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978-1-107-00072-8 - Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria

Maren R. Niehoff

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CHAPTER I

Setting the stage

From the inception of modern research Jewish Bible exegesis in Alexandria has often been regarded as a marginal phenomenon or a puzzling hybrid. It tended to be studied either from the perspective of biblical interpretation in the Land of Israel or as a forerunner of Christian exegesis. Scholars familiar with the Jewish tradition usually focused on the emergence of rabbinic literature, which subsequently became normative. If Alexandrian exegesis was at all taken into account, it was characteristically either construed as a derivative phenomenon depending on its counterpart in Jerusalem or dismissed as an alien body of literature, which reflects Greek ideas and anticipates Christianity while failing to resonate in traditional Jewish circles.¹ On the other hand, scholars familiar with the Christian tradition tended to approach Jewish Bible exegesis in Alexandria in the context of either the New Testament or patristic literature, giving special emphasis to allegory. In this scenario Philo figured rather prominently, often being praised as *the* representative of Hellenistic Judaism who prepared the way for Clement, Origen and others.²

Luckily, a number of scholars have appreciated Alexandrian Judaism in its own right. During the transition period from the Enlightenment to *Wissenschaft* it was praised by Isaac Marcus Jost as a strikingly modern form of Judaism. He stressed that it was based on a division of state and church as well as on a cultural synthesis of Jewish and Greek traditions.³ Alexandrian Judaism emerged as an important paradigm for combining tradition with critical awareness. It was identified as a forerunner of the Golden Age of Jewish philosophy in the Middle Ages and liberal Judaism in contemporary Germany. Following this early impulse, additional scholars have begun to study Alexandrian Bible exegesis in its proper cultural and

¹ See esp. Frankel 1854; Ritter 1879; Wolfson 1947; Cohen 1995. On the history of scholarship, see Freudenthal 1869; Cohn 1892; Niehoff 1999; in press, a; J. J. Collins 2010.

² See esp. Gfrörer 1831, vol. 1; Dähne 1834; Deines and Niebuhr 2004.

³ Jost 1821, esp. pp. 265–99; 1857–9, vol. 1, pp. 1–2, 344–93; see also Meyer 1991; Schorsch 1977.

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historical context. Such pioneering studies tended to focus on the Ptolemaic period, while Philo's exegetical writings, as opposed to his historical works, have generally been examined with little awareness of their immediate context in the Roman period.⁴

It is thus time for a comprehensive study of Jewish Bible exegesis in its immediate Alexandrian context. The most relevant aspect of Alexandria, which has thus far been surprisingly overlooked, is the fact that the city was the leading centre of Homeric scholarship in the Hellenistic world. Developing Aristotelian models, it boasted of the largest library at the time as well as the famous Museum, which has rightly been identified as a type of university.⁵ In contrast to that of Pergamum, Alexandrian scholarship focused on the literal text, identifying the authentic version of the Homeric epics and analysing their literary features. This detailed attention to the Homeric text led to a standardization of the corpus and a division into recognized books.⁶ Glenn Most has pointed to the importance of this Alexandrian contribution to the canonization of Homer's epics.⁷

A learned Jewish scholar such as Philo would naturally be familiar with the Alexandrian division of the Homeric epics; he refers once to a passage 'in the *Iliad* at the beginning of the thirteenth song' (*Cont.* 17). He assumed that Greeks and barbarians were raised on the poets, initially acquiring basic reading skills and then launching into a 'detailed investigation'.⁸

⁴ Freudenthal 1874 had a seminal influence on modern research, calling for a change of paradigm. Freudenthal offered a detailed analysis of some early Jewish works written in Greek and showed that they anticipate rabbinic literature, sometimes even influencing it. Equally important, yet less accessible to a wider audience is Gutman's work in Hebrew (1958–63), which offers an in-depth study of the early Alexandrian exegetes. Gutman regularly interpreted Alexandrian Jews in terms of their Hellenistic environment, arguing that they engaged with the surrounding Greek literature to treat biblical motifs. Fraser 1972, in his magisterial study of Ptolemaic Alexandria, analysed Jewish sources in terms of the city's contemporary discourse, thus giving a significant boost to the field of Alexandrian Judaism. Gruen 2002 made an important contribution by analysing the historical situation of Alexandrian Jews and their proud self-image especially during the Ptolemaic period.

⁵ For details on the Library and the Museum, see Fraser 1972, vol. 1, pp. 312–35, 447–79, who emphasized the importance of the patronage system as well as Aristotelian influence; contra Pfeiffer 1968, pp. 87–104, who stressed the role of Alexandrian scholar-poets, such as Philites, who initiated in his view a rupture from the Classical Age. Fraser's conclusions have been confirmed by Pöhlmann 1994, pp. 26–40; Canfora 2002; N. L. Collins 2000; Rajak 2009, pp. 74–8; and, less emphatically, by Clausen 2003, pp. 92–8.

⁶ Regarding the division of the Homeric epics into twenty-four songs, which is standardized by the Alexandrian scholars but not reflected in the early papyri, see Nünlist 2006; S. West 1967, pp. 18–25; contra Jensen 1999.

⁷ Most 1990, pp. 54–8; on the *numerus verbum* see also Marrou 1950, pp. 228–9; M. L. West 2001, pp. 50–2, 61–7; 1998, p. 99; M. Finkelberg 2004, 2006, who showed that Alexandrian readings, as distinct from the number of verses, were not influential in the transmission of the Homeric texts.

⁸ *Agr.* 18, *Mut.* 179; Philo also refers to his own 'reading and study of the writings of the poets' as part of his training in grammar (*Congr.* 74).

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'The Poet' provided him not only with many winged expressions, but also with an authoritative proof-text for Jewish monotheism.⁹ Other anonymous exegetes in Alexandria explicitly compared the biblical story of the Tower of Babel to a similar enterprise of the sons of Aloeidae recorded in the *Odyssey* (*Conf.* 4–5). Such references are not at all surprising given the known acculturation of Alexandrian Jews. They not only spoke and wrote in Greek but quickly read even their Scriptures only in the Greek translation.¹⁰ Homer's epics, which constituted the most important pillar of Greek education in Hellenistic Egypt, were obviously familiar to them.¹¹

The present book is based on the recognition that Homer's epics as well as Moses' Torah were foundational texts, irrespective of whether their canonicity was precisely the same, and as such prompted a large corpus of minute interpretations in their respective communities of readers. The hermeneutics involved in both contexts emerged in a similar historical environment and followed surprisingly similar rules. Moreover, readers of the Homeric epics and the Bible faced texts with distinct literary features, while at the same time relating to them as the basis of their religion. Given these premises, it is time for a systematic investigation into the historical connections between the ancient students of Homer's epics and Moses' Bible.

It is the purpose of this book to examine the connections between Homeric scholarship and Jewish Bible exegesis in Alexandria. Literal interpretation, both in its own right and as a basis of different forms of allegorical exegesis, will be the focus of our attention. I shall argue that Jewish exegetes were generally familiar with the academic methods developed at the Museum. Many of these methods directly applied them to the Jewish Scriptures. Alexandrian Bible scholars thus created a new synthesis and

⁹ *Abr.* 10, *Conf.* 170; for examples of Homeric expressions in Philo see, e.g., *Fuga* 31, *Somn.* 2:53, 2:275; Berthelot 2010; Niehoff in press, b; in press, d.

¹⁰ Even Philo, who refers to Hebrew etymologies, had no access to the Hebrew Bible but instead relied on etymological lists, as has been shown by Amir 1988, pp. 440–4; Grabbe 1988 (including an English translation of Y. Amir's 1984 Hebrew article); Kahn 1965, pp. 337–45; Kamesar 2009, pp. 65–73; contra Rajak 2009, pp. 149–50, who proposes to revive the position of Wolfson 1947, vol. 1, pp. 87–90. Note other signs too of Philo's acculturation: he not only attended the theatre and was familiar with the different sports practised in the gymnasium (Harris 1976, pp. 51–101) but is also the first extant writer to call Plato 'most holy' (Niehoff 2007). He explained many of his views by reference to Plato, Aristotle, his student Theophrastus and the Stoics, obviously taking a keen interest in the contemporary philosophical discourse (Bréhier 1908; Runia 1986, 1981; Lévy 1998, 2009; Alesse 2008; Niehoff 2010b). On Philo's views on Greeks and Greek culture, see Birnbaum 2001; Niehoff 2001, pp. 137–58. For further details on the exclusively Greek context of Alexandrian Bible exegesis, see especially Chapter 7.

¹¹ On the centrality of Homer in the educational programme of Hellenistic Egypt see Cribiore 2001.

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offered ground-breaking analyses of their canonical text. Their achievements were outstanding and anticipated both modern text criticism as well as subsequent developments in later antiquity. Whereas the overall picture is one of significant creativity in dialogue with the intellectual discourse of the environment, it is conspicuous that there were lively controversies among Alexandrian Jews about the nature and legitimacy of academic scholarship.

THE DIVERSITY OF ALEXANDRIAN JUDAISM

Special attention will be paid in this book to the diversity of views among Alexandrian Jews. In Alexandria, where Josephus' famous distinction of three Jewish 'sects' does not apply and no papyri of the significance of the Qumran Scrolls have yet been discovered, we have to rely on the extant literary evidence for a reconstruction of the different approaches.¹² Already the earliest Jewish sources from Ptolemaic Egypt suggest significant diversity. While Ezekiel the Tragedian, for example, used Euripides' model to stage his own drama of the Exodus, Aristaeas denounced the use of biblical materials on the stage.¹³ Artapanus employed motifs of the Graeco-Egyptian Alexander legends to depict Moses as a military leader, whereas Aristobulus was convinced that Moses had established a distinct Jewish philosophy, which was comparable to the views of the Peripatetics, Homer and Hesiod as well as Orpheus.¹⁴

The *Letter of Aristaeas*, Demetrius and Aristobulus provide our main evidence of Jewish Bible exegesis in Ptolemaic Alexandria. I shall argue that they were written in the mid second century BCE and belonged to the period when Alexandrian scholarship was at its height under the leadership of Aristarchus.¹⁵ The *Letter of Aristaeas* will first be investigated, because it offers a meaningful and unique account of the Alexandrian Library in relation to the Jewish Scriptures. In contrast to current views, I shall argue that Aristaeas was conservative. Rejecting the application of critical Homeric

¹² The Therapeutae, depicted by Philo as a 'party' (προαίρεσις, *Cont.* 67) with separate living quarters near Alexandria and a special style of life, will be discussed below in Chapter 9. The diversity of Alexandrian Judaism is also stressed by J. J. Collins 2000, pp. 14–16. On the sects in the Land of Israel, see esp. Baumgarten 1997, pp. 42–80; Goodman 2000; Newman 2006, esp. pp. 51–124.

¹³ On Ezekiel's and Aristaeas' attitudes towards the theatre, see Gutman 1958–63, vol. II, pp. 9–69; Jacobson 1983; Lanfranchi 2006; Barclay 1996, pp. 132–8.

¹⁴ On Artapanus see Gutman 1958–63, vol. II, pp. 109–36; Holladay 1983–96, vol. I, p. 235; Barclay 1996, pp. 127–32; on Aristobulus, see Gutman 1958–63, vol. II, pp. 186–220; Walter 1964, pp. 10–13, 103–15; Holladay 1983–96, vol. III, pp. 114–15, 204–6, 226–7; J. J. Collins 2000, pp. 186–90.

¹⁵ For discussions of the dates of these works, see below in the respective chapters, especially Chapter 3, where I explain why the generally assumed third-century date of Demetrius can no longer be maintained.

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methods to the Jewish Scriptures, he provides an important mirror image of some of his colleagues' scholarship. Demetrius and Aristobulus, on the other hand, positively engage the hermeneutic methods developed at the Museum and throw crucial new light on the state of biblical scholarship in the Ptolemaic period. Both authors furthermore belong to the Aristotelian tradition and help us reconstruct the history of that school in Alexandria.

Lacking independent exegetical sources between the mid second century BCE and the first century CE, vital evidence of the diversity of Alexandrian Judaism comes from Philo. While implying that there is but one legitimate approach to Scripture, namely that of 'us students of Moses', Philo does not altogether suppress divergent Jewish voices.¹⁶ Initially, it must be noted that he mentions 'thousands of schools' opening on the Sabbath to teach Jewish values.¹⁷ This number cannot be taken literally but deserves serious attention, because the undoubtedly existing variety of synagogues in Alexandria implies diverse kinds of activities and attitudes.¹⁸

Moreover, scholars have noted the complexity of Philo's work, which reflects not only his own views, but also those of his colleagues and predecessors. Wilhelm Bousset, Richard Goulet and Thomas Tobin offered comprehensive reconstructions of such early exegetical layers. Relying on an internal literary analysis, the first two identified Stoic predecessors of Philo, while the last argued for previous Platonic interpreters of the Book of Genesis.¹⁹ Whereas the first two studies are no longer taken seriously today, they, too, pursued the important aim of understanding Philo in the context of his discussion partners in Alexandria. The methodological problem underlying these studies, which has also aroused the impression of a too speculative approach, is the fact that in the majority of examples Philo himself does not refer to others. The analysis thus relies on exegetical tensions or contradictions, which may be explained by recourse to earlier interpreters whose views Philo integrated into his work without harmonizing them with his own position.

Significant progress has been made in this field by David Hay, who began to examine Philo's explicit references to other exegetes. Initially, he studied Philo's references to other allegorists and then devoted a seminal article to other exegetes in Philo's *Questions and Answers*. Hay concluded that Philo did not write in an intellectual vacuum but conceived of 'exegesis as a kind of

¹⁶ The expression 'we students of Moses' can be found in *Her.* 81, *Q.G.* 3.8. Philo's emphasis on Jewish unity has recently also been noted by Carlier 2008, pp. 234–6.

¹⁷ Μυρία διδασκαλεία (*Spec.* 2.62). ¹⁸ See also Clauss 2003, pp. 150–1.

¹⁹ Bousset 1915; Goulet 1987; Tobin 1983.

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dialogical enterprise that involves debate partners and opponents'.²⁰ Such discussion partners included both allegorists and literalists. Hay stressed that the latter were sophisticated and critical readers of Scripture, thus correcting Shroyer's earlier view of them as naïve, orthodox Jews.²¹

While scholars such as John Dillon consider Philo's references to other exegetes as mere rhetoric which does not point to real people or discussions, Hay's approach is convincing and deserves further consideration.²² For the purposes of this book all of Philo's references to other interpretations have been carefully studied. The great variety of their style and content is so conspicuous that they must indeed reflect different exegetical orientations of independent Jewish exegetes. Philo's references thus provide an invaluable glimpse into the original variety of Alexandrian Judaism, which does not happen to have been fully preserved by the Church Fathers.

Philo's references to his colleagues allow us to reconstruct approaches to Scripture which have not been preserved elsewhere. Reading Philo's fragments in the context of Homeric scholarship, I shall argue that his colleagues adopted certain critical methods practised in Alexandria. It is even possible to distinguish several different approaches among Philo's colleagues: some adopted a mythological-comparative approach, analysing stories such as the Tower of Babel in light of similar material in the *Odyssey*; others adopted a historical approach, investigating the Binding of Isaac in the context of ancient child sacrifice, while still others engaged in text emendations. For Philo, all these methods were anathema and amounted to an impious violation of Scripture. When studying these fragments, we have to bear in mind that their transmitter was an outspoken opponent of them who wanted his readers to dismiss their views as silly figments of the imagination. As Dillon once put it in another context, 'it is rather like trying to piece together Conservative Party policy during an election campaign solely on the basis of scattered criticisms from Labour spokesmen'.²³ Just as Dillon himself was not deterred by such a challenge regarding fragments of Platonist philosophers, we shall proceed to recover the views of Alexandrian exegetes which lay hidden in Philo's polemics. Luckily, some of the fragments are impressively long, covering several pages of Cohn-Wendland's critical edition.

²⁰ Hay 1979–80. Hay 1991b; quotation on p. 97. ²¹ Shroyer 1936.

²² Dillon 1983, p. 84, argues that 'it is not necessary that there should be any real author for most of these *aporiai*'; Snyder 2000, pp. 122–3, adopts a more nuanced approach, admitting the great diversity of Alexandrian Judaism, which cannot, however, in his view be investigated, because of the immense loss of original books.

²³ Dillon 2003a, p. 17.

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Variety characterizes not only the discussion among Alexandrian Jews reflected in Philo's work, but also Philo's own work. As has long been noticed, the many extant treatises of his writings do not convey a uniform picture. When the critical edition began to be prepared at the end of the nineteenth century, scholars investigated the nature of Philo's different works as well as their possible chronological order. Louis Massebieau and Leopold Cohn made substantial contributions, both distinguishing between the *Allegorical Commentary* and the *Questions and Answers (Q&A)*, on the one hand, and the *Exposition of the Law (Exposition)* as well as the historical and 'apologetic' treatises, on the other.²⁴ Paul Wendland was able to demonstrate the authenticity of Philo's treatise on the Therapeutae by arguing that although it sharply differs from the *Allegorical Commentary*, it shows significant similarities to the *Exposition*.²⁵

The question of Philo's different audiences, which has been taken into account since the inception of modern research, has received renewed attention in recent scholarship. Ellen Birnbaum made significant progress in this area by pointing to conspicuous differences in Philo's notions of Jews and Judaism:²⁶ the *Allegorical Commentary* speaks about Israel; the *Exposition* talks about Jews and appears to address a wider audience not familiar with Jewish history. Similarly, Gregory Sterling and James Royse distinguished Philo's different audiences.²⁷ According to their analysis, the readers of the *Q&A* require an elementary instruction in exegesis, while the *Allegorical Commentary* addresses advanced readers. The *Exposition*, on the other hand, provides a more thematic introduction to a wide audience of mainly non-Jews.²⁸

Philo's attitude towards Homeric scholarship will be studied in the context of his different exegetical series. Separate chapters will be devoted to the *Allegorical Commentary*, the *Q&A* and the *Exposition*. The former two series conform to the conventions of a running commentary and will be shown to have developed in a distinctly Alexandrian environment. At the same time, however, they make rather different use of academic methods. In the *Allegorical Commentary* Philo responds to highly critical Jewish colleagues in Alexandria and develops his own, more conservative approach, which combines literal scholarship with extended allegory. This

²⁴ Massebieau 1888, pp. 10–33, 59–65, and Cohn 1899, who both argued for the priority of the *Allegorical Commentary* in comparison with the *Exposition* and the 'apologetic' works, but they differed regarding its relationship to the *Q&A*.

²⁵ Wendland 1896, pp. 716–19. ²⁶ Birnbaum 1996.

²⁷ Sterling 1999, pp. 148–64; Royse 2009; see also Böhm 2005, pp. 116–22, 238–52.

²⁸ For an analysis of characteristic themes in Philo's different writings with a view to their particular audiences, see also Birnbaum 2004.

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particular synthesis was radically new and laid the foundation for many subsequent writers. The *Q&A*, by contrast, appeals to less sophisticated readers, who may have been Philo's own students. The question and answer format is no longer used as an academic tool, but rather as an organizing principle. Philo's treatise thus provides important new insights into Jewish Bible instruction in Alexandria.

The *Exposition*, on the other hand, will be shown to have emerged in a strikingly different context from the other two exegetical series. This work no longer follows Alexandrian conventions of a running commentary and is generally more removed from the concerns of textual scholarship. This treatise is crucial to understanding Philo's use of exegesis in a world where Rome and non-Jewish readers played an increasingly important role. The analysis of the *Exposition* in light of both Homeric scholarship and its implied audience suggests that this series belongs to Philo's mature period, when he was already involved in politics, travelling as the head of the Jewish embassy to Rome.

Looking at the development of Alexandrian exegesis over a span of approximately two hundred years, it is conspicuous that Philo and his colleagues as well as his predecessors held contrary positions on the question whether the Jewish Scriptures are unique or similar to other foundational texts. While Aristobulus and Philo's anonymous colleagues affirmed the congeniality of Moses' Torah and Homer's epics, Philo insisted on the uniqueness of the Jewish Scriptures. Much of his exegesis can be understood as an effort to create a separate Jewish discourse. Philo was intimately familiar with Greek hermeneutics and in a sense presents the peak of extant Jewish Bible scholarship in Alexandria, but he may also be seen to mark its end. He neither integrated the Bible any longer into the general academic discourse around Homer nor encouraged open dialogue and controversy. Philo instead turned increasingly to preaching the correct interpretation of Scripture, hoping to provide conclusive answers which would render further inquiry superfluous.²⁹ This 'parting of the ways' of biblical and Homeric scholarship must be appreciated in the context of rising political tensions in Alexandria, where prominent Homeric scholars such as Apion were also fervently anti-Jewish.³⁰

Studying the diversity of Jewish engagements with Homeric scholarship in Alexandria, one can only regret that Leopold Cohn, a scholar truly

²⁹ This conclusion broadly correlates with the findings of Goldhill 2008, which focuses on the transition from the Classical to the Christian period, without, however, taking Philo into account.

³⁰ On Apion as scholar and historian, see Dillery 2003; on the events themselves, see esp. Harker 2008; Gambetti 2009; van der Horst 2003.

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destined to make a fundamental contribution in this field and perhaps even render this book superfluous, did not address the topic. He not only edited Philo's texts and was a leading expert on his work but also wrote the entry in the *Realencyclopädie* on Aristarchus, the most important Homeric scholar in Alexandria. Cohn moreover wrote an enormously erudite treatise on the early scholia to Plato's writings, which still commands respect today.³¹

Furthermore, Adam Kamesar has recently produced some pioneering articles, which anticipate the present book. Kamesar interpreted Philo's literary references to Scripture, noted already by Yehoshua Amir, in the context of Greek scholarship.³² He also noticed that Philo was less open to comparisons between Scripture and the Homeric epics than some of his predecessors, thus acknowledging the variety of Alexandrian Judaism. At the same time, however, Kamesar neither attempted a comprehensive study of Alexandrian exegesis nor took the Alexandrian scholia into account.³³

HOMERIC SCHOLARSHIP

Some explanations about Homeric scholarship are necessary as an introduction for readers not familiar with it. Homeric scholarship in the broad sense can be traced back to very early times, reaching an important climax in Aristotle's *Aporemata Homerica* and the twenty-fifth chapter of his *Poetics*. These works responded to widely known criticisms of the epics, especially Plato's dismissal of Homer as an unphilosophical and thus misleading writer.³⁴ Aristotle offered a highly influential alternative to the approach of his predecessors, calling for an appreciation of the epics as literature similar to tragedy.

Alexandria subsequently became the leading Hellenistic centre of Homeric scholarship, where immensely important commentaries were produced. While none of the original works has survived, a very considerable number of fragments is extant in the scholia to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.³⁵ As the

³¹ Cohn 1884, who is frequently quoted by Schironi 2005.

³² Kamesar 1997; Kamesar 2009, pp. 73–7; Amir 1984, an abbreviated English version can be found in Amir 1988, pp. 428–40; see also Amir 1974; Borgen 1997, pp. 80–101; Stein 1935, pp. 4–10; Novick 2009.

³³ Kamesar 2004 refers to the later Byzantine scholia and investigates allegorical rather than literal exegesis.

³⁴ On Aristotle, see Richardson 1992; Bywater 1909, pp. 323–54; Dupont-Roc and Lallot 1980, pp. 386–404; Else 1986; on Plato, see esp. Männlein-Robert 2002.

³⁵ Summary treatises, such as the grammar of Dionysius of Thrax's or Ps.-Plutarch's *On Homer*, reflect only indirectly the scholarly activity in Alexandria and should therefore be used with caution; on Dionysius see Dickey 2007, pp. 70, 77–8; Schenkeveld 1994, pp. 263–301; for references to Dionysius' work in the analysis of Bible exegesis, see Kamesar 1994; Sandnes 2009, pp. 40–58.

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scholia are of rather daunting dimensions and have never been translated, thus not being easily accessible to a wider audience, they require some introductory explanation.³⁶

The Homeric scholia are now available in critical editions and contain our main evidence of Alexandrian scholarship.³⁷ Having lost the original works, we have to rely on fragments in later compilations, which are based on a complex chain of transmission. By means of the scholia we gain access to the work of the most eminent Homer scholar in Alexandria, namely Aristarchus, as well as to the views of his predecessors Zenodotus and Aristophanes of Byzantium. Zenodotus, the first chief librarian of Alexandria, who probably published an edition of the *Iliad* around 275 BCE, began to develop a rudimentary system of critical signs by which he indicated his own text emendations.³⁸ Although his precise methods as well as the originality and academic value of his work are still debated in modern scholarship, it is clear that this figure is heavily overshadowed by Aristarchus, who preserved his arguments only for the purpose of sharply attacking them.³⁹

Zenodotus' student Aristophanes grew up in Egypt and was from his youth onwards associated with the academic activities of the Museum and the Library. In the field of Homeric scholarship he made several lasting contributions, which laid the foundation for Aristarchus' work. He invented the Greek accent marks still in use today, refined the system of the critical signs indicating text emendations and also published a new edition of the Homeric text.⁴⁰ As far as can be seen in the sparse fragments, Aristophanes reached a new level of academic rigour, being far more cautious than his predecessor regarding text emendations. Whereas he did not yet compose full commentaries on Homer's epics, he began to offer explanations of literary works that took into account their historical circumstances.

Aristarchus of Samothrace, the fifth head of the Library and tutor in the royal family, set new standards of Homeric scholarship in mid-second-century BCE Alexandria. He not only produced two successive editions of the text, but also wrote treatises on specific topics as well as two running

³⁶ See also Dickey 2007; Montanari 1993; Pontani 2005b, pp. 23–103; Nünlist 2009a.

³⁷ Erbse 1969–99; Pontani 2007; see also the older edition by Dindorf 1855.

³⁸ Pfeiffer 1968, pp. 105–19; Fraser 1972, vol. 1, pp. 449–51; Montanari 1993, pp. 265–56; Schmidt 1997; Montanari 1998, pp. 6–9.

³⁹ M. L. West 2001, pp. 33–45, rehabilitated Zenodotus by pointing to evidence of a local text version, which may explain his 'erratic' readings.

⁴⁰ Pfeiffer 1968, pp. 171–203; Fraser 1972, vol. 1, pp. 459–61; Montanari 1993, pp. 268–70; Dickey 2007, pp. 92–4.