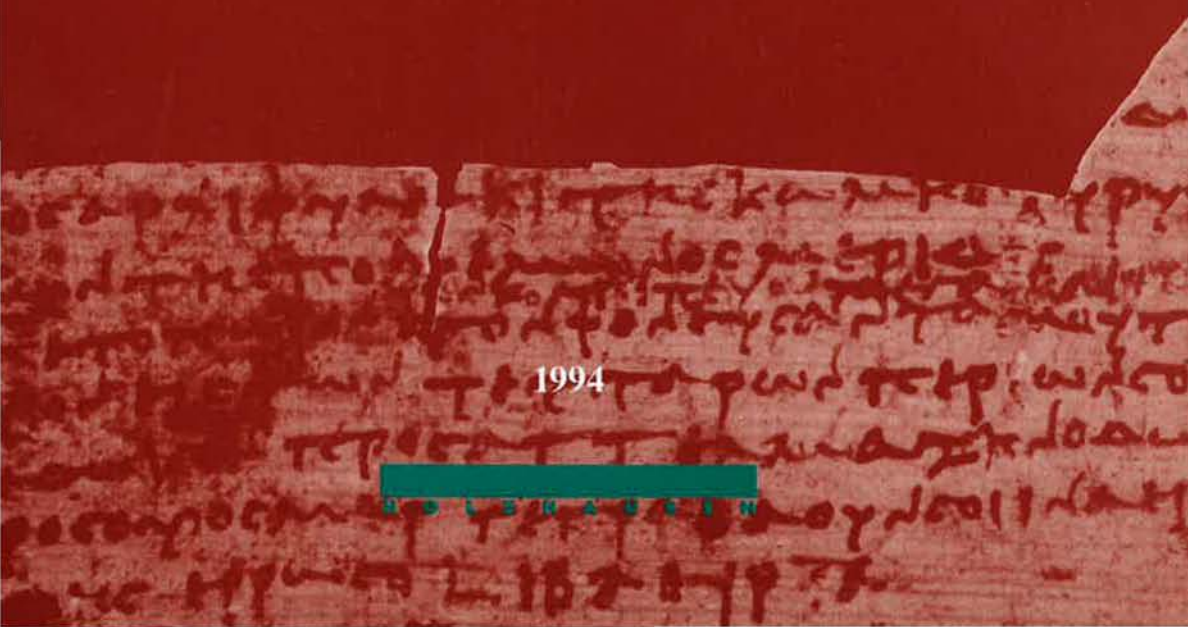
TYCHE

Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte Papyrologie und Epigraphik

Herausgegeben von
Gerhard Dobesch, Hermann Harrauer
Peter Siewert und Ekkehard Weber

Band 9, 1994



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HOLZHAUSEN

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Herausgegeben von:

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RAFFAELLA CRIBIORE

A Homeric Writing Exercise and Reading Homer in School

(Tafel 1)

The Hougthon Library of Harvard University preserves a papyrus fragment which was formerly in the Semitic Museum[1]. Since the fragment was found at Oxyrhynchus, it was described (but never edited) by Grenfell and Hunt in P.Oxy. IV 761, together with some other Homeric fragments[2].

A documentary text on the front was written along the fibers and the most likely hypothesis is that the papyrus was inscribed first with this document. Later a student employed the back to write Homeric verses. He had probably cut the papyrus to a specific size for his exercise since his lines seem to fit exactly. First of all, however, he had turned the papyrus 90 degrees to be able to inscribe it along the fibers. Turning a papyrus to avoid writing across the fibers seems to have been a favorite practice of students who wanted to take advantage of a smoother surface and of the opportunity to follow the horizontal fibers as guidelines[3]. Our student was only partially successful in this: letters or words (e. g., χεει in line 1) are often located on a higher or lower level than the rest of the line.

It is clear that this student had been exposed previously to a certain amount of writing. His letters seem experienced and fluent at times, even if the whole possesses only a relatively harmonious and well balanced look. The letters were written fairly slowly, without the speed that characterizes more competent writers. The cross strokes of epsilon and theta are always detached from the circle and stretched out to touch the following letter and linking strokes join other letters as well, as is usual in school hands. The hand seems very similar to plate 10a of Roberts, *Greek Literary Hands*[4], which was dated to the first half of the first century AD, and the later date seems preferable to that of the first century BC assigned by Grenfell and Hunt.

The papyrus itself is in particularly bad condition. Only the left and bottom original margins, as they were probably cut for the purpose, are preserved in their entirety. On the right side about one fourth of the original margin is still present, but immediately above a considerable section of the papyrus is missing. At the top margin the horizontal fibers are

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[1] The papyrus, P.Oxy. IV 761, is no. 780 in the second edition of Pack's catalogue. In the Semitic Museum it was number 4371. I thank the Semitic Museum and the Houghton Library, Harvard University, for giving me permission to publish it.

[2] „On the recto part of an effaced document. On the verso [Homer] vi. 147 and 148 and, after a lacuna which may have contained 2 lines, parts of lines 147 and 149 and another line, the whole being a writing exercise. 148 τηλεθωσα. Late first century BC, written in a large semi-uncial hand."

[3] As I have shown in *Writing, Teachers and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, (PhD. diss., Columbia University 1993) 29–30 and 69. This practice occurs in about 3 percent of the exercises. When a student uses and cuts the back of a document for an exercise which is also written along the fibers it is easy to suppose that he turned it 90 degrees. Sometimes, however, it is practically impossible to tell which side of a papyrus was used first, especially when the piece written on both sides along the fibers is very small.

[4] Cf. C. H. Roberts, *Greek Literary Hands* (Oxford 1955) 10 which is a rhetorical exercise less than perfectly executed. In our text some verticals are more slanted (e. g., in tau) and mu displays a more rigid second and third strokes which touch the base line. These are, however, characteristics which are compatible with dating to the beginning of the first century AD.

missing. In addition, in the middle part, in places the horizontal top layer of fibers has fallen off. Grenfell and Hunt envisaged a lacuna which had engulfed two lines of the text. When one considers the usually generous interlinear spacing which amounts to well above 1 cm., however, it seems more reasonable to suppose that the lacuna embraced only one line. According to my reconstruction, therefore, the student, after writing *Iliad* 6. 147–148, wrote another line, very likely 149. After that, perhaps dissatisfied with the overall result or simply following instructions, he repeated the three verses, 147–149, of which parts are preserved.

It is peculiar that the first line of the new set is considerably indented[5]. Perhaps with this the student intended to call attention to the fact that the new series was a repetition. More peculiar, though, is the fact that the third line of the set is also indented. Mechanical reasons, such as a patch or a poor condition of the papyrus at this point which discouraged writing, were apparently not the cause of this. Perhaps the student just followed the whim of the moment in a sudden appreciation of an unusual layout.

P.Oxy. IV 761 21 × 11 cm. Homer, *Iliad* Z 147–148, 147–149:

1	147	φύλλα τὰ μέν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλ̣[λα δέ θ' ὕλη]
2	148	τηλεθῶσα φύει, ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγείνε̣τα̣ι ὥρη·
3		[ ]
4	147	φύλλα τὰ μέν τ' ἄνε̣μο̣ς [
5	148	[τηλε]θῶσα φύει ἔαρο̣ς δ' ἐπιγεί̣νε̣τα̣ι [ὥρη]
6	149	ὣς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ ἡ μὲν [

The papyrus exhibits no accents, breathings or other lectional signs. Elision is always effected, but not signalled. The text is in *scriptio continua* with the exception of the first two words of line 6 which are separated by a space (see below).

2 The papyrus exhibits the variant τηλεθῶσα instead of the Homeric manuscripts' τηλεθόωσα. The student simplifies the unfamiliar Homeric form[6] by giving the Attic form of a feminine participle in -αω. The verb ἐπιγίγνεται is written here as ἐπιγείνεται with iotacism and loss of γ before ν, in the form that is normally used in the papyri[7]. At the end of the line perhaps the student writes ὥρη in the nominative, following the Vulgate and not the Alexandrian variant preserved in the ancient scholia. The scholia (Did/A) tell us that Aristophanes read the word in the dative: τὸ ὥρη μετὰ τοῦ ι γράφει κατὰ δοτικήν („he [sc. Aristophanes] writes ὥρη with iota in the dative"). This is a reading perhaps preferable to that of the manuscripts[8]. It is difficult to tell whether or not the student also intended the dative ὥρῃ since we do not have any other example of his usage of adscript ι. In papyri adscript iota in nouns or verbs appears erratically and depends on personal usage and education[9]. Already in the first century AD the dative singular of α nouns was usually written without -ι adscript sine ι had ceased to be pronounced[10].

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[5] In literary papyri εἴσθεσις was generally used to emphasize the change of meter and the different length of the verses, see E. G. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World*, 2nd ed. (London 1987) 8.

[6] Τηλεθόωσα for τηλεθάουσα by assimilation, see W. Leaf and M. A. Bayfield, *The Iliad of Homer*, 2nd ed. (London 1908) xl, 28.

[7] See B. Mandilaras, *The Verb in the Greek Non-Literary Papyri* (Athens 1973) 89.

[8] So G. S. Kirk (ed.), *The Iliad: A Commentary*, vol. II (Cambridge 1990) 176, n. 148, as in *Iliad* 2. 468 and *Odyssey* 9. 51.

[9] See Mandilaras (op. cit. note 7) 179 note 1.

[10] See F. T. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods* I (Milan 1975) 183–85.

3 Since lines 4–6 contain *Iliad* 6. 147–149, it is very likely that the student wrote line 149 in the third line of the first sequence. Of course one cannot completely rule out the possibility that he wrote line 146, the first verse of the man-leaves simile. But the purpose of the exercise is presumably to achieve practice through repetition, and there is added symmetry in repeating lines 147–149 twice.

4 It is difficult to say whether the student wrote this line in its entirety or only up to the caesura. I am inclined to think that he wrote the verses out here in line 6, but there are no traces of the second part of either verse. Considering the small number of mistakes, it is likely that he did not write the lines on dictation, but copied them from a model. Perhaps in the model already some words were spelled phonetically or the student spelled them in that way in transcribing them. At least 50 percent of extant school exercises[11] where the emphasis was on improving the look of the hand[12] were transcribed from a teacher's model. But there is also the possibility that this student was not only training his hand, but at the same time was trying to memorize the lines and wrote only part of 147 and 149 which he remembered well without copying from a model. This practice is also found in other school exercises. For example on two ostraka (O.Bodl. II 2169 and 2170) a student wrote only the beginning of some verses of the *Catalogue of the Ships* in *Iliad* 2 and another school exercise (P.Ryl. III 545) contains only the first halves of the verses in *Odyssey* 9. 122–150.

6 A considerable space is maintained between the first two words of the verse. It is unclear whether the student erased something or tried to avoid a part of the papyrus which was already damaged. We should also consider the possibility that the student tried to introduce separation between words.

The passage chosen for the exercise gives the beginning of Glaucus' answer to the taunting words of Diomedes who wants to know who he is before their combat[13]. It is pensive and sober. Before going into an unusually long excursus on his genealogy, Glaucus reflects on the brevity and insignificance of human life, likening the succession of human generations to the growing and withering of leaves[14]:

144 τὸν δ' αὖθ' Ἱππολόχοιο προσηύδα φαίδιμος υἱός·
„Τυδεΐδη μεγάθυμε, τί ἦ γενεὴν ἐρεείνεις;
οἵη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
147 **φύλλα τὰ μέν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη**
τηλεθόωσα φύει, ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη·
ὣς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ ἡ μὲν φύει, ἡ δ' ἀπολήγει.
150 εἰ δ' ἐθέλεις καὶ ταῦτα δαήμεναι, ὄφρ' ἐὺ εἰδῇς
ἡμετέρην γενεήν, πολλοὶ δέ μιν ἄνδρες ἴσασιν·

But why was part of this passage chosen for a writing exercise? Clearly the student copied a few lines from what we would today call a famous or „purple" passage. Was it also considered such in antiquity? Did students' initial approach to Homer always take place through short remarkable passages? In trying to explain the rationale behind the choice of passages

11 One may contrast scribes' writing exercises, which consisted of writing a text several times.

12 I refer to those exercises, where the text was clearly copied from an existing model or was written a few times, „writing exercises". In about 50 percent of the cases the teacher's model is still visible. Presumably more models were separate from the exercise and consequently lost.

13 Glaucus' speech continues up to line 211.

14 *Iliad* Z 144–151.

assigned to students to copy in the first years of school education it may be, as J. A. Davison observed[15], that „we should learn something about Homer, more about the literary tastes of the Greeks of Egypt, and most of all perhaps about ourselves."

First of all, it is clear that one must try to distinguish between passages that were copied initially to be memorized and studied and to improve the appearance of one's hand and long sequences of Homeric verses which were scrutinized, commented upon and often glossed under the tutelage of a γραμματικός. It is not only a question of a difference in the length of passages[16], but it is evident that the study of Homer became more thorough and comprehensive at more advanced stages of education, going well beyond the singling out of certain striking passages[17]. Most of our *Scholia minora,* for example, come from these more advanced stages, whereas our exercise almost certainly derives from the more elementary stage when the student was still learning how to write proficiently. The following observations will refer mostly to elementary education, when both the hands and the thoughts of the students needed most guidance.

We should also notice that over 80 percent of the Homeric passages written down in schools were chosen from the *Iliad.* The *Iliad* was the Homeric work *par excellence* to which a student was exposed during the school years. Therefore, in examining Homeric passages copied in schools, I have restricted myself almost exclusively to the *Iliad* since the passages from the *Odyssey* are too few to allow any ready conclusion.

It is almost certain that the first two books of the *Iliad* were read in their entirety at a relatively low level of education. Enough passages from these books evidently copied by beginners have come to light to allow us to reach such a conclusion[18]. Of course the choice of book 1 stands to reason since it sets out the plot and introduces the main characters. But the reasons behind the selection of book 2 seem more mysterious and suspicious. That choice is at least contrary to our practice when we make a selection for introductory reading. Was book 2 read exclusively on account of its proximity to book 1, as if in a desire to proceed in an orderly fashion? Ancient teachers undoubtedly believed in starting from the beginning, gradually guiding a student trough the obstacles of reading a new author[19]. On the other hand, it seems reasonable to suppose that book 2 was perhaps considered essential for a full comprehension of the plot and fascinating in its own right[20]. After Zeus' deceitful dream, the army with its latent rebellion and contrasting desires is the real protagonist of the first part of the book and in the second half this culminates in the marshalling of the troops. To help the audience realize

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[15] J. A. Davison, *The Study of Homer in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, Akten VIII. Int. Congr., Wien 1955, 53 (MPER NS. 5).

[16] Of course there is notable variation in length in passages copied at different levels since the length of a passage is often a function of the level of an exercise. Passages written down at elementary levels rarely exceed 10 verses.

[17] See for instance two tablets, Alexandria GR Museum inv. 28759 published in CdE 43 (1968) 114–21, covering *Iliad* 11. 10–81 and P.Berol. Inv. 11636, P^2 742, with *Iliad* 5. 265–317, both accompanied also by *Scholia minora.*

[18] As Davison (op. cit. note 5) 53 recognized already this may explain the general „preponderance of these books over all others."

[19] *Scholia minora* exhibit the same tendency to focus on the first books of the *Iliad* with a decisive prevalence of book 1. Book 2 is also well represented, while there is only one witness of book 6. Cf. L. M. Raffaelli, *Repertorio degli Scholia minora in Homerum*, Ricerche di Filol. Class. 2 (1984) 158–66.

[20] That book 2 was particularly cherished is proved by the fact that the poet Cercidas asked to have books 1 and 2 of the *Iliad* buried with him at his death, ὅτι ... ὁ μέντοι νομοθέτης Ἀρκάδων Κερκίδας συνταφῆναι αὐτῷ τὸ Α καὶ Β τῆς Ἰλιάδος κελεύσειεν, Photius, *Bibl.* 190. 151a. 14 Henry.

the full impact of the moving and standing of the army in the plain of Scamander similes are used in notable number to provide an almost fantastic counterbalance to the martial realism of the catalogue. But some school exercises take as their text part of the catalogue of ships itself[21]. The catalogue may have attracted the learned interests of teachers. The novel catalogue style was a Hellenistic favorite. Perhaps educational reasons were behind this selection. Because of the geographical survey provided by the catalogue, those texts may have served as instruction in this subject suitable for an elementary level[22]. It is not inconceivable that the catalogue was employed in that way and that some emphasis perhaps was placed on the provenance of distant ancestors.

Besides reading the first two books, students copied and studied passages almost exclusively from the first twelve books of the *Iliad*[23]. Sometimes teachers selected passages of evident pathos. Thus we readily understand why a student copied part of the dramatic encounter between Hector and Andromache in book 6 and we only question the abrupt truncating of the woman's speech[24]. In the same way, we readily accept the choice of the teacher who inscribed on his model the powerful prayer of Agamemnon on the oath in book 3[25].

Can the students who wrote down the passage of Hector and Andromache and our exercise be compared to the student who is the subject of a well known letter of the II–III century AD?[26] In the letter a mother reveals that she asked her son's old teacher what the boy was reading, Ἐμέλησε δέ μοι πέμψαι καὶ πυθέσθαι περὶ τῆς ὑγίας σου καὶ ἐπιγνῶναι, τί ἀναγεινώσκεις καὶ ἔλεγεν τὸ ζῆτα[27]. The teacher had answered that the boy was reading τὸ ζῆτα, *Iliad* 6[28]. It is difficult to know if τὸ ζῆτα referred to a stage in continuous reading or in-

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[21] It seems that at least in the third century BC in Megalopolis children were required to learn the Catalogue by heart, see Eustathius *Iliad* 2. 494 (p. 401. 36 M. van der Valk), παρασηνειοῦται δὲ καὶ ὁ Πορφύριος Ὁμηρικὸν Κατάλογον πᾶσαν περιέχειν ἀλήθειαν ἔν τε χωρογραφίᾳ καὶ πόλεων ἰδιώμασιν, ἱστορῶν καὶ ὅτι νόμους τινὲς ἐξέθεντο, ἀποστοματίζειν τοὺς παιδευομένους τὸν Ὁμήρου Κατάλογον, ὡς καὶ ὁ Κερκίδας (pro Κερδίας) νομοθετῶν τῇ πατρίδι, „Porphyrios notes that the Homeric Catalogue is completely truthful in regard to the description of the features of countries and cities, saying that some put laws that children in schools had to learn by heart the Catalogue, as Cercidas legislated for his city."

[22] Scholars sometimes declare their dismay at the very scanty information available about the teaching of geography in schools, so O. Guéraud and P. Jouguet, *Un Livre d'Écolier du III siècle avant J.-C.* (Le Caire 1938) 10 and B. Boyaval, RA 1 (1971) 60. See on this subject B. Legrous, *L'horizon géographique de la jeunesse Grecque d'Égypte,* Proceed. 20th Int. Congr., Copenhagen 1992, 165–176.

[23] About 94 percent of the *Iliad* passages were chosen from the first 12 books.

[24] See P.Vindob. G 26740, H. Öllacher, Ét. Pap. 4 (1938) 133–35, Pack^2 791. More recently the passage was edited by P. J. Sijpesteijn and K. A. Worp, CdE 49 (1974) 309–13.

[25] See the tablet BM Add. Ms. 33293, Pack^2 694, with *Iliad* 3. 273–285.

[26] See P.Oxy. VI 930. Here a mother is writing to her son who is studying away from home in Oxyrhynchus. She is concerned because her son's old teacher, the καθηγητής Diogenes, whom she trusted very much, has left and now the boy will have to try to find another instructor with the help of his paedagogue.

[27] „I cared to inquire about your health and to come to know what you were reading and he answered: the sixth book." As the editor and C. Préaux (*Lettres privées Grecques d'Égypte relatives à l'éducation*, RBPhil 49 [1929] 781) recognized, presumably the teacher referred to the *Iliad* rather than to the *Odyssey* which was not read much (see above p. 4).

[28] According to Ps.-Plutarch, *Vita Homeri*, II, 4 and Eustathius, 5, 29 Aristarchus was responsible for distinguishing the twenty-four books of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* with the letters of the Ionic alphabet, see P. Mazon, *Introduction à l'Iliade,* (Paris 1942) 139ff. and G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer*, (Cambridge 1962) 305ff.

stead to a selection of books in a curriculum. In any case, it seems likely from the existing evidence that *Iliad* 6, in its entirety or as a selection of passages, was part of a standard school curriculum.

In selecting passages for instruction from other books of the *Iliad* it seems that sometimes teachers favored some verses because of a powerful simile. Two exercises use verses where the movements and emotions of the army are described at *Iliad* 3. 1–5[29] and 9. 1–7[30]. In both cases, however, the similes seem to acquire a life of their own, especially because they are disconnected from the narrative. This is equally true for the comparison of the transient lives of men and leaves copied by our student.

At other times, however, it is undeniable that the reasons behind the selection of some passages for study in schools are more obscure and are rooted in individual literary preferences. Thus, when a student in the midst of a short anthology copies *Iliad* 5. 387–91, W. Aly, the editor of the passage, considers the choice rather arbitrary and questionable[31]. Equally, the editors of the *Livre d'Écolier* comment disapprovingly on the teacher's selection of *Odyssey* 5. 116–124 for they find the passage of goddesses' love affairs with men unsuitable for children[32]; we may also wonder with perplexity why the encounter of Athena and Apollo at the oak tree of *Iliad* 7. 21–28, source for another exercise, was preferred to other seemingly more meaningful passages. The two passages of the *Iliad* portray gods displaying human feelings: Apollo and Athena openly reveal where they stand with respect to the war and that they are ready to help their side prevail, while Ares acquires a human dimension in his suffering at the hands of men. Even more so, the passage of the *Odyssey* presents gods and men on the same emotional level, love being the common link. Perhaps one of the reasons for the preference of these passages was a teacher's desire to emphasize how gods could be close to men.

In the case of our school exercise we may also question why the student copied his passage starting from line 147, cutting off the introductory verse of the simile. It seems that he might have completely ignored the narrative context and the identity of the hero pronouncing the verses since he did not start from the very beginning of Glaucus' speech. We will call choosing to write the speech from the beginning *choice 1*. In our case it is clear that the simile was the exclusive object of the writing exercise. For this reason, at first sight it is more difficult to justify the student's choice to ignore line 146 where the comparison between the leaves' and men's generations is made. Choosing to write the entire simile starting from line 146 will be called *choice 2* and writing only line 146, the introductory verse of the comparison, *choice 3*. Our student, however, wrote the Homeric simile from line 147 (*choice* 4), ignoring its first verse. He continued until the ὥς clause of line 149 reestablishes the balance of the simile, which is complete in itself and fully developed even without the οἵη ... τοίη phrase[33]. Since the earliest times this Homeric comparison between the brief, successive generations of men

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[29] See O.Wadie Hanna, H. Henne, BIFAO 27 (1927) 79–82, Pack^2 680. The verses cover the whole surface of the ostracon where space is used very economically.

[30] Cf. the Cairo tablet edited by P. Jourguet and G. Lefebvre, BCH 28 (1904) 207–08, Pack^2 834. Unfortunately the description is insufficient and the whereabouts of the tablet is unknown.

[31] See P. Freib. I 1b, p. 9. Considering the passages completely insignificant, Aly compares it to the equally insignificant and even questionable passage of the *Odyssey* where Polyphemos vomits which youngsters of his time were made to learn.

[32] See Guéraud-Jouguet, *Un Livre d'Écolier* (op. cit. n. 22) p. XX, who declare that at the choice of the passage *nos sentiments modernes sont un peu choqués.*

[33] Logically speaking, this Homeric simile like many others is redundant since the comparison which is stated at the beginning is then elaborated and finally resumed at the end as e. g. in *Iliad* 4. 243–46 and 12. 433–36.

and leaves[34] was considered impressive and memorable and was much imitated and quoted[35]. It is worth asking whether our teacher's choice in selecting the verses was completely independent of this tradition or was dictated by common usage or by literary preference.

The poet Simonides, the first to quote the simile[36], wrote only οἵη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν, i. e. the introduction to the simile, making *choice 3*. The comparison was wholly set out in this verse, which undoubtedly recalled the image in its entirety. Although the first verse of the simile may not appear as striking as those following, it already contains the core of the picture and probably suggested the lines that follow. Like Simonides, most ancient writers who wanted to revive the Homeric comparison quote only its first verse which had perhaps acquired some kind or proverbial quality[37].

At the opposite extreme are those writers who quote the passage from the beginning of Glaucus' speech, according to *choice 1*. In addition to Porphyry of Tyre in his Ὁμηρικὰ Ζητήματα[38], Plutarch alone also does this in his *Consolatio ad Apollonium*[39]. Evidently the simile, though known primarily from Homer, had already started to take on a life of its own, disconnected from the narrative.

That it survived well outside the narrative context is demonstrated by another group of writers who, like Clement of Alexandria, made the same choice as our teacher (*choice 4*). Although Clement once alludes to the Homeric comparison quoting only line 146 to express that life is brief and unimportant[40], on a different occasion, on which he chose to quote more verses, he begins like our student directly from the elaboration of the image of the leaves, i. e. with verse 147[41].

It seems that when a writer wanted to evoke this famous simile the first verse, introducing the simile, was adequate and able to suggest its full meaning. When writers instead quoted it extensively, they chose to omit the redundant introductory verse of the simile, and began instead with the description of the leaves scattered by the autumn wind, thus detaching the simile even further from the narrative context. The term γενεή of the first line of the simile was in direct connection with γενεήν in the previous line[42] and therefore with Diomedes' insistent request for a full identification of his opponent. Leaving the first verse out reveals not only a desire to plunge directly into the midst of the description of the leaves, but also a conscious willingness to disconnect the simile even more from the narrative, making it into a completely independent unit. This tendency, in any case, is exemplified by almost all the ancient writers who quoted this comparison, who very rarely chose to start from the beginning of Glaucus'

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[34] It appears again in a different, shorter form in *Iliad* 21. 464–66.

[35] In what follows I will only consider direct quotations of these lines. I will not take into account reworkings or adaptations such as Mimnermos fr. 2 West. Not only they represent a completely different kind of exercise, but it is also difficult to know exactly which lines of the simile they are using.

[36] Simonides, Fr. eleg. 19 West^2. He calls it the best thing in Homer, ἓν δὲ τὸ κάλλιστον Χῖος ἔειπεν ἀνήρ.

[37] See J. Tolkiehn, *De Homeri Auctoritate in Cotidiana Romanorum Vita,* Jahrb. Class. Phil. Suppl. 23 (1896) 251.

[38] Ad *Il.* Z. 200 (p. 95, 31 Schrader).

[39] *Mor.* 104 E 7. The Homeric verses are quoted among the verses of other σοφῶν ἀνδρῶν who say that man is mortal.

[40] *Strom.* III. 16. 2. 1.

[41] *Strom.* VI. 2. 5. 8. 2. Similarly did Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 15. 4. 13. 5, Marcus Aurelius, Τὰ εἰς ἑαυτόν, 10. 34. 1. 4, Philo Judaeus, *De Aet. Mundi* 132. 8 and Theophrastus, *Phys. Opin.* 12. 81, (who quotes sometimes the whole comparison from line 147, other times only 147 and 148).

[42] In spite of a slight shifting of the sense of the word from *race, descent,* to *generation.*

speech. It is clear that our teacher, in assigning the student only lines 147–149 to write, acted completely within this tradition.

The man-leaves simile had freed itself, and probably very early[43], from its multiple connections with the narrative context. All the instances of quotations of this comparison exhibit direct knowledge of the Homeric text, but suggest a desire to disembody the image from its context and record it for preservation in memory or in writing. It is undeniable that the simile is slightly out of place in the Homeric text. Diomedes' questions would seem to require a more direct answer in the imminence of the combat. The action is temporarily frozen. The pensive reflection which opens Glaucus' speech is hardly in tune with the urgency of the moment even considering the dreamy quality of this likable hero. Moreover, the simile lugubriously foreshadows death and destruction, though the expectation is ironically subverted in the narrative and the two parties separate alive on friendly terms. The connective texture of the poem here seems less smooth and homogeneous and lets come to the fore the point of juncture of different motifs. It is not improbable that the man-leaves simile was already a topos in funereal, consolatory, threnodic poetry before the poet of the *Iliad* adapted it to the battle narrative.

We have seen that teachers in Graeco-Roman Egypt did not always share our criteria in selecting Homeric verses to be learned in schools. At times we are not able to understand their choices: they seem to have preferred rather obscure passages which do not seem to us especially meaningful for the comprehension or the plot or for powerful emotions. Their choices in exposing students to the verses of Homer were probably dictated by an understanding of the Homeric world that was different from ours. Perhaps they meant to expose their students to aspects of the Homeric world to which we are almost indifferent, or to reinforce sentiments and values which we do not fully understand. As we have seen, the desire to emphasize the distinctions and connections between human mortality and the gods' nature may perhaps have been behind the selection of some passages which do not seem to us significant enough to be included in the school curriculum.

But at other times, as I argue in the case of our school exercise, it is evident that certain passages and images that we consider memorable already struck the imagination and the preference of the ancient readers and teachers. In his answer to Diomedes' question (are you a god or a man?), Glaucus points to the feeble nature of the individual, the man-leaf, and to the everlasting strength of the tree, men's race. To rescue himself from his own death and oblivion the hero had glory and honor as his only allies. But when instead, as in our exercise, the connections with the narrative were severed and the man-leaf simile was considered and studied by itself, its suggestive power was not diminished, but a more sorrowful, encompassing value was emphasized[44].

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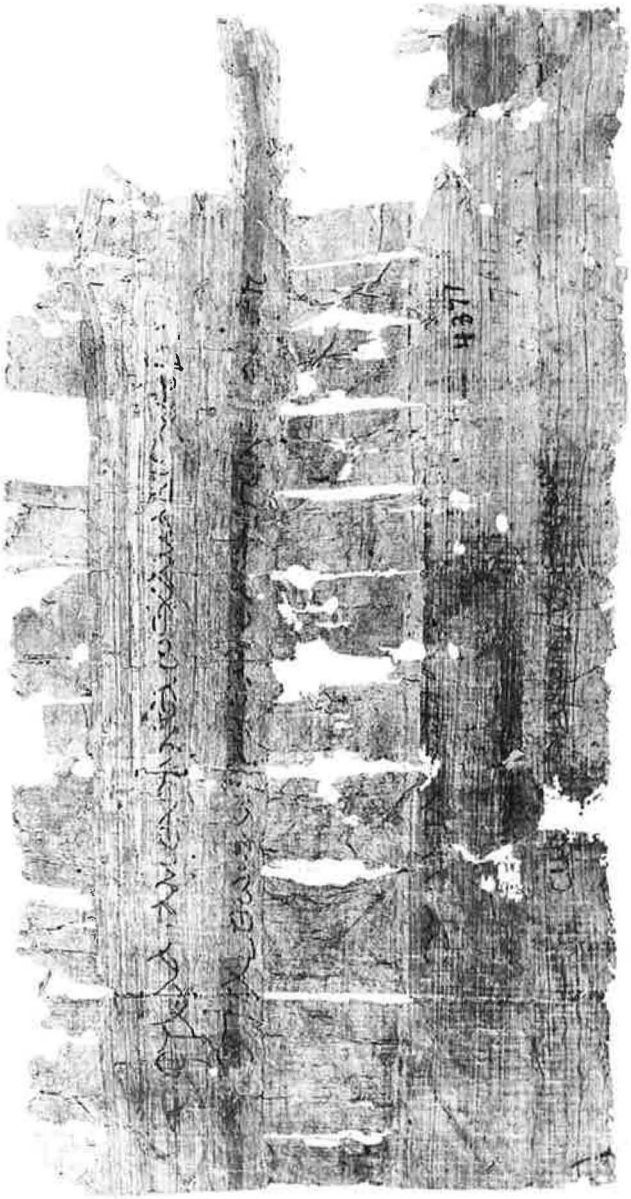
[43] For the possibility that the simile was already becoming a poetical commonplace in Homer's time see M. Griffith, *Man and the Leaves: A Study of Mimnermos fr. 2*, California Studies in Classical Antiquity 8 (1975) 76–77.

[44] I thank Dirk Obbink for reading this paper and giving me valuable suggestions.



zu Cribiore, S. 1ff.