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Centonic Variations on a Biblical Theme Preliminary Case-Studies of Semantic Discrepancies

This article is a preliminary semantic and etymological study of a selection of terms – from fake synonyms and speaking names to thoroughly Christianized and/or Platonizing reclaims of the epic vocabulary – from the I HC and the II HC and its aim is twofold: on the one hand, it focuses on a selection of key semantic variations that result from the Christian semantic reception of archaic vocabulary and especially interpretations featuring in philological works, such as commentaries, scholia, and dictionaries; on the other hand, the analysis shows the influence of biblical exegesis in understanding the re-semanticized Homeric vocabulary in return and how this was employed so as to further the existing Christian interpretation. The analysis concludes that by the fifth century the interpretation of the Bible through biblical classicizing poetry reveals a strikingly positive stance towards the Homeric text as a cultural authority useful also for Christian exegesis.

Il presente contributo si configura come uno studio preliminare, semantico ed etimologico, di una selezione di termini dalle redazioni I e II del Centone omerico: falsi sinonimi, nomi parlanti, richiami cristianizzati o 'platonizzanti' al vocabolario epico. Lo studio ha una duplice finalità: da un lato si concentra sulle trasformazioni del significato di alcuni termini chiave, esito della ricezione semantica, in ambito cristiano, del vocabolario arcaico e delle relative interpretazioni in opere filologiche (commenti, scoli e dizionari); dall'altro mette in rilievo l'influenza dell'esegesi biblica nella comprensione del vocabolario omerico, a sua volta ri-semanticizzato e impiegato per promuovere l'ermeneutica cristiana. Dall'analisi emerge che, a partire dal V secolo, l'interpretazione della Bibbia attraverso la poesia biblica classicizzante rivela un giudizio fortemente positivo nei confronti del testo omerico, ritenuto un'autorità culturale utile anche per l'esegesi cristiana.

The recomposing of Homer into a biblical poem requires a great deal of deliberate interpretative flexibility both from the virtuoso composer and the well-trained reader/audience. The *Homeric Centos* are poems composed of Homeric verses reused verbatim that narrate the main events from the Creation to the Fall and from Jesus' Incarnation to the Ascension. The first redaction of *Homeric Centos* (hereafter, *I HC*) is attributed to Eudocia, wife of Theodosius II, and is representative of late antique biblical poetry and in particular of Christian cento of which the other illustrative exemplary is Proba's *Virgilian Cento*. A second redaction (hereafter, *II HC*) seems to be a thorough revision of the first and is conceived as a new poem and not an epitome of the first redaction; however, authorship and date of *I* and *II HC* are contested¹. Like other late antique poems, the *HC* although composed with the aid of writing could have been presented in an oral performance²,

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¹ There are also three considerably shorter redactions. For the dating and the issues of authorship see the introduction in Schembra 2007a.

² For performance in Late Antiquity see Agosti 2006; like the epyllion-like composition of some episodes in the *Dionysiaca*, discussed by Agosti 2016. Similarly, the *I HC* are divided in

which entails that its audience ought to be well steeped in classical *paideia* in order to appreciate the poem's intertextual and etymological allusions.

Rocco Schembra, who undertook the Herculean task of editing the five redactions of *Homeric Centos*, has repeatedly shown that in reusing Homer cento poems make ample use of the ambiguity emerging out of crucial semantic discrepancies between the 'original' meaning of a word, namely its appearance in the Homeric epics, and its denotation in the Christian poem³. Although I disagree with Schembra on the interpretation of the technical term *δοιάδες* in the so-called *Apologia* as alluding to the semantic opacities pertaining to the Christianization of Homeric vocabulary⁴, his observations about the poem's consistent use of 'semantic variations'⁵ are extremely valuable for understanding the shift during the transformation of archaic epic into biblical poetry.

This analysis is a preliminary semantic and etymological study of a selection of terms – from fake synonyms and speaking names to thoroughly Christianized and/or Platonizing tinged reclaims of the epic vocabulary – from the *I HC* and the *II HC* and its aim is twofold: on the one hand, it will focus particularly on a selection of key semantic variations that result from the Christian semantic reception of archaic vocabulary and especially those featuring in philological works, such as commentaries, scholia, and dictionaries, from which the centos greatly benefited⁶; on the other hand, the analysis will show the influence of biblical exegesis in understanding the re-semanticized Homeric vocabulary and how Homeric vocabulary was employed so as to further the existing Christian interpretation.

Cento technique consists of extracting and, in our case, christianizing recognizable and content-wise recognizable Homeric lines and is illustrative of the cento poet's linguistic virtuosity and his/her audience's erudition⁷. The semasiological

self-contained episodes which would have allowed the performance of a part, or several parts of the poem. *Contra* see Usher 1998 who stresses more the oral, archaic-bard-like, composition of the poem. This, however, would not have been possible in late antique bookish culture.

³ Schembra 1994a, Schembra 1994b, Schembra 2002, Schembra 2006, Schembra 2007a. The translations of the biblical cento are mine; for the translations of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, I have consulted Lamberton's text and occasionally adapted.

⁴ I take *δοιάδες* to allude to Ausonius' *duos*, for which see Usher 1997. Ambiguity is an interpretative characteristic of any cento composition. See also Sandnes 2011, 190.

⁵ Schembra 1994a, 317-319 differentiates between six types of semantic variations: (i) those that relate to the Christianization of the theme; (ii) those that concern the morpho-syntactic level; (iii) those that are by-product of a *lapsus memoriae* and mistaken; (iv) those that reflect various Homeric readings; (v) those that reflect on the metre; (vi) the so-called *δοιάδες*, a term which according to Schembra 1994a, 328 is taken to mean «ambiguità, doppiezze».

⁶ Lefteratou 2019.

⁷ For the poem's intertextual engagement with the Homeric 'original' see Bažil 2009,

ambiguities during the reclaim of the Homeric vocabulary, I will show, reveal the extent of the poem's engagement with the philological and especially with the lexicographic culture of Late Antiquity: etymology became a tool of the increasingly popular allegorical interpretation⁸, and etymological puns and other word plays often feature across genres and levels of literariness⁹. Moreover, given that the Bible was a sacred text and even its words and its physical format as a book were thought to represent the Word¹⁰, the centonization of the Incarnation required a broader understanding of faith in the Gospel as embodiment of the Logos: recomposing the Gospel in epic hexameters would either presuppose the Christianization of the archaic vocabulary in the process of re-claiming or accepting/tolerating the authority of the classicizing epic verse as being good enough for recasting the Gospel. The same readerly aptitude for re-cycling and re-interpreting the biblical and the Homeric texts is evident at the lexical level too: the choice and reuse of the archaic epic vocabulary is thoroughly reconsidered so as to express the poem's new theme. The subversion of the Homeric *Kunstsprache* then required a sensitive audience, both linguistically and poetically, that could easily grasp the cento variations. What kind of academic training do the *I HC* presuppose from an audience that would have heard the poem during a performance? How can ancient Homeric dictionaries and commentaries help clarify the ambiguous meanings of specific terms within a biblical *Homeric Cento*? And what is the influence of the biblical canon and ritual, which the audience would have known by heart, on the interpretative possibilities offered by convoluted and contested terms?

Fake synonyms: epic nouns as Gospel terms

An important step towards the Christianization of the Homeric vocabulary is

Bažil 2017. For late antique intertextuality and reader response see also the useful observations in Peltari 2014.

⁸ See Amsler 1989 and Dawson 1992, esp. 7-8. For the increased use of etymology within a general interest in symbolism and allegory see Struck 2004, 137-147. For an overview of imperial scholarship see now Matthaios 2020.

⁹ On levels of style see Agosti 2008; on word plays and etymological puns in metrical inscriptions see Agosti 2019 and in this volume p. 311-333.

¹⁰ E.g., Amsler 1989, 87-95 and *passim*; even harmonizing the often contrasting narrative of the Four Gospels required a leap of faith, hence Gospel 'harmonies' were not so welcome; see, e.g., O'Loughlin 2010. For Eusebius' attempt at a different kind of harmonization through his tables, see Crawford 2019 and Bausi 2020. For the scriptural context in Late Antiquity, see Stroumsa 2008.

seen in the reuse of nouns in the new context. At *I HC* 474 there is a word-play between the homophone words βασιλεια (the queen) and βασιλεία (kingship): the line used for Penelope's suitors who are called μνηστήρες ἀγακλειτῆς βασιλείης («suitors of the famous queen») is reused to designate those disciples who shall partake of the Kingdom of Heaven, since Christian texts describe Jesus' followers as potential brides or bridegrooms of the βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν¹¹. Likewise, terms that evoke Christian martyrdom are appropriately modified: for example, we learn at *I HC* 1385 that Jesus' disciples μάρτυροι ἔσσονται καὶ ἐπίσκοποι ἀρμονιάων («shall become martyrs¹² and presbyters of the new covenant»), although in *Iliad* XXII 255 this line is used to describe the pagan gods as witnesses and guardians of human oaths. In this case then the Christian meaning of the word is so potent that replaces its archaic one. Accordingly, one needs to understand the noun ἀγών in relation to Jesus' ministry and martyrdom: e.g., at *I HC* 464 the disciples are called upon ὄφρα οἱ αὐτόματοι θεῖον δυσαΐατ' ἀγῶνα («so that they follow him in his holy fight»); or at *I HC* 1870 δῆμιοι, οἳ κατ' ἀγῶνας εὖ πρήσσεσκον ἕκαστα («the assassins, who always attend everything properly during the executions»). In the Christian poem the noun should be understood in the Pauline sense: namely, an athletic competition that ends with the combatant's martyrdom¹³. Simple adjectives are reused and semantically adapted as well. In some cases, parallel evidence from the New Testament encourages their further semantic transformation: such is the case of the terms used to describe Jesus' followers and disciples as invited ones which allude to the New Testament description of Jesus' followers as κλητοὶ καὶ ἐκλεκτοί, as «summoned and elected»¹⁴. In this case the selection process does not take place among humans but by God.

Even more astonishingly, as Schembra 1994a, 330 has already pointed out, the adjective δαιμόνιος, which in Homer is used to characterize the god-like or the wretched one¹⁵, is reused in the Christian poem to characterize those possessed by

¹¹ Cf. Mt 22:2: ὡμοιώθη ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ βασιλεῖ, ὅστις ἐποίησεν γάμος τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ. Cf. *Caten.* 2 Cor 4:13; Schembra 2006, 228.

¹² For a loaded use of the term in Nonnus' *Paraphrasis of St. John's Gospel*, see also Vian 1997.

¹³ Cf. 1Tim. 4:7: τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα ἠγωνίσαι, τὸν δρόμον τετέλεκα, τὴν πίστιν τετήρηκα («I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept faith»). Cf. Euseb. *HE* VIII 2,3; and in *I HC* 1864 the description of the cross with imagery from the chariot race from *Il.* XXIII 327: ἔστηκε ξύλον αὔον ὅσον τ' ὄργυι' ὑπὲρ αἴης. See also Thompson 2002.

¹⁴ Mt 22:14: πολλοὶ γάρ εἰσιν κλητοὶ ὀλίγοι δὲ ἐκλεκτοί; and esp. Apoc 17:14: καὶ οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ κλητοὶ καὶ ἐκλεκτοὶ καὶ πιστοί. Cf. Schembra 2006, 226. Cf. also *Or. Sib.* II 169: ἀνδρῶν ἐκλεκτῶν πιστῶν, and Lightfoot 2007, 476 *ad l.*

¹⁵ Cf. *Schol. Genes. ad Il.* II 190: τὸ δαιμόνιε ποτὲ μὲν δηλοῖ τὸν ἀγαθόν, ποτὲ δὲ τὸν

the Satan as in *I HC* 957-958: δαιμόνιε, σχεδὸν ἔλθέ· τῆ δειδίσσειαι οὕτως; | δαιμόνιε, φθίσει σε τὸ σὸν μένος («Demon, come closer; why are you so scared? Demon, your might will destroy you»). In this case Jesus addresses Satan who dwells inside wicked men such as the demoniac of Gerasene and in other examples Judas¹⁶. In these instances, the audience of the poem is prompted to interpret the passages based on his/her knowledge of the language of the New Testament at the expense of the terms' archaic connotations.

Nomina loquentia: from personal names to meaningful adjectives

The poem, nonetheless, features other, more demanding cases where the precise knowledge of Homeric language is a prerequisite for deciphering the Christian narrative. One of the most striking transformations that scholars have long observed is the recasting of speaking names as eloquent and theologically loaded adjectives. This practice derives from a long tradition of etymologizing sacred and divine names and epithets¹⁷. Of these most characteristic is the typical cluster used to introduce Jesus across all redactions of *Homeric centos* as the θεοκλύμενος θεοειδής¹⁸. Whereas in the *Odyssey* Theoclymenus is the *nomen loquens* of a seer, whose knowledge obviously depends on divine inspiration, this interpretation cannot be accepted and applied straightforwardly in Jesus' case: Christ, being one with the Father, cannot learn the truth from God, and any divergence might have even raised theological issues concerning subordinationism, the heretic belief according to which Jesus and the Holy Spirit are second and not co-equal to

φαῦλον («the [word] *daimonie* on some occasions means the good man, on others the wretched man»). For its etymology from δαίμων see *Etym. Magn.* 251 s.v. δαιμόνιος, μακάριος, ἢ θαυμαστός· παρὰ τὸ δαίμων, δαίμονος [...] δαιμόνιε, μακάριε· ἢ κακόδαμον, φαυλότατε («*daimonios*, the blessed or the admired; from *daimon* [...] *daimonie*, [means] the blessed one, or wretched, most evil»).

¹⁶ *I HC* 957, 978, 1684, 1714.

¹⁷ For the allegoric-etymological potential of sacred names see Ramelli 2011 on Origen, and Radice 2020. For speaking names in Homer see e.g. Kamptz 1982 and Kanavou 2015; for Aristophanes, Kanavou 2011; for Hesiod see Vergados 2020, esp. 6, 11, 122-124, with literature.

¹⁸ And most often in the verse τὸν δ' αὖ γε προσέειπε θεοκλύμενος θεοειδής at *I HC* 697, 719, 799, 892, 921, 1433, 1467, 1655, 2265, 2340. Cyr. Alex. often uses it to denounce the false vs the real prophets/evangelists, e.g., *C. Jul.* 1.34. [on behalf of Moses]: θεοκλυτήσαντες γὰρ ἀληθῶς τὰ ἐξ ἑνὸς λαλοῦσι τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος («having been truly taught by god they all speak in unison with the holy spirit»); *De Trinit.* 552 (Aubert) ὁ θεοκλυτήσας Παῦλος; *Epist. Pasch.* PG LXXVII 724: εἰ θεοκλυτεῖν οἴοιτό τις.

God-Father. In the biblical cento, θεοκλύμενος probably depicts him not as one who learns from God, as Eustathius already argued about the Homeric seer on the basis of etymology¹⁹, but as someone whose opinion God takes into consideration and who is thus (co-)equal to him. It is in a similar vein that other speaking names, such as (κῆρυξ) Πεισήνωρ, become descriptive adjectives that contribute to the portrayal of the Christian characters, as in the case of Gabriel and John the Baptist, the two messengers *par excellence* whose mission is to convince reluctant audiences, Mary and the crowds respectively²⁰. A further etymological twist is observed in Jesus' dialogue with Pilate where the governor is portrayed as a powerful and terrifying ruler, *I HC* 1837: ἔχετον βασιλῆα, βροτῶν δηλήμονα πάντων. The Homeric Echetus, king of Epirus, was a legendary bogeyman and tyrant, but the Christian poem retains here both the etymology of ἔχετος from the verb ἔχω, making Pilate a powerful man, and simultaneously reuses the savage reputation of Echetus to allude to the governor's likewise alleged irascible character too²¹. In these cases the etymological possibilities embedded in the word are slightly revisited in order to reflect the new Christian context.

¹⁹ ~ *Od.* XV 356. For the etymology there are several options: θεοκλύμενος = (i) τὰ ἐκ θεοῦ κλύων (Eust. *ad Od.* II 97), the one who learns truth from god; (ii) θεὸς κλυτός, the glorious god; (iii) θεόκλυτος, the one whom God hears. In favor of this last meaning, see Rey 1996, 197, Schembra 2006, 266. For the same theological reason Nonnus' Jesus highlights the heavenly origin of his testimony as coming from God's bosom, *Par.* III 155-157: ὃς δὲ δι' αἰθερίου θεοδέγμονος ἵκετο κόλπου, | φθέγγεται οὐρανόθεν τόπερ ἔκλυεν, οὐδέ τις αὐτοῦ | μαρτυρίην ζαθέην ἐπιδέχνυται («but He who comes from the ethereal god-receiving bosom, utters what he knows from heavens above; yet nobody receives his divine testimony»), interpreting *Jo* 3:31: ἐπάνω πάντων ἐστίν. Cf. Orig. *In Jo* 46: εἰ γὰρ ἄνωθεν καὶ ἐκ πατρὸς ἔρχεται ὡς παντοκράτωρ, δῆλον ὅτι ἐπάνω πάντων ἐστίν («for if he comes from above and from the Father as all-sovereign, it means that he is atop of everything»).

²⁰ At *I HC* 228 and 264, only the first hemistich, κῆρυξ πεισήνωρ; and *I HC* 368, 373. See e.g. Schembra 1994c, 321. *Il.* VI 278: κῆρυξ Ἰδαῖος πεπνυμένα μῆδεα εἰδώς; *Od.* II 38: κῆρυξ Πεισήνωρ, πεπνυμένα μῆδεα εἰδώς. In the *I HC*, the proper *nomen loquens* Πεισήνωρ («the one that convinces the/his crowds») becomes an adjective. For John as messenger cf. Clem. Alex. *Protr.* I 10,1: ὁ μὲν Ἰωάννης, ὁ κῆρυξ τοῦ λόγου. See further parallels in Schembra 2006, 142.

²¹ Cf. Aristonicus, *De sign.* *Od.* XVIII 115-116; [Plut.] *De Homero* II 2263 (Kinstrand); Ps.-Nonn. *Schol. Or.* IV 48. For the reception of Homeric Echetus, whose name in the Christian poem means 'powerful' (from ἔχω), see Schembra 2006, 486-488, who believes that in portraying Pilate as such a dangerous man the cento draws on historical sources relating to Pilate's irascibility, e.g., Philo, *Leg. ad G.* 299-304: ἦν γὰρ τὴν φύσιν ἀκαμπῆς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ ἀυθάδους ἀμείλικτος [...] βαρύμηνης («for he was inflexible in his disposition and rude as well as merciless [...] and irascible»).

A more complex case is the man who invites Jesus over at *II HC* 1319-1320: ὁψὲ δὲ δὴ μετέειπε γέρων ἥρωος ἐχένης, | ὃς μύθοις ἐκέκαστο, παλαιὰ τε πολλά τε εἰδώς («and finally spoke the old rich man, who knew many stories and many things past»). The Odyssean lines summarize the introduction of the old Phaeacian man Echeneos (Ἐχένης, ἔχω + ναῦς) whose name is typical of the subject's identity as one who possesses ships, as it is indeed the case of the Phaeacian old man. The etymology at play here was noticed by ancient critics and could be hardly missed by the authors of centos. Phaeacian names, it was known, often were compound with sea-related vocabulary²². Schembra 2007b, 203 believes that it designates here Simon Peter, and not Simon the Pharisee because of the etymological connotations of the root: Simon-Peter, unlike Simon the leper and Simon the Pharisee, is a fisherman and thus has a boat²³. The rest of the passage however transposes the anointing of Jesus by the Sinful Woman from Matthew 26 that takes place in the house of Simon the leper²⁴. If there is an etymological witticism here, then this is probably in relation to the host who is emphatically described as a rich man who possesses a house, fields and even a wheat field²⁵, as ἐχένειος. For the feminine noun ἡ νεῖός, fallow land, was considered a sign of prosperity and good luck²⁶. Hesychius associated the noun ἡ νεῖός with the ionic type of the adjective νέος (ὁ νεῖος) through *parechesis* and argued that it implied the new-looking land, namely once it has been ploughed²⁷. The understanding of ἐχένειος as denoting the rich landlord then is indicative of Simon's wealth in this poem and probably also alludes to his metaphorical rejuvenation as well, as the former leper was 'rejuvenated' when healed by Christ.

²² Cf. Ariston. *De sign. Od.* VII 155,2 and Eust. *ad Od.* I 271: ὅτι δὲ τὰ πλείω τῶν Φαιακικῶν ὀνομάτων ναυτικά ἐκ τε νηῶν καὶ θαλάσσης εἰλημμένα («that most of the Phaeacian names are nautical, inspired from the ships and the sea»).

²³ And in this light he proposes the following emendation: instead of reading and correcting the toponym *II HC* 1326 Βηθανίην, found in the poem, Schembra 2007b, 203 proposes to read Βηθσαιδά, which would make sense for Simon-Peter.

²⁴ Cf. *II HC* 1332: αὐτοῦ ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς translates Mt 26:7: κατέχευεν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς.

²⁵ *II HC* 1326-1328: Βηθανίην, ὅθι ἴτου γε δόμοι καὶ κτήματ' ἰξασιν, | ἴξον δ', ἐς πεδίον πυρροφόρον, ἔνθα δ' ἔπειτα | εἰλαπινάζουσιν πίνουσι τε αἶθοπα οἶνον («to Bethany, where he owned a house and fields, and they arrived in a wheat field, where afterwards they ate and drunk red wine»).

²⁶ Cf. *Il.* XVIII 541, the ploughing scene of the fallow land on Achilles' shield and Hes. *Op.* 463.

²⁷ Hsch. ν 238: νεῖός· κυρίως μὲν ἡ νεωστὶ μεταβεβλημένη γῆ, τουτέστιν ἡροτριωμένη· νέα γὰρ φαίνεται. (ἀπὸ τοῦ νέα φαίνεσθαι) ἡ νεῖός ἐνὶ τριπόλῳ'. Λέγεται δὲ καὶ πᾶσα πληθύουσα χώρα, ἢ θάλλουσα. Cf. Schol. A *ad Il.* X 353.

Translations of biblical terms and periphraseis

In other cases, a New Testament term or its context is translated into an archaic near-synonym. For example, the adjective εινάλιος ('of the sea') used to describe the sea-bird κορώνη in Homer is used in the plural to substitute the *koine* ἀλιεῖς, Jesus' disciples as fishermen²⁸. Another interesting case is the Christian reuse of the ethnic φοῖνιξ to describe the woman with the issue of blood at *IHC* 1000 as follows: ἔσκε δὲ πατρὸς ἐοῖο γυνὴ φοίνισσ' ἐνὶ οἴκῳ («there lived in her paternal house a woman with an issue of blood»). Schembra 2006, 311 stresses the adoption of the lowercase φ, giving φοίνισσ', 'the crimson one', as the epithet for the woman with the issue of blood, instead of upper-case Φ, giving Φοίνισσ' the ethnic 'Phoenician'. This suggestion is correct and reflects contemporary exegesis regarding the woman's menorrhagia²⁹. On the other hand, the capital-letter Φοίνικες still remains relevant for the poem: Phoenicians as the inhabitants of the Red Sea were related to dark red or black colour, which, among other, was also associated with blood but also with the murderous character of Phoenicians throughout antiquity³⁰. Simultaneously, these connotations should be viewed within the context of the New Testament since Jesus performed miracles among the Phoenicians or the Syro-Phoenicians that were interpreted as an invitation to the Gentiles³¹. When all this information is evaluated together, it emerges that in the Christian poem the Phoenician woman of the *Odyssey* embodies the previously violent (maybe because of their ritual sacrifices) gentiles and their conversion.

A less obvious case is the negative reuse of a typical Achillean characteristic for Judas, who is described as swift-footed. According to ancient scholiasts, the adjective invited further comparisons between Achilles and the equally swift Dolon or

²⁸ Schembra 2006, 225.

²⁹ Cf. Orig. *Frag. in Lk* 125, PG XVII 337: «but she was gushing forth blood endlessly and suffered from the 'phoenician sin'». This echoes the famous Is. 1:18: «If your sins are as scarlet (ἁμαρτίαι ὑμῶν ὡς φοινικοῦν), as snow they shall be white». Cf. Cyr. Alex. *in Lk (in catenis)*, PG LXXII 637. On the illness of the woman as φοινικὴν ἁμαρτίαν cf. also Greg. Naz. *Or.* XL 33 (PG XXXVI 405 = *SCh* 358, 272).

³⁰ Cf. *Etym. Magn.* 797 s.v. Φοίνικες: πρότερον οἱ Φοίνικες ᾤκουν πρὸς τῇ ἐρυθρᾷ θαλάσῃ, καὶ ἐντεῦθεν αὐτοῖς τοῦνομα [...] s.v. Φοῖνιξ: παρὰ τὸ φόνοϛ· φόνιοι γὰρ οἱ Φοίνικες, καὶ ληστρικοὶ τὸν τρόπον («previously the Phoenicians were dwelling towards the Red Sea, and thus how they got this name [...] [also] Phoenix, from 'murder'; for the Phoenicians are bellicose and thuggish in their manners»). For the connotations of the adjective *phoinik-* in imperial Greek as meaning red, blood, date, palm, dye, Achilles' teacher, and much more, especially in Heliodorus, see Bowie 1998.

³¹ E.g. Mk 7:26, and Doak 2019, 667.

Hesiod's Atalanta³². In Judas' case, the cento solves the ambiguity by reusing the verse describing Dolon's swiftness while emphatically stressing this association in the following line that describes Judas' machinations as reflecting the Homeric spy's proper name: after all he is someone who knew παντοίους τε δόλους³³. For a Christian reader, however, there is an additional semantic layer at play. Jesus in the Fourth Gospel asks Judas (or Satan inside him) to act swiftly: Jo 13:27, ὃ ποιεῖς ποιήσον τάχιον³⁴. Speed was required according to some exegetes for the quick fulfilment of the plan of salvation, for which betrayal and crucifixion were unavoidable³⁵. Likewise (and even more so) in the *I HC* Judas acts swiftly, as the poem includes a detailed digression on his conspiracies preceding his betrayal that are not found in the canonical sources. The poem presents Judas' nocturnal *Doloneia* and his betrayal in the Garden as driven by extreme haste³⁶. In the Christian cento then the adjective ποδώκης has an additional exegetical and metaphorical function: although it is not used as an alternative option for a biblical term as in the previous cases (e.g., κλητοί, δαιμόνιος), it interprets Judas' swiftness as being a catalyst in the plan of salvation.

Homeric etymologies for Christian exegetical re-use

On other occasions, the poem's audience is prompted to choose from a variety of meanings that were attached to an archaic term and attested in Homeric criticism. An interesting example of the poem's engagement with the interpretative potential of Homeric etymology is the explanation of Odysseus' name which in

³² Cf. Eust. *ad Il* I 531. Herodian *Prosod.* III 2,37: παρὰ γοῦν τῷ Ἡσιόδῳ ἀνεγνώκασι «ποδωκῆς δι' Ἀταλάντη»; Dio Chrys. *Or.* LV 13: ὅταν μὲν διηγῆται περὶ Δόλωνος, ὅπως μὲν ἐπεθύμησε τῶν ἵππων τῶν Ἀχιλλέως ... καὶ οὐδὲν αὐτὸν ὤνησε τὸ τάχος («when [Homer] narrates about Dolon, and how he desired Achilles' horses ... and how his swiftness was not to his benefit»). On the fact that the adjective encouraged comparisons with Achilles, see the analysis of Atalanta in Hesiod's *Ehoiai* in Ziogas 2013164-168.

³³ *I HC* 1487-1488: ὅς δὴ τοι ἦτορ μὲν ἔην κακός, ἀλλὰ ποδώκης, | εἰδὼς παντοίους τε δόλους καὶ μήδεα πικνὰ («who was indeed evil in his heart, but swift-footed, and he knew all sorts of machinations and wicked thoughts»).

³⁴ After which Judas swiftly leaves the room, Jo 13:30: ἐξῆλθεν εὐθύς.

³⁵ Orig. *in Jo* 32.23: προκαλούμενος τὸν ἀνταγωνιστὴν ἐπὶ τὴν πάλην, ἢ τὸν προδότην ἐπὶ τὸ διακονῆσαι τῇ σωτηρίῳ τῷ κόσμῳ ἐσομένη οἰκονομία («he is provoking his rival to fight, or the traitor to act for the fulfilment of the plan of salvation in the world»). See also Cyr. Alex. *in Jo* 2.372 (Pusey).

³⁶ *I HC* 1517: αὐτίκα; 1527: μάλα δ' ὄκα; 1530: αὐτίκα.

the Christian poem is reused to describe the woman with the issue of blood as a sufferer, *I HC* 1017-1018: πολλοῖσιν δ' ἄρ' ἐγὼ δὴ ὀδυσσαμένη τόδ' ἰκάνω («for I, cursed by many, have arrived here»). These famous words are pronounced at *Odyssey* XIX 407-408 by Autolycus, Odysseus' grandfather, and provide one of the etymologies of the hero's name. Modern interpreters have investigated thoroughly whether the etymology of ὀδυσσάμενος is to be understood as passive (the one who is hated) or middle (the one who is angered against someone) or both³⁷. However, the ancient scholia show that the interpretation of ὀδυσσάμενος was multi-layered: it could mean 'the hated' or 'the one provoking the (divine) wrath', or 'having caused harm'³⁸. In this sense Strauss Clay 1983, 60 is closer to the original meaning when she translates it as 'cursed'. This is precisely the etymology proposed by the *I HC* as the haemorrhaging woman, being a miasma, is both cursed (with this disease) and, as a result, hated by everyone³⁹. This reuse is not representative of late antique interpretation of the adjective but of the particular meaning the audience of the *I HC* was prompted to conjure through the biblical context as its reuse in Christian verse varies: for example, in the *Metaphrasis of the Psalms* ὀδυσσάμενος is used in the middle sense to describe God's anger because of human transgressions⁴⁰. What is more, in the case of the haemorrhaging woman the adjective is employed with an additional metaphorical touch: her long woes in search of a cure are a kind of metaphoric *Odyssey* for which Odysseus' name was an adequate characterization⁴¹.

In the description of the Harrowing of Hell, Christ fights with Hades who is similarly cast as a negative Achillean character. In this context the immortal lord of the underworld, vanquished, expresses the wish to become an ordinary mortal man rather than serve the risen Christ, *I HC* 2140-2141: βουλοίμην κ' ἐπάρορος ἐὼν θητευέμεν ἄλλω | ὅς κε θνητὸς ἔην («I would rather be a mortal man and work for another who is mortal»). According to the ancient scholia the word

³⁷ Strauss Clay 1983, 60-65 with an detailed discussion of older scholarship, Doherty 2009, 92-93, Peradotto 1990, 127-135.

³⁸ *Schol. V ad Od.* XIX 407: ὀδυσσάμενος, μισηθείς ἢ ὀργὴν ἀγαγών ἢ βλάβας. On etymological interpretation in Homer see Lamberton 1986, 38. See also Vergados 2020, 13-14.

³⁹ See further Lefteratou 2017.

⁴⁰ *Met. Pss.* II 26: μηδὲ παρακλίνειας ὀδυσσάμενος θεράποντι («do not forsake by being angered at your slave»); II 104-105: αὐτὰρ ὁ μήνιε πάμπαν ἄναξ κακοεργεῖ λαῶ | κλήρου ὀδυσσάμενος σφετέρου ὑπερήφανον ὕβριν («and the lord was thoroughly wrath against his evil-doing people and cursed the arrogant insolence of his inheritance»).

⁴¹ Cf. the woman's supplication of Jesus at *I HC* 1030: γούνων ἄψασθαι χαλεπὸν δέ με πένθος ἰκάνει («to touch your knees; for I am consumed by a great distress»), revisits Odysseus' supplication of Arete at *Od.* VI 169.

ἐπάρουρος could denote a keeper or guard, a ploughman, or one living on earth as synonym of ἐπίγειος (ἐπί + ἄρουρα/γῆ)⁴². It is this last sense that is reclaimed in the Christian poem and not the one used in Homer for Achilles who famously compares the glum posthumous heroic *kleos* as king among the dead to the happier and humble life of a ploughman⁴³. In other words, the Christian poem here adopts one of the interpretations proposed by the scholiasts which is not necessarily the one related to the specific Homeric passage.

Other centonic reuses imply that the audience of the biblical poem was encouraged to consider various interpretations, including some that were not necessarily applied to the Homeric text. Ὑπερφίαλος, for example, which was often associated with Penelope's suitors, was an adjective that had negative connotations already in the Homeric poems⁴⁴. It was etymologically associated with the verbs φῶ, a phantom version of the verb φαίνω⁴⁵, meaning the one who arrogantly attempts to overshadow the others⁴⁶. Ancient scholiasts, however, observe that the adjective could also have a positive sense, since the suitors address their peers using it, and therefore it cannot be negative in such contexts⁴⁷. When describing Jesus'

⁴²The word θητευέμεν here in the broader sense of working for a wage and not as a serf, e.g. Ps. Zonaras, s.v. θ 1044: θητεύειν. ἐπὶ μισθῷ δουλεύειν. Suda s.v. θ 374.

⁴³Cf. *Od.* XI 489-490: βουλοίμην κ' ἐπάρουρος ἐὼν θητευέμεν ἄλλω, | ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἀκλήρω, ᾧ μὴ βίσιος πολὺς εἶη, | ἢ πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι καταφθιμένοισιν ἀνάσσειν («I would rather follow the plow as thrall to another man, one with no land allotted him and not much to live on, than be a king over all the perished dead»). *Etym. Mag.* 353, s.v. ἐπάρουρος. In a similar sense it is used in Nonn. *Par.* VI 177; cf. Franchi 2013, 469, where it denotes the farmers who are expected to participate in the eucharistic banquet.

⁴⁴The term was already used in oracular epic language to describe transgression, e.g. *Or. Sib.* I 105, III 73 and *passim*, and later for the Pharisees in Nonn. *Par.* XI 234; an amusing case is its parodic reuse for octopuses in Opp. *Hal.* II 590, on which see Kneebone 2020, 142.

⁴⁵Phantom or 'ghost words', according to Reece 2009, 111, «were invented by lexicographers in their attempts to explain the meaning of what was to them an etymologically inexplicable» terms, and which are known only to scholiasts and glossographers.

⁴⁶*Schol. A ad Il.* XV 94: ὑπερφίαλος, ὑπερήφανος, ἄδικος, ἀπηγής, χαλεπός, σκληρός. Orion *Etym.* s.v. υ 156: παρὰ τὸ φῶ, οὗ παράγωγον φαίνω. ὁ ὑπερφαίνειν τῶν ἄλλων ἑαυτὸν ἐπιχειρῶν δεῖξαι, ὃ ἐστὶν ὑπερήφανος («derived from the verb to say [in the sense of revealing], a derivative of which is the verb to appear/show. For the one who attempts to show himself better than the others he is called the proud»); also in Ps.-Zonaras s.v. υ 1768 and in the *Etym. Mag.* 780 s.v..

⁴⁷Suda υ 385: ποτὲ μὲν ἐπὶ ψόγου· ὑπερφίαλος καὶ ἀπηγής, ἀντὶ τοῦ οὐκ ἔνσπονδος, ἐν ἄλλοις δὲ ἐπὶ ἐγκωμίου· ὑπερφίαλοισι μεθ' ὑμῖν δαίνυσθαι (*Od.* II 310 and XXI 289). ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῖς («on some occasions it is used to express blame: for example, "arrogant and rough"»

mekness and humility the negative associations of the term are signaled as still being a possibility, as for example at *I HC* 196: ὡς ἐμὸς οὐ ποτε θυμὸς ὑπερφιάλος καὶ ἀπηνής. The line is repeated at *I HC* 1551 in order to describe Judas for whom the negative connotations hold true⁴⁸. On the other hand, when the adjective is used with respect to Jesus' μνηστήρες, his disciples, the Homeric reader needs to work past the negative associations attached to Penelope's suitors in the *Odyssey*. Thus, at *I HC* 1415, ὑπερφιάλοισι μεθ' ὑμῖν, Jesus holds the Last Supper with his brave disciples, and at *I HC* 2224 the angel tells Mary to report the resurrection to the μνηστήρσιν ὑπερφιάλοισιν. These cases indicate that the etymology of the word was restricted and defined by its immediate context and thus open to scrutiny, inviting an engaged reader to ponder on the options. On the other hand, the banquet context in which these appear at *I HC* 1415, the Last Supper, is suggestive of a similar association of the adjective with the drinking cup, the φιάλη. Homeric scholiasts considered the possibility that the arrogant behaviour of the suitors might be related to their drinking habits, as they were drinking from the same bottle⁴⁹. While this may or not be true for the suitors, it is nonetheless the case in the Last Supper where the disciples share wine from the same cup as a prefiguration of the communion⁵⁰, in which case the etymology may be used in *Kontrastimitation* and with eucharistic connotations⁵¹.

A different approach is taken with respect to adjectives indicating human foolishness and disobedience, such as νηπύτιος and νήπιος. Νηπύτιος is employed in

used instead of “not gentle”; but on other cases as praise: “to dine with your excellencies”»). Cf. Apollon. *Lex.* s.v. 158 (Bekker): οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἑαυτοὺς κακῶς ἔλεγον («for they would not be badmouthing themselves»). For the reuse of the adjective in Christian verse cf. Nonn. *Par.* XI 234 and Spanoudakis 2014, 356, argues that the adjective described all sort of transgressions, also hybris against the divine. Cf. its use in *Or. Sib.* 1.105, 3.73, in a similar sense.

⁴⁸ For Judas see *I HC* 1549-1550: σχέτλιος, αἰὲν ἀλιτρός, ἐμῶν μενέων ἀπερωεύς, | ἄγριος, οὔτε δίκας εὖ εἰδῶς οὔτε θέμιστας («the cursed, the always evil, the one who always rebuts my plans; a wild one, who knows of neither justice nor established laws»).

⁴⁹ *Schol. ad Od.* II 310e: ἔθος ἦν τοῖς παλαιοῖς ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτῆς μὲν φιάλης ἤγουν ποτηρίου πίνειν ἐν συμποσίῳ τοὺς πάντας. τοὺς δὲ ἀναισχύντως καὶ ἀπαιδεύτως τῇ φιάλῃ προσκαθημένους ὑπερφιάλους ὠνόμαζον («it was a custom among men of old in banquets to drink all from one cup, i.e., from one cup. And those who were sitting next to the bottle shamelessly and boorishly they called them ‘over-the-bottle’»). Also in Athen. *Deipn.* 11.24 (Olson = 90 Kaibel).

⁵⁰ Mt 26:27: καὶ λαβὼν ποτήριον καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων, πείτε ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντες, τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου.

⁵¹ Which is supported by the poem's allusions to food and drink at *I HC* 1452-1453: ὦ πόποι, | οὐ πῶς ἔστιν ὑπερφιάλοισι μεθ' ὑμῖν | ἔσθ' εἶναι | καὶ πίν' εἶναι, | ἔτι καὶ παρέκειτο τράπεζα («alas, it is not possible to dine and drink with your excellencies, although the table is set»).

the Christian poem for Judas at *I HC* 1687 and 1567⁵² and its etymology is given by the very Homeric line used for it as at *Il.* XXI 441: νηπύτι' ὡς ἄνοον κραδίην ἔχες («imprudent; for you had a mindless heart»). In this verse νηπύτιος is taken as a synonym of ἄνοος⁵³. In a similar vein ancient lexicographers derive the adjective from νη and πινυτός⁵⁴. Likewise, νήπιος is used in the Homeric poems for the transgressive behavior of Odysseus' companions which is punished accordingly in *Od.* I 7-8: αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρησιν ἀτασθαλίησιν ὄλοντο, | νήπιοι («for they perished because of their own wickedness, fools»). The *Etymologicum Magnum* collects several of the ancient etymologies associated with the adjective: the ignorant, the fool, the gentle, the speechless (therefore the baby), or even the greasy one⁵⁵. Among these the Christian cento retains the interpretation of foolishness as punishable transgression and uses it for the poem's villains, such as Herod. The king's arrogance and wickedness explicitly contrasts him to the innocents, whom he slaughters through a word-play between νήπιος and νηπιάχοις, the innocent babies of Bethlehem⁵⁶. By contrast, when applying the adjective to Jesus on the cross

⁵² Cf. also *II HC* 1567.

⁵³ This is the case of what Marzullo (1968) defined as the principle of «coppia contiguo». Namely, the case in which two terms found close to each other in a literary text are taken not as synonyms but as having identical meaning, or as *lemma* and *explicatio*.

⁵⁴ Cf. Ps.-Zonaras, s.v. νυ 1387: νηπύτιος. ἄφρων, ἀνόητος. παρὰ τὸ νη στερητικὸν καὶ τὸ πινυτὸν γέγονε νηπινύτιος, καὶ συγκοπῆ τοῦ ι καὶ τοῦ ν νηπύτιος («*nepytios*. The foolish, the mindless. From *ne* privative and the *pinyton* ('wise') it became *nepinytios*, and with shortening of *iota* and *nu*, *nepytios*). On a different Christianized use of *nepytios* as indicating the uninitiated ones cf. Agosti (1989), 114, on *Orphica Lithica* (Halleux, Scharmp) 4.

⁵⁵ *Etym. Magn.* 604 s.v. νήπιος: ἄφρων, ἀνόητος. παρὰ τὸ ἥπιος, πλεονασμῶ τοῦ ν, ὁ πρᾶος καὶ προσηνής, καὶ νήπια ποιῶν. Ἡ παρὰ τὸ ΝΗ στερητικὸν καὶ τὸ εἰπεῖν γίνεται νηέπιος, καὶ κατὰ συγκοπὴν νήπιος, ὁ μὴ δυνάμενος λέγειν. Ἡ νήβιος, ὁ ἐστερημένος τοῦ βίου καὶ νήπιον, τὸ ἐστερημένον τῶν βιωτικῶν φροντίδων. Ἡ παρὰ τὸ ΝΗ ἐπιτατικὸν καὶ τὸ πῖον, τὸ λιπαρόν. Ἡ ἥπιον, τὸ πρᾶον καὶ μὴ ἔχον ὀργὴν, μετὰ τοῦ ἐπιτατικοῦ. Ἡ νέον πῖον. πρᾶον καὶ μὴ ἔχον ὀργὴν, μετὰ τοῦ ἐπιτατικοῦ. Ἡ νέον πῖον («*nepios*: the ignorant; the fool. From the *hepios*, because of redundancy of *nu*, meaning the meek and gentle, and acting kingly. Or from *ne* privative and to say it becomes *nhepios* [νη + ἔπος], and after the syncope *nepios*, namely the one who cannot speak. Or *nebios*, the one who is deprived of life; and from *nepion*, the one which is deprived of the worries pertaining to life; or from the emphatic *ne* and *pion*, the fatty one. Or gentle, calm, the one without anger, with the emphatic [particle]. Or from new grease»).

⁵⁶ *I HC I* 313-315: πολλὰ δ' ἀτάσθαλ' ἔρεξε βίη καὶ κάρτεϊ εἴκων, | πάντων μὲν κρατέειν ἐθέλων, πάντεσσι δ' ἀνάσσειν | νήπιος ἢ τε πολέσιν ἐπ' αὐτῷ θυμὸν ἀπήυρα | νηπιάχοις («[Herod] did many wicked deeds, yielding to violence and power; for he wished to dominate everything, to rule everyone – the fool; for himself he robbed the life of many in-

the poem seems to play with a double interpretative outcome. At *IHC* 1992-1993 the good thief on Golgotha asks Jesus: νήπιός εις, ὦ ξεῖνε, λίην τόσον ἢ ἐ χαλίφρων, | ἦε ἐκὼν μεθειῖς καὶ τέρπεται ἄλγεα πάσχων («dear stranger, are you a fool, or are you such a thoughtless man? Or are you willingly giving up and taking pleasure in woes?»). Meekness was a particularly important Christian characteristic. The *IHC* in its introductory passage featuring God's dialogue with Christ about the Salvation had already highlighted Christ's aptitude for martyrdom as a *sine qua non* for his mission: Jesus can succeed if he remains soft tempered, pleasant, gentle, and kind even in hardship⁵⁷. So when the etymological play between νήπιος-χαλίφρων is employed here, although it is intended ironically by the thief, it still highlights Christ's sublime sacrifice for the sake of humanity.

Semantic leaps, exegetical challenges

In some other cases the etymology of a particular word has to be discarded altogether or a significant semantic stretch is required in order to decode the Christian poem. A complex and exegetically confusing case is the description of the salve used to embalm Jesus' body in the entombment scene. The lines employed, albeit in reverse order, are those used for Thetis' balm with which she prevents Patroclus' body from decaying. These are reclaimed for the embalming of Jesus' dead body at *IHC* 2044-2246: ἐν λεχέεσσι δὲ θέντες ἐανῶ λιτὶ κάλυψαν | ἐς πόδας ἐκ κεφαλῆς, καθύπερθε δὲ φάρεϊ λευκῶ. | καὶ δ' ὠτειλὰς πλῆσαν ἀλείφατος ἐννεώροιο («and they placed him in a bier and covered him with fine linen, from feet to head, and atop they placed a white cloth; and filled the wounds with pricey balm»). In Patroclus' case Thetis⁵⁸, a goddess, provides a temporary solution to the issue of the dead body's exposure to decay and putrefaction before its burial. In the Iliadic context, ἐννέωρος was interpreted as meaning nine years (ἐννέα + ὥρος) and in a later interpretation the number nine might have been used to

fants»). For the association of ἀτασθαλίαι with foolishness in Christian poetry cf. also Judas' punishment at *IHC* I 1350; and also in *Or. Sib.* IV 38, IV 156 (μέγα νήπιου), echoing here also Hesiod's portrayal of Perses. For the term in Hesiod, see Strauss Clay 1993, and Maravela 2019, who, nonetheless, does not consider in depth the Christian reception.

⁵⁷ *IHC* 109-110: οὐ γάρ τοι γλυκύθυμος ἀνήρ ἦν οὐδ' ἀγανόφρων, | οὔτις ἔτι πρόφρων ἀγανὸς καὶ ἦπιος ἐστίν. On the Christian notion of meekness cf. *2Tim.* 2:24: δοῦλον δὲ κυρίου οὐ δεῖ μάχεσθαι, ἀλλὰ ἦπιον εἶναι πρὸς πάντας, διδακτικόν, ἀνεξίκακον («and the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful»).

⁵⁸ ~ *Il.* XVIII 352, 353, and 351.

describe what was understood to be an oil that had been fermented for nine years and was consequently powerful because of its age⁵⁹. While this etymology works for the *Iliad* and is also persuasive in the Christian poem, there is a danger of reading the passage too literally, as it might hint to a miaphysitic agenda⁶⁰: Christ's is not a decaying cadaver after all but the body of the risen Theanthropos. It might still be worth investigating a possible Christian reading by emphasizing the associations with the number nine. In the Gospels it is a pricey aloe ointment that is used for Jesus' body, a plant that was not known in the Greek world before Alexander⁶¹. John's mention of the expensive aloe supports the etymology of ἐννεώροιο as old and/or costly oil. To this, Christian exegesis gives an additional twist: according to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus died on the ninth hour⁶², a temporal precision also replicated in early Christian ritual. In a speech to the baptizands John Chrysostom compares the redemption of the good thief to that of the prospect Christian and stresses that their mutual confession, which, allegedly, happens on the ninth hour of the day⁶³. Given the lack of relevant aloe-related centos, the reclaim of the verses about Thetis' balm may provide an explanation concerning the hour of Jesus' death which, like the ointment, is also salvific, for humans. In this respect, potential and not strictly orthodox insinuations may be quelled as the balm, especially if this is considered to be an oil, is exegetically related to the hour of Jesus' death and thus symbolically foreshadows not a temporary but an eternal salvation from decay and death⁶⁴.

Another problematic passage which presupposed several semantic leaps on the part of the reader is the digression on Jesus' holy blood as prefiguring the Eucharist. When pierced by the soldier's spear Jesus' wound in the *I HC* pours forth a kind of liquid that has many affinities with Helen's famous drug-wine from *Odyssey* IV, in an eloquent description seen from the passage quoted below:

⁵⁹ *Schol. ex. ad Il. XVIII* 315a: ὡς φαρμακῶδη δύναμιν ἔχοντος τοῦ παλαιοῦ ἐλαίου («because the medicinal power of the old ointment was so powerful»). And Eust. *ad Il. IV* 189.

⁶⁰ For the alleged monophysitism of Eudocia, see Livrea 1997, 51; also Holum 1982, 224.

⁶¹ Jo 19:39: μίγμα σμύρνης καὶ ἀλόης ὡς λίτρας ἑκατόν. For the use of aloe after Alexander's campaign see Scarborough 1982.

⁶² Jesus delivers his spirit on the ninth hour, ca 15:00, Mt 27:46: περὶ δὲ τὴν ἐνάτην ὥραν ἀνεβόησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς φωνῇ μεγάλῃ λέγων; and Mk 15:34 and Lk 23:44.

⁶³ Jo Chrys. *Catech. ad bapt.* 117 (Papadopoulos-Kerameus): ὅταν οὖν μέλλῃς εἰσάγεσθαι καὶ σὺ κατὰ τὴν ἐνάτην ὥραν, ἀναμνησκου καὶ σὺ τοῦ μεγέθους τῶν κατορθωμάτων («similarly then when you are about to be introduced around the ninth hour remember you too the magnitude of these miracles»).

⁶⁴ For oil in Christian ritual, especially the baptism see, e.g. Norderval 2011.

εἶθαρ δ' ἄμβροτον αἶμα κατάρρεεν ἐξ ὤτειλῆς, | 1969 ~ *Il.* V 870
 νηπενθές τ' ἄχολόν τε κακῶν τ' ἐπίληθον ἀπάντων. | 1970 ~ *Od.* IV 221
 τοῦτό νυ καὶ γέρας οἶον ὀϊζυροῖσι βροτοῖσιν. | 1971 ~ *Od.* IV 197
 οὐ ποτέ τοι θάνατον προτιόσσετο θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ, | 1972 ~ *Od.* XIV 219
 ὃς τὸ καταβρώξειεν, ἐπὶν κρητήρι μιγείη· | 1973 ~ *Od.* IV 222
 οὐκ ἂν ἐφημέριός γε βάλοι κατὰ δάκρυ παρειῶν, | 1974 ~ *Od.* IV 223
 οὐδ' εἴ οἱ κατατεθναίῃ μήτηρ τε πατήρ τε, | 1975 ~ *Od.* IV 224
 ἧὲ κασίγνητος ὁμογαστριος ἧὲ καὶ υἱός. | 1976 ~ *Il.* XXIV 47

Immediately there gushed forth from the wound immortal blood which quenches sorrows, bitterness, and all painful memories. This is the only boon for miserable mortals! For your brave soul will never look upon at death [in fear] if it consumes it, once mixed in a bowl. And no longer shall a mortal shed a tear even if his mother were to die or his father nor his uterine brother or even his son.

The Spartan queen used her Egyptian drugs to sooth Menelaus' and Telemachus' lamentations. According to a scholiast, as these were the cause of their sorrow and irritation, Helen «took incredibly upon herself the elimination of grief and anger, through which the other passions are quenched»⁶⁵. Yet a rounded reading of the three adjectives – νηπενθές, ἄχολον, ἐπίληθον – is found in Eustathius who reports centuries of Homeric criticism as follows (*ad Od.* I 161):

Νηπενθές δέ, οὐ μόνον τὸ ἐστερημένον πένθους, ἀλλ' ἰδοὺ ἐνταῦθα καὶ τὸ στερίσκον πένθους. Ὅ ἐστιν ἄλυπον. Ἄχολον δέ, τὸ ἀόργητον. ἄλλως μέντοι, καὶ ἄχολα ζῶα τὰ μὴ ἔχοντα σωματικὴν χολήν. Τὸ δὲ ἐπίληθον, Ἀρίσταρχος μὲν προπαροξυτόνως γράφει, ὡς ὄνομα οὐδέτερον, ὃ δηλοῖ τὸ ἐπιληστικόν.

Νηπενθές, not only the deprived of grief but in this case here the one that deprives of grief, namely the one that frees from pain. Ἄχολον now means the not irascible, for the docile animals don't have a bile. The word ἐπίληθον, Aristarchus writes it as a proparoxytone as a neutral noun, which means that which contributes to obliviousness.

Such an interpretation is in accordance with the use of Helen's magical drug for the temporal soothing of her distressed guests, but it would have been inappropriate for the eucharistic connotations associated with Christ's holy immortal blood

⁶⁵ *Schol. ad Od.* IV 206. Cf. Hsch. α 8890: ἄχολον ἀποσκευαζόμενον τὴν ὀργήν. κωλυτικὴν ὀργῆς δύναμιν ἔχον («anger-less: the one that wards off anger; that has the power to rebut anger»).

which is also stressed in the poem (*I HC* 1969: ἄμβροτον αἶμα), a fascinating case of *Kontrastimitation*. In the Gospel the sacrifice is to be remembered as an eucharistic ritual that guarantees eternal life: λάβετε, πείτε, τοῦτό μου ἔστιν τὸ αἶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐκχυνόμενον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν⁶⁶. In revising the passage, the centonist added lines in this digression on Helen's drugs which contribute towards the new intended interpretation. Line *I HC* 1972 (~ *Od.* XIV 219: οὐ ποτέ τοι θάνατον προτιόσσετο θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ) provides an additional dimension to νηπενθές, as it shows death's lack of power, before resuming with the relevant lines from the *Odyssey* (*I HC* 1974 ~ *Od.* IV 223: οὐκ ἂν ἐφημέριός γε βάλοι κατὰ δάκρυ παρειῶν, including the hyperbole in lines 1975-1976). In this new rearrangement of Homeric lines, the verb προτιόσσετο (to forbode, foreshadow)⁶⁷ metaphorically makes of the blood a type of the eucharist for the mortals (ἐφημέριοι)⁶⁸.

In a similar vein the other three adjectives may be re-semanticized through the Christian canon. For example, ἄχολος, may echo the sour wine with gall that was offered to Jesus on the cross⁶⁹, which Jesus counters in his sacrifice by providing his blood a sweet brewage⁷⁰. An erudite Christian reader like Clement reuses the Homeric line to describe the Leviticus as a soothing song and finds 'sweetness' in it, by presumably interpreting ἄχολον in the metaphorical medicinal sense as lacking in bile and, consequently, not bitter but sweet⁷¹. As a result, the traditional

⁶⁶ With variations in Mt 26:26, Mk 14:22, 1Cor 11:24.

⁶⁷ Cf. Porph. *Hom. quaest.* 98 (Sodano): προεμαντεύετο.

⁶⁸ Schembra 2006, 536 on the eucharistic associations; Schembra is puzzled about the lack of water appearing in the cento revision as opposed to Jo 19:34; but this is probably already hinted in the mixed drink at *I HC* 1973: ἐπήν κρητῆρι μυγείη.

⁶⁹ Matthew 27:34: οἶνον μετὰ χολῆς μεμιγμένον; recalling Psalm 69:21 and with respect to the 'bitter cup' that he mentions in the Garden in Mt 20:22 and 26:39 and 42; cf. Mk 10:38, Lk 22:42, Jo 18:11.

⁷⁰ Cf. [Jo Chrys.] *In resurrect.* 91: ἐκεῖνοι ἔσφαξαν ἡμεῖς ὀψωνήσαμεν, ἐκεῖνοι τὴν πλευρὰν διώρυξαν ἡμεῖς τὸ μυστικὸν γάλα ἠντλήσαμεν, ἐκεῖνοι τὸ ὄξος ἡμεῖς τὸ αἶμα, ἐκεῖνοι τὴν χολὴν ἡμεῖς δὲ τὴν γλυκύτητα, ἐκεῖνοι τὸν τάφον ἡμεῖς δὲ τὸν οὐρανόν («they [the Jews] murdered [Christ] but we benefited from the trade; they opened his side, but we drew the mystic milk; they got the vinegar but we got the blood; they got the bile but we got the sweetness; they got death and we the heavens»). Didym. *in Ps.* 68:21, 7171a argues that the wine came from the sour Jewish vine. And *AAPhilippi* 141: καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ ἔχων τὴν γλυκύτητα, καὶ ἐνέπτυσαν αὐτὸν ποτίσαντες αὐτὸν χολὴν, ἵνα ποιήσῃ τοὺς πικρανθέντας τῆς γλυκύτητος αὐτοῦ γεύσασθαι («and he is the one who is sweet/gratifying, and they spat upon him and poured him gall, so that the embittered ones may taste his sweetness»).

⁷¹ Clem. Alex. *Protr.* I 2,3: ἀλλὰ τῆς καινῆς ἀρμονίας τὸν αἰδιον νόμον, τὸν φερώνυμον τοῦ θεοῦ, τὸ ἄσμα τὸ καινόν, τὸ Λευιτικόν, «νηπενθές τ' ἄχολόν τε, κακῶν ἐπίληθες ἀπάντων»· γλυκύ τι καὶ ἀληθινὸν φάρμακον πειθοῦς ἐγκέκραται τῷ ἄσματι («but the law

interpretation as gall-free and as a near synonym of sweet is a possibility within the new context. The case of ἐπίληθον is more challenging, as in the Gospel the re-enactment of the passion is important in the prefiguration of the eucharist during the Last Supper (εἰς ἀνάμνησιν). This parallel passage implies that in the Christian poem it is not the mortals who drink the eucharist those who are bound to forget but God; instead it is their sins that will sink into oblivion, a popular theme among biblical exegetes⁷². In this case the parallel texts from the New Testament expand on the Homeric connotations of the word and provide a new exegetical commentary for which Homeric etymology could not provide appropriate material.

Archaic terms in Christian and Platonic guise

The last case I want to examine deals with the intertextual influence of Christian poetry, and not the Bible, on the interpretation of key themes such as the poet's inspiration by the Holy Spirit, or an Angel, or in some cases by Christ in person, all of which substitute the classical *topos* of the invocation to the Muse⁷³. In these occasions neither Homer nor the Bible and its exegesis are enough to explain the Christian revision which is better understood if seen through the lens of Graeco-Roman *paideia* altogether. When the cento poet appears to refer to her soul, or rather her *thymos* as the origin of her song, as seen below, she invokes several interpretative layers of the word:

Κέκλυτε, μυρία φύλα ἱερικτιόνων, ἱ ἀνθρώπων, | 1 ~ *Il.* XVII 220+*Od.* II 65
 ὅσσοι νῦν βροτοὶ εἰσιν ἐπὶ χθονὶ σίτον ἔδοντες, | 2 ~ *Od.* VIII 222
 ἡμὲν ὅσοι ναῖουσι πρὸς ἠῶ τ' ἠέλιόν τε, | 3 ~ *Od.* XIII 240
 ἡδ' ὅσοι μετόπισθε ποτὶ ζόφον ἠερόεντα, | 4 ~ *Od.* XIII 241
 ὄφρ' εἴπω τά με θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι κελεύει, 5 ~ *Il.* VII 68
 ὡς εὖ γινώσκητ' θεὸν ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα, | 6 ~ *Il.* V 128
 ὃς πᾶσι θνητοῖσι καὶ ἀθανάτοισιν ἀνάσσω | 7 ~ *Il.* XII 242

of the new harmonious eternal [covenant], the one named after God, the new song, Leviticus, "that averts sorrow, anger, and makes forget all"; for a sweet and true medicine of persuasion is mixed in the song»).

⁷² Cyr. Alex. *Epist.* PG LXXVII 653: δεδώρηται τοίνυν ἡμῖν πλημμελημάτων ἄφεσιν, ἀνεξίκακον ἀγάπην. διασεσώσμεθα γὰρ, λήθην ὥσπερ τινα λαβόντος τοῦ Θεοῦ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης μικροψυχίας («for we have been granted remission of sins, a forbearing love. For we have been saved as if God had forgotten, as it were, about human pettiness»).

⁷³ On the Christianization of the Muses' role in Greek poetry, see Agosti 2015, 92-93, who argues that the Muses ultimately remained the personifications of poetic inspiration, but were increasingly represented in the guise of angels.

Hearken you, myriad human clans who all around reside, you mortals who now dwell on the earth and feed yourselves with grain, and those who live towards the East and the Sun(rise) and all of you (who dwell) the last towards the misty darkness, |so that I tell of all those things that my heart inside compels me, so that you acknowledge doubtlessly the one who is god and human, the one who governs over all, mortals and gods alike.

The *I HC* in fact attests to several uses of θυμός as found in the *LSJ*⁷⁴: it may indicate the soul as desire to do something (*I HC* 475: ὄφρ' εἶπω τά με θυμός ἐνὶ στήθεσσι κελεύει; *I HC* 196: πέμψω δ' ὄπη σε κραδίη θυμός τε κελεύει); the disposition and temper (*I HC* 141: καὶ δὲ σοὶ αὐτῷ θυμός ἐνὶ φρεσὶν ἴλαος ἔστω; 196: ὡς ἐμὸς οὐ ποτε θυμός ὑπερφίαλος καὶ ἀπηγής); the spirit/courage (*I HC* 608: ὡς εἰπὼν ὤτρυνε μένος καὶ θυμὸν ἐκάστου); anger and (divine) wrath (*I HC* 149-150: μηδὲ μεγαλίζεο θυμῷ, | ὡς μὴ πάντες ὄλωνται ὀδυσσαμένοιο τεοῖο); the heart (*I HC* 1039: ἐν θυμῷ, γρηῦ, χαῖρε καὶ ἴσχεο); and the mind/thought (*I HC* 346: ἦδε δὲ οἱ κατὰ θυμὸν ἀρίστη φαίνεται βουλή, | Αἴγυπτὸνδ' ἔναι). In some cases, the Homeric term probably alludes to life in the physical sense: e.g., several sufferers wish to die an ignoble death (*I HC* 847: βούλομ' ἄπαξ πρὸς κῦμα χανὼν ἀπὸ θυμὸν ὀλέσσαι; 1005: θυμὸν ἀποπνείουσ' ὡς τε σκώληξ ἐπὶ γαίῃ); or the infanticide Herod meets his doom (*I HC* 315 νήπιος ἦ τε πολέσιν ἐπ' αὐτῷ θυμὸν ἀπηύρα); or the homicide Judas suicides (*I HC* 1476: θυμὸν ἀπὸ μελέων δῦναι δόμον Ἄϊδος εἶσω).

These uses correspond loosely to the basic Homeric uses of the noun⁷⁵, but the context had changed by Late Antiquity especially because of an interest in Plato's works. In the discussion at *Resp.* 439e Plato had defined the three parts of the soul as consisting of λογιστικόν, θυμικόν, and ἐπιθυμητικόν, a division inherited by the Christian Fathers, who adapted it, with variations, to their own anatomy of the soul⁷⁶, usually addressing particularly the emotional part⁷⁷. Christian poets had also inherited the etymology of θυμός from θύω found in Plato's *Cratylus*⁷⁸, and its corresponding sacrificial imagery of the burning fume linking the earthly and the ce-

⁷⁴ Cf. *LSJ* s.v.

⁷⁵ In Homer *thymos* was not necessarily identified with the soul but it is one of the Homeric 'mental organs', such as *kardie* or *phren*; the classic study is Webster 1957; for *thymos* as part of the body-soul, see Bremmer 1983, 55-56 where it is also part of the soul and directs action. For an overview of the relevant literature, see Cairns 2014. For Stoic influence in later poets such as Quintus, see Maciver 2017.

⁷⁶ See Marmodoro Cartwright 2018 for an overview.

⁷⁷ Cf. Euseb. *PG* XXIII 1261,26, *In Ps.* 27.

⁷⁸ Plat. *Crat.* 419e: ἀπὸ τῆς θύσεως καὶ ζέσεως τῆς ψυχῆς («from the rage and the boiling of the soul»). For the Stoic association of *thymos* and *pneuma*, see Buffière 1956, 257-260. For Homer and allegorical Platonic interpretation, see Lamberton 1986.

lestial realms. Accordingly, Schembra 2006 rightly conjectures that in a Christian context such as the *I HC* 1 the word θυμός probably refers to the participation of the Holy Spirit that prompts the poem's poet-preacher to speak from the heart⁷⁹. Adjunct to this evidence is also the parallel passages from the Septuagint where θυμός may be associated with God's πνεῦμα as source of miracles, as it is the case in the Exodus⁸⁰, and not only with his punitive wrath. It is in this sense that the poem uses the term in the proem, especially since in the other two occasions where a speaker addresses the *thymos* these words are placed in the mouth of Christ, in his first and last address to his disciples⁸¹. In this respect, the reuse of a similar formula to open the poem implies at the intratextual level a Christ-inspired narrative in which the narrator-poet is emotionally present and whose message is the revelation of the Theanthropos (6: θεὸν ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα)⁸². In this occasion it is Platonic etymology that is used to replace the address to the Spirit or an Angel in order to maintain the cultural connotations related to the Christian *topos* of divine inspiration.

Another important case is the reuse of the adjective ἐτήτυμος, that appears four times in the *I HC*, including the *Apologia*, one of the poem's prefaces that is attributed to Eudocia⁸³. Here I will discuss its function in the miracle of the Resurrection of Jairus' Daughter in both longer redactions, *I HC* and *II HC* respectively as the differences show that the reuse of the word by Eudocia seems to be a conscious reclaim. Jesus is invited to heal the girl when the messenger brings the news of her death. The reaction of Jesus is strikingly different in the two poems although in both cases his answer foreshadows her resurrection. In the *I HC*, what has been

⁷⁹ Cf. a similar use of the heart in Greg. Naz. PG XXXVII 1229B, 18-21: ἀλλ' ἔμψης τά με θυμός ἐποτρύνει καὶ ἀνώγει, (~ *Il.* VI 439 and XV 43) | φθέγγομαι, οὐκ ἐθέλων μὲν, ἀτὰρ λόγον ἔκτοθε ῥήξω | ψυχῆς, ὡς ὅτε κύμα βιώμενον ἔνδοθι λάβρω | Πνεύματι («but still, what my soul urges and instructs me, that | will I speak, without my wish, but I will burst forth a speech | from my soul, just as the wave which is compelled from the inside by the violent Spirit»). Cf. the similar prompting of the Angel in the *Vis. D.* 340: ἐν στήθεσσι ἀοιδῆν. For the *I HC* see Schembra 2006, 80-81 with earlier literature.

⁸⁰ Cf. Ex.15:8: καὶ διὰ πνεύματος τοῦ θυμοῦ σου διέστη τὸ ὕδωρ. See also 2 *Reg.* 22:13: ἀπὸ πνοῆς πνεύματος θυμοῦ αὐτοῦ.

⁸¹ *I HC*: 474-475: κέκλυτέ μεν, μνηστήρες ἀγακλειτῆς βασιλείης, | ὄφρ' εἶπω τά με θυμός ἐνὶ στήθεσσι κελεύει, Jesus' first address to the disciples; and *I HC* 2347-2348: κέκλυτε, φίλοι, | καὶ μὴ τι θυμῷ ἀγάσησθε ἕκαστος, | ὄφρα ἔπος εἴποιμι τὸ μοι καταθύμιόν ἐστιν, his last address to his disciples at the Ascension.

⁸² On the Theanthropos, see Schembra 2006, 87; for the involved narrator of the poem, see also Kuhn-Treichel 2017.

⁸³ *Apol.* 5 with respect to Patricius', her predecessors' combination of centos. Also, at *I HC* 1102, 1922 addressing Jesus' god-man identity, and at 770 that I discuss here. The adjective appears only once at *HC'* 103.

said is dismissed with a moderate negation, *I HC* 770: ὡς οὐκ ἔσθ' ὄδε μῦθος ἐτήτυμος, ὡς ἀγορεύεις («thus untrue is the word that you are telling»). The corresponding passage in the *II HC*, however, consists of an abrupt response *II HC* 555: ψευστήσεις, οὐδ' αὖτε τέλος μύθῳ ἐπιθήσεις («you will lie and will not tell the full truth»). The *II HC* option may seem more obvious ψευστήσεις is a Homeric word with an afterlife in later *koine*⁸⁴: it was a word that the audience would have been familiar with and here also used for the sake of the effect of *parechesis/homoeoteleuton* (ψευστ-ήσεις, ἐπιθ-ήσεις). Given that the verse comes from Hera's speech as she tries to bind Zeus and trick him into ensuring Eurystheus' claim to the throne (*Il.* XIX 106-107), it is hard to understand why a centonist would have used a line that evokes this rather awkward and negatively received Iliadic context⁸⁵. By contrast, Jesus' reply in *I HC* 770 has interesting intertextual and philosophical ramifications. The line is found in Penelope's reprimand of Eurycleia, who brings unexpected news of the suitors' death (*Od.* XXIII 62). Read against this Homeric context, the verse implies a *Kontrastimitation*: the suitors are in fact dead whereas the girl is not. Nevertheless, the line had a long afterlife, first through Stesichorus, who famously adapted it to assert Helen's innocence, and then through Plato's *Phaedrus*⁸⁶. Eventually the recollection of the "truthful myth" (μῦθος ἐτήτυμος) was used to underscore the incompatibility between the real world and the world of ideas, between true vision and illusion for both pagans and Christians⁸⁷. Consequently, its reuse in the *I HC* may well suggest a kind of spiritual blindness that affects the speaker and prevents him from seeing the truth thus adding one more philosophical layer to the negative formulation found in the *I HC*: death is no longer a 'reality' but a 'perception', which for the Christian believer tantamount to a confession of resurrection in the flesh. If interpreted in this manner then the required editing of Patricius' text – ἀλλ' ἔμπης οὐ πάγχυ ἐτήτυμα πάντ' ἀγόρευεν («he still did not preach everything entirely truthfully», *apol.* 5) – may also imply that the editing involved also issues pertaining to the orthodox doctrine. Such an

⁸⁴ Cf. the compounds with ψευδ- in Lampe s.v.

⁸⁵ Ancient readers were puzzled at the framing of Zeus as a liar and the text was thought to be corrupted here; see Hsch. ψ 133: ψευστήσεις· ψεύστης εἶ; by contrast see, e.g., *Schol.* T *ad Il.* XIX 107: ψευστήσεις: ὕφ' ἐν Ἀρίσταρχος, ἀντικειμένως τῷ ἀληθεύσεις· ἄτοπον γὰρ τὸ διαίρειν ψεύστης εἶς.

⁸⁶ Stesich. *fr.* 192 *PMG* = 91a and c Finglass: οὐκ ἔστ' ἔτυμος λόγος οὔτος, οὐδ' ἔβας ἐν νηυσὶν εὐσέλμοις [...]; Plat. *Phaedr.* 243a. On Stesichorus' debt to Homer, see Beecroft 2006.

⁸⁷ E.g. Greg. Naz. *Carm. mor.* PG XXXVII 776,8: μῦθον ἐτήτυμον; *Met. Pss.*, *Proth.* 20: μῦθοι ἐτήτυμοι. Note that Nonnus uses the adjective only in the Christian poem: at *Par.* IV 174, XI 88: μῦθος ἐτήτυμος, IV 198, II 123, VIII 9, XI 88, XIX 127, in each case to endorse the veracity of the Christian message. Cf. Vian 1997.

interpretation is particularly tempting given that in the other two occasions in the poem ἐτήτυμος is used to describe Jesus as the Theanthropos⁸⁸.

Further questions

Did the Homeric text become Christian when transposed into biblical centos? The last example illustrates that the recasting of the biblical narrative into hexameters was particularly indebted to the models of Graeco-Roman *paideia* and its subsequent etymological, lexicographical and philological endeavors. All the examples above show that it would have been impossible to understand the composition and performance of works such as the *Homeric centos* in a milieu where dictionaries and commentaries were not available, especially as the converted epic text often entertained the possibility of variegated semantic possibilities. The centos are undoubtedly the product of a bookish literary culture and its audience was expected to be well-trained in Homeric language so as to understand the subtleties that occurred during its transposition in and performance as a Christian poem. That being said, the discrepancies from the biblical language, which was considered god-inspired and sacred, indicate that the poem could not have been read as substituting for the biblical canon but as an auxiliary and exegetical work that added its own interpretative and aesthetic imprint on the sacred narrative. Thus, Judas may be swift-footed like Dolon and Achilles as an indication of the nearing of Jesus' redeeming death; and Joseph of Arimathea's nine-year old fermented balm may be alluding to the ninth hour that bestowed salvation to humanity through death. The lexicographic knowledge that the *Homeric centos* require illustrates that Homeric language was as important as biblical language in composing this kind of poetry as a tool that enhanced Christian exegesis.

In this respect the Homeric centos mark a startling deviation from earlier Christian exegetical endeavours: the earlier Apologists and the Church Fathers used the interpretative tools of Graeco-Roman *paideia*, such as etymology, allegory, or philological criticism, to illuminate the Bible: the Septuagint in particular, as a work translated from Hebrew, raised several difficulties for a Greek monolingual reader which were often reflected in the debates regarding the work's capturing of the 'essence' of Hebrew sacred names. Earlier hexametric poetry too, such as the *Sibylline Oracles*, seems to partly reflect this exegetical tradition. In it, Adam's name, but not Eve's, is given an etymology: through alliteration that was possible

⁸⁸ *IHC* 1102: the Samaritan woman inquiries about his lineage; 1922: κείνου μὲν τοι ὄδ' υἱὸς ἐτήτυμον («for he is truly his [god's] real son»). For the confessional character of the cluster μῦθος ἐτήτυμος, cf. Nonn. *Par.* V 123, VIII 9, XI 88, etc.

because of the *koine*-Hellenistic pronunciation for the words (Ἄιδης ... Ἀδάμ), the protoplast is related to Hades, alluding to the standard exegetical interpretation of his name as the one made of clay, χοϊκός, the one predisposed to die⁸⁹. Elsewhere the *Sibylline Oracles* even attempts other non-biblical inspired etymological puns, as for example when calling Adam naif (Ἀδάμ ... ἀδαής) in the scene where Eve convinces him to consume the forbidden fruit: hence the verse exegetically aims to exculpate Adam, as opposed to the woman, for the Fall⁹⁰. In contrast to this interpretation the biblical centos mention that Eve acted unknowingly (*I HC* 86: ἢ μέγα ἔργον ἔρεξεν ἄιδρείησι νόοιο), in a passage that evokes Epicaste's, Oedipus' mother, transgression.⁹¹ In providing such interpretations the *Sibylline Oracles* apply the grammarian's tools on their hexametric biblical narrative – in other words they put Homer in the service of the Bible. By contrast the *Homeric Centos* uses the interpretative tools employed for Homer and Homeric semantics both to underscore and/or to subvert particular Homeric glosses and etymologies, in which case Homeric language is put on an equal pedestal with the biblical text.

This fascinating reuse of Homeric language towards a more or less Bible-bound exegetical approach needs further investigation across a variety of hexametric biblical corpora, which is beyond the scope of this preliminary study. The present analysis nonetheless shows that by the fifth century the interpretation of the Bible, using the philological tools traditionally employed for deciphering the Homeric text, displays a strikingly positive stance towards the Homeric text as a cultural authority for pagan and Christians alike: the examples above indicate that it was possible to offer biblical exegesis through the lens of Homeric language, without insinuating that Homer had to be converted in the process. While the editor of Proba's proem might have claimed that the poem offered an ameliorated Christianized version of Virgil in that acquired a further divine sense (*praef.* 4: *mutatum in melius*; 5: *sensu divino*)⁹², the reuse and deciphering of archaic vocabulary in the *Homeric Centos* reveals that conversion was not a prerequisite in order for the epic language to be reused with a Christian focus. Homeric *Kunstsprache* and its late antique reception could be reclaimed to express even divine illumina-

⁸⁹ *E.g.*, the *Sib. Or.* I 81: Ἄιδης... Ἀδάμ, but not etymology for Eve, for which see Lightfoot 2007, *e.g.*, 205, 333-341. Cf. the more popular etymology is based on the etymology of Adam's name according *adamah*, in Paul's 1Cor 15:47: χοϊκός. For sacred names as refiguration of Christ, see also van den Hoek 2004.

⁹⁰ *Or. Sib.* I 43: ἢ δῶκεν, τοῦτον ἀδαή πείθεσκειν ἄμαρτεῖν («she gave, and tempted the unknowing man to sin»); Lightfoot 2007, 345-346.

⁹¹ *Od.* XI 272. On the supposedly puerile state of the protoplasts, which was one of the arguments in their favor, see Evans 1968, 80-85.

⁹² Pelttari 2014, 33-37.

tion, as the analysis of *thymos* showed above, and offered exegetical possibilities that were not bound to the linguistic medium of the Bible. Thus, when exploring the Christian contribution to the development of etymological and lexicographic practice in Late Antiquity, the Centos offer material that both varies and contradicts the mainstream tendency: as opposed to the interpretation of sacred names that abound in the etymological analyses of the Church Fathers, the *Homeric centos* reuse Homer as an authority alongside the Bible; and instead of focusing on Biblical etymologies, the epic language allows for Homericizing interpretations that lay beyond the sacred scripts. In this sense the semantic variations did not obscure the meaning of a word but provided a different in-depth analysis of some key terms. Just as Apollinaris in his defence of Homeric hexameters justified his use of hexameter because of its authoritative appeal, so do the *Homeric centos* employ the epic language towards an exegetical aim, since Homer too was considered ἐκ παλαχῆς θεότευκτος⁹³.

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⁹³ *Praef.* 105-106. The authorship of the poem is very disputed and recently attributed to Apollinaris by Faulkner 2020.

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