TEXTUAL FIXITY AND FLUIDITY IN THE HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN PERIODS

Alexandrian Homer Scholarship and the Qumran Pesharim

Summary

This article discusses the concepts of textual fluidity and fixity as social constructs by comparing commentaries on Homer and the Hebrew Bible from the Hellenistic and Roman periods. I argue that the quest for textual fixity in Hellenistic scholarship of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* reflects the political context in which this scholarly tradition arose and served as a literary counterpart to the stone monuments erected by the Ptolemaic kings. In contrast, the textual fluidity of the Jewish Scriptures as reflected in the Qumran commentaries emphasises the malleability of the Jewish Scriptures. Rather than literary monuments tied to a political centre, the Jewish Scriptures in the pesharim become resilient writings, which could be read in ever-new ways to make sense of the quickly changing world in which the Pesher commentators found themselves. Thus, in the ancient world, the presentation of particular texts as either fixed or fluid was not a neutral decision, but reflected the aims of textual communities and how they construed the texts that were central to them.

In this contribution I aim to show how the concepts of textual fluidity and fixity were tied up with the social and historical situations in which different textual communities in the Hellenistic and Roman periods found themselves. I approach fluidity and fixity not in the first place as *attributes* of particular texts, but as *social constructs* which support the interests of the communities in which these texts were

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read, studied, and regarded highly. (1) As a result, I am less interested in the actual state of any particular text in these periods—which in most cases would probably end up on a scale between fluid and fixed—but in the perceptions of these texts by the people that read and studied them. Which texts were presented as fluid or fixed by what communities? And which reasons did these groups have for presenting these texts as they did?

To answer these questions I will look at two intellectual communities from the Hellenistic and Roman periods: Homer scholars working in the Museum and Library in Alexandria and exegetes of the Jewish Scriptures whose work is reflected in the Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls. Both groups of intellectuals wrote commentaries, and it is on these writings (known as hypomnemata and pesharim, respectively) that I shall focus in this article. My argument will be that the Alexandrian Homer scholars and the Qumran exegetes present their base texts in a different way, and that this difference reflects the different socio-historical aims and positions of Homer scholars in Alexandria and exegetes of the Jewish Scriptures in Hellenistic-Roman Palestine. For Alexandrian scholars of the Homeric epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were hand-written by Homer himself. Though they were corrupted in the course of their long and complicated textual transmission, the Alexandrian scholars believed they had found ways to recover Homer's *ipsissima verba*. The result is a fixed text of Homer, devoid (at least in theory) of later additions and

(1) Several recent studies have applied the concept of "textual communities" to the group(s) that wrote and preserved the Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls. The first to develop this concept was Brian Stock, in his *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983). The concept has been taken up by, e.g., Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (TSAJ 81; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 196–99; Mladen Popović, "Qumran as Scroll Storehouse in Times of Crisis? A Comparative Perspective on Judaean Desert Manuscript Collections," *JSJ* 43 (2012): 551–94; idem, "The Ancient 'Library' of Qumran between Urban and Rural Culture," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran and the Concept of a Library* (ed. Sidnie White Crawford and Cecilia Wassen; STDJ 116; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 155–67.

I have elsewhere argued that the groups behind the pesharim and the hypomnemata should be understood more specifically as *scholarly* communities. The difference between textual and scholarly communities, as I see it, is that in textual communities, texts need not necessarily be studied: it would suffice for a community more or less often to read the text(s) that informs their identity or even to have this/these text(s) as (a) central symbolic focal point(s) for group identity. In scholarly communities, a (significant) number of the community members would be engaged in what others have called "serious reading" of (a) text(s). See Pieter B. Hartog, *Pesher and Hypomnema: A Comparison of Two Commentary Traditions from the Hellenistic-Roman World* (STDJ 121; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 41–43; on "serious reading" see Dirk Obbink, "Readers and Intellectuals," in *Oxyrhynchus: A City and Its Texts* (ed. Alan K. Bowman et al.; GRM 93; London: Egypt Exploration Society, 2007), 271–86.

omissions. This fixed text of Homer served as a literary monument, which like stone monuments such as the Tomb of Alexander embodied the cultural and political ambitions of the Ptolemaic dynasty. In contrast, the pesharim approach their base texts as fluid and malleable entities. The Qumran commentaries exhibit no signs of an attempt to fix the text of the Jewish Scriptures, but freely use different text-forms side by side in their lemmata and interpretations. This perceived fluidity of the Jewish Scriptures reflects the experience of the pesher commentators to live in a quickly changing world. The malleability of their base texts allowed these ancient Jewish exegetes to make sense of their experiences in the light of Scripture—and vice versa.

Homer as a Literary Monument

The intellectual programme that Homer scholars in Hellenistic Alexandria initiated was based on a particular view of the poet. For the *grammatikoi* of the Alexandrian Museum and Library, Homer was a conscious author, who had a biography, a style, and his own literary preferences, and who had singlehandedly written the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. (2) This latter idea, that Homer had himself put his epics to writing, was a novelty in Alexandrian Homer scholarship and continued to be debated in the Roman period, as is indicated by Josephus' comment that "[Homer] … did not leave his own poem in written form." (3) This notion of Homer as a writer had a profound impact on the Alexandrian approach to the text of the Homeric epics. It made textual fixity the desired standard, since to arrive at a fixed text of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* would be equal to reconstructing the very words that Homer wrote. Fluidity, by contrast, was a sign of corruption: for the Alexandrian scholars, the existence of different versions of the Homeric epics was a sign that the epics had been tampered with after Homer had first put them down in writing.

(2) Dirk M. Schenkeveld, "Aristarchus and ΟΜΗΡΟΣ ΦΙΛΟΤΕΧΝΟΣ: Some Fundamental Ideas of Aristarchus on Homer as a Poet," *Mnemosyne* 23 (1970): 162–78; Robert Lamberton, "Homer in Antiquity," in *A New Companion to Homer* (ed. Ian Morris and Barry Powell; MnS 163; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 33–54; Jed Wyrick, *The Ascension of Authorship: Attribution and Canon Formation in Jewish, Hellenistic, and Christian Traditions* (HSCL 49; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 136–202.

Ancient scholars were divided on the extent of the Homeric corpus. Aristotle, for instance, included the *Margites* as a Homeric epic. The scholars in the Alexandrian Museum and Library worked with a rather restricted definition of the Homeric corpus, which included only the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

(3) *C.Ap.* 12 (trans. John M. G. Barclay, *Against Apion* [Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary 10; Leiden: Brill, 2007], 15–16).

In their approach to Homer, the scholars in the Alexandrian Museum and Library continued several pre-Hellenistic traditions. The name "Homer" steadily rose to prominence from the sixth century BCE onwards, when a group of rhapsodes called the *Homeridai* traced their roots back to a mythical ancestor known as "Homer." (4) They presented their ancestor as a travelling rhapsode and collected traditions from all parts of the Greek world under his name. Homer thus came to embody a pan-Hellenic identity. (5) The *Homeridai* also instigated a biographical tradition, which continued well into the Roman era and presented Homer as a concrete personality rather than an ideal persona or a set of writings. (6) As a corollary, the classical period witnessed an increasing interest in the grammatical and stylistic preferences of "the poet," whilst the attention for other early epic traditions receded. (7) In the fifth century BCE, some sophists engaged in grammatical analysis of Homer. (8) One century later, Aristotle discussed Homer's grammatical and stylistic preferences in his *Poetics* and *Homeric Problems*. (9) As a result, the Homeric epics—with the *Iliad* taking pride of place—had acquired a central position in Greek education and served a key focal point for

(4) Walter Burkert, "The Making of Homer in the Sixth Century B.C.: Rhapsodes versus Stesichoros," in *Papers on the Amasis Painter and His World: Colloquium Sponsored by the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities and Symposium Sponsored by the J. Paul Getty Museum* (Malibu, CA: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1987), 43–62; Martin L. West, "The Invention of Homer," *CQ* 49 (1999): 364–82; Barbara Graziosi, *Inventing Homer: The Early Reception of Epic* (CCS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

(5) Rudolf Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship: From the Beginning to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 5–6; Graziosi, *Inventing Homer*, 62–79.

(6) On this biographical tradition see Graziosi, *Inventing Homer*; Gregory Nagy, *Homer the Preclassic* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 29–47; Mary R. Lefkowitz, *The Lives of the Greek Poets*, 2d ed. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 14–29; Alexander Beecroft, *Authorship and Cultural Identity in Early Greece and China: Patterns of Literary Circulation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 61–105; Adrian Kelly, "Biographies of Homer," in *The Homer Encyclopedia* (ed. Margalit Finkelberg; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 129–30.

(7) See Georg Danek, "The Homeric Epics as Palimpsests," in *In the Second Degree: Paratextual Literature in Ancient Near Eastern and Ancient Mediterranean Culture and Its Reflection in Medieval Literature* (ed. Philip Alexander, Armin Lange, and Renate Pillinger; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 123–36; Margalit Finkelberg, "Canonising and Decanonising Homer: Reception of the Homeric Poems in Antiquity and Modernity," in *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters* (ed. Maren R. Niehoff; JSRC 16; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 15–28.

(8) Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 33–34.

(9) Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 69–74; James C. Hogan, "Aristotle's Criticsm of Homer in the *Poetics*," *CP* 68 (1973): 95–108.

Greek identity and self-understanding already in the pre-Hellenistic period. (10) The work of Homer scholars in the Alexandrian Museum and Library built on these earlier developments.

What was absent from pre-Hellenistic dealings with Homer was a sustained effort to arrive at a fixed text of the Homeric epics. It has been argued that the "Peisistratan recension"—an alleged Athenian edition of Homer produced by Peisistratus in the sixth century BCE—constituted such an effort, but the reports of what Peisistratus did exactly with the Homeric epics (i.e., whether he collected them or produced a fixed text) are contradictory. Stemming from a much later period than the alleged recension, (11) these reports bear mythical traits and serve to bolster the link between Athens and the Homeric epics. For Barbara Graziosi this means that "[t]he story according to which Pisistratus … collected the Homeric poems … is … a late fantasy influenced by Hellenistic editorial practices." (12) But even if some historical core in the story is allowed to stand (as some scholars have argued (13)), Peisistratus' dealings with the Homeric epics must be seen in the context of the performance of these epics at festivals and probably served the pragmatic purpose of providing a standard text for performance. (14) They do not constitute an attempt to arrive at one fixed text of Homer.

(10) On Homer as the centre of Greek education and self-understanding see Henri I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (trans. George Lamb; London: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 162–63; Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (CCS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; repr., 2000); eadem, "Education, Homer in," in *The Homer Encyclopedia*, 234–38; Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 194–97; Margalit Finkelberg, "Homer as a Foundation Text," in *Homer, the Bible, and Beyond: Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World* (ed. eadem and Guy G. Stroumsa; JSRC 2; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 75–96; eadem, "Canonising and Decanonising," 15–28.

(11) The first reference to Peisistratus' engagement with Homer is in Cicero, *De or*. 3.137. Cicero writes that Peisistratus "was said to be the first to arrange Homer's book, previously scattered about, as we now have them" (*qui primus Homeri libros confusos antea sic disposuiisse dicitur, ut nunc habemus*). Note that Cicero's comment does not imply a Peisistratan attempt at textual standardisation.

(12) Graziosi, *Inventing Homer*, 206–7.

(13) For a concise overview see Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, 6–9. Pfeiffer himself remains skeptical: "Not only in the later embroideries, but in the whole conception of a powerful statesman as a collector of literary texts, as the earliest founder of a Greek 'library', as head of a committee of scholars, we seem to have a projection of events of the Ptolemaic age into the sixth century" (6).

(14) On the link between canonisation, textual fixation, and particular performative contexts (especially festivals) see Hubert Cancik, "Standardization and Ranking of Texts in Greek and Roman Institutions," in *Homer, the Bible, and Beyond*, 117–30.

That no such text existed in the pre-Hellenistic period is further confirmed by the so-called "wild" papyri. (15) These papyri demonstrate that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* long remained fluid and open-ended works, presumably as a result of their ongoing performance and oral transmission. Different versions of the epics existed alongside one another, apparently without any serious conflict. This situation continued well into the Ptolemaic period, but the first tendencies towards textual fixity become apparent in the second century BCE. (16) It is no coincidence that this move towards textual fixity corresponds with the activities of Alexandrian Homer scholars, which reached its zenith with the work of Aristarchus of Samothrace (216–144 BCE). The scholars in the Museum and Library were the first to develop systematically a fixed text of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. And they seem to have been successful, as Homer papyri from the Roman period bear witness to a largely unified textual tradition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. (17)

The Alexandrian scholars developed an intricate system of *sigla* to express their views on the text of the Homeric epics. Before Aristarchus, these *sigla* appeared in the margins of *Iliad* manuscripts and so constituted editions (*ekdoseis*) associated with the names of various scholars. From Aristarchus onwards, Alexandrian scholars explained their views in separate commentaries (hypomnemata). As I have discussed these developments elsewhere, (18) I will here limit myself to two examples of the textual views of Alexandrian scholars as they are expressed in these hypomnemata. In P.Oxy. 2.221v (second century CE), the Alexandrian scholar Seleucus is said to have athetised (declared spurious) *Il*. 21.190 because he considers the line redundant and because it is absent from the Cretan edition of the *Iliad*. (19) Hence, Seleucus

(15) Stephanie West, *The Ptolemaic Papyri of Homer* (PC 3; Wiesbaden: Springer, 1967); Graeme D. Bird, *Multitextuality in the Homeric Iliad: The Witness of the Ptolemaic Papyri* (HSt 43; Cambridge: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2010).

(16) West, *Ptolemaic Papyri*, 15.

(17) At the same time, the text of the epics found in Roman-period Homer papyri does not necessarily correspond with the textual decisions of the Alexandrian scholars. It appears therefore that these scholars achieved their aim to arrive at a largely fixed text for the Homeric epics, but this fixed text did not incorporate their views on which lines did and which did not belong to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* Homer had written. The reasons for this situation are not entirely clear; but one of them must be the ambiguous approach of Alexandrian scholars to textual fixity (see below).

On the development of the Homeric text see Michael Haslam, "Homeric Papyri and Transmission of the Text," in *A New Companion to Homer*, 55–100.

(18) Hartog, *Pesher and Hypomnema*, 71–77.

(19) P.Oxy. 2.221v 15:24–27: "However, in the fifth book of the *Editions*, the same (Seleucus) athetises (the verse), together with the following two, as redundant. They are also absent from the Cretan edition" (Ἐν [δ]ὲ τῷ ε′ [τ]ῶν Διορθωτικῶν ὁ

concludes, the line cannot have been part of Homer's *ipsissima verba*. Similarly, Aristarchus, in P.Oxy. 8.1086 (first century BCE), is said to have athetised *Il*. 2.791–795, which tell how the goddess Iris, Zeus' messenger, likens her voice to that of the Trojan watch Polites when she urges the Trojans to wage war with the Greeks. The commentary gives three reasons: "first, Iris never likens herself to anyone when she is sent by Zeus, but always appears as herself" (20); "[s]econd, (Iris's) delivery is unconvincing" (21); third, "Homer, whenever he likens someone to someone, also clearly provides the fitting words." (22) On these literary and stylistic grounds, the commentator dismisses *Il*. 2.791–795 as spurious.

These two examples illustrate a basic ambiguity in the Alexandrian approach to textual fixity. Though determined to recover the *Iliad* as Homer had written it, the Alexandrian scholars after Aristarchus only rarely—if at all (23)—added or deleted lines in their editions. Instead, they expressed their views on the originality of certain lines in the margins of a manuscript or in a separate commentary, but allowed the line in question to remain part of the Homeric text. The fixed text of Homer as reconstructed by these scholars did not, therefore, come to us in the form of Homer manuscripts purified from all post-Homer corruptions, but in the form of annotated Homer manuscripts that allowed spurious lines to stand in the text. As a result, the standard text of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as it occurs in Homer manuscripts from the Roman period onwards reflects the aims of the Alexandrian scholars to fix the Homeric text, but not necessarily their decisions on what the original *Iliad* or *Odyssey* should look like.

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αὐτὸς [ἀ]θετεῖ σὺν τοῖς ἑξῆς β ὡς περισσο[ύ]ς. Οὐκ εἶναι δὲ οὐδ' ἐν τῇ Κρητικῇ). All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

(20) P.Oxy. 8.1086 2:23–25 (63–65): Πρῶτον μὲν οὐδέποτε ὑπὸ Διὸς πεμπομένη ἡ Ἶρις ὁμοιοῦταί τινι, ἀλλ' αἰεὶ αὐτοπρόσωπος παραγίνεται.

(21) P.Oxy. 8.1086 2:25 (65): Ἔτι δὲ καὶ ἡ ὑπόκρισις ἀπίθανος.

(22) P.Oxy. 8.1086 2:28 (68): Ὅμηρος, ὅταν τινὰ εἰκάζῃ τινί, καὶ τοὺς πρέποντας λόγους περιτίθησιν, δῆλον.

(23) There has been some debate on the question whether the Alexandrian scholars ever deleted lines from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and if so, whether they would do so without consulting manuscripts of the *Iliad*. See Franco Montanari, "Zenodotus, Aristarchus and the *Ekdosis* of Homer," in *Editing Texts/Texte edieren* (ed. Glenn W. Most; Aporemata 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 1–21; Richard Janko, *Books 13–16*, vol. 4 of *The Iliad: A Commentary* (ed. Geoffrey S. Kirk; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 20–38.

I have argued above that the promotion of textual fixity as an ideal was a novelty in the Hellenistic period, which should be attributed to the scholars in the Alexandrian Museum and Library. To explain the approach of these Alexandrian scholars to the Homeric epics many modern scholars have highlighted the continuity of their work with pre-Hellenistic (especially Aristotelian/Peripatetic) attitudes towards the poet. (24) Though not wishing to deny these continuities, I suggest that the approach of the Alexandrian *grammatikoi* towards the textual state of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is not merely a development of pre-Hellenistic practices, but reflects the political ambitions of the Alexandrian *grammatikoi* and their sponsors.

The Alexandrian Museum and Library were thoroughly political institutions. The precise reasons for their establishment are unclear, (25) but there is no doubt that these institutions were strongly supported and lavishly sponsored by the Ptolemaic dynasty that ruled Egypt after Alexander's death. (26) They may have been places of scholarship where scholars led a care-free life devoted to study and occasional teaching, but the work done in the Museum and Library was meant at the same time to bolster the power and ambitions of the Ptolemies. As Andrew Erskine has shown, the protection and promotion of the Greek cultural heritage in these two institutions supported the claims of the Ptolemaic *diadochoi* to be the true successors of Alexander's kingdom and the culture he had spread. (27) This political bent of Alexandrian scholarship is echoed in the stories, circulating widely in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, about how the Ptolemies sought to acquire all the books in the world for their Library. (28) The Aristotelian flavour of Alexandrian Homer scholarship also supports a further connection with Alexander, who was tutored by Aristotle. (29) In view of this political context, it hardly comes as a

(24) E.g., Francesca Schironi, "Theory into Practice: Aristotelian Principles in Aristarchean Philology," *CP* 104 (2009): 279–316.

(25) For a discussion cf. Frank W. Walbank, *The Hellenistic World* (2nd ed.; London: Fontana Press, 1986), 176–78.

(26) See Andrew Erskine, "Culture and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt: The Museum and Library of Alexandria," *Greece & Rome* 42 (1995): 38–48; cf. Roger S. Bagnall, "Alexandria: Library of Dreams," *PAPS* 146 (2002): 348–62.

(27) Erskine, "Culture and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt," 38–48.

(28) One of the most famous of such stories is the Letter of Aristeas, which tells how a king Ptolemy decided to have the Judaean law translated into Greek in order to include it in the Library. The story is largely fictional and must be understood as a presentation of the Judaean Scriptures as equal to, or even surpassing, the Homeric epics. See Sylvie Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria: A Study in the Narrative of the Letter of Aristeas* (London: Routledge, 2003); Benjamin G. E. Wright, *The Letter of Aristeas: 'Aristeas to Philocrates' or 'On the Translation of the Law of the Jews'* (CEJL; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015).

(29) Erskine, "Culture and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt," 39–42.

surprise that Alexandrian scholars concentrated their intellectual efforts on Homer, who had become the focal point of Greek education and identity in the pre-Hellenistic period and now served to embody the legitimacy of the Ptolemies as Greek rulers and heirs to Alexander.

This intellectual programme was not the only way in which the Ptolemies sought to bolster their authority. They also erected stone monuments in Alexandria, which symbolised their connection with Alexander and their indebtedness to classical Greek culture. One of these monuments was the Museum itself. As Strabo informs us, the Museum belonged to the elaborate Ptolemaic palace complex in Alexandria (17.1.8), (30) and this intimate material link between the royal living quarters and the Museum as an institution of Greek learning and education provided a durable symbol of the Greekness of the Ptolemaic kings. Another case in point is the Tomb of Alexander (the Sema), which—again according to Strabo—was part of the same complex (17.1.8). The Sema served not only as Alexander's burial place, but also as that of the Ptolemaic kings. This material link between the Sema and the Ptolemaic court stresses the close connection between the Ptolemaic kings and their illustrious predecessor and so attests to the legitimacy of the Ptolemaic dynasty.

Against the background of this monumental building programme in the early Ptolemaic period, the presentation by Alexandrian scholars of the Homeric epics as fixed texts can be thought to serve as a literary counterpart to the stone monuments erected by the Ptolemaic kings. Just as the Museum and the Sema offered concrete and durable expressions of Ptolemaic power and prestige, so the Homeric epics written down by Homer himself provided a durable literary monument for the Greek identity of the Ptolemies and their active promotion of Greek culture. (31) As they turned Homer in a monumental literary text, the Alexandrian scholars in the Museum and Library sought to create a textual community around this literary monument—a community devoted to their Ptolemaic rulers and acknowledging their authority as heirs of Alexander, guardians of classical Greek culture, and embodiments of Greek identity.

(30) Strabo does not mention the Library, which raises the question whether Strabo thought the Library was part of the Museum or located it elsewhere.

(31) On the general connection between literary, textual, and material developments cf. also Manfred Oeming's recent argument that tendencies towards canonisation and textual fixity of the Hebrew Scriptures started early on and were linked with the establishment of fixed measures of weight and length. The details of Oeming's argument are not without their problems, but the correlation he draws between material/archaeological and literary/textual developments is illustrative also for later periods. See Manfred Oeming, "The Way of God: Early Canonicity and the 'Nondeviation Formula,'" in *When Texts are Canonized* (ed. Timothy H. Lim and Kengo Akiyama; BJS 359; Providence, RI: Brown University, 2017), 25–43.

This Alexandrian presentation of the Homeric epics as fixed text, composed and written by the poet in a long-gone age, did not find its expression in "purified" *ekdoseis* of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but in a fluid tradition of textual scholarship. Scholarly works, such as commentaries, dictionaries, or treatises, are highly unstable writings, which tend continuously to accumulate, lose, or change material. (32) This fluidity contrasts with the stability of the Homeric text promoted by the Alexandrian scholars. (33) It echoes the ambiguous attitude of the Hellenistic intellectuals to the text of Homer: even when they considered certain lines spurious, they allowed these lines to remain part of the Homeric text. (34) As a result, there was no end to discussions over textual problems, and the text of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had to be constantly fixed anew. This shows that the Alexandrian presentation of Homer as a literary monument, fixed for times to come, was an ideal that was never fully reached in practice. The shape of the Homeric text in the Roman and later periods show that the Alexandrian *ideal* of a fixed Homeric text was highly influential in the long run, even if the opinions of Alexandrian scholars on the *shape* of this fixed text did not always win general appeal.

The Adaptability of the Jewish Scriptures

The textual standardisation of the Jewish Scriptures—including the later-to-become Hebrew Bible—was a complex process, of which many details remain unclear. Before 70 CE, no standard text of the Jewish Scriptures appears to have existed and many Jewish intellectuals were not particularly interested in fixating the text of their Scriptures. But this is only a general picture, and regional and other differences

(32) See Michael W. Haslam, "The Homer 'Lexicon of Apollonius Sophista': I: Composition and Constituents," *CP* 89 (1994): 1–45; Christina Shuttleworth Kraus, "Introduction: Reading Commentaries/Commentaries as Reading," in *The Classical Commentary: Histories, Practices, Theory* (ed. Roy K. Gibson and eadem; MnS 232; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 1–27; Hartog, *Pesher and Hypomnema*, 59–62. See also George Brooke's contribution in this volume.

(33) Cf. how Ineke Sluiter contrasts "the stable written nature of the source-text" with "the improvised, oral aspects, and fluid nature, of the commentary" ("The Dialectics of Genre: Some Aspects of Secondary Literature and Genre in Antiquity," in *Matrices of Genre: Authors, Canons, and Society* [ed. Mary Depew and Dirk Obbink; CHSC 4; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000], 183–203 [184]). On Sluiter's suggestion see Pieter B. Hartog, "Pesher as Commentary," in *Proceedings of the Eighth Meeting of the International Organization of Qumran Studies: Munich, 4–7 August, 2013* (ed. Pieter B. Hartog, Samuel I. Thomas, Alison Schofield; STDJ 125; Leiden: Brill, 2018), 92–116.

(34) See above.

abound. (35) The Letter of Aristeas (second century BCE), for one, presents the textual fixity of the Septuagint as an ideal not unlike that promoted by Alexandrian Homer scholars (*Let.Aris.* 308–311). (36) And scribal corrections in first century BCE manuscripts such as 8ḤevXII gr or 4QLXXNum may suggest that the scribes or later readers of these manuscripts saw some need to correct the scriptural text in these manuscripts in line with a different textual tradition. (37) Yet none of these examples points to existence of a standardised and generally accepted text of the Jewish Scriptures before 70 CE. (38)

The pesharim confirm this picture. These running commentaries on prophetic-poetic parts of the Jewish Scriptures often quote the proto-Masoretic version of their base texts. (39) The pesher exegetes are not bound to this version, though: both in their lemmata and in

(35) For a concise popular treatment of the textual history of the Jewish Scriptures (in Dutch) see Bärry Hartog, "De ontwikkeling van de Masoretische Tekst," *Met andere woorden* 16:3–4 (2016): 25–35, available online at https://www.bijbelgenootschap.nl/ontwikkeling-masoretische-tekst/ (last accessed 9 October, 2018).

(36) The connection between Aristeas's portrayal of the Septuagint and Alexandrian Homer scholarship has been noted by several scholars, though they have not reached agreement on ps.-Aristeas's stance on the value of Homer scholarship. See Honigman, *The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship*; Maren R. Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 19–37; Arie van der Kooij, "The Septuagint of the Pentateuch," in *Law, Prophets, and Wisdom: On the Provenance of Translators and Their Books in the Septuagint Version* (ed. Johann Cook and idem; CBET 68; Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 15–62 (18–38).

A full discussion of the issue would surpass the boundaries of this contribution. As I see it, Aristeas confirms the ideal of textual fixity that characterised the Alexandrian approach to the Homeric text and seeks to present the Greek Scriptures as a literary monument for the Jewish community in Egypt on a par with (or perhaps surpassing) Homer, the literary monument of non-Jewish Greeks.

(37) See Armin Lange, "'Nobody Dared to Add to Them, To Take From Them, Or to Make Changes' (Josephus, Ag. Ap. 1.42): The Textual Standardization of Jewish Scriptures in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Flores Florentino: Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez* (ed. Anthony Hilhorst, Émile Puech, and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar; JSJSup 122; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 105–26 (110–18); idem, "'They Confirmed the Reading' (y. Taʿan. 4.68a): The Textual Standardization of Jewish Scriptures in the Second Temple Period," in *From Qumran to Aleppo: A Discussion with Emanuel Tov about the Textual History of Jewish Scriptures in Honor of his 65th Birthday* (ed. idem, Matthias Weigold, and József Zsengellér; FRLANT 230; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 29–80 (56–63).

(38) In the case of 8ḤevXII gr, the find context of this manuscript suggests a different socio-historical context from that of 4QLXXNum or other Qumran scrolls. See Pieter B. Hartog, "Reading and Copying the Minor Prophets in the Late Second Temple Period," in *The Books of the Twelve Prophets: Minor Prophets—Major Theologies* (ed. Heinz-Josef Fabry; BETL 295; Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 411–23.

(39) For the statistics see Timothy H. Lim, *Holy Scripture in the Qumran Commentaries and Pauline Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 72–94. On scriptural quotations in 1QpHab see also William H. Brownlee, *The Text of Habakkuk in the*

their interpretations, the Qumran commentators felt free to quote and refer to other textual versions of their base texts. Thus, in contrast with their peers in Alexandria, the pesher commentators do not present their base texts as fixed entities, hand-written by conscious authors, but they endorse the fluidity of their base texts and play with the ambiguities in and interpretative possibilities of the scriptural text. In 1QpHab 4:9–13 and 11:8–15, for instance, the pesher exegete quotes his base texts (Hab 1:11 and 2:16) in a version different from MT, but employs both the non-MT and the non-quoted MT reading in his interpretations. So, in the first passage, the interpretation of Hab 1:11 implies both the reading וישם (quoted in the lemma) and the reading ואשם (MT). (40) And in 1QpHab 11:8–15, the pesher exegete takes up both the reading הרעל (lemma) and הערל (MT) in how he exegetes Hab 2:16. These cases show that for the pesher commentators, the scriptural text was not a fixed, but a fluid entity, which could be altered in the course of its interpretation.

These and other examples from the Qumran commentaries raise the question how the composers of these scholarly writings knew about the various textual forms of their Scriptures. According to Timothy Lim, pesher exegetes "may well have had different texts of Habakkuk in front of him, rather than simply remembering variant readings." (41) These were often Hebrew manuscripts, but not exclusively: drawing attention to the reading חרבו ("his sword") for MT's חרמו ("his net"), Lim points to the reading μαχαιραν αυτου in 8ḤevXII gr—the only other occurrence of the word for "sword" in the available ancient manuscript evidence. Thus, Lim concludes that, "[g]iven the multilingual context of first-century Palestine, it remains possible that the Habakkuk pesherist not only was able to read Greek, but did so on this occasion from a manuscript that was known to have circulated in his neighborhood." (42) I have elsewhere expressed my doubts on this scenario. (43) Though Lim's suggestions cannot be disproved conclusively, I would argue that the pesher commentators may have arrived at these variant readings independently—that is, without laying eyes on a scriptural manuscript. Hermeneutically, there is no distinction between the link

Ancient Commentary from Qumran (SBLMS 11; Philadelphia, PA: Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, 1959).

(40) On the hermeneutics of this passage see William H. Brownlee, *The Midrash Pesher of Habakkuk* (SBLMS 24; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 80–83.

(41) Lim, *Holy Scripture*, 50.

(42) Lim, "The Qumran Scrolls, Multilingualism, and Biblical Interpretation," in *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. John J. Collins and Robert A. Kugler; DSSSE; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 57–73 (71).

(43) Hartog, *Pesher and Hypomnema*, 155–58.

the pesher commentator draws between וישם and ואשם; הרעל and הערל; חרם and חרב; and, e.g., עמל (lemma) and מעל (interpretation) in 1QpHab 1:5–6. The only difference is that in the first three instances, the reading of the pesher commentator finds a parallel in the available textual record, whereas in the final instance it does not. However, given the straightforward nature of these variants and the absence of explicit indications in the pesharim that their composers engaged in manuscript comparison, the cases to which Lim refers may more suitably be taken as interpretations of single words, without implying that the pesher exegete must have consulted a scriptural manuscript to include these readings in his interpretations. (44)

Rather than assuming that the pesher commentators occupied themselves with systematic manuscript comparison, I would suggest that for the Qumran exegetes the transmission and the interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures were two sides of the same coin. The pesharim attest to a hermeneutical circle, in which the form of the scriptural text determines its interpretation, and the other way around. Thus, the composers of these Qumran commentaries tend to quote Scripture in the form best-known to them, but felt free to alter or reconfigure the text of their base texts in the course of their interpretations. They may or may not have checked other manuscripts, but they probably did not do so in a systematic way—and there is no way of knowing whether they did it at all. An indication for this somewhat ad hoc fashion of quotation in the pesharim is 1QpHab 12:1–7. The first quotation of Hab 2:17bα in these lines reads מדמי אדם וחמס ארץ and corresponds with MT, the second one reads מדמי קריה וחמס ארץ. This second quotation points forward to the following interpretation, which starts by saying: "Its interpretation: the city—that is Jerusalem." This indicates that for the pesher commentators, their scriptural base texts were fluid and malleable texts, and that text and interpretation in the Qumran commentaries belong intrinsically together.

This fluidity of the scriptural texts is mirrored in the textual state of the pesharim themselves. In recent years, a number of scholars have challenged Frank M. Cross's older view that all the pesharim are autographs. (45) Instead, the pesharim are increasingly taken as fluid works of textual scholarship not unlike the hypomnemata, which are at home within a study community that made active use of them. Traces of literary

(44) So also Lou H. Silberman, "Unriddling the Riddle: A Study in the Structure and Language of the Habakkuk Pesher (1QpHab)," *RevQ* 3/3 (1962): 323–64 (361); Ilana Goldberg, "Variant Readings in Pesher Habakkuk," *Textus* 17 (1994): 6–24.

(45) See also George Brooke's contribution in this volume.

development have been recognised in 1QpHab, (46) 4Q163, (47) 4Q169, (48) and 4Q171. (49) Thus, the pesher commentators exhibited the same attitude towards their scriptural base texts and the exegetical tradition in which they partook. In terms of their textual state, therefore, the pesharim—unlike the hypomnemata—present themselves as continuous with the base texts they interpret. This is another sign that for the pesher commentators, the transmission and the interpretation of Scripture are continuous with one another.

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The way in which the pesher commentators present and approach the textual state of their base texts differs markedly from that of Alexandrian Homer scholars. The latter turned Homer into a literary monument—a fixed symbol of the cultural identity and legitimacy of the Ptolemaic dynasty. The pesher exegetes, in contrast, approach their base texts as fluid entities. Whereas for his Alexandrian interpreters, Homer becomes a durable focal point of Greek identity and Ptolemaic power, the pesharim emphasise the resilience and malleability of their base texts, which can always be adapted to the new circumstances in which their readers find themselves.

These differences in how they present the textual state of their base texts echo the socio-historical background of the pesher and hypomnema exegetes. Alexandrian textual scholarship was intricately tied up with the Ptolemaic court, whose claims to power and prestige it supported. The

(46) Florentino García Martínez, "El pesher: Interpretación profética de la Escritura," *Salmanticensis* 26 (1979): 125–39 (137; see also n. 45); H. Gregory Snyder, "Naughts and Crosses: Pesher Manuscripts and their Significance for Reading Practices at Qumran," *DSD* 7 (2000): 26–48 (39–40); Jutta Jokiranta, *Social Identity and Sectarianism in the Qumran Movement* (STDJ 105; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 154; George J. Brooke, "Physicality, Paratextuality, and Pesher Habakkuk," in *On the Fringe of Commentary: Metatextuality in Ancient Near Eastern and Ancient Mediterranean Cultures* (ed. Sydney H. Aufrère, Philip S. Alexander, and Zlatko Pleše; OLA 232; Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 175–93 (186); Pieter B. Hartog, "'The Final Priests of Jerusalem' and 'The Mouth of the Priest': Eschatology and Literary History in Pesher Habakkuk," *DSD* 24 (2017): 59–80.

(47) Pieter B. Hartog, "Interlinear Additions and Literary Development in 4Q163/*Pesher Isaiah C*, 4Q169/*Pesher Nahum*, and 4Q171/*Pesher Psalms A*," *RevQ* 28/2 (2016): 267–77 (269–72).

(48) Shani L. Berrin (Tzoref), *The Pesher Nahum Scroll from Qumran: An Exegetical Study of 4Q169* (STDJ 53; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 214–15; Hartog, "Interlinear Additions," 272–74.

(49) Hartog, "Interlinear Additions," 274–76.

tradition of textual scholarship reflected in the Qumran commentaries did not—as far as we know—exhibit such intimate ties to a particular centre of power. To be sure, the pesharim, too, bolstered the claims of the movement in which they originated. But the members of this movement did not erect monuments as lasting expressions of their power. In their interpretations, the pesher exegetes did not look for monumental literature that supported their interests, but for resilient Scriptures that could be read in ever-new ways to make sense of the quickly changing world in which the pesher commentators found themselves to be living and, as a result, were able to provide consolation to the composers and the readers of these commentaries. (50)

This view of their base texts as flexible enabled the pesher commentators to make sense of the experiences of their movement in the light of Scripture, and vice versa. As George Brooke, Philip Davies, and others have shown, the pesher exegetes did not just apply the Jewish Scripture to the historical situation of their movement. Instead, they create a historical consciousness or historical memory, in which the experiences of the Qumran movement and their literary heritage are merged. (51) References to historical circumstances in the pesharim are often not very specific, as they are clad in scriptural language (52); and the scriptural base text or other traditions from the scrolls often governed the shape of the historical memory of the composers of the

(50) On the consolatory (or even pastoral) purpose of the pesharim see Karl Elliger, *Studien zum Habakuk-Kommentar vom Toten Meer* (BHT 15; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1953), 153–54. Elliger writes that "[d]er eigentliche Zweck der Auslegung [in den Pescharim, PBH] *praktisch-seelsorgerlicher Art* [ist]" (153; his italics). Elliger's suggestion merits further discussion, seeing that it has not, as far as I know, been taken up in studies on the pesharim.

(51) See the survey in Pieter B. Hartog, "Pesharim," in *The Dictionary of the Bible in Ancient Media* (ed. Tom Thatcher et al.; London: T&T Clark, 2017), 293–95. Cf. on the Teacher of Righteousness Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "The Teacher of Righteousness Remembered: From Fragmentary Sources to Collective Memory in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Memory in the Bible and Antiquity: The Fifth Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium (Durham, September 2004)* (ed. Stephen C. Barton, idem, and Benjamin G. Wold; WUNT 212; Tübingen: Mohr, 2007), 75–94; idem, "The Legacy of the Teacher of Righteousness in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *New Perspectives on Old Texts: Proceedings of the Tenth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 9–11 January, 2005* (ed. Esther G. Chazon, Betsy Halpern-Amaru, and Ruth A. Clements; STDJ 88; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 23–49.

(52) George J. Brooke, "The Kittim in the Qumran Pesharim," in *Images of Empire* (ed. Loveday Alexander; JSOTSup 122; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 135–59; idem, "The Pesharim and the Origins of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site: Present Realities and Future Prospects* (ed. Michael O. Wise et al.; ANYAS 722; New York: The New York Academy of Sciences, 1994), 339–53.

pesharim. (53) In the pesharim, therefore, we do not encounter Scripture as a monument—a fixed, timeless point of reference—but as an ever-changing, flexible text which merges with the historical experiences of the Qumran movement. The result is a historical memory that supports the claims of the movement and gives consolation to its members when their claims are challenged.

It is helpful in this regard to consider the difference between what I have elsewhere referred to as "normativity" in the hypomnemata and "application" in the pesharim. (54) The ideal of a fixed Homeric text, written by the poet himself, implies a distinction between the times of the Alexandrian scholars—where Homer's text was corrupted after centuries of transmission and performance—and that of Homer. As they sought to reinstall the *ipsissima verba* of Homer, therefore, the Alexandrian scholars turned the poet into a timeless source of wisdom. They suspend his past-ness and make the fixed Homeric text the centre of their scholar enterprise and of Greek identity and culture. They overcome the gap that separates them from Homer, not by denying this gap, but by claiming they have the knowledge to reconstruct the pristine *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The contrast between the fixity of the Homeric base text and the fluidity of the Alexandrian scholarly tradition embodies this gap and the attempts of the Alexandrian scholars to bridge it: Homer has become a monumental writing, but due to the gap that separates Homer's Hellenistic readers and the poet's *ipsissima verba* the Homeric writings have to be constantly re-instated and re-confirmed as a literary monument. The hypomnemata and other scholarly works, which place Homer in the centre of Greek education and cultural consciousness, fulfil this purpose.

The pesharim work differently. The Qumran commentaries seem to imply no gap between their own times and that of their base texts. Instead, they present their interpretations as continuous with the contents of their base texts. Allegedly going back to the Teacher of Righteousness—the implied commentator in the pesharim—these interpretations result from the divine inspiration the Teacher received from God (1QpHab 7). Contrary to a persistent assumption in Qumran research,

(53) Philip R. Davies, *Behind the Essenes: History and Ideology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (BJS 94; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987); idem, "What History Can We Get from the Scrolls, and How?" in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Texts and Context* (ed. Charlotte Hempel; STDJ 90; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 31–46. Cf. on references to the righteous (צדיק) in the base texts of the pesharim and the Teacher of Righteousness in their interpretations Pieter B. Hartog, "Re-Reading Habakkuk 2:4b: Lemma and Interpretation in 1QpHab VII 17–VIII 3," *RevQ* 26/1 (2013): 127–32.

(54) Hartog, *Pesher and Hypomnema*, 251–53.

however, the pesharim do not present the inspiration of the Teacher as a break with the inspiration of the earlier prophets (e.g., Habakkuk). Rather, the Teacher, living in a later period time than the ancient prophet, obtained a fuller insight in the course of history. But the divine inspiration in which he partakes is essentially of the same kind as that of the ancient prophet, even if it is a fuller form of it. (55) The textual state of the Qumran commentaries exemplifies their continuity with their base texts: the fluidity of the pesharim mirrors the fluid character of the Jewish Scriptures as the pesher commentators saw them.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that Alexandrian scholars of Homer and Qumran exegetes of the Jewish Scriptures present and approach their base texts in different ways. For Alexandrian Homer scholars, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are fixed texts written by Homer himself, which can be recovered by the methods and tools developed by scholars in the Museum and Library. For the pesher exegetes, the Jewish Scriptures are fluid and malleable texts. In both cases, the presentation of these texts as either fixed or fluid is not a neutral decision: in the case of Alexandrian Homer scholars, Homer's fixity and monumentality reflects the power claims of the Ptolemies, whereas for the pesher exegetes the malleability of the Jewish Scriptures allowed the movement to which the pesher commentators belonged to make sense of their history through Scripture—and the other way around.

This also shows that the concepts of textual fixity and fluidity functioned differently in the Hellenistic and Roman periods than they do today. In many modern-day textual communities or faith groups, textual fluidity is a thing to be avoided. Textual fixity, in contrast,

(55) See Devorah Dimant, "Exegesis and Time in the Pesharim from Qumran," in *History, Ideology and Bible Interpretation in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Collected Studies* (FAT 90; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 315–32; Jokiranta, *Social Identity and Sectarianism*, 166–70; Hartog, "Pesher as Commentary"; idem, *Pesher and Hypomnema*, 238–46; George J. Brooke, "Was the Teacher of Righteousness Considered to be a Prophet?" in *Prophecy after the Prophets? The Contribution of the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Understanding of Biblical and Extra-Biblical Prophecy* (ed. Kristin de Troyer, Armin Lange, and Lucas L. Schulte; CBET 52; Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 77–97; idem, "Prophetic Interpretation in the *Pesharim*," in *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism* (ed. Matthias Henze; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 235–54; "Les mystères des prophètes et les oracles d'exégèse: Continuité et discontinuité dans la prophétie à Qumran," in *Comment devient-on prophète? Actes du colloque organisé par le Collège de France, Paris, les 4–5 avril 2011* (ed. Jean-Marie Durand, Thomas Römer, and Micaël Bürki; OBO 265; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 159–66.

provides a solid basis for reading and reflection. In the period under discussion here, the lines were drawn differently. As it appears, textual fixity and fluidity were equally valid concepts, and it depended on the aims of particular textual communities how they construed the texts that were central to them.

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