ δὲ κεραύνιόν ἐστι µὲν τῶν σπανίως παρατιθηµένων, δηλοῖ δὲ καὶ αὐτὸ πολλὰς ζητήσεις πρὸς ταῖς προειρηµέναις.

\textsuperscript{26} McNamee 1992.


\textsuperscript{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 periestigmene* (2), *sigma periestigmene* (3), *stigme* (3).

\textsuperscript{29} Cf. Pfeiffer 1968: 115, 212.
means that, at least in their original conception, critical signs were linked only to the ecdotic process and their meaning should have been clear within the ekdosis of Zenodotus or of Aristophanes, without any further aid like a separate commentary to explain their function and meaning.

Aristarchus was the first of the Alexandrians to write a commentary (hypomnema) on Homer in addition to his editorial work (ekdosis). This new way of presenting philological work provided a new vehicle by which a scholar could discuss in detail his editorial choices and interpretative issues in the Homeric texts. For modern scholars, however, Aristarchus’ innovation has raised the question of how, in practical terms, he intended the critical signs, the ekdosis and the hypomnema to be used together and what these two products (the ekdosis and the hypomnema) looked like. 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, Erbse 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. Pfeiffer 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

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 scholia\(^\text{33}\) 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.\(^\text{34}\) 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,\(^\text{35}\) 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.\(^\text{36}\) 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

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\(^{31}\) 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
ΩΦΙΛΟΙΗΡΩΕΣΔΑΝΑΟΘΕΡΑΠΟΝΤΕΣΑΡΗΟΣ
ΖΕΥΣΜΕΜΕΓΑΚΡΟΝΙΔΗΣΑΤΗΙΕΝΕΔΗΣΕΒΑΡΕΙΗΙ
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\(^{36}\) This is the new dating proposed by Lundon 2002: 17, in his new edition of the text.
Τῇ ὡς ἐς ρήσφαμεν ἕπει Ἀργείοις μεθ᾽ ἑώδα

Αἱ φλοιοί ἄρρεν ἄρακοι, ἀρίστοπτες Ἀρης,

Ζηɣε με μῆᾶς ἅρμανες ἀτῆ ἀνέχθης ἀνατῆς,

Σκέταισιν, ὡς πρὶν μέν μοι ἑςεῖκαν καὶ κατέκεισιν ἰον ἐκνέφαντ᾽ ἑςεῖκαι ἀποκεῖσθαι,

νῦν δὲ κακῆς ἀπάθης ὑπολεγέσιοτα, καὶ καὶ κακεῖς

Δυσκλαῖα Ἀργοῦ ἑκέκαιε, ἐπεὶ πολὺν ἀληθὴ λαὸν,

οὔτε ποὺ δὲ ἀληθὲς ἡ ἐςεῖκαι ἐς εἶναι,

οὐ δὲ πολλὰς ἀπεκόλυθον κατέκεισιν καρδίαν.

καὶ ἔτι καὶ ἱςεῖς τοῦ γὰρ κράτος ἔτι καὶ μείον.

Ἀλέχρον γὰρ τὸδέ ἔστι καὶ ἐξερεύνοντο παγκόσμιοι,

μάς οὔτε τοιοῦτα τοιοῦτα τε λαὸν Ἀχαίον,

Ἀποκεῖσθαι πολὺν πολλὺν πολὺν ἐς εἶναι,

Ἀναφαία παγκόσμιοι, τέας ηοῦ ὑπὶ τί πέσανται,

ἐπεὶ γὰρ κʹ ἐςεῖκαι Ἀχαῖοι τε πρὸς τῇ

— ὑπερmania ταμόντες, ἀρίστοπτον ἂν ἐςεῖκαι.

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 Lundon adds this sign in lacuna in three other places where the commentary speaks of a *σηµεῖον.*\(^37\) 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 *athetes* 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 *σηµεῖον* 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 *Il.* 2.763; here however also the expression τὸ *σηµεῖον* is in lacuna and is restored by Lundon), 82 (at on *Il.* 2.801) and 106 (at on *Il.* 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. *Il.* 16.142a (Ariston.): {πάλλειν} ἀλλὰ µὲν οἷος ἐπίστατο πῆλαι: ἡ διπλῆ, ὅτι ἀντὶ 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. *Il.* 18.283a (Ariston.): οὔδε ποτ’ ἐκέπρεσι: «πρὶν µὲν κύνες ἄργοι ἐδόνται»: ἡ διπλῆ, ὅτι τοιοῦτον ἔστι τὸ λεγόμενον, πρῶτερον αὐτὸν οἱ κύνες κατεδόνται ἢ ἐκέπρεσι, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐλλιπής ὁ λόγος, ὡσπερ οὔθ’ ἐπ’ ἐκέπρεσιν “τὴν δ’ ἔγω ὦ λύσοι πρὶν µὲν 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’ ἔγω ὦ λύσοι· πρὶν µὲν καὶ γήρας ἔπεισιν (ll. 1.29)].
As McNamee⁴⁰ and Lundon⁴¹ 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 *diploi* 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 *diploi*: *P.Tebt.* 1.4 (diple peri-estigmene, asteriskos with obelos, and antisigma, but no diple),⁴⁵ *P.Lond.*

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⁴¹ Lundon 2002.
⁴³ Cf. Lundon 2001: 839. Lundon 2002 does not explicitly say so, but the title of the monograph (*Un commentario aristarcheo 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.
Lit. 27 (asteriskos),\(^46\) P.Hawara (diplai 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, 822, 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.
in papyri often are those dealing with very basic linguistic explanations while those addressing more difficult and philologically-oriented questions were often omitted.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{diple}, as already pointed out by McNamee,\textsuperscript{54} because the \textit{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 \textit{diple} in

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

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

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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.
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. 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, 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 σηµεῖα 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 σηµεῖα from the

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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.

Greeks in his letter to Africanus (Ep. Afric. in PG XI 56.25–57.4), in which he talks about the obeloi as τοὺς καλουµένους παρ’ Ἑλληνικὸν διαφωνίαν, 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 δήλον ὅτι πολλὴ γέγονεν ἡ τῶν ἀντιγράφων διαφορά, εἴτε ἀπὸ βράχυµας τινῶν γραφῶν, εἴτε ἀπὸ τόλµης τινῶν μοχθηρῶν <εἴτε ἀπὸ ἀµελοῦντων> τῆς διορθώσεως τῶν γραφοµένων, εἴτε καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν τά ἐσωτερικὰ δοκοῦντα ἐν τῇ διορθώσει ἢ ἀφαιροῦντων. τὴν µὲν οὖν ἐν τοῖς ἀντιγράφοις τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης διαφωνίαν θεοῦ διδόντος εὑρόµεθα, κριτηρίῳ χρησάµενοι ταῖς λοιπαῖς ἐκδόσεσιν: τῶν γὰρ ἀµφιβαλλοµένων παρὰ τοῖς Ἑβδοµήκοντα διὰ τὴν τῶν ἀντιγράφων διαφωνίαν τὴν κρίσιν ποιηµάσαµοι ἀπὸ τῶν λοιπῶν ἐκδόσεων τὸ συνάδον ἐκείναις ἐφυλάξαµεν,59 καὶ τινὰ µὲν ἀµελεύσαµεν <ὡς> ἐν τῷ Ἑβραϊκῷ µὴ κείµενα (οὐ τολµήσαντε αὐτὰ πάντη περιελεῖν), τινὰ δὲ µετ’ ἀστερίσκων προσέθηκαµεν, ἵνα δήλον ἦτο 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 lemmiskos (⁺) and the hypolemmiskos (⁻); similarly the combination of asteriskos and obelos is attested only in Biblical manuscripts or later sources, but never in Origen. See Field 1875: I, lli–lx; Stein 2007: 147–152.
to the modern terminology, 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, the *ekdoseis* that Origen says he used to correct the LXX when the latter was missing parts of the Hebrew Bible (“ἵνα δῆλον ἑνὶ ὅτι μὴ κείµενα παρὰ τοῖς Ἑβδοµήκοντα ἐκ τῶν λοιπῶν ἑκάτερων συμφώνως τῷ Ἑβραϊκῷ προσεθήκαµεν”) are the other Greek versions of Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus whose text was closer to the Hebrew original 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.

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62 I am adopting the definition of Tov 1992: 236.
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 omissa sunt, ut inlucescant per eam notam, quae deesse videntur*). In his explanations Isidorus indeed seems to mix the Alexandrian use of critical σηµεῖα 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,

66 The question of whether or not Aristarchus used manuscript evidence to prepare his edition is debated. There is no positive evidence that he collected many different texts of Homer for his *constitutio textus* (all the references to editions κατὰ πόλεις or editions κατ’ ἄνδρα come from Didymus; see West 2001: 50–73, esp. 67–72). In any case, Aristarchus’ atheteseis or notices of repeated lines stem mostly from an internal analysis of the text of Homer, which is a different operation to what Origen was doing.
we might even say that Origen took over the system of Zenodotus or Aristophanes of Byzantium rather than the one of Aristarchus, whose work and system of critical signs seem to be closely related to the existence of a commentary.

Certainly Origen's neglect of the diple did not arise from his lack of interest in 'commenting' upon the text. In fact, Origen's exegetical work on the Bible was extensive and he wrote several commentaries to books of the Septuagint. Although many of his exegetic works are lost and those which reached us are often very fragmentary, 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* and in his *Commentary to the Romans* but again outside the context of the exegesis to the Gospel of John or Romans. The only exegetical work on the Septuagint where Origen seems to connect his exegesis to his critical signs is the *Fragments on Psalms* transmitted under his name, where on Psalm 144 one reads (In Psalm 144, v. 13, vol. 3, 356.9–10): Ὠβέλισται δὲ τό· “Ἡ βασιλεία σου, βασιλεία πάντων τῶν αἰώνων” (Psal. 144.13). This work, however, is probably interpolated, and this suggestion might even be confirmed by the fact that elsewhere Origen never links his exegesis with his sigla on the text; rather, a later commentator using Origen's edition could have made that observation about the presence of the obelos next to line 13 of Psalm 144. Origen seems thus to keep the use of the critical signs strictly limited to the ecdochic 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’ αὐτῷ” (Num. 23.7) ὤβελισαµεν, μητε αὐτῷ μητε παραπλήσιον τι αὐτῷ εὑρόντες ἐν ταις λοιπαις ἐκδοσεων.


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? This is a long-debated question. Some scholars 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.

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

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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.


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.


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 Psalms\(^{82}\) 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.


\(^{80}\) 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, XLI, 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, has been overlooked by scholars interested in Origen. My forthcoming study on this papyrus 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. 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.

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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.
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 σηµεῖα 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.\(^8^9\) 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 σηµεῖα 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.

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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 ἐὑρεταί 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.

**Bibliography**

*Abbreviations*


Or., In Ez. = Origenes Theol., Selecta in Ezechielem (fragmenta et catenias), PG XIII, 768–825.


Secondary Sources


